

## **Pastoralism, Gender and Girls Education in Afar and Somali Regions of Ethiopia: Structural and Institutional Reforms for Promoting Collective Action**

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### **Abstract**

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*This paper examines how the socio-cultural frameworks of the Afars and Somalis in Ethiopia are major challenges to the promotion of modern education and especially girls' education. These two regions have the lowest educational indicators in the country. National efforts to increase citizens' participation in basic education have met with little progress in these two regions. The basic question is why these two regions have not made commensurate progress when compared with others in education development especially in girls' education, which is a key Social Development target. Our basic argument is that the promotion of education and girls' education in particular, will only be successful when the decision makers accept fully the programme. This could only be possible if they perceive the education processes and outcomes not threatening to the cultural framework in which the household members share and coordinate the productive activities under the leadership of elder males.*

*This paper aims at initiating a conversation on how the socio-cultural frameworks of pastoral communities in Afar and Somali have impacted negatively on the development of education and most importantly offer possibilities for improving the girl's education situation. The paper will (a) Assess the situation of education in these two regions; (b) Examine the socio-cultural framework of pastoralists with special reference to the Afars and Somalis and its impact on women and girls at the household and group levels; and (c) Propose strategies of initiating acceptable collective action that will promote girls education in the two regions.*

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**Sub-theme:** Gender Issues, Girls education

### **Background**

In Ethiopia, unlike in much of Africa, primary education opportunities, expanded very slowly until after 1974. By 1974, only 15.3% of the primary school going age was attending schools (ADB, 2002). The educational opportunity was not only limited, but it also was not evenly distributed since most of the schools were located in the urban areas and in the central regions of the country. The regions of Afar and Somali were to say the least out of the mainstream areas of interventions for various reasons. These two regions had a late start in the initiation of modern education. Some children of the chieftains of the nomadic people from these regions and others were educated in the boarding schools located in the urban centres (Shibeshi, and Kidane, 1997).

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The military regime (1974-1991) tried to promote universal primary education. The period witnessed significant expansion of school and enrolment in which primary, junior and secondary schools doubled (MOE, 1995). But the universalization of education by the socialist regime had minimal effects on the two regions of Afar and Somali that are predominantly pastoralists.

The current government, which started in 1991 continued with the universal policy of education. It went further to reforming institutions as evidenced in the Constitution (1994), New Education and Training Policy (1994), Education Sector Development programme (ESDP, 1, 2, 3, 1996, 2000; 2005). Furthermore, the country embarked on a decentralization process that administratively divided the country into nine regions and two city administrations. Afar and Somali regions are two of the nine national regional states which are generally categorized under the desert and semi-desert agro-ecological zones in Ethiopia. Both the regions of Afar and Somali share typical features in common, particularly in prevalence of high temperature and low mean annual rainfall, mobile life style of the local community in search of water and fresh pasture for their animals, and poor socio-economic status of the communities.

Within this period the country made tremendous gains in providing opportunities for children to access schooling. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at primary level has significantly increased from 32% in 1995/96 to 79.8% in 2004/05 at national level. Despite remarkable efforts since 1994, the regional disparities with regards to access to basic education remain wide. These disparities are more pronounced in the two pastoral regions of Afar and Somali. GER in both regions has been as below 13% till 2001/02 making them the least developed regions in Ethiopia compared to the national average of 61.6%. Even the 10% who were attending school tend to be in urban areas. Similarly lack of access to basic education has also been very acute in the pastoralist communities of Southern Omo Zone (SNNPR) and the Borena Zone in Oromia Region.

A basic issue is why the growth in provision and participation increasingly left behind the pastoral regions of Afar and Somali. Although the policies that underpinned the education expansion proved responsive to the interests and needs of most other regions, they proved to be inappropriate to the realities in Afar and Somali pastoral regions, especially girls. The outcomes are chronically low levels of education participation among the pastoral communities, and marked disparities in the provision and participation between pastoralist and other communities/regions in the country. In 2004/05, for instance, participation in terms of GER in Afar and Somali regions was as low as 20.9% (17% for girls) and 23.3% (18.3% for girls), respectively. This was exceptionally very low when compared to the national average of 79.8% (71.1% for girls). Moreover, the proportion of out of school children in the two pastoralist regions is alarmingly very high accounting for 87.4% and 78.6% of the total school age population in Afar and Somali Regions, respectively. The national average for share of out of school children during the same period was only 31.5% implying the need to exert extraordinary efforts and design strategic approaches to address the educational needs of children in pastoralist and agro pastoralist communities of Afar and Somali regions. The critical question is why has the two regions not benefited from the universalization policies of the government. We have tried to seek some of the explanations in pastoralism and gender. The pastoralists in most parts of the world are marginalised people who are distanced from political power, and economic resources by virtue of their way of life which distinguishes them from mainstream society. How to advance the interests of women within these marginalised communities needs some reflective actions.

