



# Carruurteenna "our children"

UNICEF Somalia Newsletter

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## Education a beacon of hope for Somalia's future

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Due to the nature of the crisis in Somalia, UNICEF and its partners must balance life-saving interventions with longer-term development goals. However, after years of neglect of education systems, and exclusion of a generation of children and youth from school due to conflict, education has a crucial role to play in Somalia both in the current emergency context, and in post conflict reconstruction.

Education forms the basis of a country's socio-economic development and plays an essential role in building human capabilities and accelerates economic growth through knowledge, skills and creative strength of a society. Education is the foundation for long term political and social stability.

Somalia has one of the lowest primary school enrolment rates, and the lowest estimated adult literacy rate in the world. The gross enrolment rate for girls is 25% compared to 37% for boys (Somalia Primary Education Survey (PES) 2006-07), and the female adult literacy rate is estimated at 27% as compared with 50% for males. Fortunately, through years of intensive efforts by education partners, led



**Nimco Ahmed Mohamoud, 13, a beneficiary of UNICEF's child-to-child school clubs. Story page 3. © UNICEF Somalia/2008**

by communities, an increasing number of boys and girls are enrolling in primary school. Since 2000, the number of children enrolled in grades 1-8 has increased roughly 300%, from an estimated 150,000 to over 460,000. However, in 2008 there were many dropouts particularly in conflicted-affected areas like Mogadishu, where up to 134 schools were closed or occupied by militias, and due to high frequency of population movements from communities affected by violence. Since the 1980s, education services in Somalia

have largely been provided by community-based organizations, local educational networks, NGOs and Qu'ranic schools.

Teachers are for the most part paid through school fees, although the governments in Somaliland and Puntland are paying salaries for an increasing number of teachers - Puntland has adopted a policy of increasing the number of teachers it pays by 200 per year and in Somaliland out of approximately 4,000 teachers, the Ministry of Education is paying 2,100.

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## Against all odds, Hammar Jab Jab school rises in Mogadishu

Hammar Jab Jab Primary School is located in Hamar Jab Jab district, Mogadishu, about a half kilometre from the port. The classrooms and all other structures of the old school were completely destroyed, and the once active school catering for close to 2,000 children (990 children in two shifts) with an average of 45 children per classroom, has been in disuse for almost two decades.

At the end of 2007 UNICEF received a grant from USAID for a project entitled 'Integrated Social Services Delivery to Support Recovery and Stability in Southern Somalia'. The purpose of the project is to support the delivery of social services, aligned with the UN Transition Plan and linking existing humanitarian assistance to nascent local government structures.

The project was designed with three inter-related components: development of sustainable water supply services and promotion of improved sanitation and hygiene, increasing access to basic education, and improving access to quality Maternal, Newborn and Child Health care Services.



**The new Hammar Jab Jab school © UNICEF Somalia/2008**

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**Hammar Jab Jab was a once active school catering for 2000 children...**

## Pupils take a frontline in emergency response in Somalia

Amidst the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Somalia, Child-to-Child (CTC) clubs have been taking the lead in social mobilization and advocacy to promote children's rights for education, protection and well-being.

Child to Child school clubs in Jowhar district, Middle Shabelle region, have demonstrated the important role children can play in emergency response. The clubs, which have been in existence in Middle Shabelle for the last two years continue to mobilize children to attend school, participate in response to emergencies and educate their communities on the importance of education.

On August 31 2008 Labo-Wab village of Jowhar district burst into flames. The village with a population of 1,800 lost every thing including homes, buildings, household items, and other property in the fire. The only school in the village was reduced to ashes, leaving 83 school children (29 of them girls) with shattered hopes of ever achieving their education dreams.

A local network of CTC school clubs in Jowhar district acted immediately and responded to those affected. The school clubs established a response committee and sought humanitarian assistance for the affected families from neighboring communities.

At the end of the exercise, CTC children assembled four bundles of clothes and a cash amount of 2,400,000 Somali Shillings (equivalent to \$ 80).

