REPORT ON

ONE DAY CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL SAFETY

DATE: 22ND JUNE 2019

VENUE: MASCOT HOTEL, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

'School Safety' has been defined as the creation of safe environments for children starting from their homes to their schools and back. This includes safety from large-scale 'natural' hazards of geological/climatic origin, human-made risks, pandemics, violence as well as more frequent and smaller-scale fire, transportation and other related emergencies, and environmental threats that can adversely affect the lives of children.

In this context, a one-day consultation on school safety was held on 22nd June 2019 at Mascot Hotel, Thiruvananthapuram under the organizations of KSDMA, the education department of Kerala state and UNICEF. The meeting was conducted as three sessions commencing from the inaugural function and continued the sessions with the topic discussions.

Inaugural function

The inaugural ceremony of the meeting commenced at 10.00 am. Mr Parvathy, Hazard and Risk analyst, KSDMA formally welcomed the dignitaries on stage. Dr Sekhar L Kuriakose, Member Secretary, KSDMA, briefed about the importance of the topic in his presidential address.

Inaugural address was delivered by Mr A Shajahan IAS, Secretary, General Education Department, Kerala.

Mr K Jeevan Babu IAS, Director of Directorate of General Education gave the keynote speech defining the risks that have to be monitored periodically to safeguard the health and well-being of children.

Felicitations were made by Dr Valsalakumari IAS (Retd), DRR Consultant, UNICEF and Mr Job Zachariah, UN Recovery Coordinator, Kerala. Dr Valsalakumari IAS started by drawing two examples of two different school accidents that happened in Kashmir and Japan, explaining the significance of school safety. Mr Job Zachariah threw light on the fact that safety and security are two different terms in which the former is considered natural while the latter is supposed to have human implications. Creating a safe environment for children on their way to schools and within the schools were the main aspects of his speech.

Mr Pradeep G S, Hazard analyst, KSDMA delivered vote of thanks to all dignitaries on and off the stage and thanked them for gracing the occasion by their solemn presence.

Session 1

The first session was chaired by Dr Valsala Kumari IAS (Retd), DRR Consultant, UNICEF. This session comprised of five short presentations followed by a Q&A session and a group discussion. The session invited participants to consider the potential of addressing school safety in our state.

1. **School Safety- National perspective: Ms Vandana Chauhan**

Ms Vandana Chauhan started her session by sharing her experiences of the school safety programme in Gujarat. She also made reference to the National Guidelines on School Safety. Furthermore, they selected 200 most vulnerable schools from a district and prepared School Disaster Management Plan.

2. **Existing mechanism of ensuring School Safety in the state: Dr Girish Cholayil**

Dr Girish Cholayil, Joint Director, Education Department gave an account of the relevance of implementing and monitoring the related plans and guidelines. Also, he suggested appointing a nodal officer at the state and district levels for monitoring and introducing a new academic curriculum incorporating lessons learnt from Kerala floods 2018. A school academic masterplan was recommended by him.

3. **Guideline on the safety and security of the school going children: Mr P Vijayan IPS**

Mr P Vijayan IPS, IGP (Admin) commenced his session by addressing the importance of care and protection plan. He made several suggestions in the discussion which include:

- Protection group in schools
- Clean campus project
- Delegating responsibility to children
- Vision- Care, safety and protection to all students in Kerala
- Build an environment of safety, security and happiness

In conclusion, he also referred to four parts of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):

a) Securing the school, school premises and staff
b) Securing the school neighbourhood
c) Transportation of children from school
d) Education and awareness building

4. **School Safety- Measures taken at the State level and gaps (2018-19): Mr Joe John George**

Referring to post-flood needs Mr Joe John George, State Project Officer, KSDMA explained the impact of flood in the education sector. He emphasized initiatives for school safety as:

a) School society clubs
b) State Level Advisory Committee formed as per NDMA guidelines.

With respect to the State Disaster Management Plan, Mr Joe stressed on the importance of structural safety measures, non-structural safety measures and student rapid response force formed in some schools of the State.

5. **Curriculum on School safety: Mr Vineesh T V**

Mr Vineesh T V, Research Officer, SCERT highlighted the context of awareness through syllabus and training for teachers. The importance of a collective portal for school safety was discussed.

Following the presentations, a Q&A session with group discussions was held. The invitees were requested for lunch and afternoon session.

Session 2

Post lunch, the second session was chaired by Mr Job Zachariah, UN Recovery Coordinator. This session comprised three short presentations followed by group discussions by the Education Department, KSDMA and UNICEF.

1. Mock Drills in school: Mr Harikumar K

Drawing some examples, Mr Harikumar K, District fire officer, Kollam portrayed the major fire incidents that happened in India. He made reference to the teams for mock drills in schools as follows:

- Awareness campaign team
- Fire alarming team
- Evacuation team
- Search and rescue team
- Firefighting team
- First Aid team
- Site safety team
- Transport management team
- Media management team

2. Best practices in School Safety: Mr Mahendra Rajaram

Mr Mahendra Rajaram, Program Officer, Risk and Resilience, UNICEF Hyderabad Field Office, Telangana mentioned his experiences from School Safety initiatives in Andhra Pradesh. Furthermore, he discussed the hazard mapping of the state.

3. Best practices in School Safety: Mr Ramesh Krishna

Mr Ramesh Krishnan, Executive Director, Foundation for Development Action commenced his talk by drawing his experiences on school safety activities in Saraswathi Vidyalaya, Trivandrum. His focus for the discussion was based on:

- Rescue and basic firefighting techniques
- Fire mock drills
- Hazard hunt exercise
- Vulnerability mapping

4. School Safety Guideline, template on School Safety Plan, School Safety Committee, Annual Action Plan: Mr Ronu Mathew

Mr Ronu Mathew, Hazard analyst, KSDMA concluded the last session by describing the relevance of Disaster Management Committees and Disaster Management Plans in schools.

Group and general discussion session

Finally, group and general discussion sessions were organized by the Education Department, KSDMA and UNICEF and the following points were decided:

a) There is a need to appoint eligible candidates for Disaster Management training. Detailed concentrated sectoral training may be planned.
b) Initiatives must be taken to generate awareness about Basic First Aid and CPR, among school students.
c) Training needs to be provided to school students.
d) Include Disaster Management and Civics in curriculum. Good civic awareness should be created in students. SCERT shall take lead.
e) All schools should constitute School Safety/ School Disaster Management Committees according to the stipulated norms before July 31st.
f) Every school should formulate School Safety/ School Disaster Management Plan in the prescribed format before August 31st.
g) Education Department shall send the Quarterly report to SDMA immediately after the completion of every quarter to ensure onward submission to NDMA before 10th of subsequent month.
h) All School buildings shall comply with the statutory norms for fitness. No school shall function in unsafe buildings.
i) KSDMA should have an active kids zone in the website in order to create Disaster Management awareness among KIDS.

Ms Anupama gave the vote of thanks to all the dignitaries and participants for their input.

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