At the Millennium Summit of the UN, Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 was broadly framed to 'promote gender equality and empower women'. Within the goal, the target relating to education was set in terms of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and in all parts by 2015 ([www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)). But many societies, such as the Afars and Somalis are very far from reaching the target. To achieve the Millennium target in these regions will need to look beyond access to schooling and examine what happens within the immediate and distant society. Unless urgent attention is paid to addressing inequalities of gender and ethnicity that shape girls experience of education, increasing access to education may be undermined. The kind of education that girls and women want is shaped by their experience and expectations of what they can do with education in the future. The expectations of girls and their parents regarding the curriculum that they study may be formed through, economic, or political constraints in the immediate environment or deduced from development rhetoric about the benefits schooling brings for individuals and society (Aikman, Unterhalter, and Challenger, 2005). This makes it imperative to ensure curricula that promote gender equality and gender equitable pedagogical practices.

While a range of declarations and conventions provide written support for ideas about gender equality and human rights, the ways in which these values can form a part of the process of putting a curriculum into practice have been hardly considered. This is an important area for governments and community based organizations to consider. In this paper we have tried to suggest some innovative practices for curriculum and pedagogy. Innovative not because they are new but because they are different from the mainstream education delivery processes. The who and what of curriculum are not confined to the content, but also to the processes of curriculum development and the forms of consultation and debate that underpin the choice of ideas, documents, and materials that comprise a curriculum and its process of review. Given the widespread commitment to overcome gender inequality, improving decision making about curriculum policy and gender equality is an important challenge. Care needs to be taken that a broad range of views of women and girls from different social groups are included in curriculum development and review processes. Teachers are central to the delivery of the curriculum. How do teachers, who possess different social attitudes and are themselves, located within gendered social relations, translate curriculum documents into classroom practices and learning outcomes.

The key issue of this paper is how gender based discrimination intersect with discrimination which arises from a woman being a member of a marginalised community. How these two forms of discrimination create particular challenges and constraint for women will be interesting to examine. For pastoralist women, the experience of membership of a marginalised community is blended with the experience of discrimination arising from female identity. Women in pastoral settings are confronted with what Nancy Folbre called 'multiple structures of constraint' (Folbre, 1994: 51). Each of these structures of constraint intersects with the others, to limit the actions and choices of individual women.

Our basic argument is that a woman's context is critical to understanding her life, choices and challenges. While women experience discrimination as a sex worldwide, the gender 'structure of constraint' operates much more intensively in some communities than in others. For example in pastoralist societies in which interpretations of religion results in tight controls over female behaviour, a woman may feel her gender identity is a very important determinant of the way she is able to live her life. The gender 'structure of constraint' can often operate most oppressively in contexts in which the rights and identity of marginalised communities are under threat. The more a community feels that its ways of understanding the world and its behaviour are under threat from an alien culture, the more likely it is that women's behaviour will come under severe scrutiny. The pastoralists of Afar and Somali seem to be under threat of having their ways of life being changed.

### **Pastoralist Context of Afar and Somali**

Pastoralism is a subsistence (economic) pattern in which people make their living by tending herds of large animals, which depend mainly on natural vegetation for their food (Kandagor, 2005; Awogbade, 1991). This dependence along with migration to water, away from disease and in response to other pressures, determines the seasonal and daily movements of pastoralists. Pastoralists are people who are primarily raising and depending on live stock and their products as their source of food and income (Dawit, 2000). Pastoralism is most often an adaptation to semi-arid open country in which farming can not be easily sustained without importing irrigation water from great distances. This means that pastoralism could be the most efficient way of using resources in dry land and marginal areas.

Pastoralists often have the same distinct qualities of personality regardless of the region of the world in which they live. Men in a local group tend to be cooperative with each other and aggressive towards outsiders. They usually have the ability to decide and act quickly.

The pastoralists like any group is not a homogenous one. There are three main modes of pastoralist livelihoods: nomadic pastoralism; agro-pastoralism and; transhumant pastoralism (Wolde Michael, 1995). Nomadic-pastoralism refers to pastoralists who mainly live and derive most of their food source and income from raising domestic stock; these do not have a recognised place of residence as they move from place to place. They are mainly found in very harsh arid and semi-arid environments. Matching the highly limited seasonal pasture supply with the constant feed requirement of livestock is quite a challenge in these environments. Management of the animals therefore entails nomadism. Nomadic pastoralists move as a team (generally at the household level or may be two to three households) with varying degrees of co-operation and hostility among them.

