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**Bridging Educational Gaps: Challenges and Strategies for Basic  
Education among Nomadic Pastoralists in North Horr, Marsabit  
County under SDG 4**



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## **Bridging Educational Gaps: Challenges and Strategies for Basic Education among Nomadic Pastoralists in North Horr, Marsabit County under SDG 4**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated the persistent educational challenges faced by nomadic pastoralist communities in North Horr Constituency, Marsabit County, Kenya, within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Despite Kenya's progress in expanding educational access, nomadic communities continue to be marginalized due to mobility, harsh environmental conditions, poverty, cultural practices, and inadequate infrastructure. With a school Net enrolment rate far below the national average, North Horr exemplifies the educational divide in arid and semi-arid regions. Guided by Ivan Illich's Alternative Theory and using a mixed-methods approach, the research explored the status of basic education (Grade 1–9). The respondents of the study consisted of pupils, teachers, head teachers, education officials, administrators, parents and village elders. The data collection instruments included questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussion and document analysis. The study identified key barriers to access, and proposes context-specific strategies. These include the establishment of feeder and mobile schools, flexible teaching schedules, integration of formal education into religious institutions, and the use of technology for remote learning. The findings aim to inform policy and practice, ensuring education systems are more adaptive, inclusive, and culturally sensitive to the needs of nomadic populations in Kenya.

**Keywords:** *Basic Education, Junior School, Educational Gaps*

## Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a key driver of sustainable development. However, despite global strides toward achieving universal education, significant disparities remain, particularly among marginalized communities (World Bank, 2018). Nomadic communities have distinct social and economic characteristics, largely revolving around livestock-based livelihoods, and they play a significant role in national development (Ali, 2019). These societies are organized around a patrilineal hierarchy, with a mobile lifestyle centered on livestock farming (Ahmadi & Rabbani, 2021). Due to their unique economic and cultural conditions, nomadic education requires special attention to improve quality of life and increase social, economic, and political opportunities, particularly for women and children (Adeniyi-Egbeola, 2018; Brossard, 2021). However, providing education to nomadic communities remains a challenge globally, as flexible, culturally sensitive educational approaches are often not embraced, leading to significant educational deprivation (Kiminza, Ogula & Getui, 2021; Raymond, 2021). Despite international commitments like "Education for All" (EFA) and SDG 4, nomadic groups remain excluded from educational policies, with traditional school systems and curricula ill-suited to their lifestyle (Baughn, 2018; UNESCO, 2010, 2018).

The situation of nomadic pastoralists remains an area of concern within the context of Kenya's commitment to the Education for All (EFA) and SDG 4 framework, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030. While Kenya has made significant progress in expanding educational access, many children in remote and pastoralist areas continue to be left behind due to infrastructural, socio-cultural, and economic challenges (Orodho et al 2016). These challenges include inadequate school facilities, teacher shortages, long distances to schools, insecurity, poverty and cultural attitudes that sometimes de-prioritize education, particularly for girls. Bridging the educational divide for nomadic pastoralists requires a comprehensive understanding of these challenges and the development of tailored strategies that address the unique needs of these communities. This paper explored the specific barriers faced by nomadic pastoralist communities in North Horr Constituency, Marsabit County, Kenya and examined the various strategies that can be employed to overcome these challenges within the framework of Education for All and Sustainable Development Goal 4. By identifying key obstacles and proposing practical solutions, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing efforts to provide equitable, inclusive quality primary education to one of Kenya's most marginalized populations.

## Context

This study examined the challenges and strategies for providing basic education to nomadic pastoralists in North Horr Constituency, Marsabit County, Kenya, within the framework of SDG 4. The basic education in the context of the study refers to primary and Junior School, comprising of Grade 1 to Grade 9. The constituency, primarily inhabited by the Gabbra and Dasanach communities, faces harsh environmental conditions, including arid and semi-arid

