

ILLERET NOMADIC EDUCATION SYSTEM (INES)

*'SCHOOL IN A BOX'*¹



ABSTRACT:

INES is an educational program currently under formation seeking to provide an Alternative Basic Education to the nomadic pastoral children among the Daasanach community in Northern Kenya. The program intends to introduce a community based teaching methodology where children learn without losing their culture and way of life. The schools shall be mobile in the manyattas/foras². This is an initiative of the Benedictine Fathers of Illeret.

¹ the slogan of INES.

² temporary settlement in the grazing field where the *Daasanach* nomads stay with their livestock.

Project title: ILLERET NOMADIC EDUCATION SYSTEM (INES)

Office location: Illeret, Marsabit County, Kenya.

Operation area: Illeret and its environs.

('School in a box'³) *Education, Culture and Environment!*

Vision: To impart basic education on the nomadic pastoral children through the adoption of the multi-grade multi-level (MGML) methodologies.

Mission statement: To address the problem of lack of access to primary education among the *Daasanach* nomadic children, by introducing an Alternative Basic Education (ABE) program, where a community –based curriculum integrated with activities, is taught. To enable the children learn without losing their culture, by establishing the schools in their manyatas/foras thus making the INES nomadic schools a community resource for conservation of culture and natural heritage while providing up to date primary school education.

Background:

Motivation and aspiration

Daasanach culture and education

The *Daasanach* of Kenya, who live in the North Eastern shores of Lake Turkana are largely nomadic pastoralists. In order to sustain their herds and find access to water, they roam an area of approximately 15.000 square kilometers in search for pasture and water. This situation, thus deprive the children in the area of their right to basic education. It became clear that the *Daasanach* nomads do not oppose education outright but they fear losing their culture and their economic way of life. Furthermore, they initially perceived western education as something which alienates their children from their families and culture for no good reward. But now this persaption has changed. This is when the idea of initiating mobile classes in their manyatas and foras was thought as the only sure way to enable these children attain basic education and not be separated from their families and their way of life. We believe, a knowledge based society is economically viable.

INES as a private school

The idea of initiating Illeret Nomadic Education System (INES) was born by the community of Benedictine Missionaries in Illeret and in particular Fr. Florian who has worked among the *Daasanach* community since 2002. He witnessed firsthand the reluctance amongst families in

³ One-teacher, one bag, one school

taking their children to any of the two conventional schools in the area⁴. He is particularly concerned with the high number of children of school going age who either drop out from the government run primary school or do not enroll at all due to their nomadic way of life. Upon establishment INES schools shall therefore be run and managed privately by the Benedictine Fathers of Illeret.

Issues with standard governmental schools in the Daasanach nomadic lifestyle

Provision of basic education has been on the Kenya's national government agenda since the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003. However government implementation on this directive has not borne fruits among pastoral communities especially in far flung areas like Illeret. It is also worth noting that the endeavor to achieve universal primary school enrollment is enumerated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 2015 and INES endeavors to contribute towards achieving this goal.

The entire Illeret area have only two government primary schools, with an acute shortage of trained teachers (10 trained teachers for twice nine classes plus two untrained nursery teachers), too few to follow up those who drop out and migrate to the foras with their families and livestock for a considerable period of time in search of water and pasture. In most cases these children do not return to the regular schools altogether.

It is also worth noting that the current Kenyan Education system was not formulated with a nomadic child in mind. Such a system is not ideal for a child born and raised in an environment where over 95% of the population is illiterate, a child who hardly comprehends the "foreign" learning materials⁵ presented to him/her by the teacher in an overcrowded classroom. INES therefore desire to change this situation by substituting the notion of regarding schools as isolated learning institutions where a child is rushed through a fixed syllabus with the focus on passing exams, with the idea that schools are educational resource centers for the local community.

⁴Illeret and Sieslacho primary schools.

⁵ The children have never seen things like an apple or a tarmaced road before. So in class they are more interested in what an apple is than to touch them or calculate with them.



