Chapter 11

Life Skills Education in Ethiopia: Afar Pastoralists' Perspectives

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Abstract Pastoralists constitute a large proportion of the population of Ethiopia, representing an estimated 14–18% of the population (MoE, A standard and manual for upgrading Alternative Basic Education (ABE) Centers, Level 1–4 to Level 1–6. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2018a). The provision of formal education through a school-based delivery model has failed to deliver the desired outcomes for Afar children and youth in terms of inclusion and participation, and quality of and relevance of education in support of building pastoralists' skills for life and thriving. Formal education for pastoralists should be concerned with curricular relevance as experienced from the perspective of the pastoralists' daily reality and extant knowledge that is well-adapted to environmental conditions and emphasizes collective community wellbeing (Krätli & Dyer, Mobile pastoralists and education: strategic options. International Institute for Environment and Development, 2009). This chapter explores the ways in which the current curriculum in the Afar region addresses Krätli and Dyer's (Mobile pastoralists and education: strategic options. International Institute for Environment and Development, 2009) four dimensions of curricula necessary for pastoralist education to be considered relevant. It also explores key stakeholders' perspectives about which life skills matter most to the Afar pastoralist community and the extent to which the current curriculum reflects and incorporates these skills. This chapter offers a new perspective on how to reconceptualize and teach these skills through the education system, highlighting recommended adaptations to the curriculum aligned with national and international development goals and notions of quality and relevance. These adaptations respond

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to the knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, mobility patterns, and calendars grounded in pastoralist populations' values to maintain a complex and sustainable equilibrium among pastures, livestock, and people.

Keywords Life skills · Education · Pastoralists · Relevance · Curriculum · Afar · Indigenous knowledge

Acronyms

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
EFA	Education for All
ESDP	Education Sector Development Plan
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GECFDD	General Education Curriculum Framework Development Department
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NPES	National Pastoralist Education Strategy
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
QESSP	Quality Education Strategic Support Program
REB	Regional Education Bureau
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WEO	Woreda Education Office

Introduction

Formal approaches to education and life skills¹ for pastoralist communities grounded in human capital and human rights approaches have failed to achieve the social change objectives of resilience and sustainable development. Life skills informed by indigenous pastoralist perspectives regarding what skills matter most, for what purposes, and how they are (or can be) taught to children and young people may offer a new perspective on how to conceptualize and teach these skills through the education system. As Murphy-Graham and Cohen's and DeJaeghere's chapters (Chaps. 2 and 4, both in this volume) discuss, educators and policymakers need to consider the broader ecology and systems within which young people develop and enact these skills, how these skills could be more meaningfully articulated and

¹ This chapter utilizes the definition of 'life skills' noted in Chap. 1, as 'skills that help you through everyday tasks and to be active and productive members of a community (*to be able to do life well*)'.

incorporated into the education system, and pedagogical practices that have the potential to create transformation toward more equitable life outcomes.

Pastoralists constitute a large proportion of the population of Ethiopia, representing an estimated 14–18% of the population (MoE, 2018a). The two predominantly pastoralist areas of the country are the Somali region and Afar region (C4ED, 2017). Afar refers to both a geographic area within Ethiopia as well as to a cultural group indigenous to this region, with the Afar Regional State situated in northeastern Ethiopia. Despite an overall enabling policy environment and significant improvement in access to education at the national level in Ethiopia since 1994, enrollment, retention, and learning attainment remain low in the pastoralist areas, especially for girls (MoE, 2017b). For instance, the net enrollment rates (NER) in 2018 for primary education (grades 1–8) in the Somali region and Afar region, at 66.4% and 45.9% respectively, are far below the national average of 94.7%. The primary education dropout rates are also higher in these regions, at 22% in the Somali region and 19.3% in the Afar, compared to the national average of 17.5% (MoE, 2019b). There is a level of consensus that, in spite of national education reforms and specific strategies and policies designed to serve the education needs of pastoralist communities and to enhance access to and the quality of school-based education in pastoral areas, the national education system has not succeeded in providing a relevant education through a contextually-appropriate modality for the children and young people in these communities. The modality and curricula will require more than a simple contextualization and “copy and adapt” set of approaches designed for sedentarized communities (Ziyn & Wogasso, 2017).

Conceptualizing and teaching life skills grounded in a relational approach present an opportunity to leverage indigenous pastoral social relations as collective protective assets (DeJaeghere, Chap. 4, this volume). These assets can be aligned with national and international development goals and notions of quality education. This chapter offers a new perspective on how to reconceptualize and teach these life skills through the education system, highlighting recommended adaptations to the nationally-framed, regionally-adapted curriculum in the Afar region, its delivery modalities, and pedagogical approaches. Such adaptations respond to the knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, mobility patterns, and calendars grounded in pastoralist populations' values to maintain a complex and sustainable equilibrium among pastures, livestock, and people. This chapter draws on interviews with a small but diverse representation from the Afar community including male and female youth, community elders and leaders, and regional and district education officials, in order to shed light on their perspectives regarding which life skills matter most and are most relevant to this context and its way of life, as well as how these skills are traditionally taught and learned. Building on the rich foundation of perspectives and insights that stakeholders offered, an analysis of the current primary-level curriculum in the Afar region is made using Krätli and Dyer's (2009) four dimensions of curricula framework, keeping the pastoralist perspective firmly at its center.²

²For this analysis, only three of the four dimensions of the Krätli & Dyer (2009) framework will be employed, that of subject content, socialization and localization. Status will be elaborated on later in the chapter but is not a considered dimension of the analysis itself.