On 6 September 2008, CTC members loaded a four wheel drive vehicle and arrived at Labo-Wab village and distributed clothes and cash to the affected families. They gave preference to families which had children attending the school.



*School clubs in action in Labo-Wab © UNICEF Somalia/2008/MHashi*

Afterwards, the clubs then embarked on a mobilization campaign in the village to restore education activities at the village school. Members made house-to-house visits to convince parents to send their children back to school. Consequently, the Labo-Wab community responded to the school club campaign and established a learning space under a tree for the children. Today the 83 school-age children who lost their school in the fire are attending their classes and getting psycho-social support in addition to education. UNICEF is also supporting the construction of two classrooms, an office, water tank and latrines to improve the learning environment and make the school more child-friendly. **See Page 3 for more details on the Child-to-Child school clubs.**

## Against all odds, Hammar Jab Jab rises in Mogadishu

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By supporting consolidated service delivery, and building a credible role for local authorities, there is a legitimate expectation that increased access to basic services will provide an environment supportive of peace and reconciliation, and provide tangible dividends for vulnerable communities.

The community of Hammar Jab-Jab district placed education at the top of their priorities. Despite the extreme difficulties in Mogadishu, in a consultative meeting with UNICEF the community identified rehabilitation of the old Hammar Jab-Jab Primary and Secondary School as a significant contribution to normalise the situation in the district, and support fragile state institutions.

A subsequent consultation involving UN-HABITAT, in partnership with SAACID, an international NGO, was held to prioritise infrastructure improvements in the district and to develop a project aimed at strengthening local governance with regards to service delivery. Through this the community affirmed their continued commitment to education, by placing rehabilitation of Gahey Primary and Secondary School and Hamar Jab Jab Primary and Secondary School as their third most important priorities following garbage collection and rehabilitation of Ansoloti Market.

UNICEF, in consultation with MoE, commissioned UNOPS to appraise the site and found that the structures were dilapidated and the level of destruction so great that rehabilitation was not

feasible. Re-construction of the school was the only viable solution, and a new design was commissioned with the plan to clear the site and build a new school. With the technical support of UNICEF, UNOPS designed a new school comprised of 22 classrooms, a library, teachers' room, administrative block, and water and sanitation facilities, and construction started in August 2008.

Despite the continuing fighting in the capital, and the growing insecurity affecting many parts of Somalia, Hammar Jab-Jab area has been relatively less affected by the continuous fighting and violence.

Seizing this opportunity, UNICEF continued supporting the construction. Closely watched by the community, construction of the school building is now complete and site clearing is in progress. Hamar Jab Jab is the first large-scale school construction project undertaken in Mogadishu by UNICEF in over 10 years.

To show their support and team spirit, the community will landscape the compound and construct the playground, and once formed, a Community Education Committee (CEC) will fully participate in the running and management of their school. UNICEF, the community, and the local authorities are eagerly awaiting the day when the school is officially opened, and students are once again able to learn in Hamar Jab Jab School.

## Child-to-child clubs are promoting children's rights to education ...

## Child-to-child clubs - improving education through after-school activities

The Child-to-Child (CTC) school club programme in Somalia is attracting a lot of attention. In a pilot phase supported by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), 75 school clubs throughout Somalia, benefiting some 5,625 primary school children, were established and consolidated during 2008. Seventy-five CTC catalysts were trained and supported to identify schools and mobilize children in the 8 -14 age group through drama, debates and discussions in after-school clubs. Where possible, the catalysts have worked closely with teachers, head teachers and other government education officials, providing the CTC programme with a strong element of sustainability.

The long-term funding of the programme made available by DfID, has been channelled through the Strategic Partnership for Recovery and Development of Education in Somalia. This four



**Abraham Mohamed Ali is a member of a CTC club in Somaliland. © UNICEF Somalia/2008**

year initiative, supports innovative and alternative approaches to education in Somalia through UNICEF, UNESCO, as well as international and local NGOs. It is an attempt to increase enrolment, currently standing at just over 30 percent, and decrease blatant gender disparity which results in only 24 percent of the school-going population being girls.

