

CELEBRATING
60 YEARS
OF PROVIDING
EDUCATION
IN AFRICA

IN FROM THE MARGINS

SUMMARY REPORT



Africa
Educational
Trust

*Education for all is the
key to development*

This review of AET programmes seeks to articulate its approach to educational work in Africa and highlight the wider lessons to be learnt from its experience. It draws on the monitoring and evaluations reports of projects carried out by Africa Educational Trust in four countries - Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda - over the last five years.

This summary report and full report can be accessed and downloaded from our website: africaeducationaltrust.org/our-resources

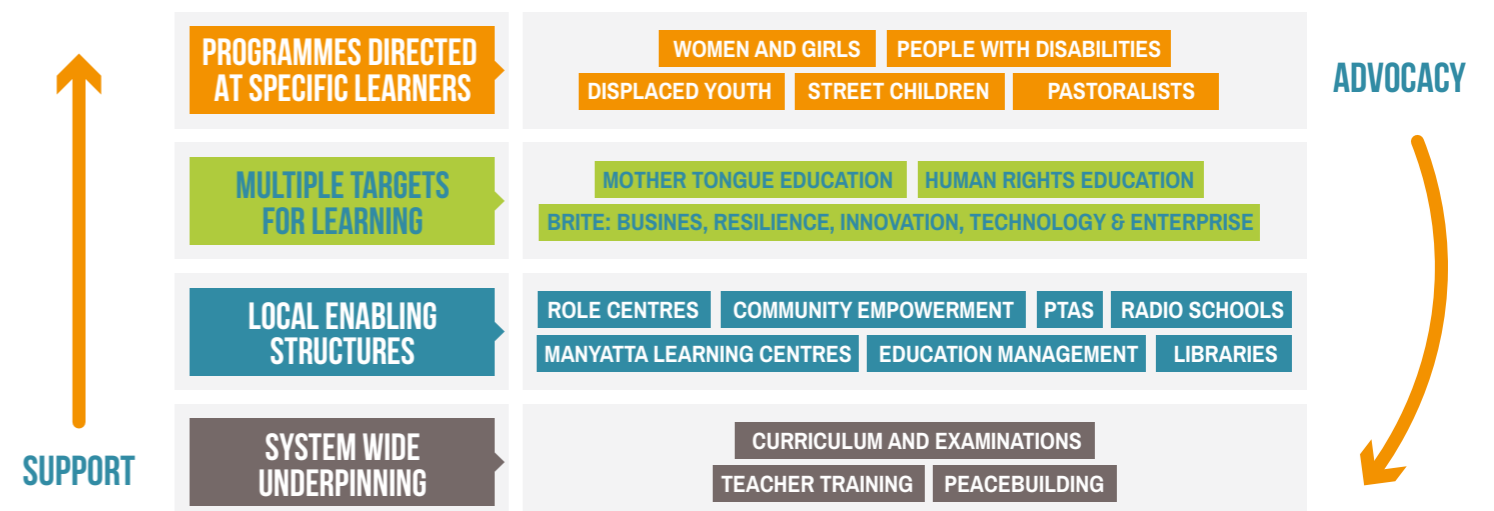
AET focuses on education for communities engaged in and emerging from conflict and targets the hardest to reach and most educationally disadvantaged people in Africa. The hallmarks of its approach include (i) the development of specialist national staff, (ii) the active involvement of communities in the design of educational programmes and (iii) the promotion of an ethos of equity and trust in school and community, to break cycles of authoritarian teaching and violence.

This review seeks to elaborate some general principles about what works in difficult contexts and how AET meets the challenges of working in such environments. It asks if AET has developed a distinctive contribution to educational provision and how its educational philosophy impacts on teaching, learning and educational management more broadly.

AET has programmes in Somalia and South Sudan where long term conflict has left a legacy of poverty and very weak national systems for educational provision. AET also works with conflict affected communities in Northern Uganda and with marginalised communities in Northern Kenya. The common background to AET's interventions are high levels of illiteracy, significant insecurity, a high proportion of children out of school, a shortage of teachers, a general lack of school buildings and learning materials, significant social and economic obstacles to girls' education and lack of opportunity for the most disadvantaged.

