



SUMMARY BRIEF: A framework for improved integrated education in the ASALs of Kenya¹

Daniel Wesonga, consultant, May 2015

Introduction

Education accounts for less than 1% of donor investment in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) of Kenya, despite many recent studies underlining its important contribution in promoting resilience. The standard model for education delivery is currently failing across all the ASAL counties. This situation requires a radical rethink in terms of overall education provision; the specific responsibilities of ASAL counties; and the huge effort that is needed by national and county level government, NGOs and donors alike. The establishment of the National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK) after three years of waiting is a welcome development, but it is currently neither empowered nor resourced, and unable to make much impact without a major increase in its resources and the close support of national government.

As part of a process of identifying a strategy for a functional education system capable of enhancing current livelihoods in the ASALs, DLCI commissioned a study that would help focus discussion on the priorities for improving ASAL education. The intention was to identify interventions in education that could be shared and integrated across all educational actors, including NACONEK, and to define an advocacy strategy—with clear responsibilities allocated—that would both support and be co-ordinated by NACONEK.

Integrated education means a linked system of education that is not developed and delivered in silos, but one that maximises opportunities for complementarity, the sharing of resources, and transition. DLCI's proposed integrated framework incorporates the recently established NACONEK alongside all stakeholders working in the education sector. It considers formal and non-formal, public and private, as well as secular and religious education alternatives, as part of a strategy to work collaboratively on education priorities and improve provision. The framework also considers plans for continued provision during seasonal movement and possible disasters, such as drought and conflict, which are particularly common in the ASALs.

The status of education in the ASALs of Kenya

The status of education in Kenya's ASALs is extremely poor, with 90% of the 2 million Kenyan children who have never been to school living in the ASALs. Primary enrolment rates are as low as 40% in many counties, compared to a national average of 95%. Between 2005 and 2010 the gender parity index has worsened, with female literacy rates remaining below 10% in some counties. Teacher pupil ratios are below other areas of the country, and completion rates and performance are way below national averages. A large number of youth who have been through the education system are now disconnected from their traditional livelihoods and do not have the right skills to find employment. This disaffected cohort is vulnerable to crime and extremist influence.

The national government has made repeated commitments to provide education for all, including in the new Constitution, but educational investment is having limited impact in the ASALs. Many of the delivery mechanisms that

¹ This brief is a summary of the DLCI document by Daniel Wesonga, 'Framework for Improved Education in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya' (2015) and was written by Vanessa Tilstone, DLCI and edited by Helen de Jode.



have been designed to reach ASAL children have not been implemented—particularly distance learning and non formal provision—or are under-resourced and supervised, for example mobile schools, feeder schools, low cost boarding schools and adult literacy classes.

Many argue that education provision should be the same as in other areas of the country—in terms of delivery mechanisms, levels of human resources and curricula—despite huge differences in the infrastructure, human resource and livelihood base, and the social and environmental conditions of the ASALs. This insistence is resulting in 50% of the population in these areas not being reached by education at all; and those that are getting it having no prospects of employment and being alienated from their communities.

In the context of the ASALs, flexibility, innovation and new technologies need to be applied creatively to ensure an education system that is of equal quality; but that is also relevant, culturally appropriate, strengthens existing and alternative livelihoods, and facilitates effective progression through to the formal education system.

The constraints and opportunities of education delivery mechanisms in the ASALs

The current format of education provision in ASAL areas is described below, together with some of the critical activities needed for their improvement:

Formal schooling:

This is currently a mixture of day schools, private provision and low cost boarding schools, mainly in urban areas.

Boarding schools are broadly popular, as pastoralist households can then maintain their livelihood strategies of mobility and migration while their children receive a formal education. The concept of ‘low cost’ boarding schools however has led to an unacceptable level of resourcing and should be scrapped. Currently they are characterised by dilapidated and inadequate infrastructure—lacking sufficient beds, mattresses, clean drinking water and classrooms. There is low capitation (8ksh per day per child for food), inadequately qualified support staff, teacher shortages, and limited capacity of education boards to undertake oversight functions, as well as inadequate safety and security. These issues should urgently be addressed so that parents feel comfortable that their children will have adequate education provision and security in such institutions. Given the resource constraints, private and NGO provision should be promoted for boarding schools. Models are starting to emerge on how to integrate these, but this needs further exploration and emphasis.

Feeder schools to cater for younger children should be established for lower primary, particularly in locations where children walk for more than three kilometres to reach the nearest primary school. This will help increase participation by younger children. Such schools could be established in smaller settlements, grouped in clusters working with a larger, central primary school, to which the older children would transition. Existing feeder schools are inadequate, lack necessary teaching-learning materials, and teachers are not given sufficient professional support.

