



# RESEARCH BRIEF

No. 15 - 2018

## PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT: ENDLINE



### Knowledge, evidence and research

The **Knowledge, Evidence and Research (KER)** component of the **Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS)** programme aims to generate increased knowledge and evidence for policymakers of what works to promote girls' education in South Sudan, about programmatic causality and impact, and to provide evidence about what may be scaleable and transferable to other contexts. The KER develops an evidence base for the project interventions, linking inputs to outcomes and impacts, and gathers broader information about what works in girls' education.

The programme gathers data continuously through the South Sudan School Attendance Monitoring System (SSSAMS), twice yearly through LQS, yearly through school sample survey, and then has set piece Baseline (2014), Midline (2016), and Endline (2018) survey waves.



### Methodology

The Public Financial Management (PFM) Survey questionnaires were administered to State Ministries of Education (SMoEs), County Education Departments (CEDs), Payam Education Offices (PEOs), and Primary and Secondary schools. Where available, supporting documentary evidence of PFM policies and practices were collected and scanned. The findings were derived from an in-depth analysis of triangulated data gathered from research rolled out in March-July 2018 across South Sudan, and included site visits to 26 Primary and ten Secondary schools, 14 Payams, 13 CEDs, and eight SMoEs.



### Public Financial Management Survey Objectives

The PFM survey aims to understand PFM practices and challenges at decentralised levels of the education sector in South Sudan. The original purpose of the study was to produce an overview of PFM standards in education at State, County and Payam levels and in selected schools, and to measure changes since the Baseline in 2014.

As Government of the Republic of South Sudan's (GRSS') resources have come to be worth much less than they were at the Baseline, and as GESS had, by 2016, become the principal funder of the South Sudan education sector in terms of value, the scope of questioning was expanded and refocused for Midline and Endline to cover specific analysis of the quality of operation of Capitation Grants and Cash Transfer systems at SMoE, CED, PEO and school levels, including:

- The general quality of planning and budgeting;
- The quality of the Cash Transfer system (regularity, reach, frequency, use of bank accounts, etc.);
- The impact of Cash Transfers on school fees;
- The quality of planning and budgeting practices at different levels of the system, including schools, with particular attention to priority action plans, roles, decision-making processes, etc.;
- The quality of the spending – this may include progress (or lack thereof) on transparent / accountable management; and
- The quality of the reporting (bookkeeping, minutes, feedback etc.).

## Executive summary

- Overall, there has been little improvement since the 2016 Midline Survey, and in some areas, such as the flow of operating grants between County and Payam, have exhibited a major step backwards compared to Midline findings.
- Particularly at School level, it should be noted that PFM accountability practices in some areas have been relatively good and have remained so throughout the period.
- Whilst at Midline an improvement in operation grant flows was recorded compared to the FY2014/15, this seems to have significantly worsened since Midline.
- Capitation Grants (CGs) are reaching schools nationally and driving accountability improvements; they need to flow more quickly and more reliably.
- The weaknesses in the CG submission/approval/payment process highlighted at Midline prevail.
- There is a continuing trend of upwards flows of school fee income to Payam and County officials in some States, despite dedicated transfers funding.
- The cost of education for families and pupils remains high and is a major barrier to education for girls and boys.



## Key findings

### **GESS Capitation Grants have instigated systemic change by introducing basic PFM processes in schools.**

The introduction of CGs in 2014 has made the process of resource planning and budget allocation more common in schools across South Sudan. This includes the principle of prioritised (earmarked) budget allocation; more clarity about the origin and use of resources; and the introduction of minimum accountability standards such as bookkeeping and mandatory financial reporting – this has been a big achievement for the Programme.

Further, buy-in from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP) to transfer Capitation Grants directly into school bank accounts appears has been a major step forward in establishing PFM mechanisms in schools. This, coupled with bank accounts being a pre-condition for receiving Capitation

Grants, means that more schools have opened bank accounts which increases the safety and speed of receiving funds. This process has however been challenged between Midline and Endline by the worsening security situation and collapse of banking systems in South Sudan.

### **School Development Plans (SDPs) don't always reflect school needs and priorities, meaning that basic learning and teaching conditions are not being fully addressed.**

Whilst the development of SDPs by schools has become more common, there is evidence to suggest that they do not always fully address the needs of schools year-on-year, and are often built around GESS Capitation Grants, ignoring other sources of income.

The majority of the schools surveyed in 2018 see their basic teaching and learning conditions as inadequate (70% do not have enough desks; 60% need desk repair; 50% need major building or classroom repair; 60% need toilet repair; 50% have issues with water facilities; and 30% have unfurnished staff rooms). This is supported by findings from the School Sample Survey, and may indicate SDPs are not adequately reviewed against those from other years.

