
From Dim to Full Light: Spotlighting the Education Concerns of Nomadic Children in Kenya

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Abstract: *Education is one of the most important human development indicators and a gateway to intellectual development and attainment of full potential. Its access is seen as part of the induction process towards self actualization. However, inaccessibility of the same denies one a chance to grow, which works against attainment of life goals. The current education system in Kenya has seen many changes since independence in 1963, the most recent being the introduction of Free Primary School Education (FPSE) programme in 2003. The programme which is largely an implementation of the UN Millennium Goal 2 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child has made primary school education compulsory for all children in the country. However, it has several weaknesses one of these being the idea of lumping all children together as though they were a homogenous group. In addition, increase in enrolment has not matched other resources including personnel. The foregoing has lowered the quality of education in general and that of the nomadic child in particular. For societal integration, the Government of Kenya has come up with the Policy on Nomadic Education to mainstream this segment of the population into the rest of the society. However, the implementation of this policy remains to be effected. What panacea is available for putting the nomadic children in the mainstream of the education system and addressing their education needs? This paper analyses the education system in Kenya, elucidates the environment in which the nomadic children are born and live, spotlights their education concerns and suggest viable strategies for enhancing their access to education.*

Keywords: Education, children, children needs, nomads, pastoralism

1. Kenyan Education System

The Kenyan education system, the 8-4-4, offers eight years of compulsory primary education beginning at about age six, four years of secondary school and four academic years of university education, the latter varying by degree programme taken. The language of instruction from the secondary stage onward is English, while in primary school depending on the particular area Kiswahili and other vernacular languages are also used especially in lower primary school. The government has been offering universal free primary education since 2003, a change from a situation where it used to cost-share with parents and guardians. This has seen a marked rise in primary school enrolment, considerably straining facilities and personnel (UNESCO, 2005). However, the enrolment is still low compared to 1980s prior to the introduction of cost sharing under the donor-propelled Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). It is however expected that higher rates of enrolment can be achieved with more government expenditure accompanied by financial discipline.

In 2008, the government introduced secondary education subsidies, a move that has considerably reduced the fees burden on parents. Although such gestures from the government have seen more children accessing education, their sustainability remains challenged by their donor-dependence. Withdrawal of donor support as it has lately happened and more so without alternative funding may be an embarrassment on the part of the government as parents may be forced to shoulder the school fee yoke. In tertiary levels of education particularly public Medical Training Colleges (MTCs), Teachers' Training Colleges (TTCs) and universities, education is highly subsidized directly by the government with parents and guardians only shouldering a small percentage of expenses. While in public-run middle-level colleges education is highly subsidized by the central government, at the university level, the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) has played a significant role in providing low-interest loans and bursaries for those enrolled in these institutions. In addition, while the private sector

plays an important role in the provision of education, the government remains the leading agency in this regard.

The education system in Kenya is basically exam-based and at every level, learners normally sit for a formal examination to proceed to the next. While examination can be an important measure of understanding among learners, it is not the ultimate since learners' talent could be in other areas such as theatre, arts and craft. Although the education system has been aimed principally to be inclusive, it has not been able to achieve this feat owing to several weaknesses. For example, gender parity especially at the tertiary and university levels education is yet to be achieved, while full mainstreaming of the marginalized, physically challenged and ethnic minorities is yet to be realised in all levels of education. In particular, the education concerns of the nomadic children are yet to be met in appreciable proportions and this explains marked poor performance registered among them in national examinations over the years.

2. The ASAL Environment: Setting for Education

The Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) of Eastern and the Horn of Africa are homes to millions of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. The region has been facing recurrent drought, famine, land degradation and socio-economic crisis, resulting into heightened poverty levels (Haile, Tsegaye & Teka, 2004). In Kenya, they cover over 80 per cent of the country and are home to about 10 million people largely nomadic and agro-pastoralists (Republic of Kenya, 2002a; 2007; 2008). The areas are wrongly regarded as being economically poor and hence with minimal returns to the Gross Domestic Product (Mwenzwa & Njaramba, 2006). They post low levels of human and other development indicators and they can well be described as lagging behind in many aspects compared to other areas of the country. These areas are recognized as hardship owing to erratic and therefore unreliable weather patterns in the midst of largely non-existent water harvesting programmes, insecurity and generally poor physical infrastructure.