Through this framework, this chapter explores the extent to which foundational life skills (per the national curricular framework) are represented as intended in the current curriculum in the Afar region; as well as the extent to which the life skills and corresponding traditional pedagogies and approaches that matter most to Afar pastoralists are reflected therein.

This chapter concludes with suggestions related to bridging the divide between the current curriculum in the Afar region and the life skills that “matter most” to the Afar community and to counterbalance the “trade off” between school-based education and pastoral livelihoods. This work contributes new perspectives to support the development of culturally and contextually relevant education that can enable the children of pastoralist communities to fully participate in and benefit from foundational skills gained through a formal education experience, while simultaneously retaining and fortifying life skills grounded in traditional pastoral production, livelihoods, and collective wellbeing.

Pastoralist Education Context in Ethiopia

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) established education as a constitutional right for all Ethiopians through the Education and Training Policy in 1994, and over the last two decades, the country has experienced an almost revolutionary movement in the education sector through a series of sector reforms, policies, and strategies. Pastoral education as a priority was mainstreamed in the third Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) (2005/2006—2010/2011) across all sub-sectors of the educational system. To guide this sector focus, a national strategy to promote pastoral education was developed in 2008 to outline the specific challenges and opportunities pastoral communities face and to identify strategies to promote access to and strengthen the quality of primary and post-primary education (MoE, 2008). With a changing environment for pastoral communities and seven years of experience in implementing the strategy, the MoE revised the pastoral strategy in the form of the National Pastoralist Education Strategy (NPES) in the 2015/2016 academic year with support from UNICEF and the Quality Education Strategic Support Program (QESSP).

Prior to the NPES, studies revealed a centralized approach and national “solution” in its response to a local situation, ironically rendering the pastoralist community, toward whom such approaches and policies were geared, invisible in their development and implementation process. This was further compounded by under-capacitated regional and district-level authorities to lead this “pastoralists first” approach. There was a strong need to shift from “tactics” to articulate a new and responsive national strategy for pastoralist education that went beyond just extending the current system (Krätli & Dyer, 2009). The current iteration of the NPES attempts to do this and offers targeted support towards the education and development of pastoralist children and communities (MoE, 2017a).

The revised strategy strongly emphasized a decentralized implementation model meant to ensure stakeholder ownership and commitment, and localization for each of the pastoralist areas, with one of its six guiding principles to “ensure the curriculum is relevant to pastoralist livelihoods and indigenous knowledge, context and developmental needs, and is delivered in an appropriate language of instruction” (MoE, 2017a). The recent Ethiopia Education and Training Roadmap (N.D., in progress) also reaffirms the need to have an education strategy that guides the provision of education and training using appropriate curriculum and flexible delivery modalities suitable to pastoralist and semi-pastoralist populations (MoE, 2018b).

Formal Education and Curriculum: A Concern for Relevance

The 2017 NPES aspired to integrate pastoralist livelihoods into the regional curriculum content and impart foundational skills per the national curriculum framework in partnership with Regional Education Bureaus (REB). The resulting curricular content and corresponding textbooks form the basis of the current curriculum in the Afar region, which is used in both school-based and Alternative Basic Education (ABE)³ delivery modalities. Current curricular materials were initially developed at a national level in Amharic, subsequently abridged and condensed by non-Afar subject experts, and finally translated into Afar language by native Afar educators (Ahmed, 2017). The Afar REB was responsible for contextualizing and translating the curriculum and for developing teaching and learning materials, though with very little consultation of pastoralist communities for whom the materials were designed (C4ED, 2017). Although the current curriculum in the Afar region may have been “complete enough” to meet national standards in terms of foundational skills and corresponding subject content, the process of its development meant it remained incomplete, and was lacking relevance in terms of localization of content and collaborative engagement with pastoralists in its development (Krätli & Dyer, 2009).

Although the same curriculum is used for school-based and ABE delivery modalities, it was found that many community members and the implementers at the *woreda*/district level⁴ in the Afar region construed ABE as a substandard mode of delivery (Ahmed, 2017), referring to the curriculum as an inferior education that only included textbook knowledge (Anwar, 2010). A key factor underpinning issues associated with ABE is that it is delivered by community-based, para-professional “facilitators” rather than formally-trained teachers used in formal schools (MoE, 2019a, b). The Centre for Evaluation and Development’s 2017 Impact Evaluation of the ABE program in Ethiopia identified that although the ABE program documents

³ Alternative Basic Education (ABE) is an alternative to the formal primary school delivery modality that condenses teaching of the first four years of primary school into three years.

⁴ A *woreda* is a local unit of governance.

specifically identified the learning needs of pastoral children and youth, the lack of endorsement of a clear and binding pastoralist education strategy with ABE as the cornerstone prevented efforts from fully meeting the learning needs of pastoralist children (C4ED, 2017). ABE as a delivery modality therefore has subsequently remained a temporary solution to extend access to education in the Afar region without sufficient resourcing and supervision at the district level to provide quality education, and it lacks buy-in at the regional level to drive, support, and oversee its adoption, adaptation and implementation.

