PASTORALIST EDUCATION IN KENYA: CONTINUITY IN EXCLUSION IN ARID AND SEMI-ARID LANDS (ASAL)
By Ishmael I. Munene and Sara Ruto*

"The fundamental problem of education with pastoral people [...] is [...] creating something they believe in [...] something they can really participate in as their own, right from the Beginning".1

INTRODUCTION

At the conclusion of 2013, Kenya will be 50 years old. It is a remarkable journey that has seen progress in various spheres of national endeavors. One such area is education. Soon after independence in 1963, primary school enrollment increased substantially in the 1960s and 1970s in response to the government’s policy of increasing access to education as one of the strategies in combating illiteracy, a key challenge to national development. Not only would expanded educational opportunities contribute to human capital development that is germane for economic development, it would also lead to a more equitable society through enhanced social mobility of the poor. Thus, no efforts were spared in ensuring access to educational opportunities which were expanded and actualized. It is estimated, for instance, that the number of primary schools in the country doubled from 5,000 in 1965 to around 10,000 by 1980.2 In addition, primary school enrollment quadrupled from 1 million in 1965 to 4 million students in 1980.3

Undoubtedly, government policy initiatives have been at the center of these impressive institutional surge and enrollment trends. Incremental policies of easing tuition fees at the primary school level spearheaded by the country’s heads of state have provided impetus for previously excluded groups to participate in basic education. The first of these incremental policy edicts was

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enunciated in 1974 when the first President, Jomo Kenyatta, announced the elimination of school fees for elementary school grades 1 - 4. Upon succeeding Jomo Kenyatta, President Daniel arap Moi, in 1978, extended the free primary education policy from grades 5 – 7 thereby ensuring that public primary schools were free of government-mandated tuition fees. These presidential policy initiatives resulted in massive enrollments in primary schools; the gross enrollment rate increased from 50% at independence in 1963 to a peak of 105.4% in 1989.4

The impressive growth in enrollment notwithstanding, the dream of a universal or near universal primary enrollment remained just that, a dream. The elephant in the room was the cost-sharing policy that the government supported and actively promoted. This policy required parents and the local community to participate in financially supporting the schools through construction of facilities, equipping the institutions and hiring of auxiliary non-teaching staff. The government on its part would employ all the teaching staff and cater to their welfare. The net effect of the policy was to blunt the momentum towards universal primary education as schools imposed compulsory levies that kept many students away from school. The universal basic education dream had been deferred so long for so many that by 2003 when the third president, Mwai Kibaki, took over from president Moi, primary school enrollment ration was only 77% implying that 23% of eligible children were out of school.5

Not surprising, president Kibaki's first policy initiative was to issue the Free Primary Education (FPE) directive that abolished all levies in tandem with his National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) party's campaign manifesto. The policy meant that not only would the state continue paying teachers but would also cover the costs of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. No school eligible child would, therefore, be excluded from school on account of school-imposed levies. This third school-fee policy initiative paid immediate dividends. By the close of 2003, primary school enrollment increased by around 22%, from 6.3 million students to over 7.6 million. In addition, gender parity in primary school access was attained with female enrollment topping 49%.6 Nevertheless, although progress in primary school access was registered in most parts of the country, regions inhabited by pastoralists did not witness similar access gains. In North Eastern province of Kenya, a region that is home to the largest nomadic population, the enrollment numbers were disappointing with boys accounting for only 17% and girls 9.8% of the net enrollment ratio.

In the light of the foregoing, the task of this analysis is threefold. The first is to provide a historical overview of government policies and programs for pastoral people's education in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) and their implications for access to basic education. The second, is to analyze the
current policies on pastoralists' education in ASAL regions in light of the major socio-political and educational reforms taking place in the country. The third is to present findings by UWEZO on learning outcomes in ASAL regions where the pastoralist's children attend primary schools. UWEZO is an educational research and advocacy non-profit agency dedicated to quality basic education as manifested in learning outcomes. Suffice to state that while the Kenyan government has made considerable policy changes and expended tremendous financial resources to attain universal primary education, education access and participation by children of pastoralist along with the learning outcomes in pastoralists-dominated areas continues to lag behind that of their sedentary counterparts. Indeed, evidence suggests that the policies and programs may have inadvertently enhanced continuity in the exclusion of pastoralists from the holistic participation in basic education.

