

1990

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NOMADIC EDUCATION IN SOMALIA:
POLICY AND STRATEGY ASSESSMENT

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A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS/AMHERST

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION

SEPT. 1990.

NOMADIC EDUCATION IN SOMALIA: POLICY AND STRATEGY ASSESSMENT

A Thesis Presented

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Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
II. What is Nomadism.....	3
III. Somali Pastoralism.....	4
A. Geographical and Historical Context.....	5
B. Livestock Production and Trade System.....	7
C. Traditional Education.....	9
IV. The Role of Pastoralism in Somalia's Development.....	12
V. Assessment of Development and Educational Policies, Strategies, and Services towards Pastoralists.	
A. Government Policy towards Pastoral Development....	14
B. Present conditions of the pastoral Sector.....	19
C. Development and Education.....	21
The Role of Education in Development.....	22
D. Educational Policy, Strategies, and Services.....	22

VI. Recommendations

A. Reassessing Development and Educational Policies....31

B. Educational Approaches.....34

 The Schooling of Nomadic Children.....34

 Adult Education37

VII. Conclusion.....38

VIII. Bibliography.....40

NOMADIC EDUCATION IN SOMALIA: POLICY AND STRATEGY ASSESSMENT

Nomads are valuable national resources. They do not resist change, innovations and development. Rather they tend to resist measures aimed at destructing their cherished culture and resources which they have obtained through their familiarity with their environment and their knowledge in the use of available resources. Their skills, knowledge and organization, if encouraged and facilitated rather than belittled and obstructed, could benefit their communities and wider society as well as themselves. Ezeomah (1990) p.18

I. Introduction

Nomadic pastoralism is the predominant life style of the majority of the people in Somalia. The country's development potential depends upon the development of the pastoral sector which provides subsistence to about seventy percent of the population.

However, the sector does not receive its proportional share of development investment. Pastoral society is under-served and disadvantaged because the development of the sector has been largely neglected, and indeed exploited. The current educational programs are not tuned to the real needs of rural and pastoral people. I believe the root of the problem is grounded in the attitudes and presumptions of the urban-based planners towards the rural and pastoral society. Most Somali planners have a pastoral background, or are well acquainted with the pastoral way of life, yet their professional training imparts a pride in which superior knowledge and superior status are assumed. They look at the rural and pastoral people as ignorant, backward, and primitive. They tend to ignore and despise local knowledge and

local reality, and hence they blindly design programs which do not meet the approval of the target group. The result is failure of the programs and wastage of valuable resources. Robert Chambers (1983:6) has aptly pointed out this issue: "not only do urban-based professionals and officials often not know the rural reality; worse, they do not know they do not know."

In this paper I will try to argue the need for reassessment of the national education policy and strategies to reflect the importance of the pastoral sector in the national development context. The basic premises of my argument are centered around the following assumptions:

- a) The development potential of Somalia is largely dependent on the development of the pastoral sector;
- b) pastoralism is time-tested and the only viable response to the harsh ecology of many parts of Somalia;
- c) pastoralists are rational, resourceful, skilled and highly adaptable to the unpredictable conditions, and do not resist change and innovations that they see as beneficial;
- d) education and development initiatives should build on the pastoral peoples' knowledge, skills and creativity.

The paper consists of five sections: i) definition of nomadism and pastoralism in general; ii) description of Somali pastoralism in its geographical, historical, and cultural context of livestock production and the trade system as well as its

traditional education; iii) the role of pastoralism in Somalia's development; vi) assessment of educational and development policies, strategies and services towards pastoralists; v) recommendations and conclusion.

II. What is Nomadism?

Nomadism is a wide spread phenomenon. Nomadic societies inhabit areas as diverse as Asia, Europe, North America, Middle East, and Africa as well as Australia. One common feature of the areas inhabited by nomads around the world is aridity or semi-aridity.

Among scholars there is no consensus on the term of "nomadism". Chimah Ezeomah, (1990:2) tracing the term "nomadism" back to its origin from the "Greek word 'nomos'" has defined it as: "pastoral activity carried on by a group of people over traditional route or area for over a period of time, who share the territory occasionally with sedentary populations". However, he admits that the word "nomadism" in modern times is used to describe "...any type of existence characterized by lack of fixed domicile". He suggested that nomadic groups found in different parts of the world can be classified into three categories based on their mode of life a) the hunter/food gatherers, b) the itinerant workers, c) and the pastoralists. Ezeomah (1990:2)

Others have a somewhat different view on the term "nomadism". A. M. Khasanov, one of the leading authorities on nomads observed that some scholars apply it to "all those leading

a mobile way of life independent of its economic specificity". (1984:15) He describes nomads "as extensive and mobile pastoralists who either have nothing to do with agriculture or who are occupied with agriculture to a limited degree in the capacity of a secondary and supplementary activity". (Khasanov, 1984:15) He is also in the opinion that the first definition is outdated, and he contends that the "mobile pastoralists" have little to share with the "hunter/food gatherers", so to use a single label for both groups is inaccurate and misleading. Khasanov's reason is based on their economic modes, because the hunter/gatherers practice "food gathering", while pastoralists are engaged in "food producing" mode. Moreover, he says to describe all mobile pastoralists as nomads itself is broad and inaccurate, because the extent and forms of food producing that groups practice is widely as diverse as their geographical variations.

III. Somali Pastoralism

Somalis practice a "food producing" mode which is characterized by extensive pastoralism and the periodic changing of the pastures during the course of the entire, or part of the year; agriculture is practiced in a secondary and supplemental capacity. Like nearly all other pastoralists, Somalis never wander aimlessly, but rather have fixed home areas from which they move as the seasons and the vegetational growth required. The aridity of the Somali climate, and the scattered distribution

of feed and water, have given rise to flexible ecological adaptations which entails wide-ranging transhumance by small camping groups between permanent dry season water holes and the rainy season grasslands which have temporary surface water.

