Disaster risk reduction begins at school

Since 2007, Madagascar has been struck by a total of 14 cyclones, causing widespread damage and school closures. Education can play a critical role both in preparing for natural disasters and in mitigating the impacts once devastation has struck, ensuring that knowledge about hazards, risks and appropriate safety behaviour is deeply embedded within communities, with children as “agents of change”. Combining humanitarian relief with long-term development objectives, UNICEF works alongside the Ministry of Education to provide teachers and students with sound knowledge of proven actions to take both at school and home before, during and after a cyclone.

**DURATION:** 2014-2018  
**CHALLENGE:** Access to Basic Services, Emergency Response and Prepardness  
**COUNTRY:** Madagascar  
**PARTNER:** UNICEF

**CONTEXT**

Since 2007, Madagascar has been struck by a total of 14 cyclones, causing widespread damage and school closures, and affecting the lives of over 3.5 million people. Children typically represent 50-60% of those affected by disasters. Education can play a critical role both in preparing for natural disasters and in mitigating the impacts once devastation has struck. Quality trainings on disaster preparedness and risk reduction help foster a culture of safety and resilience, reaching the most threatened and marginalized communities, with children as “agents of change”. UNICEF works alongside the Ministry of Education to provide teachers and students with sound knowledge of proven actions to take both at school and home before, during and after a cyclone.
**ACTION**

The activities include the active engagement of teachers, children and communities in disaster risk reduction initiatives and trainings, as well as the procurement and delivery of educational packages for children, day care workers and teachers, and the production and pre-positioning of recreation kits.

**Trainings:**

- Regional authorities, primary level students and teachers across 10 high-risk regions benefit from a refresher training course on disaster preparedness and risk management, including lessons on and exercises in how to get ready and what to do when a natural hazard is announced (be it a cyclone, a flood, an earthquake, a fire or a drought). The trainings also include drills and psychological support.
- Regional authorities, primary level students and teachers across 5 new vulnerable areas receive training courses on disaster preparedness and risk management, so that they are able to prepare for and adopt the right behaviours in the event of a natural hazard. The trainings also include drills and psychological support.

**Educational material:**

- Development, printing and distribution of student manuals and teacher guides on disaster risk reduction.
- Supply of UNICEF recreation kits to be pre-positioned in Ministry for Education warehouses for post-emergency situations. Recreation kits are developed in recognition of the importance of sports and play in addressing trauma among children affected by natural disasters and contain both indoor and outdoor sports equipment.

**EXPECTED RESULTS**

The global objective of the programme is to ensure children are able to resume their schooling quickly after an emergency as a result of building education authorities’ capacity at all levels in 15 target regions. Specifically the programme aims to:

- Increase the awareness of approximately 420,000 children and 9,000 teachers, together with their local communities and regional education staff, on disaster preparedness and response in 15 target regions.
- Replenish stocks of educational materials (disaster risk reduction manuals and recreation kits) to ensure 25,000 children are best prepared to withstand and overcome future disasters.

**LONG-TERM STRATEGY**

UNICEF activities are integrated within the national education plan to ensure sustainability once the programme is finalized. UNICEF has also put a regional network of education assistants in place who work closely with the government at a decentralized level to share best practices and support monitoring and evaluation procedures.