climates with less than 750mm of rainfall annually, poor soils, and sporadic flash rainfall and prone to long drought. Pastoralism is the dominant livelihood due to the inability to rely on rain-fed agriculture in such an environment. North Horr, the largest constituency in Kenya by landmass, has a population of 125,741 (Kenya Housing and Population Census (KHPC), 2019), and its vast, rocky terrain with sparse vegetation complicates access to education. A staggering 79% of the population, or 87,030 individuals aged three years and above, have never attended school (KHPC, 2019), highlighting the significant barriers to education in the area. These environmental and socio-economic challenges necessitate the exploration of innovative solutions to bridge the educational divide and ensure inclusive and equitable education for nomadic pastoralist communities in North Horr.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and the Constitution of Kenya 2010 aim to ensure that every girl and boy attain free, fair, and quality primary and secondary education. Despite significant efforts by state and non-state actors globally to improve education participation and prevent dropouts, many countries still struggle to identify and address the exclusion of children especially those from the nomadic population from the school system. Despite the Kenya government's commitment to education through reforms like, Free primary Education, Free Day Secondary Education, provision of funds to low-cost Boarding primary schools in ASALs and the provision of School Feeding programme, the country's education system continues to grapple with challenges that disproportionately affect rural and nomadic regions. The nomadic pastoralist communities in North Horr Constituency, face a significant educational divide that has hindered the realization of universal primary education in Kenya. Marsabit County, part of the larger Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) region, exhibits alarmingly low school enrolment rates. As per the Basic Education Statistical Booklet (2020), the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in Marsabit for primary education is 53%, a stark contrast to the national GER of 97.5%. The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in Marsabit county is 38.9% against the national average of 79.3% This is an indication that 61% of children in the county are not accessing education at the official primary school-going age.

The persistent educational challenges in North Horr Constituency and other ASAL regions are compounded by the failure to achieve the objectives set out under the Education for All (EFA) framework and Sustainable Development Goal 4 which seeks inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Reports from UNICEF (2021), UNESCO (2022) and the National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK) highlight there are 1.8 million children who are out-of-school. Most of the children who are out of school are in Mandera (295 700), Garissa (289 410), Wajir (266 540) and Marsabit (107 600). Most of the children the report noted are from households where the head has little to no formal education, creating a vicious cycle of educational deprivation. Bridging this educational divide requires targeted strategies that will accommodate the unique needs of nomadic pastoralist communities, in alignment with the goals of EFA and SDG 4. The purpose of this study was to address these inequalities by exploring

strategic solutions that can enhance access to basic education for learners in nomadic pastoralist basic education schools in North Horr Constituency, Marsabit County, Kenya

### Research Questions

The research was guided by the following research questions

1. What is the status of access to basic education in the constituency?
2. What are the key challenges in provision of basic education to nomadic pastoralist communities in the constituency as envisioned by EFA and SDG 4?
3. What strategies can be put in place to ensure that the nomadic pastoralist children in the Constituency can access basic education?

### Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Ivan Illich, Alternative education theory 1976. Illich a philosopher and educational theorist, introduced radical ideas about education in his 1971 book *Deschooling Society*. He critiqued the traditional education system for being hierarchical, oppressive, and ineffective in fostering genuine learning. Illich argued that schools often stifle personal growth and perpetuate social inequalities, promoting a one-size-fits-all approach to learning (Sukarieht & Tannck, 2020). He advocated for the abolition of schools and proposed a decentralized, learner-centered education system, where individuals are responsible for their own learning. This system, he argued, would be supported by "learning webs", networks providing access to resources, mentors, and knowledge outside traditional school structures. His theory emphasizes self-directed, autonomous learning, critical thinking, and lifelong education, which has influenced various educational reforms, including alternative schools, community-based learning initiatives, and online education (Graziano, 2021; Bartlett & Schugurensky, 2020).

Illich's ideas are highly relevant in contemporary contexts, such as providing education to marginalized communities. For example, his concepts align with efforts to improve education for nomadic pastoralists in North Horr constituency, where formal schooling is limited due to geographical isolation. Illich's focus on flexible, community-based education solutions can help bridge this divide. His emphasis on decentralized learning and resource accessibility supports strategies like mobile learning units, mentorship programs, and digital platforms that cater to the specific needs of nomadic populations (Kostakis & Pantazis, 2021). Such models foster self-directed learning and ensure that education remains relevant to local contexts, in line with the SDG 4 goal of inclusive and equitable quality education. Illich's critique of formal schooling and his advocacy for learning resources over compulsory attendance continue to influence alternative education systems today, including homeschooling, unschooling, and online education platforms (Zaldirar & Jover, 2023; Prucell, 2019).