The socio-economic system of the Somalis is based on it's pastoral economy. To understand the importance of pastoralism for Somalia's development, let us first look at pastoralism in the context of the country's geographical and historical prospective.

A. Geographical and Historical context

Somalis form one of the largest single ethnic groups in Africa. They are widely dispersed but live in a "continuous occupation of a great expanse of territory covering almost 40,000 square kilometers". (Lewis, 1955:167) This territory extends from the north-eastern tip of the Horn of Africa below the Arabian Peninsula to the Awash Valley in the north-west (now under Ethiopian Administration), southward from DJibouti and along the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean coast down to the Tana River in northern Kenya. The region has ethnic as well as geographical homogeneity that Somalis naturally consider as their national territory, which is the basis for their ceaseless search of united sovereign state. Unfortunately, due to the colonial legacy, today Somali territories and its people fall under four different independent States- namely, Somali Democratic Republic (or Somalia), Ethiopia (which occupies Ogaden region), Kenya (which occupies an area known as NFD), and independent DJibouti (

where Somalis are more than half of its population). Despite such externally imposed divisions, all the Somalis share a common ethnic background and culture- one language (Somali), one religion (Islam)- as well as one socio-economic lifestyle and values derived from pastoralism.

Coming back to Somalia proper, the country lies on the eastern corner of the Horn of Africa resembling the shape of figure seven which stretches along the southern shore of the Red Sea and bends southward to form the northwestern shore of the Indian Ocean. Its coastline is approximately 3,330 kilometers, the longest in Africa. The land comprises about 638,000 square kilometers, mostly semi-arid. The northern part of the country is hilly, ranging from 900 to 2,100 meters, and mainly provide livestock pasture, while the central and southern areas are flat, and support most of the livestock as well as cultivation practiced between the Shabelle and Juba Rivers in the southern part. Both rivers originate from Ethiopian Highlands.

The population is estimated in 1987 at 6.2 million. Only thirty percent of the population is urban (of which 14% reside in Mogadishu, the capital city), while seventy percent of the total Somali people are pastoralists and sedentary farmers-these two categories are generally referred to as rural population of which roughly forty two percent are pastoralists, and the remaining twenty eight percent are sedentary farmers. (UNDP,1988:2-6)

Thus, not only is pastoralism the predominant lifestyle but also the chief economic activity of the country. The majority of

the people is somehow engaged in the pastoral production, even among urban dwellers most have immediate and/or extended family members as pastoralists and jointly invest in livestock herd. Another factor that contributes to the dominance of pastoralism is that about twenty percent of the sedentary farmers in the south practice agro-pastoralism, a combination of livestock production and farming.

Pastoralism is appropriate to the country's dry climate. Vast semi-arid rangelands covering some 50 million hectares are the natural base for a number of productive activities carried by pastoralists compared to about 1.5 million hectares utilized for cultivation. These rangelands are used for livestock production. Rough estimates place the country's livestock (camels, cattle, sheep, and goats) at 36 million, about six heads of livestock per capita. The country is believed to have the world's largest camel herd.

B. Livestock Production and Trade System

Local bioclimatic features underlie low annual fodder yields from the rangelands, specially in the north and central regions which make up about two thirds of the country. Very large year-to-year fluctuations in output are common events and the same is true for the seasonal output from a specific region to another within same year. Nevertheless, herdsman can cope with these difficulties and have consistently shown remarkable skills in using the rangelands in ways which keep their livestock in

good conditions. The vitality of the pastoral production system is so resilient that it can easily recuperate from the harsh natural calamities as well as the man-made disasters that frequently occur in the Horn of Africa.

In general, Somali pastoral production has three main dimensions: First, the distribution of feed and water have given rise to flexible ecological adaptations which entails wide-ranging transhumance by small camping groups between permanent dry season water holes and the rainy season grasslands which have temporary surface water. They move as the seasons and the vegetational growth required. Reaping the scarce vegetation this way Somalis put marginal resources into the production of energy (meat, milk, and draft animals) for human consumption.

Second, to maximize productivity and to disperse risk, herdsman diversify their livestock production ingenuity, just as they engage in non-livestock production activities when it is viable to do so. Ecological variation implies that some species of livestock are well suited to specific zones or niches of the total rangeland areas. For instance, camels and goats are primarily browsers, while sheep and cattle graze. The four species are mixed to sustain the exploitation of a particular micro-ecological variation, and to provide faster or slower herd growth rates, deviating risks of loss to drought or disease, optimal milk supplies across the seasons, lower labor requirements in herding, or highest cash sales returns.

Third, Somalis guarantee their own physical and social security through formal, contracts (heer) of alliances among men who calculate their loyalties to one another in terms of kinship. The contracts make concrete the political obligations of lineage-mates and their followers who also collaborate socially and economically to share certain labor tasks, to defend or extend grazing areas, to redistribute basic productive or subsistence resources to individuals in need. The major proposition of these social ties for livestock production is that Somalis have networks already in place that provide resources and security, mediate disputes, and assure overall conservation for the general social well being.

Historically, from very early centuries, commercial activities along the coast proved compatible with the Somali pastoral life in the interior. In the Pharaonic times the region was known to the Egyptians as the land of "punt", sources of frankincense and livestock. Somalia's mercantile ports were figured in the accounts of Greeks, Arabs, Chinese, and Portuguese travellers over the first half of sixteenth century of the Christian era. From the middle of the nineteenth century commercialization of livestock expanded to supply meat and burden animals to the British garrison at Eden (Yemen). (Swift, 1979: 448-449) Currently millions of heads of live animals are exported to the Arabian Gulf annually to earn most of the country's foreign exchange.