Non-formal education

Mobile schools are still operational in some ASAL areas, although many have stopped functioning due to inadequate funding and supervision; and lack of support by the community due to the poor quality of education provided. There are possibilities of improving mobile schools by supporting them with distance learning, in which the majority of education is provided via radio or the Internet—with mobile teachers holding tutorials or camps. Other possibilities of improvement include payment by results, clustering and placing them under the supervision of formal schools, improving teacher quality and monitoring, and using remote technologies. Mobiles schools must either be improved



or they should be scrapped and resources transferred to more appropriate provision, as they are currently using resources without clear evidence of effective operation or educational impact.

There is a variety of non-formal education provision in the ASALs, mainly by NGOs or religious institutions including shepherd schools and *duksis*. Where these are attracting students and are showing impact they should be recognised and supported by government.

Distance learning is yet to be tried in the ASALs, despite its huge potential in reaching remote and scattered communities in ways that do not disrupt livelihoods and are culturally appropriate. A distance learning strategy was developed in 2010, as well as a costing and teachers manual, however no attempt was ever made by MOEST to even pilot the strategy. This strategy needs updating given the advance in technologies, distance learning experiences elsewhere, and communication infrastructure; and also needs to integrate face-to-face provision particularly in the early years. Distance learning can also offer complementary education to those children in school and can provide on-going training to teachers.

Adult literacy

With literacy rates so low in ASALs, particularly for women in rural areas, there is an urgent need to increase adult literacy and numeracy in ways that are culturally appropriate and take into account women's time availability and preferences e.g. for *duksis* in North Eastern. The requirements include teachers being reviewed and lessons learnt from campaign approach in other countries; where educated people in communities, especially unemployed youth, are trained on mass for literacy campaigns.

Vocational training

Vocational training for the practical skills that are in demand in the ASALs should be prioritised in order to promote employment prospects for school leavers, and provide the necessary skills for economic development in these areas. Subjects should be based on current and future human resource needs including, for example, animal health workers, health and education and local government staff, and emerging mineral and infrastructure development sectors. As many pastoral drop outs will need to become self-employed due to lack of formal employment opportunities, marketing and business skills should be prioritised and linked to the governments' youth and women's credit, start up finance and work placement schemes.

A framework for improved integrated education in the ASALs

In engineering, system integration is defined as the process of bringing together the component sub-systems into one system and ensuring that the sub-systems function together as a system. System integration is also about adding value to the system: capabilities that are possible because of interactions between sub-systems. This framework for integrated education consists of a series of proposed standards to guide education planning in the ASALs, as well as priority activities to improve key approaches to education delivery and promote linkages.

Standard 1: Build on existing resources and what is already working, or that has the potential to work in a particular context.

ASAL areas differ considerably from the rest of Kenya in terms of livelihoods, the mobility of their populations, cultures, infrastructure, and human resource base, even within their county boundaries. Education provision needs to respond to this context. For example in some areas, private provision and non-formal Islamic education e.g. *duksi's* are what is being accessed; in others mobile schools and shepherd schools are attracting children. ASAL areas generally lack fully



qualified teachers, but there are numerous educated youth that are currently unemployed or under-employed who could be mobilised and trained to provide basic literacy or non-formal education. These young people could become fully-fledged teachers using fast track approaches and distance learning, and receive other forms of continuous professional development.

Standard 2: Use innovations to address the problems of distance and poor quality that are constraining education

There are a number of recent studies on the status of education in the ASALs that identify the constraints and challenges in the ASALs,² including lack of resources, inadequate numbers of and poor training of teachers, limited monitoring and supervision, and mistrust and disillusionment of education provision by communities. Each of these issues requires specific interventions to address them, but the standard responses currently being used should be interrogated given their lack of progress in recent years. Innovative thinking is needed, learning from experiences elsewhere but adapting them to the specific contexts. For example, improvements in technologies and experiences of distance learning provide huge opportunities to increase the reach and quality of education in these remote areas, as well as improve monitoring and supervision. Distance education is being used in other sectors in the country e.g. financial, higher education and refugee camps; and methods of monitoring using mobile phones and GIS technologies are widespread, for example water point monitoring, and smart cards being used for cash transfers and service provision; but these are yet to be adapted to ASAL education. In cases where direct monitoring is difficult, results based payments could be introduced e.g. for adult literacy and mobile schools.

A strategy that ensures the relevance of the education provided, both in terms of the formal curricula but also vocational training for youth, needs to be prepared to address current and future livelihood options. Provision should also plan creatively with the realities of the ASALs in mind, particularly in terms of seasonality and regular drought and conflict so that learning is not constantly interrupted.

Standard 3: Advocate for considerable increases in resources and improved efficiency to deliver quality education

Given the poor state of infrastructure and education in the ASALs a major education overhaul is needed to reach all children and adults. A massive increase in resources is needed to support quality education provision and reforms. Resources have to be found that really can provide 'education for all', or alternative cheaper mechanisms for delivery have to be adopted. Joint financing from county governments and the private sector could be promoted. Some resources could also be recouped from current inefficiencies however: i.e. non-productive and underutilised staff and facilities, and the scrapping of inappropriate or non-priority provision.

