Mobile Schools: Basic Education for Pastoralist Communities in North Eastern Province, Kenya

Kenya
Erica Stillo

- Early childhood development
- Education
- Education reform
- Girls’ development
- Children & Youth

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

This mobile school initiative aims to increase access to education for children over 7 years old through the provision of culturally and religiously appropriate basic education to children who would otherwise find it difficult to access formal education. Structures are temporary and materials portable so they can be easily transported by camel as communities travel in search of water and pasture.

About You

Location
Project Street Address
Project City
Garissa
Project Province/State
North Eastern Province
Project Postal/Zip Code

Country your work focuses on:
Kenya
Website URL
Describe the steps that your organization is taking to make your project successful.

Step 1: In order to ensure success in establishing mobile schools, we engage communities through participatory rural appraisal (PRA) exercises to ensure proper needs analysis and ownership.

Step 2: mobilize leaders through meetings with potential host villages of mobile schools. It also involves educating the villages on the importance of education and the need to support the initiative as well as remove fear and suspicion of secular education.

Step 3: training of community teacher and ‘dugsi’ by government Teacher Training College in Garissa, particularly on multi-grade and follow up with community mobilization and sensitization.

Step 4: establish linkages with primary schools if children want to transition to formal education sector.

What impact have you had?

The success of the mobile school initiative is evident. Mobile schools have been well received by beneficiary communities who are happy that their children are receiving basic education which is suited to their nomadic lifestyles and integrated with their cultural values. To date, over 80 children, including 28 girls have benefited from the three mobile schools in Wajir. For many, this has been the first time ever they have ever had access to basic education. In addition, 14 children have transitioned to the nearby Abakore Boarding School in order to complete primary education. The mobile schools mark a significant step forward in providing culturally appropriate education to those who are marginalized because of traditional lifestyles. The chairman of the Rabai Mobile School, Abudhllai Sheikh Ahmed, states, “Communities have been yearning for education and today the community’s children are going to school”.

Describe the primary problem(s) that your project is addressing.

North Eastern Province of Kenya is primarily inhabited by nomadic pastoralist communities, making up 80% of the population. These communities live a lifestyle which involves frequent resettlement in search of fresh water and pasture for their livestock. Due to the pastoralists’ constant resettlement, children from these communities have found it difficult to formally access the Kenyan stationary and secular education system. Enrollment of children from these communities stands at only 2% and drop-out rates are high. Girls are particularly affected by early marriages as opposed to be sent to school. Most attempts to provide formal education to nomadic pastoralist communities and children have experienced limited success. This is mainly attributed to the limitation of the formal education sector to respond to the unique and diverse circumstances and needs of these groups. Another problem the mobile school initiative aims to address is the inadequate capacity at national and district levels to conceptualize alternative approaches for hard-to-reach children.

Describe the steps that your organization is taking to make your project successful.

Step 1: In order to ensure success in establishing mobile schools, we engage communities through participatory rural appraisal (PRA) exercises to ensure proper needs analysis and ownership.

Step 2: mobilize leaders through meetings with potential host villages of mobile schools. It also involves educating the villages on the importance of education and the need to support the initiative as well as remove fear and suspicion of secular education.

Step 3: training of community teacher and ‘dugsi’ by government Teacher Training College in Garissa, particularly on multi-grade and follow up with teachers on learning conditions and use of training materials.

Step 4: establish linkages with primary schools if children want to transition to formal education sector.

What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Success in Year 1:

In order for mobile schools to be successful, we must continuously engage with the Ministry of Education to ensure mobile schools are mainstreamed as an alternative education option. Our focus will also be on cross-learning between communities themselves so that schools can be replicated and less dependence on the organization. Finally, interventions have to go beyond education to respond to the environment, drought and poverty prevalent in the region. New partnerships need to be explored that intervene in health, agriculture and livelihoods.