Agro-pastoralism is segments of pastoral husbandry society who promote opportunistic crop farming integrated to their livestock husbandry practices; these live in semi permanent settlements. The system develops from nomadic systems when livestock keepers settle around permanent sources of water and grow crops to supplement livestock production. An agropastoral system is defined as one in which between 10% and 50% of household revenue is obtained from livestock and its products (Wilson, 1995). Transhumant pastoralism refers to pastoralists who have a permanent home area and move over more or less on regular routes. Any pastoralist policy on education to be effective will need to address adequately these variants of pastoralism.

Nomadic pastoralism has been a dominant feature among the Afars and Somalis living in Ethiopia. But with modernization and the opening up of these areas, these three types of pastoralism (nomadism, agro-pastoralism and transhumant) now exist. The Afar region has an estimated population of 1.9 million of which about 80% relies on transhumant animal husbandry for subsistence, while the remaining have established sedenterized communities along the Awash river banks or along major transport routes. The Somali region has a population of about 4.2 million in which the major type of pastoralism for the rural population is nomadic, followed by Agro-pastoralism.

The key issue is that no matter the category, the pastoralist life is shaped by many socio-cultural factors. Their resources and economic assets and production relations are related to a cultural framework with certain values and traditions regarding the use of resources, property ownership and the division of productive roles. Similarly, their social institutions, are shaped by certain cultural elements that defines the basis of their social relationships by identifying resources, activities, actors and roles. The basis of pastoral organization almost everywhere in the world is the clan, a set of patrilineally related households traced (in theory) to an apical ancestor. Such groupings can be small, and the ancestry stretch back for only a short time span, or so great that the working kin group is a lineage. The preservation of these genealogies is very important

The importance of education for the individual is understood in these societies. But there is resistance to change in gender power relations. No major changes have occurred in the basic ideas and values related to gender power relations. This is similar to what happened to the patriarchal values defining inter and intra household relationships. Among the Afars and the Somalis, the framework of relationships is conditioned by rules imposed by males. Interactions are generally rather restricted as the pastoralists are conscious of the need to preserve their distinctions and to resist as much as possible any threats to their cultural framework. The promotion of girls education as currently packaged seems threatening to the prevailing cultural framework that is male dominated. Pastoralists of Afar and Somali are faced with multiple marginalization –as one of the dominated ethnic groups, and as pastoralists. The marginalization of pastoralists as communities has overshadowed the degraded position of pastoralist women.

The socio-economic status of both regions is generally ranked to be extremely poor by any standards. Provisions of basic social services such as potable water, health facilities, and educational infrastructure have been poorly developed in both regions. Water is by far the scarcest resource and has been one of the major causes for life long migration and mobility of the local communities. The safe drinking water supply coverage in Afar region in 2005 is estimated to be 27 per cent while in Somali region it is estimated at about 39 per cent. The chronic shortage of potable water supply has been one of the underlying causes of health problems among children and women in both the regions. The health service coverage of in both regions is in 2005 is very low, i.e., 39 per cent in Afar and 42 per cent in Somali compared with both the national average of 50% during same year. Shortages of health facilities including medical professionals and front line health workers coupled with the mobile life style of the local communities is one of the major challenges for the regions.

Likewise, the provision of basic education of good quality has been negligible in both the regions due to various reasons, such as shortage and uneven distribution of school facilities, capacity constraints, mobile life style of local communities, low knowledge of local population on the value of basic education, particularly of girls' education. The constraints facing the delivery of basic social services have also been compounded and aggravated by the recurrent outbreak of repeated drought, over flowing of perennial rivers such as Awash in Afar and Wabi Shebelle in Somali as well as erratic ethnic conflicts in both the regions of Afar and Somali. These unstable situations are believed to have significant adverse effects of the socio-economic conditions of the pastoralist and agro pastoralist communities of the regions.

The impact of these natural disasters and human made calamities is more pronounced in the education sector as the rate of schooling children dropping out from schools is found to be high during major emergency situations in both regions. The mobility of the students together with their parents in search of water and pasture negatively affects the school-age children's physical and health status and psychological readiness for regular attendance and performance of their basic education. In the following paragraph, specific attempts have been made to specifically explore the educational profiles of children with special emphasis on girls.

