

# Educational Marginalization: Examining Challenges and Possibilities for Improving Educational Outcomes in Northeastern Kenya

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## Abstract

As a developing country in sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya has fared comparatively well in educating its young people. The new constitution of Kenya and various acts of parliament identify education as a fundamental human right and mandates the government to provide basic education for all. Consistent with the government's *Vision 2030*, most political, religious, and civil society leaders recognize education as critical to individuals attaining full potential and then contributing to nation building. However, educational access and equity remain quite elusive in rural and less economically viable areas, such as northeastern. The region and its people have been marginalized for many years, dating back to the colonial era and still remain very undeveloped, under-resourced, and impoverished. Given the endemic discrimination and marginalization of the nomadic people of northeastern Kenya, harsh geographic conditions, constant migration of the people, and heightened insecurity in the region, there is limited data, information, and understanding of these people's life experiences. The purpose of this article is to highlight these challenges that minimize educational opportunities for young people in northeastern Kenya by reviewing the historic political isolation and marginalization, sociocultural practices (e.g., nomadic lifestyle, female genital mutilation), resource deprivation and poverty, harsh geographic conditions, and poor infrastructure. Additionally, the article examines emerging efforts and opportunities (e.g., government and non-government organizations) to improve educational opportunities in the region through the devolution framework in the new *Constitution of Kenya*, constituency development funds (CDF), mobile schools, and boarding schools.

## Keywords

Northeastern Kenya, nomads, pastoralists, education, marginalization

## Introduction

As a developing country located in sub-Saharan East Africa, Kenya has fared well in educating its young people. *The Constitution of Kenya* (2010) and various acts of parliament identify education as a fundamental human right and recognize

education as critical to individuals attaining self-fulfillment and national development, which are

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consistent with *Vision 2030 (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010; Vision 2030, 2007)*. However, the educational vision remains quite elusive for some parts of the country, particularly rural and economically deprived areas. The Northeastern region of Kenya is one of those areas, home to the Cushite communities, e.g., Somali, Borana, Rendille, and Gabra. This region and its people have been marginalized for many years, dating back to the colonial era, and remain very rural, undeveloped, under-resourced, and impoverished to date (Ruto, Ongwenyi, & Mugo, 2009). Given the endemic discrimination and marginalization of the nomadic people of Northeastern Kenya, harsh geographic conditions, constant migration of the people, and heightened insecurity in the region—largely due to the failed state of Somalia to the east—there is limited data, information, and understanding of these people’s life experiences (Abdi, 2010; Whittaker, 2012). The purpose of this article is to examine and contextualize the challenges that embody the schooling experiences of young people in Northeastern Kenya. However, it is impossible to fully begin to grasp the magnitude of educational deprivation of ethnic peoples of the Northeastern region without consideration of other mitigating factors. This article examines historic political isolation and marginalization, sociocultural practices (e.g., nomadic lifestyle, female genital mutilation), resource deprivation and poverty, harsh geographic conditions, and poor infrastructure (schools, roads, clean water, health facilities, etc.) as well as their impact on educational opportunities in the region. Additionally, this article examines emerging efforts of a number of stakeholders (e.g., government, non-governmental organizations [NGO], religious community) to improve educational opportunities and life outcomes in the region.

## Background

The Northeastern region of Kenya, formerly one of the eight administrative provinces, is currently comprised of three counties: Mandera, Wajir, and Garissa (See Figure 1), which were created under the new constitution (*Constitution of Kenya, 2010*). The region is a vast land, very arid, including 62% of the arid and semi-arid lands [ASAL] in Kenya, and sparsely populated (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2008; Ruto et al., 2009). Eighty percent of the total population in the region is either pastoralist or farmers, largely dependent on livestock for their economic wellbeing. The region supplies about 60-70% of the total livestock in Kenya, with some exported to the Middle East. Due to little rainfall (i.e., 200-550mm annually), there is limited farming activity except for a few areas along the seasonal rivers and dams, with minimal potential for meaningful crop production. The area is susceptible to drought that results in low vegetation cover, crop failure, livestock death, food insecurity, loss of family livelihood, and even loss of human lives (Chopra, 2009; Serna, 2011). In addition, poor management of limited vegetation (e.g., uncontrolled cutting of the few trees and overgrazing) in the region as well as the continuous cycle of settlement and resettlement (or constant migration) – associated with nomadic people – leaves tracts of land bare and exposed to severe erosion, further rendering the land unproductive. During drought periods, pastoralists rely entirely on insufficient boreholes and spring wells to supply water for their livestock and for domestic purposes. The scarce water and grassland resources often lead to tribal tensions and conflict (Chopra, 2009; Oxfam International, 2006). There are no irrigation-based approaches to alleviate the arid conditions in the northeastern region.

