

THE MARA OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN EDUCATION PROJECT

According to a UNICEF study carried out in 2015, approximately 60,000 children are classified as being out of school in the Mara region of Tanzania. Motivated by this staggering report, the Trust partnered with the government of the Mara Region, Mara Alliance and the Qatar based, Educate a Child programme to make sure that 20,000 out of school children aged 7-17 years are supported to go to school.

KEY OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: To build the capacity of school governing bodies to identify and reintegrate 20,000 OOSC in primary school in the Mara Region

Objective 2: To build the capacity of teachers, school heads, ward, district and regional level government staff to deliver quality primary education in the Mara Region

Objective 3: To mobilise an alliance of government, public sector, no-governmental organisations and community based organisations and families to support 20,000 OOSC and their families in primary school in the Mara Region

In order to achieve these objectives, the programme proceeded to identify out of school children aged between 7-17 years old and collect detailed information about them and their families. This research enables the programme to design the appropriate support needed to fight barriers that keep children out of school. The research also extended to collecting detailed information about each school. This was done so that the programme can develop appropriate implementation plans and support the government of Mara region and its partners, school committees, the Mara Alliance and the Graça Machel Trust to improve the school environment and remove barriers to schooling that are found in the school.

The programme also relies on a strong referral and support system formed by the government, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, community leaders, and school committees to support children, their families and schools. The referrals indicate where there is a need for nutritional support, health promotion, water and sanitation, safety and protection, social welfare services, psychosocial support, material support, curriculum support, leadership and structures, community involvement, infrastructure or teacher development and support.

THE MARA ALLIANCE - ADDRESSING HARMFUL TRADITIONS TO SUPPORT CONTINUED EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

In July 2015, thirteen NGOs and faith-based organisations came together and drew up a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that formed the Mara Alliance. The Alliance enjoys representation across seven communities in Tanzania, including Musoma Rural, Rorya District, Tarime District, Serengeti District, Bunda and Butiama Districts.

The 13 organisations that currently make up the Mara Alliance include:

- ☒ Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS)
- ☒ Roman Catholic Diocese of Musoma
- ☒ Anglican Church of Tanzania (ACTMara)

- ☒ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Diocese in Mara region (ELCT)
- ☒ African Inland Church of Tanzania (AICT)
- ☒ National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA)
- ☒ Jipe Moyo Centre for counselling, training and vulnerable children
- ☒ Legal and Social Assistance Centre (LSAC)
- ☒ Women In Development, Gender and Development (WIDGAD)
- ☒ Association for Termination of Female Genital Mutilation (ATFGM) – Masanga
- ☒ Watoto Wapin geUkimwi (WWU)
- ☒ Community Alive Musoma (CA)
- ☒ Mind Set Tanzania (MST).

The Alliance is poised to become a formidable force in tackling harmful traditional practices that affect children, especially girls.

Official Launch of the Mara Education Project and Mara Alliance

Musoma, Tanzania, April 2016

Several thousand school children aged between 7 and 14 years, currently out of school in the Mara region in Tanzania, are set to go back to school under a two year collaborative project. The ambitious project is set to be officially launched in Mara on Tuesday.

According to Executive Director of the Legal and Social Assistance Centre (LSAC) and the Secretary of the Mara Alliance, Mr. Ostack Mligo, the project is being coordinated by the Mara Alliance, a 13 member group comprising the Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government in Mara, the Graça Machel Trust (GMT), school committees and a multi sectoral network of non-governmental organisations and government departments in Mara. Educate A Child Qatar (EAC) has signed a letter of intent in anticipation of a grant agreement being drawn up soon.

According to UNICEF statistics two million children in Tanzania aged between 7 and 13 years old are currently not attending school. Almost 60 000 of these children are in the Mara region. The Mara Alliance hopes to work with school governing bodies to identify these children.

The Bishop of the Diocese of Musoma, the leading implementing partner and host of the project, Bishop Michael Msonganzila says the launch of the project on Tuesday is a “big event”. “Most of the children who dropped from the schools are girls and they are mostly victims of the traditions and cultures, which promote very painful rites of passage as external signs of manifestation of maturity to girls. In this Region of Mara, the project will be a real process of liberating girls from any harmful practices of the Society. By enabling Out of School Children especially girls to access education, this project is reminding us on how important it is to empower women through education for the development of society and nation,” he adds.

