



Students learn in a school affected by cyclone Idai in Beira, Mozambique © UN-Habitat/Eskinder Debebe

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Safer Schools Programme: the success story of the resilient education sector in Mozambique

Climatic, geographic and geological factors place Mozambique at continued risk of extreme natural disasters with around 1,000 classrooms being damaged by floods and strong winds every year.

Through its diversified multilevel approach to increasing the resilience of human settlements, UN-Habitat identified that the well-being of a school was a key factor in defining the magnitude of a community's overall vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards.

To strengthen the resilience of schools across the country, UN-Habitat launched the Safer Schools Programme in partnership with the Government of Mozambique in 2011. The ongoing initiative

includes comprehensive technical assessment of schools damaged or destroyed by natural hazards, hazard risk mapping at national level, improved site planning and zoning, development of normative standards including building guidelines and technical assistance to central government for improved building codes to bolster school structures. UN-Habitat promotes the inclusion of these normative standards and tools in policy and practice.

UN-Habitat in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Development provided technical assistance to a World Bank-funded USD 15 million school reconstruction and retrofitting programme. Almost 1,100 classrooms were rehabilitated or re-built between 2018 and 2020

Building mixed material resilient schools with the local communities © UN-Habitat Mozambique



With these newly-built resilient classrooms, UN-Habitat and its partners are ensuring the continuity of education provision in the aftermath of future disasters © UN-Habitat Mozambique

in Central and Northern Mozambique using a mix of conventional and local building materials, benefitting approximately 100,000 children and teachers.

In early 2019, cyclones Kenneth and Idai struck Mozambique and 4,000 classrooms were damaged or destroyed – but all school buildings constructed in accordance with the Safer Schools standards were unscathed. The government has been scaling up the Safer Schools approach requesting all partners employ the school building

codes developed by UN-Habitat in future school construction programmes and projects.

In 2020 following the same methodology, UN-Habitat launched the Safer Hospitals Initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Health, with the objective of setting resilient and gender sensitive standards for health facilities to remain functional during crises and emergencies, and provide equitable health services to all.

The Safer Schools Programme received interest and support from central government as well as academia, and made unprecedented impact at national level. The Safer Schools approach is now a best practice worldwide.

The case of Mozambique demonstrates that:

- The Ministry of Education is determined to scale-up the Safer Schools approach.
- Schools built according to UN-Habitat proposed standards were undamaged by Cyclone Idai.
- By rebuilding a damaged school in a safe and resilient manner, UN-Habitat and its partners are ensuring the continuity of education provision in the aftermath of future disasters, as well as providing isolated communities with at least one disaster-resistant building that can be used as a safe haven during emergencies.
- The Safer Schools Programme included enhancement of coordination among government, donors and other partners, and delivery of capacity building training to sub-contractors and communities involved in building schools which is important for sustainability.

Country: **Mozambique**
 Donors: **Education Cannot Wait, European Union, Government of Mozambique, World Bank**
 Implementing Partners: **Concern, Government of Mozambique, Oikos, United Nations Children's Fund, World Vision, UN-Habitat**
 Duration: **2012–present**

“The most important outcome of this construction method is a greater learning for our students. With this, I would like to thank the government and its cooperation partner for allowing us to build this type of classroom.”

Cabral Minta,
 School Director of Muchaleque primary school

“The school is beautiful now and my children will learn very well which was not possible before. This school is more resistant than the school that was here before.”

Paula Ronda,
 mother of three and community member, participated in the construction works as a water carrier.