

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 2016, 128,000 girls started primary school, but only 2,700 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 BMB Mott MacDonald/Cambridge Education, and including BBC Media Action, Charlie Goldsmith Associates and Winrock International.

The programme began in 2013, and will last until 2018.



RESEARCH BRIEF

Girls' Education South Sudan: Midline Research



Knowledge, Evidence & Research

The **Knowledge, Evidence and Research (KER)** component of the **Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS)** programme aims to generate increased knowledge and evidence in three areas:

1. What works best for promoting girls' education in South Sudan;
2. the impact of the programme;
3. and to support education of girls in their work.

The programme gathers data continuously through the South Sudan School Attendance Monitoring System (SSSAMS); twice yearly through Longitudinal Qualitative Surveys (LQS); yearly through a school sample survey; and then has set piece Baseline (2014), Midline (2016), and Endline (2018) surveys with households, schools, officials and other relevant actors across South Sudan.

Literacy and numeracy tests were also administered in September 2016 at Primary 5, Primary 8 and Secondary 2 grades in a sample of 59 schools, including 38 primary schools and 21 secondary schools in order to investigate the impact of GESS on learning outcomes.

This research report summarises the research findings from the Midline research conducted in 2016 across the programme. The following findings are summarised according to their relevance to learners, families, teachers and schools.

Learners

Children have positive attitudes towards school, particularly linked to their future aspirations. Research shows that girls become more ambitious and confident about their abilities to progress the longer they stay in school, but more work is needed to grow their confidence in their abilities. The Our School radio programme and community mobilisation activities are contributing to this, with children who regularly listen to the programme reporting being encouraged to work hard in school and attend regularly.



P8 students in Maban, Eastern Nile State, listen to Our School on a solar-powered, wind-up radio.

The most common reason given by both male and female learners for dropping out of school was lack of money for school fees. Another common reason cited was personal sickness. Children reported physical punishment and absent teachers as their main dissatisfactions with school.

Both guardians and children reported financial constraints as the main barrier to attending school regularly. Financial constraints, domestic responsibilities and marriage are the main reasons for girls dropping out of school. However, encouragingly, Our School listeners report that they budget for school fees more than those not listening to the show. The proportion of both primary and secondary learners who have missed at least one day of school in the last year as a result of insecurity has risen dramatically since the Baseline.

For girls, Cash Transfers continue to help to buy essential items that help them attend school. For both years in which Cash Transfers had been paid at the time the research was carried out, the majority of girls report making their own choices on how to spend the money, largely on items to enable education. Cash Transfers are mainly spent on education supplies, including uniform and shoes, and are sometimes used to cover exam fees. Of the small percentage of girls whose families made the decision, or those that made decisions together with their families on how Cash Transfers were spent, the most common uses, aside from education items for the girl, were food or household items. A relatively high proportion of girls who had received Cash Transfers were found to be attending school on the day of survey, compared with average national enrolment and attrition rates.

Analysis of literacy and numeracy tests showed that most girls' scores have increased since 2014. While there was a statistically significant difference between boys' and girls' average scores in 2014, with boys scores being higher, in the 2016 results there is no difference, meaning that girls have caught up with boys in terms of results. If each grade level and type is considered separately, 4 out of 6 tests show a positive and significant (at least marginally) effect on girls' scores, suggesting that GESS interventions as a whole may have had a positive effect on girls' test scores, relative to that of boys.

Families

Guardians generally have a positive attitude towards school and teachers, but acknowledge that there are problems with education, such as a lack of teachers and unqualified teachers.

A deterioration in the economy, security and humanitarian situation means that ongoing challenges have compounded pre-existing barriers to education for both girls and boys, particularly in terms of family poverty, unequal access to education and the impact of sickness and insecurity. While Cash Transfers to girls have reduced pressure on guardians' spending on both education related and non-education related items, there has been a noticeable increase in the average reported cost (in SSP) of schooling in 2016, compared to 2014. Research found that almost half of the guardians in South Sudan would prioritise boys if they had limited funds to

spend on education.

There is still a widespread practice of charging school fees (including registration fees) and lack of understanding about how they are collected and used. Exam fees (P8 and S4) are still being paid by students. These flow upwards to County or State level, respectively. This system places additional and repeated stress on the child and household; missing an exam may result in missing a school year.