**ASAL REGIONS OF KENYA**

Figure 1 shows the ASAL regions of Kenya. Over 60% of the country falls in the Arid and Semi-arid regions. In these regions, the rainfall ranges from a minimum of 200mm to a maximum of 850mm per year. Rainfall below 500mm is considered arid and in such areas, threats of famine loom large. The ASAL regions, home to the largest nomadic population, houses 20% of the country’s population, 9 million people. The population is relatively young with the mean age in North Eastern Province being 20 years. The population fertility rate of 7% is higher than the national average of 5%. Water, sanitation and health services are poor; home deliveries are prevalent, only 11% of the newborn are immunized at birth, around 55% of the homes have no toilets and 50% have no running water.

Economic and educational indicators also reveal a similar level of disadvantage. Overall the individual economic returns are low, however. Livestock production is the mainstay of the region and with the area accounting for 50-70% of Kenya's livestock activity. However, pastoralism dominates this livestock industry. Fortunately, the ASAL region provides home for the country's tourism sector which is an important source of revenue. Close to 90% of Kenya's tourism is conducted in the region due to the abundance of wildlife.

In terms of education, the region registers similar handicap. School enrollment ratio is low with North Eastern province registering a ratio of 39.4% for boys and 24.5% for girls in 2010. For the entire region, primary school enrollment averaged between 58% and 81 percent. In Table 1, data on the districts with the lowest number of persons who ever attended school is
presented. All the districts captured in the data are in the ASAL region. It is apparent that the average number of those who ever attended school in the ASAL region pales in comparison to the national average. The causes of this education marginalization have been attributed to poverty, long distances to school and cultural practices that limit the educational chances for girls.

CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR PASTORALISTS IN ASAL REGIONS OF KENYA

Pastoralism as a lifestyle has been perceived as a backward economic activity, both by the colonial and independent governments. The British colonial government found pastoralists as an “inconvenience” who could not be pacified. Moreover, European colonial farmers were fearful of any competition by Africans in the livestock business. There was also the persistent fear that African livestock were carriers of diseases that would decimate European stock. So livestock improvement activities among the African pastoralists were not only discouraged but also denied.

Figure 1: Arid and Semi-arid Regions of Kenya
There was a deliberate strategy to divest in pastoralist livestock activities, a strategy aimed at maintaining high prices for European livestock producers. The dim view of pastoralism as an economic activity has not been completely eradicated even with independence. Pastoral lifestyle is still construed as hindrance to modernity and a drawback to national development. Pastoralism is also viewed as being incompatible with contemporary formal education which requires communities that are engaged in sedentary economic activities including agriculture, business and employment. Contemporary school economic activities including agriculture, business and employment. Contemporary school is in a static location and on a scheduled timeline. Pastoralism is based on a system of migratory patterns dictated by availability of pastures for the livestock. Scholars have argued that modern education, as currently conceived, designed and delivered, competes with the generation, distribution and regeneration of pastoral lifestyle. In terms of education, pastoral communities are a complete failure—they rank at the bottom in enrollment, in exam performance and in availability of educational facilities.

For pastoralists to enjoy the full benefits of modern formal education, an educational policy climate that is sensitive to nomadic culture is inevitable. Adoption of a uniform educational strategy, methodology or curriculum similar to the one provided to sedentary groups with a contrasting lifestyle only succeeds in perpetuating the colonial legacy of exclusion. Yet, educational policies enunciated by authorities since colonialism have demonstrated a consistent truth: they have consistently undermined the pastoralists' communities' potential for endogenous change. In the next sections we examine these policies and their consequences for education for the pastoralist communities.

