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## Building Back Better! Focusing on Education in Emergencies in Cyclone Idai Affected Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Cyclone Idai Response Zimbabwe, Mozambique – RESA April 2019

Plan International has a long history of working in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. We are responding to Cyclone Idai with emergency assistance in particular in the areas of Education in Emergencies (EiE) and Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE).

*Education is always the most under-funded sector in an emergency, and we are urging the national government led response and international donors to ensure this time it is different. We plan to work with the respective governments to ensure the consideration of education in the Cyclone Idai emergency response, particularly the need to Build Back Better. We must ensure the collective response is reaching the most vulnerable children, especially girls, with needed relief goods and services that must include protection, psychosocial support and education in emergencies. We must also ensure that girls and boys are consulted in the design process and are provided with child-friendly methods of giving feedback. Donors should designate funding for education from the very start and ensure that girls and boys can equally benefit from a return to learning as soon as possible.*

## Education is a right

Education is a human right and should be guaranteed and protected for all people, at all times. However, in humanitarian crises, despite being one of the most affected sectors, education is often overlooked and thus unbudgeted for. At Plan we believe children's right to quality education should be fulfilled at all times including during emergencies.

In 2000, at Dakar, the global community committed itself to achieving *Education For All*, as laid down by International Law, including for those affected by conflict and disasters. Following on from this the 2010 UN General Assembly Resolution (A/64/L.58) on the right to education in emergencies - a set of linked activities that enable structured learning to continue in times of acute crisis - established an important implementation framework for all states and humanitarian actors to follow<sup>1</sup>. Education efforts in emergencies are based on three core principles: the child's right to education, the child's need to protection and a community's priority of education.

Children everywhere express a passion for study and high levels of frustration and stress when disasters prevent them from learning. Children are often afraid that gaps in learning would permanently impair their opportunities in the future. In addition to learning, educational facilities are often places where children feel safe and signal a return to normalcy that is important for physical and mental health following a crisis. At Plan International, we strive to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world both through our work in development and humanitarian settings. We support education before, during and after disasters through preparedness, emergency response and recovery programming.

## Securing the Right to Education in Emergencies

Plan International focuses on Education in Emergencies during a response to ensure that school activities in the affected areas resume with minimum disruption and that learning spaces are restored in the shortest period. We also incorporate an element of Child Protection through the provision of psychosocial support for children to be able to process their experiences and manage distress.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, United Nations Digital Library, available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/685964>, accessed 20/4/2019

In order to improve recovery and strengthen resilient development, Plan prioritises interventions that reduce vulnerability and build resilience, beyond addressing immediate humanitarian needs. In schools, we work through the local education authorities to provide disaster risk reduction (DRR) preparedness and response training to teachers and pupils. We recognise the gendered nature of disasters and work to harness the power and potential of every single child and urge other humanitarian actors to do the same when working in the field. When an emergency response is not planned through a gender and inclusion lens, which includes collecting sex, age and disability disaggregated data, it leads to vulnerable populations, especially girls, missing much needed assistance.



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Research shows that adolescent girls are often among the most vulnerable in post-disaster settings, have special needs and face specific protection concerns; including a heightened risk of gender-based violence and sexual abuse as family and protective social structures are disrupted. Incidences of domestic violence also often increase as desperation and frustration grow within the family unit and this has an impact on children. This desperation also drives families to seek alternative sources of income; adolescent girls and women sometimes have to engage in transactional sex or fall prey to human trafficking or early child marriage to survive and care for their families. As most of these incidents go unreported, there is an acute lack of documentation and awareness. Unaccompanied children and those with disabilities are also often among the most vulnerable children and therefore any response should prioritise their additional protection needs, including access to quality education and psycho-social support.