### **Gender Issues in Pastoral Systems**

Gender has been defined in a variety of ways, both in research and public use. It is more than the differences between women and men and the term means different things to different people. It refers to those aspects of the differences between women and men that are shaped by social forces or to the meaning that a society gives to biological differences (Riley, 1997). Focusing on the socio-economic aspects gender could be seen in three ways that are interrelated. One is gender as a social institution, establishes patterns of behaviour (with delineated roles for men and women) through interaction with other institutions. Two, it involves differences in power by ordering social relationships in such a way that some individuals have greater power than do others. Thirdly, gender as a cultural construct is organized differently in different societies, and refers to the cultural construction of female and male identities. The cumulative effect of all these is the power dynamics –'power to and power over' –is skewed in favour of women. Power refers to ability to act and often requires access to social resources such as land, education, money etc. Women have less power to. They also have less power over than men in all facets of society. They usually have less say than their husbands in family decisions.

Ethiopia is not only one of the poorest countries in the world, but also one in which gender relations are acutely unequal (Flintan, 2006). Throughout Ethiopia, women's access to resources tends to be controlled by their husbands or other male kin. Women's lack of independent status and their exclusion from leadership are embedded in culture, and result in an internalized sense of social inferiority on the part of women themselves. This general situation varies among groups that make up Ethiopia.

Among the Afar and Somali pastoralists men are largely the decision makers for livestock production and are in charge of general herd management. Their management responsibilities require constant attendance at markets and other gathering places to obtain necessary information. Men make initial decisions on when to move, where to move to and whom to herd the stocks. The women retain primary responsibilities for dairy related activities. They are responsible for milking, processing of milk and marketing of surplus milk and dairy products. In addition to animal husbandry tasks, the women are also responsible for the daily and time consuming tasks of childcare, food preparation and water and fuel collection. They spend an average of six hours a day on these domestic chores. Women also build and maintain homes which involve dismantling the houses, loading them on donkeys for transportation and rebuilding them at the next camp.

The women have limited access to resources and benefits. Livestock are the central means of survival for pastoral nomads. Access to livestock and their products is therefore indispensable for the economic, social and cultural survival of these households. Men are generally associated with animals as herd managers and are generally considered owners of cattle, with women and children having minimal privileges. Women do not own livestock. Generally women do not inherit cattle from their husbands or fathers. On the relationship between pastoral men and women several arguments have been made on men having disproportionate amount of power over men (Harold Schneider, 1979; Spencer, 1979; Llewelyn-Davies, 1981). Schneider contended that among East African pastoralists, men's control of livestock gave them control of women, who were usually thoroughly subordinated to men and thus unable to establish independent identity as a production force'(Sshneider, 1979: 82).

In the ethnographic study of Matapato Massai, Spencer claimed that both male and female Maasai pastoralists believe in 'the undisputed right of men to own women as possessions' (Spencer, 1979: 198). Marriage in his view, was therefore, 'the transfer of a woman as a possession from her father who reared her to her husband who rules her' (Spencer, 1979: 25). Mellissa Llewelyn-Davies' study of Loita Maasai women in Kenya corroborated Spencer's findings. Loita Maasai women perceived themselves, and were perceived, as 'property', to be bought and sold by men with bride wealth. She argued that 'elder patriarchs' used their control of property rights in women, children and livestock to control the production and reproduction of both livestock and human beings (Llewelyn-Davies, 1981: 330-358). Few scholars have questioned the undisputed right of modern day male pastoralists to own women as possessions. Historians, especially Africans, who have studied East African pastoralists have rarely concerned themselves very seriously, pastoralist social organization and gender relations. This could be part of the romanticization of the old African cultures.

Going back to how pastoralist women come to be thought of as property, two contending arguments prevail. One is the historical construction hypotheses and the second is the identity marginalization community threat hypotheses. The basic argument of the historical construction hypotheses made very forcefully and convincingly by Dorothy Hodson is that contemporary gender relations among pastoralists, which many scholars have described as 'patriarchal', are not inherent to pastoralism as a mode of production or an ideology, but the result of a historically particular constellation of interactions involving the colonial systems and pastoralist ideas and practices (Hodson, 1999; Kettel, 1986; Talle, 1988). Specifically, Hodson, argued that it was during the early period of British colonial state formation that the parameters of male Maasai power expanded to embrace new modes of control and authority, becoming something we might call patriarchal (Hodson, 1999: 42-43). Gender inequality is not only a result of culture and tradition, but also a direct result of planned economic and social change, which is founded on wrong assumptions about gender roles. Development policy and practice have often failed to understand the significance of women's valuable role in pastoral livelihoods (Hodson 2000; ADB, 2004). Many pastoral development interventions still target men as the recipients of animal husbandry training, veterinary medicines and other benefits. As a result, men are able to reinforce their claims to control and ownership with claims of livestock expertise. As such, women contributions and knowledge have been further marginalized and unequal gender relations have increased. As in any patriarchal/power relationships, the control is relational, never thorough, often maintained through extended negotiations and struggles.