Table 1: ASAL District with the Lowest Number of Persons (6+) who ever attended school, 2009

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<th>Total</th>
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<td>7.8</td>
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THE INDEPENDENCE ERA, 1963-1979

By the time Kenya attained independence in 1963, the ASAL regions were a contrast to the rest of the country. Eschewed by most Christian missionaries, the region had only small pockets of Christians. Islam and traditional African religion dominated the religious scene. Christian missionaries provided the early focal point for the development of education and health facilities which meant that ASAL regions missed out on this initial foundation for education and health development. Colonial administrators gave the region a wide berth as well. Setting up a colonial administration paved way for the development of transport infrastructure, accelerated the growth of a public school system, heightened the development of urban centers where trade and commerce thrived, and also provided the genesis of the government civil service employees. All these ancillary benefits of colonialism were absent or marginally available in ASAL regions in contrast to the situation prevailing in the rich agricultural lands of central and western Kenya. So deprived were the ASAL regions that the colonial authorities labeled the northern Kenya as the “Northern Frontier District” (NFD).

Thus, prior to independence, pastoralist exclusion from participation in education occurred along two paths. The first was exclusion by design. By not establishing real and credible presence in the regions, both Christian missionaries and the British colonial authority, in their social development programs, deliberately excluded ASAL regions from participation in education. The other was exclusion by inactivity. When the independence movement began in earnest in the 1930s the indigenous people of central and western Kenya established cultural associations that founded independent schools that
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were meant to offer education based on their cultural values. The most well known of these cultural movement was the Kikuyu Central Association the precursor of the Kenya National African Union (KANU), the political party that spearheaded Kenya’s political independence. Due to heightened colonial activity, therefore, residents in the rich agricultural areas embraced activities that promoted education. The contrary is true of the ASAL areas.

At independence from Britain in 1963, the Kenya government development policy focused on eradicating poverty through wealth creation, eliminating ignorance through adult literacy and combating education inequalities through the universal provision of education. This troika of development goals pervaded all government policy documents written after independence in order to underscore the seriousness in which the state took the challenge of national development. This modernization approach adopted by the developmental state perceived education as a central plank in the march from a colonial state to modern nation characterized by political stability, economic growth and social vitality.

It is notable that political authorities recognized at independence that inequality was a threat to national development. The colonial administration had pursued a developmental agenda that favored the rich agricultural areas to the exclusion of ASAL lands. These areas had more and better infrastructure including road networks and educational institutions. The domination of ethnic groups from these regions in political leadership, civil service and in business was all too obvious to ignore. The first political statement on the development direction, *African Socialism and its Application to Development*, captured the inequality dimensions of these developments in the following redistribution terms “Every effort will be made to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for people in less developed parts of the country”14 (emphasis ours). Ten years later, the same goal was encapsulated in the second national development plan which noted “…Expansion of the economy with equitable sharing of its benefits; and integration of the national economy”15 (emphasis ours). The colonial legacy of uneven development was the monster that would continue to haunt national development efforts.

The same equity motif guided independence-era policy objectives on education. The first national education commission that was established to guide the new republic on a strategy for education for national sovereignty focused on the need for unity and identity, important ingredients threatened by uneven socio-economic development. The uneven development were perceived as being responsible for a heightened sense of ethnic consciousness in the national fabric. The commission recommended, therefore, that “A most urgent
need of education must be to serve the needs of national development. Education must promote social equality and remove division of race, tribe and religion. This position was further buttressed by the second national education strategy report of 1976 which reassessed the national educational objectives and policies. The report noted the inequitable and disturbing distribution of educational resources and opportunities based on location:

From an economic point of view, development resources tend to be invested where they yield the largest increase in net output. This approach tends to favor the development of areas that have abundant natural resources, good land and rainfall, transport and power facilities and necessary human resources. Yet the fundamental purpose of national development is to effect social improvement of lives of the people as a whole.

The import of these educational commissions was that national development went in tandem with social justice, equity as well as national unity. To ignore this dynamic is to court danger and invite national disintegration.