C. Traditional Education

Pastoral Somalis, like other societies that have similar socio-economic conditions, have a traditional education, which is geared to the perpetuation and preservation of their production system, pastoralism. Education is viewed as a process through which knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for the survival and living within the community is passed on to their children formally and informally- for example, traditional medicine, and husbandry, range management and botany. An example of formal education is the traditional Islamic education which, unlike the secular education, extensively reaches most of the population. Different institutions provide education to a wide range of both the nomadic and urban population:

a) Koranic Schools

The koranic schools are very popular in Somalia, and follow the standard pattern which exists in almost all Islamic societies with children going to school at the age of six. The schools teach the Arabic alphabet, the Koran, and in some places, numeracy. The system is very open and flexible; there is no discrimination as age, sex, or social class. In addition, Koranic schools have no tight schedule for completion, and are very appropriate to the mobile lifestyle of the pastoralists. Teachers in the nomadic areas are traditionally supported by the community; some operate as volunteers. However, there is a customary practice that on the day of graduation (when the child has mastered all the chapters of the Koran), for example, a

nomadic family may present the teacher with a camel, a cow, or a goat.

b) 'Her' schools

In nomadic camps as well as in towns and urban areas youngsters who are eager to pursue farther study of the Islamic religion may join an order (her) led by a teacher or a sheik, who teaches a wide range of religious subjects from basic religious knowledge to Islamic jurisprudence. In major towns, informal study circles in the mosque are organized in the evenings.

c) Higher Islamic Institutes

As early as the sixteenth century, Islamic Institutions of higher learning were established in the urban centers such as Harar, Merca, Mogadishu, and in some places in the interior. Today there are regular Islamic schools and institutions all over the country. The most famous is the Sufi Institute in Mogadishu which started in 1955.

The local institutions prepare interested and able students for further studies in the famous Islamic universities in Egypt and Middle East. The majority of the Somalia's intelligentsia who led independence struggle against the European colonialism and a good number of the present leadership, as well were the product of such institutions. Hoben observed that:

...the existence of the religious educational system has had an impact on the educational development in Somalia and may offer lessons for the future, as well. It trained a religious conservative but sophisticated intelligentsia, since it provided better educational opportunities than those offered promising students by the rudimentary European system." (1983:138)

Both British colonial and post-independence governments recognized the importance of building on Koranic training, and used Arabic as the language of instruction in the elementary grades before introduction of the Somali language in 1972. Today, children are required to have at least two years of Koranic schooling before they are eligible to enter public schools. Though the government recognized the importance of the Koranic school as a 'pre-school', administratively, it remains as a 'parallel system'.

The Koranic education system offers a time-tested model of schooling that can overcome or minimize the obstacles of providing education to the mobile pastoralists of Somalia. All these aspects of the pastoral production system and traditional education have implications for the provision of development and educational programs to the pastoralists.

IV. The Role of Pastoralism in Somalia's Development

Somali pastoralists unlike others in Africa have a dominant role in all economic, cultural, social and political aspects of the nation, where as in other countries nomadic pastoralists are a minority, and are looked at as a deviant and marginal case to be assimilated or integrated into the mainstream.

According to the Ministry National Planning's 1987 estimate, about 46 percent of the population of Somalia are engaged in nomadic pastoralism (as compared to other African

countries that nomadic populations such as Sudan, 22%; Kenya, 12%; Botswana, 2%; and Tanzania, 1%).

Economically the country is heavily dependent on pastoral production both for export and local consumption. The importance of pastoralism in Somalia can be summarized as below:

- * livestock and its products holds first place in the principal exports of the country;
- * pastoralism accounts for about forty percent of the GDP;
- * about eighty percent of the foreign exchange earnings is generated by the sector;
- * the sector supports more than seventy percent of the total population, and provides fresh milk and other dairy products daily to the dependent urban population;
- * traditionally it provided more than eighty percent of employment opportunities.

The amount of livestock exported from 1950 to 1985 is displayed in table 1.1 below:

Annual export of Livestock ('000 of heads)

	Annual Averages over decades			Annual exports				
	1950 plus 1954-59	1960 1969	1970 1979	1980 1985	1982	1983	1984	1985
Camels	2.4	18.4	26.4	11.6	15.4	7.5	4.2	6.6
Cattle	9.7	38.1	59.8	77.0	157.3	53.8	7.7	42.0
Sheep	302.6	598.6	622.0	651.8	730.2	568.2	389.2	708.6
Goats	131.2	337.1	611.3	669.8	719.3	557.3	362.1	748.8

Source: MNP, Livestock, Forestry, and Range section: Working Papers (FYDP 1987-1991:121)

It is obvious that the country will depend on pastoral production as long as there is no alternative resource to replace the role of the livestock in Somalia's economy. All the modern state machinery is financed by the surplus generated by the pastoral production, as well as government revenues from export taxes and other charges, taxes on imported consumer goods. Hence, it is pertinent to say that Somalia's development potential lies in the development of the livestock sector, and to develop the sector implies developing the human potential engaged in the sector.

But, despite the vital role pastoralism plays in the socio-economic well being of the country, the sector receive less than two percent of its proportionate share of the national development expenditure. Little has been done in the area of the pastoral development apart from few veterinarian programs and drilling of water wells programs, partially funded by foreign donors.