The identity marginalization community threat hypotheses, simply argues that the more a community feels that its ways of understanding the world and its behaviour are under threat from an alien culture, the more likely it is that women's behaviour will come under severe scrutiny. Women's chastity before marriage, and faithfulness within marriage, are important markers of social cohesion and order in such societies. While women experience discrimination as a sex worldwide, the 'gender structure of constraint' operates much more oppressively in some countries and communities than others (Crenshaw, 1994; Sweetman and Porter, 2006)

Under such circumstances, gender roles necessarily follow defined paths. Male prerogatives reside in family economic welfare, politics, and relationships with outsiders. Female roles stress motherhood, child socialization and family nurturing. Thus women's self perception of their roles, contributes to the perpetuation of patriarchal values. Women in pastoralist communities tend to be excluded from public decision-making processes, and experience high levels of violence and ill-health. A recent government study carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture indicated that in all pastoral regions of Ethiopia, there are more men than women. The highest gaps are in Afar and Somali regions, where the population ratios are 136 men: 100 women and 118 men: 100 women respectively (Techniplan and MCE Agristudio, 2004).

The causes of such differences need to be examined. Our hunch is that high maternal mortality, violence against women (female genital mutilation and early marriage) could be possible explanations.

Pastoralist societies most often have patriarchy descent patterns and are male dominated. The root cause appears to be related to the importance of not dispersing viable herds. Many pastoral societies practice pre-inheritance, the father dispersing the herd among his sons prior to his death, since the principle of patrilocality means that the animals will anyway remain in the same physical herd. Men usually make the important decisions and own animals, while women primarily care for children and perform domestic chores. The economic and political power of most pastoralist women is very low. The division of labour is based primarily on gender and age in pastoralist societies.

In most African pastoral societies the position of women is marginal, in the sense that they rarely own or inherit livestock. As a result, much decision-making concerning livestock development is the domain of males. There are concerns that pastoralists do not readily accept the need for education and in particular the need to educate girls. Yes we know that this is difficult. But we have to note that without progress in changing traditional perspectives, especially as they relate to gender, development will not happen. Attention therefore needs to be paid to achieving the basic conditions for gender-centred development. This will need a collective action that will involve pastoralists. Broad based campaigns through operational research could be the main strategy to educate the pastoralist society on the benefits of gender equality and to diffuse tensions between the genders. The process of working with pastoralist communities to support them to assert their rights will establish a relationship of trust between the communities and the outsiders which could create a good foundation for work to promote gender equality. It is essential that gender relations in each pastoral context are well understood, if interventions will at the very least, do no harm to gender relations in these communities.

**Key issues in the Promotion of gender equality in Education of pastoralists**

From the above, it seems clear that most pastoralist children in Afar and Somali regions do not enjoy their right to basic education. The 2015 Education for All target will not be achieved unless policies and resources are directed to provide these children with access to relevant, good quality education. The issues can be categorized as follows: - (i) structural; (ii) environmental; and (iii) economic/resource allocation; (iv) quality; (v) safety; (vi) nutritional; and (vii) curriculum and quality of teacher issues.

The structural issues include (a) particular aspects of gender inequalities, such as rigid division of labour coupled with heavy workload for all members of households especially for women during migration; and (b) the practice of early marriage and belief in the intellectual inferiority of women and girls.

The environmental issues include (a) the harsh effects of desertification and chronic drought and consequently (b) the constant mobility of nomads and pastoralists. As a result of the mobility, pastoralist and nomadic children are unable to attend a static school during the usual daytime hours of a conventional school year.

Equitable/Adequate financial allocation issues Basic education should be free for all children at the point of delivery. Governments should make specific allocation to ensure adequate financing for pastoralist education, but the reverse is the case. A study on the proportion of public allocation to basic education of pastoralist areas will be revealing. Although pastoralists contribute significantly to the overall national economy and to government revenues through taxes on their livestock, they do not benefit commensurately from investment in their education. Because of the difficulties in the areas, the basic services including education tend to be found mainly in the cities.