The foregoing is compounded by incessant ethnic conflict particularly over natural resources with devastating impact on children educational attainment. For examples, UNDP (2003) reported that only about 45% of Kenyans had access to safe drinking water, with a much lower figure in Arid and Semi-Arid areas including North Eastern, some parts of Coast, Rift Valley and Eastern provinces. For this reason, both livestock and human have to compete for the little water available mainly in dams, swamps and rivers all of which have no reliable water for the better part of the year. This aridity is compounded by occasional drought, normally accompanied by famine, hunger, starvation, malnutrition and both animal and human diseases including respiratory tract infections, asthma, Tuberculosis and malaria. These diseases among other needs in ASALs help in retarding the educational attainment of nomadic children in particular and overall development in general.

Indeed, the defining feature of the nomadic pastoralist-inhabited areas is their aridity, with annual rainfall ranging between 150mm and 550mm and 550mm and 850mm per year in arid and semi arid areas respectively (Republic of Kenya, 2002a). Temperatures in the arid districts are high throughout the year, with high rates of evapotranspiration. Hence, the primary policy challenge in these areas is how to ensure food security in a sustainable manner in environments that are prone to drought and where people's access to and control over critical livelihood resources such as land is insecure. Moreover, climate change is likely to increase hardships and substantially retard development (Republic of Kenya, 2009). The unpredictability of climate change especially by the nomadic communities is likely to leave a devastating mark in the years ahead in these areas (UN, 2007). It can perhaps be hypothesised that in the absence of sustainable economic opportunities, education remains the best option for nomadic pastoralists. Then, how do they access this service in the midst of ecological vagrancy, insecurity and associated problems?

In Kenya's arid areas, drought is perhaps the most pervasive hazard encountered by households on a widespread level (Mude et al, 2010). This is especially true for the northern Kenya rangelands, where more than 3

million pastoralist households are regularly hit by its adverse effects. For livelihoods that rely largely on livestock economy, the resulting high livestock mortality rates consequence of drought renders nomadic pastoralists amongst the most vulnerable populations in Kenya (Mude et al, 2010). As a result, when the consequences of climate change finally unfold, the intersection between drought, vulnerability and poverty will become significantly severe leaving the pastoral economy on a bridge of collapse. The ensuing poverty will make children education a luxury that is normally sacrificed for other ostensibly more pressing needs such as food. Even then, food and other basic necessities may not be accessed in adequate proportions courtesy of poverty and occasional inflation.

Low literacy levels amid environmental want in arid areas of Kenya lead to pervasive poverty among nomads as they remain grossly underrepresented in both public and private sector economic engagements. Where they are employed, most of the nomadic pastoralists are largely among the low cadre staffs who are also poorly remunerated. Indeed, during staff downsizing these cadre of staff are the prime targets, deepening their poverty. Therefore poverty among the pastoral-nomadic communities is, but a process of institutional, national and international governance. The table 1 on poverty related indices for selected arid districts is illustrative of the foregoing argument.

Table 1: Poverty-related indices for selected arid district.

Poverty indices	Selected arid districts of Kenya					
	Baringo	Isiolo	Tana River	Wajir	Moyale	Turkana
Absolute poverty rate	57.5%	78%	72%	57%	85%	74%
Dependency ratio	100:110	100:103	100:102	100:104	100:116	100:88
Life expectancy	59	57.5	53	52	55	50
Average family	5	5	5	6	5	6

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Source: Republic of Kenya, 2002 (b-h)

Table 1 shows that poverty in arid areas is quite high and a considerable majority of pastoral-nomads cannot meet basic needs, have large families and register high dependency ratios. They are not expected to invest heavily on social services including health and education for their children; hence low school enrolment and high dropout rates. In addition, since most of the population is composed of consumers as depicted by the high dependency ratios shown in table 1, saving and subsequent investment in long-term assets is largely sacrificed for consumption as families struggle to meet their basic needs. With the absence of savings and investment against a highly consumer population, access and affordability of social services including education becomes a tall order for parents. Education of children may therefore be sacrificed for other more pressing needs such as food, which explains low human development indicators registered among nomadic pastoralist communities across the Horn and East Africa.