AET's programmes are always geared to the local context but different types and levels of intervention interact and support each other. Key advocacy and influence roles happen in all directions, with the success of a targeted programme influencing policy makers both at the local and the system level, and infrastructure development or capacity building at system level supporting the targeted interventions.

This can be represented schematically:



PROGRAMMES DIRECTED AT SPECIFIC LEARNERS

WOMEN AND GIRLS

AET has carried out a wide range of educational programmes designed to increase access to education for women and girls.



'When the school mother is not there, many girls will not come to school. If she is not there the school will not develop on the side of girls'

The **School Mothers Project** (South Sudan, Uganda) sought to reduce the high school dropout rates for girls by establishing a role for women in primary and secondary school to act as mentors and champions of girls' education. This approach to child protection had a very positive impact on girls' enrolment and achievement in school. The project illustrated the interlocking aspects of education for females, ranging from basic knowledge about their bodies to setting boundaries in relation to males, while educating the school, the PTA and local families about the importance of education for their girls.

Accelerated Secondary Education for Women (South Sudan) targeted women who had dropped out of secondary education, enabling them to complete school and graduate. Teachers were trained on how to deliver the compressed accelerated programme and 30 of the 50 girls initially recruited completed the programme and sat for national exams. The girls' enthusiasm for education grew and in 2016, 100% of the first cohort of students passed their final secondary examinations. Furthermore, the school where the AET programme was carried out was ranked 9th in results in the entire country. The success of the programme lay in its flexibility, the orientation of teachers and the learner-centredness and the safe space for learning, which gave confidence to drop-outs. The advocacy for female education penetrated up to the Ministry of Education and beyond.

Girls' Writes (South Sudan) was a film making project designed to give girls a voice on sensitive issues relating to early pregnancy and marriage, and forced labour. Girls created short films discussing their challenges in accessing education and four of these were shown on South Sudanese television. MoE officials appreciated the importance of the issues raised in the films (such as the challenge of boys discouraging pregnant girls from attending school) the films had clearly encouraged debate at their viewings.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Disability inclusion has been another focus of AET's work (Somalia, Somaliland). Programmes are not just tailored to educational needs, but to changing attitudes and breaking the cycle of destitution that can entrap people with disabilities. AET has worked with government schools to identify children who need support and helped teachers to identify ways to support such children. For children unable to attend mainstream schools, AET supplied vouchers to attend local specialist schools. The programme also offered out-of-school classes for young people and adults with disabilities, offering them basic literacy, numeracy and life skills followed up with specialist vocational training courses in areas of the beneficiaries' choosing. The programme was so successful that it reached far more beneficiaries than originally targeted and fostered a positive interest on the part of government officials.



DISPLACED YOUTH

Displaced communities are also a focus for educational inclusion. **The Community and Returnee Education (CARE)** project (South Sudan) was designed to support the educational needs of South Sudanese returning from neighboring countries or from (Arabic speaking) North Sudan after South Sudan's independence in 2011. The programme supported returnees to develop basic English, IT and vocational skills to help find employment. It included advocacy through radio broadcasts and training for livelihood skills. The project exceeded its target of 2000 to reach 2500 beneficiaries and achieved high levels of participation (including by women) and positive support from government officials. Success came from the combination of various elements: advocacy efforts through radio, skills provision for returnees, training of tutors, capacity building for local partners and establishment of structures such as steering committees, to provide continuity and local ownership.

