

John Kabutha Mugo/Sara Jerop Ruto

## Dakar + 10: The Elusive EFA Goal

### Education Provision in the Arid Lands of Kenya

#### Abstract:

One key target set during the Dakar World Forum on Education for All (2000) was to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and children of ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. However, one clear challenge that Kenya faces is the education of children in the arid districts, inhabited by nomadic and pastoralist communities. This paper analyzes the progress made in enhancing access to primary education for these communities, ten years after Dakar. While acknowledging the progress made, a sceptical question is raised: Are these strategies really likely to deliver EFA by 2015?

#### Zusammenfassung:

Das Ziel des Weltbildungsforums in Dakar 2000 war u.a., Zugang zu Schulen für alle, insbesondere für Mädchen und benachteiligte Gruppen, zu erreichen. Zu den marginalisierten Gruppen gehören in Kenia die Nomaden und Viehzüchter in den ariden und semiariden Gegenden im Norden des Landes. Der folgende Artikel stellt einerseits die Fortschritte dar, die das Land seit der Unabhängigkeit im Jahre 1963 in diesen Regionen gemacht hat, und analysiert andererseits, ob Interventionsmaßnahmen zu Erfolgen geführt haben. Die zentrale Frage lautet: Reichen die Strategien, um das Ziel bis zum Jahre 2015 zu erreichen?

#### Introduction

The World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April 2000, came at a time when Africa had failed to meet international targets agreed upon in Jomtien 1990. Many children were still out of school, gender and regional disparities were alarming, learning outcomes were low and adult illiteracy remained at unacceptable levels.

During the conference, it was decried that more than 113 million children had no access to primary education, 880 million adults were illiterate, gender discrimination continued to permeate education systems, and the quality of learning and the acquisition of human values and skills fell short of the aspirations and needs of individuals and societies (UNESCO 2000, p. 1). Subsequently, governments re-affirmed their commitment to pursue the EFA goals by 2015. One of the goals was to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to eth-

nic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

It is now acknowledged that Kenya has made substantial progress in accessing education for all. The 2008 national net enrolment ratio for primary schooling stood at 92,5% (MoE 2009). While this is satisfactory, the current concern is that the face of the unreached populations has not changed; they continue to be children in Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL), rural remote populations and pockets of poverty (such as urban low income families). Arguably, the deciding factor that will determine – if Kenya remains on track to achieve EFA by 2015 – is how to reach these excluded populations.

The challenge of nomadic and pastoralist education is well documented. In Nigeria, low literacy levels among nomadic and migrant communities (0,2–2%) have been attributed to their mobile nature (NNCNE undated). In Somalia, the urban bias has been blamed for lack of access to schooling for nomadic children. In other countries like Sudan and Eritrea, the centrality of child labour in the pastoralist communities' production system, inadequacies of curricula to address needs of communities and infrastructural handicaps are some of the multiple reasons impeding education provision (Ismail 2002).

The incompatibility of the pastoralist and nomadic life with modern-day education remains the issue to resolve. The very fact that the school, like all other institutions, is stationary, points to the barriers to accessing education for children of nomadic communities. Some authors analyze the clash between schooling and the pastoralist lifestyle (Kratli/Dyer 2009; Sifuna 2005). They observe that education systems have failed in their attempt to 'modernize nomads' and 'transform nomadic identity'; they suggest that their education cannot be attained until the structural inadequacies of education systems are addressed.

This paper explores access of primary education in arid and semi-arid lands in Kenya (ASAL), an area predominantly populated by nomadic and pastoralist communities. It examines education policy making that has targeted ASAL, the schooling levels, and strategies for educational access that have been attempted. Concluding remarks will focus on a critique of the strategies, and presents ongoing rethinking.

#### Nomadic and pastoralist communities in Kenya

Nomadic and pastoralist communities occupy Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands, and constitute a region commonly referred to

as northern Kenya. These communities constitute eight language groups, the largest being the Somali (occupying whole of North Eastern Province), Maasai, Pokot, Turkana and Samburu. Others include the smaller communities of Borana, Gabra, Orma and Rendille, who occupy parts of the Upper Eastern Province (GoK 2008). The region has an estimated population of 10 million people and covers 80% of Kenya's land mass.