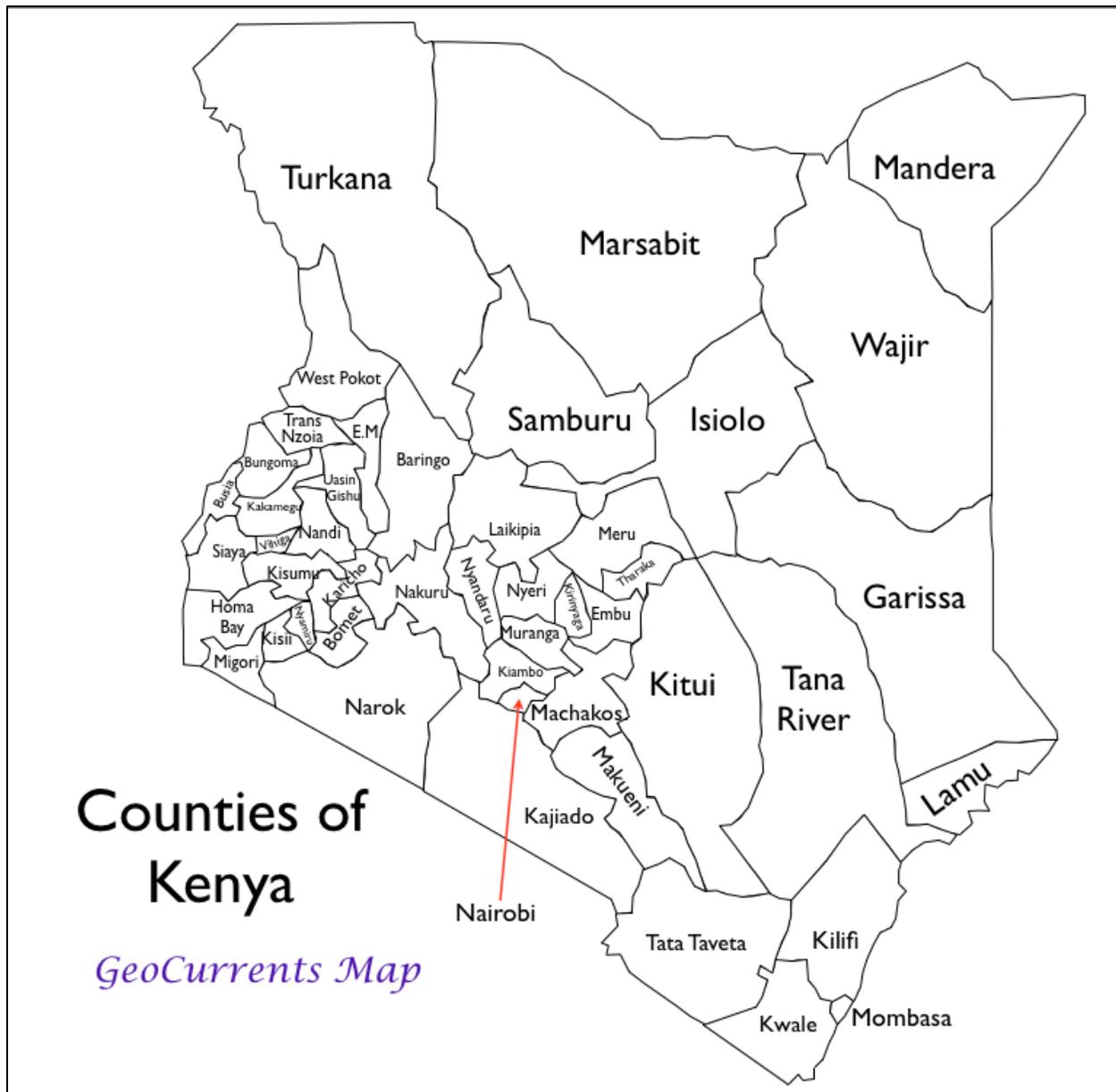


Figure 1. The Administrative Counties of Kenya. Adapted from GeoCurrents Maps.

