

Despite All Odds

They work against enormous odds, often with missing roofs, dilapidated buildings and inadequately qualified and poorly paid teachers, to provide their children with schooling

Before the civil war, the southern town of Baidoa was proudly known as 'the Switzerland of Somalia'. But during the '90s, ravaged by famine and warring militias, it was dubbed 'the Town of Death'.

The Dr. Ayub School, named after a UNICEF doctor killed by bandits in 1999, still carries that history. Twice destroyed in the past decade, the school now has a shiny tin roof over cracked concrete floors. And when the children hear gunfire, they say 'Baidoa music' – and carry on kicking their deflated football until it's time for lessons.

Only a few internally displaced children are left to swing on the rusty metal climbing frame. They live in plastic covered 'benders' which dot the town, and as morning classes are full, they wait for the afternoon shift.

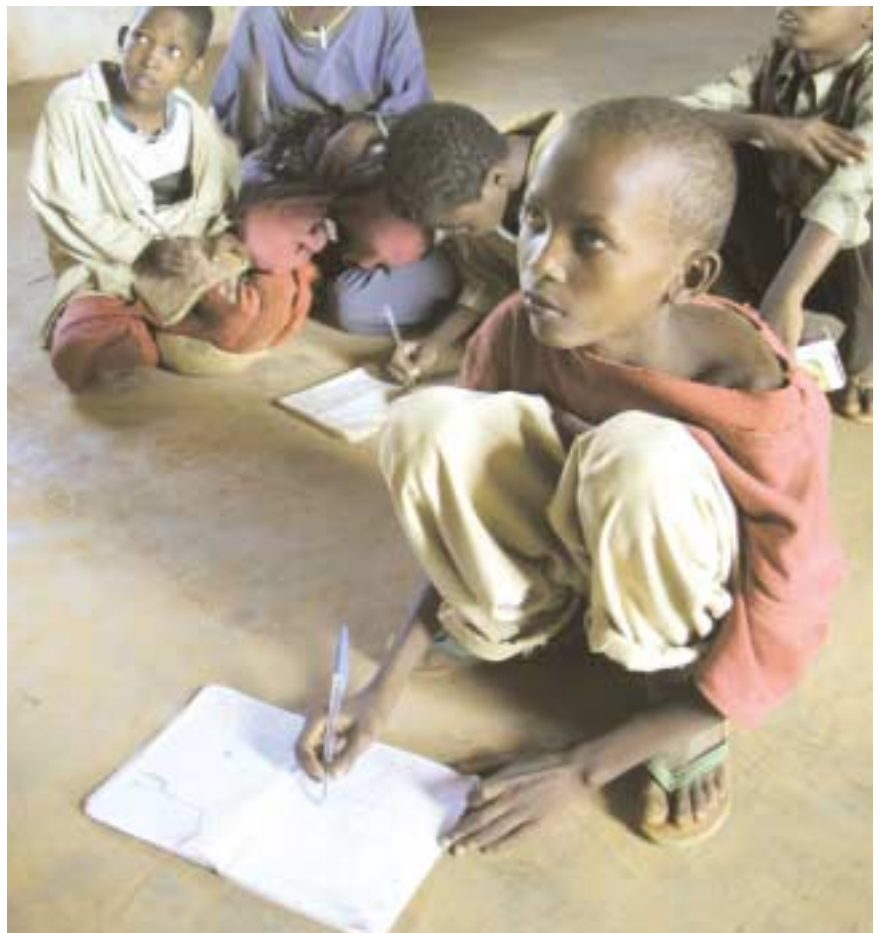
Ibrahim Kadi Adam, the school's head teacher, says "Everyone here – pupils and teachers – have lost family members. The children were starving and roaming the streets so our task was to bring them back to normal life again."

In 1999, UNICEF called together all the teachers in Baidoa, and urged parents, elders and religious leaders to form education committees. "We started teaching in 10 schools without roofs," says Ibrahim. "We began early and worked until the sun became too hot. Meanwhile we (teachers, parents and UNICEF) repaired the classrooms, one at a time."

Similar stories abound in Somalia as communities come together to rebuild an education system from scratch. They work against enormous odds to provide their children with schooling, often with missing roofs, dilapidated buildings and inadequately qualified and poorly paid teachers.

There are few countries in the world with a more traumatic past and uncertain present than Somalia. Civil war broke out in 1991 when Siad Barre's government was overthrown. The conflict, combined with drought and flooding, led to millions of deaths and mass displacement. Government structures collapsed and most of the country's infrastructure was destroyed.

Today, social disorder and disintegration caused by the war continue to deprive children and women of their basic rights in many parts of Somalia. In zones of relative stability such as the northern areas and parts of the Central and Southern zone, local authorities, communities and humanitarian agencies have made considerable progress in rehabilitating social services. However, the fragile peace and the absence of a central government create formidable barriers to building upon such achievements. In general, children and women's rights to adequate health care, basic education, safe water and protection from violence are far from being met. In 1998 Somalia was at the bottom of the heap on UNDP's Human Development Index, ranking 175 out of 175 countries.



Somali Education Through History

For centuries, Somali families taught their children in the traditional pastoralist way of life. Teaching and learning were oral, flexible, adapted to the environment and relevant to the basic needs of the people. Children also received more structured Islamic education in the *duksi* or Koranic schools, which were also nomadic and moved with the population. These still flourish today.

In the nineteenth century the British and Italian colonial powers brought formal schooling to Somalia. Later, the Somali Youth League established some Arabic-medium schools, with support from Arab countries. The colonial schools, however, were limited to areas of settled population and had very low coverage.

At Independence in 1960, the Republic of Somalia inherited just over 200 primary and 12 secondary schools of disparate origins and standards, using different languages of instruction, curricula and teaching methods.

In the early 1970s, an integrated school system and a national university were set up. Somali became a written language with the introduction, in 1972, of the Somali alphabet, based on Latin script. Following this, the government started a mass literacy campaign and somewhat expanded secular education which they claimed raised literacy from five per cent to almost 50 per cent of the population aged 15 and over. While it is difficult to verify this, it still meant that primary education coverage for children under 15 remained very low.

By the late 1980s the formal education system was starved of resources. The Ogaden war in 1977–78 diverted government funding away from social services to the military. Schools were shut down, enrolment dropped rapidly and many teachers and administrators left in search of better wages elsewhere. By 1990, just over 600 schools and trained teachers remained in service. Around 150,000 children were enrolled in what was left of the formal system – one of the lowest school enrolment rates in the world. The collapse of the formal system was therefore well advanced before the civil war.

