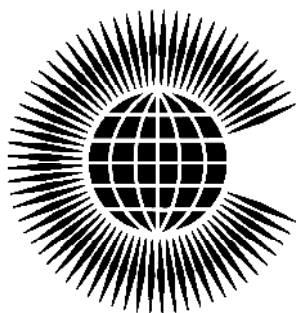


# Educating Nomadic and Pastoralist Children

The report of a discussion sponsored jointly by the Commonwealth Secretariat,  
the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa and  
the Council for Education in the Commonwealth.

In almost all nomadic and pastoralist communities, the proportion of children who get even a primary or basic education is very small - in some areas, less than 10% and much less than that for girls. The proportions of literate women are tiny. What are the consequences in terms of health, well being, poverty? This meeting will review some of the approaches to nomadic and pastoralist communities in the Commonwealth and in the Horn of Africa and consider ways towards better connections between such communities and their larger societies.

**Held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>. September 2007  
in Marlborough House, London**



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## **Preface**

The Commonwealth Secretariat derives its mandate from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings and the Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers. During the 2006 16CCEM, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals which are;

- Universal Primary Education
- Eliminating gender inequality in education at all levels
- Using Open and distance learning to overcome geographical barriers
- Ensuring quality in education
- Focusing on education in difficult circumstances
- Mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDs

The two education Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015 are;

- To ensure Universal Primary Education
- To eliminate gender inequalities at primary and secondary levels

The ministers also directed us to pay special attention to the countries which are at risk of not meeting these goals and also to target specific disadvantaged groups of the Commonwealth population.

Mobile populations have been identified as one category of people that countries are facing challenges in providing quality education for their children. That is why the Education Section has devoted considerable time and resources in this area.

We are aware that there is a large part of the population in Africa and Asia that is mobile or only partly settled for one reason or the other. Unless the children in these communities access quality education, there is no way we shall achieve the EFA goals and the MDGs.

Through regional meetings, we hope that we will be able to identify and share success stories of flexible initiatives for possible replication. We want to establish linkages and networks for sharing expertise and resources and also create a platform for raising the need for education for nomadic or mobile populations onto the agenda at future national and international meetings.

The Commonwealth Secretariat joined with PENHA, the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa, which works with pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the Horn of Africa, and with the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, which has a similar commitment to the EFA goals and the education MDGs organizing a meeting on nomadic education. The aim of this seminar was to continue to explore some of the issues which had arisen at the conference in Garissa in the Somali region of Kenya some months earlier.

The interest and enthusiasm that this small conference generated in London has shown that individuals and agencies are interested in this subject and are ready to carry this message forward to ensure that no child is left behind in our efforts to move towards achieving the set global education goals.

Dr. Henry Kaluba  
Head Education Section

## **Introduction**

The seminar on “Educating Nomadic and Pastoralist Children” was held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>. September 2007 in the headquarters of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House in central London. The meeting was the result of discussions between the Education Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA), and the Council for Education in the Commonwealth.

The basic premise of the meeting was that in almost all nomadic and pastoralist communities, the proportion of children who get even a primary or basic education is very small - in some areas, less than 10% and much less than that for girls. The proportions of literate women are tiny. What are the consequences in terms of health,

well being, poverty? The meeting reviewed some of the research and work with nomadic and pastoralist communities in the Commonwealth (both in Africa and in Asia) and in the Horn of Africa and considered ways towards improving connections between such communities and their larger societies.

The presentations and discussions are summarised in this booklet. The meeting started with a description by Ali Ismail Mohamed of PENHA of his own experience of education from a pastoralist background, followed by the conclusions of his more recent field research. There were then two presentation which followed on from the conference held by the Commonwealth of Learning and the Commonwealth Secretariat in Garissa Kenya in June 2006. Alba de Souza of CEC summarised the discussions and presentations at the conference, while Florence Malinga of the Commonwealth Secretariat gave us the conclusions of the conference and the progress since it that time. The fourth contribution was from Fatimah Kelleher, also from the Commonwealth Secretariat. This was titled: "Education Provision for Nomadic Communities: and introduction to some Asian contexts." A general discussion was followed by some suggestions for the way ahead.