### Literature Review

Suliman, Shah & Ullah (2017) in Pakistan aimed to unveil the unseen status of nomadic communities' education in Pakistani society, with special reference to the stillness nature of



educational system and nomadism. The study was cross sectional in nature. A sample size of 97 respondents was drawn from the cluster of 130 tents through random sampling procedures. Area enumeration approach suggested by Degraft (1979) were adopted in the study to resolve the issue of sampling nomads in the area. Keeping in view the illiterate nature of the respondents, the interview schedule was utilized in the study. The data was analysed, by using univariate and bivariate techniques of data analysis. The findings of the study suggest that lack of education, ethnic prejudice about nomads, lack of skills, and conservatism of the respondents were major contributors to social exclusion of nomads in the study area. Sulliman et al study was only on the stillness nature of the education system, used only interview as data collection instrument. The current study bridged this gap by using MMR design and used questionnaires, interviews and document analysis to study the challenges and propose mitigation measures.

Ali (2019) study examined the challenges in access to education that children in pastoralist of Hawd Region of Somaliland faced. A mixed methods research design was conducted while triangulation methods of data gathering and analysis were applied to evaluate the naked reality of pastoralist education. The population of the study was divided into in-group and out-group for the purpose of comparing the various experiences of pastoralists for reliable analyses. The in-group comprised of the pastoral men, women, teachers, clan leaders and school-going-age children from primary 5 to 7. On the other hand, the out-group included other people who are not directly involved in livestock rearing such as Ministry of Education officials. Sample size was 113 people. The sample included 52 school going-age children (boys and girls) from Primary5-7 in two randomly selected primary schools, 12 teachers from the two schools, 40 pastoralist (men and women), some 4 clan leaders/chiefs in Hawd region as well as 5 policy makers at the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Somaliland. The data collection instruments were questionnaires, interviews and observation schedule. The findings of the study were gendered activities considered traditionally important by pastoralists affected the education of their own children. It highlighted the uncomfortable situation of pastoralist school teachers who are underpaid at a monthly salary of only \$100. Learning under trees without desks and benches for pupils who are expected to join secondary and higher education in the near future does not instil confidence among them. Ali study although it used the same methodology was carried out in a different country with a different education system and was on a war footing, making it different from the current study.

A study by Ndibalema (2022) was on key barriers to the accessibility of basic education among pastoralist communities in Tanzania. The paper employed document analysis as a qualitative research method. Official government reports were used as a data source to develop understanding and generate insights regarding the accessibility to basic education among minority pastoralist children. The review utilised critical analysis discourse (CDA) techniques to examine the basic education statistics and other government reports at the primary education level. Thirteen government reports on education were reviewed, reflecting on the educational practices for minority groups with a specific focus on the pastoralists. The review adapted seven stages of the General Analytical Framework for CDA, as proposed by Mullet (2018) The results

of the analysis of policy documents indicated that there was a mismatch between policy statements and actual practices, which suggest increased disparities in the provision of basic education. There are more limited opportunities for children from minority groups to access quality basic education than their majority counterparts, due to several constraints like traditional taboos and an insecure learning environment. Ndibalema study was qualitative depended entirely on document analysis without interviewing the respondent and using questionnaires to gather information, a gap the current study filled.

Yusuf, Kibaara and Ikiugu carried out a study whose topic was Nomadic Education Policy's Effectiveness in Enhancing Access to Primary Schools by Learners in Balambala Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya. The purpose of the study was to investigate nomadic education policy's effectiveness in enhancing access to primary schools by learners in Balambala sub-county. The design used in the investigation was descriptive. The target population was 33 public primary schools in the Sub-County. The specific respondents were the Sub-County Directors of Education, Sub-County Director of TSC, Headteachers, teachers, Student Council representatives, and the Board of Management of Primary Schools. The data collection was achieved by utilizing questionnaires and interview guides. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, mean, and standard deviation, and inferential statistics like single regression. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically as per the research objectives. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.750$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between the implementation of the nomadic education policy and access to education. Notably, the study revealed positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of nomadic education policies, particularly in improving access and retention rates in schools. Yusuf et al study was carried out in different county and was investigating policy effectiveness and did not delve on any challenge. A gap this study bridged.