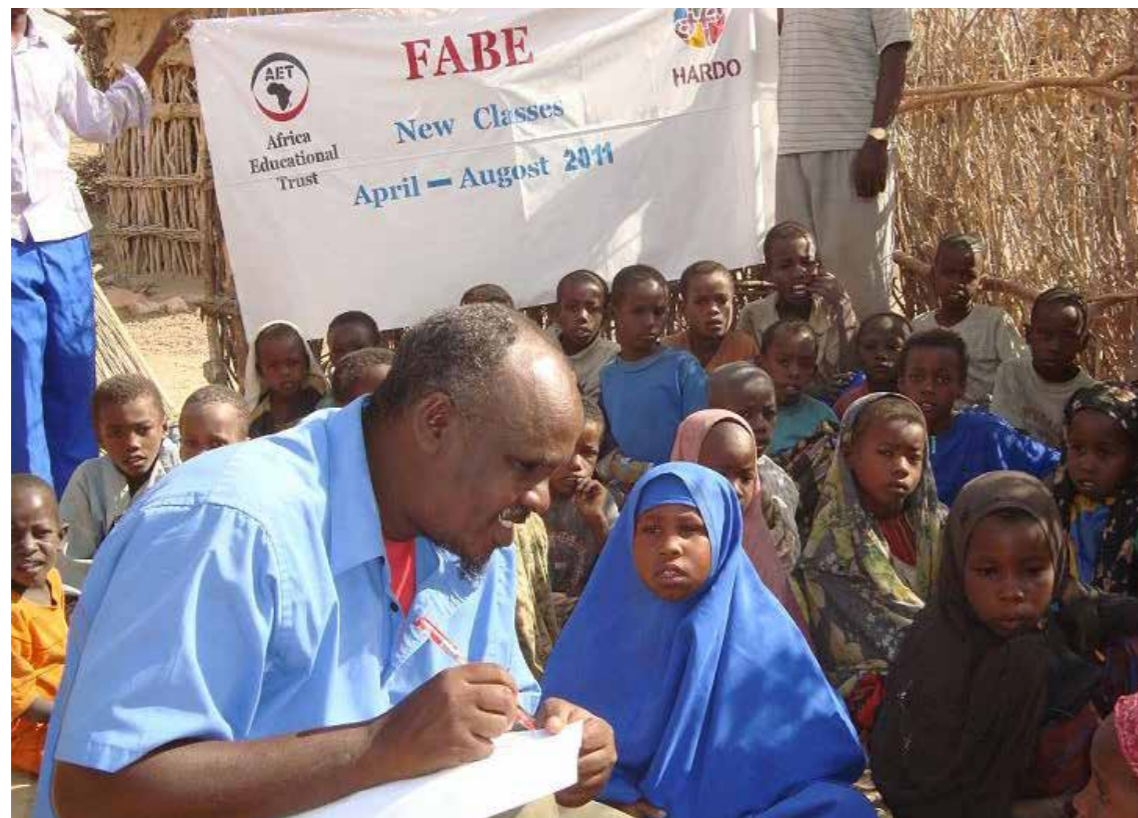
STREET CHILDREN

AET works to bring **street children** back into the education system and make the transition away from street life. Working with **Child Restoration Outreach** (Uganda), AET's contribution was to train teachers providing appropriate (child-friendly) school preparation classes for street children and provide school starter kits (uniforms, exercise books) to enable them to attend government school. The programme worked with schools to support street children joining the school system and facilitated coordination between schools, police, district government and the community to improve attitudes towards street children. The children in the programme integrated well into the primary school and quickly went on to achieve results on a par with the local population. Teachers skills were enhanced and the programme had a significant impact on the local child protection system.

PASTORALISTS

There are an estimated 30 million **pastoralists** living in the Horn of Africa, few of whom have access to education. Two programmes in Somalia, the **Flexible Approach to Basic Education (FABE)** and **Developing Appropriate Relevant Education and Training (DARET)** were established to help the pastoralist/nomadic children and youth to gain access to basic education. FABE targeted children between the age of 8-14 years and offered numeracy and literacy in the Somali language. DARET targeted youth between ages 14-25 years offering numeracy and literacy and vocational skills. Communities planned the classes to fit with their seasonal activities and came up with a flexible quality education method compatible with the nomadic way of life. About half of the students had acquired and retained the targeted skills including literacy, numeracy and vocational skills. Communication, which is a critical life skill, was significantly boosted by attending DARET/FABE programmes.