Consequently, children and youth are left with few options for self-development in the absence of meaningful education amidst environmental hostility. This has rendered the youth highly vulnerable to manipulation by political and criminal elements, who exploit their disadvantaged positions for sectarian interests. Compounding the situation is the incessant political instability in neighbouring countries particularly Somalia responsible for the *export* of arms and ammunition in the country to the detriment of security in arid areas. This is even made worse by the porosity of Kenya's international borders and the paucity of the security forces in arid areas of the country. In addition, the topography and physical infrastructure assisted by bad weather conditions makes the arid areas hard to reach, complicating provision of social services. The resultant insecurity is forbidding, complicating access to other social services including education.

The adverse effects courtesy of globalization have not spared Kenyans including pastoral-nomadic people. For example, employee downsizing, one of the International

Monetary Fund/World Bank propelled Structural Adjustment Programmes, often targeted the low cadre staff, many who are likely to be from nomadic pastoralist and other minority ethnic communities owing to their relatively low literacy levels. Once retrenched, they may end up in arid areas that provide them with largely unsustainable self-actualizing opportunities. As an alternative, they may be enlisted and engage in cattle raids, which results into ethnic conflict, further adversely affecting development in general and children education in particular. Although some figures for the same indicators from high potential districts are slightly different from those registered in arid districts, there are marked differences especially in absolute poverty and dependency ratios as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Poverty related indicators for selected high potential districts of Kenya

Poverty-related indicators	Selected high potential districts of Kenya				
	Uasin Gishu	Kakamega	Machakos	Kericho	Nyandarua
Absolute poverty rate	42%	57%	63%	60%	27%
Dependency ratio	100:89	100:108	100:94	100:93	100:107
Life expectancy	66	53	45	53	54
Average family size	4.6	4.8	4.9	4.7	4.6

Source: Republic of Kenya, 2002i-m

Table 2 shows that absolute poverty levels in high potential districts are lower than those registered in arid districts with the implication that the latter are poor. Indeed, this is demonstrated by dependency ratios in which case there are more dependants in arid districts with the exception of Turkana District as shown in table 1. While Kenya is generally poor this poverty is not evenly distributed and varies by ecological zones with the arid areas getting a major beating. Part of the reason for this scenario is the lack of diversification of economic activities in arid as opposed to high potential areas. In arid areas, there is over-dependence on the livestock economy, which is challenged by several factors including natural weather, incessant ethnic conflict and poorly developed bazaar.

It is already shown in table 2 that in high potential districts of Uasin Gishu, Kericho and Machakos, there are more economically active people than dependants. What is the implication of this scenario? Due to the presence of more economically active people than dependants in these districts, there is room for investment since many people can meet their own basic needs. This is in contradistinction to arid districts where majority of the people have to depend on the minority for their basic necessities of life. In this latter case of arid districts, it would be difficult to alleviate poverty given that there are more consumers than investors. It is not surprising then that nomadic pastoralists face a vicious cycle of poverty that they inherit to their children.

Access to infrastructure and social services in the arid areas is far below the national average. In 2006 there were 69 public secondary schools in Kitui district but only 28 public secondary schools in the whole of North Eastern Province (Republic of Kenya, 2009). In addition, in 2001, there were 86 secondary schools in Uasin Gishu District but only 16 such schools in both Turkana and Wajir Districts (Republic of Kenya, 2002j, h & i). Closing such a gap and achieving higher levels of service provision in terms of quality education is an enormous challenge. However, with concerted stakeholder engagement in strategic planning and inculcation of a culture of financial discipline, much can be done to benefit the nomadic children who have more or less been at the periphery of mainstream education. Given the environment in which nomadic children are born and live, it is instructive now to bring to the fore their education needs.

3. What are the Educational Concerns of Nomadic Children?

The Government of Kenya has developed a new development blueprint, the *Kenya Vision 2030* to guide the development of the country up to 2030, with the overall goal being to achieve a *globally competitive and prosperous nation with a high quality of life for its people* (Republic of Kenya, 2007; 2008). The vision is driven by three pillars: the economic, social and political, in which several flagship projects are envisaged across the pillars. In the social pillar

fall education and in particular, one of the objectives of this strategy is the development of Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, most of which are inhabited by nomadic pastoralists. This would be done through enhancing human capacity and providing quality social services including education. It is recognised that education equips people with the capacities to make informed choices and contribute positively to society (Republic of Kenya, 2009). In addition, it facilitates the respect for human rights as it boosts efforts towards poverty alleviation, while enhancing societal integration, peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding (Republic of Kenya, 2002a, 2007, 2008). However, a closer scrutiny of the nomadic child, his environment and challenges he faces in accessing education, one would wonder whether this assertion is plausible in the case of these children and their families. This can be explained by several factors within and without the ASAL environment.