In order to examine the relevance of the current curricula in the Afar region, Krätli and Dyer (2009) propose a framework for nomadic populations that considers four separate but inter-related dimensions that include, yet go beyond, subject content to consider status (the acquisition of formal recognition of learning); socialization (the acquisition of essential social skills necessary to live in a national society); and localization (the acquisition of skills and information rooted in a specific section of society and help to define people's identity) (Krätli & Dyer, 2009). While research suggests the status of the ABE program modality and corresponding curriculum in the Afar region is low from the perspective of community members and implementers as noted above, this study further analyzes the relevance of the current curricula in the Afar region through the Krätli and Dyer (2009) framework to identify the types of life skills that matter most from the perspectives of the Afar pastoralist communities, in order to offer new perspectives on how to reconceptualize and teach these skills through the education system.

Methodology

This study employed both a desk review and primary data collection using focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The desk review surveyed MoE policy documents and sector plans, MoE National Pastoralist Education Strategies (2008, 2017a, b), Afar Bureau of Culture and Tourism documents, the MoE curriculum framework, Afar regional-level textbooks and teacher guides, and other related reports, research studies, and evaluations on pastoralist and nomadic education.

The secondary data were complemented by focus group discussions and interviews with a purposefully-selected set of Afar participants, with the aim of including a small number of respondents representing key voices across each of several stakeholder categories. A sample of twenty-one stakeholders participated in the study and included male and female youth from the Afar community, community elders and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members, representatives from the Afar Regional Education Bureau (REB), and an Afar cultural expert.⁵

⁵This study was approved by the MOE Institutional Review Committee of the FDRE, and they followed ethical guidelines for research with young people in these specific contexts.

Fig. 11.1 Map of Afar Region and Zones

The primary data were collected in two of the five zones of the Afar region, Zones 1 and 3 (Fig. 11.1). Although with some difference in terms of cultural customs, these areas are culturally and politically very similar. The *woredas* included were Amibara and Awash–Fentale in the southern part of the Afar region in Gebi Resu or Zone 3, and Afambo, Aysaita and Chifera in the lower Awash area or Zone 1. These two zones were purposefully selected to represent the diverse lifestyles yet shared understanding and approach to life skills of the Afar pastoralists. Given limitations of the small sample size and limited geographic representation, findings cannot be generalized to the whole Afar pastoralist population.

Data collection was carried out across two phases. The first phase included tools development and testing, which included a pastoralist communities survey and interview protocols for the focus groups and interviews; collection and analysis of secondary data, including MoE policies and strategy documents; and the facilitation of focus groups with pastoralist youth and the subsequent data analysis. The second phase included interviews and focus groups with community elders, PTA members, scholars, and experts on life skills and customs. Interviews were also conducted with Afar regional and *woreda*-level education experts. Finally, an analysis of curriculum materials was conducted using the Krätli and Dyer (2009) four dimensions of curricula framework, taking into consideration three of the four dimensions: subject content, socialization and localization⁶. Conclusions related to analyzing the curriculum content as presented herein were derived through consensus between one of the authors and two Afar curriculum experts.

⁶The dimension of ‘status’ was addressed through secondary literature as presented in the section above.

Table 11.1 Dimensions of relevance & grades/subjects analyzed

Krätli & Dyer's dimension of curriculum relevance	Grades/subjects analyzed	
Subject content	Mathematics	Grades 1–4
	Languages	Grades 1–4
	Environmental science	Grades 1–4
Socialization	Environmental science	Grades 1–4
	Civics and ethics	Grades 5–8
	Social sciences	Grades 5–6
Localization	Environmental science	Grades 1–4
	Social studies	Grades 5–6
	Integrated sciences	Grades 5–6

Focus groups with youth participants explored themes relating to hopes and dreams, life skills that matter most, why and/ or for what purposes; where and how these skills are learned; and role models and caring/cooperation practices. Focus groups and interviews with adult participants explored similar themes, as well as perspectives on the formal education curriculum and delivery modalities; perceptions related to drivers of low education participation and high dropout; and gendered attitudes and perceptions related to the education of children.

Content analysis of curricular materials was conducted utilizing the national curriculum framework and syllabi, and current Afar regional level student textbooks. Following Krätli and Dyer's (2009) framework, skill domains were identified based on the national curriculum framework and interviews for each of the three dimensions explored. The dimensions of curriculum relevance and the subjects by grade analyzed are reflected in Table 11.1.

Afar Perspectives on Life Skills

This section of the chapter captures a rich cross-section of voices from and closely connected to the Afar pastoralist community to understand the different perspectives of and insights into Afar pastoralist cultural practices, preservation, and life skills. It also identifies the foundational life skills that are included in the national curriculum framework, and where additions, revisions or enhancements could or should be made. A set of recurring themes emerged across the different stakeholders, despite generational and geographic differences, including: the notion of relevance of the curriculum in the Afar region from a pastoralist perspective; that education matters and is valued by pastoralist communities; and the content children learn during their educational experience matters. The majority of stakeholders agreed that formal education is prioritized by their community and it is not incompatible with the pastoralist way of life and culture. Afar youth specifically expressed the priority that their community places on education and the sacrifices the

community makes, such as “selling cattle to educate us”, to ensure an education is attainable for their generation. Stakeholders’ perspectives contrast, however, with the current conceptual understanding of school-based education, its delivery modality, and the whole notion of a “national” curriculum.

