Review of Programmes 2011
When you read through this review of the recent programme work of the Africa Educational Trust I believe you will be impressed by the significant contribution made by a relatively small UK-based charity towards educational development within Africa.

At a time when, as I write, our news media are preoccupied with the tragedy of famine in the Horn of Africa, AET has a different story to tell. We have a different way of working, and provide for those in Somalia and Somaliland for example, to give an education to their children and young people even in the most difficult circumstances. I have been astonished that, through the Somali civil war, and the drought of 2011, our programmes have not only been maintained but have grown; astonished that we are still able to bring education to those who have never before had such opportunities, such as nomadic peoples, and that we have been able in recent years to organise primary and secondary examinations for young people almost throughout Somalia.

Providing for the growth of an educated younger population perhaps offers the best hope for true long term development, and for the growth of alternatives to war and conflict.

Please support us in our work. We are grateful to our larger donors for their generous and committed support. However we also rely on many hundreds of smaller donations to ensure our work can continue. If you feel, when you read of some of the programmes we have created and run, that you can make a general and regular donation to AET, however small, that is the most effective way of assisting us. Please do not leave it to others to read behind the headlines and discover the child and young person deprived of the chance of a better life, in some of the poorest and strife-torn countries of the world.

We are here not just for them, but for you too.

Contact us by e mail or by post (the addresses are on the back page of this Review).

Dr Christopher Beer
Chair, Africa Educational Trust
Africa Educational Trust (AET) was founded in 1958 on the principle that ‘education is the key to development’. AET’s programmes promote access to education, literacy and life skills for disadvantaged and marginalized communities. The Trust’s work is based on the belief that education and skills training will not only help to alleviate poverty but will also improve young peoples’ self-awareness and confidence and their ability to live in and cope with the changing environment of the modern world. AET uses flexible and innovative methods to target the most vulnerable in societies, including girls and young women, internally displaced people, nomadic pastoralists, and people with disabilities.

AET has supported educational development for Africa for over fifty years. The Trust is a specialist organisation focusing specifically on education. It supports education and training programmes at all levels from support for young children in primary schools to grants to enable students to study at post graduate level. However, the emphasis of the Trust’s work is on helping children and young people from disadvantaged communities in countries affected by conflict.

The Trust has worked in Somalia since 1994 and in South Sudan since 1996. It is also currently supporting children in former conflict affected areas of Uganda and in Kenya. The key feature of AET’s approach is that it works with and through local communities to make sure that its programmes meet local needs and suit local conditions. During the past decade AET has spent over £20 million helping almost a million children and young people in Africa to gain access to quality education suited to their needs and their environment. Whereas many organisations include education in their programmes, AET’s focus is education.
The Trust supports the education of many thousands of children in primary schools in Africa in countries such as South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Lesotho, Tanzania and Zambia.

After more than twenty years of civil war, South Sudan has one of the poorest education systems in the world. More than half of all school-age children are unable to go to school. The United Nations estimates that at least 80% of women are illiterate. Over the past three years 40,000 children in 100 primary schools in South Sudan have benefited from AET’s support. Without this support many of those children would have been unable to attend school and many of those who did enrol would have dropped out of school because of lack of funding and lack of facilities in their schools.

AET helps local communities to improve the facilities of their schools it also provides teaching materials and trains teachers to use them. In South Sudan and Uganda AET supports and trains women from local communities to be “School Mothers” to the girls in their communities. School Mothers represent and stand up for the education rights of the girls in their communities. They make sure that they get the opportunity to go to school and complete their education. School Mothers have made a major difference to the lives of thousands of girls in Uganda and South Sudan and the initiative has been praised by local government as one of the most effective ways of supporting girls in school.

In Northern Uganda, AET is working with a local organisation called Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) to help children in 240 primary schools. Research has shown that young children in the early years of primary school are better able to learn and stay in school if they are taught in their “mother tongue”. The language used in their home. Working with LABE the Trust is helping to train teachers in Northern Uganda to teach in mother tongue languages. This AET programme produces new reading and teaching materials in the children’s own languages and raises awareness of parents and local officials of the importance and benefits of teaching young children in their mother tongue.
Jane is 15 years old and in Standard 7 at a primary school in Central Equatoria.

“I have been in this school for the last six years. I stay with my father and mother and I have 3 brothers and 2 sisters. I enjoy singing and English at school but our school does not have a library and so we have no access to text books.

I travel to school daily by foot. We don’t play at school because we do not have any games equipment at our school. We have seven classrooms only and some old latrines. I like my school very much but I dislike the classrooms because they are dusty and there was no classroom for Primary 8 but with the help of AET, a new classroom was constructed for Primary 8.