The government pursued a number of education policy interventions in the independence era, from 1963 to 1979, to increase access to education for disadvantaged groups including children of nomadic pastoralists. The first was the abolition of school fees in public primary (elementary) school. Since the colonial times attending school, both primary and secondary (high), was at a cost. Each student was charged a fee that was remitted to the government. This was in addition to over indirect costs associated with schooling such as school uniforms and books. In 1974, the president, Jomo Kenyatta, abolished school fees for grades 1 to 4 in all public primary schools. In 1979, the second president, Daniel arap Moi, followed suit and abolished school fees for grades 5 to 7 thereby making primary education in public schools free of tuition fees.

The second policy initiative was the construction of boarding schools for nomadic pastoralists. Policy makers reasoned that if parents were assured of the safety and well-being of their children, they would release them to boarding schools rather than move with them during seasonal migrations in search of pastures. Boarding schools would enhance access, which in turn would promote retention of students. Attendance to boarding schools would be free of cost to the children with the state and international development partners footing the bills. Such schools were constructed in the Marsabit, Narok, Pokot, Samburu and Turkana districts that are home to the maasai, pokot, rendille and turkana ethnic groups.
While these policy interventions had good intentions, they failed to address the problems of access and retention in primary schools as anticipated. The abolition of school fees coupled with the reduction in state expenditures left primary schools without the requisite resources to finance critical teaching and learning resources as well as pay auxiliary staff. Consequently, school committees instituted "building fund" fees not only to meet these costs but also future school development expenses. In all regions of the country, the "building fund" fees charged were more than the abolished school fees. Effectively, the policy impact of school fees abolition on enrollment was abrogated. Furthermore, boarding facilities did not translate into tangible success for pastoralists' children either. Children are an integral part of nomadic lifestyle as they participate in cattle herding among other domestic chores. Therefore, expecting parents to surrender their children to boarding schools was tantamount challenging their socio-cultural and economic lifestyle. In the end, students from non-pastoral communities constituted the majority of boarding school attendees; all they had to do to gain admission in such school was to adopt names associated with nomadic pastoralists. Resources meant for the marginalized communities were now subsidizing the well-endowed.

By the close of the decade of the 80s, primary school enrollment in ASAL regions remained dismal. According to Naaman, by 1990 around 85% of the relevant ages were not enrolled in primary schools in Turkana district and North Easter Province, the principal domains of pastoralists. In a 1978 assessment, the Kenya UNESCO office noted the failure of the school fee abolition strategy to narrow the school access gap between regions with high income and those without in the following terms: "Although the abolition of school fees enabled Government to achieve considerable progress towards attaining universal primary education, the policy initiative was, however, less successful in narrowing the gap between the districts with highest and lowest attendance." Resolving persistent inequalities in education required more than superficial policy proscriptions delivered during major political events as was the case with both policies. It is also noteworthy that the policies focused on access to school while issues of retention and outcomes that were as equally important were relegated to the back burner.

These policy failures epitomize the limits of political expediency in the education policymaking process. The abolition of school fees were surprise announcements by two heads of state to mark important political milestones. The 1974 announcement was to celebrate a decade as a republic in the commonwealth while the 1979 was to commemorate the beginning of the second republic under a new head of state. Such monumental changes in
funding of education call for a well-crafted policy that addresses all possible outcome scenarios. This is not feasible in policy-making environment driven by political expediency.

THE 2ND AND 3RD REPUBLICS: 1990 TO THE PRESENT

The second and third republics form important milestones in Kenya’s history and coincide with significant initiatives to redress inequalities in access to basic education by disadvantaged groups. The second republic is associated with the second president, Daniel arap Moi (in power from 1978 to 2002) while the third coincides with the regime of the third president, Mwai Kibaki (in office from 2003-2013). Two forces, external and internal, shaped the broad-based policy interventions aimed at increasing access to basic education by excluded groups including pastoralists. The external impetus came from a triumvirate of global ideologies and programs that sought to realign social programs in favor of the weak and underprivileged while the internal ones had their genesis in the political reconfigurations within the country.

