



THE CHRISTMAS PROMOTION - Sydney dreams of becoming a pilot. He is one of many children who now have the opportunity to go to school thanks to our joint Christmas campaign "If I grow up". Photo: Annelie Edsmyr

"If I grow up" together with the Akelius Foundation

Three years into the pandemic, we can now see the negative effects of closed schools and interrupted studies. The number of children who have dropped out of school completely has increased, as have the number of early pregnancies, girls who have been married off or children who are forced to work. But thanks to the money that private individuals, congregations and Second Hand shops have contributed - and which you at the Akelius Foundation have now doubled - we can continue to work together to reverse the negative trend. We are extremely happy and grateful for this!

In 2019, 57 percent of all children in low- and middle-income countries could not read and understand a simple text at the age of ten. Today, that figure has increased to 70 percent. The major setbacks in knowledge level have worsened the children's future prospects for good health, livelihood and the opportunity to influence and shape their own lives. Urgent global efforts are therefore required if we are to be able to make up for the learning that has been lost. And if we are to be able to reach the goal of good education for all before the year 2030, the world's education system must not only be built better, but also intensified.

For last year's Christmas fundraiser "Om jag blir stor" we started a collaboration with you at Stiftelsen Akelius Foundation which would focus specifically on children's right to education in developing countries, and which meant that Akelius Foundation would double the money we collected! We mobilized our networks and after a fantastic response with commitment and great generosity from private individuals, congregations and customers in our second hand shops, we happily collected a total of SEK 16,101,245, which was more than the fifteen million that we had set up as a target. Among other things, 70 parishes participated in our Advent challenge through various fundraising activities in the form of Christmas

concerts and Christmas markets. PMU's staff also participated in various contexts by highlighting the importance of education and how it strengthens communities and contributes to development. We were heard, among other things, on Sweden's radio and SVT Musikhjälpen, which in last year's live broadcasts raised funds for a world without child labour.



HEARD IN MUSIKHJÄLPEN - When PMU's fundraising and communications manager Johanna Litsgård Lebourne took part in Radiohjälpen's live broadcast together with our former regional leader for West Africa, Johanna Bergsten, they highlighted how important education is for societal development. Photo: Johanna Litsgård Lebourne

Education is an important tool in the fight against poverty. Together with our local partners, we therefore work to create conditions for children to be able to go to school. Clearing away obstacles that stand in the way is central to that work. It could be about changing the view on girls' schooling, or the view on female genital mutilation, child labour, child abuse or child marriage. Disability can also prevent school attendance, or that ethnic minorities, for example, do not know the majority language. Therefore, it is important to also work for authorities to take responsibility for every child's right to education, and also for parents to gain a better understanding of why they should let their children, especially girls, go to school.

We conduct our educational projects in Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Yemen, Mali and Pakistan, among others, where we have now been able to deposit SEK 5.8 million of your gift. These efforts are aimed at the most vulnerable, regardless of their faith, political colour, sexual orientation or ethnic background, and none of the support goes to religious activities.



SCHOOL IN BURKINA FASO - Photo: Bengt Jägerskog

The mother of three, Rasha Ismaeel Mahmood, from a village in Egypt's El-Menya west of the Nile, was given the opportunity via the education project to participate in a parent training on gender equality. Through it, she learned that her two daughters have the same right to education as her son. She was also informed about the dangers of female genital mutilation. Determined to stand up for her daughters' rights at all costs, Rasha has refused to agree to FGM, despite opposition from her husband and family. But Rasha stands her ground and says she will continue the fight even if it has consequences for herself.

Many other parents, just like Rasha, have been educated about children's right to education via our local partners in different countries. In the projects that are now receiving support, we see different types of results:

- In Mali , all the parents who participated in the educational projects **learn to count and write the numbers from 0-1000, and thus they also understand that education is good for both children and adults.** Communication between parents and schools is strengthened so that parents are involved in their children's development and do not neglect their children's schooling, and the number of children dropping out of school is reduced. In addition, after teaching about children's rights, parents have stopped physically punishing their children to the same extent.
- **In Benin**, 130 parents of around fifty deaf and mute children are taught about the children's rights and learn methods of how to better communicate with the children. Other groups of parents learn the responsibilities they have towards their children in providing a healthy and balanced diet, clothing, medical care and education.
- **In Egypt, 892 parents are trained** in children's rights and given tools on how best to help their children develop. The meetings emphasize the importance of education, and try to address traditional behaviors and attitudes regarding child abuse and discrimination between girls and boys.



EDUCATION IN EGYPT - Here the children learn to put into words and recognize different feelings in order to better express them. Photo: Linus Linbro

Education is often closely connected with and affected by people's health and livelihoods. Therefore, parents are also taught how to prevent their children from getting sick. Simple instructions, such as rinsing fruits and vegetables and washing hands before eating, improve health. Through good health, the children will be able to go to school and be able to learn.

- **In Mali**, 480 women are being taught how to avoid malaria and how to monitor their children's weight gain. They get to learn more about nutritional deficiencies, about family planning and the benefits of breast milk. A woman in Konossedougou, who after a study circle realized the importance of vaccinating her children against measles, ran her own little campaign to convince other young women to also vaccinate their nine-month-old babies. At the same time, the mothers also receive information about the right of all children to education, including girls. Through the health work, they work to change the population's view of equality, health and education.

We also support the education system by developing the skills of teachers, school materials and with infrastructure in countries where there are no functioning school buildings.

- **In Pakistan**, 288 students (122 girls and 166 boys) are enrolled in multilingual schools that offer children from ethnic minorities basic education in their own mother tongue. PMU's local partners provide the schools with curriculum, books, printed materials, teacher training and annual evaluations. The project has also supported the schools with books and bookshelves for school libraries.
- **In South Sudan**, we have just completed the construction of classrooms in the town of Rumbek, northwest of the capital Juba, which will provide 1,000 children in the surrounding area with primary school education. Many school buildings currently consist of temporary shelters. In parallel, parents are taught about the importance of letting the children go to school, and religious and local leaders are asked to take ownership, together with local authorities, for the long term for the children's schooling.



SCHOOL IN SOUTH SUDAN - The school in Rumbek, northwest of the capital Juba, can accommodate 1,000 children. Photo: PMU

In these works, it is possible for us, in the project countries where the right conditions exist, to spread information about Akelius' digital educational material. Because it is online, the material requires access to the internet and a power supply, as well as a smartphone, tablet or computer. But we see that it could be used in some of our collaborations.

It is this type of work that the Akelius collaboration will continue to enable. We will report back in the future with what results the collaboration achieves and the change it means for the children in the project countries. Having said that, our experience is that persistent and long-term work is required to remove obstacles, influence attitudes and change behaviors and traditions. We often also have to count on setbacks such as climate-related disasters

destroying infrastructure - or, as now, a pandemic closing schools and forcing development to stop.

**Thank you for working
with us for children's right to education!**



Niclas Lindgren,
director PMU



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