While increasing access is crucial in the push towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), improving the quality of education through making schools more child-friendly, especially for girls, is key to retaining children in the system once parents have acknowledged the value of formal education. The Child to Child programme provides a means of increasing child participation and promotes positive interaction between learners, teachers, parents and even education officials in school life outside of the formal curriculum. This right-based approach to education is based on a renowned methodology, originally developed by the Institute of Child Health (UK) and used to promote peer to peer learning on health and hygiene issues.

"To encourage children to participate we use a child-centred methodology. This is a six-step approach," said Suleiman Hassan, Chairperson of the Somaliland Students Assembly, the local NGO that has been responsible for initiating the CTC programme in the north western zone, Somaliland. "It starts with identifying a problem. Then the children are guided through the additional steps from discussing the issues, determining the best course of action and the action itself. It's then followed up

by an evaluation and a discussion about how the process or action can be improved upon the next time. The best thing about it is that it works. Children love it and respond quickly and enthusiastically on issues ranging from protecting their environment, corporal punishment to children's right to be heard and not just seen."

Through support from DfID, UNICEF plans to scale up the number of active schools clubs and catalysts this year. Instead of merely training more catalysts, plans are being made to train a cadre of CTC trainers of trainers who will be available to respond to the growing demand for CTC school clubs throughout Somalia. A communication package will also be developed to introduce the concept to Regional Education Officers and local and international NGOs, providing them with useful information on how to go about setting up dynamic CTC school clubs based on the lessons learned from the pilot stage.

### CTC challenging gender roles in Somaliland

Through challenging cultural norms and helping children to gain confidence and self-esteem, the CTC programme is bringing about change in areas that have traditionally been taboo in Somali society and therefore very difficult to impact. Gender is one such area.

State House Primary School, which is located in one of the biggest IDP settlements in Hargeisa, Somaliland in the north west of Somalia, has become something of a magnet for children. Not only do the 360 children there attend the formal schools sessions in the morning, they are even more eager to return to their tented classrooms in the heat of the Somali afternoon.

Then they are found to be enthusiastically participating in the Child-to-Child School Club that is facilitated by a trained catalyst, focusing on a range of child-centred topics. This is just one of 30 schools in Somaliland which, through support from DfID/UNICEF, has had the chance to introduce the Child to Child programme as part of an ongoing pilot in Somalia since 2008.

In State House Primary School, the CTC programme has already had significant impact on attitudes towards culturally entrenched gender roles in the family. These socially defined gender roles often result in girls being doubly disadvantaged. Not only do parents prefer to send boys to school because the girls will soon marry outside of their family, they also feel that the girl needs to "learn to be a good wife and housekeeper" through doing household chores from a very early age.

Surprisingly, attitudinal change has quickly translated into real changes in behaviour among children and youth who attend the CTC Clubs. Abraham Mohamed Ali, 11, who attends Level 2 at the State House School, is an example of this. "While I was growing up, I was not aware that it's my responsibility to work along side my sisters in our home. Since I have been participating regularly in our CTC school club, things are very different at home.

The discussions we have on children's rights and the debates on topics such as "Girls can be doctors and scientists too" have not only changed my thoughts but also what I do. Now I not only believe that it's my duty to assist my sisters in their chores so that they too can have a chance to go to school like us boys, I also do something about it. The six steps we use show us that actions speak louder than words!"

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**Increasing access to education is one of the Millennium Development Goals ...**

## Pupils move from learning under trees to new classrooms

Schooling under a tree is common in Somalia despite the harsh weather conditions. Pupils are exposed to wind, dust and sun and are frequently interrupted by passers-by as they learn in open spaces. In such schools, there is no appropriate furniture. Pupils and teachers improvise furniture using available rocks, cans and logs as seats.

