



## **PASTORALISTS AND GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

We live in a World in which education is characterized by extensive gender inequalities. Two thirds of all those who have no access to education are girls and women. Sixty-five million girls never start school, and an estimated 100million do not complete primary education, often because its quality is poor and their opportunities are far from equal to those of boys. More than 542 million women are illiterate, many as a result of inadequate or incomplete schooling. Lack of literacy is generally associated with poverty and discrimination. Pastoralism and education are two competing issues among the nomads especially with reference to the girl child. In this study, personal interviews with the selected respondents were used to solicit information. The purpose was to find out the reasons that keep girls in Baringo district of Kenya out of school at the time when they are of school going age. The findings from this study revealed that cultural beliefs and practices are the key factors that make pastoralist not send their girls to school. The study recommended that cultural beliefs and practices that are retrogressive should be discarded so that the girl child could have the opportunity to access schooling and finally participate in the overall development of the country.

**Keywords:** girl child, pastoralists, education, cultural practices, policy makers

### **INTRODUCTION**

Pastoralism and education as an issue has two competing views held by stakeholders. There are those who think that pastoralists are stubborn people who are clinging to background culture and cannot develop beyond it. Hence giving them education is a problem. This view is held by policy makers and is demonstrated through the policies that reflect sedentary lifestyle. The other view is that pastoralists are a minority group whose way of life is not well understood hence being threatened by the dominant majority who are more powerful (Salzman and Galaty, 1990).

Even though Pastoral Nomads are people who move from place to place with their animal in search of grass and water, their definition is complex and confusing. However, Carr-Hill in his synthesis report defines them as people; who mainly live and derive most of their food and income from raising domestic livestock. Any crop production is only a place in search of pasture and water. Most are pure pastoralist. (Carr-Hill 2005:34)

However, it is important to mention from the onset that literature on pastoralist education is scarce and worst on pastoralist girl child education as is even more inaccessible and limited, especially in the Northern Kenya where Islam has a lot of influence. A part from the limited research materials from NGOs there, there are no enough documents to highlight the underlying issues contributing to the plight of the girls education in that region. Carr-Hill complains of this fact that even within the Dakar; Education for All' it is surprising that there is no debate addressing specifically the issues of pastoralist education let alone the pastoralist girl (Carr, 2005). Oxfam highlights this problem by asserting that;

*Owing in part to a lack of national cultural, economic and social data government or donor education policy rarely refers to the specific situation of nomads and pastoralists, and literature addressing the specific situation of nomads and pastoralist, and literature addressing the specific needs of girls and women is very scarce. Therefore nomads and pastoralists are invisible 'in many national statistics and reports –nomadic and pastoralist women and girls are doubly 'invisible' (Oxfam, 2005).*

Formal education has been elusive to their children and they present the lowest primary enrolment and fall far below the National averages. Education policies are geared to serve mainstream communities and

even though its officers are aware of the plight of the pastoralist children, little effort is put in place because their main concern is the majority of the other children who are available to learn. Taking Kenya's context as a case study, since independence in 1963, education has come a long way and made a lot of gains in terms of enrolment of children into schools and Universities, bringing illiteracy down. But there is a big regional gender disparity in enrolment and completion rates whereby Arid and semi- and semi-arid areas, occupied by pastoralist are the most affected as evidenced by the Table 1.

**Table 1: Primary Schools Gross Enrolment by Gender and Province -2001-2005**

Year	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
	Boys	Girls								
Coast	70.8	60.3	70.3	59.4	86.9	73.7	97.3	83.7	95.7	84.4
Central	95.9	97.9	92.2	93.3	102.3	100.9	101.6	102.2	106.9	102.7
Eastern	99.9	103.7	103.0	105.2	116.3	114.9	120.6	117.4	126.0	124.4
Nairobi	29.4	33.0	32.3	36.2	39.1	43.9	41.0	45.8	35.9	38.2
Rift valley	92.0	87.9	92.3	88.1	109.5	102.7	113.0	104.2	117.8	109.9
Western	105.8	104.9	112.6	108.0	137.4	123.2	143.3	125.9	148.2	134.2
Nyanza	105.6	102.8	104.8	102.3	127.8	122.8	126.2	117.4	127.7	120.8
North Eastern	24.7	13.2	25.3	13.3	132.4	18.8	33.5	18.5	34.1	20.7

**Statement of the problem**

North Eastern Kenya, like many pastoral areas has been marginalized and excluded by development policies and it is one of the most underdeveloped provinces in Kenya. It has poor roads, lack health facilities, few poorly equipped schools with very few teachers, insecurity and low enrolment in schools. The relationship between the government and the Nomads is suspicious because while the government assumes that they are people who do not like to develop and dangerous to deal with as portrayed by their conflicts and tribal clashes, the pastoralist themselves feel they have been ignored and marginalized by the government. All these challenges make the girl child's education among the nomadic pastoralists be denied access to schooling. This study therefore sought to establish the specific factors that inhibit girl's education

**Objectives of the study**

This study was guided by the following study objective:

To establish the factors that makes pastoralists not to send their children especially girls to school

**Research questions**

This study was guided by the following research question:

What reasons make pastoralists refuse to send their daughters to school?

