Conference Brief



Participants of Samara national conference on pastoralist education in Ethiopia
Photo courtesy: Samara University

Three major issues identified under Article 26 of the UDHR regarding education:

- **Everyone has the right to education,**
- **Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,**
- ***Parental right to choose the kind of education to be given to their children**

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 28 Defines children's right to a good quality education and the corresponding roles and responsibilities of states

Article 29 Specifies purposes of children's education to be geared towards developing their talents and abilities to achieve a life goal of fulfilled adults

Executive Summary

This is the first in its kind national conference on *pastoralist education in Ethiopia* which is co-organized by five universities and hosted by Samara University. The conference has served as a platform for policy makers, educators, researchers, government and non-governmental actors to come together and discuss state of pastoralist education in the country. The conference was held from 28 - 29 December 2024 on Samara University campus. The two-day scholarly event was attended by representatives from Ministry of Education, Afar Education Bureau, Presidents and Vice Presidents of Samara, Kotebe, Bahir Dar, Dire Dawa, Gambella, Assosa and Jigjiga Universities. Members of Afar Regional State Council, representatives from Regional Sector Bureaus, UNICEF, Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA), and Jeneva Global were among the distinguished participants of the national conference.

The conference was held under a central theme of "*promoting education in pastoralist areas*". Nine research papers that exclusively dealt with pastoralist education were presented on the conference. Designing suitable and sustainable strategies for pastoralist children education, engaging stakeholders in the effort to expand access and ensuring learning quality were among the widely deliberated concerns of the conference. National, regional and global good practices were brought to perspective in a way of drawing lessons. Historical accounts of pastoralist education in Ethiopia since the advent of the 20th century was also explored vis-à-vis the expansion of mainstream education system. Finally, the national conference was concluded issuing *10 points named as* ***Samara Declaration*** for future attention and action.

Introduction

Pastoralist communities of Ethiopia constitute for 14% of the total population. Pastoralists' settlement area covers 60% of the country's total land mass having a significant contribution to the national economy. Being residing in arid and semi-arid parts of the country, pastoralists are more disadvantaged in terms of infrastructural development and essential services provision like education. Pastoralist children access to good quality education, cohort retention in the system and rate of completion rates do always lag behind their counterpart children in non-pastoralist communities. Mobility, conflict and perceived irrelevance of curriculum are also considered to be persistent challenges that hinder universalizing basic education in pastoralist context. It is with this sense of purpose that the first national conference on pastoralist education in Ethiopia is organized.

This conference is designed to be a regular annual platform whereby policy issues, strategic alternatives, and means of expanding access to good quality education for pastoralist children. Organizing responsibility of the conference revolves among the

seven universities of the consortium where Gambella University is designated to host the second national conference on *pastoralist education in Ethiopia, 2025. Assosa University will host the 2026 the third national scholarly event on pastoralist education.*

Approach and Results

Studies presented on the occasion of the national conference are broadly classified into national and regional in terms of spatial scope.

Nationally scoped papers:-

1. Education for pastoralist communities in Ethiopia: A historical policy perspective (Dr. Ahmed Ebrahim)
2. Adopting viable paths to pastoralist education in Ethiopia: What is there and what is not? (Dr Alemayehu Debebe)
3. Speed School Practices, Challenges and Lessons in Pastoralist Communities of Ethiopia (Samuel Asnake)
4. Pastoralist Education in Ethiopia: Challenges, Opportunities and Global Perspectives (Dr Yohannes Wogasso)
5. Education for Tranhumant Pastoralists Children through Technology Enhanced Mobile Schools: Insights and Lessons for Ethiopia (Dr. Ziyn Engdasew)

Conference papers listed above have followed similar pattern of dealing with secondary data. They examined national and international sources and experiences as the matter applies to pastoralist community contexts in Ethiopia. Their focus of analysis was on the situation that characterizes provision of education for pastoralist children. The studies reveal track records, success stories and weaknesses in this regard. Besides, each of the researchers provides recommendations that are supposed to bring about further improvement which lead to the desired end with regard to bringing all pastoralist children to school.

Papers of regional focus:-

1. Exploring the informal learning experiences of women in a pastoral community in Ethiopia: The case of pastoral women in *Karrayyu* (Abiy Menkir and Turuwark Zalalam)
2. Challenges and Opportunities in Pastoralist Education: Afar Women's Education Status, Needs, and Priority (Dr. Efa Tadese)
3. Practices, Contributions and Challenges of Alternative Basic Education (ABE) in Pastoral Communities of the Somali Region **(**Ephrem H.)
4. Mobility Pattern and Pastoralists Education Delivery among Pastoralists in South West Ethiopia (Megegn Mada)

Pastoralist in Afar, Somali, South West Ethiopia regional states and East Shoa zone administration are study settings of the above four research works. Unlike the preceding set of studies the later collected and analyzed primary data to reach at a context specific conclusion.

Despite all the efforts underway, pastoralist children participation in education persists to be lower than children from non-pastoralist or even agro-pastoralist communities. The table below depicts recently published data from the predominantly pastoralist regions

of Afar and Somali in comparison with the national average of basic indicators in education.