Increased sensitization and community awareness on importance of education inspired a pastoralist community in Dari Mara village of Somaliland to start such a school with pupils initially learning under a tree. However, not all pupils were able to endure the harsh conditions. Two years after the set up of the school, half of the pupils dropped out, from an initial 55 pupils to 26. "I enrolled 55 pupils in the first year but about half of them dropped out due to the difficult learning environment. Majority of the dropouts were girls," says Abdurrahman Omer Hussen, headteacher Dari Mara primary school. Facing such odds, the local community approached UNICEF for help leading to construction of the school.

However, since the beginning of 2009, children at Dari Mara are enjoying learning in a child-friendly environment. UNICEF has supported construction of two classrooms, an office, a store and separate latrines for boys and girls. A water tank in the school ensures adequate supply of water to pupils and both girls and boys are now enjoying learning in properly furnished classrooms. This year, the school has enrolled an additional 45 pupils and increasingly girls are taking advantage of the new school despite the long distances between school and home. Located in the middle of Golis mountains, 110 km east of Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, the school is managed by a Community Education Committee, under Mandera District administration in Sahil Region.

Ongoing community sensitization through UNICEF efforts has made it possible for community to identify, prioritize and pursue their needs.

### Little Hamda enjoys the new school

"There is a big difference between previous school and the new school. I feel more motivated to go to school. I walk to the school one hour each day. I am determined to complete school so that I can be a teacher. I would like to teach literacy to my people and fight illiteracy in my community," says Hamda Mohamed Mohamoud a 12 year girl student. Eleven year old Abdi, a pupil at the school walks two hours every morning to school. He would like to be a doctor and serve his community. Girls and Boys in the school have great aspirations and big dreams like all children in the world. Their determination is without bounds. UNICEF in partnership with local communities in Somalia and donors is committed to ensuring that every child has the right to quality education. A major component of this initiative involves strengthening the capacities of resource-poor communities to set up, safeguard and sustainably manage their schools.



*Dari Mara pupils before the new school (above) and below in the new classrooms © UNICEF Somalia/2008/9*



## Child-to-child school clubs - improving the quality of education

*From Page 3*

Abraham went on to share the tangible results of this realisation, proudly acknowledging that his younger sister had not only passed her exams in December 2008 but also came second in her class – that's never happened before in State House School! The CTC Clubs aim to encourage equal participation among girls and boys. At first girls were reticent to join in.

Slowly, but surely, they have become instrumental in driving the agenda of the club meetings in many of the School Clubs with many of the School Committees, set up by the CTC Clubs, being headed by girls. One such girl is Nimco Ahmed Mohamoud. Nimco who is 13 years old and attends Level 3 at the State House School.

"Being part of the Child to Child Club at my school has made a big difference to me. I used to be so shy. But the things we discuss at the club have helped me to become much more confident. I began by asking help from my older brothers in maths which I always found difficult. It wasn't long before I was helping my younger sisters and brothers to do their homework. Now I believe that I can do lots of things that I wouldn't have dreamed about doing before.

## Community sensitization by UNICEF has enabled people to prioritize education...

## A journey of progress through non-formal education

Zeytoun Ahmed is one of many girls who have graduated from Wadajir Non-Formal Education Centre in Bossaso, Northeast Somalia ('Puntland') since 2007 when the first and second NFE level 4 centralized examinations were conducted.

She is now training to be a nurse at the Bossaso First Aid Institute. It is now one year since she started the training.

Zeytoun's is an inspiring story of her journey from having to drop out of the formal school system in Grade 1 to graduating from an NFE centre and enrolling in the Bossaso First Aid Institute where she is realizing her dream.

"My parents sent all my older brothers and sisters to school at an early age, but the younger children in the family, including myself did not get this opportunity because poverty crept upon our family as my siblings increased. My parents could not afford the educational expenses including the school fees, uniforms and books.

When I was growing up I always admired those who could read and write although I did not know that the written words had meaning. I believed in the Somali proverb which says *'Black letters are known by God only'* thinking that the skill of reading and writing was something of a miracle.

Later I realized that literacy is the right of all Somali people. I was finally enrolled in primary school when I was 10 years old.



