

KARAMOJA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, A BEACON OF HOPE, ONLY IF MORE IS DONE TO THEIR PLIGHT

1. UDN – SAVE THE CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP HITHERTO

UGANDA DEBT NETWORK has been partnering with Save the Children in Uganda (SCIU) for over 5 years, particularly in areas related to efforts of pursuing child protection and promotion of their rights to enable them grow toothier full potential. To that end, UDN has worked with and / or supported government Ministries Departments and Agencies as well as local governments communities in Karamoja and Acholi Sub regions. Some of the engagements include child centric budget literacy, domestic resource mobilization and allocation, research and advocacy on school feeding programmes and the efficacy of Universal primary education, among others.

2. THE UNIQUE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION DUE TO UNIQUE CONTEXT CHALLENGES OF THE REGION.



Above: Mr. Joseph Loput, a primary school teacher of Morulem community school in Nabilatuk district taking students through a lesson.



Above: Mr. Raymond Korobe (DEO) making a comment on the impact of ABEK programme to the children of Nabilatuk district.



Above: Mr. Peter Aguma commenting on the impact of the ABEK programme to the children of Lokitelakapes education centre.

Karamoja sub region presents a conspicuously unique case when it comes to child education. The communities being mainly nomadic, and the area being vast, schools are sparsely distributed and opportunities for consistent schooling is hard to achieve. It is against this background that SCiU partnered with government to establish centres for Alternative Basic Education in Karamoja (ABEK). Education for nomadic communities has taken different forms and continue to transform over time. In the case of ABEK Centres, they have gradually been transformed Community Schools. ABEK / Community Schools programme has been running recently under SCiU with support from NORAD programme, which comes to an end in December 2023.

Because UDN in her monitoring and advocacy has noted a lot of benefits and lessons emanating from the programme, UDN considered it vital to document the associated benefits, lessons, challenges and trends, because these have a bearing on the stakeholder's child centric planning, budgeting, programme visits: implementation and reporting.

UDN with a team of journalists travelled to Karamoja and had interactions with district officials including CAOs, DEOs, CDOs Teachers, Parents, children and community leaders. The community Schools were visited where real stories could be heard from the horses' mouths. Follow these links for the media coverage of the direct visits: <https://youtu.be/yvfe-CDtQ3k>

3. HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

While a lot has been achieved, thanks to SCiU and partners amidst resource constraints and other challenges, a lot more could be done. The team noted that as a result of ABEK, many people had gotten opportunities to rise and become prominent member of society. According to Mr. Akol Markson Ojao, DEO and ABEK focal person for Moroto, these are some of the ABEK products: The teachers from the education centres such as Mr. Aguma Peter who is situated in Lokiteded and Mr. Longoria Gabriel in Nadunget sub-county. Others would also include Mr. Sagal Max and Mr. Logiel Alex who teach at Morulem community school.

UDN however noted a number of challenges that included the following: lack of adequate infrastructure, scholastic materials, long distances from the schools, cattle rustling related insecurity within the areas where the schools are located and shortage of teachers in the schools.

4. LOOKING AHEAD – BETTERING THE GAINS

- 1) Government should fast track the coding of all community schools to enable them feature in annual budget so that they can benefit from such school facilitation as teachers' salaries, school infrastructure, school feeding, capitation grants etc.
- 2) Development partners should take interest in the Community Schools model and complement what SCiU has hitherto done so that more schools are established for easier access – to less than 3 km radius beyond which many of current children come from; this would increase retention and enrollment, more girls and higher completion rates.
- 3) The Karamoja Community Schools need to feature prominently within the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme (KIDDP) and be part and parcel of contributing to human security and promote conditions for recovery and development in Karamoja as part of the broader National Development Plan and the Peace, Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP).

In conclusion, if no part, the situation of pastoralists and nomadic groups is just an extreme example of the problem that marginalized groups encounter, it is also a reminder that no learning process is context-free.

UDN IN PICTURES



Above: Mr. Ratymond Korobe (DEO) giving his remarks to the media on the state of the ABEK centres in Nabilatuk district.



Above: UDN team sharing a light moment with the children of one of the ABEK centres in Nabilatuk district.

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