Civil society should lobby for this major change and donors should play their part in encouraging the Government to meet its stated commitments. Cheaper alternatives to provision or enhancement, e.g. distance learning, should also be considered. The sharing of resources, e.g. the sharing of buildings, teachers, materials and supervision, can also make savings. Using primary school buildings and teachers to provide other forms of education when they are not being used; sharing or adapting local language teaching learning materials between non-formal and formal provision; and adapting and drawing on NGO provision e.g. vocational training curricula, should be considered.

Given the major lack of qualified teachers and reluctance of teachers from other areas to be posted to the ASALs, particularly in remote or insecure areas, other grades of teachers and mechanisms for training should be considered. The provision of intensive courses and on-going skill development, financial incentives, lower levels of teachers working under the supervision of qualified teachers, and distance learning should all be considered.

Standard 4: Involve communities and promote accountability

² See UNICEF and Save studies in references.



Community engagement in the planning of education provision will not only enhance ownership, relevance and sustainability of the approach, but will also enhance accountability and efficiency in its delivery. Accountability mechanisms should be built into all education interventions to increase efficiency and accountability as well as responsiveness. Where social accountability mechanisms already exist e.g. Transparency International’s mechanisms in Turkana, Wajir and West Pokot, the Ministry of Education should actively engage with them. In other areas, accountability mechanisms including complaints and feedback mechanisms should be developed, with a clear feedback mechanism and follow up of issues to be addressed. Accountability for education among education managers requires bold discussions and a review of the job descriptions of County and Sub-county directors of education and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), to reflect the real needs of pastoral areas.

Standard 5: Prioritise education efforts

There are many activities that need to be carried out in the ASALs, however those that will have the most impact the most quickly must be prioritised, to prevent losing another generation to illiteracy and limited futures. Quality basic education and literacy for all, and ensuring that education enhances livelihood options through vocational and other training are clear priorities, although consultation with communities on what should be done is fundamental.

Standard 6: Advocate for devolution of functions that the county government has potential to deliver

Counties are prioritising education, however they are limited in the ways they can improve provision because of national level control and limited devolution. The Constitution allows for devolution of facilitative roles. The national government is failing the ASALs and should focus on providing quality assurance and support, especially for formal education, while allowing counties themselves to take on other functions e.g. adult literacy, school infrastructure development and non-formal education and vocational training. The national government should oversee examinations, curricula and teacher quality, and support capacity building in counties; but reaching out of school children and education campaigns requires responsiveness in particular contexts and communities—approaches that should be overseen by county governments. At the very least, county governments should define what mechanisms for provision are the most appropriate. Teacher management, resourcing, monitoring, and advocating for flexibility in the curriculum and school calendar, should all involve the counties more.

Conclusions and recommendations

The provision of education in ASAL areas is dismal, and not in conformity with the Constitution of Kenya or the many policies and declarations that the government has signed up to. This situation urgently needs addressing by the Ministry of Education and a resourced NACONEK in order to fulfil all ASALs citizens’ basic rights to education; but also to provide the foundation for development in these areas. This should be done in the interest of the entire nation, not only as Kenya will benefit from increased productivity, but also without it, on-going conflict, terrorism, drought disasters will continue to drain resources. NACONEK can provide direction and leadership but not without the financial and political support of the political leadership, the Government of Kenya (especially the Ministry of Education and Parliament), as well as all the various education institutions. All will have to put aside their institutional and individual interests, and traditional ways of working, to focus on the key objective of addressing the four A’s of education: **accessibility, availability, acceptability and adaptability**,³ issues that underpin the framework outlined above.

In order to move forward in this endeavour there are a number of immediate steps which need to be taken by education and ASAL stakeholders:

³ Dr. Chris Galgalo , chairperson of NACONEK at the DLCI education stakeholders consultation workshop, May 2015



1. Awareness raising on the resourcing and strengthening of NACONEK as the focal point and lead organisation on improving education in the ASALs. NACONEK to provide clarity on its role and what it can realistically achieve, given its current resources, and to lobby for and communicate the priority actions that it requires support with.
2. All actors to align their programs with NACONEK priorities and work in conjunction with NACONEK where possible. The collaboration and coordination of all educational actors committed to the ASALs; including sharing of learning and increased linkages with other actors, such as those providing adult literacy, vocational training and non-formal education.
3. Awareness raising and joint advocacy on increased resourcing of education in the ASALs with the government, donors, private sector, county governments and others.
4. Mapping of existing education provision in the ASALs and its challenges by NACONEK staff, in conjunction with county directors and other responsible staff and education providers, so that plans to address the challenges can be agreed as part of the exercise and put into effect immediately—including monitoring plans for follow up.
5. Engagement in the curriculum review process for basic education to ensure that it follows the principles of integrated education, particularly appropriateness and acceptability, and facilitates transition between education providers.
6. Further discussion and advocacy on phased devolution and piloting of education functions, learning from the experiences of other sectors including health provision.

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