The outbreak of civil war in 1991 delivered the final crushing blow to the education system. About 90 per cent of school buildings were destroyed, education material and equipment were looted, and many children and teachers were displaced while others, including educational administrators, were lost to other professions. Hardly any formal education took place in Somalia for at least two years.

Only in 1993 did communities and teachers begin to re-open schools. Former educational administrators and community leaders set up informal education committees in Mogadishu and in other regions, and started looking for outside assistance. UNESCO and UNICEF began to retrieve and reprint existing primary level textbooks and teachers' guides. UNICEF took on in-service teacher training and began distributing school kits. A number of international NGOs provided material assistance, training and some degree of supervision for schools in specific localised areas. Local communities, UN agencies and NGOs undertook school rehabilitation.

Education in Emergencies

Education is an inalienable right – one that all children, including those caught in natural and humanitarian emergencies, must be able to access. The question is how do we provide education to children under extremely difficult and stressful conditions?

Education in emergency situations has often been seen as a stop-gap and relief measure until there is a return to normalcy. UNICEF challenges this concept, particularly with regard to human-made or complex and prolonged emergencies such as Somalia. This is because education is a powerful social and cultural institution that can lie at the root of what causes conflict but is also an essential tool to transform a society for the better. Quality education is also a fundamental right for children in all conditions.

Education, therefore, needs to be viewed both as a relief and development activity that starts as early as possible during an emergency but continues to be strengthened as the situation changes. Of course, it may start very simply, with the basics, but it must also be designed so that it is expanded and enriched.

In fact, an emergency can provide a 'crisis situation' in which immediate changes are possible. It is sometimes easier to introduce change into education systems as a result of an emergency than in peaceful orderly times. This is because education as an institution is often very resistant to change, although it is a host to powerful tools for change.

For education to be meaningful, it must be transformed to develop citizens who value peace, respect for others, critical thinking and diversity. It has a critical role to play in preventing emergencies, especially complex ones. But this is a long-term process for which contents and methodologies of learning and teaching need significant reform around the world. Teachers teaching from stances that include prejudice and stereotyping cannot help children learn respect, social justice and conflict resolution skills.

However, education on its own cannot be a panacea. It is one of several social institutions that contribute to sustaining a peaceful society. Just as the causes of emergencies are several, so are the sources of prevention. A functioning justice system based on human rights and an equitable economic system are also vital. To ignore education however would be to ignore the very means of creating awareness and acquiring the skills and knowledge for functioning in an improved society.

Working in Somalia

UNICEF is currently running a three-year Country Programme, 2001–2003. It is made up of five programmes—child survival and healthy development; child nutritional care and feeding practices; water and environmental sanitation; child and youth learning and development; and a cross-sectoral programme which includes HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation, gender, child protection, monitoring and evaluation, and emergency preparedness and communication.

The Country Programme is implemented in a flexible manner given the current fluid context where levels of security, stability and partner capacity fluctuate. This includes direct and indirect implementation and capacity building. The programme operates from three geographical areas, called 'zones': the Northwest zone or 'Somaliland', the Northeast zone or 'Puntland' and the Central and Southern zone.

The Northwest and Northeast zones are areas of relative stability. Somaliland is a zone moving out of crisis, with a recovering economy and a strengthened local administration. Here, UNICEF interventions have shifted from a relief to development orientation, addressing access, use and quality of social services. In Puntland, improved security and stability since 1998 have helped UNICEF to undertake programmes in health, nutrition, education and water and environmental sanitation in collaboration with local and international partners.

Much of southern Somalia continues to be a crisis zone, with no governance or economic recovery, high levels of criminality, sporadic armed conflict and great humanitarian needs. Here emergency relief work is the norm for humanitarian agencies but is often conducted under precarious conditions.

Parts of the Central and Southern zone fall somewhere between crisis and recovery. In these areas, a transition towards a more stable environment is happening but is fragile and reversible. Here, UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies are moving away from emergency to more development-oriented programmes aimed at building local capacity, encouraging community participation and replicating successful pilot projects.

Since real political power in Somalia is radically decentralised, much of the work carried out by UNICEF is at the grassroots level, with local-level authorities and civil society as partners in rehabilitation and development.



Partnerships for Education

In close partnership with local authorities, UNICEF, NGOs, other UN agencies and donors work together to carry out some of the functions that would normally be the responsibility of a national ministry of education. In the Northwest zone, UNICEF and partners collaborate with officials working under a developing system of educational administration. In the Northeast zone, zonal education officers are based out of offices of regional governors and are supported by external agencies. Elsewhere, education committees and boards have been established to run schools within their localities, serving as dedicated grassroots partners for UNICEF and other aid organisations.

The Education Sectoral Committee (ESC) of the Somalia Aid Coordination Body (SACB) in Nairobi provides a forum for coordination, information exchange and debate on policy issues. It brings together major stakeholders involved in education programmes. Meetings are open to Somali educationalists working inside Somalia. UNICEF and Save The Children Fund - UK are currently co-chairing the ESC. In addition, UNICEF, UNESCO and NGOs actively contribute to various issues.

Current members of the ESC are:

- Adventist Development Relief Agency
 - Aktion Afrika Hilfe e.V
 - Africa Education Trust
 - Africa 70
 - Association for Participation in Development
 - APS
 - CARE Somalia
 - Centre for British Teachers
 - CISP (International Committee for the Development of People)
 - Concern Worldwide
 - Coordination Committee of the Organisation of Voluntary Service
 - Diakonia Sweden
 - Ecoterra International
 - Education Volunteer Service
 - EC Somalia Unit
 - HISAN-WEPA
 - Islamic Africa Refugee Agency
 - International Aid Sweden
 - InterSOS
 - Jesuit Refugee Service
 - Norwegian Church Aid
 - Norwegian Peoples' Aid
 - NOVIB
 - RADES
 - SACB Secretariat
 - Save the Children Fund-US
 - Site International
 - SOS- Kinderdorf International
 - Caritas Swiss Group Switzerland
 - Techno-Formation
 - The Hugh Pilkington Charitable Trust - UK
 - Trocaire
 - UNA (Una terra mundi di tutti)
 - Water for Life
 - Windle Trust
 - World Concern
 - World Vision International
 - UNDP
 - UNESCO-PEER
 - UNHCR
- Co-chair:**
- UNICEF
 - Save the Children Fund-UK

A New Beginning

“We have meetings called by the teachers under the big tamarind tree where we discuss the importance of education.”

