

## UNICEF Education Case Study

Learning solutions for pastoralist and internally displaced children in Somalia

10 September 2021

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Before COVID-19 hit in 2020, Somalia had more than 3 million out-of-school children (1.5 million girls). This was due to recurring instability, conflict and emergencies, with internally displaced people (IDPs) and pastoralist children most excluded from learning and at the highest risk of dropping out of school. Girls are especially vulnerable. They struggle to attend and complete schooling because of gender-based violence, social norms, as well as early marriage and pregnancy. In 2015, UNICEF worked with the government and partners to improve educational outcomes for pastoralist children and internally displaced children. Together, this partnership created the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) programme as a flexible educational entry point for vulnerable children who are unable to access formal education because of their location, their distance from school, the language of instruction and the cost of school. Campaigns led by community groups helped enrol vulnerable learners into the programme.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (MOECHE), with support from UNICEF and local partners, developed ABE learning centres in Bay, Bakool and Gedo regions. These educational facilities provide children with a place to learn in their mother tongue; also, to participate in recreational activities; and they are a pathway for children to move into formal secondary schools. Local community groups called Community Education Committees and Child-to-Child clubs develop strategies to improve the ABE programme. The ABE programme supports girls through interventions focusing on menstrual hygiene and gender-sensitive water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. In hard-to-reach and high-risk locations, UNICEF-supported training and cash incentives helps ABE centres to retain their teachers. Technical advisors are creating the first ABE and non-formal education policy standards and assessment tools. These standards and tools will be used to

measure learning outcomes; and to incorporate the ABE programme into the MOECHE's Non-Formal Education Directorate. In their preliminary stage, these assessment tools have already measured ABE learners' literacy levels against those in Somalia's neighbouring countries.

## RESULTS ACHIEVED

- From 2016–2020, in the conflict-affected regions of Bay, Bakool and Gedo, 20,248 children (8,707 girls) from nomadic pastoralists communities and IDP groups enrolled in education for the first time. Of those, 937 (403 girls) graduated from the four-year ABE cycle in 2020. These graduates can now transition into formal secondary schools.
- In 2019, together with MOECHE, UNICEF conducted the first Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) for ABE learners. Literacy results for ABE learners were higher in Somalia than in neighbouring countries: Reading comprehension in Somalia was 58.2 words/minute compared to 24.5 words/minute in Kenya and 25.8 words/minute in Ethiopia.
- In hard-to-reach and high-risk regions, UNICEF provided 447 teachers with cash incentives to support their work in ABE centres.
- UNICEF distributed teaching and learning as well as recreation and reading materials to all 20,248 ABE learners (8,707 girls). Meanwhile, UNICEF updated the ABE curriculum, issuing 57,116 new ABE textbooks for all grade levels.
- UNICEF provided learning supplies, school meals and safe drinking water to an additional 80,555 crisis-affected children (37,861 girls) attending the ABE centres.
- From 2015–2020, the MOECHE registered 96 newly constructed USAID-supported ABE centres, with 194 temporary learning spaces and 198 gender-sensitive sanitation facilities.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Community involvement retains teachers and students.** Teachers and school staff were more likely to attend school regularly when parents and community leaders were involved in their recruitment. The Community Education Centres in ABE schools have helped enrol more students and have prevented children from dropping out of school. However, more women are needed within these centres to ensure female participation in management and decision-making.
- **Mother tongue as the language instruction yields positive literacy results.** The use of mother tongue as the language of instruction increased reading and comprehension for older learners between the ages of 12–15 years.

## NEXT STEPS

- Working with the government and other partners, UNICEF aims to scale-up the ABE programme, recognizing the potential to enrol more out-of-school children, including older children as well as those living in pastoralist and rural communities.
- In addition, UNICEF will disseminate the EGRA report to all education stakeholders and support the scale-up of assessments across the country to increase continued understanding of child learning. UNICEF is also supporting the MOECHE to complete and issue the ABE policy and standards for the entire education sector.

**Cost effectiveness:** Between 2015 and 2020, the cost for pastoralist and internally displaced children to attend ABE programmes in Somalia was about US\$100 per child per academic year. The programme expenditure over the five years was approximately US\$10 million, funded by USAID, UNICEF, local partners and with in-kind support from local communities.