## Challenges to Educational Opportunities

The challenges that hold back the northeastern region are historical, sociopolitical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic in nature. This section will contextualize some of these issues as they relate to education by exploring: the political and marginalization, sociocultural and

traditional, and resource deprivation and poverty of the region.

## Political Isolation and Marginalization

The current isolation and marginalization of northeastern region cannot be understood without connecting the present to the past. The contemporary political/government regimes

seem to have been copied from the playbook of the colonial rule – the British rule.

### **British rule**

The history of discrimination, isolation, and marginalization of northeastern Kenya began with the British colonial rule. The British colonial government focused their resources and their development efforts on agriculturally viable areas, approximately only 20% of the country, which had sufficient rainfall. The colonial government considered pastoralists as less industrious and sometime rationalized taking land from them (Arid Lands Resource Management Project, [ALRMP], 2004). In addition, the British government's concentration on the development of infrastructure along the railway line was the reason for isolating the northeastern region because it was, and still is, several hundred miles away from the main railway line, rendering the region as economically untenable (Mahmoud, 2009). Only few essential facilities such as police stations, military bases, and administrative offices were installed. The building of schools became the responsibility of the local communities.

Formal education was introduced to the people of Kenya by European Christian missionaries as an evangelical tool (Eshiwani, 1985). The missionaries dominated the provision and administration of education throughout the Colonial period. Most prestigious schools in Kenya today are former mission schools, such as Alliance High, Mang'u High, Maseno, Kaimosi Girls, Kaimosi Boys, etc. The missionaries favored establishing schools around agricultural areas, adjacent to the colonial settler farms (Sifuna, 2005). This strategic decision greatly benefited central Kenya and further isolated the northern parts of Kenya with harsh climatic conditions and predominantly Islamic territory.

### **Independence and conflicts**

Unfortunately, even after gaining independence from the British rule in 1963, successive governments perpetuated marginalization of the northeastern peoples (Dadacha, 2009). For instance, President Jomo Kenyatta, the first Kenyan president, imposed a state of emergency on northeastern in December 1963, that persisted for 28 years until it was lifted by his successor, President Moi, in 1991. In part, the state of emergency was in response to attempts by the ethnic Somalis in the colonial Northern Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya to secede from Kenya and join with their fellow Somalis in the larger Somalia Republic. The Kenyan government dubbed the 1963-67 conflict *shifita* after the Somali word for "bandit", as part of a propaganda effort to scuttle the uprising (Whittaker, 2012). During the conflict, the Kenyan forces treated the ethnic peoples in the region brutally, leaving an ongoing sense of suspicion, anger, and tension, to the extent that some communities still consider themselves not part of Kenya.

### **Wagalla massacre**

In 1984, Kenyan forces were dispatched in response to clan-related conflict in northeastern. Eyewitnesses' accounts reported that Kenyan troops rounded up close to 5,000 ethnic Somali men and executed them at the Wagalla airstrip, an action later dubbed the Wagalla massacre (British Broadcasting Company, 2011). This oppression by the Kenyan government was a source of pain and bitterness in the minds and hearts of many ethnic Somalis which remains today. Furthermore, northeastern was a theatre of war as recently as 2012 when the Kenyan troops fought with Al-Shabab – a terrorist organization based in Somalia and affiliated with Al Qaeda (Mbaka, 2012). Al Shabaab's terrorist activities included bombing churches, abduction of school children, ambushing police stations to take officers hostage, as well as raiding homes and businesses, robbing and killing the owners

(Masters & Sergie, 2015). In the most recent attack, April 2, 2015, on Garissa University College, Al Shabaab gunmen massacred 147 people (mostly students) and wounded scores of others (BBC News, 2015). The leaders in the region lobbied hard to acquire the University College so that it could become a beacon of transformation but instead the terrorists used it for massacre. Most students enrolled at the college vowed never to return, opting to transfer to other colleges. This level of insecurity has caused tremendous unrest among the residents by additionally disrupting their already complicated lives.