Ayiro and Sang (2017) carried out a study that explored why nomadic children in the counties of Turkana and West Pokot were left behind in the primary education process despite free primary education (FPE), and considered the variables that contributed to high dropout rates, low enrolment, poor attendance, and unsatisfactory academic achievement. The study adopted a theoretical approach centered on Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) (1977). The methodology used was phenomenology design. A total of 10 parents, a male and a female primary school teacher, and a school head teacher, two administrators (District Education Officer-DEO & District Officer-DO) four local leaders (Chief, Assistant Chief, Woman Leader and Church Leader) and ten children (allowing for gender parity) were interviewed in each of the two counties through stratification in zones (based on the administrative locations) followed by purposive sampling. There were two focus groups of eight persons per county comprising of the administrators, the local leaders and four parents (2 male and 2 female). The major constraints established by the study to the participation of nomadic communities in education were: The nomadic peoples' constant migrations/movements in search of water and pasture; The irrelevance of the school curriculum, which is tailored towards meeting the needs of sedentary groups and thus ignores the educational needs of nomadic peoples; The centrality of child labour

to their production system, thus making it extremely difficult for children to participate in formal schooling; Their physical isolation, since they operate largely in inaccessible physical environments; The inadequate education provisions for the ASAL areas by the government, student achievement, progression to the next level of education and by extension training. Ayiro and Sang study though carried out in a nomadic community was qualitative did not make use of questionnaires which would have yielded data on enrolment and challenges, a gap this study filled.

Ekeno, Bitok & Matere (2024) paper assessed the influence of periodic mobility of nomadic pastoralist parents on the retention of early year's learner education. The study was guided by Ecological Systems Theory postulated by Bronfenbrenner in 1994. Descriptive survey research design was used. The target population was 402: comprising 300 ECDE teachers, 101 parents and a Sub County Director of Education in charge of ECDE. The sample size was 121 and categorized as follows: a Sub County Director of Education, 90 ECDE teachers, 30 parents, and 10 from each of the three wards in the Sub County. Structured and semi-structured questionnaires, and interview schedules were used to collect data. Quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented by table of frequency and percentages. The findings revealed that periodic mobility interfered with children's access to education. Ekeno et al study though MMR did not make use of document analysis which was vital to get the challenges of access and enrolment pattern, a gap this study bridged.

### **Some Approaches for Providing Nomadic Education**

The multifaceted approaches identified in the literature for provision of education to nomadic populations in the world include:

**Regular schools:** For nomadic communities worldwide, regular schools primarily serve settled groups, but they often fail to address the unique educational needs of mobile children. In some cases, helping teachers may be deployed to support nomadic learners who struggle due to unfamiliar curricular content and teaching methods. However, a significant challenge arises as regular school syllabi and pedagogies designed for sedentary populations are applied to mobile children, making learning inaccessible and culturally irrelevant. As a result, pastoralist children, such as cattle herders, often underperform because the curriculum does not align with their lifestyle, experiences, and knowledge systems. This disconnect highlights the urgent need for contextualized and flexible education models that integrate indigenous knowledge, adaptable teaching strategies, and mobile schooling solutions to ensure inclusive and effective learning for nomadic populations

**On site schools:** On-site schools serve as an effective solution for semi-sedentary groups, providing education while accommodating seasonal migration patterns. These schools are strategically located along nomadic movement routes or at fixed reference points, ensuring accessibility at different times of the year. To address the irregular attendance caused by mobility, they can operate as schools of alternative intake, allowing learners to enrol or rejoin at



different stages without disrupting their education. This flexible approach ensures that nomadic children receive continuous learning opportunities, even as their families migrate, while also integrating culturally relevant curricula that align with their lifestyle and indigenous knowledge systems. These schools are found in Mongolia, India, Iran, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Chad (Dyer, 2016).

**Mobile schools:** For nomadic communities worldwide, mobile schools (portable classrooms) provide a flexible education model tailored to migratory families within clan clusters. These schools move alongside nomadic groups, ensuring that children continue learning despite seasonal migration. An example of this is the Qur'anic Mallam model, where Mallams (Islamic teachers) travel with nomads to teach the Qur'an. This traditional system can be modernized and integrated into formal education by including literacy, numeracy, and life skills while maintaining its cultural and religious significance. Countries that have adopted mobile schools include Nigeria and Chad for Fulani pastoralists, Kenya and Ethiopia for Samburu and Borana herders, Mali and Niger for Tuareg and Peulh nomads, Mongolia for herding families using ger (yurt) schools, and Afghanistan and Iran for Bakhtiari and Kuchi tribes. By combining traditional and modern education methods, mobile schools offer culturally relevant, accessible learning that supports SDG 4 (inclusive and equitable education for all) while preserving nomadic lifestyles (Ayisi 2019).