– Sayeeda Hussein, midwife and chair of Habare Women's Committee, Baidoa, Central Somalia.

The current UNICEF education programme was born in 1997, in close collaboration with Somali education experts, local communities, UNESCO and local and international NGOs. It built upon a prior but modest education programme that, since 1993, had involved providing school kits, supporting school rehabilitation and reprinting of old textbooks. But more importantly, the new programme gave life to clearly articulated requests from parents and communities actively seeking quality education for their children.

"There is tremendous desire amongst Somalis for good education for their children. They see it as helping them to grow up to participate as members of a global community – and have better options in the future. This is most heartening," says Geeta Verma, UNICEF Somalia Education Officer. She reports how UNICEF staff making field visits often come across villages with newly established schools, sprung up since the team's previous visit. "Everyone in this community supports education, led by our chief. We have meetings called by the teachers under the big tamarind tree where we discuss the importance of education," says Sayeeda Hussein, chair of the village women's committee and the village midwife in Habare, Baidoa.

In countries experiencing long-term complex emergencies like Somalia, a simplistic 'package approach' to education is not enough. Education strategies and interventions need to be development-oriented and long-term in nature, aimed at creating a solid foundation for a qualitatively rich and sustainable primary education system.

For this reason, UNICEF has concentrated, since 1997, on standardising and improving the quality of education in Somalia. Emphasis has been placed on formal primary schooling and learning to build a quality base on which the education system can be expanded. To ensure that increasingly larger numbers of children have access to quality learning, a youth education and development programme provides educational opportunities, equivalent to the primary level, to out-of-school youth. To address the education needs of nomadic children, UNICEF and the Pastoralist and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA) conducted a study on nomadic populations in 2000 and 2001. This study will help shape future interventions to bring primary education to nomadic children.

Children On The Edge

Although most children in Somalia are not able to fully enjoy their basic rights, there are particular groups of extremely vulnerable children that will need special attention from an educational point of view. No comprehensive quantitative studies have been made of these children, but several UNICEF and NGO reports give a qualitative picture of marginalised children.

In Somaliland, the most peaceful and stable zone in the country, child labour is prevalent. A number of children are living in orphanages without appropriate care and educational activities. Juveniles can be found living in prisons, together with adults, with no access to education or recreation. They are exposed to violence and abuse, greatly compromising their right to protection. Displaced and returnee children, some separated from their parents, live in very difficult conditions in or around urban centres, have limited schooling opportunities and spend their time working on the streets.

Most of the same challenges faced by Somaliland can be found in Puntland, including large numbers of children working and living in the streets. Educational access is very limited for these children too.

As a result of the chronic insecurity and inter-clan fighting in most parts of central and south Somalia, children face specific problems such as involvement in militia and armed activities. In Mogadishu and other big cities, child delinquency is prevalent. Drought and frequent floods have also prevented children from being schooled, as most of their time is spent earning an income for impoverished families.

Across Somalia, minority children, children with disabilities and child victims of gender-based violence or sexual abuse also require special protection and focused education interventions.

Community Ownership for Sustain

Before the civil war, all public schools were managed by the central government that also paid teacher salaries. In some cases, school premises were provided or constructed by the community.

For several years after 1991, the revival of public primary schools was almost entirely dependent on international support. In an effort to expand access and reduce aid dependency, such external investments were rationalised in favour of greater community involvement in support of local schools.

A key feature of UNICEF humanitarian programming in Somalia has been to help create a sustainable education system, which would not stop if aid stopped. Using social mobilisation campaigns, UNICEF and its international and national partners have encouraged villagers and local authorities to form Community Education Committees (CECs).

Members are volunteers who are selected in open meetings by their communities. Anyone can be part of a Community Education Committee – parents, religious leaders, members of women's and youth groups, and business people. Once a CEC is set up, school supervisors train its members in a number of capacity building areas such as leadership skills, and school management and administration.

Most Somali educationalists and aid agencies agree that representative committees at the school or community level should have the prime responsibility for financing the running costs of individual schools. Local government and humanitarian agencies would focus on institutional support such as training and capacity building at all levels, development of standardised educational resources and, monitoring and capacity building support to Community Education Committees themselves.

Jama Hassan is chair of the Gacmodheere Primary School CEC in Hargeisa. He says, "When we returned to Hargeisa after the war, the children had nothing but stones to sit on and water came through the roof. Our first move was to provide them with chairs and then to fix the roof. We had no wall around the school, so we arranged for the community to contribute a third of the price and for a local businessman to build the rest."

To date, Community Education Committees have been set up in 89 percent of schools across the country. Some 23 percent of CEC members are women.

Asia Hassan Ali, aged 40, is one of the only half a dozen women head teachers in Somaliland. She has steered Hargeisa's Sheik Ali Osman School for six years, proving a crucial role model for girls and women in the community. "I want to advance other women; at our next CEC election we will have three women, Inshallah!¹"

“I want to advance other women; at our next CEC election we will have three women, Inshallah! ”

– Asia Hassan Ali, head teacher, Sheikh Ali Osman School, Hargesia, Somaliland

Today communities own more than half of the 1,105 operational schools in the country and manage 46 percent of them, according to the 2001–2 annual Primary School Survey. The remaining schools are owned and managed by local authorities and private individuals; some are also managed by international and local NGOs.

Getting communities involved, organised and empowered has been particularly successful in the south of the country, where local government structures are non-existent or very weak. The survey found that in the Northeast and Central and Southern zones communities owned 96 percent and 73 percent of schools respectively.

As communities take school matters into their own hands, it is important to support this drive for self-help. In the absence of a central government, sustainability in the primary education sector will be greatly enhanced if community capacity for decision-making and action is cultivated and strengthened.



Girls' Education is Important

“If someone has no education, she is blind; if she goes to school, she can see light”

– A Somali mother

A focus on girls' education is of great importance too. In Somalia, girls bear the burden of domestic labour and are sent to work to generate income for the family. According to the End Decade Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2000), 49 percent of girls aged 5 to 14 are working.

Says a Somali mother, "We want our girls to go to school so that they can be the same as girls anywhere in the world. If someone has no education, she is blind; if she goes to school, she can see light. But we do need girls to help us in the house and it is very hard to tell our sons to do any work."

Gender imbalances are also felt in the teaching profession where only 12 percent of teachers are female, and a meagre 3 percent of head teachers are female.

UNICEF integrates gender issues into all aspects of its programming, including policy development, school rehabilitation, training and development of new educational resources. In the two northern zones, UNICEF has supported authorities in drafting gender-responsive education policies, and efforts are being made to include more women within the education system amongst the education functionaries and managers.

