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School-based disaster preparedness: a route to societal resilience? The case study of Ljungby municipality, Sweden

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Children spend around five days a week in school for almost the entire year. Thus, it is sensible to best prepare them for coping with the potential occurrence of hazardous events while they are in school. The present research aims to explore the perceived importance and feasibility of implementing school-based disaster preparedness (SBDP) by the means of a case study of Ljungby municipality, Kronoberg county, Sweden. Through the means of semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and secondary data, the research unravelled how the respondents, in the form of both students and school staff perceive SBDP, and whether they see it as a potentially useful tool for their schools. In addition, the paper focused on understanding how this type of disaster preparedness can contribute to the municipality's resilience. We concluded that the respondents understand the importance of SBDP and consider that the administrations at school and municipality level should focus more on ensuring that crisis plans are available, as well as on short- and long-term strategic preparedness. In addition, a shift in focus from training only staff to including students as valuable resources and considering their levels of preparedness was noticed by the interviewees, as well as the need to increase the awareness regarding the available SBDP items in each school. The existent crisis plans might need additional consideration in order to ensure their adaptability to schools' needs, capacities, lessons learnt and locations. Further studies are needed in regard to whether students-aimed SBDP can be used for creating a sustainable SBDP culture within communities, municipalities and later on, entire countries.