

Research Brief

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HOUSEHOLD SURVEY: Baseline Survey of Households

Knowledge, Evidence and Research in GESS

The Knowledge, Evidence and Research (KER) component of the Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) programme aims to generate knowledge about best practices in education, both nationally and internationally, in programmatic causality, and in impact. KER seeks to develop an evidence base for the project interventions linking inputs to outcomes and impacts, as well as a broader information hub focused on girls' education. To inform the programme activities, research for the overall programme will take place in three phases: baseline (2014), mid-term (2015-16), and end-term (2017-18).

Household Survey Objectives

The objective of the Household survey was to get an in-depth picture of the sensitive and complex nature of household decisions about money, gender relationships and power structures that affect education, as well as the experiences of students. In particular, the Household Survey aimed to capture data in the following areas:

- Financial management by households and girls;
- Educational choices by households and girls; and
- Barriers to attending school.

Methodology

A total of 251 quantitative surveys, 250 in-depth interviews and 28 focus group discussions were conducted in seven states. Data could not be collected from Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile due to conflict. The quantitative surveys included in-depth qualitative questions. Twelve households per State were selected purposively, and all States had the same sample size, to ensure adequate representation of experiences from a State perspective. Within each selected household, surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted with one parent or guardian, one older child (13-18), and one younger child (6-12). Focus group participants were selected based on a purposive sample of community members who had children of school age.

Quick Facts

- Financial poverty was reported as the key reported barrier to education for both boys and girls; most other highly-reported barriers to education are specific to girls.
- Older girls appear more likely to miss school than younger girls, and sickness is a major factor for all school absences.
- Non-attendance at school does not appear to instigate much follow-up action from the school or local education authorities, and 81.8% (n=69) of the guardians stated that no one had come to ask them why any of their children had not attended school.

Key Findings

Spending priorities and income

Education is high on household spending priorities, following survival spending on food and medicine. Just over half of the guardians surveyed (54.8%, n=46) reported food as their top



spending priority, followed by medical expenses (22.2%, n=56), with education fees and supplies in third place (19.8%, n=50).



The findings suggest that for 77.4% (n=65) of the households, their main source of income is through informal means, which is strongly linked to the vast majority of households (95.2%, n=80) who expressed varying degrees of difficulty in being able to purchase food and clothing, and cover health and education costs.

School attendance

High proportions of school-going children per household were reported, although school absence does not appear to result in follow-up action.

- Of the 97.6% (n=82) older children surveyed who reported attending school, 58.3% (n=49) were female while 39.3% (n=33) were male;
- Of the 91.6% (n=76) of younger children surveyed who reported attending school, 47.0% (n=39) were male and 44.6% (n=37) were female;
- Of the 8.4% (n=7) younger child respondents who reported not attending school, all (n=7) were female.

Non-attendance at school does not appear to instigate much follow-up action from the school or local education authorities, and 81.8% (n=69) of the guardians stated that no one had come to ask them why any of their children had not attended school.

Older girls appear more likely to miss school than younger girls, and sickness is a major factor for all school absences.

Amongst the younger children, boys appear more likely to miss school than girls (46.2%, n=18 of the boys compared to 18.9%, n=7 of the girls). However, amongst the older children, girls appeared slightly more likely to miss school, with absences of two or more days at a time being reported by 40.8% (n=20) of the older girls, compared to 36.4% (n=12) of the older boys.

Attitudes to education

The families surveyed reported positive attitudes towards education for boys and girls in most parts of South Sudan. However, the students surveyed reported that their families are not as positive in practice.

The majority of the guardians surveyed (77.4%, n=65) strongly disagreed with the statement that once girls reach 12 or 13 years of age it is better to keep them at home than send them to school. However, in spite of the guardians' apparent support for girls to continue at school, qualitative interviews with students and pupils indicate that guardians are not as open-minded about education as they portray themselves to be. The findings from the children's interviews indicate a much higher prevalence of preventative views, particularly those that prioritise marriage and dowries over education.

Regarding school conditions, guardians prioritise the proximity of the school and the availability of school equipment, while children prioritise access to food and levels of punishment.



Almost all the children who answered the question of what they wanted to do in the future responded that they wanted a job, to get married, and to have children. Strong levels of family and community responsibility were also demonstrated. However, career aspirations were ambitious, with the majority of the younger and older children wishing to become doctors.

Barriers to education

Financial poverty was reported as the key reported barrier to education for both boys and girls; most other highly-reported barriers to education are specific to girls. When combining the reasons cited by guardians about why boys and girls don't go to school, the top five reasons given are lack of money (73.8%, n=124), time given to domestic chores (43.5%, n=73), early marriage (39.3%, n=66), paid work (22.0%, n=37) and getting pregnant (20.2%, n=34). This demonstrates that the most highly-cited non-financial barriers to education apply only to girls.

Possible Responses to Findings

The possible responses below are beyond the scope of the GESS programme's own activities, but should be considered as broader suggestions for support to the education sector in South Sudan:

Finding	Possible responses
Financial poverty is the key reported barrier to education for boys and girls	Consider increasing cash transfer amounts and broadening them to a greater number of year groups; cash transfers for boys in education could also be considered; continue to work with the education sector to remove registration fees
Absences are rarely followed up by schools, Payams or Counties	Develop guidelines for schools, Payams and Counties on how to follow up on absent pupils and students
Sickness is a key factor in school absences for boys and girls	Consider co-location of schools and clinics; consider the funding of school nurses; equip schools with basic medical supplies for common ailments
Cultural barriers to education apply disproportionately to girls (early marriage, pregnancy, household chores)	Continue to work on behavioural change through media and community mobilisation

References:

GESS (2014) Baseline Survey of Households.



Aim

Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) is a 5.5 year programme - April 2013 to September 2018 - which aims to transform a generation of South Sudanese, especially girls by increasing access to quality education. There are many barriers (cultural, financial, poor infrastructure/quality) that are preventing girls from going to school. The GESS programme works closely with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) to realise its strategic objective of eliminating barriers to girls' education and promoting gender equality throughout the education system. GESS is being implemented in all ten States of South Sudan.



Management

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