

THE WOMENS VILLAGE EDUCATION (WOVE) PROGRAMME IN SOMALILAND

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The overall aim of the WOVE Programme is to empower women living in rural and pastoral nomadic areas in Somaliland by improving their access to literacy, numeracy and life skills education in health, nutrition, hygiene, environmental awareness and women's and children's rights.

The programme has six objectives namely:

- (1) To enable 4000 women living in rural and pastoral nomadic areas in Somaliland to access and complete locally developed and delivered functional literacy, numeracy and relevant life skills programmes.
- (2) To develop local capacity in the remote and rural areas of Somaliland for delivering locally based education and training projects, especially projects for women.
- (3) To develop the teaching skills of fifty women living in remote and rural areas of Somaliland, especially their skills in teaching adult literacy, numeracy and life skills to women.
- (4) To encourage and foster capacity at the village, regional and national level to make fair and transparent decisions making and in applying equal opportunities for people from different clans and minority groups.
- (5) To encourage and foster a continuing and sustained reading habits and use of literacy in rural and remote areas of Somaliland by the local development of relevant and suitable Somali curriculum and supplementary reading materials for adult basic readers.
- (6) To promote peace and reconciliation amongst men and women from different ethnic and clan areas by developing and fostering positive working relations between village and regional community groups from the different areas involved in the project.

In order to achieve these objectives a Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA) was conducted to identify community and stakeholder views on desired outcomes, impacts and indicators of attainment to be used for the project. Following this a local curriculum development workshop was held to design and develop local relevant teaching and learning materials suitable for teaching literacy, numeracy and life skills to women in rural and remote areas, specifically in health, nutrition, hygiene, environmental awareness and women and children's rights. The facilitators and all participants were from Somaliland.

Following the workshop the Somali project co-ordinator and two regional assistant project officers worked with local organisations to develop fair and transparent

procedures for selecting the target villages and the individual beneficiaries within those villages. Regional and village selection committees and monitoring groups were established and each group received training from the local project staff.

Fifty women were then selected as prospective teachers. Each was selected in consultation with the local village committee, where potential women with previous teaching experience were chosen. All received training in the use of the locally developed WOVE curriculum. The village committees then worked with the local project staff to select 2,000 women for the first phase of the literacy, numeracy and life skills course. The classes were arranged in the home villages at times and locations suitable for and acceptable for the women enrolled.

Following the establishment of the classes the project then provided training workshops and financial support to help local writers and artists to produce reading materials relevant to and suitable for adult basic readers, especially women living in rural and remote areas. Twenty short booklets, on topics relevant to the lives and interests of the learners were written, illustrated and printed locally and multiple copies were distributed to all WOVE classes.

The project is now entering its third year. To date over 3,000 women have attended the literacy, numeracy and life skills courses across Somaliland and approximately 20,000 copies of the supplementary reading materials have been printed and distributed to the WOVE learners and other students. In the third year of the project women learners in each WOVE village will be encouraged to prepare and submit a short proposal for a Women's Community Project. In preparing the proposal they will be asked to demonstrate how their literacy, numeracy and life skills have improved their ability to act together to help their local community. A project committee with representatives from the village groups from each region will then be asked to review and select the projects for small grants to enable the women to implement what the local community considers to be the best proposals.