Despite its arid nature, the region contributes 50–70% of the country's livestock production (account to around 10% of the Gross Domestic Product) and generates around 90% of tourism revenue (GoK 2006)<sup>1</sup>. However, most of the people are classified as extremely poor, have poor access to social services, and depend on aid from the government, local and international NGOs and other faith-based initiatives (KNBS 2007). For instance, 94% of families have no access to clean drinking water, while 55% lack access to toilets (KNBS 2007). Studies have also noted that these communities have borne a history of political marginalization, viewed by policy makers as a population that lacks in numbers for significant political capital (Ruto/Ongwenyi/Mugo 2009). However, the most unifying factor for these communities is that they lag behind other Kenyan communities in almost all education indicators.

### Education Policy Making for Pastoralist Communities

Over the years, Kenya has maintained focus on education for nomadic and pastoral communities. The Ominde commission of 1964 (the earliest education policy in independent Kenya) recognized the need to focus on ASAL, and identified higher grant allocation, boarding schools and mobile schools as strategies to reverse low enrolment (RoK 1964). It has however been argued that the recommended strategies harboured no sustained potential for addressing the educational needs of pastoral communities (Ngame 2005; Sifuna 2007). The abolishing of primary school fees for these districts introduced in 1971 initially improved access, but failed to create lasting solution for pastoral communities. The boarding schools introduced were soon crowded by children of non-pastoral communities (Sifuna 2007). In the 1990s, Kenya was beset with social, economic and political uncertainties and difficulties, and EFA received little attention during this period (Chege 2006). Indeed school participation in ASAL was more adversely affected due to the fact that ASAL has traditionally relied exclusively on government, missionary and NGO initiatives. Local community effort for education was largely lacking yet it was a government education policy after the adoption of the structural adjustment programmes. Educational growth stagnated during this period.

Renewed energy to address the inadequacies of educational provision was witnessed from 1990 onwards. The combined strategies of policy formulation, presidential decrees and decentralised funding contributed to revamping school participation. For example, in 1993/94, the secondary school education bursary fund was established through a presidential decree. Affirmative action was utilised as more money was reserved for ASAL.

The Dakar forum was therefore held at a time when the government was ready for further rethinking and action. The readiness was evidenced by a series of activities in 2003, namely the launching of the poverty reduction paper; establishing of

the Constituency Development Fund<sup>2</sup>; introduction of free primary education and convening of a national conference on education, training and research. In 2005 the Sessional paper<sup>3</sup> number 1 of 2005 on education, research and training (GoK 2005b), and the five-year Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (2005–2010) (GoK 2005a) were finalised. These policies openly acknowledged nomadic and pastoral communities as units in need of special focus and made special provisions. Additionally the government issued a Sessional Paper on Sustainable Development of Arid and Semi Arid Lands and Draft arid and semi-arid lands Gender Policy Guidelines, both in 2005, followed closely by a draft arid lands policy in 2006 (GoK 2006). Further on, a Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands was established in 2008, to strengthen policy formulation and implementation for the development of pastoral communities. A draft Policy on Alternative Provisions of Education (GoK 2008) was developed the same year.

### The Current State of Education Participation in ASAL

The concerted effort to improve education participation has resulted in consistent increase in access to education in Kenya (table 1).

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Girls	2.939	2.988	3.485	3.579	3.688	3.736	4.012	4.205
Boys	3.002	3.073	3.674	3.815	3.902	3.897	4.217	4.358
Total	5.941	6.062	7.160	7.394	7.590	7.633	8.229	8.583

Table 1: Primary School Enrolment by Gender (000): 2001–2008  
Source: KNBS: Economic Survey 2006; 2009 (<http://www.knbs.or.ke/>)

In addition to this, areas that previously had lower enrolments have witnessed biggest strides in closing the regional gaps in access (table 2 on the next page). The entire North Eastern province is arid and can therefore give an indication of schooling in ASAL in general. This province recorded the biggest increase between 2003 and 2007 (27,3%). However, with a 27,5% net enrolment ratio, it remains the worst performing province (together with Nairobi).

