



## AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH



**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
2006 IMPACT REVIEW**



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AIR's International Development Program seeks to enhance the capacity of developing countries to improve the quality of life through education and social development. In collaboration with local partners we work to:

- Ensure children's equitable access to all levels of education;
- Improve the quality and relevance of education; and
- Empower individuals, communities, and institutes as agents of social and behavioral change.



**Where we worked in 2006:**

Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil,  
Cambodia, Djibouti,  
Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia,  
Haiti, Honduras, India,  
Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho,  
Macedonia, Malawi,  
Mozambique, Namibia,  
Nicaragua, Pakistan,  
South Africa, Sudan,  
Swaziland, Tanzania,  
United States,  
Yemen, Zambia

## AIR's International Development Program

Every day, in countries around the world, AIR is helping to improve lives by building local knowledge and capacity to achieve important development goals.

Our work is based on a strong belief in the transformative power of education—that by providing children the opportunity to learn and to receive quality instruction, by sharing proven tools and strategies with local governments, and by helping communities recognize their own potential for collective action, major improvements can be realized in the health, welfare, and productivity. As a catalyst for development, education has the potential to deliver an individual from poverty and unlock social, political, and economic contributions of all, including the most vulnerable and most marginalized.

AIR's International Development Program (IDP) is a leader in the effort to support, improve, and expand education throughout the developing world.

IDP's contributions include increasing access to education for girls, improving student learning, enhancing curriculum development, stimulating community support and management of schools, facilitating education policy change to break down barriers to education, improving teacher training, and developing accurate measures of student achievement.

In the health arena, we are working with governments, communities, schools, and individuals to educate on the causes and risk factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS, designing strategies to mitigate the spread of this horrific pandemic, and providing support to those already infected. AIR is also working throughout Southern Africa to reduce the level of the worst forms of child labor through awareness campaigns and improved access to education.



The work of IDP is made possible by the skill and experience of our staff—343 professionals located in Washington, DC and in field offices across the globe. Over 83 percent of IDP staff are citizens of the countries in which we work, a strong indication of our commitment to strengthen local human resources for sustainable impact and change.

In 2006, AIR worked on 35 projects in 27 countries. The value of our efforts is measured by the impact our projects have on the lives of children and adults in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia.

The following pages highlight a selection of IDP projects from around the world. The descriptions provide insight into the myriad ways in which IDP staff and local partners made very real impacts on teaching, learning, health, and the empowerment of youth and communities in 2006.



## Improving Educational Quality

Every day, late in the afternoon and into the evening, students in villages along the Nile, in small desert towns, and in the urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria are busy reading their textbooks and doing practice exercises as part of their supplemental schooling, or “private lessons.” Throughout their educational careers, students across Egypt devote tremendous energy to preparing for end-of-term examinations and for the all-important *Thanawiyya Amma* (General Certificate of Secondary Education). From an early age, children learn that performance on these tests determines their future opportunities, and teachers and parents go to great lengths to help them do well.

Although tests are a central part of education in Egypt, there has been growing criticism both of relying only on tests to make decisions and on the quality of the examinations themselves. The government is now working to develop large-scale assessments that yield valid and reliable information about what students know and can do.

Under the Education Reform Project (ERP), AIR works in cooperation with the National Council for Examinations and Educational Evaluation (NCEEE) and Egyptian consultants to develop “CAPS” (Critical Thinking, Achievement, and Problem Solving) assessments to better understand ERP’s impact on student learning. Collaborative development of these assessments is serving as a strategic capacity-building opportunity to provide NCEEE staff with invaluable experience coordinating a large-scale assessment program from start to finish.

In January 2006 AIR led a workshop during which NCEEE staff refined their skills in writing test questions and scoring rubrics, resulting in more than 800 newly developed test questions. Developing questions that tap critical thinking and problem solving was a particularly new area for NCEEE, as was developing clear criteria for evaluating student work. The training and ongoing support provided by AIR have increased NCEEE’s understanding of how to develop valid and reliable assessments and strengthened their skills in development, scoring, analysis, and reporting. As a result of its collaboration with AIR, NCEEE has enhanced capacity to undertake similar assessment activities in the future, whether for ERP, other donor programs, or for the Ministry of Education.



## Strengthening Community Schools

In the hilly jungles of India's remote state of Jharkhand, a local NGO known as the Center for Women's Development (CWD) works tirelessly to serve marginalized hill tribes. An average day includes navigating rivers, traversing washed out roads, and working in communities without electricity or running water. A difficult day at work could involve a run-in with Maoist rebels or wild elephants. But neither the washed out roads, nor the wildlife, nor even the rebels could keep the Sisters at CWD from one of their primary passions: opening and maintaining *balwadis* (kindergartens).