### **Free education is only possible if government funds flow as they are intended. Unstable or irregular or insufficient flows of funds, such as delays or unpredictable disbursements challenges efficient policy implementation.**

At State level, operational grants seem to have flown more regularly in Financial Year 2016-2017 than in Financial Year 2017-2018. However, flows have generally been inconsistent and the amounts received do not always match with what budgets show.

Further, monthly allocations appear to be correct for only one in four States surveyed in 2018, and the others have received significantly less (reportedly up to 60%-75% less). These issues are further compounded by a lack of documentation available to inform best practice, with one in two of the States surveyed in 2018 reporting that they had not received a copy of the Guidelines on Educational Conditional Transfers to States and Counties (2016-2017 and 2017-2018).

At County level, the Guidelines on Educational Conditional transfers to States were also largely unavailable in County

Education Department offices.

Operational grants have been flowing irregularly: in Financial Year 2017-2018, 80% of Counties did not receive, and when the funds are flowing, the frequency varies from once every 1-12 months. Generally, Payam offices do not receive their share (30% of the CEDs say they make cash payments but are unable to explain how and how much). This constitutes a major step backwards compared to Midline findings.

Most Payam offices also reported that they did not receive their operating grants in Financial Year 2016-2017 and Financial Year 2017-2018. It is estimated only 10% received grants on a regular basis and, compared to Midline findings, this is a major step backwards.

Very few Payam offices are aware of the 40%-60% allocation principle and how that should work, and the majority (80%) say they do not have a bank account. As a result, there is a continuing trend of upwards flows of school fee income to Payam and County officials in some States, despite dedicated transfers funding, with officials putting pressure on schools to cover 'operational costs' from school budgets. Regular flow of operational funds to Payams are needed in order to prevent this.

At the school level, late payment of CGs during the school year is a destabilising factor. Schools need resources at the beginning of the school year in order to implement their SDPs fully. When CGs come late, schools have to seek alternative income sources and will continue relying on alternative income sources such as school fees and contributions for their basic operating costs, which places an increased financial burden on households and communities. Furthermore, this is likely to inhibit further systemic change as schools may feel less pressure to ensure minimum standards of accountability.



Payam Education Supervisors outside the County Education Department, Maban County

## Recommendations

- The priorities expressed in SDPs are not being addressed year-on-year, with money prioritized for operational necessities rather than development. More PFM-focused education staff are needed within Payam and County level structures, reflected in training and job descriptions.
- At school level, the actual participation of the community is at times limited by lack of information and capacity. Schools should be supported to provide regular financial information to communities. Similarly, Payams and Counties should be supported to provide this information back into the system.
- At Payam level, Payam officials put pressure on schools to cover 'operational costs' from school budgets. Regular flows of operational funds to Payam are needed in order to prevent this.
- There is a decline in the number of school visits and a lack of clarity regarding their role in authorising or confirming SDPs or school expenditure beyond 'stamp and sign'. Improved guidelines and training on PES roles and responsibilities should be considered to improve their capacity to help in these areas. Similarly, improved guidelines and training on CED responsibilities towards Payam Education Offices would improve oversight.
- At all levels, there is often limited or late information on the status of Capitation Grants at the individual school level – whether they have been requested, approved, and sent. These processes should be improved to prevent delays to schools receiving funds and increase institutional trust.

This research was designed and conducted by Johan Verhaghe, supported by enumerators from Charlie Goldsmith Associates and MoGEI.

**Full reports will soon be available on our website:**  
[www.girlseducationsouthsudan.org](http://www.girlseducationsouthsudan.org)

# INSPIRE

# EDUCATE

# TRANSFORM



## AIM

Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) is a programme that will transform the lives of a generation of children in South Sudan – especially girls – through education. South Sudan, the newest country in the world, has some of the lowest educational indicators, with education of girls being among the lowest. Very few girls who begin Primary education continue to Secondary school; in 2017, 138,578 girls started Primary school, but only 3,816 completed Secondary school. GESS is determined to change this, so that all girls can go to school, stay in school and achieve in school.

## MANAGEMENT

Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) is an initiative of the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI), Government of the Republic of South Sudan, funded by UK aid from the UK government, and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan. In order to realise its strategic objectives of eliminating barriers to girls' education and promoting gender equality throughout the education system, MoGEI is supported by a consortium, led by Cambridge Education, and including BBC Media Action, Charlie Goldsmith Associates and Winrock International.

The Programme began in April 2013, and will last until September 2018.



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