Analysis of school access in the years 2003 and 2007, the gender gap widened in Mandera (17,1–23,6%), Turkana (7,5–10,4%) and Wajir (5,8–7,8%), (Ruto/Ongwenyi/Mugo 2009).

Another recently concluded study (Uwezo 2010) has confirmed educational marginalization of northern districts. For instance, while only average of 5% of children is out of school nationally, the ASAL average is 21%.

In certain arid districts like Pokot and Samburu, 42% of children do not attend school. It has been estimated that about 900 000 children are out of school in parliamentary constituencies categorised as nomadic, 300 000 of them among the Somali communities of North Eastern Province alone (MSDNKAL 2010, p. 9).

PROVINCE	2003			2007			% Increase/Decrease
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Coast	66,9	60,1	63,5	84,6	77,0	80,8	27,2
Central	83,6	84,2	83,9	84,4	80,7	82,5	1,7
Eastern	90,4	90,3	90,4	98,7	97,8	98,3	8,7
Nairobi	35,5	40,3	37,7	28,6	29,3	29,0	23,1
Rift Valley	84,1	82,0	83,1	98,3	94,0	97,8	17,7
Western	97,5	93,2	95,3	99,1	98,9	99,0	3,9
Nyanza	96,2	95,4	95,8	98,4	98,2	98,3	2,6
North Eastern	26,1	16,2	21,6	33,1	20,8	27,5	27,3
NATIONAL	80,8	80,0	80,4	94,1	89,0	91,6	13,9

Table 2: Public Primary Schools Net Enrolment Rate (NER) by Province, 2003 and 2007  
Source: Ruto/Ongwenyi/Mugo 2009

Alongside this, only 17% of the mothers among pastoralist communities have ever attended school, against a national average of 79%. The study further established that children of nomadic and pastoralist communities are lagging behind children of other communities in reading Kiswahili, reading English and solving mathematics problems (Uwezo 2010).

The data presented above confirms that progress witnessed in ASAL has been insufficient to lift it from its perennial tradition of under-participation. ASAL areas continue to be afflicted with lower access and retention. These analyses, among other concerns that have been raised, point to a dismal situation, and clearly demonstrate the impossibility of Kenya achieving EFA goals by 2015. The key question however is, what has the Kenyan state been doing to address these challenges of nomadic education, and what effect is it having?

### Public and Private initiatives towards EFA for nomadic and pastoral communities

Over the last decade, effort has been invested to improve education for nomadic and pastoralist children in Kenya. The traditional 'solution' of low cost boarding schools has been augmented with expansion of mobile schools. Novel alternatives, such as the shepherd schools have been attempted just as entry has been made in integrated approaches bringing in Duqsi<sup>4</sup> and Madrassa<sup>5</sup> schools. Parents and communities, who previously had a nonchalant attitude to formal education are supporting education in various ways.

#### Mobile schools

'We used to give him [teacher] a goat or two every month, and he would move with us wherever we went, teaching our children' (Somali Elder, Wajir East; interview conducted during EFA global monitoring, 05.2009). Mobile schools have been supported by a variety of organisations, the church, the World Bank funded Arid Land Resource Management Project (ALRMP) and the government. The Ministry of Education has in recent years become more purposeful in coordinating these schools but it does not have an updated register. Current records indicate that there

are about 90 mobile schools with an enrolment of 4 437 (1 833 boys and 2 604 girls) in nine districts. This figure accounted for around 1,93% of the children attending public primary schools in those districts (MoE 2009a). Mobile schools are modelled to suit the nomadic lifestyle. Basically, the teacher stays and migrates with the nomadic families, offering flexible instruction to children. In some centres, younger children are offered instruction during the day, while older children, who are mostly involved in herding activities, meet in the evening for classes. The teacher has a pack of teaching materials, usually a foldable tent that is carried on camel or donkey back. The mobile schools cover content of pre-school to grade three, after which children are enrolled in main schools with boarding facilities. In most cases, the teacher offers adult classes to the same community. Mobile schools known to the MoE receive grants to support the purchase of materials.

