

Pastoralist Education

An estimated 25 to 40 million children of school age live in nomadic or pastoralist households in Africa alone, of whom only 10 to 50 percent attend school. The overall rate of female enrollment in school is extremely low or nonexistent in most pastoralist regions. Most basic education systems available to pastoralists are characterized by limited access, poor delivery, gender inequality, low retention, and poor infrastructure. Further, there are huge disparities between regions, countries and communities due to cultural and traditional beliefs and a lack of basic access to parents, which in turn affects child enrollment.

For IIRR, education is not only one of the most important basic human rights but it is also the foundation for human development. It is a powerful tool that releases the intellectual, social and organizational potential of individuals, communities and nations.

The Project

In 2005 IIRR started education for pastoralists and other marginalized groups in Kenya and Ethiopia. The program contributes to the efforts of the government and local communities to increase the opportunity for out-of-school children in pastoralist areas to access quality basic education by designing appropriate delivery mechanisms that are compatible with the pastoralist lifestyle, with particular emphasis on girls' enrollment and retention.



The Approach

IIRR does not implement projects or programs directly with beneficiary communities. It works with and builds the capacity of local organizations—NGOs, local government, community organizations and parents associations—to design, implement and monitor effective delivery of education.

Evolving education delivery models

Sustainable education for pastoralists must support their livelihoods and be attractive to their way of life. IIRR and partners developed a flexible education curriculum that fits with pastoral mobility patterns and allows their children to help with daily chores. The evolving delivery models include:

Mobile schools: With these simple semi-permanent structures, students and their teachers travel when communities migrate in search of greener pastures and water. Learning often takes place in tents or under the shade of trees.

Shepherd classes: These are evening classes designed for children who are busy herding livestock or doing other chores during the day.

Feeder schools: Pastoralist settlements are normally far apart and some children must walk long distances to school. Feeder classes are set up within settlements for younger children to reduce the distance until they are old enough to walk and join a more organized learning center.

Functional Literacy: The majority of adult pastoralists have not had any schooling. The IIRR adult literacy classes offer basic education combined with practical problem-solving and life skills.

Integration: Partnerships are formed with other agencies that provide additional social services. The project integrates HIV/AIDS, gender empowerment and peace building as critical components, especially for girls and women.

Progress to date

Through the 19 partners in Kenya and Ethiopia, IIRR has established 54 learning centers for school age children, 28 functional adult literacy classes and 17 early child development (ECD) centers. They have 2,018 school-age children and 456 younger children in ECD classes. The parents support the education programs by getting involved in one of the 54 center management committees (CMC), which supervise training at the centers. Through the capacity-building trainings, the partner organizations can now design, implement, and monitor the learning as well as document and share their lessons. Targeted lobbying is bearing fruit as governments are influenced to design focused pastoralist-friendly education policies.



The Future

The focus is to increase access to quality learning to a wider pastoralist community and enroll over 10,000 children and adult learners in the next three years. To do this, the program needs to reach out to even more partners in order to establish more learning centers. In specific terms, this means expanding to more districts in the predominantly pastoralist and marginalized communities in Kenya and Ethiopia and, later, to pastoralists in Northern Uganda and South Sudan. More teachers need to be trained and hired, and the skills of serving teachers need to be upgraded through in-service trainings. Better and more learner-friendly teaching and learning materials need to be purchased. The learning centers need additional classrooms, toilets and water to increase attendance and retention rates. The managerial skills of the CMC need to be upgraded and the capacity of NGOs and local government educational authorities must be enhanced to plan and monitor the quality of learning. To undertake these expanded activities and reach our goal, the current annual funding of US \$450,000 must increase to US \$1 million.



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