The purpose of opening and maintaining balwadis is to bring the school-going experience to children under age eight. To provide a stimulating learning environment and encourage attendance, the balwadis incorporate interactive learning methodologies such as song, dance, and dramatizations into the curriculum. Upon completion of the 1-3 year program, the children have the opportunity to attend a local primary school. Balwadis have helped inculcate the school-going habit in children and their parents. Parents are now inclined to send their children to primary school and become engaged in their education.

Through the support offered by AIR's *REACH India* project, the sisters at CWD have been able to expand the reach and scope of their existing 35 balwadis and start an additional 20, reaching a total of over 1,800 children. Moreover, with the grant and guidance provided by REACH India, CWD was able to purchase adequate teaching/learning materials for each of the 55 balwadis. REACH India also gave CWD the necessary tools to conduct monitoring and evaluation, create inviting classroom spaces, and monitor their finances more efficiently.



## Changing the Culture of Teaching

It is an unfortunate reality that Pakistan's government-run schools have neither the resources nor the ability to provide quality education services to the country's poorest and most vulnerable students. Inadequately trained teachers use lecture-based teaching methods, with little student interaction or participation. As a result, students fail to learn the critical skills that come from a quality basic education. Only about 41 percent of Pakistanis are literate, and for women the proportion is even lower.

A shift in teacher professional development has begun, however. Teachers are benefiting from training provided by AIR under the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) project and AIR's efforts to develop sustainable systems for promoting teacher education in Pakistan. Gulnisa, a primary school teacher at Government Girls Middle School Rary Killi, Killah Saifullah, participated in AIR's teacher training workshops that promote teaching strategies that encourage inquiry, group work, comprehension, problem-solving, and critical thinking. She has also been trained as a mentor, and now works closely with nine teachers of her school to provide professional support. She is also an active member of the Professional Development Forum in Killa Saifullah set up by the project to promote professionalism among teachers.

According to Gulnisa, the mentoring program has completely changed her perspective on teaching. She used to use a lecture-based, teacher-centered method but now engages her students in the learning process and sees this "new way" of teaching as easier and more enjoyable, both for her and for her students. Her students also take a greater interest in their schoolwork and have learned to ask questions.

Gulnisa's colleagues are eager to emulate her example and frequently seek help from her to improve their teaching strategies. Teachers have also started holding weekly staff meetings where they not only share problems with the head teacher but also consult each other on academic issues. Meetings are also scheduled with the parents to regularly apprise them of their children's progress. Pleased with the benefits of the ESRA training program, the head teacher of Gulnisa's school has decided to continue weekly professional development workshops for the teachers of her school, even after the conclusion of the ESRA project.



## Improving Basic Health

In Zambia, as in other tropical countries, poor hygiene, lack of toilets, and contaminated lakes and rivers result in parasitic worm infections leading to diseases such as bilharzia. School-aged children frequently have the highest infection rates for anemia, diarrhea, fever, fatigue, and, in the long-term, increased rates of hypertension and cancer. Affliction with parasitic worms not only has pronounced health consequences but also reduces a child's ability to learn and perform well at school. Fortunately, for diseases such as bilharzia, treatment is available in the form of inexpensive pills that can be administered to students to eliminate the worms. Under AIR's CHANGES2 program, thousands of Zambian school children are benefiting from this important treatment, just one component of the project's school health and nutrition (SHN) activities.

In cooperation with staff from the Ministries of Health and Education, CHANGES2 trained 800 teachers in 400 basic schools in administration of de-worming drugs in 2006. The program also provided materials such as student SHN cards (to record treatments), height poles (to determine dosage), and instructional flipcharts. Project staff attended "de-worming days" at participating schools to monitor drug administration and assist with sensitization activities for parents and community members. Over 120,000 children have now participated in CHANGES2 SHN programs. Infected students, and all students in schools with an overall infection rate of greater than 50 percent, have received de-worming drugs along with vitamins and micronutrients.