The earliest of these external forces was the 1988 Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) for Africa instituted by the World Bank. Under SAPs African national governments were to rationalize their national budgets by decreasing expenditures on social programs like health and educational services as conditions for budgetary support from the bank.20 In the latter, cost-sharing would be instituted in higher education where the higher socio-economic groups dominate and has a lower social rates of returns while additional resources would be directed towards basic education which caters the bulk of the poor and has a higher rate of returns to society. The Kenya government’s acceptance of this neo-liberal thinking saw the enactment of cost-sharing programs in country’s public universities along with the introduction of private universities.

The SAPs agenda was closely followed by the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand, and sponsored by consortium international development agencies including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, UNESCO, and a host of western governments. The ensuing Education For All (EFA) declaration called for all government to ensure, among others, that universal basic (primary) education is attained by the year 2000 and improvement in learning achievement is attained. This was followed by the 2000 EFA evaluation meeting held in Dakar, Senegal, Africa, which observed the failure by most governments to meet the target, and set new ones to be attained by 2015, including “ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and from ethnic minorities have
access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality."

The third international force was the 1990 United Nations Millenium Development Goals (MDG). The MDG aim is to eradicate global poverty by 2015. Education is seen as key component in the strategy on war against poverty. Under Goal 2 on Universal Primary Education, all United Nations member countries committed themselves to ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education. A decade later, the MDG evaluation noted that by 2010 about 69 million school-age children were out of school in Africa, half in Sub-Saharan Africa.

These international policy agendas did not instantly translate into action towards pastoralists’ children education on the part of the Kenyan government. What they activated immediately was a reform in higher education financing which resulted in increased private funding for the sector. This released state revenues for the other educational sub-sectors including primary education. They also kept the issue of inequalities in educational access and outcomes on the front burner of all government development agendas such as Vision 2030, the development manifesto that seeks to translate Kenya into a middle income country by the year 2030. Suffice to note that the international agencies focus was on education access and education inputs (teachers and facilities) rather than actual learning outcomes.

The most immediate triggers for policy action, however, were internal factors. The first was the accession into office by the third president, Mwai Kibaki and the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government. To redress the main source of inequalities to educational access, the notorious “building fund” fees were abolished and the Free Primary Education (FPE) program launched by the NARC government in 2003. Under FPE, all fees imposed by school committees were abolished. In turn the government would remit to every public school a capitation grant of Ksh 1,100 (US$ 13 at current exchange rate) per student for school expenses. Primary schools would have no recourse for suspending students over “building fund” fees.

The establishment of the Ministry of Northern Development (MND) in 2008, a cabinet level office, also provided a critical entry point in addressing the marginalization of the pastoral community in the country. In its strategic plan, the MND laid special emphasis on increased access to basic education, proposed the establishment of a National Commission on Nomadic Education (NACONEK), and planned for the creation of an Education Foundation with
a bias towards girls' education. Though MND became defunct in 2013, it had already elevated the educational concerns of pastoralist to the national level.

Of all the internal impetus towards equalization of educational opportunities, none supersedes the enactment in 2010 of the new Kenyan Constitution. The enactment of constitution was hastened by the 2007-2008 post-election violence which took an ethnic dimension. During the violence, marginalized groups and those that felt they had no stake in the system conspired to kill, maim and destroy properties owned the Kikuyu who had dominated the county politically and economically. The overarching goal of the new constitutional dispensation is to eradicate ethnic inequalities arising from historical injustices and thereby lessen ethnic conflicts motivated by competition for the control of state power. It is an all-embracing objective in which access to education is identified as a basic human right, enshrined in the Bill of Rights and captured in various articles of the document:

- No 43 (1): Every person has the right to (f) education.
- No 53 (b): every child has the right to free and compulsory basic education.
- No 54 (1): A person with any disability is entitled (b) to access educational institutions and facilities for persons with disabilities that are integrated into society to the extent compatible with the interests of the person.
- No 55: The State shall take measures, including affirmative action programmes, to ensure that the youth (a) access relevant education and training.
- No 56: The State shall put in place affirmative action programmes designed to ensure that minorities and marginalized groups (b) are provided special opportunities in educational and economic fields

In this new constitutional order basic education is not a privilege but a right, and the government is obligated to ensure not only its availability but also access. Though the emphasis is on access qualitative outcomes are partially implied.

