



Drylands Learning and  
Capacity Building Initiative  
for Improved Policy and  
Practice in the Horn of Africa

*Pastoralist Parliamentary Group*

## MEDIA BRIEF: PASTORALIST PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

### ILLITERACY FREE KENYA: OPERATION TAKE THE SCHOOL TO THE PEOPLE

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#### The status of education in the nomadic counties of Kenya

The status of education in Kenya's nomadic counties is extremely poor with 60% of the 2 million Kenyan children who have never been to school living in the ASALs, despite constituting only 14% of the population. Primary enrolment rates are as low as 40% in many counties, compared to a national average of 95%. Between 2005 and 2010 the gender parity index has worsened, with female literacy rates remaining below 10% in some counties. Teacher pupil ratios are below other areas of the country, and completion rates and performance are way below national averages. A large number of youth who have been through the education system are now disconnected from their traditional livelihoods and do not have the right skills to find employment. This disaffected cohort is vulnerable to crime and extremist influence.

The national government has made repeated commitments to provide education for all, including in the new Constitution, and the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals which states that all countries should 'ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. In Kenya this goal will only be reached if nomadic communities are reached. Currently educational investment is having limited impact in these areas because it does not conform to the basic principles of **accessibility, availability, acceptability and adaptability**<sup>1</sup>. Many of the delivery mechanisms that have been designed to reach nomadic children have not been implemented—particularly distance learning and non formal provision—or are under-resourced and supervised, for example mobile schools, feeder schools, low cost boarding schools and adult literacy classes and the newly launched National Council on Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK) is neither empowered or resourced to change the situation.

Many argue that education provision should be the same as in other areas of the country—in terms of delivery mechanisms, levels of human resources and curricula—despite huge differences in the infrastructure, human resource and livelihood base, and the social and environmental conditions of the ASALs. This insistence is resulting in 50% of the population in these areas not being reached by education at all; and those that are, having no prospects of employment and being alienated from their communities.

In the context of the nomadic counties, flexibility, innovation and new technologies need to be applied creatively to ensure an education system that is of equal quality; but that is also relevant, culturally appropriate, strengthens existing and alternative livelihoods, and facilitates effective progression through to the formal education system.

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Galgalo, Chair of NACONEK



## What should be done?

In order to improve education in the nomadic counties there are a number of urgent steps which need to be taken:

1. **Devolve adult literacy and non-formal education so that locally appropriate measures can be instituted to increase literacy OR** properly resource and implement distance learning, non-formal education, vocational and adult literacy strategies in nomadic areas.
2. **Build on and support community initiated education provision** e.g. the integration of *madrassa* and *dugsi* systems and other community schools, ensuring quality and equivalence with other education provision.
3. **Address the chronic lack and low capacity of teachers in nomadic counties** through affirmative action for students from these areas to enter teacher training, including: lowering the minimum entry grade for girls joining teacher training to C-; increasing scholarships, hardship and risk allowances, and recognition and capacity building of auxiliary teachers in remote areas.
4. **Appoint a specific team on Nomadic Education headed by KICD as part of the current curriculum review process to ensure that curriculum is relevant for nomadic regions.**
5. **Empower and resource NACONEK so it can fulfil its mandate of improving education in nomadic counties.** NACONEK should become Corporate Body and be properly resourced and empowered to carry out its functions.
6. **All education actors should align their programs with NACONEK priorities and work in conjunction with NACONEK and support education delivery mechanism that are appropriate and sustainable.** Collaboration and coordination of all educational actors is essential to ensure efficient use of resources and a coherent strategy. NACONEK has been mandated to lead on this, but other government institutions, donors and NGOs should work in conjunction with NACONEK so that there is joint planning and review, and pooling of resources.
7. **Increased emphasis on and resourcing of education in nomadic counties by the government, donors, private sector, county governments and others.** Including: increasing capitation for low cost boarding schools and free primary, and increase quality assurance officers (e.g. there is currently only one quality assurance officer for the whole of North Eastern) and support from donors (currently only 1% of donor funds to the ASALs go to education).

## Conclusion

The provision of education in the nomadic counties of Kenya is dismal, and not in conformity with the Constitution of Kenya or the many declarations that the national government has signed up to. Despite the recent launching of NACONEK, it is neither empowered nor resourced to address the current constraints in nomadic counties to fulfil the basic right to education. This should be done in the interest of the entire nation, not only because Kenya will benefit from increased productivity, but also without it, on-going conflict, terrorism, drought disasters will continue to drain resources. To do this, more appropriate and culturally acceptable delivery mechanisms need to be urgently instituted to reach the people in nomadic counties who don't have access to education so that Kenya can finally become 'illiteracy-free'.

## More documents and resources

Other documents on nomadic education can be accessed under the 'drylands education database' at: [www.dlci-hoa.org](http://www.dlci-hoa.org) including:

DLCI (May 2015) Technical brief: A framework for improved integrated education in the ASALs of Kenya, Wesonga, D. <http://www.dlci-hoa.org/?p=3909>



DLCI (May 2015) Full study: A framework for improved integrated education in the ASALs of Kenya, Wesonga, D.  
<http://www.dlci-hoa.org/?p=4058>

Dyer, C. and Kratli, S. (2009) Mobile Pastoralists and Education: Strategic Options, IIED

Dyer, C. (2006) (Ed) The Education of Nomadic People: Current issues, future prospects. USA: Berghahn Books.

Kratli, S. (2001). Education Provision to Nomadic Pastoralists: A Literature Review. IDS Working Paper 126. Institute of Development Studies, Brighton. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/Wp126.pdf>

Uwezo Kenya (2011/2) "Are our children learning?" Annual Learning Assessment Report, Nairobi.

