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MADAGASCAR

CASE STUDY

Community listening groups: Catalysts for change

Community listening groups help improve the quality of elementary education.



Photo by Norma Evans, EDC

The listening groups have been a catalyst for change in our community...

-Emmanuel Ramarolahy, Principal,
Ambalafiabato Public Elementary
School

Challenge - The success of the Madagascar Ministry of Education's educational reform package depends in large part on having parents become more involved in their children's education and take ownership of their local school. This means ensuring that parents are aware of the role they can and should play in the running of their local school, and having them identify initiatives they can take to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Initiative - In the Fianar region of Madagascar, this challenge is being met through the establishment of community-based listening groups. Community members meet twice a week to listen to a USAID-funded radio program on dynamic school-community partnerships, including the roles and responsibilities of parent teacher associations, effective administrative and financial management practices and what parents can do at the local level to insure that students receive a quality education. After listening to the programs, members discuss the relevance of issues addressed for their particular community and identify specific actions they take in their community, with the resources available, to improve learning conditions for their children.

The community listening groups are led by a local facilitator selected unanimously by the community and trained by USAID, through the EDC-led ATEC (Appui technologique aux éducateurs et communautés) program, on how to establish and nurture effective community-based listening groups.

Results - The listening groups have proven to be an effective means of engaging community members in a dialogue on school quality. In the case of Ambalafiabato Elementary, attendance has increased three-fold since the beginning of the broadcasts. Now well over 50 community members meet weekly to debate issues addressed in the programs and identify what they can do together to improve learning.

And for Emmanuel Ramarolahy, Principal of Ambalafiabato Elementary, the results are evident. More students are coming to school and parents are taking greater responsibility for the state of the school - a critical first step in improving the quality of the education system nation-wide.