V. Assessment of Development and Educational Policies, Strategies, and Services towards Pastoralists

A. Government Policy towards Pastoral Development

Having examined the importance and the status of the pastoral sector, let us look at the government policy towards pastoral development. Since 1969, the government has been pursuing a general policy emphasizing food self-sufficiency and

agricultural production, an emphasis which relied on the widely-held belief that pastoralists would become cultivators. (Samatar, 1988:150) The government has been encouraging transformation from nomadic pastoralism to settled agriculture and fishing communities.

A more recent development policy towards the pastoralists is embedded in the National Rural Development Strategy for the decade 1981-1990 which aims at "the improvement of the living standards of the rural people (including pastoralists) and the enhancement of their role in the social and economic development of the country". Some of the major objectives include:

- * Increasing production, especially cereals, and improving nutrition standards of the rural population whose dietary habits are based on protein rich foods.
- * Increasing the level and access to social services such as health, education, and water supply.
- * Increasing the participating role of the rural communities and organizations in the development efforts.
- * Reducing rural poverty by promoting income generating activities for the labor force. (Adam, Hussein, 1986:204)

Several assumptions inherent in the strategy are worth discussing here: a) most conventional economic experts and observers view Somalia as a difficult, if not hopeless case. The conventional economic and development indicators place the GDP per capita of the country near the bottom rung of the least "developed" countries. (Allen Hoben, 1983:28) Consequently,

program interventions of the National Rural Development Strategy are grounded on such assumptions and indicators. The strategy looks Somalia's 'underdevelopment' problems from economic aspects only-stagnation and poor performance of the pastoral and agricultural sectors are theorized to be the major obstacles. This line of thought assumes that there are "crisis" of overpopulation, underproduction, poverty, and environmental degradation facing the rural production systems, both livestock and agriculture.

However, in reality, Somalia's economic and social structures are atypical of the average LDC and therefore, the conventional development indicators that measure only the formal economic activities are misleading. There are major economic sectors (informal economy) that operate outside the official or formal financial system that indicators usually measure: i) the production of the rural sector (including the pastoral sector) is mainly unmonetized. The 1988 UNDP's Annual Report of Somalia cited the prevalence of the livestock sector which, while engaging the largest segment of the population, mostly nomads, and estimated to account more than 40 percent of the GDP, consumes most of its output; ii) because of the strong family ties, Somalis share resource not only among family (extended family) members residing within the borders but also across the borders, so transfers and remittance tend to operate outside the formal financial system. In addition, most family units span over all economic activities.(UNDP,1988:1)

b) Poverty: The National Rural Development Strategy assumes that rural and pastoral people are relatively poor compared to urban people. However, some evidence shows a contrary view, a study on incomes and poverty did by Jamal (1981) concluded that:

...we have found that the situation in the rural sector is much healthier than hitherto believed. The country is practically self-sufficient in food, and the incidence of poverty-in terms of undernutrition is within reasonable limits. p.125

Moreover, Jamal observed that antithetic to conventional wisdom the "farm sector is quite productive...producing a surplus big enough to feed twice as large a population." (p.46), clearly he has taken the informal economy into account. Similarly, Hoben(1983:2) and others who have done a social and institutional profile of Somalia have concluded that: "the conventional view of Somalia as a poor country with bleak prospects is inaccurate", the discrepancy is due to the co-existence of a formal economy, which is in shambles, and a booming informal economy practiced and shared by the majority of the Somali people both within and outside the recognized borders of the country.

c) Settling nomads: As is the case in many other parts of the world where nomadic pastoralists exist. Somalia's attempt to induce nomadic pastoralists to a settled mode of life has been unsuccessful. For example, in response to the severe drought that struck the country (mainly in the northern dry regions) in 1974-75, the Somali Government launched massive relief efforts to resettle the drought refugees in agricultural and fishing villages in the south. In addition to alleviating disaster, a

major goal was to permanently siphon people from nomadism to settlement. Despite the initial success of saving lives with large support from sympathetic donors, it has even been impossible to retain the original numbers of settlers, let alone to start and populate new settlements. Coerced sedentarization and industrialization is unlikely to work. Aronson (1980) in his article 'Must Nomads Settle?' concluded:

Somali sailors in London, Toucouleur sweepers in Paris, Tuareg workers in Benghazi, Baluchi laborers in Oman, Gambian senior civil servants, and Sudanese cotton farmers, all having grown up in communities that kept animals for multiple social and economic goals, continue today to invest their savings in herds at home. Pastoralism lives.... Nomads need not settle to change, but will settle if (the move) to stop moving serves them well. p. 184.

d) Planner's attitude towards pastoralists: Perhaps the planners' (foreign experts as well as their national counterparts) persuasions that the traditional livestock and agricultural practices and attitudes are irrational, ineffective, or inefficient is due to their urban bias and their limited knowledge of rural and nomadic production systems.

If this is so, it implies that the national planners are utilizing social and economic indicators and interventions that are not in line with the socio-economic reality of the country. The existing pastoral and agricultural production systems are efficient and well adapted to Somalia's harsh climatic conditions. The presumed crises are not proved by research. A further complication comes from the scarcity and paucity of reliable data on pastoralism which is partially responsible for

the disparity between the programs and real needs of the target groups.

In short, we could aptly conclude this section with Hoben's (1983) remarks on pastoral resilience:

the persistence of family herding enterprises providing (at least) subsistence to most of Somalis is obviously a proof of the long-term viability of pastoralism in its various sub-types around the country. We lack, however, any specific information on household production among Somali herders. p.65

Thus the keys to Somalia's development are yet to be found.