*"The de-worming day was an occasion of great awakening in our school. The day, which was packed with activities such as feeding of children, screening of pupils on minor infections and giving of drugs, turned out to be a day of great realization of the missing link—health promotion for pupils, parents, and teachers."*

*-- Pastor Mwansa, Head Teacher  
Lubengele Basic School, Zambia*





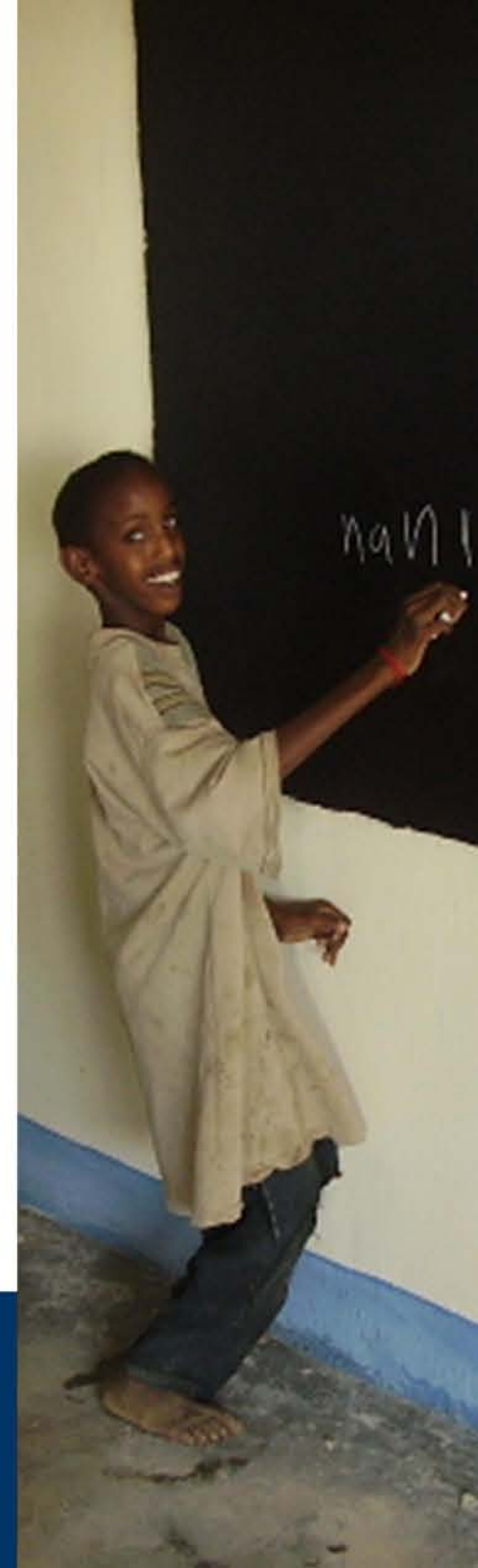
## Reaching Pastoralist Children

In sparsely populated northeastern Kenya, prolonged drought has forced traditionally nomadic pastoralists to settle, but government schools are few and far between. Moreover, many are boarding schools, and pastoralists are reluctant to send their children away. To make education more accessible, AIR is working with the Aga Khan Foundation through the Education for Marginalized Children in Kenya (EMACK) project to start children's schooling close to home and prepare them, and their parents, for the transition to boarding schools where they can receive a good basic education.

Jambele village is located in the parched North Eastern Province approximately 70 kilometers south of Garissa town, the closest city offering urban amenities and administrative services. Jambele was built near a river a few years ago in the hope that the pastoralists could earn a living by farming, and also because relief food programs are located nearby. As children living in and near Jambele had no schools to attend, EMACK helped a fledgling community-based organization, the Pastoralist Development Organization (PDO), build a one-room, multi-grade classroom of twigs, thatched roofing, and poles. By the end of 2004, fifty children of varying ages were coming to this school. The EMACK project provided learning materials and trained the teacher in basic literacy and numeracy techniques.

To make sure that villagers were involved, the project worked with PDO to create a school management committee and train its members. Today these members can articulate both the benefits of education for their children and the needs of their school.

In January 2006 two permanent classrooms were built, so now one room serves kindergarteners and the second serves first graders. The former nursery school houses the *dugsi* (traditional Koranic school). Thanks to the new construction, the district education board in Garissa has officially designated Jambele a feeder primary school. This recognition means that the government will send a teacher to Jambele School to work alongside the EMACK-trained nursery school teacher.



## Providing Opportunities to Disadvantaged Children

On weekday afternoons in the southern Haitian town of Petit-Goâve, the streets are filled with uniformed children returning from school. The diversity of colors and patterns on these uniforms is a marker of one of the most important and unique characteristics of Haiti's education system—the large number of privately owned and operated schools. Indeed, almost 80 percent of Haiti's schools are private, a result of initiatives by the private sector to fill the gap left by a public system with too few resources to meet the high demand. To send their children to school, most Haitian parents must pay the tuition fees at the private schools. For many families, these and other direct costs of education such as uniforms, supplies, and shoes are an enormous strain. The high cost of schooling is one of the main reasons that roughly 60 percent of school-aged children in Haiti do not attend school.