## Situation Overview

Cyclone Idai is one of the worst disasters to hit southern Africa in decades. It has caused catastrophic damage in and around the port city of Beira, Mozambique where some 150 square miles are under water, and brought extensive destruction to parts of Inhambane, Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia provinces, as river levels rose and caused further flooding. Areas of Zimbabwe, particularly the districts of Chimanimani and Chipinge in Manicaland and parts of Malawi have been devastated as well.



Source: BBC News Africa

Children are the most affected by the disaster having in some cases lost family members, places to live and safe places such as schools to play and to learn. Hundreds of thousands of girls and boys in all three countries are facing increased protection risks and risk losing out on valuable learning time. According to UNICEF, 854,000 children need assistance in the three affected countries (UNICEF, SitRep 4, April 7).

Education has been one of the most affected areas following the Cyclone. In Mozambique more than 3,400 classrooms have been damaged or destroyed (UNICEF). In Zimbabwe a rapid Joint Education Needs Assessment covering 61 affected schools in 6 districts found that over half the schools (52%) had at least one damaged block or school facility<sup>2</sup>. 95% of schools reported loss and damage to essential teaching and learning materials, resulting in over half the schools closing for a number of days<sup>3</sup>. According to pre-crisis enrollment figures more than 305,000 children in Mozambique and over 90,000 school children in Zimbabwe have had their learning disrupted by the Cyclone (UNICEF)<sup>4</sup>. Drop out rates could increase in both countries if families whose property or livelihoods have been negatively affected by the cyclone are forced to send their children to work to make ends meet. This compounds an already shockingly low enrolment and learning achievement rates of secondary school aged children of less than 20 per cent in Mozambique with 22% of school aged children engaged in child labour (UNICEF).

Plan's response to Cyclone Idai has included procuring tents to set up temporary learning spaces and securing the provision of replacement teaching and learning materials to ensure lessons can resume as quickly as possible. It is imperative to ensure a swift return to normalcy in education within a minimum period of disruption of the school year. There is also a need to target outreach to find and support the most vulnerable and marginalised groups: girls, children with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities to ensure equal access and education for all.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, Save the Children, WVI, Plan International, *Rapid Joint Education Needs Assessment: Cyclone Idai, Zimbabwe*, April 2019

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF website: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) accessed on 23/4/2019.

## Schools identified Psychosocial Support as the top priority

Whilst the repair of infrastructure damage has been the focus of much the government-led response schools themselves identified psychosocial support as the top priority area. In this regard, it is vital that EiE response initiatives focus on closing the gap created in ensuring continuity of meeting children's right to accessing inclusive quality education with the needs of the children to receive psychosocial support. Due to the large percentage of the population exposed to the Cyclone and the increasing casualties and injuries, mental health and psychological support interventions are much needed. Children face trauma from having homes and schools (often their safe places) damaged, the loss of family members, displacement and general disruption to the social fabric. Too often, in emergencies, psychosocial support is not prioritised and girls have particular difficulty accessing available services. Donors should ensure that funds for health include funds for psycho-social services and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in and out of schools and urge government and implementing partners to ensure that children and girls also have full access to these services.

At Plan we know adolescent girls' movements in particular are often restricted in times of crisis for numerous reasons, including a heightened fear of violence and increased domestic chores, including caring for younger siblings which often mean they cannot access school or relief services during a crisis. Young girls are at high risk of child marriage if their household's livelihoods have been affected. 48% of girls in Mozambique and 32% of girls in Zimbabwe are married before the age of 18 (14% and 4% respectively before turning 15 years old (Girls, not Brides<sup>5</sup>) – these figures are likely to rise following a disaster such as Cyclone Idai as families look to gain income through dowries or reduce the number of mouths to feed by marrying off their daughters. Along with the increase in Gender Based Violence (GBV) and lack of safe environments, due to the increase of child marriage and transactional sex, cases of adolescent pregnancy are likely to increase, putting adolescent girls at further risk of maternal health complications. Adolescent girls are at particular risk of exploitation if they are separated from their families, living near the military or in mixed gender spaces.



