



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



**SEMINAR ON GOOD GOVERNANCE PRACTICES
FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Seoul

15 – 16 September 2004

**Jointly organized by the Office of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations
Development Programme**

**Panel 2: Strengthening the delivery of services contributing to the
realization of human rights**

**Universal primary education through alternative basic education for
minorities***

* The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect those of the OHCHR or UNDP.

Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (Uganda)

Presentation Abstract

Summary

1. In 1997 the Government of Uganda started the implementation of the Universal Primary Education Programme. This programme sought to ensure the inclusion of all children in education. As a result, there has been an increase in primary school enrolment in most regions; Karamoja in the Northeast was an exemption.
2. Karamoja is the poorest region in Uganda. The Karimojong are made up of several ethnic groups that are pastoral semi-nomads dependent on their livestock. Their villages, where women, old people and children live, are placed close to riverbeds. Women cultivate the fields, while men live in the grazing grounds with the herds. Men follow the herds and lead nomadic lives, while women are more sedentary.
3. The Karimojong rejected the existing formal education system for various reasons; important factors impeding participation in education were the necessity of children to participate in the household chores and education being looked upon as not being relevant to the survival needs of the community.
4. The Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) programme seeks to address the primary educational needs of the children from the Karimojong communities. It is a non-formal learning programme, formulated in close consultation with local communities and is implemented by the district local government of Kotido and Moroto. The programme seeks to close the gap between the formal system and the semi-nomadic lifestyle where households' economies rely substantially on the contribution by children.
5. ABEK had two objectives:
 - a) Develop relevant teaching for a Karimojong child who would grow up and continue the Karimojong lifestyle;
 - b) Encourage and create a path to formal school for those who did want to move to formal school.
6. It is characterized by 1) the flexibility of timetables, allowing children to help in the household while attending schools 2) a curriculum that is appropriate and relevant for the local context 3) community participation in all stages of the program 4) the use of local resources to implement the program, 5) the use of local facilitators selected by the community to teach the lessons, and 6) learning centres being places in and close to the communities.
7. Low literacy levels made advocacy difficult. The communities were skeptical to outsiders and to formal education, however they indicated that both traditional and modern knowledge was needed and asked for a non-formal alternative, sensitive to their way of life, values and beliefs.
8. ABEK is set up to meet children in the villages where they live. The timetable is flexible, with lessons in early morning and late in the afternoon, adjusted to the

daily rhythm in the villages. Children responsible for younger siblings can bring them to class, boys can keep their herds close to the centre during lessons. In the time-gap between the morning and evening lesson the children can help at home. The facilitators and communities can agree on having a different schedule for classes when needed.

9. Local facilitators teach the lessons. They receive training before they start teaching, as well as regular workshops. They also receive on the job support from trained teachers specifically assigned to monitor and give assistance on a regular basis.

10. A curriculum that is relevant and appropriate for Karamoja has been developed, integrating formal school requirements, but within a context familiar to the Karimojong (for instance with a focus on livestock and crop education).

Results

11. The programme resulted in increased participation of children in basic education, including in formal education, from about 5,000 children in 1998 to about 21,000 in 2002. The integration of ABEK children into regular school classrooms is increasing on a steady pace, to date a total of about 1,000 children have joined formal schools.

12. The literacy rate increased; more than 50 % of the children benefiting from ABEK have learned how to read and write and solve simple mathematical problems. ABEK children participated in activities that concern them both at local, district and national level.

13. Due to enlarged participation of the local communities the programme has made education more desirable for the Karimojong. It has also given local authorities experience in working to include pastoral communities in education and in education decision-making processes. There is also increased capacity among facilitators, trainers, supervisors/monitoring assistants resulting in better curriculum delivery.

14. ABEK was expanded in 2001 to four more communities, with UNICEF becoming a partner and USAID coming in as a donor. The activities are being integrated into the district plan of action and the Ministry of Education and Sports pays the facilitators salaries, as a first step towards integrating ABEK in the formal school system.

Lessons Learned

15. ABEK is an example of how to work with local communities and ethnic minorities to make education more relevant and the right to universal free primary education achievable. The development of a curriculum that recognises and builds on the wealth of indigenous knowledge with immediate relevance to the pastoral lifestyle, is an example of creating appropriate teaching and learning materials. Community participation and involvement of local and central government in developing appropriate education provisions for pastoral populations were particularly important.