To eliminate some of the barriers that prevent school children to attend school, the Mara Alliance has identified 12 priority areas that need urgent attention. These are: nutritional support, health promotion, water and sanitation, safety and protection, social welfare services, psychosocial support,

material support, curriculum support, leadership and structures, community involvement, infrastructure, teacher development and support. Seven of the 12 priorities are essential services required by children to survive and thrive, while the remainder create an enabling quality teaching and learning environment.

The Graça Machel Trust says the project is a major step and contribution in the fight against child marriage and female genital mutilation. Research has shown keeping girls in school have a direct correlation to reduction of child marriage and other forms of rights violations.

Project Background and Statistics

The project entitled "Identifying, Enrolling and Retaining 20 000 out of school children (OOSC) in the Mara region of Tanzania, will seek to identify, enrol and retain these children.

A number of studies have been undertaken in the region to assess the number of school children aged between 7 and 13 years. A 2015 UNICEF study notes that there are approximately two million children out of school in Tanzania and almost 60000 are found in the Mara Region. Statistics also show that among the age groups of between 7 and 13 there are more boys (1 047 000) than girls (921 000) out of school in Tanzania.

In yet another research, a feasibility analysis of the Mara region indicates that if the OOSC initiative is able to identify an average of 13 children in each of the 803 schools in each year and address existing barriers to education, then the target of reintegrating 10,000 children each year would be possible.

To achieve the goal of keeping the 20 000 in school, the Mara Alliance partners believe that if school governing bodies have the capacity to identify children out of school and then be able to refer them, then children will be reintegrated into school and they will not drop out. The programme is also premised on the belief that if the government, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and families form a supportive alliance that in turn supports schools and families; it leads to an improvement in the quality of education and a decrease in school drop-outs.

PROGRESS IN 2017

A study of five districts in Tanzania's Mara region has identified 11,666 children aged between 7 to 17 years old as not going to school and needing to be reintegrated back into the school system. The study was commissioned under the ambitious Graça Machel Trust Mara Alliance Out-of-school Children (OOSC) Project that aims to reintegrate a total of 20,000 children in the region back into the country's education system over a two year period.

The results of the study were announced at a workshop held on March 13th in the rural Lake Zone town of Musoma, and was attended by the project's core implementing partners. Mrs. Graça Machel, Founder of the Graça Machel Trust, together with the Mara Regional Commissioner, representing the government of Tanzania, and Bishop Michael Msonganzila of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Musoma, a representative of a coalition of non-governmental organisations and faith-based organisations that form the Mara Alliance were on hand to hear the tangible progress of the project thus far.

20,000 children to be brought back into the school system

The Mara Project aims to reintegrate a total of the targeted 20,000 children currently of school back into the country's education system by removing barriers that keep children out of school and by improving the quality of basic education being provided.

The quantitative and qualitative study was carried out in five of the nine District and Town Councils of the Mara Region. The research will be now extended to the remaining four districts to identify the rest of the targeted 20,000 children.

Key findings

Announcing the research findings was lead researcher Dr. Fortunate Makene, of the Economic Social Research Foundation (ESRF). Dr. Makene reported that, of the 11,666 children identified in the five District and Town Councils, 33% were from Bunda, 31% from Tarime, 26% from Butiama and only 10% from Musoma Municipal Council. Of these children, more boys than girls were brought forward by community members. 2

Poverty a key factor in dropout rates

The top five reasons of these school drop outs were found to be poor economic conditions, illness of the child or parent, disabilities and long distances travelled by the children to and from home and school. The study also revealed that the vast majority of these out-of-school children did not have birth certificates and had dropped out of school.

Seventy two percent of the households with children not in school earn their living from agriculture. These households live on two meals per day. Another ten percent survive on one meal per day. Only 39% of schools have school feeding schemes.

In addition to these poverty-related factors, the study also looked into other vulnerability factors, including substance abuse, domestic violence, discrimination and physical disability. Of significance was that no therapies were found to be available for children living with disability.

The Mara School Project will also be leveraging other best practice models to improve school access by children. One such model is the SADC Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Framework (CSTL) which proposes 12 essential elements that create a caring, supportive and inclusive school environment. These elements attract enrolment, maintain retention and promote school achievement. They include safety and protection, social welfare services, nutrition, curriculum support, teacher development, leadership and structures, health, community participation, infrastructure, material support, psychosocial support and water and sanitation.

