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UNICEF EDUCATION

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Case Study

MOZAMBIQUE

Responding to multiple emergencies – building teachers’ capacity to provide mental health and psychosocial support before, during, and after crises

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In March and April 2019, Mozambique was struck by cyclones Idai and Kenneth in just five weeks, affecting more than 1.5 million people. In addition to widespread displacement and damage to public and private infrastructure, education services were severely disrupted with 1,380 schools and 4,189 classrooms partially damaged or destroyed, affecting a total of 382,717 students and 9,619 teachers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were closed for most of 2020, affecting over 8 million children, 6.9 million of whom were primary-school aged. Additional closures in July and August 2021, affected 14.1 per cent of primary school (more than 1 million) and 36.5% of secondary school children (more than 500,000). Furthermore, conflict in the north of the country has led to the displacement of more than 800,000 people, at least 400,000 of whom are children. As a result of the violence, 219 (57%) out of the 385 schools in the 9 northern districts in Cabo Delgado. One hundred and four classrooms in 46 schools have been destroyed or seriously damaged, including five education district offices.¹

Chronic vulnerability to natural disasters, regional insecurity, and the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the urgent need to embed mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions into capacity development for teachers and other duty-bearers. This is to ensure that children and teachers in crisis-affected provinces have access to the mental health and psychosocial well-being supports they need before, during, and after emergencies.

¹ DPE (Direcção Provincial de Educação) Cabo Delgado, 6 September 2021.

In response, UNICEF coordinated with Education Cluster partners Save the Children, IsraAID, Right to Play, StreetChild, and UNESCO to develop a MHPSS training manual. The aim was to improve access to mental health and psychosocial supports for primary school children by strengthening the basic knowledge and competencies of frontline educators and teachers in emergency settings. The manual provides Ministry of Education and Human Development (MINEDH) professionals and school staff with an introductory overview of MHPSS in education settings; practical guidance on pedagogical approaches to supporting student well-being, such as creating learning environments where students feel safe to express themselves; and strategies for identifying children in need of additional support, due either to mental health concerns, exposure to violence and/or gender-based violence, with additional approaches for referring them to justice, health and social welfare services.

With support from partners Aid for the Development of People for People (ADPP) and Finn Church Aid, the MINEDH is implementing trainings on the manual beginning with national focal points, replicating down to provincial and district facilitators. To ensure quality, a continuous coaching approach was embedded throughout the training process. This included follow-up on trainers' experiences, evaluations and feedback mechanisms to identify areas for improvement. UNICEF collaborated with MINEDH to integrate the manual into on-the-job training for teachers, with the possibility of integrating an MHPSS component in national teacher pre-service training.

RESULTS

- Trainings have resulted in more than 40,000 children, who have been affected by natural disasters, conflict, and COVID-19, receiving psychosocial support.
- More than 7,600 primary teachers have participated in training to improve their capacities on MHPSS services for children. An additional 67 national, provincial, and district level focal points and 290 pedagogical directors received training on the MHPSS manual.
- Forty national, provincial, and district level focal points have received training on the two recently added modules on violence against children (VAC) and gender-based violence (GBV).

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Engaging the Ministry from the outset to ensure uptake.** UNICEF's collaboration with MINEDH was integral to securing the Ministry's commitment to integrate the manual into national teacher training.
- **Leveraging the Education Cluster to multiply impacts.** UNICEF's coordination with the education cluster played a key role in reconciling implementing partners' different methodologies and approaches regarding MHPSS in schools into a national, unified training manual and multiplying impacts through collective action.

NEXT STEPS

UNICEF is currently training teachers in six additional provinces, targeting 83,000 primary school teachers. UNICEF is advocating for funding so that the trainings and printing of the manual can be included in the new National Education Action plan and is working to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Cost effectiveness: With financial support from UNICEF and GPE, USD\$ 650,000 has been contributed to the development of the MHPSS manual and the ongoing implementation of training.