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<sup>5</sup> Girls not Brides website: [www.girlsnotbridges.org](http://www.girlsnotbridges.org), accessed on 15/4/2019.

Keeping children in schools, where they can attend awareness-raising sessions on these issues and receive psychosocial support helps to mitigate against these child protection risks. Schooling and non-formal education programmes enable the exchange of essential life-saving messages. Such messages may include education for human rights, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, basic health and hygiene, HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention, education for disaster risk reduction and education for sustainable development. Children and young people can also be important channels for transmitting those same messages to their families and to the wider community. Education and Child Protection go hand in hand. Therefore, it is critical that we put education at the heart of interventions, especially in the early recovery phase. All affected girls and boys should be provided access to safe and adequate learning spaces, including establishing temporary learning spaces to restart formal primary and secondary schooling where school infrastructure has been damaged. Reconstruction of damaged infrastructure needs to be a coordinated effort, ensuring that new constructions comply with national and international health, safety and environmental standards.

## **Building Back Better**

The joint efforts of national governments and the international community to respond to disasters may provide an opportunity to rebuild education systems to standards even better than before the disaster. Reform of system management, curricula and learning methods to new standards often becomes possible during recovery and reconstruction, providing an opportunity to increase educational access, retention, quality and equity. The same principles apply in reconstruction of damaged infrastructure. In our rush to build back quickly we must be careful to ensure that new constructions comply with international environmental, health and safety standards, including the use of safe and proper building materials. In Mozambique and Zimbabwe there are concerns that several non-humanitarian actors have rushed to contribute to the reconstruction of damaged schools, in the process donating many sub-standard or potentially hazardous building materials, including roofs made using asbestos, which run counter to the humanitarian principle of Do No Harm and risk jeopardising the opportunity to Build Back Better.

Response initiatives should include integrated interventions to ensure effectiveness and high level impact. Interventions should incorporate holistic approaches that target according to need ensuring that no children are excluded from assistance. Planning for the activities should be inclusive and consider participation of various stakeholders, including children themselves, participating in the response to ensure improved coordination, designation of roles and responsibilities. Children, parents and teachers from Cyclone affected communities should be made aware of age and ability appropriate feedback mechanisms to ensure accountability to the affected population at all times. Humanitarian response principles, including Do No Harm and the principle of Building Back Better should guide interventions and must be based on a structured cycle trajectory focussing on life-saving, early recovery and resilience building which should be embedded in the long term programming within the scope of development work.

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## Recommendations:

Government, humanitarian agencies and donors have an important responsibility to recognise children and young people's right to education and ensure the provision of education in any humanitarian response. All concerned stakeholders, including NGOs, international organisations, governments and local authorities, should put child rights, gender equality and Education in Emergencies (EiE) and Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) IASC standards at the centre of their deliberations and make them a starting point when considering humanitarian interventions. Child protection must be an integral part of the humanitarian response and donors should specifically dedicate funding to programmes offering services, protection and education for girls and women. To ensure holistic and effective protection of all, prevention measures should be incorporated into all activities and designed with a specific gender and inclusion focus. This includes raising awareness of gender-based violence and other harmful practises as well as comprehensive support for survivors. Analysis of the shifting gender dynamics within affected communities allows for more effective and appropriate programming and will ensure humanitarian assistance is tailored to the specific and different needs of women, men, boys and girls.

### 1. For schools and communities

- **Local leaders, communities, and school personnel must work together** on local development plans to ascertain what is needed to encourage children to go to school, stay in school and pursue higher education. This includes addressing both teachers' and children's needs.
- **Community protection mechanisms.** Systems must be put in place, or revitalised to prevent sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse, or physical and emotional harm to school children, especially girls, as well as teachers.
- **Child friendly feedback mechanisms.** Mechanisms must be put in place for children to freely share feedback, respond, and if necessary, escalate to higher local leadership for final actions to be taken on any issues raised.