Nevertheless, education remains a priority for household spending, even by displaced populations, despite increasingly fragile household finances. Education is the second highest priority for spending after food. Those listening to Our School are more likely to actively participate in education-related activities, more frequently discuss education with their children, and know more about initiatives that support girls' education, compared to those who do not listen.

Teachers and Schools

There are still major problems related to school finances, and there are still equipment shortages in schools. Students report shortages of basic school equipment, with reading books overtaking chalk as the most needed item in the Midline, compared to the Baseline research. Teachers report irregular payment of salaries and some teachers said that they had been on strike during 2016 due to lack of pay. The number of teachers with a teacher training certificate (at primary level) and bachelor's degree (at secondary level) has noticeably reduced since the Baseline research in 2014. This is most likely because of the increase in volunteer teachers in schools.



IDP teacher and students in the Bentiu POC, Northern Liech State

The research also provides evidence that support through GESS initiatives has had a positive, tangible impact in terms of notable differences in school facilities and an increase in the number of teachers as a result of Capitation Grant money. Capitation Grants are reaching schools nationally, and driving accountability improvements; however, they need to flow quicker, and more reliably.

Attitudes towards girls' education amongst teachers have progressed since the Baseline, with an increase in the number of teachers and Head Teachers who either disagree or strongly disagree that boys are better suited to higher education than girls. Teachers also either disagreed or strongly disagreed that girls were less likely to need an education in their future lives.

Personal sickness was the most common reason for missing school reported by teachers and both female and male learners, followed by sickness of a family member.

Findings indicate that the teaching profession remains overwhelmingly male; 68 out of 71 Head Teachers and 111 out of 122 teachers surveyed were men.

As at the Baseline, the majority of schools had been visited by Payam officials 2-3 times in 2015. A lower proportion of Payam officials reported that copies of School Development Plans were kept at the Payam Education Office than in 2014. The majority of County and Payam staff reported that the schools under their supervision have improved and that enrolment has increased since the Baseline was carried out in 2014. In most cases, these improvements were linked to the impact of GESS interventions.

Teachers behaving inappropriately with students does occur, with both girls and guardians describing this as a problem, but according to Payam staff, such relationships are relatively rare. Payam officials were divided over the consequences for the teacher and pupil involved, suggesting a lack of common guidelines.

Recommendations

- The longer girls stay in school, the more confident and ambitious they become. There needs to be ongoing encouragement from those in authoritative positions, that girls can achieve just as much as boys. This encouragement can be complemented through gender-sensitive classrooms practices, such as asking both girls and boys the harder questions/to contribute; listening to girls' concerns; encouraging strong, female leaders in school; as well as encouraging girls, guardians and communities to listen to Our School radio programme.
- Corporal punishment is leading to absences. Head Teachers, teachers and communities need to be aware of alternative methods of disciplining children that do not affect attendance rates. This topic is touched upon in GESS' pilot Teacher Professional Development training, but could be introduced, or further entrenched, in schools through community leaders, CED and PES.
- Cash Transfers are helping to boost enrolment of girls. It is important to ensure that girls and communities are

aware of the Cash Transfer process. Parents, SMCs/BoGs and PTAs to can aim to improve management and transparency of Cash Transfers, as well as encouraging girls to spend the money on education-enabling items, such as text books, pens and school uniforms.

- SAs, PES and CEDs should encourage girls to attend school regularly so they can receive the CT.
- Once girls receive their CTEF on validation day they must keep them safe until the day of payment, when they should bring them with them to school.
- It is important to ensure that schools follow the correct process and account for Capitation Grants as quickly as possible, so that validation can take place and so that the flow of further funds is not delayed.



Payam Education office in Yambio, Western Equatoria State

Conclusion

A rigorous independent analysis of the impact of GESS 2014-2016, based on the national SSSAMS data set, found that Capitation Grants and Cash Transfers make schools more likely to remain open, increase their enrolment numbers, and increase attendance rates, despite the prevalence of substantial ongoing levels of violence and conflict.

Similarly, Our School is contributing to the consortium's aim of increased enrolment and retention. Regular listeners to Our School with a daughter/girl are significantly more likely to say the girl is in school compared to non-listeners, after controlling for a number of other factors.

The Midline research has found that the GESS programme is successfully addressing the main barriers faced by girls and families: - financial, cultural, infrastructural and the quality of education - as well as influencing knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, social norms, and practices related to girls' education in South Sudan.