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

For a long time culture and ignorance have been used as excuses for the poor participation of pastoralists in education. Recent studies have shown that it is not true and actually they are more than willing to take their children to school, but there are other factors that influence their decisions not to, demonstrated by the following statement from some pastoralists during their forum in Ethiopia in 2005: *“What we need is help with reconstructing the livelihood we used to live, not food aid. Restocking, veterinary facilities, health care, employment opportunities, education for our children- that's what is important to us”* (Devereux, S). Another pastoralists complained saying Schools are not in line with the movement routes, therefore we face a hard choice; putting children in school or moving with animals. (Scott, 2005), Ezeomah in his part too disqualifies this myth by claiming that; Nomads dislike Western delivery methods, not education as such (Ezeomah 1997; 28-29).

All the above statements show that Nomads want education but have issues with its delivery methods and practices among other reasons that will be highlighted later. These reasons influence to a large extent, the choice of who goes to school and who does not and unfortunately, the girl children are the ones who

remain behind. Culture and beliefs that have been used to explain the girls poor participation in schooling have no place anymore because they have served as stereotypes that have overshadowed the real issues preventing these girls from rightfully accessing education. Educationists and policy makers should move away from this view and approach this problem positively by addressing the real issues that influences the poor participation of girls in education.

These stereotypes have been disqualified also by number of girls in some of the schools in Nomadic areas, like Wajir Girl's Primary School which was started by the community in 1988 with 40 girls and today is posting of 576 girls (Unterhalter et al. 2005). Kratli too gives Mongolia as a good example to disqualifying this myth because of its 100 per cent enrolment for both boys and girls (Kratli, 2001). The participation of other pastoralists' communities like the Maasai, Samburu, Pokot, Tugen, Turkana, portrays a positive future education prospects for pastoralist. This study therefore looks at this problem beyond those myths.

These views are very important to this study because they partly shape the education policies that affect pastoralists and contribute to the poor participation of girls in education and subsequent struggle towards their inclusion by those who favour the second view. This study concurs with the second view to disqualify the first one.

For decades pastoralist have remained at the lowest echelon of the education league while governments and education stakeholders have assumed business as usual, as the nomads continue languishing in illiteracy, while assuming that they refuse their children to go to school and especially the girls (Ismail, 2002). This is a claim that does not hold any water because it is not based on critical study. It is the same assumption among others that have informed policies that do not address the needs of the pastoral communities. No indepth research has been done to ascertain the real issues on the ground. This raises a valid question; who formulates the policies for who and why?

The same situation is found within the pastoralist of East Africa as Nkinyangi expresses that, Pastoralist in our education system get knocked on the head, being told they do not know anything....although they in fact come in with knowledge that even if we study half our lives we wouldn't achieve.' (Nkinyangi 1980:194). They are regarded as victims of ignorance and need to be guided and that is why other people make policies for them which they refuse to embrace because the policies do not serve their needs. This is where the problem begins and stops! But Kratli too is quick to warn against this assumption by insisting that pastoralists are, far from being a mass of drifting unskilled under proletariat (Kratli, 2000).

Education is a foreign idea according to Nomads, imposed on them and when it does not seem to work, they are being blamed for resisting it. Education does not address the social, political and economic exclusions and marginalization of the pastoralist (Chelimo, 2006). He continues to question its provision and practices which he says do not accommodate the pastoralist way of life. Chelimo expresses the view held by many that , education programmes in East Africa are founded on the premises , that the formal education system was designed to respond to the sedentary lifestyle . 'He uses Karamojong in Uganda as an example;

*Delivery of education is antagonistic to pastoral culture and has hitherto been executed with human interface hostile to nomadic culture ..... the hidden curriculum has not been considered when designing and implementing mass formal education. The culture expressed within the formal schools system including the strategy, curriculum and pedagogy are inconsistent with the essence of pastoral existence (Chelimo, 2006).*

Pastoralists therefore find it hard to accommodate formal education within its parameters hence resist it. This has caused the poor enrolment, high dropout rates and poor performance and the girl child bears the highest brunt. Despite the fact that education is a fundamental human right since UNESCO 1948; (Bray:1986), it has continued to be an elusive factor for Nomadic children especially the girl child. Education programmes have failed for these mobile communities and they have continued to view it with suspicion based on its values and practices.

