



## Lessons from Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS)

**Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS)** is an initiative of the **Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI)** of the **Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS)**, funded by **UK aid from the UK government**, and GRSS. GESS will transform the lives of a generation of children in South Sudan – especially girls – through education.

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**. GESS works at the local level through six State-based NGOs, referred to as State Anchors.

GESS' Quality Education component takes a holistic approach, including school-based teacher professional development training, community-based school governance, supportive school supervision and school-based mentoring for girls.

The mentoring component was a pilot programme implemented in selected schools, designed to complement existing activities under the Quality Education, as well as other GESS activities which addressed the financial barriers to girls' education. It was designed to build on the investment in school-based mentoring in primary and secondary schools, and targeted girls as mentees.

The GESS mentoring model was initially piloted in primary schools in seven of the ten former States of South Sudan, with teachers as mentors. This was then developed into a

second model, piloting mentoring in secondary schools in 7 of the former States of South Sudan, trialling both teacher-led and peer-led mentoring models.

The GESS mentoring programme consists of 16 teacher-led and 16 peer-led sessions for secondary school students for a total of 32 mentoring sessions to be conducted in selected secondary schools in South Sudan. These mentoring sessions were delivered by trained teacher mentors and peer leaders on a weekly basis. The sessions alternated so that the lessons learned during the teacher-led mentoring session one week, were followed by deeper discussions and activities on the same topic the following week, led by the peer mentors. This approach reinforced key messages and content for mentees, increasing their knowledge and skills to overcome barriers to their ability to stay in school and perform well.

Overall, 305 schools have been reached with the mentoring component. Drawing on the experiences of GESS, this document provides an introduction to the design and implementation of a mentoring programme in a fragile and conflict affected state.

**305**

Secondary Schools have been reached with mentoring in

**7**

of the 10 former States of South Sudan



Mentorship, in its various forms, is effective in helping young girls achieve their full potential, with regards to academic achievement, delayed sexual activity and protection from STIs/HIV and pregnancy, reduction of early marriage, and gains in self-confidence. Globally, various forms of mentoring offer compelling examples of the impact that teacher, community member, and peer-led mentoring can have on the lives of girls. mentoring can be a powerful and effective tool to support girls in fragile, under resourced environments to reach their full potential.

## Designing and Implementing a Mentoring Programme

When designing and implementing a mentoring programme, there are four key considerations:

- Contextually Relevant Design
- Contextually Relevant Content
- Monitoring Progress
- Adaptive Programming

were identified in consultation with key stakeholders such as MoGEI, local staff, and aligned with the objectives of the GESS programme:

1. Increase school attendance
2. Increase retention in school
3. Increase in promotion to the next grade
4. Increase secondary school graduation
5. Reduce incidence of pregnancy

Each behaviour should then be addressed by an intentionally designed set of activities that target a preauthorized set of psychosocial and environmental determinants. A Theory of Change logic model that maps the links between the goal of the mentoring programme with girls' behaviours, with the determinants associated with those behaviours, and the intervention activities linked to intentionally changing those determinants can then be developed. The following are useful headings to consider in designing a Theory of Change logic model for a mentoring programme:



*Theory of Change logic model*

### Contextually Relevant Design

The first step in designing a successful mentoring programme is identifying a goal that is relevant to stakeholders and the operational context. The GESS mentoring programme contributed to the overall GESS programme goal to transform the lives (i.e., ability to reach desired education, career and personal goals) of a generation of children in South Sudan – especially girls – through education. It was also aligned with the government's priorities, as MoGEI's commitment to girls' mentoring is reflected in its strategy for girls' education; mentoring in South Sudan is positioned to be well received, effective, and a source of new learning.

Once the goal has been identified, key behaviours should be identified that are directly related to the goal. These will form the basis of the mentoring programme's Theory of Change, to ensure that the design of the mentoring programme will lead to the intended results.

The following five key girls' behaviours formed the focus of the mentoring component of the GESS programme, and

### Contextually Relevant Content

In order for a mentoring programme to meet the needs of the mentees, it is critical that both the design and the content of the programme are inclusive and relevant to the operational context. Workshops should be held with stakeholders, making sure to include government officials at levels relevant to the programme.

As the GESS mentoring programme was implemented in the former 7 States, government officials from both the national and State levels were consulted. Thematic working groups were held at the national level with MoGEI under the Directorate of Gender and Social Change. A series of handbooks and guides were designed for the teacher- and peer-led mentoring models. The topics covered were developed through a series of consultative workshops in Juba, bringing together technical specialists from the ten former States, staff from the Directorate of Gender, Equity and Inclusive Education, and the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare. The layout of the mentoring guide was validated by MoGEI at the national level. The content was developed and

validated in a workshop with all State Anchors.

Where possible, it is also important to consult girls who will be participate in the mentoring programme. What do they want to get out of it and what topics do they want to see included?

The following are the topics that were developed in the GESS mentoring component, for both teacher- and peer-led sessions:

1. Me and My Goals
2. My Role Models
3. My Decisions
4. My Money
5. My Study Skills
6. Communication
7. Managing My Emotions
8. Peer Pressure
9. My Changing Body
10. My Menstrual Cycle
11. Pregnancy & Contraception
12. HIV/AIDS and Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases
13. My Body, My Decision
14. Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drugs
15. Violence Against Girls
16. My Gender, My Education

In addition to ensuring that the content of the mentoring programme is relevant to the needs of the operational context, it is also important to ensure that it complements, rather than

replicates, existing interventions and programmes. Such interventions may be external or internal, and collaborating with them should also improve value for money.

