

# THE SCHOOLS' APPROACH TO ASAL DEVELOPMENT

## SUMMARY

### THE CENTRALITY OF CHILDREN

With the notable exception of UNICEF, governments and donors worldwide have neglected the role of children in development. This is rather strange, considering that in a country like Kenya 52 % of the population is less than 15 years old. Further, given that children are more receptive than adults in learning new skills and traditions, and also considering the emphasis by Kenya Government on learning, the stage is available to embark on a strategy to teach the future farmers of ASAL the skills to survive under adverse conditions. Such education must enable them to remain on the land rather than to migrate and congest the cities. "Teach them young and save the band aid" should be the motto.

The schools approach in no way pretends to be a substitute for present government and donor activities in the rural sector. By picking target groups at an early age and teaching them the appropriate technologies, government will in the future be able to deal with farmers who already possess the basic skills to absorb specific extension themes. Moreover, the right conditions for community participation will be there. These are lacking now. Essentially the schools approach, in conjunction with present activities of government departments, is thought to be more effective and less costly than alternative solutions, whereas the present situation is thought to be no solution at all, and merely serving to postpone the inevitable.

Teaching children new skills, adapted to the realities of their own environment, first of all requires availability of relevant materials. "**SAP in ASAL**" (**Sustainable Agricultural Production**) is a draft manual which serves to illustrate what needs to be taught in the schools. It includes themes like the Nitrogen cycle and the Phosphorus cycle, elements of organic farming and zero grazing, soil and water conservation, establishing of nurseries, and others. The manual is multipurpose in the sense that it can be used by teachers, but also by extension officers of MoA, MoLD, MENR, and SDA's.

Other than "**SAP in ASAL**", other manuals are under preparation. These concern nutrition, health, and a manual called "**TREES in ASAL**". In the latter case the manual will be written on a site

specific basis, i.e. for each agro-ecological zone where the schools approach will be practised.

Teaching the contents of the manuals in practice is expected to take place on the school grounds during normal school days as part of the daily activity. The average school ground normally comprises between 7 and 10 acres of land. This is adequate for the purpose of starting practical conservation and production activities as part of learning. In setting up the system, the catchment approach must be followed as much as possible, since at the farm level this is the only way to achieve sustained production. Rather than to employ the term "school farm" this must be regarded as the "school catchment" in physical and sociological terms.

The school catchments, apart from being training grounds are expected to produce food, milk, and fruits for the pupils of each school. A school catchment, if well managed and equipped, should be capable of providing one meal every day for 200 pupils during the school year. An average school of 400 pupils can therefore provide the necessary food for each pupil every second day.

#### **PILOT PROGRAMME STRATEGY**

Before establishing the school catchments, water is a necessity for people, livestock and crops alike. Schools will therefore be equipped with a sufficient number of water tanks, and the selected number that will implement the school catchments programme will have a shallow well, a small earth dam, or a waterpoint of comparative cost as well, where it is technically and economically feasible.

A total of 4 districts have been selected to implement the schools approach. These are Kwale, Kitui, Embu, and Baringo. The reason for their selection deals with the expectation that activities can be combined with UNICEF, which is already active in these districts. The total population of these districts numbers approximately 1.9 million. This corresponds to roughly 25% of the Kenyan population living in ASAL districts. The number of school going children number roughly 40%, ie 760,000. One should though note that on average the age group under 15 years of age constitutes more than 50% of the population.

The proposed School Approach Programme consists of three

interrelated but distinct phases, which can be carried out almost simultaneously.

**Phase One** deals with the construction of water tanks and VIP latrines. This will address the two key problems for the schools which are availability of water and sanitation. A generation of school goers spending 10 years in school covers the life expectancy of a water tank. The water will form the basis of subsequent knowledge and production activities. Added benefits to districts are training of artisans and their employment. Some 800 artisans will be trained and employed for a period of five years. They will remain as a technical resource in the communities after the programme.

During a 5 year period some 7,500 water tanks and 3,300 VIP latrines, distributed over the four districts, will be constructed. The total cost of phase one amounts to US\$ 11,451,000 (Kenya Pounds 16.03). The cost of the tanks and the VIP latrines represents 53.5% of the phase one budget. The investment per child is US\$ 30.

It should be noted that the group to carry out this proposal have had experience with the construction of water tanks and VIP latrines over many years. In a recent programme, during a nine month period artisans were trained, and 300 water tanks, as well as 200 VIP latrines were installed and a photo-manual on how to construct a 46m<sup>3</sup> water tank with dome (or any appropriate size) developed.

**Phase Two** represents the development of the school catchments. For reasons of cost, but also to determine their projected impact, 40 schools will be selected in each district by the DDCs. Thus a total of 160 in the four districts will be selected. Target schools should be clustered as much as possible, so as to maintain maximum spill over from the schools to their community catchments so as to establish comparison with non-target schools areas. The main activity of this phase is to develop the school farm by introducing water harvesting to the production system of grains and livestock. The objective is to pass the skills to the school population and the community.

The total cost of Phase Two is US\$ 4,415,000. This amounts to an average investment of US\$ 69 per child. Perhaps this seems rather much to acquire the necessary skills and environmental appreciation to safeguard the future of ASAL, but it must further be taken into account that children will be fed on a regular basis, from the food/livestock resources generated in the school

catchment as organic farming and livestock rearing take.

**Phase Three** aims at introducing some of the technologies taught in the school catchments into the areas directly surrounding them. This concerns primarily the introduction of organic farming/zero grazing and the use of solar cookers. Approximately 24 parents will be engaged in the schools during Phase Two to receive the relevant training, and later apply their skills at home. Furthermore, adult education classes aim at reaching larger numbers.

The cost of Phase Three over 5 years for the four districts will be some US\$ 769,000.