Challenges and solutions

Of the 377 schools visited during the study, a number of challenges were identified, including a high prevalence of sexual harassment suffered by girls. Other challenges that were identified by the study included poor water and sanitation facilities in schools, the lack of comprehensive sexuality education in most schools and limited access to training in psychosocial care and support for teachers.

The ESRF report recommends addressing harmful practices such as gender discrimination, improved social protection programmes for vulnerable households, the need to strengthen community-school cooperation and improved services to children and families through government, private sector and non-governmental sector partnerships. 3

On the supply side of the education system, they recommend, a more rigorous school curriculum, better infrastructure, as well as greater investment in the Complementary Basic Education for Tanzania (COBET), a programme intended to benefit children who have missed the opportunity to enrol in formal schools or have dropped out of school for various reasons. The reintegration of COBET into basic education rather than adult education, will lead to more inclusive schools for children vulnerable children and children with disabilities and generally better resourcing for schools.

The Graça Machel Trust-Mara Alliance OOSC Project is currently in its first phase of a multi-year project that will follow up on the re-integration the identified out of school children through their life's journey. The project is supported by a US\$2 million grant from Educate A Child of Qatar and an in-kind contribution of US\$2 million from the Graça Machel Trust and the Mara Regional Government. The current two-year funding phase started in July 2016 and is expected to end in July 2018.

432 COBET Facilitators Graduate in the Mara Out-of-School Children Project

Musoma, Tanzania, March 2017

The Mara Out-of-School Children Project, a partnership of the Graça Machel Trust, the Mara Alliance non-governmental organizations and the Regional Government of Mara, celebrated the graduation of 432 Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) facilitators in Musoma, the regional capital of the Mara Region in Tanzania.

The month-long residential training programme, which ran from 1 to 30 March at the St Antony Vocational Training Centre and Buhare Community Development Training Institute in Musoma Town, was conducted by 16 highly experienced COBET trainers drawn from Tanzania's education sector. The training was given under the leadership and guidance of Dr. Naomi Katunzi, an Education Specialist, who was instrumental in the initial development of COBET in 1999. She will continue to provide technical support to the project.

Local teaching expertise used to benefit region

The 432 trainee COBET facilitators were drawn from the five Local Government Authorities of Musoma Municipal Council, Bunda Town Council, Bunda District Council, Butiama District Council and the Tarime District Council respectively, where the Mara Out-of-school Project is being implemented in the first year of the project. Of these facilitators, half are trained primary school teachers who were seconded to the COBET initiative, while the other half comprises school-leavers, who will become para-professional COBET facilitators.

The deployment of the trainee COBET facilitators by the Local Government Authorities to 247 primary schools will see each center now being run by two COBET facilitators, one being a trained teacher and the other a para-professional. The graduates will spend the month of April preparing for the arrival on 1 May of the 11,666 out of school children recently identified by the Mara Out-of-school Children project survey study.

Strengthening COBET

The Mara Out-of-school Children project seeks to revive COBET education system which experienced a gradual decline since its inception in 1999. COBET is a "fast-track" special

curriculum that delivers the primary education curriculum to children in flexible schooling times, child-centered approaches and participatory methodologies. This allows children who are behind in their schooling to catch up with others at a pace that incorporates their various living, social and economic environment. Learners who are engaged in various income generating activities, or are young married mothers or fathers, or have other household responsibilities can study without disrupting their existing lives or livelihood.

The project will reintegrate out-of-school children into basic education by placing them into two age-range classes. Cohort 1 targets younger children, aged 7-13 years and Cohort 2, targets older children aged 14-17 years old. The Cohort 1 classes will be offered for 3 and a half hours during the morning, while the Cohort 2 classes will be conducted in the afternoons.

Development of life skills and economic and social competencies a core benefit

After the successful completion of the three-year “fast-track” COBET course, Cohort 1 pupils will be expected to join Grade 4, while Cohort 2 students will need take the primary school-leaving exam, after which they can continue with their secondary education or branch off into various vocational training programmes. An important aspect of the 3-year course for older Cohort 2 students, is the incorporation of a number of critical life skills and the development of economic, personal and social competencies, that will enable students to make the right personal choices, work on income generating projects, set up self-help groups and meaningfully participate in livelihood initiatives.