## **Why Pastoralist Children Do Not Go to School**

A personal view from a pastoralist background

Ali Mohamed, Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa

The speaker comes from a pastoralist background and after his education and the first few years working in Sudan, came to the UK. He was determined to develop his knowledge of education as well as to campaign for the education of pastoralists. He has been back several times to Sudan and to do field work in the area near where he had his own education in eastern Sudan and western Eritrea among the Ben Amir.

The Ben Amir pastoralists are mostly now semi-nomadic. Their livelihood is based on animals – and in the past, there were large range lands for them. However in recent times, the most fertile lands have been taken over for arable purposes leaving the pastoralists and their animals with the most arid pastures. Consequently they have to move regularly not to overgraze the pastures. The men and the older boys are responsible for the herding, leaving women, young children and the elderly in small homesteads where small scale agriculture is beginning to become common.

The governments of both countries have policies which focus on the need for Education for All (EFA). However this has been done in a top-down, centrally-planned manner with no concern for the lifestyle and needs of minorities like pastoralists. In addition, it promotes an authoritarian system – to make parents, teachers and students behave predictably and passively. What has resulted are the extremely low levels of schooling among pastoralist and nomadic children – particularly girls.

What this top-down, centrally-planned approach means in practice is that there are not enough schools for pastoralists and they are often situated so that children have to walk 10 km or more. Furthermore, these schools are usually ill equipped with little relevant teaching equipment. The timing of the terms during the year and of the

lessons during the day do not take account of the needs of the pastoralist families. The teachers are rarely from a pastoralist background with an understanding of the needs of the children, a common language, a respect for pastoralist culture or an interest in working with the parents. Many of these teachers have been sent straight from school themselves or are even sent to rural areas as a punishment. A particular issue is the use of corporal punishment which is deeply resented by pastoralists.

Finally, the curriculum is not relevant – and so is not of real interest to the pastoralist children and no incentive to the parents to send them to school. Very often, it is copied from other countries, theoretical with little practical content.

On top of this, there is corruption – with equipment being diverted away from the schools in the rural areas. The speaker gave an example of schools being closed down in rural areas so the teachers allocated to these schools could be reallocated to urban areas.

Part of the reason for this is the lack of respect or understanding by those in positions of power. Pastoralists are often not asked why they do the things they way they do. The speaker gave an example of some pastoralists who refused to used weed killer on their crops. The organisation which had provided the weed killer concluded that they were stupid – until they were persuaded to meet the pastoralists and were told that the weeds were used as an important source of fodder for their animals. The weed killer was of no use to them.

Even if children do go to school, they rarely last long. The speaker gave an example of the drop out rate in one school:

Year	Total children	Pastoralist children
1	40	10
3	43	6
6	30	1

He also commented on the lack of trust between pastoralists and government officials. So often meetings between them and such officials has been the precursor to the loss of grazing land. When doing his research, he was only able to communicate properly when he discarded his European clothes and used tradition garb and sat on the ground with them.

There are some who despite all of this manage to complete their education. Two examples are given in the box – of a boy and of a girl – of those who have been successful and are now contributing back to their society.

The speaker ended his presentation by saying that this whole process “results in pastoralists feeling neglected ... (which) then leads to friction and unrest between pastoralist and non-pastoralist. If a person is not educated, then he or she cannot be, and is not, part of the policy making process. If they are not part of the policy making process, then they are left out. This has happened for years. Lack of education provision has created mistrust between the pastoralists and the non-pastoralists – who are the policy makers and decision takers – which reduces rural peoples’ production, leads to dependency and hatred which increases tension and destabilisation which leads to more poverty. ... The problem is, how to change the perception of the non-

pastoralists. There will not be Education For All if these misconceptions are not dealt with.”

### **Two stories of pastoralist children who did get an education** Version 2

Abdi was born as the fourth son of a pastoralist family which moved backwards and forwards between Sudan and Eritrea. His two oldest brothers worked with his father herding the family livestock. His next brother had education until middle schools – and ended up as a police officer. He then was able to fund Abdi’s education. Abdi went to the local primary school – and then to secondary school (in Keren, Eritrea) and went far away to Addis Ababa university. However he was only able to do one year when all sorts of problems occurred and the university was closed. He then moved to Sudan (as he was able to as a pastoralist) and did a three year degree course in agriculture in Khartoum. After that he worked for ten years in his own pastoralist community in Kassala, supporting his younger brother and his parents. He is now doing a teacher training course and campaigning for pastoralist children to have education.