Quality issues The children of pastoralists have a right to good quality basic education. When pastoralist and nomadic parents send their children to school, they do not want sub-standard education, but one which is both the same as others receive, with the same certification, and is also relevant to their mobility, way of life and knowledge.

Safety issues Decisions about where to locate static schools have important implications for girls. Pastoralist children living in dispersed mobile groups may have many kilometres to walk each day to and from school. This raises safety issues for girls en route, and also in school, where they may be far from their family and therefore more vulnerable to abuse.

Nutritional Issues These are very critical in situations of drought. If boys and girls are to attend school, given the many hours they spend walking to the school and back, in-school feeding programs are essential.

Curriculum and quality of teachers' issues Pastoralism demands high relevance of curriculum. The mobile school concept challenges the established notion of what a school is or should be. Mobility may necessitate a shortened school day, involve multi-grade teaching, require a truncated school year, and need an adapted curriculum which requires specific relevant training for teachers. Teachers in pastoralist areas should have the training and skills to adapt the 'core' curriculum to suit the local contexts. Experience in the non-formal sector indicates that interventions that are community based and that respond to context and mobility patterns, can work.

Based on the issues the implementation of basic education in pastoralist societies such as Afar and Somali should break through the barriers to girls and women education. The same barriers holding girls in non pastoralist societies are the very ones holding them in pastoralist societies. The only difference is that they are stronger in the later. Any program/strategy like the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) that is described below must as a primary step develop a gender analysis of the obstacles and inequalities faced by nomadic and pastoralist girls and women both inside and outside of the school. The problem of how to support girls to remain in school until they have achieved good quality which can improve their capabilities should be well addressed.

**Achieving Gender Equality in Education through Collective Action**

Poverty leads to people having little influence over decisions made about their future. People in poverty are easy to ignore and exploit, and remain hard to reach with social services. This is particularly true of pastoral communities of Afar and Somali regions. A central item on the Education for All agenda is the challenge of providing an education of an acceptable quality to those who so far have been excluded. In this case, these are the pastoralists living in remote and sparsely populated regions of Ethiopia. Our proposed strategy is getting education to the people/learners in collaboration with the communities. This will require a paradigm shift in thinking about education provision. The current mainstream paradigm is largely supply driven –getting learners to come to school.

The complimentary paradigm we are proposing is demand focused –getting education to reach learners. That would entail looking at where the learners are, negotiating with them or their families what they would accept as worthwhile education, and examining how best to arrange it within the possibilities of the learners’ environment, means and commitments. This second paradigm already operates in ABEC (Bangladesh) and COBET (Tanzania) for rural girl children with significant success, Nomadic Education (Nigeria), REFLECT approach in adult education (Burkina Faso). In Ethiopia, the ABE programme if well delivered offers great possibilities for contributing towards achieving the education goals of the MDG in Afar and Somali pastoralist regions. However, this paradigm continues to be a marginal option, most often only of secondary interest to the main ministries of education. At best, it is regarded as a temporary expedient, to be used only until all learners can be brought to fit into proper schools. The ABE programme, as designed in the Ethiopian context, is defined below.

### **Alternative Basic Education (ABE) as a Strategy**

The World Conference on EFA, in 1990, underlined that primary education must be universal, ensure that the basic learning needs of all children are satisfied, and take into account the culture, needs, and opportunities of the community. Supplementary alternative programmes can help meet the basic learning needs of children with limited or no access to formal schooling; provided that they share the same standards of learning applied to schools, and are adequately supported.

In 2000 the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia, later, conducted a study on “Alternative Routes to Basic Primary Education” to investigate and assess the contribution of this non-conventional approach towards achieving UPE. Based on the findings of the study the Ministry of Education saw the need for innovative and flexible approaches and special programmes to reach millions of hard to reach Ethiopian children including the pastoralist children. As a result, the three-year ESDP II that ran from 2002/03 to 2004/05 outlined clearly the need for ABE as a strategy to be adopted by all regions.

Since then, ABE is being integrated in the educational plans of the Regional Educational Bureaus. National Guidelines were issued for mainstreaming alternative basic education (ABE) graduates into the formal primary schools. A Task Force that specifically coordinates the implementation of ABE in pastoralist and semi-agriculturalist regions was set up in the Ministry of Education in 2004.