I don’t miss classes except when I am sick and I think it is very important to go to school because that is my future and I want to become a teacher if I complete school. The School Mother also visits us at home and tells the importance of sending girls to school to my parents and now my parents don’t talk about marriage to us. The School Mother has helped us to understand the dangers of early marriages and the importance of staying together with disabled children, the importance of schooling for girls and keeping one’s self clean”.

On television and in the newspapers we see daily reports of conflict in Africa. We see soldiers with guns and bombs. We see death and destruction. For outsiders it is hard to believe that the vast majority of people in those countries are not involved in the fighting. Most people want to live normal lives. For every young man or woman who becomes a child soldier there are a thousand others who want to go to school.

However, in many conflict affected areas it is often not possible for children and young people to go to normal schools. The classrooms are destroyed. The teachers have left. There are no teaching materials. For children in rural areas it may be too dangerous to travel to the towns where the schools are located. Even when fighting has stopped it may take years to rebuild schools and train new teachers.

AET helps many thousands of young people who missed out on education because of conflict and civil war to continue with their education and training even where there are no schools. In 2001 AET, in partnership with the BBC World Service Trust, launched the Somali Distance Education for Literacy (SOMDEL) Programme to help young people who were missing out on education because of the war in Somalia. SOMDEL uses radio programmes broadcast by the BBC World Service linked with student text books and face-to-face teaching by local specially trained tutors. To date almost 100,000 young people across Somalia and Somaliland have been able to complete literacy and basic education courses using this approach. In 2006 a World Bank Report called SOMDEL “one of the World’s most innovative uses of distance learning”.

In 2010 AET launched a new radio-based non-formal programme in South Sudan to help 17,000 young men and women who did not get the opportunity to finish their primary school. It is called Speak Up and it is helping young South Sudanese men and women to learn English and Life Skills. English is the official language in the new Republic of South Sudan and is becoming essential for young people who hope to work for the government and private companies or start their own small businesses. Because of the civil war these young people were unable to finish primary school and develop their language skills. Working with another international NGO called Free Voice the programme trains local people to become radio journalists whose programmes are broadcast across South Sudan. Speak Up offers young people the chance to get the skills they want and need.

Also in South Sudan AET has provided IT and computer skills through a network of Community Resource and Open Learning (ROLE) Centres. Over 3,000 people have gained skills in computing through AET’s intensive one-month computer training courses. A large proportion of the beneficiaries work in government ministries and now use these skills in their day to day work. Others work for local community organisations, women’s groups and in local businesses.
Mahamed

For most of his childhood, Mahamed worked as a livestock herder near Las Anod. When he was about 14 he moved to Burao to live with his uncle. Although his uncle owned a shop, he did not allow Mahamed to work for him because he was illiterate. However, since completing AET’s SOMDEL Radio Literacy Course, his uncle has asked him to assist him in the shop so that he can spend more time caring for his elderly father.

Because Mahamed is able to read and has gained basic numeracy skills, he is able to keep records and accounts, resulting in an increase in profits in the shop. Although Mahamed is not paid, he feels that he has gained the trust and respect of his uncle and has increased his sense of purpose and responsibility. He is hopeful that his work experience will earn him a good reputation amongst other shop keepers in Burao, and enable him to secure paid employment in the future.

Ayub

Ayub is a young man who lives in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Merca, Lower Shabele. He first completed an AET literacy course. He then went on to register for an AET vocational training course, where he trained in electrics. He completed his vocational training in late 2008, after which he applied for and was awarded a micro grant from AET. The micro grant enabled him to purchase equipment and set up his own business. Ayub has achieved his goal and since completing the training his life has changed considerably.

Ayub currently works as a self-employed electrician in Merca, Lower Shabelle located 90km south of Mogadishu. He is now able to support his parents, and earns enough money for the family to survive on. As a result of his literacy training Ayub’s confidence has increased and he is a very active member of the community.
Over half of all Somalis live outside the main towns. They are dependent on their animals and follow the traditional lifestyle of their ancestors moving from place to place to find water and food for their animals. The majority of them do not want to settle in towns and the land and rainfall is not rich enough to allow them to settle as farmers in one place. Year after year they move with their animals to where there is grass and water. Their children move with them and so have very little opportunity to go to school. Frequently just as they have settled for a few months in a school, their family moves and they have to leave, often to an area where there is no school.

In Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland AET works with local NGOs to provide opportunities for children and young people in nomadic and pastoralist communities to get basic education and skills training. Instead of fixed classrooms and schools and fixed timetables, AET and its partners use flexible approaches to education and training. Recruited and supervised by a local NGO, teachers from the area work with the children and elders in the nomadic communities to provide education in a place and at a time that suits the community. The classes may take place in the early morning before the children leave with the camels, sheep and goats or in the late afternoon when they have returned with the animals. They are likely to take place in the shade of a thorn tree. There are basic education classes for children and literacy and vocational skills classes for teenagers and young adults. The vocational skills taught are all skills which the nomadic communities themselves have identified as needed by their communities. Skills such as basic health and midwifery care and simple veterinary, livestock and bee keeping skills.
Good Gifts funding has enabled AET to purchase and distribute camels to 37 nomadic and pastoralist communities in Somaliland and Central South Somalia. AET is implementing literacy and vocational skills training projects in these communities and the provision of camels is an innovative addition to the programme which will foster increased sustainability of education in these communities. The camels are being looked after by the community elders and the idea is that their milk and future offspring will be sold and money made will be used to pay for teachers.
The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for education have focused almost exclusively on ensuring that all children attend and complete primary schooling. One negative aspect of the MDGs has been that because of the pressure to achieve universal primary education many governments and international donors stopped or cut back on funding for secondary education. The result is that for many years secondary education has been neglected. The shortage of people with a secondary education has now become a major problem for many countries in Africa, especially for countries which have experienced civil war and on-going conflict. It does not take a secondary education to fire a gun but a secondary education is needed to become a nurse or a teacher or to go on to be a doctor or an engineer.

AET supports secondary education in Somaliland, Puntland, Central and South Somalia and in South Sudan, Uganda and Swaziland. Working with international partners and with the Ministries of Education in Somaliland and Puntland, AET has built over 150 new classrooms in secondary schools. It has provided millions of pounds worth of text books, science equipment and teaching materials and it has supported the education and training of over a hundred secondary school teachers at local universities and teacher training colleges.

In 2008 AET at the request of the Ministry of Education of the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) launched a pilot programme to train secondary school teachers through a distance learning project with the Ugandan University of Kyambogo. The teachers receive distance learning materials from the university and submit assignments. In the field they are supported by local tutors and mentored by experienced qualified teachers. At the end of their course lecturers from the University supervise the final examinations in South Sudan and observe teachers teaching in their own schools.

AET also provides support for the secondary education of disadvantaged students in a number of other African countries, including Swaziland where, through the Colonel Johnson Educational Trust, AET pays for the secondary education of 100 students from HIV/AIDS affected families.
In Somaliland and Puntland thanks to the commitment of the Ministries of Education and support from donors more and more children are completing primary school. The majority of students want to go on to secondary education but unfortunately there are not enough secondary schools to support them. There is limited funding to build new schools. One of the most expensive structures in a new school is the school laboratory and many new schools are built without them. It is very difficult to learn science properly without carrying out practical work yet the children in many new schools have no opportunity to learn the practical skills that are essential for science.

To meet this need AET has developed a Mobile Science Unit. This Unit is manned by a qualified science technician who travels from school to school in a specially equipped “Science Van”. The technician visits ten schools over a two week period and spends a day in each school helping the children and the teachers with practical science lessons. The equipment and materials needed for the activities are transported to the school in the van and the teachers who are sometimes not familiar with practical work themselves have the support of a well qualified and experienced laboratory technician.

The Mobile Science Unit, with one set of equipment and one technician, can provide regular practical science lessons in at least ten schools. It is hugely popular with the students and teachers. The students now perform much better in science tests and are more interested in following a science career.
When AET was founded in 1958 its main focus was on supporting students from Africa to obtain higher education qualifications so that they could use those qualifications for the development of their country. Over a forty year period between 1958 and 1998 AET supported many thousands of African students for further education and professional qualifications, first degree, post graduate and masters’ degrees and PhDs. The Trust’s alumina includes at least one former president, cabinet ministers in South Africa, Namibia and South Sudan and a Commissioner in the Africa Commission. There also thousands of others who have, thanks to the Trust’s support, gained qualifications and are now working in key positions for the development of their countries including doctors, engineers, university professors, lawyers and senior government officials.

Although AET’s scholarship programme has greatly reduced the Trust continues to support higher education and, in cooperation with universities in the UK and Africa, the Trust has developed a number of innovative higher education programmes. These include: a UK Scholarship Programme developed with University College London (UCL); a distance learning course in Public Administration and Management developed in cooperation with the University of Fort Hare in South Africa; a Strategic Leadership Programme for South Sudan developed in cooperation with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in South Africa and a Post-Graduate and Masters’ Programme in Educational Management developed in cooperation with the Islamic International University of Uganda.

Hundreds of people, mainly in countries affected by conflict, have been able to obtain professional qualifications, university certificates, diplomas, degrees and masters’ degrees by studying on the Trust’s sponsored distance learning courses. Courses which they have been able to study and successfully complete while remaining and working in their own country.