Zainab was an only child living in a pastoralist community with no school. At the age of eight, her parents decided that she needed to get an education – and because of the long distance to the nearest school, in the village of Awad, she was taken each day on a donkey by her father. He father looked after the cattle before collecting her. She got an “A” at the end of primary and was able to go to the “Mediterranean School” in Kassala, Eastern Sudan, as a boarder. After completion, she did a two year teacher training course.

Zainab is now back in her own community, teaching in Awad and fully involved in the local community, particularly helping women to deal with health issues. She is also campaigning to get a school built in her own community village.

## **Reaching Nomadic Populations in Africa**

A report from the Forum held in Garissa, Kenya in June 2006

Alba de Souza, Council for Education in the Commonwealth

This forum was hosted in Kenya by the Ministry of Education and the country office of UNICEF and was funded and organised by the Commonwealth of Learning and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The aim was for researchers, education practitioners and nomadic people themselves to synthesise research, describe successful practices and share lessons which have been learnt.

It was recognised that the issue is important to the attainment of both Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Dakar Framework for Action specifically mentions nomads as belonging to one of the groups that need to be targeted. “Education systems have to be inclusive, actively seeking out children who are not enrolled and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners”. Providing education to nomadic communities is one of the most challenging and urgent issues currently facing education policy makers, practitioners, donors and other stakeholders if the EFA and MDGs are to be achieved.

The nomads in east Africa are mainly comprised of pastoralists who are living in harsh climatic conditions, in arid areas. However there are also nomadic fishermen along the shores of Lake Victoria as well as along the coast and to a number of hunter-gatherers in Tanzania. Pastoralists survive because of their strict discipline, in a hierarchical society, sharing great loyalty to each other and supporting each other. They live precariously, on the edge. It is in this context that the education of pastoralist children has to be seen.

The conference had five themes:

1. Ensuring basic education for all
2. Girls and Women
3. Teacher/Facilitator training and Teaching
4. Skills Training
5. Government Policy

A number of approaches to providing education were described. In the 1970s, the Kenyan government decided to provide formal education for pastoralists along the migration route through the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) of Kenya regularly used by pastoralists between Tanzania and Ethiopia. A series of boarding schools were built – and they tried to force the children of pastoralists to attend. The result was a very high drop out rate. The conditions were quite alien to the children – inside a building, quite different food, no animals around, foreign sleeping arrangements, foreign language used, irrelevant curriculum, etc. So the initiative was a failure, and the schools were used for other children. Apparently because of renewed interest among the pastoralist communities, there is a move to bring them back into use.

A distance education initiative for remote communities in Botswana was described. Learner Centres were located in these remote locations and were powered by solar energy. Lessons designed with the learners in mind were both in print and also sent by satellite for down loading. Success depends on keeping the learners interested, and that depends on the staff. This is an expensive approach.

Open schooling is a more flexible form of teaching – with learning taking place at the learner's speed. Primary education takes place face to face, while the secondary level was by distance learning using printed material. It was expensive to set up initially, but after that, it was a comparatively easy system to use.

In areas where Islam is predominant, much teaching takes place in Madrasa and Dugsi non-formal schools where the Koran is taught. They are also used for teaching the national curriculum. The even less formal “shepherd schools”, also for teaching the Koran, also give some basic literacy and numeracy skills.

The Kenyan government has introduced mobile schools in some areas which move with the nomadic pastoralists.

The issue of girls' education was an important theme in the forum. The proportion of pastoralist girls going school is about half that of the already low attendance of boys. Like many other parents, pastoralist parents strongly prefer to send their daughters to girls only schools, including having women teachers. The lack of women teachers is a problem here. The speaker gave an example of a particularly successful girls boarding

school where the head teacher herself visited the communities and invited the parents of pupils to visit the school at any time while passing – not just during official visiting hours.

Teacher education was an important issue. The speaker described how the Kenyan Permanent Secretary for Education appealed to the Kenyan pastoralists and nomadic communities to nominate candidates for teacher training. He said that they were prepared to accept those at lower than normal grades who would then be given special training. The Education Ministry needed the help of pastoralists so that they could then help other pastoralists.