Stakeholder interviews with regional and district level education representatives particularly noted the need to rethink pastoralist education (education for pastoralists) whereby the system itself and the curriculum:

[should] reflect the livelihood, it should be relevant and take into account the rich knowledge and skill of the community. There should be a thorough study and reflection to include the content and methodology of pastoralists in the education system. It’s not enough to have policies, strategies and guidelines and then only ask for an adapted translation. What is required is to first of all listen to the people (i.e. those from pastoralist communities) and work on creating enabling conditions.

One education expert used an example of mother-tongue based education and suggested that, should the MoE work through a mobile school model, it’s upon them to first ensure there are teachers proficient in mother-tongue, and who are willing to work in these environments and to adapt to the mobility patterns and calendars of the people. Stakeholders suggested that Afar youth are a critical cohort that the MoE could be training and encouraging to assume education leadership roles in the future as a “local approaches” strategy toward bridging the divide. There should be no expectation of a compromise made between a child enjoying the benefits of a formal (school-based) experience and that which is community-based and rooted in his or her immediate social context (Krätli & Dyer, 2009). The matter, quality, and extent of formal and traditional education can be greatly amplified if they are genuinely mutually-reinforcing, complementary, and viewed as equally valid.

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of the pedagogies and methodologies found in the Afar community practices of inter-generational transfer of knowledge, skills, and practice, and one Afar REB representative suggested the “modern education system” presents an “excellent opportunity to deploy such techniques, practices and institutional arrangement embedded in our community”. The idea to integrate Afar knowledge and pedagogy into the formal system was welcomed by another REB representative who observed that, while teachers in the formal system are relatively well-trained with college or university education, their skills level and knowledge base are still very limited, noting:

Either one or both teacher education system and the school service delivery mechanism should be harmonized with the methodology of the pastoralist community, which transfer knowledge and skills from one generation to the next through ... authentic techniques (i.e. observation, experiential learning, assisting, coaching) and institutional arrangements, such as the indigenous conflict resolution system, *Med-a*.

In sum, our findings illustrate the need for the formal education system to become more relevant by infusing it with traditional Afar life skills and knowledge systems, including Afar pedagogies and methodologies.

Afar Perspectives: Shared Voices About What Matters Most

Although stakeholder discussions revealed some slight divergence of perspective, which for the most part was generational, there was a consistent and tightly-knit cross-generational convergence regarding the types of life skills that mattered most, such as reciprocal caring and sharing, reinforced by a commonly-held high value placed upon clan, community, and on traditional ways of knowing and doing, as well as teaching and learning. Stakeholders provided explicit examples of skills that should be included in the curricula in areas such as animal husbandry and livestock health and management, traditional building and construction practices (*Afar AREE*), environmental preservation, indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and social cohesion (*Med-a*), and communication techniques (*Dagu*). They also offered pedagogical processes and approaches for acquiring these skills, including experiential learning, observation and listening, mentorship and apprenticeship, and learning by making mistakes. They felt these approaches could be reflected or adapted and elaborated upon within formal education to ensure a more accurate, holistic, culturally-relevant, and successful education experience for all children, from pastoralist and non-pastoralist communities alike.

Livestock management and animal husbandry are life skills central to the Afar way of life. But in a context of rapid socio-economic change, elders and parents from the pastoralist community expressed concern that Afar children and youth also need to learn skills and have experience for the changing economy and conditions. They felt that the school system and the curriculum could take responsibility for teaching animal production for a livestock economy, income generation, and financial literacy. Historically, animal production was a measure of household wealth and status in the Afar community, and used for household consumption, not for economic wellbeing. “Culturally, the community has no experience in selling cattle for income generation and saving for future life. The community, however, shares and the clan will support those in need”, one elder noted. Another elder also spoke about modernity, urban sprawl, and the diminishing pasture land, all of which have threatened the pastoralist way of life and highlighted the need for Afaris to adapt to the changing conditions, such to engage in a livestock economy and to manage savings. One parent observed that, although there is still a relatively low level of awareness in the community of the importance of “modern” education (in contrast to traditional learning), parents do recognize the changing circumstances, including widespread logging and pervasive drought, that are putting their livelihood assets and subsequent legacy to be left to their children at risk. Educating their children through formal (school-based) education is commonly seen as a means of helping to mitigate such shocks and to better prepare them for a changing future. Treatment of diseases in livestock was also considered an important skill set to be learned alongside the corresponding prayer ceremonies; however, the prayer ceremony was not tied to the curriculum, but rather was the responsibility of the community to ensure indigenous knowledge and local belief systems in diagnosis and treatment were passed on.

Stakeholders highlighted the unique set of life skills required to construct an indigenous Afar home, known as Afar AREE, which is conferred onto young people (specifically girls) by way of observation, apprenticeship, and learning by doing. Stakeholders believed engineers and those from non-pastoralist communities should be invited to understand the unique Afar structure and design, which uses local materials uniquely suited to the region's hot and dry climate, making it more resistant to wind and floods. Stakeholders noted that although the social studies curriculum makes some references to the Afar traditional house, it is extremely limited in the description and does not include the corresponding science and engineering skills involved in its construction. Elders emphasized that this skill should be reflected in the curriculum, and highlighted the idea that there may then be a level of adaptation of construction materials used due to technological advances. They felt that not only do Afar youth need to learn this knowledge, but so do others so they understand these locally relevant and environmentally useful techniques, which also build life skills of collective wellbeing through caring for the environment.