Illeret (marked with the letter 'A') is situated in Marsabit county, on the eastern shore of lake Turkana, 14km from the Ethiopian border. It remains one of the remote and neglected areas in Kenya.⁶

RiVER and MGML

INES intents to adopt the methodology innovated and practiced in the **Rishi Valley Institute for Educational Resources (RiVER)** in the rural interior of South India for over 25 years. *INES* approach will allow provision of ABE to nomadic children whereby they learn by doing at an individual pace. The MGML-model of learning, provides a child the necessary flexibility in learning because classes consist of pupils of different ages who study at their own pace and learn by doing. It also gives the single teacher the possibility to teach four years in one classroom. Alternative Basic Education is recognized in Kenya, thanks to the Ministry of Education's policy launched in 2011.

⁶ Maps are a courtesy of Google Maps (some details like the border of the national park are not accurate)

Rough curriculum

The teaching curriculum under *INES* shall be locally contextualized and designed to suit the educational, cultural and economic need of the Daasanach, besides covering basic official topics of lower primary. The content of the entire curriculum shall include skills that are relevant to their pastoral lifestyle for instance livestock education, Environmental management, peace and security. These modules shall be integrated with activities that aim to promote conservation and sustainability of the Daasanach local culture and way of life. Instructions shall start in the local Daasanach language and then be followed by Kiswahili and English.

Since the nomadic children may not be comprised of the same grade and age, the multi-grade system⁷ is considered appropriate in this big undertaking. *INES* is therefore aimed at achieving a one-teacher, one-classroom approach in order to serve children in mixed ability group by using methodologies that are locally conceptualized. The *INES* program is at this stage perceived to an added advantage owed to the already developed and available Daasanach Alphabet⁸. This will help in the formulation of the teaching aids since the first language to be used in teaching is the local *Daasanach*. If successfully adapted and implemented, *INES* shall be a child centered program tailored towards addressing the much needed primary basic education by the Daasanach nomadic child.



Af 'Daasanach alphabet

Teachers

Teachers are a determining factor in the whole undertaking. Because of the language and cultural factor they can only be recruited locally with the general low level of education in the area. This is a great challenge. The only ten trained local teachers are already absorbed in the two

⁷ One- teacher several grades

⁸ Af 'Daasanach – courtesy of Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL Kenya) (see picture)

government primary schools in the area. The few Form 4 leavers are mostly absorbed in locally available clerical and NGO works and are not ready to live outside of town center. Their for training of teachers with a considerable low level of education will be the second task that the INES program will have to tackle after developing the curriculum and teaching material. The teachers preferably should be recruited from the manyattas/foras in which they are to teach. The training has to be done in shorter lapses spread over a long period of time to avoid long absences from their family. In this way they can already start teaching after the initial training and advance with each new laps of their training.

Targeted beneficiaries

INES program target the Daasanach nomadic pastoral children, especially those in the manyattas/foras outside Illeret Centre having cultural responsibilities. These children are willing to acquire basic primary education but unable, as they have to looking after their parents' livestock. Firstly, these manyatas/foras are far from the two permanently established government primary schools within Illeret area hence the children cannot access learning. Secondly, the unpredicted movement from one place to another occasioned by search of pasture, water and the frequent conflicts with their neighboring pastoral communities like Gabra, Hamarkoke and Turkana make access to basic education to these children difficult. The proponents of INES are optimistic that with dedication and full implementation, the project shall result to realization of its objectives as outlined.

We have identified and proposed to start pilot schools in the following Manyattas(10): Elkimere, Aibete, Illolo, Elbookoch, Duraa, Telesgaye/Ilegele, Nang'olei/Dhuorim, Watalii, Guoro, Kadite. We want to start schools in the foras later, as they move more often and we thus expect it more difficult. The number of pilot schools is limited to the number of available teachers. However, INES is committed to reaching out and to provide basic education to all the nomadic children in the area.