#### **Theoretical framework- conceptualization**

Theoretical frame work used in this study will be based on the Social Capital Theory, by (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Braatz and Putnam, 1996; Francis et al 1998). They base their theory on the basis that

family, community and state involvement in education improves outcomes for student success. It explains how Family, community and state involvement helps to increase the relevance and quality of education by improving ownership, building consensus, reaching remote and disadvantaged groups, mobilizing additional resources, and strengthening institutional capacity thus increasing internal efficiency.

Based on this study some students fail to complete their secondary education due to cultural factors like Moranism and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) (Lewin, 2007b). The pastoralist culture is known to be very rigid as even today they still hold to some traditional beliefs and norms like forced marriages where parents marry off their daughters without the girl's consent after undergoing Female Genital Mutilation while the boys are similarly considered ready for marriage immediately after circumcision as they become warriors who can defend the society. This may lead to drop out as opposed to other communities which do not carry out such practices.

Social capital is a useful tool for understanding differences among student learning outcomes. Nations with high stocks of social capital are more likely to produce students with better academic performance than nations with low stocks which is critical for students to grow cognitively, physically, emotionally, and critically in all communities. All the students should be given equal opportunities in access and participation in education without discrimination regardless of the areas where they come from. It was noted by UNESCO (2008) that, children in semi-arid areas have the lowest opportunity to enrol in secondary schools at their official age which causes them to drop out of school. The government has tried to fight these challenges in Baringo north Sub-County through mechanisms such as introduction of school feeding programme, strengthening of boarding schools and re-enrolling of girls back to school after delivery. Thus the need to utilize this theory as the study seeks to establish the factors leading to students dropping out of secondary schools in Baringo north Sub-County.

Recent research indicates that social capital is not only a critical input for education but also one of its valuable by-products (Coleman, 1988). In addition to strengthening the human capital needed for economic development, it also promotes societal cohesion and strengthens citizenship when children of all socio-economic backgrounds are enrolled in the public education system. All the students should be given equal opportunities in access and participation in education without discrimination regardless of the areas where they come from as it was noted by UNESCO (2008) that, children in semi-arid areas have the lowest opportunity to enroll in secondary schools at their official age which causes them to drop out of school.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study used descriptive survey specifically cross sectional research design since the data involved dealing with effects of natural occurrence. This is because in its natural setting, the factors under investigation had already contributed to the girls being denied access to education. The study used documentary analysis as a framework for research. This method entails collecting information from varied sources. Information was thus solicited from a list of selected respondents including but not limited to the pastoralists in Kenya. Specifically information was obtained from selected representatives from the pokot, Turkana, samburu, Maasai. These people groups identified a number of factors as responsible for failure to send girls to school. The instrument used (interview schedule) solicited and identified the extent to which each of the named factors contributed to failure by the pastoralist community to send their children to school. Most of the findings as discussed in the pages that follow were obtained using a face to face interview with the respondents and some of them are reported verbatim.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The study identified a number of factors that contributed to girls' lack of accessibility to education. The factors and their varied contribution to the dependent variable are reported and discussed in the subsequent pages of this document.

### **The rough terrain and cultural practices in the North Eastern Kenya**

North Eastern Province is an area that experiences a lot of difficult climatic conditions high insecurity and underdevelopment. Every year, animals die from hunger because of drought and people experience

serious shortage of food and mostly rely on relief food. There are a lot of cattle rustling and ethnic clashes and many people lose their lives every year. The people living there are of Somali ethnic background and they are largely Muslims. The tribes living there comprise of Buji, Borana, Rendile, Somali, Oromo, Gabra among others. They still practice cultural practices like Female Genital Mutilation, (FGM) marry off their girls early and do not educate many of them.

Historically, British colonized Kenya, brought Christianity and Western educationist did not take Christianity to Northern Kenya because the occupants there were already Muslims who could not accommodate Christianity and looked at it suspiciously because of religious competition. They could not also readily accept formal education too because it is western oriented with Christian values. After independence the same conditions continued to prevail and the government policies marginalized them. They always looked at the government with suspicion and have suffered underdevelopment hence most of them suffer poverty.