The arid environment in Kenya is under intolerable stress owing to both natural and human action, making the inhabitants struggle to survive. For example, there is the threat by drought and accompanying famine, armed ethnic conflicts, external incursions from unstable neighbouring countries and harmful cultural practices (UNDP, 2006). These make the areas a classic case for special attention by the government and development agencies (Osamba, 1999; Republic of Kenya, 2007; 2008). This state of affairs hampers the provision of education services, with the result of low human development indicators across the board. The pastoral-nomads therefore remain a pauperized and brutalized lot and their children have to start life from a position of great inconvenience. This disadvantaged position is transmitted to their children by way of *inheritance*, a vicious cycle of poverty. Children are hence necessarily denied access to education, their intellectual acumen notwithstanding.

The foregoing happens in the fragile and predominantly livestock economy, whose returns are yet to be exploited fully. Indeed, natural and manmade calamities leave the livestock economy substantially devastated to the detriment of local livelihoods (Odegi-Awuondo, Namai & Mutsotso, 1994). This may mean withdrawing children from school and taking other measures that are

counterproductive to their development. With minimal employment opportunities outside of the local economy, children may, after dropping out of school get into early marriage and engage in child labour, in most cases its worst forms including armed combat, herding and other anti-social behaviour that are detrimental to their balanced development.

Nomadic pastoralism, the economic mainstay of the nomadic ethnic groups necessarily means occasional immigration across the rangelands with their livestock in search of water and pasture. This implies that children including the school-going have to move along with their parents, necessarily dropping out of school (Kona, 1999; Omosa, 2005; Mwenzwa & Njaramba, 2006; Suda, 2003). Although, this movement is important for their livelihood and ecological regeneration, it counterproductively impinges on the education of children. Whereas an insignificant proportion may get the chance go back to school, the rest have to make do without it, adversely affecting their socialization and movement towards self-actualization. In such state of affairs, anti-social behaviour is not unexpected courtesy of the limited opportunities for self-actualization. Consequently, the high school dropout and low transition rates from one level of education to another registered among nomadic children are not unexpected.

The arid environment is largely composed of less productive rangelands that are synonymous with natural calamities including drought, floods and famine the three that are compounded by incessant ethnic conflict, cattle rustling and banditry (Osamba, 1999). Flare up of conflict accompanied by famine, poor social services and the possibility of hunger, starvation and malnutrition conspire to make life generally difficult and more so for children. The local economy is therefore left unable to support the nomads, least of all children education. In such cases, child education becomes a luxury that parents can ill-afford and therefore withdrawing them from school as a desperate measure. Such children may engage in activities that are not only hazardous to their health, but also socialization including drug abuse and child labour at the expense of their balanced growth and development.

Insecurity in these areas of Kenya is for the most part associated with civil war in neighbouring countries including Sudan, Uganda, Somalia and Ethiopia (Murunga, 2005; Omosa, 2005; UNDP, 2006). In addition, the porosity of the international borders compounded by lawlessness especially in Somalia means incursions by militant groups escalate insecurity to the detriment of social service provision. Education is hard hit when schools are closed down as teachers and children stay away consequent of resultant insecurity. In this case, the educational attainment of the nomadic children is affected in a great measure. As some children drop out of school for good, other may get maimed or killed in crossfire, amid starvation, malnutrition and ill-health.

In the areas inhabited by nomadic ethnic groups, shelter is mainly temporary, in both homes and public institutions like schools. Many of these school structures are mainly erected using locally available materials that are particularly not resistant to extreme weather conditions like El Niño and acute drought. In many cases children have to make do with trees shades as classrooms against the scorching sun and clouds of dust. It is instructive to note that many of the trees used as classrooms remain leafless for the better part of the year, leaving children struggling to shelter themselves on one another's shade! During heavy rains or flash floods like the El Nino, schools and homes may be submerged or swept away by flood water, leaving children and their families as vagabonds. In addition, other infrastructure like roads becomes completely impassable, ruling out the possibility of getting school supplies to the disadvantage of learning. In some other places like the Turkana rangelands, strong winds accompanied by thick clouds of dust may destroy school structures thus impairing learning.