#### Shepherd Schools

Shepherd schools are often designed as stationary centres, mostly attached to a public school, serving children who have to tend the livestock. An example of the shepherd schools is the Lchekuti of Samburu that targets young herders. Lessons are offered in the afternoon/evening either in conventional school or learning centres situated in the manyatta. In Marsabit, evening classes offered in the mobile schools or nearby regular schools target children who look after goats and sheep during the day. In other cases, mobile schools evolve into sedentary schools after nomadic families decide to settle permanently in one place, like the case of Tana River district. With the changing nomadic lifestyle, many families are establishing semi-permanent settlements, serving as points of reference where women and children are left, while men migrate in search of pasture and water. There are no statistics available on how many children are attending these schools.

#### Boarding schools

The boarding school is probably the earliest attempt, documented from the 1950s, to enhance schooling access for children of nomadic and pastoralist communities. To date, there are more than 360 boarding schools serving arid districts. Boarding schools offer the advantage of having a child full-time, and hence securing more time and concentration for learning. The appeal for these schools has increased. However, some parents have been found to make choices against boarding schools, expressing feelings of insecurity mainly for their daughters. Subsequently, having girls-only boarding schools has been found to enhance enrolment of girls. Moreover, boarding schools are mostly inappropriate for younger children, while children who work at home cannot be accommodated within the boarding school arrangement (MSDNKAL 2010b).

#### Looking ahead: New policies and actions

Traditionally, Ministry of Education (MoE) guidelines have suggested low cost boarding schools and mobile schools as the strategy for expanding access. Unfortunately, this strategy is not

comprehensive and neither has it enabled school participation for all children. There is increasing worry about placing children in boarding environments at a tender age. Comparatively, mobile schools present more exciting possibilities. However, these schools are beset with a myriad of challenges. Mobile schools operate outside the Education Act (revised 1981). They face irregular funding, lack regular trained teachers, are excluded from supervisory and quality assurance from MoE, and are afflicted with poor learning conditions and numerous environmental interferences. Children are supposed to transit after 'Grade 3' but lack of schools, or discomfort with the boarding school concept has been an impediment. More critically, these schools were supposed to be solutions to the mobile populations. However, the current organisation of these schools is not able to withstand the effects of mobility. A new rethinking of how to access education to all children in ASAL is needed. The worrying levels of school participation in ASAL lend credence to the view that education is at risk and countries must develop more inclusive approaches linked to wider strategies for protecting vulnerable populations and overcoming inequality (Ruto/Ongwenyi/Mugo 2009).

Two separate, yet inter linked processes are leading in the rethinking process. First, the MoE has finalised the Policy Guidelines on Nomadic Education in Kenya (2010) (GoK 2010). This policy not only allows for more targeted attention but also provides for the establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK). This commission has been proposed to; formulate policies, mobilize funds, coordinate and evaluate activities, ensure that nomadic education reaches across district boundaries, establish linkages with other Ministries, establish standards and skills to be attained in nomadic schools, and prepare statistics. Second, the Ministry of State for Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands was established in 2008. This ministry is mandated to 'fast track development in Northern Kenya and in arid lands by providing the necessary specialisation and energy in government that will find new solutions' (MSDNKAL 2010a).

The Ministry of Northern Kenya has prioritised the operationalisation of NACONEK. It is working closely with MoE to try practical solutions such as use of Radio, devolved from the presence of a teacher to reach the yet to be reached. There is a conscious effort to utilise concepts of distance education, aided by various electronic media. These new solutions provide some hope that more children will be accessed. It is however unlikely that Kenya shall fully achieve education for all children by 2015.

### Annotation

- 1 Nearly all wild animal parks are found in this region.
- 2 Devolved funds; this stipulates that 10% of the fund may be used for education.
- 3 Sessional papers are the official documents that spell out the country's policy direction in regard to certain developmental issues.
- 4 Duqsi refers to Koran classes held usually for younger children, whereby families employ private teachers to offer classes in neighbourhoods. Such classes take place very early in the morning, before school.
- 5 Madrassa is an Islamic system of education, preferred by some families as alternative to the formal education system.