**Adult Education programme:** Adult Education Programs play a crucial role in equipping pastoralists and mobile populations with basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills while respecting their migratory lifestyles. These programs often focus on functional literacy, integrating livestock management, health education, financial literacy, and indigenous knowledge to enhance daily life and economic opportunities. Many countries have adapted flexible, context-specific approaches to adult education for nomads. In Nigeria and Chad, Nomadic Education Programs provide literacy and vocational training for Fulani herders. In Kenya and Ethiopia, mobile adult learning centers support Somali, Turkana, Samburu and Borana pastoralists. Mongolia has implemented distance education for herders through radio-based learning. In India, states like Rajasthan and Gujarat offer seasonal literacy programs for Banjara and Rabari nomads. Similarly, Iran and Afghanistan provide caravan-based adult education for Kuchi and Bakhtiari tribes. By using non-formal, mobile, and community-based approaches, these programs help bridge educational gaps, promote economic self-sufficiency, and support SDG 4 (inclusive lifelong learning opportunities for all) (Sharma, 2011).

**Radio or distance education programmes:** radio and distance education programs provide an effective way to deliver education at different levels, overcoming the challenges posed by mobility and remoteness. Since nomads frequently carry radio sets and listen while traveling, this medium can be harnessed to teach literacy, numeracy, health education, and vocational skills. Programs can include radio dramas with storylines that reflect nomadic cultural heritage, radio commercials promoting education, and interviews with successful nomads as role models. Many countries have adopted radio-based learning for pastoralists. In Nigeria and Chad, the Fulani

community benefits from radio discussions and educational broadcasts. In Kenya and Ethiopia, pastoralist education programs use radio to reach Samburu and Borana herders (Kratil & Dyer, 2009). Mongolia has implemented distance learning through radio for herding families, while Australia's "School of the Air" provides radio-based education for children in remote areas. In Afghanistan and Iran, mobile radio lessons support Kuchi and Bakhtiari nomads. By integrating culturally relevant content and interactive discussions, radio education can help bridge the learning gap, ensuring accessible, flexible, and inclusive education for nomadic populations in line with SDG 4.

**Shepherd Schools:** shepherd schools provide education tailored to the needs of young herders who spend long hours tending livestock. These schools are often flexible, mobile, or part-time, allowing children to combine work with learning. They incorporate basic literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills relevant to livestock management, animal health, and sustainable grazing practices. Several countries have adopted shepherd school models to support nomadic learners (Siele, et al 2011). In Mongolia, ger (yurt) schools educate herding children while allowing them to stay close to their families. In Afghanistan and Iran, caravan schools provide mobile education for Kuchi and Bakhtiari pastoralists. In Kenya and Ethiopia, alternative basic education programs serve Samburu and Borana herders. Nigeria and Chad have introduced flexible learning programs for Fulani cattle herders, while in Peru and Bolivia, Andean shepherd schools offer education to Quechua and Aymara children in high-altitude pastoral regions (Sukhbaatar & Tarko, 2022). By adapting school schedules, integrating indigenous knowledge, and using mobile or community-based teaching methods, shepherd schools help bridge educational gaps, ensuring that nomadic children gain essential skills without abandoning their traditional way of life, aligning with SDG 4 (inclusive and equitable education for all).

### Research Design and Methodology

The study employed Mixed Methods Research (MMR) paradigm. Using MMR paradigm, specifically cross-sectional surveys and case studies, was well-justified for studying the challenges and strategies in providing primary education to nomadic pastoralists in North Horr Sub County under the SDG 4 framework. The cross-sectional survey captured broad patterns in school access, enrolment, and attendance, while case studies offered in-depth insights into cultural barriers and community perspectives. The combination allowed for triangulation, enhancing validity by linking statistical trends with contextual explanations. The approach ensured diverse stakeholder perspectives, incorporating input from pupils, parents, teachers, education officials and community leaders. It also aligned with SDG 4 indicators, assessing educational progress. Given the fluid movement patterns of nomadic populations, a cross-sectional survey provided a snapshot of their educational status, while case studies offered rich ethnographic insights into how mobility affects schooling. Ultimately, this mixed-methods approach balanced breadth and depth, ensuring that both quantitative data and qualitative narratives inform policies for inclusive and equitable education.

