



SUCCESS STORY

Building Schools, Building the Future

Basic education program contributes to local capacity and community development



Photo: USAID

Community members of the USAID-funded effort to improve Pagak Primary School attend an organizational meeting.

“If we do not participate, who will participate, and what will be the future of our children?” asks the chairwoman of the Pagak Women’s Association.

The women’s association in Pagak, southern Sudan, had approached education organizations on many occasions in an effort to obtain materials and supplies for the local school. They had little success. The association’s chairwoman said that many organizations “visited our location, collected information and disappeared without sharing the information with us,” and eventually the group gave up expecting support.

One day, the association and the rest of the Pagak community were invited to a meeting organized by a USAID local partner organization. Despite initial skepticism, they decided to attend saying, “If we do not participate, who will participate and what will be the future of our children?”

As USAID began to establish local partnerships in 2003, literally every community expressed fear that they would be unable to accomplish their objectives because of a lack of transport and a limited ability to pay the costs of local labor.

In 2004, however, many local communities have seen a significant change. Groups such as parent-teacher associations and Sudanese organizations mobilized community members to contribute their time and resources to improving local schools. Because of the active participation of local communities, USAID had rehabilitated over 50 primary and community girls’ schools by early 2005. Nearly 25,000 students are enrolled in USAID-supported schools.

For Pagak residents, the inclusion of the community’s primary school in USAID program to improve basic education was a dream come true. The Pagak Women’s Association took the lead in ensuring active participation by contributing materials, labor and time. By April 2005, close to 300 people — including more than 250 women — were attending the project’s local meetings.

Said the association’s chairwoman, “It took a lot of time for USAID community mobilizers to convince us that it was going to be different this time around, and it is.”