

# P a s t o r a l i s m

## Progressing Policies that favour Pastoralists

### 6. Education

#### The context

Education is central to the reduction of poverty and to full participation in political life. However, pastoralists are falling behind in education and the acquisition of skills needed in the modern world, with girls especially vulnerable. There are specific challenges to pastoralists' participation in education, mainly associated with mobility and remoteness.

If low pastoralist enrolment and high drop-out rates continue, countries with significant pastoralist populations will not reach the Millennium Development Goals, national economic development will be slowed, rural economic diversification will be impeded, and political unrest will grow.

#### Policy implications

- New strategies are needed for primary and secondary education and for all aspects of learning which equip pastoralists to keep pace with modern life and changing conditions in the rangelands
- Internationally and nationally, there is widespread and solid political support for providing education to pastoralists
- Ways forward need to be found for delivery of education, curriculum content and school culture. For delivery a mixture of boarding schools, mobile schools and radio schooling, adapted to particular local circumstances, is probably the best solution
- In boarding schools, school culture is the defining factor. Wherever this culture is anti-pastoralist, action must be taken.



credit: Oxfam/Geoff Sayer

“As children of pastoralists we were brought up to always look closely at the ground beneath our feet. To look for signs of how the land is, what wild animals are with us and our animals, and how to graze carefully. A lot of educated people can have their eyes up and looking around and fail to notice natural resources and take care of them. I have been away for school and further studies but I will never lose my ‘Maasai education’.”

**John Kamanga, Olkirimatian Group Ranch  
Chairman, Kenya**

#### Education provision

Being mobile and living as a scattered population are key to the production strategy of pastoralists, but pose a serious challenge to formal education. Other challenges include the cost of school fees, resistance to schooling for girls, the need for child labour in the household economy, and the difficulties in securing good quality teachers in remote locations.

Strategies are needed for all aspects of education, particularly for learning and skills which equip pastoralists to diversify economically, increase productivity, and engage successfully with the state. But such strategies must recognise that the price of education may be high, including reduced learning about livestock management, absence from the family and acquisition of attitudes which threaten a pastoral life.

viable livelihood

productive

knowledgable

economically important

environmentally sustainable

adaptable

skilled

market suppliers

resilient

## Ways forward

- Delivering schooling: boarding schools have been the most common solution, notably successful in Mongolia, but less so in Africa. In Iran and Nigeria, mobile schools, where the school and teachers move with the migration, have worked well. More widely, distance education using radio is perhaps the most promising current delivery method
- Making curricula and school culture pastoralist-friendly and appropriate: important decisions have to be taken regarding the language of instruction and the extent to which the curriculum is constructed around the national curriculum or pastoral livelihood system. This would help to overcome the legacy of antagonism towards pastoralism in many schools.



“Tradition is still strong here. Knowledge of the world and knowledge of how to work as a community are what we need to teach to the next generation.”

**Stephen Nteetu, Maasai pastoralist**

## Evidence of change

In the arid plains of northern Kenya, school enrolment is less than half the national average. But for Turkana pastoralists in this area it is less than a quarter. Lack of training for teachers and poor attendance are just some of the problems. Oxfam has been working to improve education in Turkana since 2001. They began by helping to establish Turkana Education For All (TEFA) to coordinate the efforts of local communities and organisations in order to identify educational needs and priorities, and work with the government to fulfil these. As a result, ‘mobile education’ for nomadic children was introduced, an approach now formally approved and supported by the Kenyan government.

‘Mobile schools’ ensure that children from nomadic families are able to continue their education when their families move. Support required includes training of teachers and school committees, monitoring the quality of the education, paying mobile school teachers who are not yet on the government pay role, and providing books and other resources. So far, ten mobile schools are on the move; as a result of their success another ten are planned for 2010. In addition, TEFA is campaigning effectively for the rights of all Turkana children, including girls and children with special needs, to education.

For more information: [www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam\\_in\\_action/direct/pgs\\_projects/kenya09/](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam_in_action/direct/pgs_projects/kenya09/)



“As elders we are including the next generation. When I have been to meetings I come back to the village and show everyone, even my youngest grandson where I have been and what I have been talking about. That way he is growing up knowing about the problems we face, like grazing rights, but that we are trying to find ways to keep our livelihood with livestock.”

**Habdiram Raika, pastoralist leader, Rajasthan, India**