### Target Population

The target population of the study was primary schools in the sub county, the education officials, the head teachers, teachers, parents, community leaders in the sub county. The cross-sectional survey gathered quantitative data from students, parents, and teachers to identify enrolment trends, and key challenges, while case studies provided in-depth qualitative insights from specific schools and communities. Engaging multiple stakeholders ensured a holistic analysis through triangulation, leading to effective, community-driven solutions. This diverse yet focused target population captured both macro-level trends and micro-level experiences, making the findings relevant for policy and practice under the SDG 4 framework.

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Using Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table, the study will sample 30 out of 40 schools (75%), 377 pupils from a population of 14 845, 155 teachers from 260 (60%), and 30 head teachers (aligned with selected schools) to ensure broad representation. Stratified random sampling will divide the population into relevant categories, followed by simple random sampling to select participants within each stratum. For case studies, 4 schools were chosen from each ward through purposive sampling based on unique characteristics such as the largest boarding school, schools with high dropout rates and single sex schools, while snowball sampling identified key informants like community elders and drop out pupils to provide deeper insights into educational challenges. This mixed sampling approach ensured statistical representativeness while capturing in-depth experiences, enhancing the study's validity, generalizability and contextual richness in line with the SDG 4 framework.

### **Results and Discussions**

#### **Access and Participation in Education in North Horr Constituency**

The Basic Education sector in Kenya has experienced massive expansion in enrolment since independence in 1963. Enrolment in primary education has grown from 892,000 pupils in 1963 to about 10.07 million pupils in 2020, (Basic Education statistical Booklet, 2020). The increase has been accelerated by the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) programmes in 2003 and 2008 respectively (Republic of Kenya 2023, UNESCO, 2012). While these statistics portray a success story at the national level, the situation is disappointing when these data are unpacked at county level, especially in the nomadic pastoralist Counties.

**Table 1: shows the Primary and Junior school enrolment by gender in North Horr Constituent in 2025.**

	GRADE 1		GRADE 2		GRADE 3		GRADE 4		GRADE 5		GRADE 6		GRADE 7		GRADE 8		GRADE 9
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B
<b>Turbi</b>	234	177	253	208	145	155	234	177	253	137	123	174	130	173	101	145	116
<b>Marsabit</b>																	
<b>North</b>	360	347	316	232	168	180	360	347	316	178	132	189	126	176	117	174	132
<b>Dukana</b>	229	218	203	197	150	123	229	218	203	137	151	138	142	134	164	140	79
<b>North Horr</b>	435	368	430	280	334	290	435	368	430	210	164	169	149	169	165	146	145
<b>Total</b>	<b>1256</b>	<b>1110</b>	<b>1229</b>	<b>917</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>1258</b>	<b>1110</b>	<b>1202</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>472</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2366</b>		<b>2146</b>		<b>1545</b>		<b>2368</b>		<b>1864</b>		<b>1240</b>		<b>1199</b>		<b>1152</b>		<b>1023</b>

**Source:** Marsabit County Education Office, 2025

As shown in Table 1, the enrolment rate in primary and Junior schools in North Horr Constituency stands at 14 845 pupils (7820 boys and 7025 girls). According to KHPC 2019 the total number of 6-year-old to 16 years in the constituency are 38 419. This means that the total number of children out of school in the constituency may be more than 23 574 representing more than 61.4% of the school aged pupils. This finding is confirmed by Basic Education Statistical Booklet 2020 which gives the NER for Marsabit County as 38.9% indicating that 61% of school going-aged children are out of school. This is a worrying statistic for a country that is making every effort to achieve SDG 4 and Vision 2030 by 2030.

### **Challenges Faced in Providing Basic Education**

The major challenges established by the study in the participation of nomadic communities in basic education are:

- The nomadic peoples' constant mobility in search of water and pasture. This aggravated by neglect by successive governments in providing basic amenities such as water along migratory routes. Due to the seasonal movement of families in search of water and pasture, children often miss extended periods of schooling. The mobility of the

communities, driven by the need to herd livestock, leads to inconsistent attendance and disruptions in the learning process and eventual drop out.