Why are girls important?

The overall priority for UNICEF is for all children to realise their right to basic education of good quality.

The hurdles both girls and boys need to get over in order to have a good quality education are big. However for girls, the obstacles are, for the most part, larger and more frequent – simply because they are girls. Their gender puts them in a weaker or different position with regards to power relations, privileges and needs.

The efforts invested by UNICEF and its partners in education have shown that a focus on girls' education is often the most effective inroad to achieving education for all children. Programme strategies and interventions for girls have proved to be at least as beneficial for boys. For example, educated mothers are more likely to send all their children, both boys and girls, to school. Girls' education helps to ensure quality of education for all by raising awareness about attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate disparities and discrimination.

Girls' education is also inseparable from the prevention of HIV/AIDS and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. It helps reduce child and maternal mortality and leads to improved child protection policies, from increased registration of infants at birth to reduction of child labour.

Girls' education is therefore a crucial link to the fulfilment of other rights for present and future generations of children.

UNICEF and partners focus on three areas in their work on girls' education:

- Access – ensuring that girls are getting into school
- Retention – once in school, they remain in school and complete at least primary level of education
- Achievement – that girls complete their education literate, numerate and equipped with life skills



An Opportunity for Change

The new curriculum is a cornerstone for education reforms at the primary school level.

Key to UNICEF education policy is the provision of quality basic education. This means that the focus is on learning rather than merely schooling. Educational curriculum, both content and methodology, must allow learners to develop knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes that are useful for life and that can be adapted as life circumstances change. Emergencies and transitional recovery periods can be used optimally to introduce reforms and innovations in weak education systems.

One of the biggest achievements for UNICEF and its partners in Somalia has been the development of a new, contemporary curriculum, syllabus and textbooks for grades 1 to 4 at the lower primary level. This process has produced 24 syllabi and textbooks covering six basic subjects – maths, science, social studies, Somali language, Arabic, and Islamic studies.

The new curriculum is a cornerstone for education reforms at the primary school level. It also represents a major shift in UNICEF's previous modus operandi, when it supported reprinting and distribution of old textbooks based on a curriculum that was developed over a decade ago. It became clear that the content of the old curriculum needed major revision to prepare children for the challenges of the modern world and to introduce teaching methodologies that were child-centred.

Developing a national curriculum and textbooks in a country where no central government exists, and where agreement is often hard to come by, presented a creative challenge. Forty Somali educationalists joined a two-year roving consultation process that was often fraught with political sensitivities and serious logistical problems. Most images of girls were disputed: should girls appear at the front of the class, or eating – even playing – with boys?

However the consultative textbook writing workshops, under UNICEF leadership, achieved what was intended: to guarantee debate and negotiation, resolve differing viewpoints and ensure 'ownership' by the partners and decision makers from across Somalia under difficult and sensitive conditions.

This arduous process has resulted in a standardised curriculum and textbooks that are acceptable, culturally appropriate, technically sound and which reflect contemporary, child-friendly teaching methodologies. The textbooks are well illustrated, attractive, and comparable to the best available in the region.

About 90 percent of the primary schools have embraced and adopted the home-grown national curriculum for the 2002–3 academic year. It is expected that the new curriculum will eventually replace the old pre-1991 curricula and other foreign systems currently in use in some 10 percent of the remaining primary schools.

Some 500,000 textbooks have already been distributed to schools across the country, thanks to the determination and efforts of UNICEF and its partners, particularly UNESCO, the local authorities and NGOs.

Financial contributions for the curriculum development project have come from a wide range of donors, including DANIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the governments of Japan and the Netherlands, UNICEF National Committees in the Netherlands and Japan, and from UNICEF general resources. The European Union provided the funds used by UNESCO for the cost of printing bulk of the textbooks.

Children have welcomed the arrival of textbooks with overwhelming excitement. One child in Hargeisa exclaimed in delight, "I have never had textbooks with such colourful pictures before!" Girls are, for the first time, seeing images of themselves.

Teachers too are thankful for the text books and curriculum. Says Mustafa Mahmoud Ismael, "The new method is child-centred. Now we involve the children in activities...and they participate. We work in groups, we use role play and drama. The children love playing games and are getting more enthusiastic. The new textbooks are wonderful; the children love the coloured pictures and there are images of girls."

"This is an important beginning," says Leila Pakkala, UNICEF Senior Programme Officer. "The new curriculum and textbooks, together with other vital educational interventions, will provide Somali children with fresh and exciting new learning opportunities to help shape the future of their country."

But challenges still remain. The need for substantial additional resources to ensure that the educational reforms are taken to scale at both lower and upper primary levels is vital. Long-term sustainability for the entire education sector will be ensured if support is extended beyond the primary level to secondary and tertiary education, alongside substantial increases in primary enrolment.



Providing Education Materials

UNICEF has been distributing education kits in Somalia since 1993. Such packages initially provided a rapid and simple education response in times of crisis because they could be adapted to specific groups of learners, such as internally displaced children.

In 1998, UNICEF reviewed the kits to assess their effectiveness in a country under transformation. The conclusion of this evaluation was that the contents of the kits were not always responsive to the differing and often improved conditions in many areas of Somalia. The kits were also found to be unsustainable as they were sourced from outside Somalia.

UNICEF, in consultation with local authorities, teachers, NGOs and other partners, developed two revised kits, one for pupils (Kit-B) and another for teachers and schools (Kit-A). These kits are now more responsive to local conditions and in tandem with the new curriculum.

Kit-B is designed for the lower primary grades, 1 to 4, for a class of 40 pupils. Kits for the upper primary levels will be developed once funding has been secured.

The teacher/school Kit-A provides a teacher and the school with the basic supplies to carry out interactive child-centred learning, while the pupil Kit-B contains slates, chalk, pencils, crayons, ball point pens and note books. UNICEF has trained teachers, head teachers, school supervisors, education authorities and NGOs how to use, maintain and replenish the kits. In 1999 and 2000 both kits were distributed to all operational primary schools across the country. This exercise is being repeated for the 2002–3 school year.

Educational kits are useful to “kick start” educational activities during emergencies. However, they are only a beginning and should be seen as a supplement to more comprehensive initiatives aimed at developing quality education that is accessible to all.