The learning facilities in especially arid districts most of which are inhabited by pastoral nomads remain not only poor, but more importantly inadequate, largely spread over a large area. This means distances to schools are enormous, even as those distances have to be covered many times hungry amid insecurity. This is compounded by inadequate personnel, most of who are not professionally trained. For example, in one of the primary schools visited in 2002 by the

authors in Tarasaa Division, Tana River District, there was only one teacher against five classes. In another school in Kiunga Division, Lamu District, there was only one trained teacher, with several others being standard eight leavers. With the current *piecemeal policy* and contractual teacher recruitment, it is unlikely that such conditions have improved considerably. When such is the case, the glaring poor performance registered among nomadic and ethnic minority children in national examinations cannot be better explained.

Parental attitude towards education, cultural practices and beliefs are also partly to blame for the low levels of literacy among nomadic pastoralist communities of Kenya. The foregoing is generally worse for the girl child, given the conspicuous subordinate status of women among nomadic pastoral ethnic groups. In addition to their multiple domestic responsibilities (Mwenzwa, 2004; 2011), certain cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and infibulations among some of the ethnic groups, early marriage and the parental preference for boys' education, greatly curtails girl child education (UNDP, 2006). Indeed, when parents preside over a contest between boys and girls over schooling, the latter comes out badly beaten, her intellectual abilities notwithstanding. The option for her is largely teenage pregnancy, early marriage, motherhood or transactional sex with the possibility of contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV/AIDS. This in many cases becomes the likely estate which she stands to inherit her daughters, a vicious cycle of poverty and the insubordinate position in society.

Generally, the educational participation of nomadic children is markedly low even with mobile schools supported by the Ministry of Education. The quality and utility of these schools remain limited as they are largely manned by untrained teachers and only provide education up to Standard 3 (Republic of Kenya, 2009). Moreover, the single uniform education curriculum does not reflect the particular needs of the nomadic children who are born, live and experience a world of their own. This is explained by the multiple hurdles they have to jump over on their way to school. It is therefore not surprising that arid areas register low literacy indicators including enrolment, transition and

completion rates. Table 3 on literacy indicators for selected nomad-inhabited districts is illustrative of the foregoing sentiments.

Table 3: Literacy indicators in selected nomad-inhabited districts of Kenya

Literacy-related indicators	Selected Nomad-inhabited districts of Kenya				
	Isiolo	Tana River	Wajir	Moyale	Turkana
Literary rate	50%	39.5%	12.6%	49.5%	11.7%
Primary school enrolment rate	55.5%	43.9%	14.5%	63.2%	33.9%
Primary school dropout rate	11.5%	47%	56%	41.7%	62.9%
Secondary school enrolment rate	15%	10.6%	4.6%	8.5%	4.95%
Secondary school dropout rate	6.5%	30.5%	51%	5.5%	24.1%

Source: Republic of Kenya, 2002 (b-h)

As shown in Table 3, the average number of years of school attendance is around 6 for those who have the chance to be in school, meaning many of the children in these areas do not go beyond primary school level. Like most of their parents, they have to start life from a position of great disadvantage. In addition, average literacy level is about 32.7%, with relatively low primary school enrolment rates. Moyale District registers the highest enrolment rate at 63.2%, while Wajir has the lowest, standing at 14.5%. It is worse for secondary school in which case Isiolo District leads with an enrolment rate of 15% and Wajir with a low of 4.6%. It is interesting to note that, out of the 4.6% of students who enrol in secondary schools in Wajir District, over 50% of them drop out before completion of the approved four-year course.

With such low levels of literacy, the affected are not expected to have many viable and legal alternatives to eke a living. For example, the modest educational achievement registered among pastoral-nomadic children cannot allow them to compete with those from other communities on an equal footing when it comes to securing jobs and other self-actualizing opportunities. They may therefore be left with the

option of engaging in banditry, cattle theft, drug abuse and trafficking, casual and unskilled manual work including child labour (Mwendwa & Njaramba, 2006; Republic of Kenya, 2001).