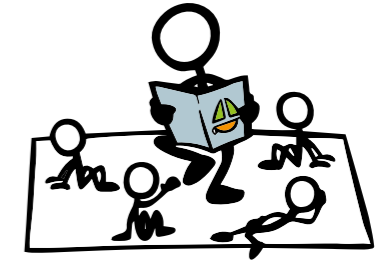
The initiative continued as the **Somali Nomadic Education Project (SNEP)**, having developed effective teaching materials that equipped students for further training or transition to intermediate school. It also made good use of audio-visual learning with Somali songs, poetry and proverbs in the book/memory cards being both educative and entertaining. The programme provided adults with a rare opportunity to learn how to read and write, since they could not attend formal schools and they appreciated the non-formal centre established by AET, because there were better teaching/learning materials, which had relevant and appropriate themes and topics for the learners. Success factors derived from the participants themselves deciding relevance, and from high flexibility, with trainers going to communities rather than the other way around. As well as the innovative audio-visual materials, the project reached a wide range of learners by allowing parents and children to learn together to address adult illiteracy.



MULTIPLE TARGETS FOR LEARNING

MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

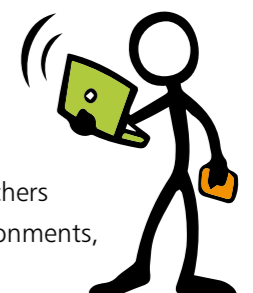
AET's **Mother Tongue Education** projects (Uganda, Kenya) are designed for younger children (and their parents) in marginalised communities to ease their entry into the education system and improve their learning outcomes. The programmes involve support and coaching for teachers in use of local languages alongside national language and the production of early grade readers in the local language. The projects have attracted strong community involvement and have had a very positive effect on the enrolment of early years learners.



BRITE

At the other end of the school spectrum, AET has managed two ICT related programmes in Uganda. **Business, Resilience, Innovation, Technology and Enterprise (BRITE Futures)** offered training and experience in high-demand subject areas such as IT and promoted skills relevant to the workplace. Support in teaching ICT was key to the programme which saw an appreciable increase in students' confidence in use of computers and produced some entrepreneurial initiatives. **Promoting Advanced Computer Training in Secondary Schools (PACTS)** developed an ICT student's course book and ICT teachers' guide using key topics from the curriculum to create a user-friendly ICT resource for students. This programme gained wider traction when the local District Education Office directed primary head teachers from surrounding schools to go to the secondary schools during holidays for training by the ICT teachers, at a small fee to help in maintenance costs.

ICT facilities and connectivity remain challenging, yet emerging examples of teachers using ICT to research and deliver lessons suggest that even in low resource environments, ICT can be a useful tool for improving teaching and learning.



HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Realising Rights: A Community Approach on Rights (South Sudan) was a programme designed to enhance the protection and realisation of human rights in schools and communities, focusing on access to basic services, gender equality and rights of the child. It promoted the establishment of Community Protection Committees and provided training and support for a range of activities (debates, films) to stimulate awareness. In the course of the programme, CPCs became strong advocates for women's and children's rights. It often took some time before people would speak out openly but once aware of the role of the CPCs, people became more comfortable raising issues with them.

LOCAL ENABLING STRUCTURES

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

Across the full range of its projects AET has worked very closely with **local school management structures**. In Kenya, this involved helping to develop school Boards of Management. In Uganda, School Mothers (who are part of the school management system) received continuous support and teachers appreciate AET's emphasis on quality and the importance (and rewards) of good teaching. In South Sudan, AET provided training on the educational structure for local government representatives and training on school inspection and supervision. In all cases AET has aimed to build closer relationships between communities and local education officials.

ROLE CENTRES



In South Sudan AET established four **Resource and Open Learning Centres (ROLE centres)** which have played a pivotal part in delivering its educational programmes. They deliver teacher training, develop learning materials for primary schools, run basic literacy courses, run the operation of mobile libraries, and support distance education and IT courses. The ROLE centres have been recognised for their 'very capable and dedicated staff' and an 'outstanding level of engagement with communities and local government'. In addition, outreach officers and project officers play a vital role in maintaining the very strong relationships with school communities that has been a hallmark of AET's work in South Sudan.

