

Summary of the AACES Annual Report 2011-12

The Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) is a partnership of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), ten Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) and their Africa-based partners. AACES will be implemented over five years (2011–16) in 11 African countries, namely: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The \$90 million program focuses on community-based interventions in the sectors of food security, maternal and child health and water and sanitation with particular attention to women, children and people living with disabilities. In the first year of AACES, significant progress was made towards increasing marginalised people's access to necessary services.

AACES had a positive impact on food security by assisting 13,000 households to adopt new agricultural technologies and sustainable farming practices; supporting 3,300 households to access farm inputs such as tools, improved seeds and livestock; and helping 12,500 households to access new or improved agricultural services. The program supported women smallholder farmers by distributing livestock and promoting off-farm income generating activities. Advocacy platforms for smallholder farmers were strengthened and 28,700 people were provided with training on their rights to land, food and access to government agricultural services.

During the year, AACES successfully reached marginalised communities living in rural and remote areas with vital health services. As a result, more than 30,000 people accessed a modern family planning method and over 20,000 children received life-saving vaccines. Support was also directed towards strengthening health systems for improved maternal and child care by the training of community health workers. This resulted in more than 1,700 baby deliveries through clean and safe practices.

The water, sanitation and hygiene component of AACES also delivered strong results. The construction and rehabilitation of water supply and sanitation facilities increased access to safe drinking water for 42,000 people, while 18,500 people started using improved sanitation facilities or procedures. As a result, many communities reported reduced numbers of diarrhoea cases. In addition, conveniently situated water points in villages and communities reduced the time required to fetch water from distant sources.

The program increased awareness and demand for sanitation and hygiene services in schools and communities through hygiene promotion activities. Training and capacity building support offered by AACES NGOs to local authorities and community groups improved capacity to deliver and manage water, sanitation and hygiene services.

Strong partnerships are critical to the success of AACES. Drawing on the partnerships established so far, 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.