



CHRISTMAS PROMOTION N- Thanks to our joint Christmas campaign in 2021 "If I grow up", over 700 young people in Burundi have been taught about environmental and climate issues, gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence.

Photo: PMU/Therese Svensson

"If I become big" continues together with the Akelius Foundation

For the Christmas fundraiser two years ago, we at PMU started a collaboration with you at the Akelius Foundation, which focused on children's right to education in developing countries, and meant that the Akelius Foundation would double the money we collected. It became a strong incentive for our network of parishes, second-hand shops and private individuals who made extra efforts in the campaign: "If I grow up". The goal was 15 million, but in the end it was over 16 million.

This has made possible large efforts for education, which is absolutely central for an individual to be able to influence his life, but also for a society to be able to develop. Some investments have already been implemented and reported, such as the renovation of classrooms in the city of Rumbek in South Sudan, where over a thousand students can now receive instruction. But even in 2023, new children and families have been given opportunities for an improved quality of life thanks to the gift from the Akelius Foundation.

An important part of the work is to create conditions for children to be able to go to school and remove obstacles that stand in the way. 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 do not know the majority language.

This work is done together with our local partners and we also work for authorities to take responsibility for every child's right to education, and 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, Kenya, Yemen, Mali and Pakistan, among others. These efforts are aimed at the most vulnerable, regardless of their faith, political colour, sexual orientation or ethnic background.

- **Millions of children grow up in war and Yemen** is a clear example of how schooling is affected for these children. Many children have seen and experienced war in a way that they cannot forget and have difficulty concentrating in school. After participating in PMU's partner's week-long program for children with trauma, many testify that they have been given tools to process what they experienced during the war and are now on a journey towards a better feeling.



YEMEN – Children in Yemen have seen their schools bombed. Seeing the war up close creates great trauma. Through PMU's partners, the children receive help to process their experiences and find their way back to a sense of security. *Photo: Dreamstime*

- **In Pakistan** , the minority population is a prioritized target group with an aspiration that the children should also receive instruction in their mother tongue. This improves the quality of the teaching and increases the opportunities for the students going forward. Many of the schools that PMU supports in Pakistan have female teachers, which is very unusual in conservative parts of the country. It is an important signal that produces results – over 100 girls have been allowed to start the education this year alone.
- **In Mali** , participants in 10 women's groups and 18 literacy groups have learned to read, write and count. They also work to increase parents' knowledge of children's rights. It can be about the importance of education, hygiene, health care and gender equality. This has led to improved living conditions for children. It is perhaps most obvious when it comes to food hygiene, where the children are simply healthier now.



MALI – Education for women also leads to improved living conditions for children. Women who learn to read and write often value and prioritize education for their own girls. *Photo: PMU/Eva Skog*

- **In Kenya**, 330 Maasai boys have learned more about FGM in a school program. About half became actively involved in "rights clubs" which are an initiative against female genital mutilation and they are peer educators for their peers in school and in the villages. One boy said that "I have learned about the negative effects of FGM and I understand the risks and when I become a father I will not circumcise my daughters". Such statements are very crucial to our belief in giving children a chance to go to school and making them the change agents of tomorrow.



Kenya – Daniel Konee is Maasai and has grown up in a culture where female genital mutilation is seen as something normal. Today he knows better and he has decided never to circumcise his future daughters. *Photo: PMU/Jonas Fällsten*

The young people's commitment to the environment can also be seen in several of the initiatives that you have supported:

- **Yanick is a 6th grade student in Burkina Faso who says** : "When I was in primary school, as a member of the children's club, I was educated about the importance of trees for life and the climate and I wanted to make my own plantation. Now me and my friends have decided to save our weekly money to buy trees. I have bought and planted three orange trees. I dug the pits with my friends and my father helped me build a fence to protect them from the animals. I water them twice a day and I am proud and happy to see them grow."
- **In Burundi** , 15 environmental clubs have also been started where over 700 young people have gained an increased awareness of environmental and climate issues. The children also learn about savings and credit, small businesses, the fight against gender-based violence, equality and human rights. These educations contribute to the children growing into active citizens who are aware of how to build an inclusive and sustainable society.



Of course, persistent and long-term work is required to reverse a negative development and remove obstacles, influence attitudes and change behaviors and traditions. We will come back in the future with what further results the collaboration with you brings about and the change it means for the children in the project countries.

Thank you for participating and doubling the Christmas collection and thus enabling this important work for children's right to education together with us!



Niclas Lindgren,
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