

ACCESS

Providing opportunities to
access basic education to children
in difficult circumstances



actionaid
tanzania

ActionAid Tanzania is an international non-governmental organisation committed to fighting for a better world with communities, in order to eradicate poverty, injustice and inequality. To achieve this objective ActionAid Tanzania has worked with rural communities in Tanzania since 1998 to improve access to education, fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and create opportunities for poor communities to improve their livelihoods.

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ACCESS is an acronym for "Appropriate, Cost-effective Centres for Education within the School System". The central idea of ACCESS is to provide basic education for children, in an appropriate, flexible and cost-effective way. The children attending ACCESS centres eventually join the formal school system.

ACCESS is not an alternative or competing education system. ACCESS is a complementing system that feeds into and reinforces the formal school system. But unlike the formal schools, ACCESS emphasises flexibility in order to accommodate the needs of children living in poor communities or difficult circumstances.

Classes are given in an ACCESS centre, which is located inside a village. This makes basic education easily available to children aged 7 to 14 years. This community-based programme also promotes access to education for girls, because families are sure that their daughters are safe when they are within the village. The centres are linked to a formal school, and serve as satellites to the parent school. ACCESS centres do not require children to wear school uniforms. This reduces the cost of education without affecting its quality.

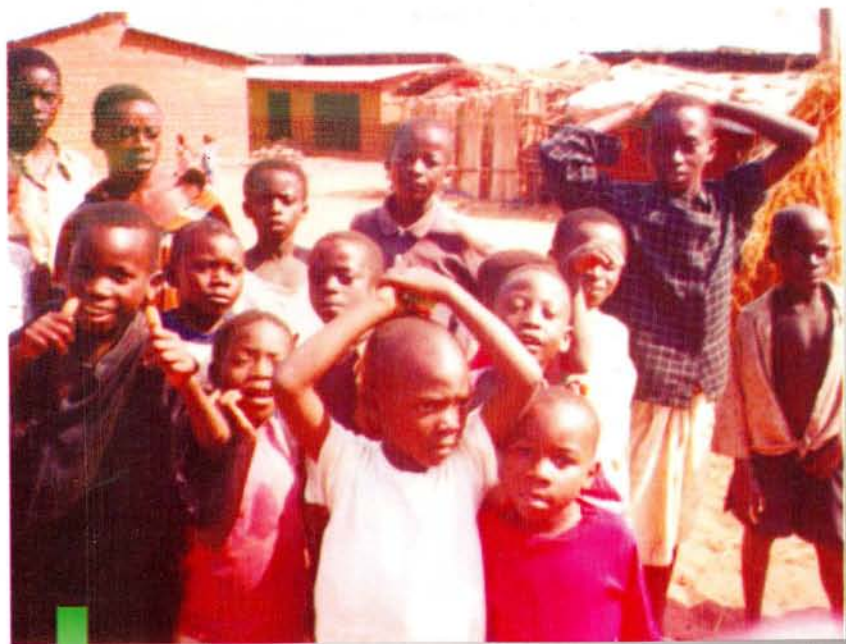


*Eager learners
are not
discouraged by
lack of furniture.*

Reaching Children Out of School

"After only two years of studying at Rugunga ACCESS centre my daughter Asha is now able to read the information written on her younger brother's clinic card and reminds her mother on the date of the next appointment." Mr. Iddi Mkwafi of Machazo sub-village, in Kigoma Region, is happy that his daughter can now read and write. A short while ago, this would not have been possible. Like many families in the region, Mr. Mkwafi was unable to raise the various fees required in formal schools - tuition fees, uniforms, textbooks, and levies for school construction and maintenance. Even when a family could sacrifice and pay the fees, the schools were too far from the village, forcing children to walk very long distances, sometimes through areas with wild animals. Poor families also needed their children to help with farming and other income generating activities.

Each year of schooling gained by a child increases his or her chances of escaping from poverty.



Thousands of families cannot afford to take their children to formal schools.



Girls attending ACCESS Centres are emerging role models in the community.

ActionAid Tanzania conducted studies in Kigoma and Lindi regions to find out why many children did not have access to basic education. Poverty was a major reason why children were not attending school. In addition, a large number of children dropped out of school before completing their primary education. Communities established that the poor enrollment and retention was caused by:

- Parents' inability to meet basic school needs such as stationery, school fees and uniforms;
- The long distances children had to walk to reach school; and
- Inflexible time-tables that did not allow children to participate in home activities.

The communities also observed that teachers were not committed to their jobs and the parents had no say about how the schools were run. They also felt that the curriculum was not relevant to the lives of their children.

