

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND SAFETY STANDARDS IN SECONDARY
SCHOOLS.A STUDY OF NYERI COUNTY KENYA

BY

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ABSTRACT

When a natural hazard strikes, children are among the most vulnerable population group, especially those attending school in times of disaster. In Kenya the Education minister directed that all provincial secondary boarding schools be given money to buy fire-fighting equipment. The study aimed look into safety precautions and security standards put in place by school authorities to ensure safety of school communities, assess the measures put in place in mitigating disaster when and if it happens, establish the mindset of school communities in terms of the possibility of a disaster happening in their schools. The study used a descriptive survey design to establish disaster preparedness in secondary school in Nyeri County. The target population in this study consisted of the secondary school principals of Nyeri County and deputy principals. The secondary schools in the county were 175 in total, Of the 175 schools, the researcher sampled 20% of the schools which was 35 schools. The developed questionnaire was piloted by administering it to 5 identical respondents not included in the study sample. The study found that that school heads were aware that disasters can occur anytime in their schools. Most of the safety situation guidelines had not been adhered to because majority of respondents the schools are not competently ready to deal with disaster or crises situations. The schools had not constituted a strong and effective school safety subcommittee. The findings from the questionnaire also indicated that some of the schools were not having scouting movement and therefore the training on dealing with disasters was not in existence. In addition rarely did students report on any spotted risk situations in the school. In a nutshell the safety situation in the schools did not have trained persons in the school who can deal with crises as and when they occur found to be wanting because some schools did not have copies of Ministry of Education circulars and therefore were not conversant with the safety standards and guidelines as specified which assure the safety and security of school community. The study concluded that safety was inadequate because in most school majority of the respondents disagreed that, all doorways in the school open outwards and are not bolted from outside, windows in the schools are without grills and the school has constructed a strong and effective safety committee. The findings of the study concluded that although some schools had been fitted with fire extinguishers, First Aid Kits and lightening arrestors were inadequate. Similarly the study established that rarely are: school facilities and equipment inspected, do schools conduct disasters and crisis management training for staff and community, conduct fire drills and schools invite fire brigade department to give talks and demonstration to learners about fire prevention in school context. Schools. The study recommend that the following measures for disaster management at Secondary Schools. The Ministry of Education should integrate safety education in the curriculum and explore possibility of insuring school property to allow for compensation in case of a disaster. The school management should constitute a standing committee on disaster mitigation and a school safety subcommittee whose responsibility shall be overseeing school safety by carrying out regularly safety inspection, audit and prevention of accidents. Facilities in secondary schools should be regularly inspected to ensure disaster preparedness. All doorways should be wide enough, at least 5 feet wide, and they should open outwards. They must not at any time be locked from outside when learners are inside; each dormitory should have a door at each end and an additional emergency exit at the middle.