The GESS mentoring component collaborated with other GESS programme components to work towards achieving the same goal. For example, another GESS programme output delivers cash transfers to girls enrolled in Primary 5 to Senior 4; reducing the financial barriers that girls face in attending school is crucial in increasing their enrolment and retention.

The mentoring programme enhanced the potential of the cash transfers through a session focused on the responsible and effective use of a cash transfer. With limited resources and household demands, and without proper guidance, girls (and boys) can be tempted to use the cash transfer for purposes not directly linked to supporting their success in school. Specific sessions within the mentoring guide addressed the question of how to effectively use the cash transfer as well as the broader issue of planning and budgeting for education. The importance of decision making also featured prominently with contextually-based situations, allowing girls to consider the advantages and disadvantages of different choices to make informed decisions on how to use the cash transfer.

A mentoring programme is an excellent opportunity to provide girls with information and knowledge that they previously did not have access to. This can often be on culturally sensitive topics, such as menstruation and reproductive health. Providing girls with such information can help them to make



*A female mentor guides students from Juba Day Secondary School on National Girls' Education Day*

informed, healthy and safe decisions. However, such topics should be developed in consultation with local stakeholders to ensure they are approached in an appropriate way.

Under the GESS programme output to enhance household and community awareness of and support for girls' education, BBC Media Action developed Our School - 15-minute innovative magazine-style radio programmes, which follow the lives of girls and their families as they struggle and resolve the challenges of going to school. BBC Media Action worked with Winrock International to pair existing radio content from their Our School programme with each of the mentoring programme topics listed above. The mentoring component selected radio programmes that corresponded to related sessions from the Mentoring Guide, and developed accompanying discussion tools, materials, and activities for girl-led sessions.

The Our School radio sessions, followed by guided discussion facilitated by the Peer Leaders, allowed girls to easily engage in the topics that are often sensitive, such as menstruation, with stories, questions, and perspectives drawing on their own experience with these issues.

Mentors should be provided with tools that allow them to track:

- Sessions they have led
- Attendance of the girls
- The speakers who have attended
- The topics they have addressed
- The activities that the girls organize for the larger school and/or at paired primary schools, and
- Any other activities and observations that the mentor has.

The GESS mentoring component designed a tool called the Mentor Monitoring Log for this purpose. Programme staff should review these periodically and engage Head Teachers or School Administrators in conducting monitoring and providing support to Teacher Mentors and Peer Leaders in the delivery of the mentoring programme.

In addition to the behaviours above (increased attendance, retention, and secondary school graduation), there are other behaviours that support the achievement of the goal that



*Mentees with the solar-powered, wind-up radio that plays Our School radio programme during mentoring sessions*

## Monitoring Progress

In order to monitor ongoing implementation and to learn about the outcomes of a mentoring programme, a mixed-methods monitoring and evaluation plan should be considered. If the operational context has an education monitoring information system, this can be used to monitor the attendance, retention and examination results of individual girls participating into the mentoring programme. GESS uses the South Sudan Schools Attendance Monitoring System (SSSAMS - [www.sssams.org](http://www.sssams.org)) to review data from mentoring schools, such as school attendance, retention, and enrolment in secondary school, signifying the successful transition from upper primary school. These are all the behaviours that support attainment of the end goal.

should be evaluated. Preventing teen pregnancy, HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases, reducing the incidence of early child marriage, and decreasing the incidence of gender-based violence will also contribute to attainment of the goal. Typically, education management systems do not have data that can provide evidence about these behaviours. It is therefore necessary to look to other methods. Qualitative methods, such as case studies of the schools involved in the mentoring programme are a useful means of informing understanding of these other elements, and contribute to continual learning and improvement. The GESS mentoring programme conducted case studies by carrying out questionnaires and focus group discussions which were utilised to delve into the determinants of girls' behaviours.

## Adaptive Programming

A mentoring programme operating in a conflict affected or fragile state should be flexible and responsive to meet the needs of the dynamic context. Despite inclusive and thoughtful planning processes, it is possible that certain strategies might not work. Should that be the case, they should be revised and altered.

The GESS mentoring component was initially implemented in primary schools. Unfortunately, there were several challenges to this. The primary school teachers involved were experiencing heavy workloads and were reluctant to be involved in the mentoring programme without additional incentives.

The education level of the primary school teachers also led to challenges with grasping some of the content. The mentoring model was then revised to focus more on secondary schools, and the content was more appropriate to that age level. The secondary school model continued to use teachers as mentors, but added peer-led mentoring strategy. Teacher mentors introduced topics in structured mentoring modules and then these topics were further discussed through facilitated activity-based sessions led by peer mentors.

Training was delivered to girls who became peer mentors, and tool were created for them to use as peer mentors, utilising prompts and activities linked to the Our School radio programmes.

In some areas, State Anchors requested refresher training for school mentors. The programme was able to adapt to these needs to deliver refresher training, where required. The effects of attrition should also be a key consideration and planned for as a contingency.

On occasion, throughout the GESS mentoring programme, teacher mentors moved away from their schools due to government transfers or personal reasons. As part of its initial strategy, the GESS programme trained two Teacher Mentors, in addition to the Head Teacher at each school, as well as two Peer Leaders to deliver mentoring sessions.

Additionally, a contingency budget can be allocated from the beginning of the programme to train mentors who join the programme part way through, should that eventuality occur. Training peer mentors also requires an ongoing budget throughout the programme. In the GESS mentoring component, peer mentors were selected from Senior 4. This meant that they left school part way through the programme and incoming Senior 4 girls had to be trained on how to be peer mentors.



*Girls in a Secondary School in Juba gather under the shade of a tree for a mentoring session*

**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

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