Concerning the education of their daughters therefore, it has been a big issue and various reasons including cultural influence have been used to explain their poor participation;

*That there is a deep seated reluctance in many parts of Africa to provide girls with the opportunity to go school is not in doubt. But by describing the problem principally in relation to cultural values, the temptation is merely to blame pastoralist communities for those disparities and to absolve those charged with addressing those disparities from any responsibility for their perpetuation (Stromquist, 1997).*

In this study, I was able to talk to Dr. Easther Kakonge, secretary UNESCO, Kenya and a reputable educationist who has written on pastoralist' girl education and has documented a report on North Eastern Kenya. I asked her what she thought were the major challenges facing enrolment and completion of girls from the pastoralist community. She blamed culture as an immediate culprit but was quick to say that those pastoralists who are non-Muslims like the Maasai, Samburu, Turkana and Pokot were more accommodating and flexible to change for girls education and there is a more positive response than the ones in Northern Kenya where Islam is the main religion – blaming religion.

She expressed the fear, and mistrust that the Muslims have towards the formal system of education because they think it is intended to change them because of its western orientation and values. She emphasized the value that Muslim hold for their girls and fear that education will 'spoil' them. Kakonge mentioned the language that is used in writing the books that does not encompass Arabic and the medium of delivery that are all in English. She expressed her dissatisfaction at the way they are left behind and was skeptical about any success soon.

I also interviewed a Mr. Eliud Kinuthia, a programmes Director with the Forum for African Women Educationists – Kenya (FAWEK) – an organization that promotes girls' education. This time I was very particular about the fact that culture has become a Buss 'word used as an excuse to explain the failure of education of pastoralist's girls and which has overshadowed the real factors underlying this problem; a fact that has informed the policies that sideline the pastoralist girls' needs.

Even though he too started with blaming the influence of culture, he was more critical with the system and policies of education. He saw it as a contributory factor because it does not address the situation of all Nomadic children, let alone the girls. He also had issues with the lack of national and global awareness on the side of pastoralist communities of which he claims, limits them hence have no vision. He says because they have nothing to drive them to educate their girls.

He mentioned the existing power relations between the major communities and smaller ones which have promoted huge competitions not only in education performance and access to resources but also to employment. He sees an influence of unemployment of the few educated pastoralists on the demand for it. They feel the bigger communities sideline them in job acquisition and see no need of educating children especially the girls who can fetch better dowry in terms of cows than an education whose returns they viewed as unpredictable. Kinuthia finally concluded that if education has to be meaningful to pastoralists many issues have to be addressed.

### **Poverty and related social ills**

A related anecdote given by researchers on maasai education in 1970s and early 1980s, showed that their participation was always low, even with abolition of school fees (GORHAM, 1978; Pauline Heron, 1983; Foster, 1977). But with a development plan of 1984 -88, for livestock resources, marketing facilities and banking services, their participation increased (Sarone, 1986). The conclusion drawn from this anecdote was that, an increase in monetary resources and facilities had an indirect effect in promoting education enrolment (Ponsi, 1988;7). This anecdote has a huge bearing with the reasons for poor enrolment in Northern Kenya. According to Hassan Arero;

*It is estimated that now nearly 75-85% of the population of the Northern nomadic pastoralist may be living below poverty level – most of them living within what is termed as ‘hardcore’ levels of poverty (Arero, H. 2005.) ‘poverty and destitution were also identified as critical factors affecting girls’ education in Wajir and Madera. Where families do not have adequate financial resources to educate their both boys and girls, parents preferred to educate the boys, thus discriminating against the girl. (FAWEK, 2001).*

That being the prevailing situation therefore, nomads face a difficult choice in determining which of their children should or should not go to school in relation to their individual economic capability. Parents compare the importance of education a girl or a boy against the available resources and the expected benefits. Oxfam report confirms this view by asserting that, poverty contributes to gender disparities in enrolment with parents tending to prioritize their sons over he daughters’ education, where they have to decide which of their children they can afford to send to school’ (Unterhalter et al. 2005).

Many times they would prefer the boy to the girl because of the view that resources spent on the boy will benefit the family at the end when he will find some work and he will then send money home to help the family recover its wealth in cattle or help built a house etc. Girls, it is commonly argued, will get married and leave the family (Arero, 2005). So they would rather have the boy educated than the girl. Such decision at that point in time, is the best they could make.

At the same time, the girls are a source of riches because they are married off at an early age to rich old people and fetch dowry in terms of cows which will salvage the family from their poverty, without going into the pain of sending her to school and in fact the girl that has no education is more preferred to an educated one because she is assumed to be more disciplined and would be loyal to her husband than the one who has education. Poverty therefore has taken a huge toll on the girl’s right to education as it drives the debate on the value of her education and dictates the eventual bias against her. I contacted an interview on phone with Hussein Abshiro, an headmaster of one of the primary schools in Mandera, a Gabra from there and is a graduate, to ask him what he thinks about the poor participation of girls in the region.