With the new constitution in place, it has become imperative to realign all laws governing education including the observance of the principle of right to education with the new constitutional dispensation. The most prominent of the newly enacted statutes are: the Basic Education Act (2012), the Teachers Service Commission Act (2012) and the Kenya National Examinations Council
We shall consider each in light of the need of education by the pastoralist communities.

The Basic Education Act (2012) has the following key provisions:

1) Guiding Principles:

- the right of every person to free and compulsory basic education;

- equitable access to basic education and equal access to education institutions;

- protection of every child against unfair discrimination within or by an education department or education institution on any ground whatsoever;

- advancement and protection of every child to be instructed in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable;

- provision of adequate, equipment, infrastructure and resources that meet the needs of every child in basic education;

2) Establishment of:

- a pre-primary institution, primary institution, and a secondary institution within a reasonably accessible distance from any residential area within a County;

- well equipped boarding primary schools in arid and semi-arid areas.

3) On tuition fees, Article 26 (1) states:

No public school shall charge or cause any parent, guardian or any other person acting in loco parentis capacity to pay tuition fee for or
on behalf of any pupil in a public institution of basic education and training.

The educational strategy espoused by the Act still focuses on the failed "boarding school" policy, a failure to acknowledge the centrality of pastoralism in the life of citizens in ASAL regions. Though it rightly outlaws charging of fees by educational institutions, it makes no provision for specific funding and fundraising mechanisms for schools in ASAL regions that have a low economic base which is an impetus for school committees to reinstitute school fees charges. Additionally, the law focuses on access and educational inputs while being oblivious to the importance of retention or learning outcomes.

The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) is the government agency charged with the employment and management of teachers in public schools. The TSC Act of 2012 extends the mandate of the agency to include the registration of all teachers in public and private employment in all pre-college institutions. The commission itself mandates strict criteria for teacher registration: completion of minimum high school education, evidence of professional teacher training, and possession of a national identity card as proof of nationality. These conditions work well for teachers or aspiring teachers in non-nomadic areas—the registration and employment of teachers is based on a rigid meritocratic criteria. For ASAL regions with nomadic pastoralists, a new model of teachers is required which conventional teacher training modules cannot provide. Such teachers must also demonstrate an understanding of nomadic lifestyle and be willing to move with them during migratory seasons. Knowledge about pastoralist lifestyle and educational needs is tacit and practical, acquired after a considerable period of study and residence in nomadic regions. Contemporary teachers have been educated in the traditional mode within a one-size-fits-all framework. That the new TSC Act is oblivious to these realities suggests a level of continued exclusion of nomadic pastoralists from fully participating in education.

The Kenya National Examinations Council Act (2012) repositions the examination agency's role in credentialing students following the successful completion of primary and secondary school as well as those seeking certification in technical and craft courses. In addition to provisions for governances and financial matters, the new law makes elaborate provisions for examination procedures, venues (minimum 15 students), dates, offences and penalties. For pastoralists, the examination law makes no provisions for alternative or flexible examination venues and dates. For elementary education, it emphasizes examination for high-school bound students rather than nomadic lifestyle. It is, additionally,
silent on inequalities in learning outcomes based on disparities in learning resources.

