

BOARDING SCHOOLS

Essential considerations and suggestions regarding funding requests

Boarding schools always require a very considerable input in terms of personnel, time, financial and material resources. A whole range of buildings are indispensable: kitchen, dining hall, staff houses, recreational facilities. In most cases, it cannot realistically be expected that the boarding school's recurrent expenses will be covered by its own income. Where regular subsidies have not been received, the inevitable result is often a process of decay and dilapidation. Operating costs such as those of energy and water supplies are often underestimated. Another crucial problem is food: conflicts (including strikes, for example) caused by inadequate food supplies are by no means unusual since the fees paid by parents are in most cases not sufficient to allow the school to provide adequate food. Expenses for students' health care should not be underestimated, either. The level of care and attention offered by a boarding school automatically entails a corresponding level of requirements in terms of human resources. The recurrent expenditure resulting from all this can only be covered if the boarding school charges very high fees.

Boarding schools and the institutions behind them as well as parents consider the following to be the advantages of boarding school education: comprehensive and holistic personality building based on a coherent pedagogical concept; very short distance between where students live and where they are taught; students learn discipline and teamwork; boarding schools provide their countries with their future elites, the men and women who will take up leadership positions in the various spheres of society and the world of business; finally, boarding school education is expected by some to provide a protected environment particularly for unstable or vulnerable youths.

From the viewpoint of MISEREOR, boarding schools present the following disadvantages:

Target group

- Poor families cannot afford sending their teenage children who are fit for work to boarding schools for several years - they simply do not have the money this would require.
- The inevitably high enrolment fees mean that the poor are excluded.
- If the poor are to be included as a target group, this means providing long-running subsidies at a high level.

Learning environment

- In most cases, the training situation is a relatively artificial one and does not correspond to the 'outside' world of real work and life.
- As the social and economic challenges of real everyday life are faded out, the boarding school does not provide students with the skills that would allow them to successfully cope with these challenges inside and outside their jobs.
- Transfer of knowledge acquired at the boarding school to everyday life settings is extremely difficult. Training in a protected environment entails the risk of causing frustration when the knowledge acquired would have to be applied in a new environment.

Recurrent Expenditure

- The high level of operating costs causes considerable problems for those in charge of financial management of the schools.
- The main difficulties regarding operating costs of boarding schools are in most cases not caused by the vocational etc. training but by the expenditure caused by the school as a boarding facility.

⇒ Only in exceptional cases should boarding schools be funded by MISEREOR.

Alternatives

- In towns and cities the students/trainees should be taken in by local host families. Relatives living nearby may also be able to take them in.
- Very remote rural schools or training centres may continue to be exceptions. If no other solution is in sight, they should be provided with nothing more but dormitories and cooking facilities for the students/trainees.