Making Schools Healthy & Joyful

Today, a growing number of primary schools are operating, most established and maintained by communities on shoestring budgets. Others receive support from external agencies and local authorities. However there is no uniformity in school construction or rehabilitation. While some schools are built to good standards, others remain dark, unventilated and child-unfriendly. The most recent school survey found that while 71 percent of operational schools had permanent concrete buildings, nearly half of all schools did not have latrines, making them unhealthy and particularly unfit for girls.

UNICEF and partner humanitarian agencies agreed that standardisation in school buildings and facilities was urgently needed. So UNICEF developed a low-cost but quality school rehabilitation guidelines with minimum standards of space, security, air and light, and modular plans for playgrounds, latrines and water supply systems.

The guidelines also take into account the special needs of female pupils, and can now be implemented by all communities and partners using local building material. With UNICEF's assistance, Somali construction supervisors will soon receive on-the-job training as they participate in rehabilitating about 100 school facilities by the end of 2003.

Creating and maintaining school environments that are clean, attractive and safe is deemed important from an educational point of view. UNICEF and Somali education experts have developed a manual called *'Improvement of the School Environment'*. It contains creative ideas for teachers, school administrators and communities to make classrooms, school buildings and school compounds cheerful, attractive, tidy, safe and stimulating for teaching and learning. Schools can plant their own gardens, for example, or parents can lend a hand to build swings and slides in a playground.



Joyful Learning Spaces

"Joyful Learning Spaces: A Guide for Construction of Child Friendly Schools and Play-grounds for Somali Children" developed by UNICEF, is a manual aimed at UN agencies, NGOs, communities and authorities. It gives guidelines and innovative ideas for rehabilitating primary schools, playgrounds and resource centres using minimum construction standards. Examples of these are:

- Promote use of local design and material whilst ensuring safety and cost efficiency.
- Design girl-friendly school environments such as separate toilets for male and female pupils and teachers. Involve female members of CECs in the planning process.
- School buildings should be oriented along an east-west axis to avoid the morning or afternoon sun shining directly into the classrooms, overheating them and making them very uncomfortable.
- Design buildings to cater for students with disabilities, such as an easily accessible main entrance and unobstructed pedestrian routes.
- Plan a modular school design with future expansion in mind.

The manual also explains how to prepare proper tender and contract documentation, gives detailed technical information on construction and provides sample designs for different types of school, ranging from a coastal, traditionally inspired school to a rural/urban 12-classroom modular school.

The manual is available from the UNICEF Somalia Support Centre in Nairobi.

Gathering the Figures

“The establishment of an EMIS system in Somalia has been a ground-breaking initiative...”

One of the biggest challenges to education planning and policy development in Somalia was the lack of reliable national data. There were also no standard monitoring tools for teachers or education officers to assess the performance of pupils and schools. “We simply did not know how many schools there were, how many children were enrolled or what equipment and curriculum were in use,” remarks Geeta Verma, UNICEF Education Officer, recalling the early days.

UNICEF, in partnership with local education authorities and NGOs in all zones, started a process of annual surveys to gather data on primary schools. The first survey was conducted in 1997, followed by others every year. With each survey, the questionnaire was refined and data gathered on a wider range of indicators, providing key information at local, regional, zonal and national levels.

Also critical for planning has been the development and implementation of a standardised school-based Education Management Information System (EMIS). UNICEF, education authorities and other partners have been using these tools and system for the past two years. The aim of EMIS is to standardise the collection of data at the school level and to create a computerised database at the regional, zonal and national level. Information would be collated from the school-level data and regularly updated, generating education statistics and reports.

REPORT CARD		
Past Record	Achievements	Remarks
<p>Education has been one of the biggest casualties of 1991 civil war.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 90% of school buildings were damaged or completely destroyed. ✗ Many qualified Somalis, including teachers, left the country. ✗ By 2001, only 22% of men and 12% of women were literate. 	<p>A modest public education system is supported by communities, NGOs, foreign donors, and in northwest and northeast, the administration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1,105 primary schools are operational, almost twice as many as in 1990. ✓ 260,000 students are enrolled, a 75% increase over the same period. ✓ In all zones, enrolment is steadily growing. ✓ A new Somali primary school curriculum, with syllabus and textbooks, is in use across six subjects. ✓ 6,500 teachers have now received 19 days of standardised in-service training in 2002. ✓ A standardised Education Management Information System (EMIS) is in place to provide a computerised database of primary education statistics. ✓ Gender issues are integrated into all resources and materials. ✓ Community education committees have been formed and activated for nearly every school. ✓ Primary level Non-formal education programmes in numeracy, literacy, science, social studies and life skills for out of school youth is up and running. 	<p>Several challenges persist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Only 17% of children of school-age attend school. * 60% of enrolled children are in the lower primary level. * Only 35% of enrolled children are in girls. * Only 12% of teachers are women, 3% head teachers and 21% community education committee members. * There are only some 15 secondary schools in the whole country and one nascent tertiary level education institution in Somaliland.

The EMIS uses three data collection tools at the school level—a Pupil Card, a Class Register, and a School Register. These tools, printed in large quantities by UNICEF, are distributed to all operational schools at the start of the new school year. All primary school teachers, head teachers and supervisors have been trained in data collection through on-the-job training and during the mass in-service teacher training programme conducted in 2002.

UNICEF has also developed software for EMIS data aggregation and analysis. Hardware such as computers and printers has been provided to regional and zonal education authorities in charge of data entry and data aggregation. They have received training on how to use the software and once the whole system is in place, the annual school surveys will be phased out and replaced by the statistics generated through EMIS. The idea behind building capacity in EMIS at the regional and zonal level is that all partners, including education authorities, will be able to use this data to do educational planning and policy development by themselves.

The establishment of an EMIS system in Somalia has been a ground-breaking initiative, allowing, for the first time, standardised data to be available to all NGOs, donors and local authorities. UNICEF and UNESCO have already used EMIS statistics to plan for the number of textbooks to be printed, identify functioning schools for textbook distribution, and plan and conduct in-service teacher training.



Teaching the Teachers

“In the past, male teachers – and even the bigger boys –
harassed the girl students and teachers”

– Mohammed Abdirahman Jama, teacher trainer

To coincide with the distribution of new textbooks, UNICEF with local authorities, provided in-service training to 6,500 mostly lower primary school teachers between March and July 2002.

UNICEF hired four international subject-specialists to train 64 teacher trainers from zonal authorities. A Trainer's Manual was developed for each subject and a standardised 19-day course devised to teach all lower primary school teachers. The course familiarised the teachers with the textbooks and taught them how to teach four subjects – maths, science, social studies and Somali language. A similar course for Arabic and Islamic studies is being finalised. Incorporated in the training were child-centred and gender-sensitive teaching techniques, as well as textbook management and basic school data collection for EMIS. Teachers discussed issues such as girls' education and how they could persuade parents to send girls to school.





