

Summary of the AACES Annual Report 2012-13

“Advancing disability–inclusive development”

The Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) is a partnership of the Australian Government, ten Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) and their African-based partners. AACES is a five year program (2011-16) delivered in 11 African countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The \$90 million program contributes to reducing poverty in Africa through food security, maternal and child health, and water and sanitation community based interventions, with particular attention to women, children and people living with disability. This report, the second annual report for AACES, highlights the partnership’s major achievements in 2012–13. The theme for this year’s report and a key priority for partners is ‘advancing disability-inclusive development’.

The construction and rehabilitation of water supply and sanitation facilities increased access to safe water for 64,000 people, 47,000 people accessed appropriate sanitation, while more than 50,000 people learned about safe hygiene practices. AACES partners collaborated with various Disabled Peoples Associations to lobby governments to plan for and target people with disability with the aim of promoting more equitable use of resources.

AACES provided vital health services to more than 80,000 people living in remote areas. More than 23,500 children received life-saving vaccines and more than 10,000 babies were delivered through clean and safe practices. Support was directed towards strengthening health systems for improved maternal and child care by the training of 897 community health workers to provide basic care, deliver maternal and child health, and nutrition messages in marginalised communities.

Program partners also worked with local governments to help people with disability access health services and participate in development and income-generating activities. This resulted to local authorities improving access to health centres, particularly for people using wheelchairs, and integrated sign language into primary health care information. AACES partners worked with Disabled Peoples Organisations to design information and educational materials suitable for people with disability. This resulted in more than 3000 people with disability gaining better access to information on sexual reproductive health and family planning services.

AACES assisted more than 26,000 households to receive farm inputs such as tools, seeds and livestock; more than 31,000 farmers adopt new agricultural technologies and sustainable farming practices; and more than 14,000 farmers join farmer associations, which provide technical support, information and knowledge sharing. The program helped people with disability participate in food production by promoting *traditional community help*, where community members offer their labour to support people with disability.

Alternative income-generating activities such as bee-keeping, tree nurseries, weaving and hiring of tents and plastic chairs was promoted for those people with disability who are unable to farm. AACES partners strengthened the skills and knowledge of smallholder farmers, particularly women farmers, to engage in off-farm income-generating activities and advocate for their rights and engage with governments. More than 32,000 people learned about their rights to land, food and access to government agricultural services.

Strong partnerships are critical to the success of AACES. Drawing on the partnerships established, program partners have been able to leverage resources, share best practices and successfully work with governments, community groups and various other stakeholders.

The 10 Australian NGOs implementing programs as part of AACES are: ActionAid Australia, Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific, Anglican Overseas Aid (with Nossal Institute and Australian Volunteers International), CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Marie Stopes International Australia, Oxfam Australia, Plan International Australia, WaterAid Australia and World Vision Australia.