



## 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 GESS quality education component took a holistic approach, including school-based teacher professional development, community-based school governance, supportive school supervision and school-based mentoring for girls.

With the package of GESS services in mind, this document is best viewed in conjunction with the publications on GESS School Governance, Supportive School Supervision and Mentoring.

When GESS started, there was an absence of a strategic framework for teacher development and management in South Sudan. Gaps in the system included a lack of teacher educators' capacity; availability of infrastructure and other resources; appropriate incentives or salaries for the teachers; teacher education accreditation policy; and career path

guidance. As a result, the quality of learning in schools suffered from inadequate resources as well as un-trained or poorly-trained teachers and Head Teachers (HTs).

The GESS pilot school-based Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programme was conceptualized as a solution to some of these challenges. It aimed to test a new model of on-going teacher professional development, focusing on classroom practices and peer learning, in order to contribute to development of a model of best practices for teacher professional development in South Sudan.

Between 2015 and 2018, **218 schools** have been included in the TPD pilot, and 191 schools have been reached with training on low cost teaching and learning materials. **2,587 teachers and HTs received TPD training**. The pilot has led to the use of inclusive pedagogy, an increase in the use of classroom aides and more pair and group work.

Drawing on the experiences of GESS, this document provides an introduction to the design and implementation of a teacher development programme in a Fragile and Conflict Affected State (FCAS).

**10**

Education Specialists

**2,587**

Trained teachers and Head Teachers



## Designing and Implementing a Teacher Professional Development Programme

When designing and implementing a teacher professional development programme, there are five key considerations:

- Conducting a Teacher Needs Assessment
- Eligibility and Targeting
- Delivery Method and Content
- Monitoring Progress
- Adaptive Programming

## Conducting a Teacher Needs Assessment

When designing a TPD programme, the first consideration must focus on discovering what the needs and issues really are. A reliable needs analysis is an essential foundation upon which the most effective teacher professional development programmes are built. There are numerous international examples of governments and programmes which have a genuine commitment to supporting teacher professional development, but where initiatives do not achieve the desired impact because they are not grounded in a thorough understanding of needs and issues.

In contexts where resources are limited, it is even more important to conduct a thorough needs assessment so that teacher development policies and programmes can be targeted at the areas of greatest need. This is the case in South Sudan which, as a new state attempting to emerge from long periods of conflict, faces significant challenges in building a sound education system.

Many studies on educational quality in developing countries only use proxy measures of teacher capability such as teacher qualifications or years of schooling. However formal teaching qualifications are not an automatic guarantee of the quality of teaching. In many cases, it is taken for granted that a qualified teacher has the necessary competences for effective and efficient teaching. There is evidence to suggest that such an assumption is not always accurate.

An effective needs assessment for a TPD programme should focus on teacher competencies. This can be tailored to the context. For example, GESS limited the scope of the needs assessment to the evaluation of several basic competencies that would be necessary for teachers to adhere to the National Professional Standards for Teacher in South Sudan. These included competencies such as proficiency in English; basic mathematics; ability to apply literacy and numeracy skills to teaching duties, such as classroom administration; keeping records; calculating students' test scores; identifying patterns in students' achievements; and using resource materials to develop lesson plans.

The needs assessment should be used together with any existing data or research on teacher competence in the operational context. The daily tasks performed by teachers is a useful starting point for analysis. A list of teachers' daily tasks can be compiled using findings from school visits and classroom observations. These tasks should then be evaluated in terms of how effectively these tasks are carried out by teachers. This can also be used to link teacher performance to desired competencies; GESS linked these to the competencies stipulated in the National Professional Standards for Teachers in South Sudan. Practical tasks can also be designed to measure how teachers use data to inform their teaching practice and lesson planning.

**It is helpful to follow the following four steps when designing a needs assessment:**

1. **Literature Review** – Conduct a literature review on the education sector, teacher education and teacher development in the operational context.
2. **Field Visits** – Visit key education sector institutions, including meeting education managers, school leaders, teachers and learners in order to understand the classroom context.
3. **Design** – Use evidence from the first two steps to inform the design of the Teacher Needs Assessment. The GESS teacher needs assessment was a two-part research assessment consisting of a background questionnaire and a practical assessment of teachers' skills, designed in collaboration with the MoGEI and stakeholders working in the teacher development sector. Other tools to consider could be structured interviews or focus group discussions with teachers or students.
4. **Selection of teachers** – Use proportional sampling to ensure that teachers from relevant subgroups are included in the assessment. The GESS needs assessment included teachers from urban, semi-urban and rural areas, and female and male teachers from all States.

The GESS needs assessment was structured in a way that is highly relevant to teachers' daily tasks. It took teachers through a normal day in school, with the activities that teachers carry out from the time they arrive at school to the moment they leave the school. Teachers were asked to perform different classroom activities and tasks and answer some questions. The instrument provided a number of different tasks to assess teachers' basic pedagogical competences. 696 teachers participated in the assessment.

Data from the needs assessment can be combined with other assessment instruments, data generated by classroom observations and learning assessments. Triangulation of such data can be used to give policy makers a better insight into the factors that are affecting teacher performance.