### ***Lack of development projects***

The situation in northeastern is further aggravated by the lack of funding by the government for much needed development projects (e.g., roads, clean water, hospitals, etc.) thus making access to basic livelihood very difficult. State resources and development of infrastructure are appropriated to areas where national political leaders have political support or can garner electoral votes, while marginalizing areas perceived to be in the opposition or politically not viable. National leaders have focused mainly on areas with large populations where they are sure of getting many votes during general elections. Therefore, Central, Rift Valley, Western, Eastern, Nairobi, and Nyanza regions (see Figure 2) have received significant national development resources over the years due to their large populations and favorable environmental factors (Abdi, 2012; Dadacha, 2009). These regions are home to the five largest ethnic groups – the Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Kamba and Kalenjin – which account for 70% of the population in Kenya (Kurian, 1992; see Figure 2).

While recognized as an asset, Kenya's ethnic diversity has also led to disputes.

Interethnic rivalries and resentment over Kikuyu dominance in politics and commerce have hindered national integration. Most political decisions are made to favor certain regions and tribes (those with the power), whereas northeastern bears the brunt of political isolation since the area has always been considered to be of no political value. Development theories suggest that there are causal relationships between societies, whereby one society's development can be at the expense of another society's underdevelopment (Kuhnen, 1987). This is particularly relevant when comparing the underdevelopment in northeastern Kenya with other highly developed areas in the country. It is evident that for northeastern Kenya, people's lives during colonial and post-colonial eras have not changed much, as the past and present regimes' dispositions towards the region seem to be similar (Roseberry, 1989). In general, political decisions have grossly promoted disparity in the life experiences and outcomes between nomadic peoples of northeastern and the rest of the Kenyan people.

### ***Sociocultural and Traditional Practices***

Kenya has about 42 indigenous groups (or tribes) and over 70 distinct ethnic groups, ranging from 20% (Kikuyu) to as little as .04% (Sakuya) of the population (Kurian, 1992). Each of the tribes (or ethnic groups) has its own unique cultural and traditional practices, some of which are a barrier to modernity e.g., female genital mutilation (FGM), forced early marriage of girls for "wealth," and traditional circumcision for boys. The following sections explore the challenges embedded in some of the cultural and traditional practices as it pertains to education and life opportunities for the youth in northeastern.

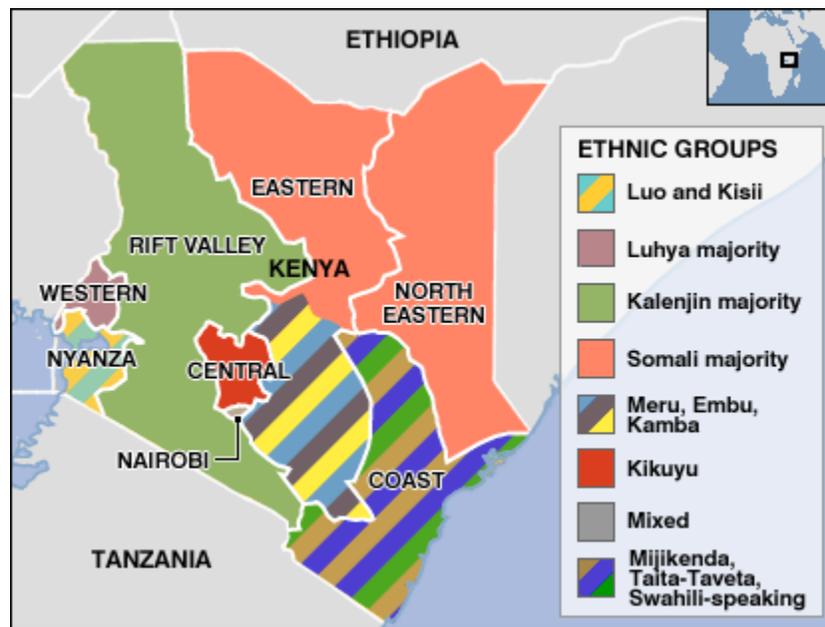


Figure 2. Map of Kenya Regional Division and Ethnic Distribution. Adapted from GeoCurrents Maps