Hussein’s words echo my belief that there are other driving factors behind the poor enrolment of girls, other than their parents’ outright refusal. One could read the desperation and skepticism on the future education in Northern Kenya. He decries poverty, underdevelopment that have isolated people from the global development trends which he believes if addressed, there would be change in people perceptions hence positive trends for education.

The free education offered today in Kenya has not had a significant impact because there are indirect costs that are still being met by parents like pencils, exercise books, Uniforms and even food. For a girl, it is even more challenging because she would need extra things like sanitary towels to make her comfortable in schools. Statistics from the Ministry of Education show that the enrolment of girls in the four districts of Northern Eastern since the inception of free education in 2003 to 2005 increased just by a meager 2.2 per cent up from 18.5 to 20.7. This trend is not different even in some of those poor districts that are not patrol like Eastern with an increase of 3.8 and Nyanza with a drop of 2.0 percent. Nyanza today is one of the poorest provinces in Kenya (Poverty in Nyanza is caused by HIV / AIDS). This explains that poverty still plays a big role in keeping the girls out of school.

Even though education is seen as a gateway to economic prosperity, there are some few cases of rich parents who do not educate their girls, for complex reasons and because they are not looking for prosperity; but those who do not have enough have to make their choices accordingly, as explained

earlier. However the numbers of those rich families with those choices are too minimal to sway the views on the effects of poverty on girl education. Adverse poverty therefore, largely influences the decisions made against the girls' education.

#### **Parents' illiteracy level**

Parents' illiteracy rate in Northern Kenya is very high. They are therefore ignorant on the importance of formal education and have low level of gender awareness according to Kakonge. Development research has shown that the more educated parents are, especially the mothers, the better for the education of their children and especially the girls (FAWE, 2001; World Bank, 2003). Kinuthia too in his view supported this argument by asserting that pastoralists' bias against their girls are contributed by their limited understanding of global issues and exposure to better services that make life better therefore lack ambition. He also blames the education system for this, claiming that it ignores them. He favors an education that is sensitive to the needs of the people which will in turn make them be sensitive to its values and embrace it.

Kakonge too expresses the same view in her report on Northern Kenya. Her research finding showed that the high parental illiteracy rate existing there contributed negatively towards girls' education (Kakonge, 2001). The literacy rate for women in Northern Eastern Kenya is 6 per cent according to Gender Data sheet 2006.

Some teachers from the area commented that most parents acted negatively against their daughters due to the universal view that women are homemakers and which has made, the parents and the community to restrict girls' intellectual and social development. Illiteracy compounded with stereotype has helped to perpetuate gender inequality among the pastoralists. But whose mistake is it? When government policies marginalize and isolate Pastoralists from global information channels and denying them development that can help in widening their knowledge; it should be held responsible for it.

#### **Underdevelopment and insecurity**

The high underdevelopment experienced in Northern Kenya has affected the education of pastoral children especially the girls. Schools are few and very far from where they live and because of insecurity, they cannot risk trekking long distances. Bandits raid, abduct people including women, rape or even kill them. In 2005, many school children were killed by bandits. In the cases where they decide to send their children to school, they would send the boys because they think they are strong and can run incase of anything.

Boarding schools too are not popular because the parents were scared of the safety of their children. According to Kakonge who was the key respondent in this study, teachers in this region expressed the parents' fear that they would be exposing their daughters to insecurity particularly rape or defilement if they left them in boarding schools. There is lack of water in the area and people have to trek for long distances for it. Girls therefore have to forego schooling because they have to spend time watering animals and fetching water for their families because those are jobs meant for women and girls in those communities.

#### **Education policy and curriculum relevance**

In an attempt to explore this factor, Hussein who was one of the key respondents posited that there is a serious marginalization in the education policies and curriculum relevance to pastoral lifestyle. According to a report from Koech Commission of Inquiry and Ministry of education, the policies do not take into consideration in particular the persistent economic, social, cultural and religious background of the people of Northern Kenya. It is based on mainstream policy and do not serve their needs especially their girls. This has contributed to their resistance because they feel it marginalizes them instead. 'The policy guidelines that seek to eliminate gender imbalances at all levels of education, particularly the low enrolments in ASAL regions, fall short as policy, since financial allocations to achieve the targets are missing; , according to a report from (FAWEK). So it is only policy in paper which does not serve the people it is suppose to (Kakonge, 2001).

The curriculum has also ignored the social aspect of the nomads (Hussein, 2001). Children are being taught about agriculture and the examples of the activities given reflect other agricultural areas of Kenya and instead of livestock production and Islamic lifestyle. Most of the things in the syllabus fit children

from other parts of the country where the communities have settled and yet at the end they are tested from the same syllabus.

