

# Research Brief

No. 03 - 2014

## PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SURVEY: Baseline Survey of Public Finance Management in the South Sudanese Education Sector

### 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).

### Public Financial Management Survey Objectives

The survey aimed to understand Public Finance Management (PFM) practices and challenges at decentralised levels of the education sector in South Sudan. The main purpose of the study was to produce a baseline of PFM standards in education at State, County and Payam levels, and in selected schools.



- Administration of questionnaires to State Ministries of Education (SMoEs) and to randomly selected County Education Departments (CEDs), Payam Offices (POs), and primary and secondary schools; and
- When available, collection of supporting documentary evidence of PFM policies and practices.
- The findings were derived from an in-depth analysis of triangulated data gathered from six SMoEs, nine CEDs, 12 POs, 25 primary schools and seven secondary schools.

### Quick Facts

- There are major information-sharing shortfalls from the centre to the states and counties. This leads to significant unconformities between SMoE and CED budgets and planning and budgeting guidelines.
- Projected income from Capitation Grants for schools is higher than existing income from registration fees. This creates an opportunity to reassess the current school fee policy based on the principle that public financing should gradually replace household contributions.
- There is evidence of a centrally-led policy development dynamic, which contrasts with the logic of a decentralised policy.

### Key Findings

#### Policy Development: Findings

- There is an absence of a coherent recipient-driven policy that (i) primarily addresses locally-identified priorities and the need for structural reform; and (ii) takes stock of all available financial resources to underpin such policy;
- There is also evidence of a predominant and

### Methodology

Field research was conducted in seven States. Data could not be collected from Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile due to conflict. The study included the following procedures:

centrally-led dynamic, which contrasts with the logic of a decentralised policy.

#### Policy Development: Recommendations

- Establish a coherent policy framework for systemic development based on the following principles: (i) priority-setting is the result of locally-identified needs in line with a decentralised policy that seeks to effectively improve the quality of teaching and learning; and (ii) *all* available resources (domestic and external) to be strategically allowed to support this policy;
- Define a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of SMOEs, CEDs and POs in line with the decentralised policy.

#### Planning and Budgeting Process: Findings

- There are significant unconformities between SMOE and CED budgets and planning and budgeting guidelines due to (i) major dysfunction in the chain of information between the centre to the States and Counties; and (ii) weak capacity to fully understand the institutional, financial and technical scope of the decentralised agenda;
- Suboptimal budget formats are in use, which focus on inputs rather than on results and therefore remain opaque regarding their quality and relevance;
- There is an absence of context-specific standardised unit costs that reflect on-the-ground realities.

#### Planning and Budgeting Process: Recommendations

- Remedy major information-sharing shortfalls to ensure conformity with State and County education

planning and budgeting guidelines;

- Design relevant and standardised budgeting tools to facilitate understanding of the basic principles of budgeting; Use simple budget formats that contain relevant information on resource allocation in line with identified priorities, instead of line-item budgets that focus on inputs rather than results;
- Produce standardised unit costs for recurrent activities to enable the drafting of realistic and context-specific budgets.

#### Accountability: Findings

- Annual projected income from capitation grants (for schools) and operating grants (for County and Payam Offices) is significantly higher than existing income from registration fees. This creates an opportunity to reassess and question the current school fee policy and practice based on the principle that public financing should gradually replace contributions from the households;
- Analysis of routine PFM in schools (such as accounting processes) indicates better accountability practices than in CEDs and POs; however, the current budgeting tools used in schools are too sophisticated and add an unnecessary layer of complexity to the PFM reform process.

#### Accountability: Recommendations

- Develop simple and relevant PFM tools for decentralised levels to ensure proper accounting;
- Adopt a coherent school fee policy that gradually replaces household contributions by public financing.

#### References GESS (2014)

GESS (2014) Baseline Survey of Public Finance Management in the South Sudanese Education Sector



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

Girls' Education South Sudan is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), Government of Republic of South Sudan, funded by UK Aid and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan. MoEST is supported in the implementation of GESS by a consortium led by BMB Mott MacDonald, and including BBC Media Action, Charlie Goldsmith Associates and Winrock International.