Villagers in Ilagala and Makata divisions decided to do something about their children's education. After analysing the problems they agreed to adopt the ACCESS programme, which they believed, would give their children a chance for education.

The ACCESS Centre

The community builds the ACCESS centres. The centres are established in sub-villages and start with a minimum of eight children. Sub-village leaders guide the community in conducting a census of out-of-school children. With this information the community determines where the centre will be located and also select the ACCESS Centre management committee.

At each step towards establishing a centre, the village Council, Ward Education Coordinators, head teachers of the nearby parent primary schools and other government officials are informed. The final decisions are however reached and implemented by villagers. This ensures that the ACCESS centres is fully owned, managed and supported by the village.



A few centres are housed in permanent buildings and have furniture.

The community provides the physical facilities, which are constructed using locally available low cost materials. The classrooms can be made of mud walls and grass thatch roofs. However, ACCESS classes can be held in any convenient physical facility available in the area including private homes, churches, or mosques.

The centre calendar and the timing of the classes are flexible and are determined by the community. This ensures that children's classes do not overlap with seasons when they are needed for planting and harvesting. On average the classes run for 3-4 hours each day for five days in a week. The daily timing of the classes changes to suit the

community. For example, during a planting season classes may be held in the afternoon only or suspended for a short while. The maximum class size is 40 children, which allows a favourable atmosphere for teaching and learning. Centres operate a shift-system when children exceed 40 and also to serve children at different levels of learning. With the shift system, one facility accommodates many more children without requiring additional rooms. To further reduce costs, children learning at ACCESS centres do not wear uniforms.



Children do not need to wear uniforms to attend an ACCESS centre.

The Curriculum: The centres use the national curriculum, but develop teaching and learning methods that suit the local children. Graduates of an ACCESS centre fit into the formal school programme, often performing better than children in formal primary schools.

Guiding Principles

1. Community participation
2. Relevant curriculum
3. Linked to parent school
4. Learner-centred
5. Flexible timetable
6. Nearby classes
7. Low cost to families
8. Use local materials
9. Supported by the community
10. Integrated with development activities
11. Gives equal opportunities to girls and boys

ACCESS Facilitators

Facilitators teach children and manage the ACCESS centers. They are para-professionals who work on a part-time and voluntarily basis. They are community members who are identified and selected from within and by the community. Qualifications are flexible depending on the scarcity or availability of educated people in the area. However, 7 years of primary education is the minimum qualification required of a facilitator to teach at an ACCESS centre.



For many facilitators the ACCESS programme is an opportunity to continue their academic life.

Training of facilitators is an important component of the ACCESS programme. It determines the quality of the teaching-learning process and the success or failure of the programme. Tutors from the closest teacher training college, the head teachers of parent primary school, Ward education coordinators, and ActionAid Tanzania, conduct the training. Facilitators learn teaching methods, child psychology, lesson planning, and evaluation of children's performance. They also learn how to manage an ACCESS centre and how to mobilise a community around education issues.

Local education officials train facilitators every three months, for one week. The training is reinforced during weekly meetings with the ward education coordinators. Once a year the facilitators attend a three-week course at a teacher training college.

The facilitator's duties and responsibilities are not limited to classroom activities.

Teaching in Kamiyovu
Sofia Stephen has a secondary school certificate. When she got married she moved to Kamiyovu and to her dismay there was no school or library within miles. She thought her academic life was over until an ACCESS centre was established in her village. "The Centre has given me a chance to use my knowledge and skills in teaching children in my community. I feel happy and satisfied because all members of the community value my contribution."

She/he is also expected to create awareness and mobilise the community around education issues, and to maintain healthy relationships with parents through visits to homes. The facilitator is also the secretary of the ACCESS committee that manages the Centre.

A Community Resource

The success of the ACCESS programme is not just the education of children. The ultimate goal is to lay a foundation for community ownership of cost effective, relevant and flexible basic education institutions. They enhance the communities' capacities to manage and sustain the ACCESS programme far into the future.

An ACCESS committee manages each centre. The committee has 4 or 5 members including the centre's facilitator. Parents elect the committee members, who must be people who are respected by the community and who are able to coordinate activities of the centre. The committee members receive training through the district education office to develop management skills.

The community, through the guidance of the centre committee, is responsible for:

- selecting, recruiting and monitoring facilitators;
- constructing the ACCESS centre;
- ensuring continual attendance of their children;
- collecting teaching and learning materials; and
- paying facilitators.



During training, facilitators develop learning and teaching materials that they will use at the ACCESS centre.

Constructing the Centre is a shared activity.



Parents are encouraged to provide basic learning materials such as pencils and exercise books but children without these items nevertheless attend all classes. Materials are also provided through the parent primary school and the Ward Education Coordinator.