Some of the undertakings they engage in are not only poorly paid, but also erratic. Compounding this situation is the incessant ethnic conflicts and cattle raids that complicate livelihoods and access to social services including education. Indeed, the entry of the gun and the apparent commercialization of livestock theft have made these areas to be synonymous with insecurity (Osamba, 1999; Kona, 1999; UNDP, 2006). This has far-reaching implications on children socialization, development and education in addition to entrenching and institutionalizing intergenerational poverty transfer.

In high potential areas of the country, the story is markedly different, differentiation that is telling of the sorry state of the country's social service provisioning and welfare system. As such, the corresponding figures on literacy among sedentary communities and especially in the high potential areas of the country are substantially different from those registered in arid districts as shown in tables 3 and 4. The data from arid areas therefore compare unfavourably with that from high potential districts such as Uasin Gishu, Machakos, Nyandarua, Kericho and Kakamega as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Literacy indicators for selected high potential districts of Kenya

Literacy-related indicators	Selected high potential districts of Kenya				
	Uasin Gishu	Kakamega	Machakos	Kericho	Nyandarua
Literary rate	81%	85%	76%	76%	85%
Primary school enrolment rate	89%	82%	81%	105%	85%
Primary school dropout rate	* ¹	26%	5.5%	25.6%	8.5%
Secondary school enrolment rate	28%	69%	32%	26.5%	32.6%

¹ Data unavailable

Secondary school dropout rate	23%	5.3%	4.7%	3.8%	10%
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Source: Republic of Kenya, 2002i-m

Table 4 shows that overall literacy rates are relatively high in high potential districts, primary school enrolments are high while corresponding dropout rates are low. It is to be noted that the data presented is for the pre-introduction of free primary school education programme and therefore figures must be higher at present. In addition secondary enrolment rates are relatively higher in high potential as compared to arid districts while at the same time dropout rates are lower in the former as opposed to the latter. It can therefore be inferred that children in high potential ecological zones stand better chances of realizing their intellectual dreams as opposed to nomadic children, who must necessarily come at the rear.

Child rearing practices in arid areas are partly to blame for the low levels of human development in general and child education in particular. In a study in Wajir District one of the nomadic pastoralist-inhabited districts, Omosa (2005) found that during conflict, 69% of older students abandon school by their own volition or request from parents to help in fighting the *enemy*. Others are forced to leave school when conflicts become unbearable and when their families migrate to safety as schools become out of bounds under conflict-induced curfew. On their part, teachers stay away fearing for their lives, a situation which greatly impairs learning. The foregoing partly explains low levels of literacy and poor results in national examinations among the nomadic communities. This may perhaps make nomadic pastoralism, banditry and cattle rustling as alternative enterprises in the absence of other opportunities, which is more the case than the exception in the largely arid environment.

The lack of viable alternative ventures in arid areas implies that school drop outs may become domestic slaves as herders and therefore ready weapons for hire by cattle rustling warlords and political elements. This exposes them to moral corruption and conditions that are hazardous to their growth and development. In particular, girls may be made to drop out of school and get married off to old livestock-wealthy men for their parents to get bride price to

meet their needs. The foregoing scenario has the consequence of adverse effects on health, intellectual, physical and social development of the children and more so for the girl child. Indeed, it makes them inherit and assume the subordinate roles their mothers have held before, a vicious cycle of subjugation.

Health is an important human development indicator and when it is in jeopardy, development is compromised in considerable proportions. Access to this service particularly from formal institutions for nomadic children is hampered by several factors including distance to facilities, availability, accessibility and affordability of drugs, nomadic lifestyle and insecurity among other factors. More important, many nomadic children do not complete their immunization and more so those born outside designated formal health facilities, which is more the practice, than the exception. For example, in a study in Turkana District, AMREF (2006) found that, 91% of deliveries take place at home with 37% of them being self-assisted. A considerable majority of the children in the same areas above the age of six had not completed immunization, with many having had none at all. It is expected that in case of sickness among such children, their immunity and resilience to ill-health will be greatly compromised and eventually educational attainment.

