



## **Building knowledge in the reconstruction process: the safer house construction guidelines in Malawi.**

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### **Abstract text**

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In 2009 Malawi was hit by an earthquake that left the northern areas of the Country deeply damaged. In response to the earthquake, the Government prepared a first set of guidelines “the safer house construction guidelines” with the specific objectives to provide technical support to build safer houses and solutions to repair the damages caused by the earthquake. In 2014 the Government called for the revision of the guidelines, now under preparation. The main gaps found in the existing guidelines were: the lack of a multi-hazard approach (solutions were addressing only the earthquake), the lack of a proper target for the guidelines, (the manual was found too technical to be read by the people that were actually involved in the reconstruction process, and too poor to be used as a manual by the different institutions that were dealing with the reconstruction of the houses), and the lack of dissemination of the guidelines. In relation to the dissemination process, the only area reached by the guidelines was Karonga district (where the earthquake damaged the largest amount of constructions), and were the guidelines were distributed. The paper wants to describe the process of preparing the new guidelines, by considering the different conditions found in the country of Malawi, the involvement of the different stakeholders in relation to the task, and the main goals that the guidelines try to achieve. In particular the paper will describe the different issues faced during the guidelines preparation process, such as the evaluation of the different risks that affect the country, the current status of the information (missing knowledge such as hazard maps), the knowledge in the choice and preparation of the different construction materials, the availability of the materials, the choice of different construction details, the maintenance of the buildings, the awareness strategy during the reconstruction process, the necessity to provide information that would apply either in urban and rural context, the lack of post-disaster assessment (formal and/or informal) and the lack of alternative (improvement) solutions while the process of building back was in place.

The paper will discuss the contents of the guidelines, the dissemination process and the road map in order to provide safer houses in Malawi.

### **Roundtable theme**

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- Disasters in urban context
- Housing and beyond: reconstructing lives, reconstructing cities
- Linking a past, present and future: histories, urban imaginaries, urban design and its influence on urban recovery
- X Supporting urban risk reduction through reconstruction**
- Relocation from hazardous areas



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## Author's Biography

### Matilde Cassani

Matilde Cassani (1980) studied at the Politecnico Di Milano and at the Univesidade Tecnica de Lisboa, then Architecture and Urban culture at UPC (Universidade Politecnica de Catalunya) in Barcelona. She holds a PhD in Spatial Planning and Urban Development. Cassani worked as a consultant for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) in Sri Lanka, where she started developing a research project on the post tsunami reconstruction. She furthermore worked as an architect for Stefano Boeri. She currently teaches at Politecnico di Milano and at Naba and acts as a consultant for the World Bank, and works on a research project on "Holy Urbanism". Her practice reflects the spatial implications of religious pluralism in the contemporary Western urban context.

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### Maria Chiara Pastore

Maria Chiara Pastore (1980) is a Post Doctoral Fellow and Adjunct Professor at Politecnico di Milano. In March 2013 she concluded her PhD at Politecnico di Milano with a research on the relation between water and urban planning, particularly in rapid urbanizing cities. She is the project manager of a European Project that involves five Egyptian Universities for the implementation of a Master Degree in Sustainable Development. Her consultancies include the production of the "Safer house construction guidelines" for the country of Malawi, the "Masterplan for the City of Dar es Salaam", in Tanzania, where she had been living in 2011. Her research on African Cities was included in the Exhibition "Africa Big Change Big Chance" at the Triennale of Milano, now at CIVA in Bruxelles.