

Introduction

The 2001 earthquake in Gujarat directly affected an estimated three million school children. Educational Infrastructure and systems were affected in 18 districts. The damage was particularly severe in Kutch, Rajkot, Sundarnagar, Jamnagar, Ahmedabad and Patan districts. The lives of educational administrators, teachers and students were disrupted and has taken a long time to recover.

In the hardest hit districts of Jamnagar ,Kutch, Rajkot and Sundarnagar, more than,1700 Primary schools had been destroyed (55% of the total), leaving approximately 317,000 students without classrooms.

According to the preliminary figures available from the state government some 15,000 primary schools , half of the pre-quake total, had been damaged or destroyed across Gujarat.

Considering the States vulnerability to earthquakes, it becomes imperative, that school children in particular, be protected against future impacts. In many countries around the world, schools have special safety programmes. These include structural measures aimed at enhancing safety of buildings, and non-structural measures for their occupants. Schools are also earmarked as temporary rehabilitation centres for disasters. In India, such initiatives are not yet in place. Having suffered one of the most devastating earthquakes in recent times, Gujarat can well take the lead in introducing school safety programmes.