The foregoing challenges notwithstanding, the nomadic children have to sit the same national examinations at the same time with those from high potential areas. In addition, most examinations are either in English or Kiswahili, while the unofficial language of instruction in many schools in arid areas is mainly mother tongue, with minimal use of English and Kiswahili. During examination, understanding the import of a question may be compromised by poor language mastery, leading to dismal performance. Such performance can ill-afford them entry into a good secondary school or institution of higher learning and for some other children, this may be the end of their schooling. In general, the hurdles placed in front of a nomadic child on his way to self-actualization are enormous and akin to those encountered by a freedom fighter. Key questions must be asked here: how do nomadic children survive with low literacy levels in the midst of environmental hostility? What options are there for them? What legal or policy reforms are feasible in their case?

In the follow up of these questions among others, we here below raise some pertinent issues that policy makers need to consider to mainstream the education needs of nomadic children.

4. Meeting the Education Needs of Nomadic Children

That the nomadic ethnic groups in Kenya have not been in the mainstream of national development initiatives is not subject for debate. On their part, nomadic children have always trailed their counterparts in other communities when it comes to sharing education rewards. It would seem that the systems that disadvantaged pastoralists in pre- and colonial era are still intact in the post-colonial period. Perhaps the panacea for this undesirable scenario may be in their ability to lobby the authorities and those authorities' willingness to compromise. Nevertheless, there is not only room for action, but impressive improvement in the welfare of nomadic communities and their children. This is feasible if some of the following issues are implemented.

Many areas inhabited by nomadic pastoralists have low population densities that are highly mobile, which is essential for their survival and livelihood. However, this makes it costly per capita to provide social services such as education and health and therefore requiring innovativeness. Owing to the fragile ecology, sedentarization of the nomads for their children to attend school uninterrupted is out of question because it would lead to untold localized environmental degradation. As such an alternative in the form of equipped boarding schools for the children is more viable if they have to be integrated into the rest of the society.

In arid areas where livelihood necessitates ecological conservation and frequent mobility, education would come in as an important supplement for nomadic pastoralism. With this in mind, there is need to construct centers of excellence across the arid districts that would admit children from the local areas. The Constituencies Development Fund resources from various arid constituencies could be pooled together for this purpose. Efforts should be made to construct at least two of such facilities in each district inhabited by nomadic

ethnic groups for both boys and girls. In this endeavour, local authorities could be instrumental in identifying sites, partial financial contribution and other logistical issues.

The nomadic children have historically been marginalized and consequently denied the benefits of the mainstream education funding in Kenya. There is need for the enactment of legislation to institutionalize a fund in the spirit of both the youth and women enterprise funds to cater for the specific education concerns of nomadic children as a special group. It would not be asking for too much for a budgetary allocation specifically to meet the specific needs of the nomadic children and safeguard their rights and welfare as spelt out in the Kenya's Children Act, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Millennium Development Goals among other instruments.

The girl child among the nomadic communities has to jump over considerable number of hurdles on her way to school including early marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, parental bias towards boy child education and cultural incarceration among others. We therefore need to look at her as a special case that requires special attention if her education and human development potential has to be realized. In this case, we reason that favouritism on boy child ignores one half of mankind in which case development is delayed in the same proportion. A deliberate neglect of the girl child education is therefore an act in postponing development. The proposal we have here is to selectively and deliberately put more effort in the nomadic girl child education to ensure sustained movement towards gender parity in education access for both boys and girls.

Reforms in both the Children and Education acts (Republic of Kenya, 1980, 2001) are necessary to help in putting the nomadic child in the mainstream of the education system. It is recommended that provision should be made in these acts to set aside specific funds that would be used in meeting the specific needs of the nomadic children. Alternatively, a separate legislation should be enacted particularly regarding the education and other concerns of the nomadic child. However, while legislation is important for policy formulation, left alone can only be a bulldog. In this case therefore, we recommend

implementation accompanied by close monitoring and evaluation to ensure compliance for the benefit of the nomadic child.

Insecurity which is rampant in many arid areas of the country is a function of unstable neighbouring countries compounded in part by the porosity of Kenya's international borders, the apparent paucity of the security apparatus and absence of viable road infrastructure. To minimize insecurity would mean giving room to provision of social services including education. It is therefore important that border surveillance is stepped up and refugees are closely monitored especially when they interact with the civilian population. This would keep way bad elements including arms traffickers, enhance security and make the environment conducive for learning.