B. Present Conditions of the Pastoral Development

There is ample evidence that in the last two decades, Somalia in general and pastoralists in particular, has been deepening its status in the rapidly spreading capitalist economies of the Arabian Peninsula. (Aronson, 1980:14; Samatar, 1988:152; Swift, 1979:453). Hence, a modern marketing operation is superimposed on the pastoralists, creating a shift from a subsistence oriented production to a market oriented production with no real development. Yet pastoralists have no means to control the price for their produce or to diversify their production systems in order to break the web of dependence on the urban traders.

I believe the development of the pastoral sector depends on what happens to the surplus it generates. As long as pastoral trade is dominated by merchant capital, with the connivance of the government, very little of the wealth generated, whether in terms of fair prices to producers or reinvestment of the

windfalls for traders will return to the sector, and the production will face serious deterioration. Both government and urban livestock traders seem to be exploiting the situation, and have neglected to reinvest in pastoral areas. The problem has class and power dimensions as Aronson noted:

The alliance of government and traders hardly works for the benefit of the nomadic producer. Increasing areas of rangeland, especially in the northwest, are being appropriated for fodder production or for grazing by trade herds. Nomadic movement is being constrained by the pressure of a growing population on the water supplies that are progressively in the hands of the traders. The primary producers have no control at all over prices, markets, or the credit system. (1981:20)

this indifference led the pastoral sector into perilous situation. Since the country's main and presently almost the only source of wealth is on the verge of decline, only a drastic rejuvenations of its institutions could save pastoral system from extinction and protect it from the menace of future disasters, and preventing from the rapid growth of essential economic and social injustice, and insuring the endurance of the livestock production system.

In my opinion, the sector should receive top priority over all other sectors. It is my contention that unless adequate and in-depth studies and research of the pastoral socio-economic system as a whole is undertaken, intervention programs can not escape failure.

The government should reassess the assumptions and attitudes upon which its policies and strategy are based, the following might be considered:

- a) pastoralists are specialists; therefore, planners should seek their expertise, and should ensure their participation throughout the program levels;
- b) accurate understanding of problems rural and pastoral people face can only be gained through careful assessment and study of their production systems and rationale;
- c) what, where, and when to intervene depend on rural people's definitions of needs, participation, and solutions.

C. Development and education

Although different societies might view development differently, there is a general prevailing notion that development is synonymous with economic growth and that industrialization precedes or is accompanied by social and individual change. Perhaps the labelling of the technologically advanced nations as "developed" and others as "underdeveloped" or "developing" has influenced the creation of such a notion. Nonetheless, some authors do not equate development and technological advancement. One defines development as the

...process by which persons and societies come to realize the full potential of human life in a context of social justice. It is essentially a people's struggle in which the poor and the oppressed are the active participants and the beneficiaries. (Heisey, ?:11).

Personally I agree with this latter view, and I would suggest that development should equip pastoralists with the means to develop their human potential in order to attain their

economic, social, and political aspirations, and to reach greater autonomy and sufficiency.

The Role of Education in Development

In modern times, education is seen as the vehicle through which the lives of individuals and society can be changed and developed. My contention here is that education should be viewed as a liberating force. Julius Nyerere, one of the prominent leaders of Africa, has eloquently described the role of education in development by stating the purpose of education as:

The liberation of man from the restraints and limitations of ignorance and dependency. Education has to increase the men's physical and mental freedom-to increase their control over themselves, their own lives and the environment in which they live. The ideas imparted by education or released in the mind through education should be liberating skills. Nothing else can be called education. (Nyerere, 1976)

However, one underlying question regarding the change of peoples lives is: to what extent should efforts be made to preserve the traditional culture? Education should be based on traditional knowledge and it should lead to ways of improving traditional culture and reconciling it with the modern technological culture.

D. Educational Policy, Strategy, and Services

Policy

Before we talk about educational policy towards nomadic pastoralists in Somalia, let us briefly look at nomadic educational policies in other countries that have a nomadic population.

Many countries that have nomadic populations have recognized the problem of providing education to nomads and have formulated policies to curb the gap of educational deprivation between nomads and urban populations. In Africa such countries include; Algeria which introduced in 1967, a policy aimed at "reducing the regional imbalance and to encourage equality of access to schools for all children". Similarly, Kenya adapted in 1978 a policy guidelines for the establishment of Arid Zone Boarding Primary Schools for the Maasai, Turkana and Somali nomads. In 1977 Nigeria introduced a policy statement aimed at providing educational 'opportunities to all citizens of the nation both inside and outside the formal school system.' In Europe special educational acts for nomads formally appeared early this century, in Norway and Sweden educational policies for 'nomad schools' for the Sami were formulated before the Second World War. In the Middle East in 1954, Israel introduced a policy aimed at providing a separate educational system to the Negev Bedouin. Similarly Australia developed an educational policy for the Aborigine in 1967. (Ezeomah, 1990:9-11) Educational activities for the Iranian nomads were started by private initiative and recognized by the government in 1955. (Varlet & Massoumian, 1975:275) Most of these cases emphasis fixed school models such as boarding schools except Iran, which adopted a mobile school model.

Somalia introduced a policy aimed at providing basic education to all Somalis above the age of six in 1975. In regard to the nomadic pastoralists the policy aims at "orienting the nomads to the understanding of their specific social and natural ecology and at enabling them to acquire a national outlook towards life and living." (Adam, 1986:211)

One of the major educational objectives in Somalia is the expansion of adult education programs. Since 1969, Somalia has given a significant priority to adult education. It carried out the urban literacy campaign of 1973-74 and the rural development campaign of 1974-75. In order to maintain some of the gains of the literacy campaigns, nonformal education became a potential means to reach adults and rural populations.