In addition to distance learning courses AET has continued to support a small number of students on full-time higher education courses in Africa and the UK. Here the focus is on specialist courses which are not easily available in their own countries For example, over the past few years AET sponsored students have completed courses in epidemiology, biomedical sciences, control of infectious diseases, petroleum law and policy, energy studies, banking and finance.
AET and the University of Fort Hare

Since 1998 AET has worked with the University of Fort Hare in South Africa to provide students in South Sudan with the opportunity to study higher education courses in Public Administration and Management by distance learning. The students are able to study on these university courses while remaining and working in South Sudan. Over 150 people have completed their Certificate in Public Administration and Management, 50 have completed their diploma and 15 have recently completed their honours degree. The successful students include Government Ministers and Director Generals and Directors of many key government ministries as well as Members of Parliament.

South Sudan Executive Leadership Programme

Since 2009 AET has worked with the Leadership Academy of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Eastern Cape in South Africa to provide a high level university course in executive leadership and strategic policy studies. The programme is delivered through a combination of residential courses in South Africa and in South Sudan. The first fifteen students completed their fourth semester of study in June 2011. They are currently working on a short thesis and hope to graduate in May 2012.
Over the past decade a major new area of AET’s work in Africa has been providing direct support for the development of the capacity of Ministries of Education to manage and deliver education. Since 2005 AET has managed a major programme to assist and develop the capacity of the Somali Ministries of Education to deliver primary and secondary examinations. This has been a very successful programme. National Examination Centres have been established in Somaliland and Puntland and valid and reliable examination systems are in place and operating across the states. Somali secondary examinations are now recognised not only by employers and universities in Somaliland and Puntland but in many neighbouring countries including Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen.

In Central and Southern Somalia the Trust works with a number of local educational NGOs or “Umbrella Groups” which are responsible for delivery of education in some of the areas most seriously affected by conflict. Nevertheless over the past three years over twelve thousand children in those areas have been able to sit their primary and secondary leaving examinations.

AET is also working with UNICEF and the Centre for British Teachers (CIBT) to strengthen the capacity of the Ministries of Education in Somaliland and Puntland. AET is responsible for helping the Ministries to improve the quality of education in primary and secondary schools. Two key components of this programme are the recruitment of qualified educationalists from the Somali Diaspora as long-term consultants in the Ministries and support and training for young Somali education graduates as long-term interns.
New Schools and Classrooms

Working with international partners such as the Danish Refugee Council AET has built over 150 new classrooms in Somalland and Puntland. This includes sixteen new secondary schools. The Trust has also built twenty four Girl Friendly Spaces (GFS) which include a study room and private toilets facilities for girls.

Community Empowerment Training in the UK

AET is working in partnership with the Evelyn Oldfield Unit to develop the capacity of African women working in Diaspora Community organisations in London. This two year programme trains African women on how to conduct research on the needs of their communities and advocate for these needs. The skills they develop will enable them to influence policy makers in central government, local authorities and service providers.
As an international NGO focused on education, AET realises the importance of ensuring that the work that we do is based on good evidence. We want to make sure that our work will not only "do no harm" but that we will actually make a positive difference to the lives of the people whom we are helping. A key part of our work is evaluating what we do and conducting research to find out what approaches and methods are most likely to benefit children and young people in the countries where we work.

External evaluations are carried out on all AET’s major projects and each year the Trust carries out research into how it can improve the support it gives to education in Africa.

The Millennium Development Goals have stressed the importance of increasing the enrolment and retention of girls in primary schools. There is, however, very little hard evidence of what approaches should be used to achieve this. Based on evidence gathered by local researchers over a three year period in South Sudan, AET has published a report “Empowering Village Education: AET 2011” which compares the enrolment and retention of girls in schools which had received specific support to improve girls’ education with schools which had not received this support. As the report demonstrates the results were statistically significant and showed that in schools which had received this support there was a larger increase in the number of girls’ enrolment and that once enrolled girls were more likely to stay in school.

When planning the implementation of its programme for vocational training for young Somali nomads and pastoralists, AET worked with local researchers to identify the vocational skills which the young people and the elders felt would be the most relevant and important for young people in their communities. Their views were canvassed on what skills would be most useful for those who wanted to remain as nomadic pastoralists as well as what skills would be most useful for those who wanted to leave their communities and move to towns and cities. The results of this study were published in “Vocational Skills for Nomadic Pastoralists: AET 2011”.

AET has also recently completed a joint research study with the Medical School of Swansea University for the Welsh Government into diabetes, obesity and exercise amongst teenage boys and girls of Somali, Bangladeshi and Welsh backgrounds in Wales. The research found that there were very different habits and patterns of exercise amongst the different communities with Somali girls being the least likely to exercise.

A research article on this study was published by the BioMed Central Journal Public Health 2011 11:412. AET and the Medical School are now working on a pilot study in a secondary school in Wales which provides vouchers to students to enable them to pay for a sport, a game or an activity and to encourage them to exercise more.