### References

- Chege, F.N. (2006): Process of adopting EFA goals: The Kenyan Experience. Paper presented during the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) Seminar; [www.grips.ac.jp/forum/pdf06/seminar/24mar06/DrChege.pdf](http://www.grips.ac.jp/forum/pdf06/seminar/24mar06/DrChege.pdf), retrieved April 30, 2010.
- GoK = Government of Kenya (2005a): Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) 2005–2010. Delivering quality education and training to all Kenyans. Nairobi.
- GoK (2005b): Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on a Policy framework for education, training and Research. Nairobi.
- GoK (2005c): Sessional Paper on Sustainable Development of Arid and Semi Arid Lands. Nairobi.
- GoK (2005d): Draft arid and semi-arid lands Policy Guidelines. Nairobi.
- GoK (2006): National policy for the sustainable development of arid and semi arid lands of Kenya. Nairobi.
- GoK (2008): Draft Policy on Alternative Provisions of Education for ASAL. Nairobi.
- GoK (2010): Policy Guidelines on Nomadic Education in Kenya. Ministry of Education. Nairobi.
- Ismail, A.M. (2002): Challenges and Opportunities to Nomadic Education. The Sudanese and Eritrean Experience. Research Paper presented during the Abuja Conference on Nomadic Education, 16–19 January 2002.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2007): Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey. Government Printers. Nairobi.
- Kratli, S. (2000): The bias behind nomadic education. Commentary on UNESCO Courier; [http://www.unesco.org/courier/2000\\_10/uk/apprend.htm](http://www.unesco.org/courier/2000_10/uk/apprend.htm), retrieved April 30, 2010
- Kratli, S./Dyer, C. (2009): Mobile Pastoralists and Education: Strategic Options. Education for Nomads Working Paper 1. IIED.
- Ministry of Education (2009a): Education Facts and Figures 2002–2008. Nairobi.
- Ministry of Education (2009b): Various Reports on Monitoring of mobile schools in Fafi, Lagdera, Wajir West, Wajir East, Ijara, Tana River, Tana Delta, Turkana North and Samburu East Districts.
- Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands (2010a): Getting to the hardest-to-reach: A strategy to provide education to nomadic communities in Kenya through distance learning. Unpublished Strategy Paper.
- Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands (2010b): Report of the Workshop on Nomadic Education, 26th to 28th January 2010.
- Ngome, C.K. (2005): Mobile school programme for nomadic pastoralists in Kenya: Pilot project in Wajir, Ijara and Turkana Districts. Paper Prepared for ALRMP.
- Nigerian National Commission for Nomadic Education (undated): Situation Report on Nomadic Education; [www.chr.up.ac.za/indigenous/documents/Nigeria/Report/Situation%20Report%20on%20Nomadic%20Education.pdf](http://www.chr.up.ac.za/indigenous/documents/Nigeria/Report/Situation%20Report%20on%20Nomadic%20Education.pdf), retrieved May 25, 2010.
- Republic of Kenya (1965): Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya. Nairobi.
- Ruto, S.J./Ongwenyi, Z.M. et al. (2009): Educational Marginalisation in Northern Kenya. Background paper for the Education for All Global Monitoring 2010. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186617e.pdf>, retrieved May 25, 2010.
- Sifuna, D. N. (2007): The Challenge of increasing access and improving quality: An analysis of universal primary education interventions in Kenya and Tanzania since the 1970s. *International Review of Education*, 53, p. 687–699.
- UNESCO (2000): The Dakar Framework for Action. Adopted by the World Education Forum Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April 2000. Paris: UNESCO.
- Uwezo (2010): Are our children learning? Annual Learning Assessment Report, Kenya 2010. <http://www.uwezo.net/index.php?i=2>, retrieved May 30, 2010.

### Dr. John Kabutha Mug

is the Chairman of the Department of Special Needs Education at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya. He holds a PhD from the University of Hanover, Germany, and has conducted research and published in the areas of street children, child labour, disability education, juvenile delinquency and youth crime, and education of marginalized communities in Kenya.

### Dr. Sara Jerop Ruto

is the Country Coordinator of Uwezo Kenya, a national project on assessing learning competencies. She is also Chair of the Women Educational Researchers of Kenya (WERK), and formerly lecturer at Kenyatta University, Kenya. She holds a PhD from the University of Heidelberg, Germany. Her research interests and areas of publication include gender and education, non-formal and alternative education, and education of marginalized communities in Kenya.