The Nigerian Commission for Nomadic Education started by training education facilitators. They gave them three months of training in pedagogic methodology as well as teaching them part of the curriculum. They were then sent out for three months teaching. After coming back for another three months training, they were again sent out to teach. This pattern continued till they were fully trained. These facilitators ended up by being the lecturers in the teacher training colleges.

The skills which were considered to be important included the following:

- Animal Husbandry
- Health
- Nutrition
- Crafts
- Embedded Literacy Programmes

How did this develop as Government Policy?

- In the case of Nigeria, this was developed by the National Commission for Nomadic Education;
- In Kenya, the government is looking towards providing schools for nomads in the part of the country designated as Arid and Semi-Arid Lands.
- Tanzania has demarcated areas of the country specifically for nomads – and here they are looking to provide relevant education.
- South Africa is also recognising that nomadic education is an issue which has to be addressed.

## **Educating Nomadic and Pastoralist Children**

Moving on from the Garissa conference

Florence Malinga, Commonwealth Secretariat

The speaker started by going through the recommendations which came out of the conference the previous year in Garissa in Kenya. They state:

1. “The establishment of working groups/commissions or other organisational structures that have legal status that are relevant to the national context, which will comprehensively address issues and implement activities that are pertinent to marginalised groups including nomadic communities;
2. The expansion of networking among countries at further regional and international forums, and to examine possibilities of working together through the establishment of:



- a) a regional association of educators working with nomadic groups
  - b) an electronic network, and
  - c) a website that disseminates information on behalf of such a network.
3. Advocating at further regional and international forums for nomadic education in terms of increased recognition, funding and political will;
4. Lobbying UNESCO for the inclusion of nomadic education within their analysis of marginalised groups, particularly within the EFA Global Monitoring Report;
5. Producing an annual publication that documents for dissemination:
  - a) case studies of innovative initiatives and lessons learnt, and
  - b) best practices in nomadic education provision;
6. The exploration of strategies that will arrest challenges of current and emerging health issues such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, polio and maternal and infant mortality;
7. The exploration of new information technologies (mobile phones, wind-up radios, solar powered computer kiosks) to provide timely information on current issues;
8. The development of an integrated approach on current issues such as health, nutrition, water and sanitation, livestock, agriculture and other immediate concerns; and
9. The formulations of holistic policies and strategies, such as affirmative action and quota systems, which specifically target increased access to education for nomadic groups in countries that do not yet have them.”

Nigeria is the only country to have a National Commission specifically for Nomadic Education – and it has agreed to be the centre for nomadic education in the African region. Kenya and Ethiopia have been in touch with Nigeria. The Commonwealth Secretariat is waiting for a response to its request for reports on specific educational programmes for pastoralists and other nomads. India has a radio programme which has been successful in reaching people in disadvantaged areas of the country.

More generally, the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) funding requires a comprehensive and holistic sector plan which covers the education of groups such as nomads and pastoralists. In the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Social Transformation Programmes Division, which covers gender, health and education is important in bringing all these important social issues together to focus onto the development of education policy. A number of countries, Uganda being a good example, have affirmative action policies regarding gender, for example, which have had an important and positive effect on education.

In Africa as a whole, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa’s working group on Non-Formal Education (WGNFE) has focused on disadvantaged groups because non-formal education is able to

- “Ensure that countries address education and training in a more holistic manner as they progress towards the goal of basic education for all;
- Non-formal education is better adapted to disadvantaged groups and offers the advantage of being grounded in the grassroots and the workplace;
- It contributes to the revitalization of education in Africa by forging more effective links between education and the reality of everyday life;

- WGNFE’s global objective is to provide a forum for dialogue with, and empowerment of NFE providers, whilst also helping them to engage governments in the areas of policy, resource provision and general support for alternatives in basic education;
- Specific objectives include:
  - Strengthening the capacity of providers to identify and publicize the benefits of non-formal approaches, and thus invigorate the education system as a whole; and
  - Reinforcing partnerships between ministries of education, NGOs and other providers of non-formal education and training.
- Sponsoring research on NFE and its impact on educational performance; and
- Improving co-ordination between funding agencies and encouraging joint investments in innovative programmes and projects.