Zeytoun Ahmed © UNICEF Somalia/2008

I immediately noticed that I was much older than most of the students and so I left the school because I felt painfully shy and out of place, lacking a sense of belonging. I stayed at home for four years." However, I later joined Wadajir Non-Formal Education Centre which provided me with an alternative channel to secure the basic education skills that I had missed as a child. The centre in the Puntland coastal town of Bosasso enabled me to complete my lower primary education."

"I was determined to complete primary education so that I could at

least read and write and therefore have a chance to become a nurse which was my lifelong dream. At the beginning, I learned to read and write in Somali as well as the foundations of numeracy. These skills helped me to complete the four NFE modules, Health and Science, Maths, Social Studies and Business Education.

I was among the batch of girls who sat for the 2008 NFE centralized examination. I passed the examination with excellent marks. After this I sat and I passed the placement test designed for the entrants to the Bossaso First Aid Institute. I was very happy to have the chance to learn the foundations of the nursing profession. Currently I am learning how to support patients in various emergency situations outside of the hospital as well as patient care in the hospital. I am planning to study medicine in the university after completing secondary education."

## Non-formal education restores hope for youth in Central and Southern Somalia

UNICEF Somalia has been supporting Non-Formal Education (NFE) in Central and Southern Somalia since 2003, through teacher training, provision of supplies and establishment of learning spaces for youth and adults. NFE is primarily intended to provide learning opportunities to young adults who missed out on formal primary education.

The overwhelming majority of NFE learners are females. IIDA Women's Development Organization and Swedish African Welfare Alliance (SAWA) NFE local partners run the most efficient NFE centers in Lower and Middle Jubba regions. The first batch of youth learners completed the two year NFE programme in 2008.

376 youth learners graduated from IIDA and SAWA youth centres. These graduates were equipped with basic education competences in math, literacy, social science and life skills for health and business. Majority of the youth learners who completed NFE courses are female, accounting for 54% of the total graduates.

Eighty (45% female) of the young adults who graduated from IIDA and SAWA pursued further education by joining upper



NFE graduates in IIDA centre in Central Somalia © UNICEF Somalia/2008

primary in formal schools. Transition of youth graduates to formal schools indicates that the NFE programme complements enrolment in formal schools

A total of 296 youth graduates acquired work related skills under the vocational training scheme. Vocational courses offered include electricity, mechanics, carpentry, computer and tailoring. Skills acquired aid the graduates in finding employment.

Such schemes enhance young adults' capacity to control their lives and participate fully in societal development initiatives.

tives.

The NFE programme provides dual opportunities for youth groups. First, the programme restores their lost hope and aspirations by giving them a second chance to education which when completed allows them entry into formal schools. Secondly, it equips those who need to seek employment opportunities with skills. This goes a long way in improving their livelihood.

## The non-formal education programme gives learners a second chance...

## Communities take lead in addressing educational needs — The Hol Hol School Project

On the outskirts of Awdal district located in western Northwest Somalia ('Somaliland') bordering Ethiopia lies a little rural community by the name of Hol Hol. Hol Hol is approximately four kilometres south-east of Borama, the regional capital of Awdal district and has a population of approximately 1,200, based on an estimate of 200 households. There are few services available in Holhol and those available are provided and maintained by the community.

For as long as anyone could remember, Hol hol had no primary school. The literacy rate within the community is very low, and out-of-school children were previously engaged in household chores and livelihood activities.

A small change in fortunes was to come when In 2007, Hol Hol community was identified as one of the beneficiaries of the Community Driven Development and Recovery (CDDR) programme. The CDDR programme applies a community-driven approach to development that empowers communities to take the lead in identification, prioritization and seeking solutions to issues and needs in their communities through a participatory processes.

The CDDR programme seeks to give communities authority and control over decisions and resources that impact their lives. It involves a community empowerment process that leads to a change of attitudes, and promotes greater participation and action. The end result is development of the community using locally-mobilized resources.