For many of the students at the *Centre des Etudes Classique de Petit-Goâve*, the economic barrier to education is being mitigated by the Haiti Scholarship Program. This is a joint effort by AIR and local Haitian foundation, *Le Fonds de Parrainage National* (FPN), to provide scholarship support to more than 15,000 students in the five Haitian cities of Petit-Goâve, Port-au-Prince, Saint-Marc, Gonaïves, and Cap-Haïtien—sites of the worst political violence and civil unrest in 2004. Under the program, students receive tuition support, school supplies, and weekly after-school tutoring in math, French, and Creole. Teachers providing the extra tutoring receive compensation payments and educational supplies, and school directors receive payments to defer administrative costs. The school also receives a supply kit containing items such as clocks, maps, trash cans, and water coolers, as well as support for a school improvement project.

The Haiti Scholarship Program has been a true blessing for many parents at the *Centre des Etudes Classique de Petit-Goâve*. Without the support from the scholarship program, many parents would not be able to send their children to school. Some years, they note, lack of money to buy shoes has meant that their children could not attend school. The tutoring that their children receive has also proven invaluable, as some of the parents are unable to read and write and therefore cannot help their children with their studies. As one father noted, the confidence of knowing that school bags, tuition, and school supplies will be provided under the scholarship program has encouraged him to make all possible efforts to pay for shoes and a uniform. "There is a certain dignity in meeting the donors half way," he says and he is proud to be able to do that.



## Mitigating the Spread of HIV and AIDS

*M'mudzi Mwathu* (“In My Village”) is a radio program that documents communities’ stories about their resilience and innovation in the face of Malawi’s HIV/AIDS epidemic. Broadcast weekly in the local language, each episode profiles a particular community or school and includes instructional messages on the prevention and mitigation of HIV/AIDS. Since the start of the program in February 2006, AIR and the Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) have recorded and broadcast more than twenty-eight community stories over the national Malawi Broadcasting System. Local communities are encouraged to create listening clubs that take information, inspiration, and activity ideas from the radio shows and work to create community-level support initiatives for orphans and people affected by HIV/AIDS.

Kaphande village is a typical example. Residents became interested in forming a listening club when the Mchitianji community five kilometers away was featured on the program. “If Mchitianji can support those affected by HIV/AIDS,” explained a village member, “so can we.” Program staff helped villagers set up a listening club, which included writing a constitution and creating an activity action plan.

Two months after the club was created it was already thriving, with children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic receiving food, uniforms, notebooks, and pens in addition to mentoring, comfort, encouragement, and love. To sustain the support, a garden has been rented, maize planted, and a fence built to keep cattle out. Profits from the sale of the maize will finance ongoing support.

The listening club also supports sick and elderly community members by helping with essential chores, encourages members to go for voluntary HIV counseling and testing, and helps address issues of stigma and alienation within the community. The club has also played a key role in accessing external resources such as the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) to help buy cows and construct a corral.

Thanks to the knowledge acquired through “In My Village” broadcasts, the Kaphande listening club is likely to keep going for quite some time. Most importantly, villagers have learned what they can achieve through their own efforts.



## Bolstering the Confidence of Youth

Two years ago, Ana Gicova was one of ten Macedonian vocational students chosen to attend the 2004 National Future Farmers of America (FFA) convention, an effort by AIR's Secondary Education Activity (SEA) to introduce students to the benefits of vocational student organizations (VSOs). Today Ana is preparing to major in business at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio on a full scholarship provided by a Macedonian businessperson.

Ana's success is part of a remarkable story of how she and her peers have brought about fundamental changes to the experiences of Macedonian vocational students. Through the SEA project, AIR is strengthening the quality and relevance of vocational education in secondary schools in order to improve students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills and to better prepare students for success in Macedonia's modern workforce. The creation of VSOs is one part of the strategy.

The ten students who attended the 2004 convention returned home filled with excitement, enthusiasm, and determination to share their new knowledge with fellow students. In 2005 they formed 13 local VSOs with support from the SEA project. Their programs of activities ranged from community service such as the collection of clothing for the disadvantaged to preparing fellow students for job interview competitions and finding partners in industry to support VSO activities. In 2006 Ana and her peers reached out to other vocational schools in the country to share the positive experience of starting a VSO. As a result, the number of Macedonian VSOs jumped from 13 to 70.