### ***Nomadic lifestyle***

Due to constant mobility, nomadic pastoralists are likely not to have a place they would consider their permanent home. Men are sometimes forced to separate from their families for months as they travel great distances with their livestock. The very mobile lifestyle of families in the region is a challenge to the traditional schooling structure as we know it – schoolhouse, classrooms, desks, teaching equipment, and schedules based on the school year (Jama, 1993). Children are forced to accompany their families on these nomadic expeditions, several months at a time and cover hundreds of kilometers in cruel jungles, hence unable to attend traditional schools. Parents, being mostly illiterate, are also not in a position to support the formal education of their children while in transit. Therefore, the only inheritance that parents can pass on to their children is livestock – their only asset. Once the children are initiated into youth and adulthood (e.g., circumcision and FGM), they are left on their own to take care of their livestock, to marry and have families, thus

eliminating possibility of attaining a formal education (Birch, Cavanna, Abkula, & Hujale, 2010). Odds are particularly stacked against girls as they are often forced into early marriage and the practice of FGM which adversely impact their opportunities. The nomadic lifestyle has been the tradition for generations; and if there is no change in their life conditions and opportunities, it will continue.

Due to neglect and marginalization, the Kenyan government has not made a concerted effort to develop the region: to either provide alternative sources of income, to irrigate the land to avoid the need for constant movement or to implement innovative alternatives to educating young people as well as the adults in this region. Also, given the government disengagement with northeastern people, little is known or understood about pastoralist livelihood. The general government attitude and approach toward nomads has been to narrowly pursue confining these people in tribal villages with a main focus on crop farming (Government of Kenya, 2011; Whittaker, 2012). Anderson

(2005) noted that at the core of this approach is the idea of containing the communities as opposed to improving their lives. It is paternalistic for the government not to consult the nomadic pastoralists to establish their preferences. It leaves contemporary views such as the ‘Maasai and their cattle must be separated,’ ‘Can a Maasai be a Maasai without cattle,’ and ‘Pastoralism is the problem’ to frame stereotypical narratives associated with Northeastern pastoralists (ALRMP, 2004; Carr-Hill & Peart 2005; Oxfam International, 2006).

### ***Female genital mutilation (FGM)***

Most northeastern communities practice female genital mutilation. The Somali community in Kenya (and those in native Somalia) has practiced the severest form of female genital cutting (FGC), infibulation, for centuries (Jaldesa, Askew, Njue, & Wanjiru, 2005). These practices are often embedded in culture and traditions as well as religious beliefs of some communities with the notion that FGM is a rite of passage, helps girls maintain sexual purity, and prepares them for marriage (Jaldesa et al., 2005). However, Jaldesa and colleagues (2005) report evidence suggesting that FGM practices could be associated with early sexual activity among girls that may result in pregnancy, school dropout, and early marriage. Some communities are opting to conduct FGM while girls are still younger (ages 5-7) and less resistant (ActionAid International Kenya, 2011). Reports indicate that there seem to be an increase in the FGM practices among participating communities (Kebaso, n.d.). Unfortunately, there is no end in sight to the regressive FGM practices. FGM coupled with early and forced marriages have a significant impact on girl-child education in pastoralist communities. Girls are relegated to rudimentary home-related chores, a supporting

role to the mother, such as, cooking, caring for siblings, and hunting for water that involves walking long distances; education becomes secondary and unattainable for girls.

Furthermore, it is inherently problematic when communities like Gabra hold notions, such as, “God first, then man, then camel and lastly the girl,” (p. 11) – further evidence of the difficulty of advocating for the rights of girls and the need for an education when they are ranked lower than livestock (Ruto et al., 2009). Similarly, a Somali proverb that suggests, “A girl is like a vegetable” (p. 11) has been used to support early marriage (Ruto et al., 2009).

These expressed attitudes paint a rather grim picture for the girl-child in northeastern Kenya and presents a challenge to providing education to girls. Whereas, other regions in Kenya have made major strides in eradicating the FGM practice, the northeastern region has made very little progress, largely due to the connection between the practice and Islamic religious beliefs. However, FGM has been discredited as a universal practice associated with the Islamic faith (Asmani & Abdi, 2008; Jaldesa et al., 2005).