- Very few schools close to the villages and lack of adequate Boarding school to cater for the nomadic children
- The education provision mode and school curriculum time, which is tailored towards meeting the needs of sedentary groups and thus ignores the educational needs of nomadic peoples
- Delayed disbursement and Insufficient SFP to cater for lunch for children who have to walk long distance to schools
- The role played by child labour to the nomadic community's production system, thus making it extremely difficult for children to participate in formal schooling;
- Their physical isolation, since they operate largely in inaccessible physical environments due to lack of passable roads and lack of communication technology
- Erratic weather pattern which makes their mobility far from school frequent and unpredictable. The constant movement of families in search of pasture for their livestock further complicates the situation, as children are unable to stay in one location long enough to attend school consistently. hence forcing pupils to drop out and follow their parents.
- Cultural and Socio-Economic Factors: Education, particularly for girls, is undervalued where traditional cultural practices prioritize livestock herding and family responsibilities over schooling. Early marriage, child labour, and gender-based roles also limit children's access to education, The mandatory attendance of first-born males to traditional ceremonies exclude them from school attendance.
- Many families in nomadic pastoralist communities live in poverty, relying on livestock for their livelihood. The cost of education, such as uniforms, boarding fees, school levies and transportation, is often unaffordable for families who are struggling to meet basic needs. Moreover, during periods of drought or livestock disease, families prioritize survival over education.
- Insecurity, conflict, and a lack of parental education are significant barriers to providing basic education for nomadic pastoralist communities. Frequent clashes between different ethnic groups or with other neighbouring communities disrupt schooling and force children to abandon their education. Additionally, the lack of parental education often leads to limited awareness of the value of schooling, which results in low enrolment and attendance rates.

#### **Suggested Strategies to Enable children Access Basic Education.**



The respondents proposed that the following strategies can be used to enable nomadic pastoralist children access education:

**Construction of feeder schools and boarding schools:** Build feeder schools near large villages and large boarding schools within each sub-location to accommodate children from feeder schools when they reach Grade 4. **Feeder schools as adult literacy centers:** Use feeder schools as adult literacy centers on weekends and selected evenings. Adult teachers should be trained to teach literacy, numeracy, animal husbandry, entrepreneurship, and health education

**Mandatory preschool attendance:** The County Government should make preschool attendance mandatory by providing UniHuts and posting a teacher in each village or grouping several villages with schools nearby.

**Adequate teachers and flexible scheduling:** Ensure feeder schools have enough teachers so that the schools operate as "duo schools," where some children attend in the morning, others in the afternoon, while others go grazing. Provide sufficient lunch through a School Feeding Program..

**Incorporate school curriculum into Madrasas:** Integrate the regular school curriculum into Madrasas so that feeder schools serve a dual purpose, combining religious and formal education.

**Mobile feeder schools:** Establish mobile feeder schools with UniHuts and mobile teachers in large villages, particularly in areas like the Five Yaas among the Gabbras and the Dasanach clan migration areas, ensuring all children can attend school through the duo school system.

**Use of educational apps and radio technology:** The County and National Governments should leverage educational apps and radio technology to offer online and offline classes as both a teaching and awareness tool, ensuring all children are enrolled in schools.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Bridging the educational divide for nomadic pastoralist communities in North Horr, Marsabit County, remains a significant challenge to achieving inclusive and equitable education under the SDG 4 framework. Despite efforts like free primary education, school feeding programs, and low-cost boarding schools, barriers such as harsh environmental conditions, inadequate infrastructure, cultural attitudes, and geographical isolation persist. These factors contribute to alarmingly low enrolment rates, with Marsabit's Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) at just 53%, far below the national average of. To address these challenges, tailored solutions are needed that account for the mobility, socio-cultural context, and economic constraints of nomadic populations.

To address the educational challenges faced by nomadic pastoralist communities, flexible and targeted solutions are essential. These include constructing feeder schools near villages, establishing mobile schools with UniHuts and mobile teachers, and integrating adult literacy programs into existing infrastructure. Additionally, leveraging technology such as educational apps and radio programs can support remote learning. The government, in collaboration with

non-state actors, must ensure adequate resources and support for these strategies, addressing cultural, economic, and logistical barriers. By implementing these measures, Kenya can make significant progress toward achieving SDG 4, ensuring that all children, including those from marginalized nomadic communities, have access to quality, inclusive education.

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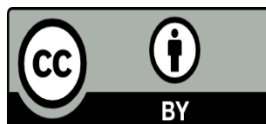
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