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Looking At Schools As Community Safe Spaces Transmitting Life-Saving Information



Since 2008, the International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP) has supported 32 primary schools and 40 koranic schools in four districts within South Central Somalia. In 2011, CISP reached 48 primary schools and 40 koranic schools. CISP's approach of supporting both types of schools has encouraged the Somali community to view secular education as a complement to religious instruction. Increasingly viewing schools as safe places, Somali girls and women have had the opportunity to receive training both as students and teachers. Within two years, this project has significantly increased the enrollment of female students and doubled the number of female teachers.



Approximately 10,000 students (46% girls) and 206 teachers (23% women), in approximately 250 rural locations, have been impacted by CISP's support of schools in Ceel Dheer, Galcaad, Xarardeere and Dhusamareeb (in Galgaduud and South Mudug regions). This support has come in the form of rehabilitating or constructing classrooms, distributing education materials, training of teachers, community awareness activities on the importance of education, and even the provision of monthly incentives to teachers in the absence of a functioning government.

In addition to the curricular lessons, training on health and hygiene, promotion of gender-segregated latrines, provision of hand-wash facilities, advocacy on the importance of safe water supply, sensitization on gender issues, and promotion of child protection has provided life-saving information to the community.



This project has sought to establish a gender balance in Somali schools, not only among students but also teachers. The distribution of locally made sanitary pads has not only increased the attendance of girls who stayed home during their periods, but also promoted the income-generating activities of local women's groups.

The emphasis on exclusively training new female teachers has brought the percentage of teachers from 10% in 2008 to 20% in 2010 and to 23% in 2011. The use of mother-daughter extra-curricular activities has promoted the idea that the school environment is a safe space in which the Somali girl child can prosper. These activities have increased the rate of girl enrollment in schools from 32% in 2008 to 49% in 2010 and 46% in 2011.



Due to the demonstrated success of this project, CISP is expanding its activities in 2012 to

more districts as well as IDP settlements. This expansion offers quality education to more than 16,000 Somali children --- half of whom will be girls. The new primary education program starting in March 2012 will target an additional 18 schools in Mogadishu, Hiraan and Middle Shabelle.