### **Resource deprivation and poverty**

Northeastern is characterized by a myriad of economic deprivation indicators that include poor health, water, and sanitation services; no electricity; inadequate roads, and other physical and social infrastructure; poorly developed, highly ineffective public and community service departments; uneducated population; and limited access to regional, national, and global markets and opportunities (GoK, 2012; Ruto et al., 2009; Serna, 2011). The climate in Northeastern region and the factors listed cause the area to be poorer economically and agriculturally (one of the core Gross Domestic

Product sectors in the country). Livestock is the single-most significant source of income, supplying 60-70% of the total livestock market locally with some for export. The prevalence of drought in the area results in water shortage, crop failure, and death of animals, leading to a compromised livelihood (Serna, 2011). The lack of food, clean water for drinking and other domestic usage, as well as inadequate sanitation facilities undermines children's ability to live healthy, quality lives. School attendance is impacted by food scarcity at home, and children are sometimes forced to contribute to basic family resources instead of attending school. Northeastern reports the lowest primary and secondary school enrollment (9.8% and 4.8%, respectively), which is associated with a cycle of poverty, remoteness, insecurity, and the nomadic lifestyle (World Wildlife Fund Eastern Africa Regional Programme Office & British Standards Institution, Ltd, 2006). The 2008 data (Table 1) shows the percentage of the population in the region that have attended school, regardless of level or completion. These are among the lowest school participation rates in the country. The data also indicate gross

disparities between males and females, reflecting the discriminate treatment of girls/women. There are serious issues in the region with the primary to secondary to college education pipeline. Although there is no data reporting on the number of students joining post-secondary institutions from northeastern, which is problematic, an analysis of the number of students applying for loans from the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) is revealing. For instance, only 414 students from the ten arid counties (i.e., Baringo, Garissa, Isiolo, Lamu, Mandera, Marsabit, Samburu, Tana River, Turkana, and Wajir – see Figure 1) applied for loans in the academic year 2005-6, only a fifth of the students (2,020 ) who applied for loans from Nyeri county (Higher Education Loans Board, 2009). In the 2008-9 academic year, the proportion seemed to have improved, with 835 from northeastern counties applying compared to 2,529 in Nyeri. This data indicates a significant disparity, worthy of investigation, between students from the arid areas and non-arid areas (e.g., Nyeri) seeking loans for post-secondary education, particularly university education.

Table 1.

*Percentage of individuals (ages 6+) in Northeastern counties who have attended school*

Counties	Male	Female	Total
<b>Mandera</b>	28.5	2.0	15.2
<b>Garissa</b>	29.8	7.8	19.5
<b>Wajir</b>	35.5	7.1	21.2

*Note. Source is Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.*

## Improving Educational Opportunities

In principle, the Government of Kenya (GoK) acknowledges that education is a fundamental right and believes that education can be used to develop human resources and capacity necessary for economic and social transformation (*Vision, 2030*). The Kenyan government, especially within the new constitutional framework, seems to promise to address issues of access, equity, and relevance of curriculum and education in general for all students (Abdi, 2012). The biggest problem has been the political brinkmanship and corruption in appropriating the limited public resources (Gathaka, 2012). Northeastern is a true example of the effect of historic government ineptitude and discrimination.

Given the backdrop of historic marginalization, providing education for all in the northeastern region cannot be achieved without addressing other socio-cultural, political, economic, and healthcare concerns. The effort to change life outcomes in northeastern region cannot be accomplished by just the local counties (e.g., Mandera, Wajir, and Garissa) or even the national government alone. A multifaceted approach is necessary to comprehensively tackle the complex needs of northeastern people. Consequently, educational needs of northeastern people have to be addressed along with the need for adequate food, safety and security, healthcare, political empowerment, economic vitality, and socio-cultural activities consistent with modern society. The following section provides some of the viable approaches in improving educational opportunities in Northeastern Kenya.