What therefore is the way forward? The speaker suggested the following:

- The Commonwealth Secretariat should take a more active part in the steering committee of the Working Group on Non-Formal Education with the object of developing policies and thus action to support the education of nomads and pastoralists;
- Increase advocacy for the education of nomadic children and others;
- Disseminate good practice;
- Combine the studies and the actions of the international organisations such as UNESCO (and the IIEP), the Commonwealth Secretariat and other similar bodies; and
- The Commonwealth Secretariat, while not a funding body, was prepared to give specific country support when requested.

The presentation ended with the announcement that Commonwealth Secretariat intended to have a workshop in Asia similar to that in Kenya in 2008.

## **Education Provision for Nomadic Communities: and introduction to some Asian contexts.**

Fatimah Kelleher, Commonwealth Secretariat

The speaker explained that her presentation represented a preliminary look at the very diverse situation in Asia. The title, with the words “some ... contexts” expressed this in view of the complexity of the issues. She would also briefly cover some non-Commonwealth countries – to give both the necessary breadth but also because of both the fluidity of borders and the inevitable way in which nomads ignored borders even when they were demarcated.

The nomadic population was the highest in Asia – and was mostly concentrated in Commonwealth South Asia. The nomads were varied – both the “traditional” communities (pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, hunters and riverine) as well as nomadic trade communities such as blacksmiths and entertainers (acrobats and the like). These overlap with economic migrants. They originate from a nomadic tradition which has gradually changed. There are also some very remote communities in the deserts as well as in the Himalayas.

They face a similar series of issues as in Africa when it comes to the provision of services, including education. They are:

- Geographic obstacles or remoteness;
- Encroaching sedenterisation;
- Social marginalisation and stigma;
- Cultural and ethnic differences that are incompatible with formal education systems; and
- Gender as a main issue in education provision, with access being particularly difficult for girls.

There are also some country specific contexts – border refugees who come from a nomadic background in Pakistan and a complex system of national ethno-politics which face nomads in India.

The speaker briefly highlighted three non-Commonwealth examples:

Mongolia, where a nomadic society has managed to successfully provide education along with other social services to almost all of its members. This probably derives from the homogeneity of Mongolian society.

In Iran, the Qashqa’I are a minority community which is struggling to maintain cultural and ethnic roots within the state system.

The Harasiis, a pastoral community in Oman, have boarding education for a chosen few. This has been developed as the result of detailed dialogue with community leaders – but it is not the answer to Education for All.

The speaker then went on to discuss the three main Commonwealth countries with nomads – starting with India. There are no official figures for the number of nomads in India. The lowest estimate is about 60 million – 6-7% of the national population of over one billion. Some are in remote areas, others on the very edge of towns and operate as an adjunct to the settled society (such as nomadic traders). There is a stigma which attaches to nomads. The ethno-political context is related to the issue of the scheduled and the non-scheduled tribes. In addition, there is the historical context. In the late 19<sup>th</sup>. century, the colonial authorities stipulated that certain nomadic communities had to notify the authorities when they visited a town. This system continued until the 1950s – when they were “de-notified”. However the stigma of being a denotified tribe has remained. The effect of this means that they have difficulty in accessing education or other services. They have not been able to effectively influence the government or its policies. There is some pressure that they should be properly recognised – but part of the problem is the multiplicity of different groups. If the Commonwealth Secretariat is to become seriously involved in India on this issue, it will need to first work with both the Indian NGOs and the Government of India to do the necessary research on this sensitive issue.

The speaker than briefly highlighted in greater detail some of the issues. Pastoralist groups such as the Rabaris of Gujarat and the Bakkarwal of Jammu and Kashmir are facing land issues as well as the demands of the modern economy. As a result, they will have to diversify into new activities which will require literacy and numeracy.

For those who settle, there is the loss of their traditional nomadic culture. Trade nomads such as the Gaduliya Lohars of Rajasthan have traditionally had a symbiotic relationship with settled communities as blacksmiths, traditional healers and entertainers. However the modern economy is undermining their economic viability with industrial goods (as against those produced by blacksmiths), TV and films (as against traditional entertainers) and modern medicine (as against traditional healers). When they try to settle in order to access social services such as education, they do so as a stigmatised community.

In Pakistan, most of the nomads are Pushtun, refugees from Aghanistan who are also sometimes known as Powanda and Kuchi nomads. They have been put into refugee camps where they have effectively been forced to settle, with the loss of their nomadic culture. However, as in India, they continue to carry a stigma. As far as those who are still mobile are concerned, the possibility of secondary education is zero as the government of Pakistan is struggling to provide Education for All to the settled population.