2006 saw another significant development as these same ten students convened the first annual meeting of the National Vocational Student Organization Assembly (MASSUM) with delegates from 70 vocational schools. The assembly elected a student national board representing all of the clusters in vocational education. Seven national leaders were then selected to carry the organization forward. The MASSUM meeting was the culminating event at the first annual Educational Rendezvous, which they also organized and which brought over 10,000 students together for three days of vocational competitions, workshops, and fun events such as a talent and fashion show.

SEA has also helped vocational schools start school businesses, yet another way to provide students with practical, engaging experiences that improve their career-related skills. Ana has benefited from both activities. As she explains, "All the experience and leadership skills I've gotten working in the youth organization, school company, and participation on different competitions and workshops organized by the SEA project were crucial in choosing my career path and planning my future. And I know that, after four years, I will come back to Macedonia and work for better economic development of my country."



## Raising Awareness of Child Labor

Through a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, AIR is working to reduce the incidence of exploitive child labor in five countries of southern Africa (Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, and the Republic of South Africa). The program seeks to increase public awareness and research concerning children's participation in exploitive labor, especially the worst forms; improve educational opportunities and social services for children heading households and orphans and vulnerable children living or working on the streets in towns and cities; increase access to quality education, infrastructure, teachers, and basic resources in rural and farm schools; improve capacity and coordination between government ministries and strengthen policies and structures to support the implementation of child labor laws; and improve educational opportunities for teenage mothers or pregnant girls, indigenous populations, and other children with little or no education.

In July 2006 AIR hosted an historic regional awareness-raising conference in Johannesburg, attended by over 270 delegates from 12 countries, including government officials, academics, independent consultants, and representatives from non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and a variety of international agencies. Presentations were made by a diverse group of experts, with topics divided into the areas of advocacy, education, social support services and governance. Lessons learned and good practices were shared as presenters highlighted successful programs and described the challenges faced.



## Improving Student Assessment

Like many developing countries, Honduras has made considerable progress increasing the number of children enrolled in elementary and secondary school, but by all measures the quality of education remains low. The *Improving Student Achievement in Honduras project* (MIDEH) is an innovative effort to address the problem of educational quality.

The project is based on a concept that is common in education throughout the world but seldom implemented in developing countries—that pedagogical and management components of the education system must be linked and aligned. The main components are content standards and curricula, instruction and didactic materials, and formative and summative assessment. The integrated components lead to performance standards and descriptions of those standards, i.e., how high is the education “bar” and what does it mean to jump over it.

AIR has formed a team comprised of two expatriate assessment experts and 25 local specialists based in Tegucigalpa, the capital city. They collaborate closely with the Secretariat of Education (SE), including the Minister of Education and the SE’s evaluation unit. They have developed the capacity to create content standards from curriculum documents and textbooks, formulate test specifications, produce items, construct tests, and generate teacher’s guides. All of their assessment products are aligned to the national content standards for grades K-9.

When the project began in November 2004, “standards” was not a part of the vocabulary of Honduran educators, community members, students, and business leaders. Two conferences in October 2006 in Honduras brought to light the tremendous amount of progress made in the Honduran education system over the past two years, with support from the MIDEH project. Entitled “Launching National Educational Standards,” the conferences featured over 350 invitees, including SE officials, business leaders, university professors, school directors, schoolchildren, donor representatives, and MIDEH staff. Financed through the project and organized by the SE, the conference featured a keynote address and a clear message from the Minister: not only does the ministry understand the word “standards” but it has taken ownership of the process. In the upcoming 2007 school year, all of the 30,000 teachers at the elementary and secondary levels will have copies of the new standards documents along with teacher’s guides and assessments to improve learning and help Honduran students prepare for the global economy.



## Addressing Health Barriers to Education

Nhe is 15 years old and a fourth grade student in Cambodia's Mondulhiri Province. He is the first child of an ethnic minority Phnong family and lives with his parents and three younger siblings in a small bamboo hut. Nhe was born with a cleft lip and has always felt shy about his appearance. His family believes he is the reincarnation of his grandfather, who also had a congenital facial disfigurement. Nhe receives a scholarship from the Educational Support to Children in Underserved Populations (ESCUP) project, which is managed by AIR in partnership with World Education and, among other things, helps to resolve health issues that prevent children from going to school.

Nhe likes to study but was often unhappy when his classmates called him names. Recently Nhe and his family received information from ESCUP on the possibility of free surgery from Operation Smile, an international initiative. Nhe and his father decided to undertake the ten-hour journey to Phnom Penh to see the doctor. Nhe was very excited because it was the first time he and his father had ever traveled outside the province, but also nervous about the hospital visit and possible operation. There were many children in the hospital, and Nhe was surprised to see so many other children with a cleft lip. Nobody else in his community had the same problem. Nhe was accepted for corrective surgery, recovered well from the two-hour operation, and is now very happy with the results. Nobody makes jokes about him anymore; indeed, all the students were curious to hear the stories about Phnom Penh, and that made him feel very special.