It is recognized that many trained teachers are reluctant to work in remote arid areas among nomadic ethnic groups for the hardships associated with these places. In this regard, the government has already defined designated hardship areas and came up with respective allowances for public servants working therein. However, it is our submission that there is need to re-look at the hardship allowances with a view to revising them upwards to attract more personnel in these areas. In addition, more scholarships for further studies should be directed to teachers who have worked in arid areas for specified periods of time. This is likely to motivate and attract more personnel here given the gains.

It also acknowledged that the local people are better placed and would be more willing to provide education and other social services in arid areas. What should be done to increase the level of local personnel in these areas? A deliberate attempt needs to be made through community gate keepers and local leaders to identify and train local qualified individuals as teachers and deploy them to provide services locally. This it is hoped would go a long way in minimizing the scarcity of qualified personnel and enhancing access to education by the nomadic children. In turn, this is likely to pay dividends by way of considerably improving academic attainment and performance of the nomadic children.

The fact that many school-age nomadic children are out of school for various reasons cannot be gainsaid. To put them in school, there is great need to strategize in a way that attracts them to school and away from harmful lifestyles and cultural practices that are counterproductive to their development. How or what strategies could be adopted in this regard? We need to come with incentives to attract children to school such as reviving the school milk and enhancing feeding programmes especially in primary school level.

In most arid areas, the failure of children to go to school can partly be blamed on parental attitude regarding cultural practices that are harmful to children growth and development. Many illiterate parents may not see the need for education in as far as their children are concerned and this has dire consequences for the children's growth, development and future life. It is in this regard that we recommend incentives for parents to make them discontented with the prevailing education standards and hence release their children to school. Such incentives would include fee waiver and bursaries for their children and affirmative action in admitting children from these areas in public institutions of higher learning, with slightly lower grades than those from relatively well-to-do areas.

It is instructive to mention that the private sector and Faith-Based Organizations have an enormous interest and role to play in the provision of education in Kenya. However, this has not been particularly the case in arid areas. This is partly because the necessary policy framework is yet to be put in place to attract the private sector and Faith-Based Organizations to invest in education in arid areas. For this reason, there is need to recognise the role these sectors play in providing education and give them incentives accordingly. Such incentives would include a conducive environment, provision of free land, funding and other social services such as health, telecommunication, electricity, viable security and road infrastructure.

One of the factors adversely affecting the provision of education in arid areas is ethnic conflict and the resultant insecurity. While it leads to a lot of resource wastage against scarcity, the impact of ethnic conflict on education in arid areas is yet to be quantified. We therefore propose research

in this regard, the results of which can be used as a lobbying pedestal to advocate for the education needs of the nomadic child. Without adequate research, quantification may only be based on unsubstantiated guesswork, on the basis of which poor planning becomes obvious.

To make policies that are in line with available resources and needs, there is need for up to date and accurate information in the same regard. For this reason, periodic data collection in the form of monitoring and evaluation of nomadic education to ensure sustained improvement in quality and quantity cannot be gainsaid. This is likely to ensure increased enrolment, retention and transition to subsequent levels of education, whose results do not require explanation. We therefore recommend further research on a continuous basis to feed the policy making arm of the Ministry of Education for sustained improvement in nomadic education standards.

In rural areas of the country especially in arid areas inhabited by nomadic pastoralists, there is marked stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities and more so children. There is need for comprehensive civic awareness in these areas on the cause of physical impairments and how to integrate them into the rest of the society. Helping such stigmatized members of the society and integrating them can be an important step in enhancing not only their own welfare, but also that of the entire society. This is looked at from the pedestal that leaving on the wayside one segment of the society delays development in the same magnitude.

While nomadic children are a category that needs special attention, it is also true that differences among them exist. For example, if the nomadic child can be seen generally as a double proletariat, the disabled nomadic child passes for a triple proletariat. Worse could the disabled nomadic girl child who is likely to be more vulnerable to many ills including sexual assault, heightened stigma and discrimination in accessing both formal and informal education. It is therefore a matter of fact that the disabled nomadic child needs even more attention by policy makers. As such, we recommend further researcher concerning the education concerns of the disabled nomadic child from a gender perspective. In this case, we propose an audit of not

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only the number of nomadic children with disabilities, but also the types of disabilities by gender and their specific education needs.

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