

Joining Forces: How DOD and USAID partnered to Keep Students Safe and In School



When U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) COVID-19 relief funding for personal protective equipment (PPE) first became available in April 2020, schools in Mozambique were still not open due to necessary health restrictions. But teams at DOD and USAID knew that supplies like these would be essential for schools to reopen safely. DOD had the funding; USAID had the contacts. They decided to join forces in preparation for when children were back in the classroom. DOD began identifying local and outside suppliers to procure the masks, sanitizers, water dispensers and

thermometers required to begin safer in-person learning. Meanwhile, USAID reached out to its Mozambican education partners to develop a distribution plan for the PPE kits.

The USAID Vamos Ler! project, implemented by Creative Associates, had already been developing a training curriculum focused on helping teachers and school administrators adapt teaching and school management techniques to a COVID-19 environment. When the USAID/Mozambique mission contacted them to see if they could help get the 132 PPE kits to schools that needed them, they were ready. USAID Vamos Ler! has been working with schools throughout Nampula and Zambezia provinces to increase early grade reading skills through improved instruction and materials. Not only did they know how to work with school management and teachers, they also knew how to get supplies to schools quickly and efficiently. Over the past 5 years the USAID Vamos Ler! team has helped design and deliver over 7 million literacy texts, teacher training manuals, and supplementary education materials.

Working with the Department of Defense team and district officials, USAID Vamos Ler! identified 61 schools in Nampula province who could most benefit from the PPE kits based on reported number of COVID cases and school population. Each kit contained 600 washable masks with filters, 250 surgical grade masks, 2 infrared thermometers, two water dispensers for hand washing stations, 10 liters of hand sanitizer and 10 liters of antibacterial hand soap. Deliveries of the PPE kits began in June. Distribution is not always easy in Mozambique.

Some schools are in remote and hard to reach areas, so the PPE deliveries are coordinated with deliveries of school textbooks and teacher training sessions.



With a few simple items such as a quality mask, an infrared thermometer and some antiseptic wash, parents and staff alike were more confident about school restarting. Shaquira Ramazane, a second grade teacher at Tapatero Primary said, “We are so grateful for these materials that will help us to prevent the spread of COVID in the classroom and allow us to continue teaching our students every day. Some of our students do not have masks and want to come to school. Now they can.”