Learning about this system of home building is also tied to another life skill of Afar peoples, namely, that of equity in enacting collective wellbeing. All members of the community, including children, are expected to build life skills in order to contribute to the collective wellbeing of the community. Division of labor is gendered in the Afar community to ensure equity and sharing of the work more so than "what men do" or "what women do". It is the role of women to lead the work of engineering and home construction, and young girls learn from their mothers by way of observation, assisting, and coaching. It is the role of men to lead the work of child rearing and, as young girls shadow women in learning skills for engineering and home construction, young boys learn life skills underpinning animal medicine, husbandry, grazing, and herd mobility, etc. from men.

Related to the skills of building and their environmental relevance, Afar youth consider the preservation, protection, and honoring of the environment as central to their way of life as pastoralists. The felling of trees "without reason" is prohibited in Afar culture and is penalized "through social isolation or giving cattle or another means of livelihood as compensation. Trees are only allowed to be cut in a time of severe drought subject to the consent of the clan leader of the community". Thus, life skills regarding traditional environmental practices within the Afar community are important to teach in school.

Med-a, a cultural governance and conflict resolution system with its own customary administrative process, frequently came up as an important indigenous practice that needs to be protected and preserved at a community level, but its practices and approaches to social justice, cohesion, and associated life skills of reciprocal caring and conflict resolution should also be reflected in and taught in the education curriculum. Proficiency in *Med-a* is seen as a critically important life skill in that "it helps with peace, justice and social cohesion" and "helps us to learn how we should communicate with other non-Afar communities". *Med-a* allows "us to continue as Afar", meaning it is central to who they are as a people. Male youth also stated they wanted to "modernize the *Med-a* system that binds our communities as one. It is the source of peace and justice". The system helps to manage and resolve intra- and

inter-ethnic, clan, and personal conflicts, and while it was not clear what modernization in this case implied, Afar pastoralists see the value in promoting the life skills that underpin this traditional governance and conflict resolution system.

The practice of *Med-a* should be, as one district-level education representative stated, “included as a major life skill in the curriculum as it touches every aspect of the pastoralist community”. Additionally, stakeholders mentioned that curriculum writers should “study and read the Afar history first. The history of the Afar joining to fight the Italians in defense of Ethiopia’s sovereignty is scarcely mentioned in the grade eight history subject matter textbook”. Therefore, making the content relevant to the livelihoods and history of Afar requires understanding these practices within their historical context and use, and from the perspective of Afar pastoralists.

Alongside *Med-a* is *Dagu*, also learned in the community and not in schools, and also often cited by all stakeholders as being of value, needing to be retained, and central to “being Afar”. *Dagu*, meaning “information, news and knowledge”, is a word-of-mouth communication technique and skill set used throughout Afar culture whereby, “even in the absence of ICT [Information and Communications Technology], we are able to share important information,” a male youth shared. Afar people have a well-developed oral culture whereby word of-mouth plays the most important role in connecting, informing, and educating, especially about accounts of current events (Mohammed, 2016). Afar people painstakingly swap and meticulously fact-check news and share knowledge through *Dagu*. The enthusiasm they have to obtain news and information together with the reciprocal accountability attached to *Dagu*, i.e. accountability for what one reports or relays, and universal and reciprocal responsibility to share news and knowledge, makes *Dagu* a highly interactive traditional communications network (Mohammed, 2016; Morrell, 2005). All stakeholders expressed the importance of preserving the life skills—listening, speaking, fact-checking information, and sharing knowledge—related to *Dagu*.

The fabric of Afar culture, including its way of life and its maintenance, is underpinned by a sense of a shared life and belongings and corresponding life skills of collective asset management and stewardship. As one representative from the district education bureau said:

Helping each other is the most respected value of the Afar people. The culture of sedentary people is of that of individuality (living for oneself) however, in our case, if someone who has money or information or skills from the clan, the money and so on doesn’t belong to him or her or his or her household. It belongs to the clan and automatically for all.

Another respondent spoke to the survival of its culture over the centuries and “if someone in the community has a problem, everybody (clan) will help”. With the changes of urbanization, the loss of viable of pasture land and “modernization”, these traditional practices of sharing may be at risk but they are no less valued. Although Afar youth respondents spoke of individualized aspirations for their futures and desires for increased access to technology, their ideas, beliefs, and attitudes were not individually learned or enacted. Rather, the Afar youths’ ideas, beliefs, and attitudes are influenced and enacted in relation to others and their environment; they are tied to the collective, imbued with ideas of mutual support and

care, and keep community, clan, and collective aspirations at the heart. Youth attributed notions of value, self-value, and self-esteem to the community and to “being Afar”: “As you know our community is clan-based and the clan-based relationship is a highly valued connection. If I encounter a serious problem, the first responsible body is my clan. The clan protects and supports.”