“Gender training is a key issue,” says Mohammed Abdirahman Jama, a 39 year-old teacher trainer. “In the past, male teachers—and even the bigger boys – harassed the girl students and teachers. Now we discuss how to involve girl students, and how to encourage women head teachers and community leaders. We impress on the teachers the importance of following up on girls who are often absent, and of providing separate latrines for girls. Heads must find out if teachers are paying equal attention to both boys and girls and follow up any problems.”

This is the first time in Somalia’s history the such a large number of primary teachers have benefited from standardised in-service training. Feedback from teachers, through course evaluation forms, and from international NGOs whose teachers participated in the training, has been very positive. “It was well worth waiting for,” says Patrick Muraguri from the NGO, International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP). Abdi Fatah Muhammed Hersi, a science teacher from the Northwest Zone, said “I like the training as we learn about the new methods of teaching by example...we now have material and guidelines to help us prepare classes. Before we had to do it all ourselves.”

It is hoped that this training will have a significant impact on the quality of primary education in Somalia. The annual School Survey 2001-2 reveals an improved increase (about 30 percent) in the numbers of pupils enrolled since the previous year. This may reflect the growing confidence in the quality of education among parents now that they know that their teachers have been trained and are using high quality teaching material.

This is the first phase of a series of on-the-job training programmes which will take place over the next three years. The aim is to upgrade teachers’ knowledge and skills over a three year period so that they can receive certification equivalent to that of graduates from teacher training colleges.

Sums

Some 6,500 teachers have taken part in on-the-job teacher training workshops, conducted by UNICEF with education authorities in the northwest and northeast and NGOs.

- Four subjects are taught for four days each, followed by a day on gender issues and one on the education management information system and textbook management.
- UNICEF pays a daily subsistence allowance of US\$8 if a teacher is not local; US\$4 a day if he/she is.
- Somali trainers get paid around US\$200 a month for training teachers; in this first phase they worked for about four months doing training sessions.
- Only a handful of teacher trainers are women, partly because few understand English – which was the medium of training of trainers. UNICEF is taking remedial action to correct this imbalance.

The Missing Link

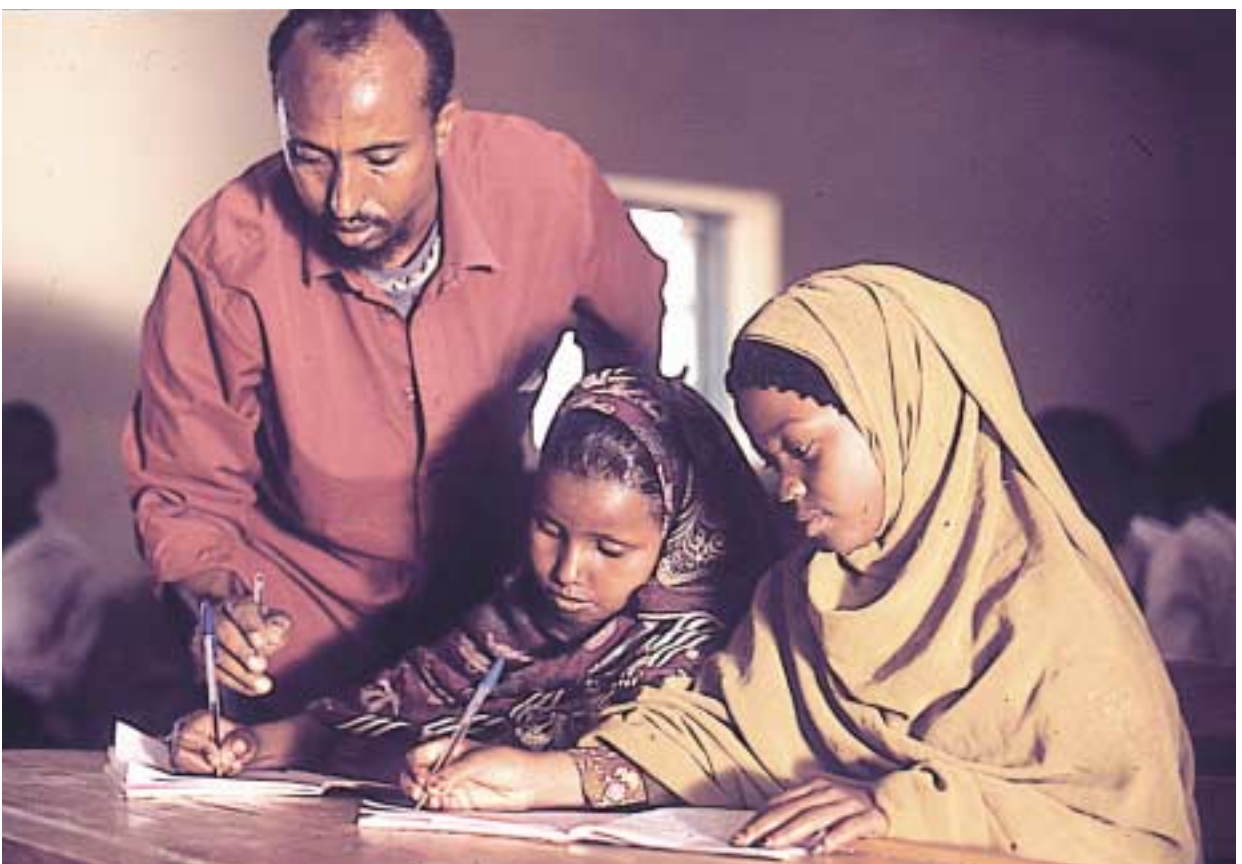
“Where a school has a strong female role model, the impact on girls’ enrolment is tremendous.”

An important missing link between teachers and education authorities was a cadre of supervisors that could provide mentoring and guidance to teachers, head teachers and community education committees at the school level.

Before the civil war, there was inadequate professional supervision and guidance of schools, aggravating poor teaching quality. Many schools did not even have a head teacher but operated under a cluster system where one person served as head for several schools. Whatever supervision structure existed then was swept away by the conflict.

Since then, a few NGOs have provided supervision for groups of schools under their project support. UNICEF and UNESCO staff have also carried out wider supervisory functions on an ad hoc basis. In 1997/98, the nascent “Ministry of Education” in Somaliland started putting in place a system of regional supervisors, as did the authorities in some parts of the Northeast zone. However, a strong cadre of supervisors was still missing.