In all, while the new constitution sets the broad parameters germane to the equitable access to, and participation in basic education including learning outcomes, the ancillary laws in education fail to capture these peculiarities of a nomadic lifestyle for the pastoralists’ education needs. The subsidiary laws still give preeminence to boarding schools, meritocratic achievement and traditional models of teacher training all which have been found to be inimical to pastoralists’ educational interests.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES IN ASAL REGIONS: THE UWEZO DATA**

In this section we present Uwezo 2012 data, gathered almost a decade after the launch of the Free Primary Education (FPE) program, on educational indicators in ASAL regions populated by large segments of nomadic pastoralists. The focus of Uwezo studies in primary schools has been on learning levels as opposed to conventional studies and government reports that emphasize access and school infrastructure. In the last four years the agency has undertaken large-scale, citizen-led, household-based assessments of actual levels of children’s literacy and numeracy levels. The key consideration for Uwezo is: what are students learning in schools?

In Figure 2, comparative data on school enrollment by age between ASAL and non-ASAL regions is disclosed. While enrollment at age 6 is comparatively similar between the two regions, the disparities are glaring by age 16 at grade 8, the end of primary school cycle. This suggests a high attrition rate by students of nomadic pastoralists in ASAL regions since many leave school in upper primary school levels for marriage.

Information on teacher and student attendance to class and school resource availability are disclosed in Figure 3. Teacher and student absences are significant contributing factors in low academic achievement. Teacher attendance in non-arid lands is comparatively better than in the arid lands. The same is true of student attendance. Non-arid lands have slightly more teachers than their arid counterparts; they also have a higher number of more experienced head teachers. The availability of books is also in favor of non-arid regions. What all this implies is that students in non-arid areas have comparatively better educational inputs to enhance retention and learning outcomes than their pastoralist counterparts in
The ability of students to read in English and Kiswahili by depending on wealth status presented in Table 2. The categorization of poverty is in a three-phased continuum namely, non-poor, poor and ultra-poor. The data is explicit that in all wealth status categories and for all ages, students in the arid areas perform at a lower level than their counterparts in the non-arid regions. Simply put, learning outcomes in terms of English and Kiswahili languages are weighted against nomadic pastoralists children in ASAL regions.

Figure 2: School Enrollment by Age in Non-Arid and Arid Regions of Kenya
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Figure 3: Attendance and Resource Disparities between Arid and Non-Arid Regions
Table 2: Students Unable to Read English & Kiswahili Words by Wealth Status (in %)

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<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next level of comparative data set, presented in Table 3, is the ability to read based on a mother's level of education. The survey data looked at three levels of education: none, primary school and secondary school levels of mother's education. The mother's level of education is important because when young, children spend considerable amount of time with their mothers. They are the greatest influence in a child's early and later education. As disclosed in the data, the percentage of students unable to read in English and Kiswahili in arid regions, whether the mother is illiterate, has primary or secondary level of education, is higher than that of students from non-arid lands. The confluence of mother's education and school resources tilt the scales against pastoralists' children in ASAL areas.

Finally, Uwezo also explored the students' numeracy skills. In Figure 4 a comparative analysis of the numeracy skills of students in non-arid...
and arid is presented. At age 6, the non-arid students have a relatively higher level of numeracy skills. This differential advantage does not show a marked decrease as the education progresses and by age 16 the gap between the two groups has widened. Learning outcomes in terms of mathematical skills are skewed in favor of students from non-arid regions.

Besides survey data, Uwezo also analyzed the 2012 Kenya Certificate of Primary Examinations (KCPE) results. KCPE is the terminal examination taken by all primary school students in grade 8, and determines those who will proceed to high school. Of the worst 10 performing counties, 6 (Garissa, Isiolo, Mandera, Marsabit, Tana River and Wajir) were in ASAL regions and with large groups of nomadic pastoralists. Nevertheless, 2 counties, Baringo and West Pokot, were among the top 10 counties in the country. Are these outliers? Did only the best students survive the school system? There is need for additional research into this.