The committee sets its regulations and ensures parents fulfill their obligations. The committee monitors the work of the facilitators, ensuring they attend all their classes. At weekly committee meetings, the members discuss attendance and performance of children and the issues related to the physical facilities. The committee works with the parent primary school head teacher and Ward education coordinator to:

- determine the daily schedule and annual calendar of classes;
- collect teaching and learning materials from the district education officer, parent primary school and collaborating NGOs; and
- evaluate the performance of the children.

Each month the committee invites parents and the Ward education coordinator to receive reports on children's performance and on the physical structures. Parents also learn how they can support their children to perform well.

The committee is the community's link to the parent primary school and head teacher, Ward education coordinators, the district council, ActionAid Tanzania and other collaborating NGOs. The Committee

Athuman Kiboko, a retired village chairman, was pained to see so many children out of school. "There is only one school in our village with 600 pupils. But there were more than 500 school-aged children who could not attend the school because they live in four sub-villages that are 7 kilometres away.

We learnt about ACCESS from a neighbouring village. We had no difficulty mobilising the community to construct simple structures and contribute 200 shillings for facilitators, when they heard that was all that was required for their children to be educated.

Everyone wants their children to go to school. Now there are 400 children at the ACCESS centres. We have increased the number of children in school to over 1000."

follows-up issues that have been raised by the education officials. Twice a year the parents' committee meets with education officials to evaluate the overall performance of the ACCESS programme and make plans for the following six months.

Giving Hope for a Better Future

Since 1999, 4,356 children - 2150 girls and 2206 boys - who had little hope for education, have attended classes in 32 ACCESS centres. Access to basic education in Kigoma rural and Liwale districts has risen from 16% and 27% in 1998 to 76% and 80% in 2002, respectively. The number of children dropping out of school has also greatly reduced. 116 facilitators have taught the children and managed the centres.

Flexible programme: Children attending ACCESS centres are aged between 7 and 14 years. However, in some centres children of 15 years have joined the programme. Therefore, unlike the formal primary school where age 7 is set as the requirement to enroll in Class 1, the ACCESS programme provides a flexible age requirement. The only requirement for enrollment is the child's willingness to learn.

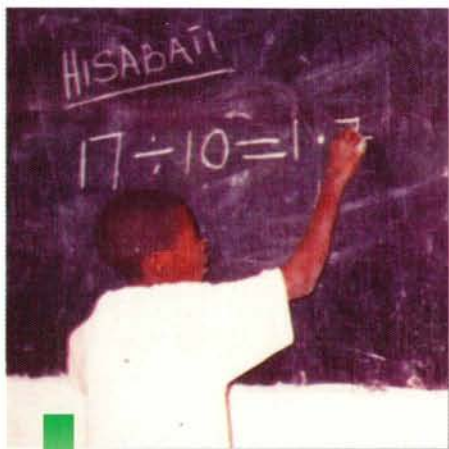
The attendance rates of children in the centres are very high. The flexible hours ensure that children do not have competing tasks to do at home, while also expected in class. The centres do not offer classes during seasons that children and their families are engaged in crucial activities for the home. Drop-out rates are lower than those of the



Flexible learning hours encourage parents to enroll their children at ACCESS centres.

formal school system. Mrs. Sofia Stephens, the ACCESS facilitator for Kamunyovu Centre in Ilagala confirms that ACCESS is making a difference in the lives of girls in the village. "Fewer and fewer girls are getting married at an early age or becoming pregnant. Many girls do not want to interrupt their schooling and they are role models in the village."

Children completing their basic education at the centre take the national standard four examinations. Many children out-perform their primary school peers.



ACCESS has given Mfaume Ngemba an opportunity to excel.

Mfaume Ngemba: Setting national standards

When he grows up Mfaume would like to be a politician - maybe even the president of Tanzania. Why? "As president I can move around the country and meet many people. I can also make many important decisions that will benefit all people, especially children" Mfaume's confidence does not show the hurdles he has had to climb to get an education.

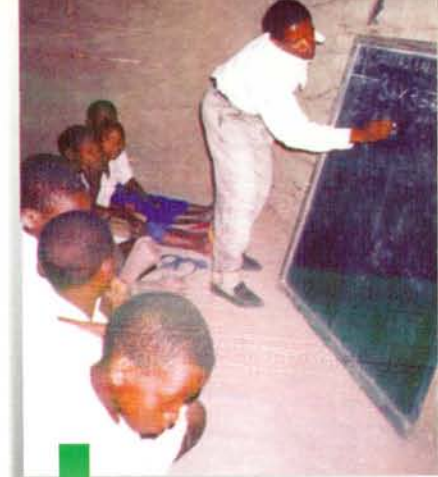
His parents invested in his education and enrolled him in Mlembwe primary school. However, before long they had to pull him out. Living in Mlembwe in Makata division, Mfaume had to walk 11 kms each day to the nearest primary school. His parents had to make the difficult decision for Mfaume's safety.