Year 1
• Seed capital for purchase of start up material
• Continuous community mobilisation and sensitisation
• Identification and training of paraprofessional teachers
• Monetary support through stipend for the paraprofessional teachers
• Provision of teaching and learning materials on termly basis

Success in Year 2:

Year 2
• Follow-up and mentoring for primary school and paraprofessional teachers
• Refresher training
• Upgrading boarding schools of nearby primary schools to enhance transition
  - physical facilities
  - Sanitation facilities
• Provision of meals (sustainability communities are mobilised and sensitised to supplement the GoK support)
• Provision Bedding facilities
• Coordination of other to provide integrated multi-pronged approach
• Coordination meeting stakeholders to enhance integrated service provision
• Transitional activities with teachers to help children fit into the boarding schools

Success in Year 3:

Year 3
• Mentoring of teachers
• Provision of teaching and learning materials
• Transition activities for teachers to support transition of children to boarding
• Linkage and hand over to district education officials for support and sustainability
• End of project evaluation

Do you have a business plan or strategic plan? (yes/no)
Yes

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization? STEP 1:
1. Teacher and Dugsi training on teacher pedagogy

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization? STEP 2:
2. Collaborate with other development agencies in sectors of health and livelihoods integrated service provision

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization? STEP 3:
3. Replication of mobile schools and roll out to other districts

Describe the expected results of these actions.
- Increased access, retention and transition among children from nomadic communities
- Improved quality of teaching and learning in mobile schools
- Enhanced parental and community participation and support to education initiatives
- Enhanced community adult literacy normally provided by mobile school teacher

What was the defining moment that led you to this innovation?
Persistent low enrolment rates have been recorded among the Nomadic communities in the North Eastern Province. This is often attributed to the limitations of the mainstream education system to respond to the unique and diverse needs of the nomadic pastoralist community. For the Somali, one of the nomadic communities in NEP, it is mandatory for children to attend the Quranic school (duksi), for religious instructions for a period of 2 – 3 years. The communities put more emphasis on the Quran education when compared to the formal secular education. While the demand of for fundamental religious instruction is not met in the mainstream education the Mobile school provides both forms of education without compromising the other. In addition, the nomadic pastoralist lifestyle is labour intensive by nature; as such children contribute to the household labour needs by tending to the animals and caring for younger siblings children. The flexible nature of the mobile school timetable allows for children to acquire basic education and still contribute to the survival of their families.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.
The first pilot mobile school was started in Wajir by a group called Nomadic Primary Health Care in and this was improved by Oxfam GB in 1995. Our initiative has taken this and expanded to involve government, introduction of basic life skills and the provision of a camel which can transport the school materials when the community moves.

How did you first hear about Changemakers?
through a colleague

Sustainability

What would prevent your project from being a success?
Nomadic communities’ lifestyles are increasingly getting sedentary as government is deliberately working towards this for ease of service provision. Programmes like the Arid Lands Resource Management Programme (ALRMP) and devolved funds, Constituency Development Fund, (CDF) have been successful in some areas resulting to some mobile schools being weaned off to sedentary schools.

Persistent and prolonged droughts and famine as well as inability to follow-up with teachers because of the distances are other challenges.
Financing source
Yes
If yes, provide organization name.
Aga Khan Foundation
How long has this organization been operating? (i.e. less than a year; 1-5 years; more than 5 years)
+10 years

Does your organization have a Board of Directors or an Advisory Board?
Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with NGOs? (yes/no)
Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with businesses? (yes/no)
Yes

The Story
Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with government? (yes/no)
Yes
Please tell us more about how these partnerships are critical to the success of your innovation.
Partnerships with Government of Kenya (GoK) ministry at national for policy discussions and negotiation and sustainability at the end of the three year period will be critical. At local level the partnerships are necessary for community entry, quality assurance and school based support. AKF relies on existing structures like the Mobile school regulatory framework - mobile school Mobile coordination committee chaired by the local Ministry of education leader, the Provincial Director of Education and attended by District Education Officials and other stakeholder. The multi-sectoral approach brings all service providers across the sectors together because nomadic communities’ issues cut across all the sectors. Partnership with community Based Organisations for mobilisation, awareness and advocacy and also for sustainability and community entry will be critical.

How many people will your project serve annually?
100-200

What is the total number of employees and total number of volunteers at your organization?
+100

What is your organization’s business classification?
Non-profit/NGO/citizen sector organization

Have you received funding from any of the following groups? (Please check as many as apply.)
CIDA (Canada) , DFID (United Kingdom) , Ford Foundation , Hewlett Foundation , United Nations Development Program (UNDP) , USAID (United States) .

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