Hussein further asserted that combined with this is the timetable that is incompatible with their schedule of work. Education provision also has affected the enrolment of the girls. Children are expected to be in school according to timetable to when they are supposed to be helping at home. It is worst for the girls due to the demand of household duties which cannot give her time to be in school the whole day, so she either forfeits school or go for some time and leave when she has to. This is why it is not strange to see some girls carrying their young siblings to school at times. Such girls cannot get adequate and quality education and eventually drop out. At the same time, when the children fail in exams and do not join secondary education, parents too lose and end up removing their children because they feel they are wasting precious time that could be used to do better things. Unfortunately, the first child to be removed is the girl because of her much needed labour.

Kratli (2000) positively identifies this oversight while commenting that state provided education is antagonistic towards pastoralist because of its mainstream policies hence it is not right to blame pastoralists for its failure (Kratli, 2000). But the question is who decides what is relevant for who? Policy makers ignored the views of the pastoralists and decided on their behalf. Robert Chambers, asks, whose reality matters?' (Chambers, 2002). Why are nomads not involved in deciding what is best for themselves? These questions become a reality when Kenyan policy makers and education stakeholders borrow leave from the Mongolian experience where there is high enrolment for both boys and girls yet they are also largely pastoralists.

The experience in Karamojong in Uganda too gives other good practices that have shown progress in getting the girls to school as opposed to how things are done in Kenya. The pastoralists there are involved in deciding in how education should be disseminated to their children (Chelimo, 2006).

#### **The attitude of the policy makers**

There are questions on the attitudes of those whose responsibility is to ensure equity in education for all Kenyans irrespective of their ethnic or racial background. Policy makers have negative attitude towards Nomadism and nomads whom they view as foolish, backward victims of poverty and ignorance, who do not know what they want. It is not right to isolate people along their livelihood lines and condemn them for it. On the contrary, 'pastoralists are confident, articulate and entrepreneurial, have good negotiating and management skills, and show a strong sense of dignity and self respect' (Kratli, 2001).

*Education research in pastoral areas (...) has tended to ignore local perceptions and attitudes towards schooling in rural areas. More specifically, it has often neglected the consequences and implications of educational participation for the pastoral way of life. (Sarone: 24).*

That could only explain the reasons behind the poor participation of pastoral children especially the girls because of lack of policies promoting their education. Why have other countries achieved progress and Kenyan educationists seem to be wallowing in the same old buzz of culture,' claiming that Nomads have to change and settle down for education to work for them? Is it not an excuse for running away from their responsibility? To be cultural is not crime and if anything other communities in Kenya have their own culture and have been provided with education! Furthermore, education can be enhanced within those cultural contexts as long as its provision recognizes them positively. Therefore the policy makers themselves are the ones to change first, for education to have meaning to Nomads because they are the custodians of all its provisions.

They can claim to have formulated some policies but they are on paper and practically on the ground, there is little or nothing happening. In fact FAWEK report says it has no budget! Currently, the Gender and education policy draft has disappointingly ignored the needs of the pastoralist girl (Legget, 2005). This tells a lot on the attitude of the policy makers. They play a role in reinforcing the 'invisibility' of the girls and curtailing their future. This only sends very negative signals especially to the nomadic girl who is still jostling with myriad of problems to get herself to the doors of education, which will reward her with freedom and empowerment, and which might only be an imagined dream to her! The question is how the government intends to achieve Universal Primary education by 2015 if it is still ignoring some of its citizens? That is another story!

It is even more surprising that after 45 years of independence, Education policy for the girl child is still in form of a draft and awaiting enactment, (UNICEF, 2003) which does not seem to come by too soon, while global development is advancing at a great and fast rate. This only summarizes the government's lack of political will to improve the education of girls and the lives of Kenya women.

#### **Home-based factors**

It is very important to highlight the fact that the decisions made by parents about the education of their children are based on what is best for the families (Legget, 2005). This is a scenario found in both rich and the poor families. In rich families, the demand for work is higher and the girls have to contribute more to it while the poor homes too depend so much on their children's labour (Kratli, 2001).

According to Roth, within the Rendile household, the selection criteria for selecting an offspring to attend schooling depend on the subsistence patterns and household characteristics (Roth, 1991). Chelimo too emphasizes this view as he describes the children's labour as, 'pivotal to the survival of the household Micro – economy' (Chelimo, 2006). Oxfam report too claims this view that, 'the opportunity costs of sending daughters to school are high in terms of the domestic labour girls are expected to perform.' (Oxfam 2005).