In 2000, UNICEF and partners under the ESC/SACB umbrella set up a programme to identify and train supervisors over a period of three years for a target 1,500 schools. The aim was to have a cadre of professionals that would fulfil a number of functions,





including community mobilisation, collection of data for EMIS, distribution of educational supplies, management of educational resources, improvement of school environments and training of CECs.

So far, 86 supervisors from across Somalia have been trained. But very few – about six – are women. Low female representation in teaching and other professions is a common problem in Somalia where historically, women have not had access to education. In addition, the very limited presence of upper primary grades seriously impedes girls' transition from lower to upper grades and completion of grade 8 level education, thereby increasing the imbalance.

To overcome this in the short term, UNICEF is identifying women with relevant academic credentials and potential with the objective of developing support strategies that will facilitate their recruitment in the cadre of education functionaries and authorities. However, longer term strategies ensuring, at a minimum, completion of grade 8 by girls are urgently required, so that substantial reinforcement of women's participation can be expected.

Where a school has a strong female role model, the impact on girls' enrolment is tremendous. Batula Hussein Sheikh is a supervisor of 14 primary schools in Berdale town and district, and head of a primary school of 450 pupils. She proudly says that there has been a 100 percent increase in girls in her school since she became a head. She also works hard in her role as supervisor to improve school standards and achievement rates.

"As a supervisor, I check that teachers are attending and that the quality of their teaching is good. I check children's attendance and success in annual examinations. About 70 percent of the children succeed and move on to a higher grade; the others repeat the exam. I encourage parents to attend meetings and also encourage them to help build up their schools."



Young People: Agents of Change

“An entire generation of young people in Somalia, now 17 years old, has lost out on education. ”

An entire generation of young people in Somalia, now 17 years old, has lost out on education. Ahmed Hassan has lived in a camp for internally displaced people for 10 years. “I belong to the ‘lost’ generation which has been disrupted by war. We are not young, but we are not fully adult, as we are not educated. A lot of my contemporaries spend their time chewing *khat*.”

Some of these young people have organised themselves into a loose network of youth groups in search of meaning and purpose to their lives. But lack of experience, skills and guidance have prevented these well-intentioned young women and men from becoming effective “agents of change”.

UNICEF’s Youth Education and Development programme aims to redress this imbalance by helping strengthen the capacity of community-based youth organisations. This is being done through a multi-pronged approach using sports and cultural activities, libraries, non-formal education, and training and capacity building in leadership and organisational development. This programme will benefit about 4,000 young people from 800 youth organisations all around the country by end 2003.

Four youth leaders from each youth group are now being trained in strategic planning, management and leadership, effective communication, team building and conflict resolution skills. Youth programme managers from international NGOs are also included in this training as they will be responsible for overall supervision of the programme.

UNICEF has also supported and funded rehabilitation of 36 sports fields and playgrounds for girls and boys, including installing latrines and safe water supplies. Sports supplies have been distributed and training provided to coaches. Young people have been taking part in tournaments, football matches and cultural activities organised around themes of peace, eradication of female genital mutilation, prevention of HIV/AIDS and promotion of immunization. More girls are joining in sports and recreational activities.

