

EDUCATION FOR NOMADS NETWORK - KENYA

As promised, we have set up a mailing list to keep you updated on the progress of our work. This is the first communication.

The goal of the mailing list is to inform all those interested about the progress and direction of the work and to seek early feedback.

You can take yourself out of the mailing list at any time by sending an email to sarahwitts@sahel.org.uk with the text: 'delete my name from the EFN mailing list'.

We ask you to treat these communications as working notes designed for internal distribution, and not to be quoted or disseminated outside this mailing list. Thank you. Your feedback, in any form, will be very much welcomed!

This first update briefly presents the context and orientation of our work and describes our early steps in the mapping of relevant experiences and innovative approaches.

WORKING TOGETHER

A new policy framework addressing the issue of education provision to nomadic peoples is being developed by the Government of Kenya under the lead of the Ministry of Education and with the support of UNICEF.

Awareness of limited institutional capacity for dealing with the particular living conditions of nomadic populations has led to a multi-sectoral approach open to receiving inputs from stakeholders involved in pastoral development.

The Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands, as a key institutional stakeholder, has invited a pastoral education team co-ordinated by SOS Sahel International UK, to help in the process of assuring that the new policy for nomadic education meets the expectations of mobile populations and matches both their livelihood



conditions and their economic strategies as producers. The intention of this initiative is not to replace existing activities, but rather to consult fully with other actors to learn from what they have done and to further support their work.

GETTING STARTED

One of the first steps in the work of this team is to map potentially useful lessons from successful and innovative educational alternatives.

The framework for our strategic mapping overlaps substantially with the 'Vision' stated in the draft policy for nomadic education: providing 'globally competitive quality education, training and research for Kenya's nomadic communities'.

Preliminary results from fieldwork with pastoral groups suggest that their interest in education is gaining great

momentum. This change in attitude follows from a greater awareness of the political and economic drawbacks of lacking formal education in the context of today’s nation states. At present however, formal education can only be pursued at the cost of splitting the household into schooled and non-schooled: on one side the few youths who have dropped out of the family business in order to go to school or as the result of schooling; on the other, those who, in order to maintain production, had to renounce to formal education. As lucidly put by an elder from Isiolo we met last January, households interested in education are forced to ‘choose between wealth and knowledge, between having a prosperous herd but remaining ignorant, and being educated but poor’.

If the vision of achieving globally competitive quality education for nomadic households is to match the nomads’ interest in education, we think that three fundamental requirements have to be met.

The provision of education should:

- not get in the way of households’ production strategies;
- be accessible to *all* children in pastoral households, rather than only a few as now (missing out those actually involved in production);
- offer evident short- and long-term benefits, as a priority, to nomadic producers as such as well as to those who seek alternatives to their present livelihood.

We therefore understand the Vision for nomadic education as *all* children in nomadic households being enabled to effectively and consistently access primary and secondary education through educational alternatives that do not undermine the nomads’ systems of production *and* are of a quality potentially leading to university education of international standards.



Challenges of Providing Education to Nomads

- Mobile and scattered population
- Disruptions of service and attendance due to uncontrollable events (e.g. conflict, droughts, floods).
- High costs for building, maintaining and equipping remote schools
- Children’s work commitments in the household
- Parents’ resistance to sending girls away from the household in order to attend school
- A largely non-literate social environment
- Lack of liquidity in pastoral households
- Shortage of well-trained teachers available for staffing remote schools
- A legacy of antagonism and reciprocal mistrust between nomadic groups and educational institutions



EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES TO SCHOOLING

Most of the difficulties listed here appear to be associated with the provision of school-based education, not of education per se. Experiments with non-formal education have often given much more encouraging results than the simple provision of traditional schooling. This is due to practical reasons more than theoretical shortcomings: it is not our purpose to question the value of school-based education. Nevertheless, it is evident that the provision of good quality school-based education to nomadic populations has faced fundamental challenges that, to date, have proved unsurmountable, and there are no reasons to think that this will change in the foreseeable future.