With regard to aspirations for “modern skills” and employment prospects, Afar youth did not see any contradiction between the need to expand their livelihood opportunities and to retain their Afar values and practices. They recognized a need to diversify livelihoods and income generating options, and emphasized the value of “modern skills” to advance education to the tertiary level, referring to higher education aspirations toward becoming a doctor, social scientist, engineer, teacher, or business person. Teaching was identified by one male youth as a profession to aspire to, while his peers referred to “going to university and becoming a doctor (and living in the city)”. Female youth referred to becoming engineers who could “dig wells and free their communities of water scarcity and introduce environmentally friendly agriculture” while also acknowledging the value of education and schooling for the future wellbeing of their families and their communities. Male youth did not explicitly link economic wellbeing nor aspirations (in terms of professions/dreams for the future) to their pastoralist experience around livestock or animal production, and they mentioned technology as something of value and important for their future.

In summary, a number of skills were universally identified by stakeholders as the most important life skills for this community. All stakeholders regarded the life skills of reciprocal caring and sharing, and of collective asset management and stewardship as central to “being Afar”. Afar youth also associated the collective wellbeing of the community with their surroundings, their environment, and its protection. Life skills in animal husbandry, livestock management, and animal (and human) disease prevention were considered extremely important for all community members, with Afar elders and parents expressly concerned that Afar children and youth develop financial literacy skills in the context of the livestock economy and “a changing world”. All stakeholders said that life skills in traditional building and construction were highly valued and with new technologies and materials on the market, Afar elders encouraged the idea of adapting techniques and approaches to incorporate such “advances”. All stakeholders said life skills associated with being proficient in *Med-a* and *Dagu* were extremely important indigenous life skills that needed to be protected and preserved. At the same time, they represent skills that hold many benefits for others and should be shared with non-pastoralist communities.

Formal Schooling and Traditional Learning

Based upon this small yet representative selection of stakeholder voices, there were no apparent cross-generational tensions nor disconnects. All voices were unanimous in their belief that formal education is highly prized and of value to their

community, and that there are specific life skills that the community prioritizes, values, and believes would enhance the education curriculum if meaningfully infused and not “grafted on” as means of checking off “inclusion”. Additionally, there are foundational life skills that are not currently learned at the community level, but which should be reflected in the formal system to ensure that Afar children and youth are even better equipped to navigate a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. There was a genuine desire to see some traditional Afar life skills taught through the formal system, and a belief that incorporating into the formal system some of the traditional pedagogies and methodologies for teaching and learning used in the Afar community could strengthen formal education as well.

What mattered most to all stakeholders was that the formal system should reflect the values and necessary life skills of the Afar pastoralist community, from a pedagogical as well as a content perspective. The level of sophistication in teaching and learning strategies used by the Afar community to transfer knowledge and skills, using experiential learning pedagogies and methodologies and encouraging listening and observation, could easily overwhelm an average teacher in the formal education system who may be less comfortable or trained in these kinds of pedagogical approaches. Heath (1982) and Harris (1984) propose that “good” teaching in any culture should include traditional learning techniques and that a teacher in a cross-cultural setting will try to make learning as context-specific and real to life as possible. To achieve this, formal schooling for Afar students must include learning by observation and imitation, learning by trial and error, learning through real-life activities, and learning in context-specific settings. The culture of formal schooling can often create a significant barrier to learning for many students, and the goal of the teacher is to create a learning context that is familiar to students, yet stretches them beyond their previous experiences (Lingenfelter & Lingenfelter, 2003). Thus, for schooling and the curriculum to be relevant to Afar students, a teacher needs to lead students to understand the place and purpose of both traditional and formal learning, and utilize the pedagogical and methodological approaches found in indigenous Afar pastoralist culture.

Curriculum Content Analysis

After identifying the skills and related pedagogies and methodologies that matter the most to pastoralist stakeholders, a curriculum content analysis was conducted using three of the four dimensions of the Krätli and Dyer framework (2009)—namely, subject content, socialization and localization—to examine the extent to which these prized life skills are reflected in the curriculum, and relatedly, to determine the curriculum’s relevance. Through the lens of Krätli and Dyer’s (2009) subject content and socialization dimensions of relevance, the first level analyzed the extent to which foundational skills, as intended per the national curriculum framework and its syllabi, are reflected in current Afar regional-level textbooks and teacher guides. The second level focused on the extent to which the life skills valued

by Afar pastoralists are represented in the curriculum through the lens of Krätli and Dyer's (2009) socialization and localization dimensions of relevance.

Foundational Life Skills Intended Under the National Framework: Curriculum Analysis

This analysis considered the extent to which foundational life skills, as intended per the national curricular framework, are represented in the current Afar region subject content of primary grades (1–4) student textbooks, teachers' guides, and the syllabi for mathematics, Afar-Af language, and environmental science⁷. These three subjects were selected as they offer a good representation of the coverage of foundational skills intended under the national framework. Each life skill was assessed as either not meeting, somewhat or partially meeting, or fully meeting expectations per Krätli and Dyer's (2009) dimensions of relevance, in terms of the corresponding skill domains.

Foundational skill domains of literacy, numeracy and communication skills were found to meet a level of expectation in terms of representation in the curriculum across the three subjects. Numeracy is addressed in these materials through teaching number relationships, measurement, shapes, solids, and basic data handling. Financial literacy, a critical life skill prioritized by Afar adult stakeholders, is not addressed. Moreover, the curriculum is extremely limited in its approach to problem solving in relation to the challenges faced in Afar pastoralists' day-to-day lives as specified in the curriculum framework (MoE, 2009, p. 15). Literacy skills are acceptable at the expected standard per the curriculum framework and syllabus, that is, they attend to how students gain information and experience, exchange views, ideas, and different cultural and social values. As Afar stakeholders pointed out, however, there are many examples from traditional teaching and learning pedagogies and practices that could be infused into the curriculum to reflect and build relevant life skills in problem solving that are related to everyday challenges in Afar communities, such as in the construction of traditional homes, or in the management and stewardship of collective community assets like animals and the environment. Moreover, the set of communication skills undergirding *Dagu* represent a rich opportunity to strengthen the relevance of the curriculum and fortify the corresponding development of life skills critical for pastoralist communities through the formal education system.