To date ESCUP has provided scholarships to 4,817 primary students, 138 lower secondary students, and 101 teacher training candidates from three Cambodian provinces, Kampong Cham, Kratie, and Mondulhiri. The project has also helped 429 pupils connect with care-providing organizations such as Project Smile to help them continue their studies. Project interventions have helped reduce student dropout rates in 67 percent of schools targeted by the project.



## Strengthening Early Childhood Education

Faced with overcrowded classrooms, a lack of materials, and insufficient training to meet new educational needs, the kindergarten teachers of El Jerash School an hour north of Amman are overwhelmed. They are not alone. In Jerash, and throughout Jordan, many kindergarten classrooms are run-down, without a heating source, and poorly furnished. Yet these teachers do not despair. They survey their surroundings and identify local materials and resources to meet their classroom needs.

Through the ERfKE (Education for Knowledge Economy) Support Program, the Kingdom of Jordan recognizes the importance of early childhood education as the first step in developing young students with the skills and knowledge needed to compete in the knowledge economy. AIR supports Jordanian kindergarten teachers by providing material resources and training to help them prepare students for primary school and beyond.

In El Jerash, AIR works with the teachers and the Jordanian education ministry to renovate classrooms and turn them into bright and lively spaces with new rugs, furniture, and learning materials that let teachers structure their lessons around learning corners that promote the different outcomes of the curriculum. Where the materials provided by the project fall short of needs, AIR trains teachers to look around for learning materials they can make themselves. With these skills, the teachers of El Jerash have developed innovative teaching tools such as a Bedouin home corner constructed with recyclable goods and a timeline of Jordanian history as represented by the clothes of the era.





## Supporting Education with Youth Volunteers

The Malawian proverb *Amene ku munda, saiwale mudzi* reminds youth that they should return the benefits of learning and their worldly gains to the society of their origins. It is in this spirit that AIR is working through the Primary School Support Program (PSSP) to develop the Mobilization Corps of Malawi, a unique service learning program that provides youth an opportunity to lead rural communities in developing practical responses to complex development problems. Project staff recruit and train talented secondary school leavers and support their efforts to service communities in Malawi's Dowa district, where they identify, prioritize, and assess the causes of local education challenges. Mobilization Corps Members (MCMs) receive special training and support to address the social impact of HIV/AIDS and insufficient education resources and work side by side with community residents to develop practical, time-referenced action plans that respond to specific problems and provide ongoing guidance and support for implementation of plans.

The MCMs have been successful in their efforts to help communities improve education for their children. One MCM, Mark, has rekindled pupils' interest in school by establishing a playground at a rural school, including three seesaws, a swing, a broad jump pit, and boards to play the popular board game *bawo*. The playground was constructed with support from the community, school management committee members, and the pupils themselves. The community contributed funds to purchase cement, nails, and paint to help construct the equipment.

Thus far, attracted by the playground activities, 31 out-of-school youth have re-enrolled at this particular school. Existence of the playground has also promoted social interaction, improved punctuality, and reduced absenteeism at school. Previously, on a typical day about ten pupils were absent from school, but now absenteeism rates has dropped to fewer than three per day.

PSSP works in 226 schools in Malawi's Dowa District. In addition to the Mobilization Corps program, PSSP provides training opportunities for teachers to improve classroom practices and supports school management committees and PTAs in developing improved school governance practices.



## Addressing the Education Needs of Orphans

Working through the Reducing Exploitive Child Labor in Mozambique (RECLAIM) project, AIR is using Junior Farmer Field and Life Skills Schools (JFFLS) to address the special needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Based on a model pioneered by the Food and Agriculture Organization in other parts of Africa, the children carry out their studies on plots of land that serve as their classrooms. The core process involves groups of children investigating threats to their lives such as HIV/AIDS by understanding their own strengths and vulnerabilities. Children learn to farm wisely by using traditional practices, knowledge which might otherwise be forgotten due to the inability of sick or deceased parents to pass along the knowledge to the next generation.

The program helps vulnerable children make informed decisions and solve their own problems in a rational manner, realize that they are an important part of their community, be confident of their future, make use of available resources in a sustainable manner, help others realize their dreams, and plan a future for themselves and others. The curriculum also has a significant psycho-social component on life skills (self-awareness, assertiveness, HIV/AIDS prevention) as well as a sociological component focused on gender equality and human rights. Children are selected for the program based on their age (12-17), their orphan status, and vulnerability to exploitive child labor.