The Ministry of Education defined ABE as a form of basic primary education for school aged children who are not enrolled in the formal; education system. Four subjects are taught from level 1 to level 3 for three years: mother tongue, English, mathematics and environmental science. This is a condensed version of the first cycle of the primary school curriculum. The objective of the programme is stated as: "to provide good quality basic education that is equivalent to that of the first year cycle of formal primary education (Grades 1-4) to children of pastoralist and semi-agricultural regions through an alternative mode of delivery suited to the socio-economic and cultural realities of the regions" (MoE, 2004:4).

Main Features of the Programme include the following:

- A curriculum based on the formal curriculum for the first cycle of primary education (Grades 1-4), compressed into three years of three levels and is localized. The number of school days has been increased from the formal five to six per week and the duration of one period from 40 to 50 minutes.
- Three consecutive levels each of which have duration of one year. Children who successfully complete the three-year programme can enter Grade 5 in the formal primary school.
- Three consecutive levels each of which have duration of one year. Children who successfully complete the three-year programme can enter Grade 5 in the formal primary school.
- A flexible school day and academic calendar whereby children and community determine when and where to have classes.
- Facilitators, who are paraprofessionals selected by the community from the locally available educated manpower. The selection criteria include being versed in the mother tongue, the culture of the beneficiary community and a minimum of Grade 8 primary education. Preference is given to females.
- Community participation in identifying the needs of the community, selection of learning places, provision of land where centres can be built, provision of local materials and labour for the construction of the centres, selection of facilitators and managing the day to day activities of the centres.



### Actions Recommended to Accelerate Access to Basic Education in Pastoralist Communities

There have been commendable achievements in improving access in the two pastoralist dominated regions- Afar and Somali since the introduction of alternative education program in the last two/three years. As a result the GER for Somali and Afar has reached to 23.3% and 20.9% respectively in 2004/05. This is still too far from the national average of 79.8%.

Therefore the following issues need to be considered in order to accelerate efforts towards UPE by 2015 in the pastoralist communities.

- ◆ Localization of the curriculum development process to make it more relevant and functional to the community it is meant for is crucial. Continuous needs assessments and researches will have to be carried out not only to identify the learning needs of the communities but also to establish the profiles of the children and mobility patterns of communities. Research based information will help for the efficient and effective implementation of the programme.
- ◆ Provide textbooks to learners in a one to one ratio.
- ◆ There is a need to develop a strategy for upgrading the academic level of ABE through distance learning and/or ins-service educational programmes.
- ◆ As a short-term strategy, it may be necessary to recruit facilitators who are in the proximity of the pastoralists both linguistically and culturally.
- ◆ Possibilities of considering and capacitating the Koranic schools to serve as centers to give basic primary education may be explored. International experiences reveal that such schools have been found successful provided that the facilitators are equipped with the necessary pedagogical skill and knowledge through short trainings and re-trainings.
- ◆ In situations where there are not too many students in at each grade level, ABECs have to apply the multi-grade classroom approach so that children will not be deprived of learning opportunities due to the size of the class.
- ◆ Mobilization of resources for construction of schools, ABE centres and other physical facilities as well as remuneration of the facilitators must be encouraged.
- ◆ Regarding the provision of appropriate and conducive infrastructure, at least two strategies may be considered:
  - The establishment of mobile schools should be intensified. The “school” should move along with the communities in order to ensure a regular and uninterrupted schooling of children of the pastoralists. These are classrooms that can be dismantled, carried on and re-assembled in new locations as the pastoralists migrate seasonally. Facilitators move with the pastoralists and their mobile school during migrations. The use of mobile tents/collapsible classrooms has been found successful in Nigeria, Iran, Algeria and Mongolia.
  - Permanent structures in the form of cement block of classrooms may also be built in situations where these structures are believed to serve as focal points for permanent settlement.
  - Although expensive, another possibility is to consider building low cost classrooms at different places in situations where pastoralist communities migrate within a certain radius rhythmically and in a defined cycle or period. This means pastoralists will get classrooms anywhere they move.
- ◆ Capacity of woredas has to be built so that they will control quality, support ABECs and ensure that the education provided by the different actors are consistent with the national goals of education of Ethiopia and that they are producing the required results.
- ◆ Strengthen and establish Alternative Basic Education Centers through provision of essential materials and training of community facilitators/para-professionals;
- ◆ Expand school feeding programme in areas of low food security;
- ◆ Build the capacity of Woreda Education officials, PTA members, teachers and school directors , on school mapping and micro planning, management, monitoring and reporting of education activities;
- ◆ Quality assurance is an important element in programme implementation. It involves ensuring that the national standards and norms; the right type of values and attitudes are inculcated and ABE is contributing towards improving quality of life of the pastoralists. Therefore, there is a need to put in place a national mechanism for quality assurance that will be used to control the quality of education offered by the various actors.

