



Disaster-resistant schools

A cyclone-resistant school building

A tool for universal primary education
Development Intervention Fund, Madagascar

Introduction

The cyclone-prone island of Madagascar is on track to reach the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015. In the last three years, primary school attendance rate increased by 80 per cent, from 53 percent in 2002 to 95 per cent in late 2005.

The Malagasy Government's free supply of school materials such as textbooks and pens to low-income families in selected areas, a massive recruitment and training of primary school teachers, and the construction disaster resistant school buildings are three main factors that have contributed to the rise in primary school attendance.

Project brief

Located off the South-East coast of mainland Africa, the island of Madagascar is exposed to tropical cyclones six months per year—from November to April. At least one cyclone a year causes significant damage to part of the island. In response, the Malagasy Government has initiated the Development Intervention Fund IV (FID¹ IV) project that aims to reduce cyclone risk.

Under a FID IV Project component known as "Shock Response", school buildings and primary health centres are built or retrofitted using cyclone-resistant construction codes. The FID IV project emerged in mid-2004 after two strong cyclones (Gafilo and Elita) struck the country's East and West coasts, damaging 3,400 schools—of which 1,420 were completely destroyed—and leaving more than 200,000 people without shelter.

The success of the FID IV project relies entirely on the leadership, management and ownership of the local community. A local association is formed by community members who submit a formal funding request to the FID for the construction or rehabilitation of a public building.

Upon approval of the request², a "project manager" status is conferred on the community members'/parents' association to supervise the administrative, technical, financial and business-related aspects of the development of the building including the design, construction codes, tender, selection of contractors/sub-contractors, business negotiations, follow-up, and completion of work.

After construction is completed, the local association also takes full responsibility of maintaining and administering the building. Since mid-2004, the FID IV Project has helped develop 2,041 cyclone-resistant school buildings that can withstand cyclone winds of up to 250 km/hour.

¹ FID stands for « Fonds d'intervention pour le développement » in French (Development Intervention Fund in English). The word "FID" refers both to the project - established under the World Bank-driven Structural Adjustment Programme - and the institution running the project.
² The FID Project allocates funds to communes for their priority development actions. Intervention sites are selected based on well-defined criteria such as remoteness, local government revenues, school attendance rate, access to drinking water, etc. The ongoing FID IV (Phase 4) Project ends in 2007.

Teacher training and recruitment is managed by the Malagasy Ministry of National Education, in which a high number of “informal” teachers previously employed by families in rural areas in a “food-for-teaching” scheme, participate. On completion of their training, the former “food-for-teaching” teachers receive monthly salaries by the Education Ministry. The FID IV Project has also helped build and retrofit 311 health centres using the same disaster-resistant construction codes. This increased local community’s access to health services in the areas concerned by 50 per cent.

Lessons learned

1. The construction/rehabilitation of schools using disaster-resistant standards took place mainly on Madagascar’s cyclone-prone coastal areas where school attendance rate was lower. This helped increase school attendance rate
2. The improved appearance of the school buildings, as well as community’s management of the entire process, also helped boost school attendance rate
3. The disaster-resistant schools became widely-used community meeting places and “havens” before, during and after cyclones
4. The construction of the disaster-resistant schools raised awareness and understanding of disaster issues among community members
5. The disaster-resistant schools are now “ready-to-run” pilot sites for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into primary and/or secondary school

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