In February 2007, 20 communities in Awdal and Sahil region were mobilized by UNICEF to identify their constraints in service delivery; analyze their situation, prioritize their needs and propose actions to improve their situation. This culminated in the development and completion of community action plans with Hol Hol being one of the communities that benefited from this initiative. Hol Hol identified education as their first priority. Previously, households which wanted to send their children to school were forced to send them to neighbouring communities where the nearest school was eight kilometres away .

Hol Hol community members worked together under their Community



Part of the new Hol Hol school © UNICEF Somalia/11-2008

Development Committee (CDC), mobilized resources and begun the construction of classrooms.

They managed to lay the foundation for the classrooms and build walls but were unable to complete the entire building. The CDC worked with the local municipality and secured UNICEF support in finalizing their project as well as mobilizing financial resources to cater for teachers' salaries. While the construction was going on, the community mobilized children who started learning under trees, however, due to the harsh weather, their studies were frequently interrupted. In January 2009, the school construction was completed, ensuring access to quality education in a child-friendly school environment for the children in Hol Hol. Currently, 60 children in this community go to the school, out of these, 25 are girls.

## Empowering children through Quranic schools

Nothing could hide the joy of Quranic School teachers in Bossasso when they received their first ever training in teaching and learning practices in integrated Quranic schools.

A total of 24 teachers (22 male and 2 Female) drawn from four Quranic schools, gathered in Armo to receive training on teaching of the primary school curriculum. They were introduced to the Somali primary school syllabus which they are now implementing in the integrated Quranic schools.

The Integrated Quranic Schools Project (IQSP) is an initiative aimed at increasing access to quality basic education in Somalia through integration of the primary school formal curriculum. Quranic schools provide a viable channel for providing basic education to the larger population of Somali children, given that all children are required to attend Quranic schools to learn the Quran. This is considered the most important educational activity in the Islamic context and provides a strong framework for integration of primary formal basic education.

Consecutive analysis of trends in primary school enrolment indicates an increase of barely 3% per annum. With a gross enrolment ratio of 30.7% Somalia is ranked amongst the countries with the lowest gross enrolment ratio in the world.

IQSP offers a comprehensive package for benefiting schools. The project addresses issues of teacher training, through a training package meant to promote child-centered teaching methodology with a focus on children's participation in the teaching and learning process, improvement of school infrastructure focusing on provision of appropriate school furniture,



A Quranic school teacher and pupils in Hargeisa, Somaliland © UNICEF Somalia/2008/Woki

improved classrooms and lighting and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

The project also aims at strengthening the management and administration in integrated Quranic schools through training of head teachers and establishment and training of Community Education Committees (CECs). Improved planning is promoted through the introduction of school data management tools.

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**The Quranic schools project aims at increasing access to quality education...**

## Impact of menstruation on Somali girls' education

*Every month, I miss school for 4 to 5 days. This way I feel more secure at home than at school as I do not have to worry that I will soil my dress."*

Faduma is not the only girl in Somalia who misses school every month. Many other girls who have reached puberty also miss school. Sadly enough, this is a result of menstruation, a natural biological process that all women undergo and which only needs proper management so that it does not negatively affect their lives, or keep girls like Faduma out of school. Menstruation and its management remains a mystery to many in Somalia, and as in many African countries, the topic is not openly discussed, to an extent that some mothers do not get to know when their daughters begin their menses.

In a study conducted in Puntland and Somaliland, UNICEF sought to understand how girls manage menstruation and whether it affects their participation and performance in school. Menstruation had been highlighted in past girls' education forums held in Bosasso and in Wajid as one of the barriers that affect girls' education.

Findings of the study indicate that not only is management of menstruation an issue, but ignorance and lack of information surround the topic. Information on menstruation is barely covered in the science books, and is not taught in all schools. The Quranic schools cover the topic to some extent, but mainly focus on Islamic religious teaching on practices women should adhere to during their menses, for example they should not pray, fast or go to the mosque during this period.

Due to limited and unreliable sources of information, menstruation has been interpreted as a sign of readiness for marriage. In one of the interviews with parents, they expressed concern that the beginning of menses for a girl alerts the parents that she is not a permanent member of the family, and some resort to seeking husbands for their daughters, whether they are in school or not. This is a major reason why girls dropout as they progress to higher grades.

