

"Building a new future: Internally Displaced Women in Marocane challenging adversity and breaking down social barriers"

Bibi Faquihi, a 27-year-old single mother with two children, found herself caught up in the chaos of the armed conflict in Cabo Delgado when she was a new mother in the district of Meluco. *"I was a new mother,"* Bibi recalls, *"the situation of the armed conflict was getting worse. After two weeks, I went to Macomia and, after a few months, when I wanted to get used to Macomia, the insurgents returned"*. Faced with violence and instability, Bibi was forced to flee, returning to the district of Meluco, where conditions were also unsafe. With no alternative, she went to Pemba in search of help, facing a painful journey. *"There was no transportation from Pemba to Macomia or from Meluco to Macomia or from Macomia to Pemba, so I had to walk to a village near the main road and set off for the city of Pemba."*



Beneficiary woman with clay in her hands, during the process of building the houses. (UN-Habitat)

After seven months in Pemba, Bibi saw her luck change when opportunities for accommodation in resettlement villages arose, and she was selected for the village of Marocane. Here, Bibi and other internally displaced women were faced with the task of building their own homes from scratch using limited resources and facing the challenges posed by the rainy season and a

shortage of building materials. However, the arrival of the initiative "Promoting Adequate, Affordable, Safe and Resilient Housing for Internally Displaced Women and Girls in Cabo Delgado" brought a new glimmer of hope for Bibi and other women in her situation.



Gender-sensitive, resilient and accessible 'Marocane' model house developed in collaboration with internally displaced women to meet their needs. (UN-Habitat)

The initiative, led by UN Women in collaboration with UN-Habitat and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, was implemented in response to the humanitarian crisis affecting the northern region of Cabo Delgado since 2017. In addition to increasing access to safe and resilient housing, the project aimed to empower and include internally displaced women in the housing and resettlement processes, thus promoting their socio-economic empowerment and resilience. Furthermore, 40 women and 67 local artisans were trained in resilient housing construction and involved in the process of building the houses.



Internally displaced women weaving a house as part of the process taught in training courses on building and maintaining resilient houses. (UN-Habitat)

"When UN-Habitat came to help with the roof, I moved from the small house to the big house... when I had to go to the fields during the rainy season, I would get anxious because I knew my children and my clothes would suffer," Bibi shares, reflecting on the transformative impact of having a safe and dignified home for herself and her children. This new home not only offered protection from the weather, but also allowed Bibi to focus on other needs, without the constant worry about her family's shelter and well-being.

Women's active participation in building their own homes not only strengthened their technical skills, but also promoted self-employment and entrepreneurship. Similarly to Bibi, Flora Antonio, a 30-year-old woman, also experienced a significant transformation through the project. By taking part in practical training in building and maintaining resilient, affordable and suitable housing, Flora acquired new skills and competencies that not only empowered her, but also inspired her to aspire to more. *"I feel good and ask for the project to return, even if it's just a request to build in Pemba Metuge or anywhere else,"* expressed Flora, revealing a genuine desire to contribute her skills for the good of her community. The beneficiaries of the trainings are

replicating the learning about building and maintaining resilient houses to provide support to other families who are building their permanent homes with government assistance.



Engagement and active participation of women in the construction of their homes, empowering them economically with the development of technical skills. (UN-Habitat)

In addition to the direct beneficiaries, such as Bibi and Flora, the project has had a positive impact on the wider community. The increase in construction activity has not only created local employment opportunities, but has also stimulated the growth of small businesses and suppliers of construction materials, thus contributing to a more vibrant and resilient socio-economic environment. This project has also inspired several other initiatives, both individual and project-based, as it has enabled the women and men trained in the project to use the same model of resilient homes in the Marocane neighborhood.



Handover ceremony of the resilient houses for the beneficiaries, led by the Secretary of State, Antonio Njanje Supeia. April 2024 (UN-Habitat)

As beneficiaries such as Bibi and Flora start living in their new homes, it marks not just the end of a project, but the beginning of a new era of hope and renewal for displaced women and communities in Cabo Delgado. This successful collaboration between international organizations, local authorities and beneficiary communities has not only resulted in the construction of resilient housing but has also restored dignity and confidence in a better future for everyone involved. With the handover of the 50 houses now complete, the ceremony served as a tangible symbol of the ongoing commitment to the well-being and security of communities affected by conflict and climate change, benefiting more than 350 vulnerable women and girls.