

Research Brief

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SCHOOL SURVEY: Baseline Survey of Schools

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).

Methodology

In order to effectively assess and gain a holistic picture of the issues concerning education and schools in South Sudan, a number of tools were used for the study, including quantitative surveys involving different actors in schools (Head Teachers, teachers, School Management Committees, students), lesson observations, facilities/infrastructure checks, and learning assessment surveys. Information was gathered from 151 primary and 47 secondary schools across seven States in South Sudan. Data could not be collected from Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile due to conflict.

School Survey Objectives

The purpose of the survey was to gain an overall picture of the state of the primary and secondary schools in South Sudan and understand the education experiences of pupils and students (particularly girls), teachers, and managers.

Quick Facts

- Almost one-third (31.0%, n=70) of classes were found to be held in the open air, or in semi-permanent classrooms.
- In States in which high proportions of parents and teachers reportedly value boys' education over girls', the survey found lower girls' attendance, and lower educational aspirations among girls.
- Female teachers remain severely outnumbered by males – of the 513 teachers and Head Teachers surveyed, only 45 (8.8%) were female.



Key Findings

Equipment and infrastructure

There are widespread shortages of basic classroom equipment, and the relatively high prevalence of semi-permanent or open-air classes highlight the need for targeted capitation grant spending.

Classrooms across all surveyed States were found to be lacking basic materials such as chalk, desks, and chairs, as

reported by pupils, students and the teachers. Almost three-fifths of primary pupils (59.5%, n=519) and just over two-thirds of teachers (69.7%, n=200) cited the need for chalk, while 77.8% (n=1095) of pupils, students and teachers identified shortages of chairs, and 78.0% (n=1098) cited shortages of desks. Around half (54.4%, n=123) of the classrooms observed were in permanent structures, but almost one-third (31.0%, n=70) were found to be held in the open air, or in semi-permanent classrooms.

Curricula and languages

The South-Sudanese curriculum is the most dominant system in use, according to the Head Teachers and teachers; however, some East African curricula are still being used. In addition, despite most schools claiming English as their official language, teachers still reported using Arabic as the language of instruction in the classrooms.

Teaching practices

Teaching methods rely heavily on textbooks and teacher-talk time, with little active participation from or between students and pupils. Lesson observations suggest that rote learning from the blackboard or textbooks is the dominant practice. However, observations also found that to some extent, teacher talk-time gave way to reading and writing exercises as the lesson progressed.

Corporal punishment

High proportions of primary school pupils reported that teachers use corporal punishment. This is supported by the findings of the Household Survey, in which primary pupils reported being beaten and caned for coming to class late or being disruptive. The negative environment created by such treatment is not conducive to learning, and was cited by many pupils, students and parents as a major cause of dissatisfaction with schools.

Gender disparities

Few girls reported any feelings of insecurity or fear of violence in school. However, institutional conditions such as low numbers of female teachers and insufficient separate toilets for girls and boys point to important areas requiring improved gender sensitivity. Although disaggregation of teacher qualifications indicates that proportionally, female teachers have reached higher levels of education than male teachers, female teachers remain severely outnumbered by males – of the 513 teachers and Head Teachers surveyed, only 45 (8.8%) were female.

In some States, such as Lakes and Northern Bahr El Ghazal, attitudinal biases against girls' education were reported. A

positive correlation was found between States in which high proportions of parents and teachers reportedly value boys' education over girls', and States with poor attendance of girls, as well as lower educational aspirations and reduced optimism among girls in reaching educational goals. Girls from Lakes State, where the most conservative and restrictive attitudes towards girls' education were found, demonstrated the most limited aspirations, with just over two-fifths of students (42.5%, n=24 from Lakes) citing Primary 8 as the highest level of school they wished to reach, compared to the majority of students surveyed in other States, who wished to reach Secondary 4.



Barriers to education

The majority of pupils and students surveyed reported that they wished to complete Secondary 4, but two-thirds (66.2%, n=758) of the students perceived financial costs to be the most significant potential obstacle standing in their way. In addition to school fees, other costs such as exam fees, stationery, uniforms, meals, and voluntary teacher payments were cited as expenditures that households were expected to cover. Ill-health was the next most significant barrier to education, which correlates with the high levels of absenteeism attributed to sickness found in the Household Survey.

School governance

School Management Committees (SMCs) appear to take an active role in school organisation, and were reported to be heavily involved in developing school development plans. The majority of SMC survey respondents reported having a current school development plan. This was supported by a majority of the Head Teachers, most of whom were able to show the plan to the enumerators.

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
Shortages of basic education equipment, and lack of infrastructure in many schools	Continue to support capitation grants that enable targeted funding to reach schools directly, and which can be spent according to the school's own priorities
Non South Sudanese curricula still being used in some schools	Clear guidance from the Ministry of Education to encourage adoption of the South Sudanese curriculum
Arabic language still being used as the medium of instruction in some schools	Clear guidance from the Ministry of Education to reiterate the policy on English being medium of instruction; targeted English language courses for 'Arabic pattern' teachers whose English may be weak
Rote learning and teacher-talk methods dominate	In-service and pre-service training to focus on interactive and participatory teaching methods
Corporal punishment is widely used and widely cited by pupils, students and households as a reason for dissatisfaction with schools	Continue efforts through social and behavioural change (media and community mobilisation) to discourage the use of corporal punishment in schools
Very low numbers of female teachers in schools	Step up efforts to actively recruit female teachers
High correlation between conservative and restrictive attitudes to girls' education, and low attendance and low aspirations of girls	Continue efforts of social and behavioural change through media and community mobilisation; use school-based mentoring programmes to provide positive role models for girls to stay in education
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
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

References:

GESS (2014) Baseline Survey of Schools.



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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