MANYATTA LEARNING CENTRES

In Kenya, AET established **Manyatta Learning Centres (MLCs)** within the Maasai community as communal facilities to enable parents and children to learn together. Parents, accompanied by their youngest children, meet at times convenient to them for literacy and numeracy classes. Older men and women who attend these classes are acquiring functional literacy as well as developing reading materials based on their own oral stories. The MLCs have been so well received that in addition to the original five centres, eleven more were added in response to community pressure.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND PTAS

In South Sudan, community involvement in education has been explicitly developed through the **Empowering Participants in Community, Education and Development (CED)** programme. Through the programme, PTA members and Ministry of Education (MoE) officials gained a clearer understanding of their roles, leading to more active engagement in their school, while teachers and PTA members felt increased responsibility for improving their schools.

Many of AET's other programmes in South Sudan have engaged with and helped to develop PTAs. Engagement has also been an important part of the Kenya MTE programme, where AET has promoted community conversations to enable local people to discuss education issues with local authorities.



LIBRARIES

AET's provision of **libraries** offers wider support for literacy and community development. The first library project, in Somalia, developed school and mobile community libraries, suited to the nomadic environment, and also suitable to move books to displacement camps and provide reading material for people with disabilities. In Uganda, AET has established 100 school libraries and supports training for teachers to incorporate reading and library access into their lessons. A scheme of lead librarians was instigated in Uganda where 12 successful librarians were selected to support and monitor other schools in their vicinity and to receive additional training.



RADIO SCHOOLS

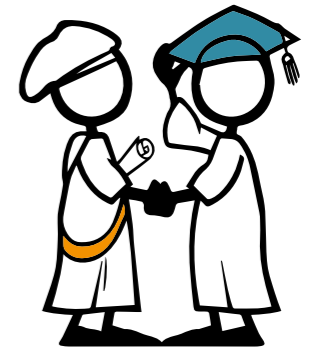
AET's earliest work in Somalia included literacy programmes by radio, an approach that continues today in the form of radio schools in 'Speak-Up' (South Sudan). This programme has developed radio broadcasts and recorded lessons on CDs or MP3s that allow people access to education without having to leave the safety of their homes. It offers basic literacy and numeracy skills and the prospect of later enrollment in certified courses. Radio schools are low cost and low profile but have considerable reach and the ability to connect with those who are excluded from conventional educational opportunities.

SYSTEM WIDE UNDERPINNING

CURRICULUM AND EXAMINATIONS

The challenge of helping to rebuild curriculum, examinations and school systems in post conflict societies ranks among AET's most ambitious and demanding undertakings.

In Somalia, the **Somalia Wide Education Synergies (SWES)** programmes (now in their fourth phase) have been implemented through a collaborative partnership with the regional Ministries of Education (MOEs) in Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia. The objective was to strengthen educational systems and promote harmonisation and synergies across all levels of the education system. AET provided the technical support to develop a more robust curriculum that teaches students how to problem solve with knowledge they have gained, and not just learn by rote. In developing the curriculum AET helped to ensure a participatory approach with opportunities for commonly excluded groups, such as women and girls, pastoralists and people with disabilities. AET also developed the textbooks, learning materials, and examination systems that correspond to the set curriculum.



The objective of the third phase of SWES was to strengthen the capacity of the Ministries of Education to implement the new outcomes-based curriculum framework and hold examinations of international standard for those graduating from it. Inspectors and curriculum advisers were trained on how to monitor curriculum implementation across all the three regions. Similarly, exam boards' personnel in all the three regions were trained and reviewed both primary and secondary school syllabuses with specific emphasis on the syllabus outcomes.