Table 3: Students Unable to Read English & Kiswahili Words by Mothers Education (in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Non-poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Ultra-poor</th>
<th>Non-poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Ultra-poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>33.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUDING REMARKS

The object of this analysis was to document the continuity in the exclusion of nomadic pastoralists in Kenya’s education system. The focus was primarily on primary school since it provides the foundation for basic literacy and is the platform that determines access to other levels of education. Besides looking at government policies, the analysis also explored empirical data
collected in schools and households in the nomadic pastoralists regions.

The early post-independence policy initiatives were guided by the need to redress the regional inequalities in education and national developments inherited from the colonial regime. While the national government has endeavored through various policy interventions to increase access to basic education among the pastoral nomads, the use of zero tuition fee policy has not yielded the anticipated results. Since the abolition of primary school fees commenced in 1974 to the declaration of free primary education policy in 2003, nomadic pastoralists regions of ASAL have continued to register lower enrollment ratios than the arable regions occupied by sedentary communities.

The persistence of the inequalities and their attendant threat to national cohesion along with international movements towards universal basic education informed the new constitutional dispensation with a strong agenda of redressing the inequalities in education and other social services. The associated educational laws that derive their mandate from the constitution seek to entrench equality in all aspects of education and in all regions of the country. However, the new subsidiary legislations have adopted the hitherto unsuccessful paradigms in reframing the legal environment in tandem with the new constitution. The Basic Education Act 2012, the Teachers Service Commission Act 2012 and the Kenya National Examinations Council 2012 Act all demonstrate that traditional approaches of boarding schools, meritocracy, and traditional teacher preparation programs still reign supreme among educational policy wonks even though they run counter to pastoralists educational aspirations. The Uwezo 2012 data analyzed shows that while in aggregate access to education may have improved nationally, areas occupied by pastoralists still lag behind in student enrollment, student and teacher attendance to school, teaching
and learning resources as well as achievement in reading and numeracy skills and performance in national examinations.

A salient implication of the foregoing analysis is the preponderance of economic variables in shaping educational policy. It began in the colonial era and continues in the post-independence dispensation. The colonial authorities viewed the ASAL regions as being of marginal economic value and therefore neglected educational development in the region. In the post-independence era, education was perceived as the engine that would drive economic development. Structural Adjustment Programs, however, negatively impacted education thereby reducing substantially its ability to deliver on the economic promise. This was not a uniquely Kenyan experience but one that is observable in the rest of the continent.

Equally important, the analysis has hinted at the challenges inherent in trying to ensure access and equity in the distribution without first restructuring the society. Politicians and Policy makers, in Africa and elsewhere, often take the easy route of providing educational opportunities independent of other structural changes that influence a persons ability to access the educational opportunities. Analysis by development economists Michael Todaro and Stephen Smith, for instance, suggests that access to education is first and foremost influenced, shaped or determined by one’s location in the social structure of society. Therefore, a most viable policy option of liberalizing or democratizing access to education is best pursued by first restructuring society to ensure socio-economic advancement of the marginalized groups. Such a restructuring that led to improvement in education access can be seen in the United States of America. It is only after the civil rights struggle and the socio-economic restructuring of the society that access to education improved considerably for minority groups.

All these suggest the need for a two-pronged approach to enhancing education for the nomadic pastoralists regions. Even as the government and international agencies formulate policies
that will ensure 100% enrollment of school-age children throughout the country, there is also need to formulate strategies that will enhance retention and learning outcomes commensurate with each stage of education. Cognitive skill mastery and retention are just as important as access to school. Educational laws that delegitimize innovative strategies that can assure favorable outcomes and student retention in schools need to be reviewed and revised. We have already identified such lacunas with the all the educational acts written in the current constitutional dispensation. Furthermore, it goes without saying that structural reforms of education independent of societal transformation will not guarantee access and retention let alone satisfactory learning outcomes. Reforms in education will likely be more successful if they go in tandem with overall socio-economic reforms in society.

NOTES


7. For a full description of UWEZO’s background, theory of change and learning assessments, visit their website at www.iwezo.net.


23. E. Omwami & R. Omwami, “Public Investment and the Goal of Providing Access to Primary Education in