But after an ACCESS centre was opened in Nambinda village, Mfaume resumed his education. His parents encouragement and his hard work have earned divisional acclaim. His class 2 results were the highest in Makata division in 2000. Mfaume and his parents are determined not to make these early successes derail him from his goal - to attain university education.

Committed Facilitators: Among the reasons for the good performance of ACCESS graduates is the low facilitator-student ratio, close supervision of the Centre by the community, and the facilitator's accountability to the ACCESS committee and the community.

The support the facilitators receive is a small token compared to the work they do. Communities are grateful to facilitators for their commitment and motivation. Mr. Ezekial Kazyogo of Kabeba Access Centre in Kigoma rural district is happy to offer his service for the sake of the children. "Teaching in the ACCESS centres is very satisfying.

Giving children a chance to learn and seeing how eager they are to gain something new each day is worth all the effort. It is almost better than any amount of money the villagers can ever give me."



Committed facilitators have motivated children to work hard.

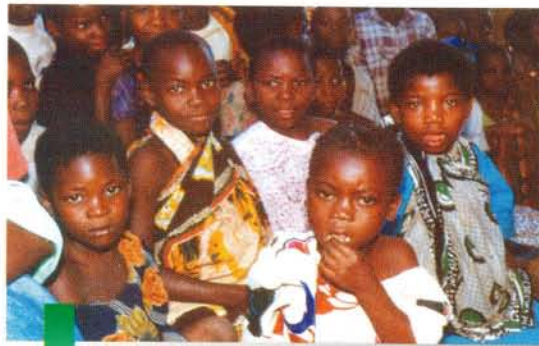
"I can now read and write. I like school because it is near my home. ACCESS is the saviour for me and my two sisters. My elder brothers and sisters only went until class three."

*- Zubeda Ahmed,
sixth child of Ahmed Baruani.*

Children are motivated to work hard when they see their facilitator's commitment. Children in ACCESS centres have been rewarded for their efforts. Over 500 children who transferred to primary schools performed so well that they were accelerated to higher classes than their age mates in the primary school.

Effective Partnerships: The pride of an ACCESS centre is the variety of partnerships it can forge. A Centre deliberately develops strong links with nearby primary schools to share experiences and learn from each other. Head teachers of parent schools support ACCESS centres with materials and often offer their time to assist ACCESS facilitators when they need an extra hand.

Partnership between facilitators and parents is key to effective learning. Good collaboration among parents, facilitators and pupils ensures that children perform very well. Children are motivated to learn when their parents are interested and involved in their education and in the smooth running of the ACCESS centres. The success of the ACCESS education model is challenging formal schooling. Many communities have requested support from ActionAid Tanzania to start centres in their villages.



Parents are sure that their daughters are safe when they learn near home.

District education officers have noticed the success of the Centres. Education officers are placing support for ACCESS centres on their budgets and regularly provide teaching and learning materials. Their inspection visits to schools often include a visit to an ACCESS centre.

Partnership with the Ministry of Education and Culture has resulted in the upgrading of some ACCESS centres into formal schools in Makata and Ilagala divisions. The Ministry, working with district technicians and the communities are working on the modalities, including registration and constructing permanent structures. The Ministry of Education and Culture has also adapted the ACCESS approach for the Complementary Basic Education Programme (COBEP).



Government officials visit centres to check the quality of learning.

The whole ward has 3,400 pupils in school. Of these 1,250 are studying in 13 ACCESS centres. The children in the ACCESS centres could not attend the primary schools because the schools were between 5 and 13 kilometres away.

I make quarterly inspection visits to ACCESS centres and have found the children are performing very well. Three centres have been transformed into primary schools.

The ACCESS model of education has been successful because the community is involved in determining the school calendar and all matters related to their children's education. Primary education is now easily available and cost effective for families that depend on fishing.

- Ilagala Ward Education Coordinator

The success of the ACCESS centres demonstrates that communities are able to find sustainable solutions to their problems. With the right facilitation, opportunity and recognition, poor communities are the best experts in meeting their development needs. "I never miss a meeting called by the ACCESS committee," says Sadick Issa of Nambinda sub-village in Lindi. "In those meetings I have an opportunity to share my ideas and be heard. In the other schools only "wataalamu" (experts) talk, and for so long. If you do not accept their ideas you are called a "mshamba" (backward person)."



ACCESS Can Benefit Your Community

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