Inaffordability and lack of availability of adequate sanitary materials (towels) translates to poor management of menstruation. Though sanitary materials are available in towns, not all girls can afford them. In rural areas the problem is assumed to be

much greater, given limited sources of income. In both urban and rural settings, girls use pieces of cloth for protection, in some cases these are recycled after washing. Whereas this is practical in some urban settings where water availability is not an issue, in rural settings this poses a greater challenge.

The impact of menstruation on girls cannot be overlooked as it has a direct implication on school attendance and performance. Lack of female teachers in a majority of schools further exacerbates this challenge. Female teachers are limited, and as might be expected, girls are reluctant to approach male teachers when they have problems related to menstruation.

Though UNICEF promotes girls only toilets in schools, the study revealed that a majority of girls do not use toilets in school, this can be attributed to cultural attitudes towards girls visiting toilets openly, both in school and at home. As can be deduced, most girls only change their sanitary wear at home. One can only imagine the discomfort and lack of concentration when in class.

The study provides background information to guide programming initiatives to support girls and further recommends a feasibility study on production of low cost sanitary towels using locally available materials. Following the study, communities should be empowered to produce affordable sanitary towels which should be supplied to girls in school.

Additional recommendations include advocacy and a campaign promoting girls' use of toilets, emphasizing gender responsive teaching in child friendly schools and affirmative action on recruitment, training and placement of female teachers. In order to demystify sexual maturation and menstruation, the study proposes development of fact sheets. Girls will also be empowered to "speak out" through Child to Child clubs. UNICEF remains committed to ensuring that girls and women in Somalia realize their human rights. With the support of DfID under the Strategic Partnership for Recovery and Development of Education in Somalia, UNICEF strives to increase access for girls to education by addressing menstruation and other barriers. Following the study, UNICEF has identified strategic local partners in Somalia for intervention on menstruation. The aim is to ensure that girls right to education is not hindered by their maturation, and that they learn in an environment where their dignity and self worth is respected.

### Empowering children through Quranic schools

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Most importantly, the project focuses on ensuring quality education. This is achieved through provision of appropriate textbooks, as well as through training of teachers.

In Hargeisa, 16 Quranic school teachers received training. The training was implemented by the Ministry of Religion in Collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

IQSP is at this stage a demonstrative pilot intervention to the Ministries of Education in Puntland and Somaliland for future replication.

It is aimed at influencing the ministries to develop a policy on upgrading Quranic schools that wish to contribute to the expansion of formal basic education.

Through financial support from DfID, under the Strategic Partnership for Recovery and Development of Education in Somalia, the project is currently benefiting 919 children in Somaliland and Puntland. This year, the project will expand to an additional 18 Quranic schools in Puntland and Somaliland.



Girls at Quranic school in Somaliland © UNICEF Somalia/2008/Woki

Many girls who have reached puberty leave school during menstruation...

## Giving back to the community and making a difference

*“On a UNICEF-supplied book I wrote, using a UNICEF-supplied pen”*

Sitting behind a large desk in the UNICEF Bossaso office, Faiza Abdirashid is all smiles. Today she can serve the community in a way that she had always dreamt. For her, the dream has come true.

Born in Kismayo, Southern Somalia in 1985, Faiza (pictured right) was raised in Garowe, Northeast Somalia (‘Puntland’) among a family of eight that included three sisters, two brothers, and her mother and father.

“Upon the collapse of the central government in 1991, all public infrastructure was demolished in Somalia. No single school was functioning. I was among those children who were unfortunate and could not go to school,” Faiza told UNICEF.

“In 1992, I was sent to a Madrassa school, where I begun to learn the Arabic alphabet and the Holy Quran. August 1992, was a new beginning for me. Some teachers voluntarily organized themselves and started a school in my village (Waberi village – near Garowe). Pupils paid very little fees. The school was named *Iskuulka Danyarta iyo Saboolka* (school for poor and vulnerable people). More than 100 students from neighbouring families and the town enrolled. The school was dilapidated; class rooms had no roof, no furniture and no doors. Pupils were using cartons instead of books. Others had nothing to write on and they sat and listened.”