The success of this project has been considerable and wide-ranging. By ensuring standardised exams, students' certificates are recognised and respected both by universities in neighbouring countries and prospective employers. The key is the participatory approach. Despite existing disagreements and conflicts between various regions in Somalia, Somali people have been enabled to come together to develop a curriculum framework and associated text-books. AET is the lead coordinator for curriculum development in Somalia and has developed and implemented a process of consultation with different regional and community groups to ensure a commonly accepted framework. Ingrained in this process is not just a technical action but a contribution to peace-building, democracy and diversity.

TEACHER TRAINING

While the training of teachers remains integral to almost all AET projects, the absence of qualified teachers in newly independent South Sudan prompted a particular effort in that country. The **Quality in Secondary Education (QISE)** programme offered untrained secondary school teachers in South Sudan an opportunity to attain a qualification through a distance learning course with the support of experienced mentors and tutors. The participants significantly improved in many areas, including planning, classroom management and the use of diverse teaching methods, as well as extending knowledge of their subject (Mathematics or English). QISE students and head teachers said they would unanimously recommend the course to their fellow students.

In the BRITE project, AET have partnered with STIR Education to build the capacity of secondary school teachers in Uganda through a movement of **teacher change makers** motivated to tackle the challenges in the learning environment of students, despite limited resources. As elsewhere, key success in teacher training is not just subject knowledge but also enhanced skills in positive classroom management, leadership, general increases in professionalism and an understanding of the needs of diverse and marginalised groups.

PEACEBUILDING

The notion of teachers creating change also underlies efforts in peace education. AET **peacebuilding** programmes in Somalia and South Sudan aim to equip teachers to use schools and classrooms to foster discussions in a respectful and positive manner and lets students address the legacy of violence and conflict they are living with.



In Somaliland, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, the Peace-Building Education and Advocacy programmes initiated a youth-led community-wide consultation on the curriculum. A further intervention led up to a fully developed curriculum for Puntland that focused on peace building through youth empowerment, achieved through participation in the curriculum development process.

In South Sudan, peacebuilding was also attempted through the distribution of classroom materials – **Social Issues kits** – designed by the ROLE centres. Peacebuilding was one of a set of issues including health and hygiene, the environment and agriculture (topics included in various parts of the national curriculum).

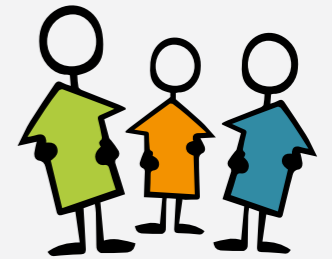


KEY POSITIVES

Drawing on the lessons of all these programmes the key positives of AET's work are summarised under four interlocking areas: **A grassroots approach, multiple targets, advocacy and value for money.**

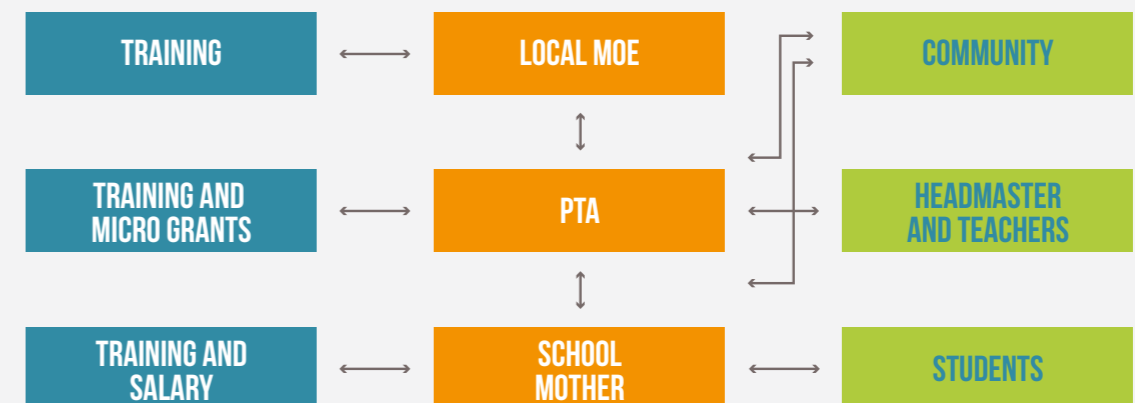
A) BOTTOM UP, WITH COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING

The strength of many AET programmes derives from the efforts to ensure that communities and schools are not just consulted but are involved as far as possible in determining the direction of initiatives. Programmes are not designed from outside or above, but are generated from what recipients say they need, or from problems identified by them.



