

World Refugee Day 2005

Fundraising for the education project:

Together for Girls

- Basic education for Somali refugee and returnee children: Focus on Girls



“The refugee youth can achieve as much as any other youth in any part of the world. With hard work and determination, we can realize our dreams.”

Dama Diriye, 16 year old Somali refugee girl in Dadaab, 20 June 2003

Today, Somali refugees are on their way home after having spent more than a decade in refugee camps in the East and Horn of Africa. The majority of Somalis, who have lived in exile in Ethiopia have returned to the safer areas in the Northeast and Northwest of Somalia. However, there are still 151 000 Somali refugees in Dadaab refugee camps, in northern Kenya, who are waiting for conditions to improve in South Somalia. Now, there is hope that also their future will reopen again. But the hardship is not over yet. Now, the reconstruction process begins. Most of the country and the homes refugees return to are destroyed after years of violent conflict, and Somalia ranks among the five least developed countries in the world.

The condition of Somali children is particularly alarming. Youth and children have known nothing but conflict and hardship most of their lives in many parts of the country. Many of those who did not flee the country have suffered displacement and have observed, experienced or sometimes participated in violence. A majority of them has never experienced normal and stable social relationships and have had no opportunity for education. Only 17 per cent attend primary school and among them only one third are girls.

In the Dadaab refugee camps, i.e. Ifo, Hagadera and Dagahaley camp, roughly half of the 50 000 children attend primary school. Like in Somalia, two thirds of these school-going

children are boys. To achieve gender parity and give girls and boys equal opportunities in education, a series of special measures are thus needed.

Education of refugee children and refugee youth is invaluable for their life today and in the future. While children and young people are confined to the camp, the school gives their life meaning and hope for the future. But equally important, education builds both refugee children and youth as well as those having lived through the violence in Somalia for the life after the camp and the conflict. Together, they have to begin rebuilding human relations and the infrastructure in their conflict-torn home country.

The funds raised on World Refugee Day by the religious communities in the Nordic and Baltic countries will thus go to the education project *Together for Girls*. It is a project that, with a particular focus on girls, includes education for both Somali refugee children in Kenya, and improvement of the education opportunities (school infrastructure etc.) for those rebuilding their lives in Northern Somalia.

The project, *Together for Girls*, is responding to an expressed wish for education by the target groups. And especially women and youth have vocalized the need for a particular focus on girls. The project strategy and measures adopted to overcome the barriers to children and especially girl's education, are based on discussions with and research among the target groups, as well as a study by UNHCR on girls and education in five camps in East Africa and the Horn of Africa¹.

Barriers for education, some of which affect both genders, include girls' traditional domestic role; poor families' prioritizing their resources in favour of the boy; the income from child labour; early and/or forced marriages; security factors such as risk of rape and assault on the way to school; lack of clothes and other personal belongings; and widespread attitudes that girls are destined to become housewives and therefore not worth an investment. Barriers within the school system include lack of schools; discriminative facilities such as shared toilets and sport facilities; tough rules (physical punishment, girls getting expelled due to pregnancy and a lack of understanding for girls' domestic workload), as well as a lack of education materials and school books.

Project Objectives

- *To provide formal and non-formal education opportunities to Somali refugees and returnees*
- *To improve girls' access to education, as well as support retention and achievement*
- *To develop new methods for UNHCR to promote gender equality within education (collection of best practices)*

One concrete objective is to provide education to 1 700 Somali girls.

In overall terms, in the project it is possible to distinguish between material, capacity building and attitude changing interventions. The material interventions include building of schools, provision of extra classrooms, separate toilets, acquisition of school desks and school materials as well as establishment of child-care facilities. Capacity-building measures comprise

¹ "Strengthening Access to Quality Education for Refugee Girls in the Horn Region and Eastern Africa", Sheila Parvyn Wamahiu, Oct. 2002. Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland, Uganda

employment of female teachers and training of teachers in social guidance, gender equality and conflict management, while attitude changing interventions include information campaigns targeting parents and the local community, as well as formation and/or backing of support groups working to strengthen the participation and self-confidence of girls.

Target groups for the project

22 000 school children and youth in Dadaab, Kenya, and a similar number of children in Somalia.

About \$46 is spent to send one child to school for one year in this project. Less than \$4 per month is all it takes.

How to help

To give a donation to the project: “Together for Girls” use bank account in Sweden:

Bank: Svenska Handelsbanken

SWIFT: HANDSESS

Account No: 6134 219 557 411

Message: World Refugee Day

The uncut funds raised on World Refugee Day will benefit the project: “Together for Girls”. UNHCR is very grateful for any contribution.

Without you, UNHCR cannot reach the goal of universal primary education.
With you, lessons continue in refugee and returnee classrooms and we draw more girls into school.

UNHCR and education

UNHCR is operating with a standard aiming at 10 years of basic education for all children under its protection. But when funds fail to arrive, life-saving measures are prioritised. Thus especially in Africa, UNHCR does not have the resources to realize this universal standard of education for all children. In Africa, which is hosting 56% of the world’s refugee children, only between 40 and 45 per cent of the children of concern to UNHCR are attending school regularly.

UNHCR and funding

Only two per cent of UNHCR’s budget comes from the UN. The remaining 98 per cent UNHCR has to raise itself in the form of voluntary contributions.