Children in this program are also being helped to enroll in government schools affiliated with the JFFLS. Once children complete the one-year course, not only do they have better prospects for a sustainable livelihood but they can also graduate to the adult Farmer Field Schools, gain access to micro projects, and become involved in co-operative ventures to commercialize their produce.

The JFFLS model has been enthusiastically received by all government departments that have had contact with it. The Minister of Agriculture has said that he would like to see JFFLS set up in every part of the country, and the Ministry of Education hopes to adopt elements of the JFFLS in the regular school curriculum.



## Mobilizing Parents to Help at School

Despite widespread poverty, Nicaragua has dramatically increased the level of primary school enrollment in recent years. Part of the reason is AIR's program known as "EXCELENCIA" (Expansion of the Centers of Excellence in Nicaragua with Emphasis on the APA Method), which promotes active learning through increased parental involvement in schools. The successes of this participatory approach are evident.

At the General Tomás Martínez School in Corinto, students do not miss a day of school. When a teacher is absent, an adult from the parents' committee donates time as a substitute teacher. With only three teachers on average per 125 students, parent participation is not only helpful but vital.

At the San Caralampio School, mothers and fathers arrive each day to help teachers supervise students and prepare school materials. Parents also work to ensure children have breakfast and lunch. Mothers rotate each day to help prepare the meals.

These contributions are well-received by the school administrators. EXCELENCIA schools now routinely inform parents about school plans, projects, and needs and encourage them to participate in decisions having to do with their children's education. Parents have responded positively and have offered their services readily. One group of parents initiated a fund-raising drive, asking local businesses to sponsor a grade by donating educational materials and making other monetary and non-monetary contributions to the school.

The benefits of parent and community participation are many: Schools can leverage parent support to fill in gaps left by a lack of funds, parents feel more connected and invested in their children's education, and the Ministry of Education benefits from grassroots recommendations in support of their decentralization campaign. All of this supports quality education and student learning.

AIR implements EXCELENCIA with Save the Children Federation and the Academy for Educational Development.



## Improving School Maintenance

Safe and attractive school furnishings are central to effective learning, whether in modern, industrialized countries or in the developing world. With little or even no maintenance, structures can provide many years of useful service, but desks, chairs, cabinets, and blackboards are more subject to wear and tear and often end up rusting on the roofs of schools or in nearby equipment “graveyards.”

Working through its partner in Yemen, the Academy for Educational Development, AIR is pursuing an imaginative and cost-effective approach to keeping school furnishings new through the use of mobile repair teams. The technique has proved remarkably effective, not only in making improvements that quickly return school furniture to active duty but also in mobilizing community members to work with the team, thereby increasing ownership and sustainability.

During their initial reconnaissance visits, project staff repeatedly came across large numbers of desks, chairs, and other furnishings in need of repair. Given the choice of transporting the furniture to a nearby town versus repairing it on the spot, it quickly became evident that the latter approach would be more cost-effective in the more remote areas. Furniture factories in Yemen charge at least \$45 for a new three-student desk, and repairing one at a central facility costs even more due to high transportation costs. By contrast, the cost of repairing a broken desk on-site was estimated at only about \$5.

Thus, the project established a two-person mobile repair team comprising a civil engineer and a driver/carpenter with a double passenger cabin four wheel drive pickup truck. The open cab in back was enclosed and equipped with an electric generator, power and hand tools, and various consumable supplies and materials. The approximate cost of outfitting a mobile repair team vehicle in Yemen is \$3,500.

Since the fall of 2003, the USAID/Yemen Basic Education Program has worked to renovate dozens of schools, train hundreds of teachers and headmasters, establish adult literacy programs, and mobilize communities, with a particular focus on girls and women. The project covers three governorates in the poorest and most remote areas of the country stretching from the mountains of Amran in the northwest to the expansive desert covering much of Mareb and Shabwah governorates in the east and southeast. Over 16,900 students attend the targeted schools.



## Preparing Youth for the Modern Workforce

One of 31 million Brazilians between the ages of 15 and 24, nineteen-year old Leidiane Silva dos Santos lives in a poor neighborhood in the outskirts of Recife. Although she dreamed of attending college, Leidiane had no chance of being accepted since she had gone to a poor quality primary school. Her family pressured her to get a job to help sustain the family, but she lacked the necessary experience to be hired.