Services and Programs

Education programs geared towards rural people and pastoral nomads mainly teach literacy or technical skills. There are a variety of institutions conducting rural training programs in Somalia. The institutions, each dealing with a definite problem or catering to a specific group, have developed independently of each other with no proper policy guidelines or subsequent coordination. They include:

1. The Somali Institute for Development, Administration and Management (SIDAM);

2. Women's Education Services (WES) under the Department of Nonformal Education, MOE, and the Somali Women's Democratic Organization's Training Centers;
3. The National Adult Education Center (NAETC) of MOE, through the Nomadic Education Centers, Adult Ed. Centers In the regions;
4. The Cooperative Training Center;
5. The Ministry of Agriculture through its Agriculture Extension Program;
6. The Ministry of Livestock, Range and Forestry through its Range Agency;
7. The Ministry of Health through the Primary Health Care Program;
8. Others including NGOs. In the next section I will discuss in detail only the status of the programs that the Ministry of Education provides to the pastoral people.

However, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has a permanent Literacy Committee to coordinate post literacy education among Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and Livestock which have the responsibilities of offering education to the rural population (including nomadic pastoralists), the MOE's Department of Nonformal Education has the major responsibility of extending education to the nation's adult population. This department serves the out of school population, specially adult illiterates, women, rural groups, and nomadic pastoralists. The Department provides three major services: a) National Adult Education and Training Center

(NAETC), b) Women's Education Service (WES), c) and Adult Education Services.

The first service offers programs mainly to nomadic populations and rural adults through its Nomadic Education Centers and Regional Adult Education Centers. Most of the activities focus on drafting curriculum, producing teaching materials, preparing lectures, and conducting short and long term training courses- including Literacy and numeracy; animal husbandry; animal biology and livestock diseases; nutrition, hygiene, and basic sanitation; basic sciences; child and maternity care; and range management.

WES carries out training to a wide-range of urban, rural, and nomadic women clients through its 66 Family Life Centers scattered throughout the country. Programs offered include: basic literacy, numeracy, home management and income generating skills.

The Ministry of Agriculture carries out agricultural extension through its National Extension Services, while the Ministry of Livestock, Forestry, and Range provide educational services through its National Range Agency. (Somalia education and Human Resource sector Assessment, 1984).

Weaknesses of the Educational System

Despite the high priority the Government has assigned to education and the emphasis in/of the successive development plans on the improvement of the quality and the quantity of education in urban areas, little has been achieved and in some parts signs

of deterioration have appeared. Furthermore, the provision of education towards nomads is even in worse condition; the efforts have been minimal and ineffective. The reasons for failure are tremendous and complex, however, in the next few paragraphs we discuss some of the most obvious ones.

Current literature on education for nomads is replete with examples of unsuccessful programs. The problems that torment provision of nomadic education may arise from policies and programs that are determined by governments with little or no input from the target people, as this affects their participation and interest in the programs. Pauline Heron claims that many "cases in the literature indicate that non-educational objectives or lack of objectives and lack of overall understanding of nomadism are what characterize educational strategies" She is in the opinion that:

...the planners' purpose of education as perceived by the pastoralists is in direct opposition to their traditional ideology, which results in poor motivation and low participation in schools on the part of the pastoralists. (1983:62)

No doubt the task of formulating development programs is tremendous, even Herculean in nature. The nomads' isolation, their constant mobility, and their deep rooted traditional and cultural values pose a challenge for urban planners. Also, the lack of data and scant knowledge about the pastoralists' psycho-social, and economic practices are major obstacles.

In the case of Somalia the majority of the population is rural and nomadic pastoralists, and very few have been able to

take advantage of the expansion of the public schooling system which is concentrated in the urban areas. Sixty five percent of the primary schools in the country are located in Mogadishu, the capital city, alone. (Samatar,1988:103) For this reason the issue of equity and access to some form of basic public education is critical. While the construction of adult education and training centers in the regions will help extend outreach to a greater number of non-migratory adults, the particular education needs of pastoralists have yet to be adequate addressed. Presently only about 840 pastoralists out of 2.5 million have attended courses offered at the nomadic education centers. (Somalia education and Human Resource sector Assessment, 1984)

Ironically, in the case of Somalia it seems that little has been learned from past experiences. During the 1950s, ten years before Somalia gained independence, a UNESCO project for the education of nomads in Southern Somalia (Dinsor Area) was carried out. The objective was "to encourage community development in conjunction with incentives to further sedentarization". Although the project employed mobile teams (teacher and nurse) working from a fixed base, it failed because of an incongruity of its "methods and content" to the traditional educational approach of the Koranic school. (UNESCO,1989:1)

A more recent example is the literacy campaign of 1974-75 which, although it won a UNESCO literacy award and international admiration for excellence, has contributed little to the improvement of living conditions. Because the activities of the

Permanent Literacy Committee has been extremely limited, no post-literacy materials have been produced and distributed. According to a recent report, the literacy rate has sharply declined to less than twenty percent. (UNDP,1988:8) Reasons cited include irrelevancy of the content to daily life of the learners. Jose Ruijter (1987) who interviewed Dr. Kinunda, Unesco advisor to Somalia, has reported that Dr. Kinunda explained the reasons for the decline of the literacy in the country as follows: "...most of the materials were not relevant to the day-to-day reality of the people... for more than ten years literacy training was divorced from the other activities people are involved in." (1987:69-72)

Some of the nomadic education centers are located on border areas where recurrent droughts and wars disrupted and at times completely halted the programs. In addition, it is not clear how their programs can effectively reach the more than 2.5 million nomadic pastoralists.