### Devolution Framework

The enactment of the new Constitution of Kenya on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, replacing the one that had been in place since independence in 1963, was a major milestone for the people of Kenya, one

referred to as a rebirth of the nation (Creste, 2010). One important aspect of the new constitution is the decentralization of governance from a powerful central government to a localized people-centered management framework. People perceive decentralization as a way to eliminate the long-standing patronizing attitude of the national government, thus changing the way resources are managed. The following communication from the incumbent governor of Mandera County, Ali Roba, is testament to the exuberance for the possibilities of devolution:

Devolution in Mandera County was ‘God sent.’ It marked a new beginning for the county and created a sense of identity and self-worth that inspired new hope for a prosperous future. It also offered an opportunity for the residents to chart out a road map on how to possibly address the problems of marginalization. “Devolution is our only hope. We are finally in control of our destiny and we must support all efforts to succeed. We got very scanty resources over the years and now it is a new dawn,” said the County Governor Ali Roba, while marking one year of devolution. (Gachanga, 2014, para. 20)

The new dawn the governor referred to is exemplified in the difference in budgetary allocations between past and present. For instance, in 2013-14 financial year, the county received KSh. 6.5 billion from the national government, an amount far greater than what the county received in past 50 years before devolution (Gachanga, 2014). The money was directed toward security operations (both police and military), food shortage, water scarcity and healthcare in the county. However, due to years of neglect it will take time and a lot more resources to build the necessary infrastructure to impact people’s lives. With regard to education, Mandera county government is poised to invest

in vocational and technical post-secondary education as well as to lobby for a four-year university (Gachanga, 2014). Also, the county has initiated a free school meals program aimed at retaining students and teachers in school. School feeding programs elsewhere in the country report positive effects, such as improved attendance (Ministry of Education, 2008). With this kind of promising resource allocation and utilization, there is so much hope in the productive functioning of the devolution government framework. However, skeptics argue that corruption and nepotism are like cancers among Kenyan political and government leaders and devolved governance may not make a significant difference in people's lives (Gathaka, 2012).

### **Mobile schools**

The concept of mobile schools is being tested with different communities in northeastern. Pilot mobile schools are mostly the initiative of nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Oxfam international, Aga Khan Foundation, ALRMP, and the Catholic Church), with limited government involvement (Ruto et al., 2009). To realize the full impact of mobile schooling, the schools require enormous resources with total commitment and support from the government and non-governmental organizations (Abdi, 2010). Research indicates that mobile schooling for nomads has been implemented with success in other countries, such as Nigeria (Souza, 2006). In essence, mobile schooling is an effort to adapt schooling to the socio-economic lifestyle of nomadic people by allowing the teacher(s) to move along with students and their families (Ruto et al., 2009). In northeastern, school supplies are packed and moved around by donkey or camel. Learning would take place under a shade of a tree or a tent, or at a makeshift school at various locations along the migration route; and the teacher(s) would teach different age groups or grade levels during

allocated times of the day, allowing children to participate in family business of tending to their livestock (Abdi, 2010). The challenges to this unorthodox way of delivering education are numerous: Recruiting qualified teachers, tracking progress, commitment from families, funding, etc. Moreover, given that Kenyan schools adhere to one standard curriculum which is developed by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), with disregard to differences in context, some argue that the curriculum is irrelevant to the unique needs of the pastoral nomads (Ruto et al. 2009); consequently, a majority of pastoral nomads may not consider schooling as a worthwhile investment. This disconnect may contribute to parents' lack of commitment to their children's schooling.

### **Subsidized boarding schools**

Boarding schools are a common practice in Kenya, particularly single-sex schools at the secondary level. These single-sex public boarding schools have proved successful in educating youth across the country, particularly girls. The girls are able to leave the distractions of home, often heavily biased against them, and concentrate on their education. Many parents, who have come to understand the role of education for social mobility, sacrifice to the last penny and are willing to send their children many miles away from home to a boarding school. However, access to boarding schools remains a challenge for many students because they cannot afford the cost of attendance – the tuition/fees. Many of these students are often left out. However, the new Constitution of Kenya mandates free basic education (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). The government has defined free basic education to include free primary education and significantly government-subsidized secondary education. The problem is the government has not provided a clear funding

framework for this proposal (Daily Nation Editorial Reporter, 2015).