We therefore believe that there is a need for a fundamental revision of education strategies for nomadic populations, seeking lessons from experiences in viable alternatives to the school-based system.



RECENT NEWS

In February, on invitation from the Government of Kenya, we offered a brief commentary on the draft Policy on Nomadic Education. The text is available from SOS Sahel UK (see address below).

A first working paper by Saverio Krätli, focussing on nomadic education and open and distance learning, is in final draft and will soon be released.

An important part of developing education provision for pastoralists is understanding the attitudes of adults and children in pastoral societies towards formal

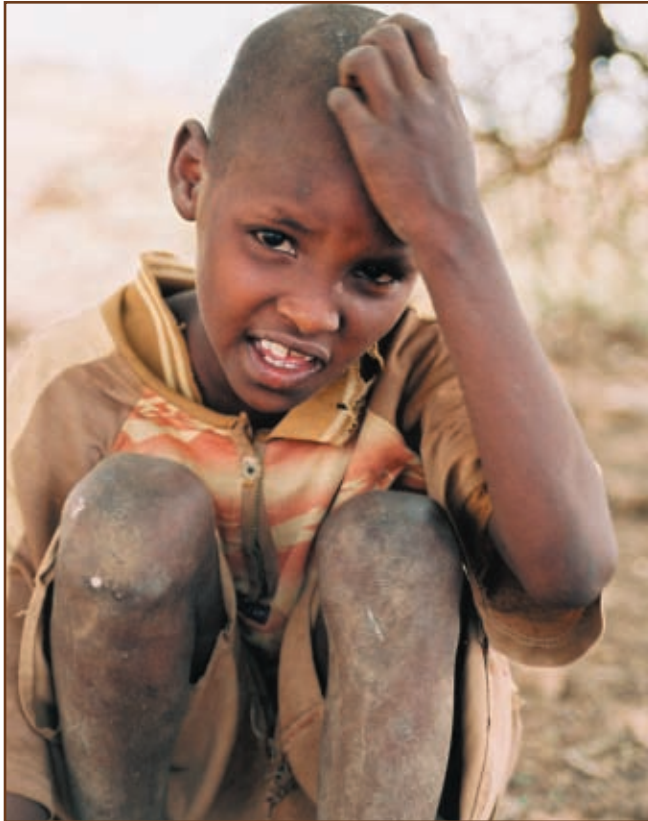


education and skills acquisition, and the reasons for low enrollment and high dropout. SOS Sahel is using the scenario planning methodology to gather the views of boys, girls, men and women, to ensure that they are fully involved in planning. Scenario planning has been described as 'rehearsing the future', or learning how to recognise which particular version of the future is unfolding. In February, eight pastoral specialists convened in Limuru for specific training on the use of the scenario planning methodology in consulting nomadic communities about education. Since then, community consultations have been carried out in Wajir, Isiolo and Marsabit. Ali Mola, a 15-year old at school in Meru, told us his story: 'Before, my father said I could not go to school – livestock is for you, and you are for livestock, he told me. Now, my family wants me to concentrate on education. I love my school. It seems I am a role model – children talk to me and many want to go to school' When asked what they would say to the 'big people' in Nairobi about education, young people in Marsabit explained that they 'would like to learn and still be looking after animals'.



WHAT NEXT?

As well as continuing the community consultation process to help get the voice of the people to the policy-makers (further meetings are planned in Wajir, Isiolo, Kadijado and Turkana), SOS Sahel UK are mapping the institutional links and key actors in education for pastoralists in Kenya. A 2-week visit in May is intended to build up a clear picture of the work being done and what the gaps are. Look out for more news in the next bulletin!



CONTACT US

The mailing list for this bulletin is moderated but open. If you know of somebody interested in our issues and want to suggest a contact please let us know by emailing sarahwitts@sahel.org.uk.

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