Somalization of the curriculum so far has been shallow and limited to linguistic and superficial rather than being substantive and comprehensive. One major reason might be the lack of systematic and written knowledge about the rural and pastoral Somalis' environment, production systems, and about the types of educational instruction that would help them to improve their way of life and economic activities. An advisor to the nomadic education programs has asserted that:

The current curriculum prepared for those (Nomadic Education) centers fails to take account of

traditional herding practices well adapted to Somali conditions and would benefit from revision based on awareness of indigenous knowledge. (Allen Hoben, 1983:141)

Moreover, all the adult education services currently lack mid-level educational administrators and managers to monitor and supervise the different services directed to the rural and nomadic areas.

Review of performance in the FYDP (1982-1986) regarding the education for nomadic pastoralists has stated that the lack of boarding schools for the children of the nomads due to financial constraints was a major obstacle. In fact less than 2.5 percent of the total education budget for FYDP 1987-1991 is allocated to the whole nonformal education sector services, including nomadic education. Other reasons cited include; difficulty in recruiting teachers who would be willing to move with nomadic groups (the National Adult Education Center does not have a teacher training center, therefore, they hire primary school teachers from urban areas); and lack of support by regional authorities to the nomadic education efforts; not to mention low pay for teachers, unavailability of books and supplies, and poor facilities.

The funding and the technical assistance from diverse foreign donors to most of the educational programs described above has had some negative results. According to a study done by Hoben and others foreign donors:

...seem to have coordinated their effort in part by agreeing to divide the different aspects of educational system among themselves, a modus operandi which leads to some distortion of long-range planning and also to

problems concerning unification and Somalization of the system. (1983:136)

In addition, there are administrative and communication problems between the planners in the capital and the remote project sites which hamper implementation of the program activities.

Thus it is imperative that the urban planners make detailed studies of various aspects of pastoral life, and examine their own attitudes towards development and education of pastoralists before designing any ambitious programs. A radical change in the strategy will be needed to provide educational access to the pastoral population of Somalia. Allen Hoben in his study, "Somalia A Social and Institutional Profile", aptly concluded:

The need for pre-feasibility and evaluative studies in education has been overlooked. Educational planning and development needs to be based on careful assessment of country conditions, indigenous knowledge and educational experience, the local economy, participants' perceived needs, and evaluation of the effectiveness of on-going education efforts. Experts working in the capital have at best only a partial understanding of the constraints on economic and educational development faced by the Somali nomads and farmers, and curricula prepared without taking cognizance of indigenous knowledge are likely to be poorly adapted to learners' needs. (1983:?)

VI. Recommendations

A. Reassessing Development and Educational Policies

In lieu of scarcity of information and reliable data on pastoral system, aggravated by a lack of sound educational policy towards nomadic pastoralists it is unrealistic to propose concrete and appropriate solutions to the vaguely defined

problems facing the nomadic pastoralists in Somalia. However, the following points require further discussion and in-depth study.

1. **Assumptions:** in my opinion, the major weakness of the policy is that it assumes that nomadic pastoralists do not understand their specific social and natural ecology. The record shows that almost all intervention programs have failed, or have had little impact, while on the other hand the pastoral system itself is healthy and blooming. (Hoben, 1983:53) Therefore, in the absence of empirical research evidence, one can only conclude that planners lack proper understanding of the specific social and ecological reality. I believe that the most crucial objective should be to close the gap between the urban-based planners' understanding of the pastoral situation and reality of the system as it exists in the pastoral areas.

2. **Policies:** Since, no one can disagree that the country's development potential is primarily based on the pastoral production. Therefore, it is pertinent that the government should:

- a) reassess its general development policy, particularly the educational policy, towards the pastoral society; and
- b) give a proportionate priority to the education of nomadic pastoralists by devising viable policy which emphasizes the following aspects.

Such a policy should:

- I) build on the indigenous knowledge-traditional medicine, botany, herbs, surgery, animal diseases, range management,

etc- and stress Somali entrepreneurship and industriousness;
II) be based on the mobile mode of life, rather than the
sedentary;

III) focus on coordination of all sectoral development
programs and their integration with the indigenous knowledge
and expertise;

VI) view pastoralism as viable mode that can be improved and
developed, rather than as a pathological case to be changed.

3. Institutions: to reflect the importance of the sector, I
suggest that a nomadic education institute should be created. The
institute's major objectives would be i) research, documentation
and recording of all aspects of pastoral life, ii) developing
educational models and curricula, iii) coordinating educational
programs aimed at the nomadic pastoralists, and vi) advising
other institutions involved in the sectoral development of the
nomadic pastoralists.

4. Sedentarization: On the issue of sedentarization of
pastoralists pursued in the development policy, particularly in
the education sector, the government and change agents should
seriously reconsider it. Because persistent pastoralism is the
only viable way of extracting sustainable living over half of the
country which is suitable only for livestock production; while
less than five percent of the land is considered good farm land,
both pasture and arable resources should be preserved. So
planners have to make sure that the development efforts of rural
and pastoral areas do not lead to the destruction of nomadic

pastoralism or to weaken their production system. This fact poses problems for educational planners, because educational programs can be easily managed where people are sedentary, yet nomadism is a rational response to the harsh ecological environment in Somalia, specially in the north. Sedentarization will have negative repercussions on the pastoral production as well as on the efficient exploitation of the vast range lands. A policy of sedentarization also floods the urban sector with unskilled surplus labor force which is inevitably followed by social problems. Education therefore should take into account the environment in which the target group lives.

B. Educational Approaches

You don't have to have school buildings in order to have schools, and you don't have to have schools in order to have education. (John Holt, 1972:116)

According to Somali educational policy, pastoral children have the same rights to education as the rest of the population, however, the problem in this case is how to provide such education to a mobile population.