- ◆ Attach ABECs with school Cluster Resource Centers and strengthen the cluster through provision of essential materials and professional development of head teachers, educational personnel, supervisors and teachers.
- ◆ Assess learning achievement of ABE students and use the result for quality improvement, planning and management purposes.
- ◆ Establishing a common forum and strengthening of partnership and networking among Federal Ministry of Education, Regional Education Bureaus, Woreda Education Office, UN agencies, local and international NGOs, s, etc is very crucial in order to share experiences, create good communication, avoid duplication of efforts, eliminate competitiveness, create synergies, assess challenges regularly and seek feasible strategies towards promoting ABE.

### **Making ABE Programme to work for the Pastoralists**

When addressing the education of pastoralists, it is all too often forgotten that to be a pastoralist is an identity these people take pride in. Education, however, has mainly been intended as an instrument to transform the pastoralists into something else. It is upon this cultural clash that the problem of delivering mass education to nomads has been framed and policy solutions devised. Our basic argument here is that ABE to be effective with the pastoralists will not only have to be relevant to pastoralism, but also be of good quality. The core ingredients of effective learning and education are: (a) learners who are willing, interested, committed and able to learn; (b) competent teachers and guides; (c) social support by family members and communities; and (d) the content, methods and materials to help make the learning engaging and effective and to reinforce it. In ABE, we assume that a-c are reasonably in place. We will like to discuss fully the d factor under the rubrics of curriculum work.

### **Getting to the heart of pastoralists through curriculum work**

In order to design and implement a flexible education policy and deliver gender equitable education, policy makers need to identify what motivates nomads and pastoralist to send their children to school, understand the expectations and motivations of girls and their households and then develop strategies that take account of their expectations.

The main objective is to initiate more community-led processes of curriculum development that will offer a higher degree of equal opportunities for all sections of pastoral societies including women. The logic is that intensive engagement of pastoralists (men and women) with correct support, all in the pastoral communities will work together to bring about the necessary changes. As a marginalised group or groups who perceive themselves as being marginalised and threatened, through action research, the perception will be changed and mutual trust established.

Through the Triple A Process, the pastoralist communities will be facilitated to develop the curriculum in its broad term that will enable them understand their situation and solve their problems. To achieve this, they will collectively do the following things:

- Assess their situation and obtain correct information and understand the information
- Analyze their life situations and understand the implications of actions
- Take corrective actions
- Subject to learning (assess, analyze/reflect and further discussion)
- Develop strategies for further action

### **Partnership Building –The Role of Indigenous Institutions**

The entire process of providing basic education to the pastoralist communities requires a complex set of actions and strategies that involve a large number of actors. There is a need for robust collaboration and partnerships with relevant governments, institutions and organizations in programme development, implementation and evaluation.

Raising the enrolment rate in the pastoralist regions to ultimately achieve the UPE objectives needs to be supported by sufficient resources and political will-nationally, regionally and at woreda level.

There are all possibilities of partnering with traditional/cultural and religious intuitions found in the pastoralist communities. They have strong influence in the lives of pastoralists i.e. socially, economically, culturally, morally and politically.

Such organizations could be instrumental to promote basic education if they approached systematically and capacitated accordingly; they are made to be part of the solution and own the pastoralist programme

The partnership between higher education institutions and the Federal Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Bureaus is almost non-existent. This has to be initiated and strengthened in order to tap the pool of knowledge existing in the universities so that they can contribute to the development of the country. Experiences in other countries confirm that universities and colleges contribute a lot in this regard. Therefore it is recommended that universities open centres that focus on the social, economic, cultural aspects of pastoralists. As related to pastoralist education, the universities can take part in:

- Research and evaluation for the education of pastoralists;
- Teacher training and out reach programmes; and
- Curriculum and instructional materials development for the education of pastoralists;

#### The Need for Effective Coordination

The pastoralist education is a collaborative enterprise between the Federal Government , Regional Governments, Woredas the pastoralist communities, and several governmental, non-governmental and community based organizations. Therefore,

- the participation of several actors ought to be institutionalized and strengthened through relevant pieces of legislation and policies.

The activities of these various participants in programme implementation have to be led, managed and coordinated by an autonomous government body, which has an executive power, if objectives and targets are to be achieved in a cost-effective and sustainable manner rather than doing things on an ad-hoc basis. The “Task-Force” approach has to be avoided as it has proved itself ineffective. Pastoralist education has to be taken seriously, if UPE is to be achieved in the Country by 2015.

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