The speaker then took the case of the Bede nomads in Bangladesh. These nomads are riverine – estimated in number between 0.5 to 1.2 million. They are commonly called “water gypsies”. They are a highly mobile community with a distinct cultural identity from other ethnic groups in the country. Their livelihood is as traditional healers – but this is beginning to be challenged with the advent and expansion of modern health care provision. They travel for up to ten months of the year across both Bangladesh and India. In the short two or three months they are settled, schools are reluctant to register them. This is partly because of the stigma of being nomads along with the short period for which the children are in one place (about 15% of the year). One of the other reasons for the lack of provision for them is that they are not recognised as a separate group, not even in the census returns – and this means they have not benefited from targeted government programmes which have been launched for other marginalised and minority groups.

The basic consequence of this is that in Bangladesh, where this is real overall progress to Education for All, this group is being left out.

The speaker then looked at the way forward. In India, the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes was established in 2006 and is due to report this year. It will certainly discuss the question of education among many other issues. A project of mobile schools among the completely nomadic Van Gujjars in Uttaranchal in the Himalayas is being run by an NGO. 300 teachers, along with their spouses and children (if any) are being employed. They move with the nomads. The project is heavily subsidised because of the considerable cost of the teachers and the necessary equipment – but it is reasonably successful.

In Bangladesh, following the pattern developed in Nigeria for groups based in the Niger delta, a floating school project has been developed under the participatory action research programme. This is for the first stages of education as more advanced schooling takes place in the national education system.

Pakistan is providing education for some nomads in refugee camps and on the outskirts of urban settlements. The government's Education Sector Plan acknowledges the need to target marginalised groups including nomads.

The way forward for the Commonwealth Secretariat includes the following:

- Research into one or more of the Commonwealth countries for fuller contextual understanding and to identify key issues and successful practices where necessary;
- Identifying and linking with regional partners. There are discussions with UNESCO about research in central Asia;
- A forum is being planned for Commonwealth countries in Asia by the Secretariat; and
- The establishment of South-South dialogue between Africa and South Asia, promoting linkages and sharing experiences. One such link which has already been established is between the Nigerian Nation Commission for Nomadic Education and the Indian National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes,

## Discussion and Questions

The discussion covered a range of topics. The diverse nature of the target group was acknowledged – from nomads who are always on the move to the people who were semi-nomadic but had bases, and the many permutations in between. Furthermore, the situation is always changing. It was stated that in East Africa, droughts which had a frequency of about 25 years now had them about every five years. In addition, land which had been used on a communal basis by pastoralists was, unless it was very arid, more and more being taken for arable agriculture. This has put pastoralists into a crisis situation. At the same time, they are of course not the only nomads. There are those on rivers, lake sides and the sea coast, in addition to the trade nomads. The problems facing nomads and pastoralists were often very similar to those facing other marginalised groups – especially as it affected women. The lack of women teachers, the distance from home to school (affecting both genders), the perceived low priority of education for women, etc. directly resulted in smaller numbers of girl learners. However the nomadic communities, pastoralists, etc. simply fell off the radar of planners who, because of lack of statistics often compounded by inherent prejudice, were not really aware of them as a sector of society.

A major issue was the kind of education provided. Pastoralist parents wanted their children to follow the pastoralist way of life and not to lose their traditional customs. They saw the present education system, with its centrally produced curriculum, as a threat to their way of life. At the same time, pastoralists saw the importance of education – they were not able to represent themselves to the planners and decision makers because they were very often illiterate and ill educated. So relevant curriculum was a major issue, though other important issues included the time of schooling – both through the year and through the day. One of the many problems which came to the surface was how different the various communities of pastoralists and nomads were. Each one needed a different approach, curriculum and timing of schooling.

As one speaker said: “To make a change is a risk. If you have resources, you can take risks. If you do not have resources, then you cannot take a risk. If you have an alternative income, then taking a risk is possible. So pastoralists do not want to take the risk of sending children to rural schools. They want an education which will develop pastoralism itself by its own people.”

A final comment from a member of the Commonwealth Secretariat was that there were other disadvantaged groups where there were significant numbers of children who were mostly not nomads. These groups also missed out on education.