Providing significantly government-subsidized or free boarding schools (both primary and secondary) in the northeastern nomadic lifestyle appears to be a viable option. Boarding schools across the country are perceived to provide stability and consistency for students. The schools can provide meals and health programs for students who otherwise may not have access to these services (GoK, 2012). The critical goal is to increase enrollment and stabilize attendance, particularly for these very disadvantaged children. A meals program component, for both day and boarding schools, is important in a region that has a chronic food shortage that leads to malnutrition, multiple health related problems, and sometimes famine-related deaths (Serna, 2011). The government acknowledges that school meals programs will positively impact educational access and retention of students as well as of teachers (Ministry of Education, 2008). Health and nutrition are associated with overall educational achievement of school-age children (GoK, 2012). In 2012 the government reported that the school meals program provided lunch meals to approximately 2.4 million pre-primary and primary school children in sixty four arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) counties and slums within Nairobi (GoK, 2012).

In summary, there are no easy solutions to the complex challenges that face the people of Northeastern. The challenges are complex because they are historic in nature as well as economic, sociocultural, political, and educational. The solutions have to match the magnitude of the problem. For example, to provide access to education, the region has to take advantage of the newly adopted devolution framework of governance and to provide funding to mobile schools and subsidized boarding schools. Nomadic people should not have to choose between educating their future

generation and their long-standing traditional livelihood of herding livestock.

## **Conclusion**

Against the backdrop of historic, overt and covert discrimination, marginalization, and isolation of northeastern Kenya, a renewed hope has arisen within the framework of the new Constitution of Kenya. To acknowledge years of neglect of northeastern region, the government of Kenya should adopt policies that address the complex challenges of the region. The government should provide reparations in terms of a comprehensive multifaceted policy framework – political, economic, sociocultural, and educational – coupled with unprecedented capital investment in the economic, educational, social, and political infrastructure. In appropriating resources, northeastern should not be treated on the scale as the rest of the regions.

However, it is realistic to conjecture that the Kenyan government may not have enough resources to make the kind of investment necessary to impact the region. The challenges of improving education and the other aspects of life in northeastern are enormous in scope with no one entity being able to overturn the cumulative disadvantages embedded in historic injustices. Collaboration among agencies is necessary. The Kenyan government must spearhead a coalition of stakeholders to implement an action-based policy framework for change with willing partners such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Bank, African Development Bank, Oxfam GB, Aga Khan Foundation, ALRMP, and religious organizations. The efforts must include the participation and collaboration of the ethnic peoples of northeastern, without whose help the efforts may be viewed as irrelevant and destined for failure. It is time for the voices of the people of the region to be heard, and given the

opportunity to participate in charting a course for their future. That is why, if done right, there is great hope in the devolved government framework, which has the potential to facilitate meaningful local participation.

Under the new 2010 Constitution of Kenya, the devolution framework of governance is based on the principle of efficient distribution of administrative, financial, and political power to the local levels in order to augment the adeptness and efficacy of government (Bigambo, 2015). In theory, devolution is supposed to provide opportunity for greater citizen participation in local development and allow the government to respond quickly to local needs. This concept gives hope to many Kenyans who have been disappointed by the central government for many years. Since independence, the central government wielded much power with no input from the citizens on decisions affecting the country. With devolution's idea of easier representation and distribution of resources, northeastern people have a chance to actively participate in charting their own course for posterity. The governors of the three northeastern counties need to pursue, with utmost urgency, an aggressive and ambitious economic, education, and security agenda. An agenda that will begin to transform the region particularly give people opportunities for economic viability. Providing access to schooling and mandating attendance is critical for building the future. Adult education is a worthwhile effort as well. If adults (i.e., parents) are educated, the benefits are good for the children, family, and region.

However, there is need to exercise cautious optimism because devolution framework is not a magic wand. If the citizens are not vigilant, the county leaders can consolidate power and easily be corrupted, especially given that corruption is endemic in Kenyan political and government structures. Without proper accountability, the Governors

can easily fall into the trap of appointing their cronies – family and friends – to conduct business as usual. Furthermore, the pervasive Kenyan attitude of honoring and revering their leaders (especially along tribal lines) and not challenging them, has a tendency of emboldening the bad actors. Also, most citizens who are illiterate and poor are only concerned about day-to-day survival with very little to do with investing in the future. These and other nuanced factors create concern for fully realizing the impact of devolution governance. However, the hopes of many remain high for this new experiment for Kenya.

### Author Note

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