A: Illeret; B: Sieslucho; M1-M10: Manyattas in same order as above

Institutional and structural framework

INES started its preparations in January 2014 with the selection and preparation of a small core group of two candidates drawn from within the community after a competitive process. This core group still needs training on the RiVER System i.e. Curriculum designing, teacher training, monitoring etc.. Currently (end may 2014) they are working on the basics of the syllabus and learning material for the school. Further on it is planned for the core group to teach for experience a few month themselves, before training the teachers and improving the material.

For purposes of effective running of the schools, INES has come up with the following structure:

- 1) **The Director:** The holder of this office shall be the overall foreseer of the entire project and giving direction from time to time on the way forward. This position is the founder (Fr. Florian) and the title of Director and the Founder shall be used interchangeably in reference to the office bearer.
- 2) **Program coordinator:** The holder (Gilbert Kipchumba) is responsible of coordinating, supervising and ensuring that activities now in the preparation and later in all the INES schools are running as planned and expected.
- 3) **Field supervisor:** The holder who shall be appointed amongst the core team shall act as the overall Head Teacher of all the INES schools. He will be charged with regular supervision of the progress of the schools on the ground and subsequently bring a report to the office with recommendation for possible action
- 4) **The core team:** This comprise of the two individual is now charged with formulating of syllabus and teaching materials and shall be charged with regular training of the teachers on effective teaching and formulating relevant teaching materials as new development emerge.
- 5) **The teachers:** They shall teach in separate schools (one for each school). They shall be reporting the learning progress of their respective pupils to the program coordinator and recommending possible areas of improvement. Such recommendations shall be relayed to the management for possible action with a view of improvement.

N/B: This structural framework may be redesigned upon acquisition of administrative knowledge, and experience.

Other key players/stakeholders

- Benedictine community
- Rishi Valley Institute for Educational Resources (RIVER)
- The local (Daasanach) community.
- Ministry of education.

Opportunities

- ✓ common culture/language
- ✓ respect for the council of elders by the community
- ✓ availability of many children of school going age to attend school
- ✓ use of flexible learning methodology (MGML)
- ✓ Flexible learning time
- ✓ Contextualized curriculum
- ✓ Local teachers
- ✓ Proximity learning centers

Expected challenges

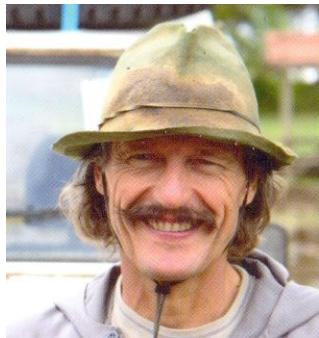
It is obvious that for a unique system of education that INES is about to adapt to come to a full realization, there are a fair share of challenges that comes with it. One of eminent challenges is the issue of funds because the entire process of trans-creation of materials, implementation, human resource, scaling up, and contextualization cost money. It is in this regard that we are appealing to like-minded organizations and people of good will to offer financial and logistical support toward this worthy undertaking.

Scarcity of personnel with the requisite educational qualification is another great challenge since the population is largely illiterate, however we shall rely on the few youth in possession of basic knowledge of reading and writing, and are ready to live and move with the nomads. They have to continually advance their education by following the in-service programs so that they remain academically relevant and also improve the quality of education in INES schools.

Owing to harsh conditions in the area and the general scarcity of food, considering the introduction of a school feeding program would certainly be an encouragement to children and parents alike, again this depends on availability of funding.

Conclusion:

With all the institutional, logistical, and structural mechanism put in place and working on our expected challenges, INES believe that it shall achieve its intended purpose – bringing basic education to the Daasanach nomad child eventually transforming the society as a whole. We in INES believe that a proper foundation of education is the first crucial step to future success, therefore dedication and hard work is the only sure way of realizing this goal. The teaching of life of St. Benedict *Ora Et Labora* (praying and working) shall be our guiding principle.



Fr. Florian von Bayern OSB
Director/Founder,
Illeret Nomadic Education System, (INES)
fr.florian.osb@gmail.com



Gilbert Kipchumba,
Program coordinator,
Illeret Nomadic Education System, (INES)
gilbert.kipchumba@yahoo.com

The core team: Boniface Bonaya and Joshua Habara