Pastoralists teach their children work at an early age and contribute so much to the household economy. Girls do chores and take care of their younger siblings. Their parents usually keep the very hardworking children at home while they send the ones that are regarded as lazy to school and this is how the girls remain behind while the boys go, in majority of the cases. If the girls go to school, they still have more burden of work because even while attending school, household duties await for them after the classes. The girls are more valued as workers and future wives and they take over responsibilities at a tender age. The backlash to their informed decisions is that their daughters are denied their right to education and even those who attend school have no time for studies hence poor performance and drop out. Colcough asserts this view by claiming that, 'The dependency of the household on girls labour thus represents an opportunity cost of their attendance at school, thus cost lowers the enrolment of girls in school or, at the least, contributes to weaker performance and earlier drop out' (Colcough et al.2000).

Since education threatens the household livelihood, in removing children from contributing to it, pastoralists have to decide between the two, unfortunately always the decision is not in favour of education and girls are more affected by this decision than the boys for the reasons already explained.

Both too claims that sometimes they also make their choices according whoever they think is capable of giving adequate returns on the educational investment. To him, it is very much of a 'luck dip' Legget too claims that, 'these judgments are made by weighing up the wishes and abilities of individuals on one hand against the collective interest of the family as a whole on the other hand (Legget, 2005). But in most cases the luck befalls the boys because, 'parents perceive the returns to girls' education to be lower (Rose et al. 1997).

I believe that those decisions could be turned around for the betterment of the education of the girls if those parents are given better enabling environment. With that capacity of judgment, they could still make better decisions in favour of their daughters, given better alternatives in life.

#### **Religious factors and beliefs**

The Nomads of North Eastern Kenya are unique because of their Islamic affiliation. The formal education offered in Kenya is more of Christian oriented, therefore it competes with the beliefs of Islam hence treated with suspicion. They therefore do not trust and feel it is being imposed on their children for other motives. Legget says that they think it will 'spoil' their girls or make them develop immoral behavior because of its western values. Muslim girls find themselves in this compromising situation because of the importance that is attached to protecting what is perceived to be the honour and reputation of girls and to preparing them to their future roles as wives and mothers (Legget 2005).

Kakonge supports this argument when she expressed her view that they are skeptical about formal education and they would rather put their children in Madrasa classes to read and learn Koran. As for those girls that enroll in formal schools, they would drop out as soon as they know how to read the Koran. She claims that Koranic schools are even more popular in some of the areas than formal schools. Carr – Hill too expresses the same view in his finding.

Examining critically the Muslim fears of the impact of western oriented education in form of formal education, one would not hesitate to draw the conclusion in support of their claim. Why? Looking at the way of life today of educated Africans, one can see the apparent adaption and assimilation of western values which are contrary to who an Africa is. Their lifestyles do not measure to what is acceptable to Africa values.

Hetherington too observed the same argument when he proposed that, such kind of education, ‘ produced individuals divorced from their social milieu, no longer prepared to engage in traditional occupations and even holding a contempt for manual work’ (Hetherington, 1978;118). Sifuna too supports this fact by saying that education has ended up producing, ‘assimilated Africans who cherished European values’ (Sifuna, 1982).

Even though, I do not favour the stand taken by the Nomads of North Eastern Kenya in rejecting formal education from that point of view, I feel they have a genuine reason that can serve as a starting point in trying to analyze what contributes to poor participation of girls in education in a pastoralist and Islamic background such as theirs.

### **Absence of role models**

In Northern Kenya like many areas of pastoral communities, there are a few prominent women holding positions in their society. Most of the education officers in those areas are male. In the schools there, female teachers do not occupy leadership positions and even the only girls’ secondary school in Wajir is headed by a male teacher yet there are some qualified females that could do it. Worst still is the fact that most of those females are found in schools near or in towns hence the children in the rural areas have not seen a woman teacher according to Kakonge. This fact plays a major negative role in the perceptions and attitudes of parents towards a girl’s education. Mob psychology at this level influences choices of people. Lack of role models to emulate therefore makes even the girls not to be ambitious and with any slight problem, they drop out.

A good example of the influence of role models is the case of Wajir where Legget claims that the perceptions of the parents are positive (Legget 2001). Mrs. Mohammed Shuria, the headmistress of Wajir Girls’ Primary school attributes it to the benefits derived from employment of girls who finished school, got jobs and were helping their families. She asserts that;

Through the creation of awareness (sensitizing parents to the importance of educating their daughters) and after so many girls have gone to school and are working, they are seeing the fruits of their education and attitudes (as consequences of this) are changing,, Those who have started working are assisting their parents so they feel girls are more helpful than boys because of their experience of schooling. That is helping the community to accept girls education (Unterhalter et al. 2005). Role modeling therefore goes a long way in influencing both parents and the girls for education.