Faiza Abdirashid © UNICEF Somalia/2009

“In spite of the poor condition of the school, I was inspired to study and I took advantage of the availability of my teacher. Parents continued to enroll more pupils and two months after opening of the school, two more classes were added. With three classes, the school attracted 300 pupils. “The beginning of 1993 was a new dawn for my school. The UNICEF Education programme was launched in Somalia. My school received exercise books and pencils. Later on, the school received textbooks and other additional supplies. The single book and pencil I received meant so much to me and to every other pupil in my school. On a UNICEF supplied book I wrote, using a UNICEF supplied pen.

“I yearned to know more about UNICEF and from that day, a desire in me was born, a desire to work with UNICEF, which I understood then as ‘an agency that supported children’. I felt that UNICEF’s work was making a difference to children in Somalia. At that time, there were very few girls in school, however, I kept on studying and was not discouraged. I completed primary education and proceeded to secondary school. On completion of secondary school, I won a scholarship from an international NGO to study clinical medicine at Egerton University in Kenya. I have since completed that, worked for CARE international and now I am doing what I enjoy doing best, serving children and women through UNICEF. I am the Zonal HIV/AIDS coordinator. In UNICEF, I can contribute towards improving the lives of vulnerable children all over Somalia. My dream has come true, and have set my goals higher: to reach (help) more children beyond Somalia.”

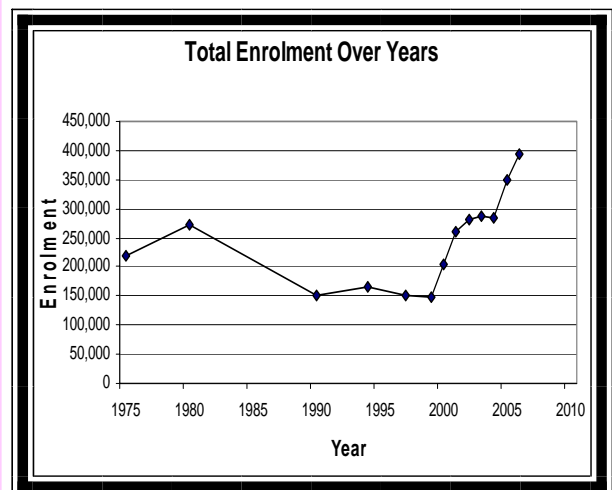
\*\*Faiza joined UNICEF Somalia in 2007. Like Faiza, many girls and boys in Somalia are benefiting from school supplies from UNICEF and other organizations. UNICEF supported the development of the Somali national primary school curriculum in 2002. Since then text books and teacher guides have been printed, reprinted and supplied. Currently UNICEF, under the Strategic Partnership in Education Programme, is supporting a review of the textbooks through UNESCO.

### Education is a beacon of hope for Somalia

From Page 1

UNICEF is working with these partners, and the Ministries of Education, to ensure that gains in access to quality education are sustained, and that by the end of 2010 an additional 100,000 children are enrolled in primary grades. To achieve this modest goal, government capacity to support and manage education systems will have to be strengthened, quality of instruction will have to be improved, classrooms will have to be enriched with supplies and textbooks, and child-friendly schools will have to be constructed and rehabilitated. As you will learn from this issue of Carruurteenna, UNICEF and its education partners are improving the lives of children through a diverse education programme.

We work with Community Education Committees, Child-to-Child clubs, formal and non-formal schools, Qu’ranic schools, regional education umbrella groups, government counterparts, NGOs, UN agencies such as UNESCO, WFP and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and government counter-parts. We believe that this approach will continue to address gender disparities in education, while building sustainable systems that will provide quality education opportunities to the vast majority of children and youth who remain out of school. UNICEF appreciates the support it gets from donors towards its work in Somalia and looks forward to its continuation.



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