### 2. For national government(s):

- **Governments should mainstream a gender and inclusion approach:** consulting with women and girls on safety mapping and taking steps to ensure temporary housing sites are adequately lit, and aid and sanitation must be made as accessible as possible so children and adolescents are not forced to walk distances on their own thus putting themselves at risk of exploitation or abuse.
- **Collect Sex, Age and Disability Disaggregated data (SADDD)** to ensure the most vulnerable are accessing humanitarian assistance.
- **Community-based and school-based child protection mechanisms** should be quickly established or re-strengthened to allow children to report sexual violence and refer them to appropriate and child-focused services.
- **School curricula must be reviewed** to provide gender responsive and inclusive materials on how to deal with social, economic and environmental hazards.



- Teachers' physical and psycho-social needs must first be understood and addressed before they interact with children. Teachers must be equipped with basic psycho-social tools to bring the children back to school before reassuming academic programmes.
- Efforts to rebuild damaged infrastructure should follow Build Back Better guidelines and be in line with international standards.

### 3. For NGOs:

- It is important to start Education in Emergencies planning and programming as early as possible as education is a “life-saving” intervention for children.
- Collect Sex, Age and Disability Disaggregated data (SADDD) to ensure the most vulnerable are accessing their services.
- Provide psycho-social support and capacity building for teachers.
- Assist local government in refurbishing and rebuilding local schooling structures with the principle of Build Back Better.
- Even where schools are damaged, Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) can be established quickly. TLS must be of high quality and meet minimum standards for them to be able to protect and education children adequately.
- Establish Child friendly spaces (CFS), or similar programmes, should be provided to re-establish routine, provide psychosocial support, an opportunity to play, and informal learning. With high displacement figures (IOM), CFS interventions will be critical for many families.
- All response actors have a responsibility to enhance equal opportunities and equal access to schooling for girls' including factors pertaining to menstrual hygiene.
- Concerted efforts need to be made to ensure all adolescents, especially girls', have access to sexual and reproductive health and information services and gender sensitive WASH activities in schools including menstrual health and wellness considerations.





#### 4. For donors:

- Donors should [designate funding for education from the very start](#) and ensure that girls and boys can equally benefit from a return to learning as soon as possible.
- Donors should [dedicate funds to programmes specifically aimed at providing adolescent-friendly, gender sensitive sexual and reproductive health and information services](#) to all those who need it, especially adolescent girls.
- [Funds MUST be made available for the transition period from emergency response to safe schools programming](#): to ensure proper preparedness activities, such as contingency planning linked to early warning systems, school emergency drills, and, other social and economic hazards are covered within the education curriculum and in line with government commitments to the Sendai Framework.
- In their interactions with national government actors, humanitarian leadership and the UN, [donors should ask about plans for including children, especially girls](#), in assessments and other community consultation mechanisms.
- [Advocate for immediate financial and resources support to rehabilitate schools including supporting infrastructure](#) (e.g. gender sensitive water points and hygiene facilities) in line with the Sendai Framework to “Build back better” to ensure that rehabilitated infrastructure are hazard resistant, gender responsive and inclusive.
- [Encourage governments to recognise that children and youth’s psychosocial resilience](#) must be adequately addressed. Children, particularly girls, must feel that they are in a safe space before commencing with academic learning.

- Donors have a role to play in “Build back better” and this includes addressing issues regarding teacher to student ratio as well as encouraging more female teachers. This, in turn, will encourage more girls to attend classes from primary to secondary school.
- Donors also have the opportunity to encourage the Ministry of Education to operationalise mechanisms that ensure children with disabilities are identified, encouraged and supported to attend school throughout the year.
- Donors have a key role in investing and advocating national governments to address these issues comprehensively. Safety, emotional and cognitive child development and teacher delivery for quality education can only be supported with an appropriate number of classrooms and improved teacher: student ratio.