

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.

The South Sudan Schools Attendance Monitoring System (SSSAMS - www.sssams.org) is a near real-time data management information system, designed to function in fragile contexts where beneficiaries have limited resources and low connectivity. It was designed and rolled out by MoGEI and GESS and is used by National, State and County officials to support the management of schools, and allocation of resources.

Drawing on the experiences of GESS, this document provides a general introduction to the design and implementation of such a data management information system.

With the package of GESS services in mind, this document is best viewed in conjunction with the publications on GESS Cash Transfers (CTs) and Capitation Grants (CGs).

GESS developed SSSAMS in order to collate data that would support CT and CG activities. The data collected on SSSAMS includes:

- The status of each school
- Name, gender, age, and details of every enrolled student in South Sudan
- Current enrolment levels in all schools across South Sudan, disaggregated by gender and State
- Required documents from schools receiving CTs and CGs
- CT and CG tracking
- Teacher and examination data

When designing a data management information system for use in a Fragile and Conflict Affected State (FCAS), it is important to ensure that:

- The system relies on available technology
- The system is simple to use, requiring minimal training
- The system is robust enough to ensure accuracy
- The system can be accessed remotely

With these factors in mind, SSSAMS was designed so that data could be sent using multiple tools via multiple channels. The preferred method of communication is via SMS, using basic, feature or smart phones. In cases where there is low connectivity or a lack of resources, hard copies of data are sent via our State Anchors (State-based partners), or any other organ of government or NGOs operating in the area.

On receipt of this information, our data entry team upload information daily into the system.

To account for challenges linked to insecurity, low connectivity and low resources, that may prevent timely submission of data, schools are allowed to submit information retrospectively within an 8 week time period. As a result, SSSAMS was developed to allow data entry teams to update the website with information up to 8 weeks after the date it refers to. This was taken into consideration and accounted for when writing and examining static reports based on data gathered on the system.

In order to enable complex data to be sent via SMS, we created a comprehensive coding system. The rest of the system was designed so as to be consistent with this code. For example, schools on SSSAMS are referred to by a three letter code, to enable school names to be communicated quickly and efficiently via SMS.

Each SMS report sent to our data entry team indicated, in the correct format:

1. Which two-week period they are reporting on using the data code
2. Which school they are reporting on using a 3 letter SSSAMS code

3. Which teacher they are reporting on using a teacher short-code - a unique code assigned to each teacher
4. How many lessons teachers have taught each day over the two-week period

Implementing a data management information system for use in a Fragile and Conflict Affected State (FCAS)

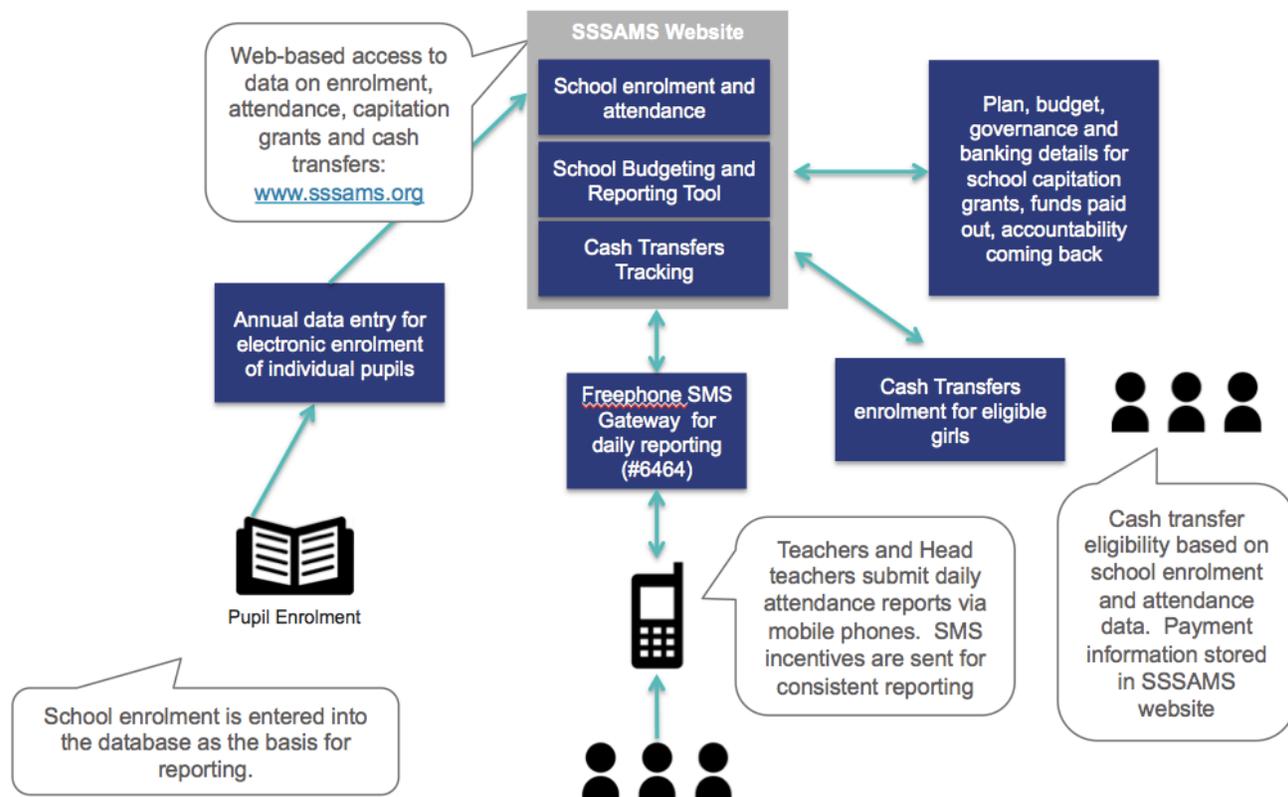
When implementing a data management information system for use in FCAS, it is important to ensure that:

- The system has political buy in from relevant actors
- Users receive adequate training
- Hands on operational support is available for users
- There are incentives for use, whilst disincentives for use are removed or minimised

Ensuring political buy-in will support effective implementation.

As this is a system designed for the National/State Ministries of Education, having their input and feedback throughout the design process was vital to ensure it met their needs.

SSSAMS is part of a suite bringing together enrolment and attendance monitoring, as well as data on GESS Cash Transfers and Capitation Grants



For example:

- We ran workshops for MoGEI officials to gain their feedback on the design process in order to develop the system in line with their desired specifications.
- We trained Ministry, State and County staff in the use of SSSAMS so they could support teachers and schools nation-wide to use it effectively.
- Prior to the start of every academic year, the Undersecretary for Education wrote a letter to all schools to encourage the use of SSSAMS.
- We included County education staff in the collection of relevant documents.

Providing adequate training will improve the likelihood of the system being used regularly and correctly.

- To ensure that users benefit from adequate training on the use of the SSSAMS SMS coding system, our tech team runs regular training sessions for State partners, Ministry staff and County education staff. These individuals are then placed in State-based teams and carry out training for teachers in every accessible school in the country.

The availability of hands-on operational support for users will support the efficiency of the system.

- Support from Head Office: we found that early in the year, a number of SMS reports contained errors. To minimise errors, our data entry team proactively monitored incoming messages for the first few weeks and called senders who formatted information incorrectly, providing operational support until the codes were correctly used.
- State-based support: we trained State partners and County Education staff to provide hands on support to schools throughout the year.

Providing incentives for use and ensuring there are no disincentives for use supports the efficient and regular use of the system.

- The SSSAMS system is linked to GESS' CTs and CGs programmes. Receipt of CTs and CGs is dependent on the submission of data to SSSAMS. This provided a financial incentive to use the system.
- It is made clear to teachers and schools at the beginning of each academic year that the content of the data submitted to SSSAMS will not result in repercussions and that their data will be secure and accessible only to authorised individuals. This ensures there are no disincentives to using the system.
- A free to the user short-code was created for

sending SMSs to our data entry team. This ensures that the cost of submission does not fall on the user, which would disincentivise use.

- The simple codes used also ensure that non-English speakers are able to participate and engage with the system.
- The anonymised data gathered by SSSAMS can be accessed by the government to inform policy making decisions, which improves the Government's support of the system.



CLO at St Andrew's Primary School in Bor checks enrolment data

Achievements

GESS staff have been working full time at MoGEI over the course of the Programme to offer SSSAMS guidance and training to State education officials, in order to strengthen their ownership of SSSAMS and ability to support States and schools.

SSSAMS is a key innovation of the GESS programme, supporting MoGEI and education partners in decision-making. In years before the implementation of SSSAMS, there was a severe dearth of education data, and where available, big gaps that threatened the quality of data and subsequently, its use in policy-making.

In 2018, at the time of writing, SSSAMS had collected names and details of >1.6 million individual pupils. This data is disaggregated by gender and State, to allow for a more detailed insight into the state of education at the local level.

To view near real-time data on enrolment, visit www.sssams.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 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.