## What Next?

There was no doubt that most pastoralists and nomadic communities wanted education for their children – if it was the right kind of education. At the same time, it was important that the freedom to reject the option of being educated must be recognised. To some extent, the drive to get all children to school could be seen as a form of political or administrative tidying up. A conversation was reported with a government official in an African country who said it was policy to get nomads out of the desert in order to modernise them – and education was the way to do this. In effect, schools were seen as a way to break the nomadic culture of these desert people. It was noted that in the UK, travellers’ children who get to schools are not taught to be better travellers, but are slotted into the British (settled) education. It is an issue for the whole of the Commonwealth.

At the same time, there is some movement. One of the speakers said: “More and more officials see that unless they have pastoralists on their side, they will have difficulties, for example with animal issues, health, agriculture, nutrition. People have changed. Curriculum developers talk about relevance and that one must start with what people know already.”

In a contribution made as a result of the seminar, Peter Williams had the following suggestions:

“Unfortunately I don’t know what already exists in the area of pastoralism and nomadism, especially in the area of education. For example

- is there already some international network either for the whole subject or specifically in the education area? Does PENHA have its counterparts in other sub-regions and regions of the world?
- Is there a documentary centre on education for nomads and pastoralism? Is there an annotated bibliography on the subject?
- Is there any study which differentiates for us the different populations that are being addressed?

To the extent that these do exist then the task is to engage in appropriate networking and to devise some co-ordinated strategy to address the different issues. If they don’t exist then some institution-building and commissioning of studies seems to be called for.

There did not seem to be many hard and specific actions to report from the Commonwealth agencies post-Garissa. Obviously resources are a problem but I

would have thought it was well within Commonwealth capacity to arrange for East African policy makers in this area to spend a fortnight studying Nigerian policies and institutions ....

It may well be possible to tap into the agendas of other groups in the UN and elsewhere concerned with desertification and climate change, education for sustainable development and so forth.

One strategy would be to work on and through existing agencies concerned with Education for All and Non-Formal Education and get them to give greater attention to this set of issues. For example

- Ask if the Association for the Development of Education in Africa's working group on Non-Formal Education can have a special meeting on nomadic populations
- Suggest to the Global Monitoring Report Director that a future Report takes 'education for mobile populations' as its theme
- Offer to lay on a strand/section on nomadic and pastoral education at the next UK Forum on International Education and Training Oxford Conference in 2009
- Explore having special issues of professional journals on Education (International Journal of Educational Development, Compare, Comparative Education Review) on this theme.

I do think the subject matter needs mapping out and that flexible education strategies need to be developed accordingly.

- How far are the agendas of 'education in remote rural areas', 'education for nomads', and 'education for pastoralists' the same or different? What are the special characteristics of each?
- Within these categories what further differentiation is necessary? If we take nomadic populations, for example, are the issues for pastoralists, hunters and gatherers, fishermen, itinerant traders the same or different?
- Do we have to distinguish between degrees of sedenterisation. Do some pastoralist groups for example range out from a base on a seasonal, monthly, weekly, daily basis to tend their herds and flocks: while others are 'of no fixed abode'?
- Are we interested here in regular patterns of mobility only, on an annual, seasonal or other basis where people return to areas they regularly visit /reside in? Or are there populations that are constantly on the move but with no pattern to it?
- Are we talking of group nomadism or individual nomadism – is the whole family/community on the move or is it just the men and boys who go out while the women and girls are at a settled home looking after dependants and growing crops? Is the challenge to modify the schooling schedule or is it to devise new kinds of education provision for learners who are constantly moving. And are mobile pastoralists (a) capable of dropping in on established schools or do they (b) need mobile provision making for them – and in that case for mobile groups of what size?

There are of course many other difficult issues and I won't attempt to rehearse them all here. Is it wise for the state to ensure that kids are educated more widely

than their own culture so that they have insurance against future disappearance of traditional livelihoods? Or should adults from the community be able to dictate what they want their children to be taught?”

In summing up the session and the seminar as a whole, Ann Keeling the Director of the Social Transformation Programmes Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat emphasized that it was important that children should be educated. There were still 70 million children within the Commonwealth who were not in education, either primary or secondary, and this meeting was part of the final push. However she said that this must not be in violation of their identity – i.e. not at the expense of their other rights.