### **Unfriendly school environment**

Most schools are not girls friendly. They are very situated at a far proximity and the girls get exposed to any dangers including raping, abduction or even killing. The physical infrastructures available are deplorable. In fact some children learn in makeshifts and some under stress. Facilities like girls’ toilets are not enough and in very poor state. It is reported that some do not have doors and the girls have to stand at the doors to shield their friends. In some schools, they are not available at all. Girls need separate toilet facilities for privacy, sanitary materials, especially at adolescent age, which may not be available in a place where resources are scarce like Pastoralist areas.

Some children learn in makeshifts or under trees. Inside the classrooms the girls have to stand for the boys to sit when the seats are not enough. Equipment and essential supplies like books are unavailable and they lack enough teachers. Under such conditions, parents are reluctant to send their children to school because they think the quality from such schools is poor and they feel it is a waste of precious time and resources. Girls are the first ones to remain behind because of high demand for domestic labour while the boys especially the young ones who have nothing to do, are send to school to ‘waste ‘ time. Some schools too lack guidance and counseling services that can help girls solve some of their problems. Many of them suffer quietly and eventually drop out. Teachers treat girls along the traditional gender roles without empowering them with ideas that will help them to grow to be better. Some of them are gender

insensitive and use abusive language and show favour for boys openly. The boys ridicule them especially when they get their periods and because of lack of guidance and counseling they leave school forever. Mrs. Mohammed Shuria, the headmistress of WAJIR Girls' Primary School claims that her success in keeping the girls in school is attributed to a girls- friendly environment where she and other teachers encourage girls to go to school, identify their problems and help where possible. (Unterhalter, 2005).

#### **Legal framework**

Legal framework that compels parents to send all their children to school irrespective of their sex is lacking. Even though education is every child's right, parents there are not aware and are biased against their daughters. Many girls are circumcised and married off at early ages to rich old people in exchange of 'handsome' dowry. Those are things are long gone in almost all parts of Kenya. Most of those parents are not aware of these rights as much as they are ignorant of the consequences of not educating their daughters. During a research, on girls' education in North Eastern Kenya, it became apparent that lack of legal framework plays a big role in the girls' poor education participation. Parents, practice illegal actions (mentioned above) and get away unpunished. That has taken a huge toll on the girls.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The poor education participation of pastoral girls has been viewed by many as an act of cultural influence. This study has disagreed with the view attributing it to some underlying obstacles that manifest in cultural influence. This school of thought has in turn informed the education policies that have marginalized Nomadic girls' needs.

It is imperative to note the fact that Pastoralists have been marginalized by development policies, suffer from poverty resulting from unviable livestock economy especially during times of drought and suffer from raids that see them lose a lot of their animals. In such circumstances, they have nothing to fall back to because there is no other economic activity they can engage in since their areas have poor infrastructure and they can not access other alternatives like business and so on. Their resources therefore become scarce and they cannot afford to send their children to school. Their lifestyle also of moving from place to place has made it difficult to access meaningful formal education. In fact this has advised the assumption that pastoralism is antagonistic to education. Therefore accusing pastoralist of poor participation in education is a miss – uninformed and unjustified effort.

Most of the obstacles discussed in this study therefore point to policy and the government rather than culture and pastoralists themselves refusing to send their girls to school. The policy draft on girls' education does not address the needs of the pastoralist children because they serve mainstream children and nothing specific for Nomadic girls and this is very painful for people who are suppose to be equal citizens with the rest of other Kenyans. The Muslim Nomadic communities are even more disadvantaged because the formal education is found on Christian values and a western idea which has a competing view with Islam (according to the people of Northern Kenya) evidenced by the language and the illustrations used in course books, hence the communities there do not trust it. They think it will change them to Christianity. However, it has been shown that pastoralists are willing to educate their daughters if given enabling environment in terms of facilities and if policies address their needs like other Kenyans' and as evidenced by literature on other areas like Mongolia and others mentioned in the study. But education provisions, content and delivery methods do not considerer their recurrent difficulties and lifestyle.

The decisions made by Nomads on the education of their children are driven by conditions which are beyond the control and blaming them and their culture does not hold any 'water' anymore. The government has to offer equitable development policies to all its citizens irrespective of their culture, ethnicity, sex, political affiliation or religion. Development marginalization of Northern Kenya has contributed to poor living conditions and has a huge negative impact on the education of the girl child. Policy makers and government should deal with problem by addressing the real issues that hinder the girls from participating in schooling, rather than blame culture for it. My view is that policy making does not involve those from pastoralist background, those whose reality matters, as advocated by Robert Chambers, hence fall short of the indigenous knowledge and the reality on the ground, and has hitherto neglected their needs. Until this point is appreciated by those in charge of education, Kenya may not

realize the Millennium Development Goal of Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015 and its test is in North Eastern Kenya.

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