



# Innovations in Education

## Supporting students in West Darfur through the Accelerated Learning Program

### Why West Darfur?

During the long-standing violent conflict in the Sudan, many homes and schools in the West Darfur region have been destroyed, forcing people to flee and resettle elsewhere. Students who remained in the region have faced long breaks in their education because they are either marginalized or prevented from going to school. In addition, many youth have never attended formal school due to years of instability, frequent movement and a lack of opportunity for their families to earn a living.

### The Accelerated Learning Program

CRS is helping youth in West Darfur catch up in school through the Accelerated



The timing of the ALP program allows female participants to complete domestic and farming chores during the day and attend school in the evening. Photo: CRS Sudan staff.



CRS is piloting a new construction technology that uses a block pressing machine to let schools make bricks out of soil, water and a bit of cement to build schools in West Darfur. Photo: CRS Staff.

Learning Program (ALP). Implemented in 2010 by CRS, the West Darfur Ministry of Education and the Kulbus Locality of West Darfur, the program aims to provide the students with two academic school years in one year, following the Sudanese government curriculum of mathematics and Arabic reading and writing at an accelerated pace. After successful completion of two years of accelerated learning, students can choose to join the government schools at the 5th grade level. The program provides appropriate training and follow-up for ALP teachers.

### How have students responded?

After completing their first ALP year, the majority of the 100 female participants chose to continue with the program. The participants stated they enjoyed the ALP because the timing (two hours in the evening) allowed them to complete domestic and farming chores during the day. While the program originally targeted out-of-school youth, slightly older participants who had missed out on education opportunities for five or six years, were also interested in the program. Over one-third of the older participants were married, often with young children.



The ALP program gives students the opportunity to join the government schools at the 5th grade level after completing the program. Photo: CRS Sudan staff.

### How does the program work?

The program is supported by both CRS and student contributions. Each student contributes one Sudanese pound (1 SDG = approximately 35 US cents) per month toward the teachers' salary, and CRS provides three SDG per student per month. Next year, the plan is for students to pay two SDG per month, with the hope of eventually transferring ownership to the students or local authorities.

The Kulbus Education Office is involved in every step of the program alongside CRS, including community mobilization and meetings surrounding ALP, registration and vetting of students to attend, and monitoring the ongoing ALP classes.

### What else is CRS doing to support education in West Darfur?

Since early 2005, CRS and its partners have built more than 154 permanent, 95 semi-permanent and 280 temporary classroom structures at schools across West Darfur to help communities provide schooling for their children. Other key activities have included teacher training, Parent-Teacher Association training, provision of water tanks and simple hand-washing stands, training students and cooks in hygiene and building kitchens and storage facilities to support school feeding. These efforts have helped more than 46,800 students in West Darfur receive education.

## Looking Ahead

CRS plans to tailor the ALP curriculum and offerings to the needs of female participants during 2011. Therefore, in addition to Arabic and mathematics, the CRS team in Kulbus will collaborate with other sectors to offer frequent lessons in health and hygiene to enhance cooking and water sanitation practices, as well as provide agricultural extension lessons to help those for whom farming is the main livelihood to improve their methods – and hopefully yield. Financial literacy may also be incorporated into the curriculum.

In Sudanese culture, it is important to ensure that fathers, older brothers and husbands are involved in female education and recognize its value to the community and the family. CRS plans to hold community meetings on the topic of female education, organized by neighborhood and led by members of the local education office as well as respected religious leaders in Kulbus. This will provide an opportunity for fathers, brothers and husbands to understand the importance of female education and the benefit to them and their families.