1. The Schooling of Nomadic Children: What have we learned from the traditional Islamic education system that can be adapted here? The Islamic education system offers a time-tested model of schooling that can overcome or minimize the obstacles of providing education to the mobile pastoralists of Somalia. The model has some pertinent features for nomadic education in Somalia because of the following reasons:

- a) accessibility, there are wide-spread indigenous institutions of learning that are deeply-rooted in the Somali culture;
- b) participation, the institutions enjoys the confidence and respect of the people;
- c) flexibility, they have flexible program of learning which people can utilize at their own convenience.

Thus, any learning system designed for the rural and nomadic people of Somalia would have greater chance of success if it adapt and integrate the positive characteristics of the traditional Islamic education system. I believe such a system would have the crucial public support and the necessary logistics for applying it.

In addition, if the characteristics of nomadic society is closely examined, one finds that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to employ the conventional formal education systems for the education of nomads, because its methodology is irrelevant to the mobile life-style. In this respect the nonformal education system has some advantages over the formal one, since its more flexible, more open, and therefore more responsive to the immediate needs of the target groups.

Hence, the following several strategies employing nonformal education systems for providing education to the pastoralists might be considered:

- 1) Seasonal schools: seasonal schooling for children, specially during the dry season, when pastoralists frequent areas

that have permanent water wells, and beneath surface cement water tanks (Berkad). Schools using permanent physical structures can be organized since sedentary mode of life exists at such areas.

2) Mobile schools: in which teachers move with the population during the grazing seasons and the pupil are taught within the environment. Traditionally, for example Koranic schools have been mobile and, therefore, a build-up to a primary level mobile schools using tents should be practical and relevant to their way of life. Iran has successfully used this strategy. (Varlet and Massoumian, 1975) I believe the Somali case is very similar to that of Iran, therefore, it is relevant to draw on some Iranian experience such as 'tent schools'. Such schools could be coupled with back-up units operating from fixed bases (for instance, seasonal schools) using land Rovers for short visits to the mobile groups.

Since teachers from urban or sedentary areas would have difficulty in adapting to mobile way of life, and would perhaps not be readily accepted by the nomads, they should come from the nomadic families themselves. Perhaps the traditional Islamic education teachers can be given further training in diverse subject matters and in nonformal education instructional methods. As women form the main group herding livestock during the grazing season, it might be advisable to use female teachers rather than male, and to train them in multi-grade teaching.

3) Use of radio. Traditionally Somalis are oral society, news and information pass round verbally with extreme rapidity,

moreover, most of pastoral families have at least one radio set per camp.

It is possible to mix the three approaches. A major difficulty might be one of administration and coupling of the inputs from a seasonal schooling during the dry season, with mobile schooling during the grazing period, and it is here that radio back-up programs would be most effective.

Although boarding schools for nomadic children has been used in Algeria to some degree of success, (Kacem Bensaleh, 1987) I'm skeptical about their appropriateness in the case of Somalia. Permanent school facilities are incompatible to the nomadic lifestyle, fore example, efforts to provide boarding schools for pastoralists, including Somalis, in Kenya have failed. (F. Kajaerby, 1980:103-4) Children in pastoral societies are heavily engaged in herding, day in and day out, therefore, parents might be reluctant to send their children in such schools, in addition, they are costly and difficult to run.

2. Adult education: The Nomadic Education Centers should be relocated and integrated into the seasonal schools. As most of the males spend their time in town and water wells during the grazing seasons, educational programs can be offered in the seasonal schools. However, the question of adult education suggests the same problems with the mechanism but presents an additional one, that of curriculum content. Adult pastoralists already know their environment, animal husbandry and range management extremely well, the challenge is how to build on their

traditional knowledge and integrate it into curriculum. The content could be based more on socio-economic and political aspects of development and less on technical ones. For example, in addition to functional literacy, content could address broad aspects of livestock production, the economic aspects of livestock marketing, the need to avoid overstocking, and overgrazing, questions of methods of water and forage storage, also those concerning agricultural opportunities for small-scale investment within a framework pastoral development. Education should provide knowledge relevant to the pastoral society, and should not lead to the destruction of their way of life, it must inspire a desire for improving their living conditions and gives them the voice concerning the direction of their destiny.

VII. Conclusion

Development specialists in Somalia, and perhaps elsewhere, have a tendency to build on perceptions divorced from the reality and needs of the target groups. When implementation of programs built on these perceptions fail, planners simply pick up new issues and build new programs. In the mean time, practically no testing of assumptions has taken place. Pastoralism remains unexamined and mysterious to development planners. Sector programs including education have, as Thadis Box put it, "met with resistance...and resulted in failure" (1971:228). Similarly the World Bank observed that " services are usually poor and sometimes non-operational" (World Bank 1981, Vol. II :12). With

this gloom situation in the development effort towards pastoralists, the government should reassess its development strategies, and adapt integrative approaches that tap the ingenuity and experiences of the pastoral people, their institutions, and their knowledge. Such a strategy might have a chance to be accepted, and transform the nomadic pastoralism so as to create a socio-economic system which is less at the mercy of natural disasters; and on the other hand, to reduce progressively and finally eliminate economic, educational and socio-political inequities between the pastoral nomadic sectors and the urban sectors. One strategy is to develop an indigenous education system by building on the local knowledge and experiences of the pastoral way of life and its production system. Hence, it is a high time for reassessment and reformulation of the current educational policy and strategies towards the pastoralists. Additionally, since education and development are inter-linked, it is essential to seek a viable pastoral development approach by using education as an integrated development tool.

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