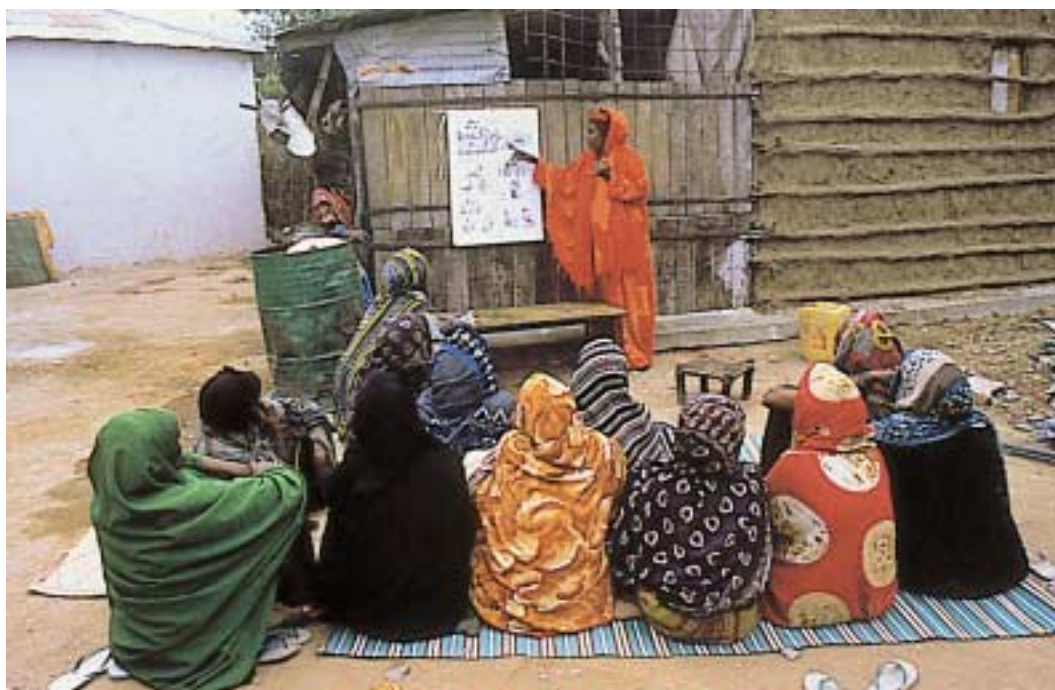


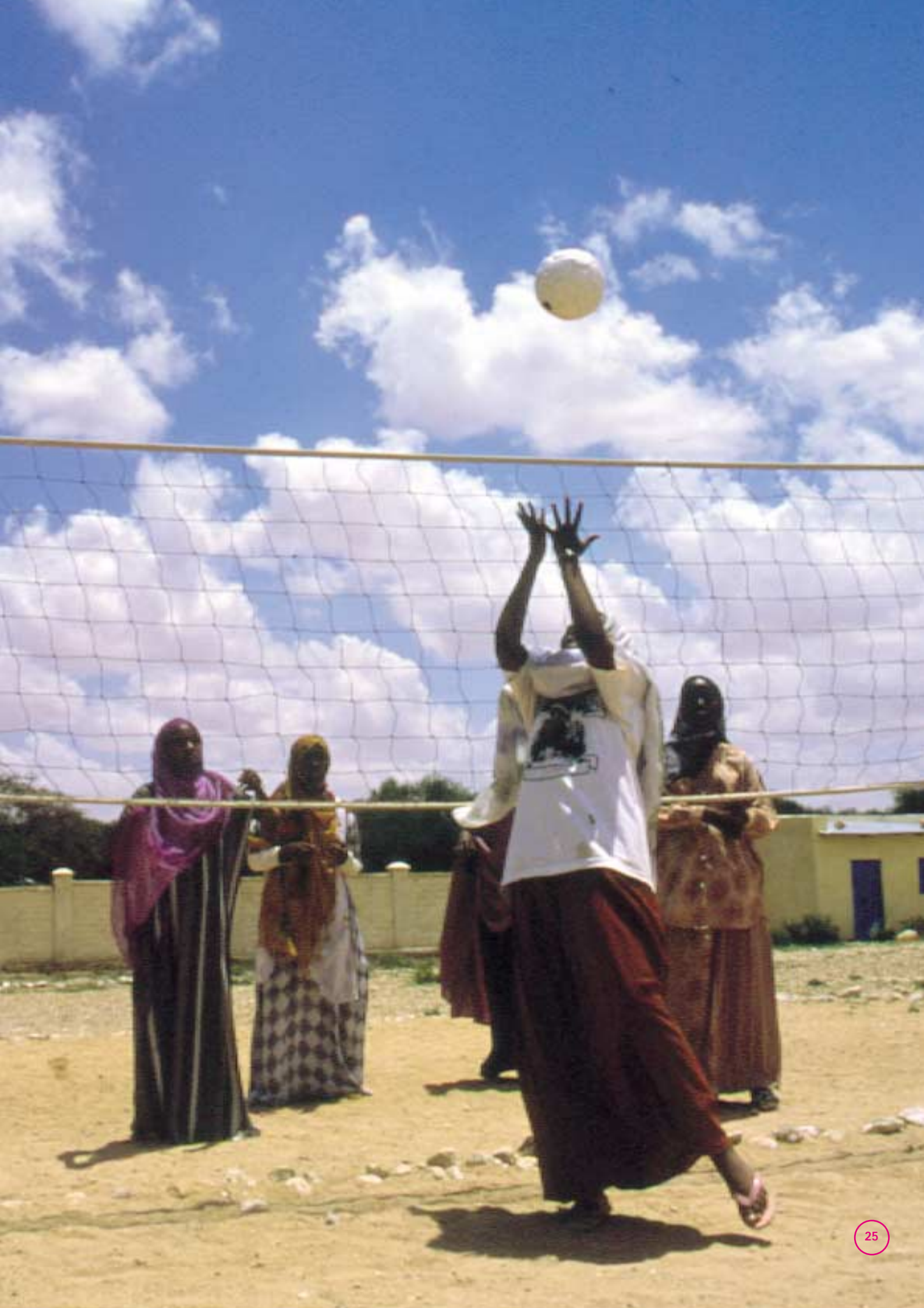
Halima Ali receives free lessons at an NGO centre for education and sport. She says, "My two sisters and I live in our grandfather's shack; our mother has gone to Berbera to live with another husband and our father is mentally ill. Our mother sends money, but it is not enough for us to go to school. We clean the house in the mornings, but every afternoon we walk from our home to SOCA, where education is free. We also play volleyball – we love it! When we get our certificates from here, we can go either to primary school, or into a job or business."

UNICEF, with the technical help of Somali and expatriate education experts, has launched a new Non-Formal Education (NFE) programme for young people who have missed out on school altogether or whose education was cut short before they could complete primary education.

The NFE package includes a standardised primary level curriculum, syllabus, learner modules and teachers' guides for literacy, numeracy, science, social studies, business studies and life skills, including awareness on sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation, child rights, peace building, and other relevant areas. Added to this is a kit of essential supplies such as chalk, a blackboard, a map of the world and stationery. The NFE packages, including supplies, were delivered following the launch of the programme in Somalia in September 2002.

With the support of UNICEF, NGOs, and local authorities, a core group of 24 NFE teacher trainers has been identified from all parts of the country and trained. Teaching guidelines and modules have been prepared as well. The teacher trainers had completed training of about 800 NFE teachers by December 2002. NFE teachers are selected from youth groups, local/international NGOs and authorities.





The Way Forward

UNICEF and its partners are proud to say that the 'what' and the 'how' for provision of quality primary education in Somalia are now mostly in place. A strong foundation has been laid down over the past five years. A modern and gender-sensitive lower primary curriculum is in place, with new textbooks to match which are generating a lot of enthusiasm for education. All teachers at the lower primary level benefited from intensive teacher-training in 2002. Parents, teachers and authorities are busy transforming schools and recreational spaces into attractive and cheerful environments, and the number of schools is steadily on the rise. Young people have the opportunity to learn essential skills to become effective "agents of change".

"All this has been made possible by committed and determined partners who have rallied around to ensure delivery of children's fundamental right to education," says Jesper Morch, the UNICEF Somalia Representative. Parents, village elders, young people and children themselves have all demonstrated that there is great desire for education in Somalia. Whether this has meant collecting contributions from everyone in the village, helping to repair the roof of a school building, or peering over a new colourful textbook and deciding in that moment that going to school was worth every effort, their commitment is inspiring. Nascent local authorities, NGOs, UN agencies and donors have been there to answer to Somalia's cry for education. Much time and significant resources have been invested in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the country. Now is the time for the "quantum leap" – taking quality education to an increasingly greater number of children and young people.



But great hurdles remain. Large investments need to be made to take the recent successes to scale. Improving the quality of education is an important step but this needs to be made accessible to the majority of Somali children. With only 17 percent of school-age children enrolled in primary school, this low coverage presents a great challenge to the country. More primary schools are needed as well as learning and teaching materials. While girls' education rates are not abysmal with 35 percent of the primary school population being girls, the momentum needs to be strengthened by employing more women teachers, encouraging parents to send their girls to school, and making schools girl-friendly. Marginalised children, such as nomads, former child soldiers, orphans, children living on the street, children in conflict with the law, and children with disabilities, have the right to quality education but are often the last to benefit from it. They need to be put at the centre of schooling in an inclusive manner appropriate to their special learning needs.

However, a strong foundation at the primary level cannot be effective for human resource development if secondary and tertiary education is practically non-existent. Where will the primary teachers of tomorrow come from? UNICEF strongly advocates that more attention be paid to maintaining the momentum of today and investing in education systems in Somalia at primary and higher levels.





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