Foundational skill domains of history and geography as per the national framework were found to only somewhat meet expectations of curricular relevance. The textbooks demonstrate a concerted effort to contextualize the subject content with the inclusion of references to the landscape and geography of the Afar Regional

⁷Environmental Science is an integrated subject in grades 1–4 comprising strands of natural sciences, health, agriculture, social sciences, home science and civics education (MoE, 2009).

State, wild and domestic animals indigenous to the region, commonly found diseases in livestock, key rivers in Afar, Afar names, cultural clothing, and commonly produced crops. However, content specific to history, geography, and corresponding foundational understanding from Afar perspectives is broadly lacking.

The foundational skill domain of critical and analytical thinking was not represented in the analyzed curricular materials. Skills such as hypothesizing, predicting, analyzing, and making generalizations, as specified in the syllabus, were not identified in the curriculum subject content. Moreover, as outlined in the curriculum framework, skills and competencies such as information technology (IT) literacy, being able to adapt to a changing world, higher-order skills, participation and contribution, independence, and adapting to change, are not systematically and consciously treated throughout the textbooks (MoE, 2009). These skills are highly valued by Afar stakeholders, who see these skills as necessary in order for their children and broader community to adapt to rapidly-changing socioeconomic and environmental conditions.

In terms of Krätli and Dyer's (2009) socialization dimension of curricular relevance, which relates to the essential social skills necessary to live in a national society, student texts from the following grades and subjects were analyzed: primary school grades 1–4 environmental science; grades 5–8 social sciences, and grades 5–8 civics and ethics. The domains of life skills examined under this dimension of relevance included: democratic systems and the rule of law, respect for cultural differences, and respect for state laws as derived from the national curriculum framework and syllabi. Curricular relevance in terms of life skill domains related to respect for state laws and democratic systems (i.e. rule of law, equality, justice, patriotism, responsibility, industriousness, self-reliance, saving, active community participation, and the pursuit of wisdom) were determined to be adequate in the materials reviewed. Respect for cultural differences (multiculturalism) as per the national framework only somewhat met expectations of relevance in the analyzed curricular materials.

In sum, using Krätli and Dyer's (2009) framework for life skill domains to analyze the current Afar regional curriculum and its relevance, we find that there is significant room for improvement especially for, but not limited to, critical and analytical skills. Afar stakeholders offered numerous examples of indigenous pastoralist content, such as Afar AREE, relevant Afar pedagogies and methodologies such as learning by doing, and even traditional games such as *Gebeta* (Mancala), that could be incorporated into the current curriculum, thereby strengthening its relevance while building foundational skills for pastoralist youth through the formal education system.

Life Skills That Matter Most to Pastoralists: Curriculum Analysis

Using the lens of Krätli and Dyer's (2009) socialization and localization dimensions of relevance, this section presents an analysis of the extent to which life skills most valued by pastoralists (determined through stakeholder consultations) are represented in the current Afar regional curriculum. In terms of socialization, which relates to the essential social skills necessary to live in a national society, the analysis drew upon the same grades and subjects as in the preceding section, this time highlighting the particular life skills most valued by pastoralists: traditional conflict resolution, law enforcement, moral/ethical values, and reciprocal caring/cooperation. Krätli and Dyer's (2009) curricular dimension of localization, which centers on the acquisition of skills and information rooted in pastoralist society, context, and identity, was applied through analysis of the following curricular materials: primary grades 1–4 environmental science, grades 5–6 integrated science⁸, and social studies.

As noted above, the life skills of reciprocal caring and sharing are of paramount importance to Afar pastoralists. Regarding caring and cooperation, the curriculum was determined to be somewhat relevant with respect to social skills necessary to live in a national (Ethiopian) society. However, when analyzed using Krätli and Dyer's (2009) dimension of localization, the extent to which the curriculum included content and information related to life skills of reciprocal caring, mutual dependence, and solidarity rooted in Afar traditions, customs, and practices, was found to be entirely lacking. Life skill domains relating to traditional pastoralist conflict resolution skills, proficiency in aforementioned *Med-a* governance enforcement skills/ mechanisms, and cultural moral/ethical values, all of which matter greatly to pastoralists, are also absent from the curriculum. Such a void is critical, as a male youth described:

If there is a conflict, we don't need the police. How does the *Med-a* system then enforce the decision? It is through social pressure and the penalty is not for the individual only, but all clan members to contribute to and settle the penalty.