B) MULTIPLIERS, MULTIPLE TARGETS AND MULTIPLE PARTICIPANTS

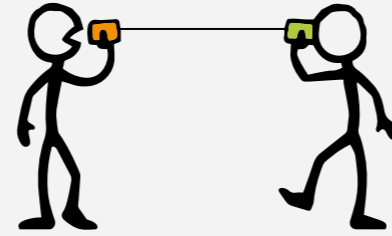
AET projects are generally designed to have wider reach vertically than the immediate beneficiaries. A good example of how his interaction worked was contained in the independent evaluation of the Primary Education Project in South Sudan represented in the following diagram:



AET invariably has a wide range of connections and partnerships with other agencies, local NGOs and International NGOs, so that strengths and resources can be combined for different projects, and transparency and dissemination enhanced.

C) ADVOCACY AND INFLUENCE FOR CHANGE

A number of key areas of influence and advocacy have emerged from AET's work. Its expertise in MTE has enabled AET to develop a strong dialogue with the Kenyan Ministry of Education on this issue. They are also working closely with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development on mother tongue language integration in early childhood development and primary education. In Somaliland, AETs work on disability resulted in the creation of platforms for collaboration between the authorities to influence nationwide policy on disability. Advocacy also has impact at community level through those who become key influencers for gender equality and rights, such as School Mothers, and through use of techniques such as radio to reach wider communities.



D) VALUE FOR MONEY

AET's grassroots approach has resulted in good value for money in its programmes.

Training takes place within communities to ensure widely dispersed knowledge with reduced travel and accommodation costs. AET minimises the use of external UK-recruited trainers and uses methods such as radio schools to reach learners, and low costs for trainers and teachers.



Mobilising communities has very high impact on the success of programmes at a very low cost. Role Centres, Manyatta Learning Centres, the empowerment of PTAs all help to bring educational activity to the community, enabling them to plan project activities and delivery and catalyse greater long-term benefits.

A focus on building relationships, particularly the engagement between local government and communities, is central to what AET does. It has very low cost but gives important long-term benefits.

AET has a strong and very dedicated team who understand and own the vision of the organisation. Managerial and outreach staff are committed to their work and are invested in their communities.



CONCLUSION

AET's work aims to improve access to education and identify the obstacles in the way of people gaining an education. Obstacles come in many shapes and forms – safety in schools, particularly for girls; language barriers; wider pressures on time and money in challenging environments. AETs work often takes place within badly resourced national education systems with programmes that aim to build something better. For children, this means making school a safer place and supporting teachers to offer child centred learning in child-friendly classrooms. For adult learners it means making the curriculum relevant, offering flexible learning times and places and rebuilding confidence.

This review has underlined that the success factors in AET's work all stem from the deep embeddedness of AET national staff in the region. Working in times and places of extreme insecurity, their long-standing experience and expertise gives a huge advantage. Their dedication in the face of constant interruption gives stability to the projects and builds trust with the people they serve. Knowledge of the complex communities they work in enables experimentation and creativity within sensible limits. AET approaches the problem in situ, working with communities to identify ways to overcome the obstacles in their particular environment. It is not someone else's idea of education but their own. This level of ownership is the best possible motor of development.

Staff working in some of Africa's most challenging environments have built up close relationships with communities and with Ministry of Education officials over decades. They have gained expertise in educational development on a range of technical issues such as establishing exam systems; introducing Mother Tongue Education; new approaches to adult learning and non-formal education; aspects of pedagogy to improve classroom techniques and promote child-centred learning.

All this explains why AET is able to provide a constant source of leadership in the field. It would be no exaggeration to conclude that AET occupies a unique position in the advancement of education in Africa and that the thousands of people whose lives have been changed would not have seen this transformation without AET.