Parameter	Afar	Somali	National
Pre-primary enrolment (GER)	23	9	50
Pre-primary enrolment (NER)	15.1	7	37.4
Primary enrolment (GER)	69.2	106	105.4
Primary enrolment (NER)	55.3	82.4	94.1
Middle school (GER)	22.9	40.8	65.9
Middle school (NER)	11.9	16.5	46.6
Secondary enrolment (GER)	21.2	29.3	43.8
Secondary enrolment (NER)	14.1	15.3	32.9
Average age of marriage	16.4	NA	17.5

Source: MoE 2023 (GER & NER) & UNICEF Report 2019 (average age of marriage)

As it is clearly observable from the table above, pastoralist areas are by far below the national average in pre-primary through secondary school enrolment. The national average age of marriage for girls is 17.5 year whereas average age of marriage for girls in Afar is 16.4 year while Addis Ababa enjoys 23.9 year at an average. In a simple arithmetic, this means that a girl in Addis Ababa remains pursuing her education seven and half years after her age mate in Afar got married.

Conclusion

The national conference on *pastoralist education in Ethiopia* is organized to bring all stakeholders together for a common goal of advancing pastoralist children education. Adopting technology assisted teaching, ensuring gender equality in educational participation and outcome, promoting parental participation in making decisions regarding their children's education and fostering stakeholder collaboration are some of the critical policy issues identified. Integrating pastoralist community's indigenous knowledge with the efforts of providing modern education helps to boosting up community support and engagement in their children's schooling. Addressing inherent challenges of mobility, child labor, and early/underage marriage hand-in-hand with the plan to expand pastoralist children's access to education is found to be driver of success. Designing inclusive education for children with disabilities will pave the way to universalize basic education among pastoralist communities.

"We will learn if you bring us a school which has feet, a school which can walk with us, otherwise we cannot".
Afar elder quoted in Ziyn (2024)



"Educate a woman, educate a nation" (African proverb)
Photo Courtesy: Geneva Global-Ethiopia

Implications & Policy Recommendations

1. Fine-tuning curriculum with the pastoralists' socio-cultural and economic contexts for a maximum learning retention and achieving long term impact of schooling
2. Reconsidering teacher education, deployment and remuneration and retention system (call for multi tasked teaching force) for impactful and sustainable desirable gains.
3. Integrating basic literacy, numeracy and life skills lessons into religious teaching schemes. This can take place through the religious teachers who are willing and capable religious teachers or allowing trained teachers to provide lesson in religious premise
4. Promoting gender equality through expanding access to cultural context responsive and relevant education
5. Revisiting gender policy in a way it takes needs of pastoralist women into account for equal opportunity in education
6. Promoting parental engagement in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of educational interventions in order to fostering sense of community ownership
7. Adopting tailored and flexible approach to pastoralist children education that does not discontinue even when mobility occurs
8. Introducing technology integrated mobile schooling for expanding educational access and improve retention for transhumant pastoralists
9. Rethinking of coordinated action between government, non-government agencies, higher learning institutions and technology developing companies to designing, testing and implementation of technology supported education for pastoralist children

10. Mainstream education, due to its very nature, did not prove to be fully responsive to the felt needs and life style of pastoralist communities. This state of affairs eventually calls for a meaningful policy attention revitalization in searching for and implementation of viable alternatives to pastoralist education in Ethiopia.

> Education breeds confidence, confidence breeds hope, hope breeds peace.
>
> Confucius

Samara Declaration

We; the joint organizers of the first national conference on pastoralist education hereby declare the following in view of further promoting pastoralist education in Ethiopia.

We; government institutions, non-governmental agencies, researchers, and participants of the conference hereby reaffirm our commitment to work in collaboration with the pastoralist education consortium member universities in enhancing pastoralist education in Ethiopia.

The Covenant:

1. We commit to play our role in designing/re-designing pastoralist education strategies to be responsive to social, economic and cultural contexts of pastoralist communities in Ethiopia
2. We shall undertake pastoralist education strategies impact evaluation for evidence informed policy making
3. We prepare and present alternative ways of recruitment, training and deployment of teachers to the pastoralist areas for a better quality education
4. We advocate for governance structure that is fully responsible to pastoralist education affairs down the organizational hierarchy from Ministry of Education to District Education Office
5. We design mechanisms of parental engagement in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of educational interventions for pastoralist children in order to fostering sense of community ownership
6. We provide for establishment of pastoralist education research centers in our respective institutions of higher education to put pastoralist education high on agenda
7. We owe to ensure continuity of the annual conference on pastoralist education in Ethiopia through concerted effort and collaboration on a revolving host basis
8. We shall work in close partnership with government line offices, non-governmental organizations and higher learning institutions in a way of promoting pastoralist education and seeking remedies for challenges prevailing
9. We pledge to work towards ascertaining gender equality in access, retention and outcome in the process of designing, delivery and assessment of pastoralist education scheme

10. We endeavor to assess and present options of technology assisted education for pastoralists that is cost effective and user friendly one



Bahir Dar University
Dire Dawa University
Gambella University
Jigjiga University
Kotebe Education University
Samara University

29 December 2024
Samara University
Samara, Afar, Ethiopia

This Policy Brief was produced as part of the 2024 *State of Pastoralist Education in Ethiopia*. Full proceedings on this theme will be published in 2025.

State of pastoralist education in Ethiopia is an initiative brought forward by five Ethiopian universities, namely, University of Samara, Kotebe University of Education, Bahir Dar University, Dire Dawa University, and Jigjiga University. This consortium of universities is envisioned with realizing universalization of basic education in pastoralist areas of Ethiopia and among pastoralist communities across the country.

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