In 2003 AIR partnered with national and community-based organizations in Brazil to provide young people such as Leidiane with the professional training and skills they need to find gainful employment. Known as *Enter Jovem* (“Enter Youth”), the project prepares disadvantaged youth for the formal job market through training in information communication technology (ICT) skills, basic education, leadership and professional behavior at 26 community-based organizations in some of the most violent, low-income Brazilian neighborhoods of Salvador, Recife, and Fortaleza.

Soon after completing an “employability workshop,” Leidiane landed an interview and was offered a position at a local ICT firm, LanLink, as a receptionist. After just three months the firm decided to promote her to the position of training assistant in the sales department. Leidiane was also successful in obtaining a scholarship and is currently studying business administration at *Faculdade Salesiana do Nordeste*, a private university. She is the first in her family to attend college, and she is also working, which has allowed her to contribute financially to the household.

*“I am proud to be an example to the youth in my community, and want to tell them that they must work very hard to get what they want, and take advantage of every opportunity the Enter Jovem has to offer.”*

AIR has provided over 4,000 young disadvantaged people in Brazil with opportunities to become productive members of the workforce, pursue higher levels of education, and improve their standard of living. The success of the program lies in its orientation to market demand as training is based on employers’ needs. By working to provide remedial education in math and Portuguese, develop job hunting skills (interviewing, oral presentation, preparing a resume, conducting a job search, exhibiting professional behavior, etc.), and improve their ICT skills, youth are empowered to seek job-related information and opportunities that will allow them to realize their aspirations for a better future.



## Training Teachers to Combat HIV and AIDS

HIV/AIDS is threatening family, community, and national development among almost all age groups in Malawi. The Government of Malawi has introduced life skills education into the national curriculum with the hope that the knowledge and skills gained from studying the subject will help to eradicate the problem, but life skills education had not been as effective as hoped due to lack of trained personnel to teach the topics and lack of teaching and learning resources.

AIR's Malawi Teacher Training Activity (MTTA) has taken steps to address the HIV/AIDS problem by providing life skills training to all college lecturers. The project workshops are designed so lecturers can gain the necessary knowledge and skills and develop desired competencies in life skills education. MTTA has also equipped government-funded teacher training colleges with teaching and learning resources such as DVDs on life skills education, DVD players, projectors, and screens, thereby enabling teacher trainees to observe best practice in teaching life skills education.

Experiences shared among lecturers through a MTTA guest speaker initiative have fostered an enriched dialogue on life skills and HIV and AIDS related issues. "I am now able to handle life skills and HIV and AIDS subject content better than before. My student teachers at Kasungu Teachers College now enjoy learning life skills education. Some student teachers already feel that if the subject had been introduced some time back, the pandemic should not have reached the present scale," says Mr. Muhabi Chivunga of Kasungu Teachers' College.



## Building Knowledge Worldwide

EQUIP1 is a Leader with Associates USAID-funded award designed to address issues of educational quality in schools, classrooms and communities. EQUIP1 Associate Awards are designed to raise the quality of classroom teaching, increase student learning, improve school-level management, and encourage community involvement in numerous countries worldwide. Project field staff work diligently in their communities and continually overcome obstacles relating to the political, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic situations to achieve a better quality of education for all children.

Through the EQUIP1 Leader Award, AIR gathers knowledge that would otherwise be known only in a given country and centralizes it through the EQUIP Information Communication Center (EICC). Dissemination is centralized and efficient thanks to a website that houses information on over 35 country-specific awards.

AIR has also developed networks of development practitioners, donors, and academics to effectively distribute the best practices and knowledge generated through the EQUIP mechanism. In 2006 AIR developed a publication highlighting issues that arise in programming for school construction. Another publication outlined the practice of using mobile repair teams in Yemen. The EICC also produced four newsletters in 2006 dealing with youth assessments, complementary education, youth participation in development projects, and girls' scholarships.

EQUIP1 conducts research on timely and relevant topics such as teacher professional development, perceptions of education quality, education in transitional and crisis situations, and literacy. These studies help to strengthen field work and further establish expertise in the field of international development and education.

In 2006 AIR sent researchers to Malawi to study the impact donated books have on the quality of education. Also ongoing is a cross-national synthesis on factors that influence educational quality at the classroom, community, and community level in Nigeria, Namibia, and India. The results of such studies are disseminated in an effort to inform practice.

In July 2006 the EQUIP1 Leader Award hosted a communications workshop for project staff in Africa and Asia. The workshop examined communications-related issues at the project level ranging from client regulations to creating communication strategies and disseminating effective knowledge products for greater impact. The workshop aimed to promote knowledge sharing between projects in the EQUIP community, as well as the larger development community.





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