While *Med-a* is mentioned in social science and civics materials, there is no elaboration or explanation in terms of procedures, nor explanation of how it is used for conflict resolution or to enforce expectations of equitable use and protection of collective community assets, including the environment. Equally absent is elaboration of *Dagu* and the corresponding set of life skills (i.e. listening, speaking,

⁸The integrated science: for grades 5 and 6 is structured by a thematic approach and adopts six themes studied at both grades; Air, Water, Plants, Animals, Our Body and Earth. Issues such as HIV and AIDS, harmful traditional practices, rural development, health, agriculture and environment are addressed through these thematic areas. A 'learn (science) by doing' methodology is used, enabling students to develop scientific knowledge and skills through practical application, as well as develop the attitudes and values needed for effective citizenry.

fact-checking information, and sharing knowledge) it represents for pastoralist society.

Traditional life skills that matter greatly to pastoralists related to environmental protection and stewardship are intertwined with pastoralist life skills related to traditional science and engineering—especially skills related to house construction, rearing and care of animals (grazing, in particular), mobility patterns, and the use of local materials for animal (and human) medicine. Notably, none of these life skill domains are sufficiently represented in the curriculum, and there is an absence of representation of the related body of pastoralist knowledge in the materials reviewed. Afar communities have a rich body of related knowledge about many aspects of life acquired over generations and handed down as local knowledge traditions, which includes managing livestock, the environment, economic use of water, house making, and traditional medication and healing. For instance, with regard to Afar house construction and the environment, as one community member noted, “only the picture [of the house] is drawn in the environmental science textbooks, without discussing the details of its construction . . . Instead of presenting its shape, I recommend engineers should study how these houses are resistant to wind and flood.” It is striking that traditional pastoralist knowledge about animal husbandry and indigenous animal medicine is not found in the curriculum, given the central importance of these life skills to this community. As one male youth noted:

For the treatment of certain diseases with our livestock, we use a leaf called *Agdagto*. We soak it in water and administer it through the nose or mouth for two days and they will be cured. For a male camel with a high desire for sex, put coffee through its nose and in its mouth. For the treatment of donkeys, we use a leaf called *More*.

There are many examples of illustrations in the texts that are irrelevant for the local Afar context, such as fruits, vegetables, and animals not found in the region, which could be substituted for relevant localized examples such as the leaves and plants used to treat various ailments for animals and people.

In summary, none of the life skills that matter most to pastoralists, and that are associated with Krätli and Dyer’s (2009) localization dimension of curricular relevance, were found to be sufficiently represented in the current Afar regional curriculum through this analysis, and only some skills associated with the socialization dimension of curricular relevance were found to be partially represented. Nonetheless, stakeholders offered a host of examples of traditional pastoralist practices and approaches that could further strengthen the education curriculum as noted above and in the previous section, such as those related to Afar collective sharing of assets, equitable division of labor, and using traditional governance systems (*Med-a*) and peer pressure to enforce expectations of cooperation and appropriate use of shared resources, including the environment. The central theme that resonates throughout this section is both the need and the opportunity for the curriculum to be made more relevant to Afar pastoralists by infusing it with important traditional life skills, and localized content and knowledge systems.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to explore which life skills matter most from the perspectives of Afar pastoralists themselves, in the context of the low rates of education inclusion, participation, and retention of pastoralist communities in Ethiopia. Using Krätli and Dyer's (2009) framework to analyze the current curriculum, this study reveals that only a limited representation of those life skills that matter most to pastoralists are depicted. The exclusion or only partial inclusion of indigenous knowledge could be attributed to the fact that the syllabus was not developed from the pastoralist perspective, but rather it was an "add on" to its original design for a sedentary or urban learner. While the sample of Afar pastoralist perspectives represented herein is limited and further research is needed to validate and generalize findings regarding which life skills matter most to this indigenous population, the study highlights a host of opportunities to strengthen the curriculum quality in terms of relevance. Correspondingly, it also highlights ways to improve outcomes for Afar children and youth, both in terms of educational inclusion and participation, while building pastoralists' skills for life and thriving.

This study sheds light on the central importance and opportunities represented in the relational values and corresponding life skills that shape how Afar people live: how they govern themselves, address conflict, and at once protect and hold all members of the community reciprocally accountable for sharing, caring, and stewarding collective assets, including the environment. These are not life skills used to dominate, but rather they are used in the service of promoting the wellbeing of all. Reconceptualizing and teaching life skills grounded in a relational approach through the formal education system presents an opportunity to leverage indigenous pastoral social relations as collective protective assets. This study has also shed light on foundational skills that are not currently learned at the community level—such as financial and computer literacy—and which should be included in the formal educational system, to ensure Afar children and youth are even better equipped to navigate a rapidly changing world.

In sum, there is a substantive disconnect between the current regional curriculum and the teaching of life skills that matter most to and are most needed by indigenous Afar pastoralists. A focus on these life skills—inculcating and fostering life skills around mutuality of caring and solidarity, social cohesion and collective social security, shared caring and responsibility that can transcend traditional pastoral livelihoods—holds promise for improving Afar wellbeing even in the context of a changing climate and economy. Despite the disconnect between the current curriculum and the life skills that matter most for them, Afar pastoralists all expressed the belief that formal education matters, that it is prioritized by the community, and that it is not incompatible with the pastoralist way of life and culture, and in fact, Afar culture has much to offer the formal system. Relatedly, traditional pastoralist education utilizes pedagogies and methodologies that are integral to teaching and learning in the Afar context, which have undergirded their ability to maintain a complex and sustainable equilibrium among pastures, livestock, and people for centuries, and

that, if adopted in the formal education system, could fundamentally change how we learn in relation to our community and our environment.

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