The GESS Teacher Needs Assessment found very low teaching capacity. It also found that schools were lacking in resources, and in terms of supervision and observation. Some of the findings included:

- 19% of teachers were able to mark learners' attendance correctly in a register.
- 35% of teachers were able to define learning outcomes for an example lesson.
- 5% of teachers were able to develop a complete lesson plan in the suggested format.
- 11% of teachers were able to provide learners with meaningful feedback on a written assignment.
- 50% of teachers were able to rank students in order of performance.
- More than 75% of teachers report using English as a language of instruction.

The TPD programme was designed using the findings of the Teacher Needs Assessment, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning and the standard of education in South Sudan.

*"Teachers of Arabic background found it difficult to teach in English."*

**Malish David, Education Specialist,  
Eastern Equatoria**



## Eligibility and Targeting

It is important to consider carefully who should be targeted by the TPD programme. The GESS TPD pilot was implemented in 20 schools in one County in each of the 10 former States of South Sudan. As the Teacher Needs Assessment found low teaching capacity to be cross-cutting, the programme aimed to be inclusive and included all teachers in pilot schools. If a Teacher Needs Assessment finds variance in teaching capacity levels, teachers targeted by the programme can be selected accordingly. The 20 target schools in each County were chosen with the following factors taken into consideration: strong HT leadership; schools accessible to the ESs; schools with supportive Payam Education Supervisor (PES); and schools receiving the GESS Capitation Grant and reporting on time.

## Delivery Method and Content

The method of delivery, and content of the programme, should be informed by the Teacher Needs Assessment. The findings of the assessment can be used to develop a list of desirable change indicators at the school and classroom levels. Based

on the findings of the assessment, the TPD programme aimed to provide practical and hands-on support to teachers and Head Teachers in the pilot schools, focusing on classroom practices and peer learning. 24 modules were developed in 5 categories: **Teacher Development** (9 modules); **Head Teacher Development** (8 modules); **Staff Meeting** (3 modules); **Payam Education Supervisor Development** (1 module); **Education Specialist Development** (all plus 3 additional modules).

The support structure to enable school-based teacher development in this programme comprised of: teacher training workshops; staff meeting inputs; HTs' workshops; PES workshops; periodical wider sharing meetings with teachers and HTs in the local areas; and continuous support from the ESs through post lesson observation feedback sessions.

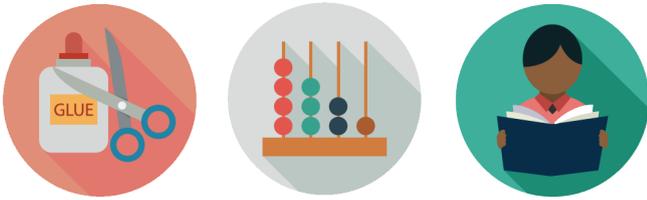
The ESs played the role of the main 'driver' of the intervention at the field level, with a 'facilitative approach'. The ESs were brought together in Juba to be trained as trainers, and were then stationed in their respective States to deliver the teacher and Head Teacher trainings at the local level. The PESs received on the job training as ESs delivered the teacher and Head Teacher trainings. The ESs received two refresher trainings each year to review progress, the strategy and to be trained on new content added to the modules. The HT trainings were clustered, with Head Teachers in each of the 20 schools in one County being brought together in one location, with transport and lunch provided. The teacher training was school-based.



Part of the teacher training content focused on low-cost and no-cost teaching and learning materials. Building the capacity of teachers in this area is an important strategy in improving teaching and learning in fragile and conflict affected contexts.

As part of the GESS TPD model, a workshop was delivered where teachers learned how to develop and use appropriate teaching and learning materials; how to store them; where to look for items which can be turned into learning materials; where to look for funds for learning materials; and how to create learning display. Teachers created a portfolio of low-cost/no-cost learning materials for their specific subject and

student levels. Being able to create learning materials from materials that are locally available, such as twigs, leaves and stones, provides teachers with a wealth of effective teaching aids that are accessible to all.



An effective teacher professional development programme should also aim to foster a community of learning and collaboration, where implementing staff can learn from and support each other based on their real experiences of the programme. This should be factored into the workplan. The GESS TPD programme facilitated a number of exchange visits between ESs from different States, where ESs were able to learn from one another. To further foster learning and collaboration, a Facebook group was created and used throughout the programme for ESs to share their experiences and motivate each other.

A TPD programme operating in a FCAS context will be operating in a context that is low-resource. Using school-based model is particularly effective in such a context. In the school-based model that GESS used, every teacher in the school benefited from the training. As all teachers in the school were learning together, they were also able to provide each other ongoing support. Furthermore, as the teachers were learning in their local environment, additional costs such as transport, venue hire and accommodation were not incurred. Any risks to safety posed by travelling far from the schools was also avoided.

## Monitoring Progress

Essential to the success of any TPD programme is careful monitoring of progress. This should involve multiple stakeholders to ensure that data can be triangulated. Monitoring for the GESS TPD model was designed to include five groups of stakeholders: ESs; HTs; PESs; GESS central team members; and staff from the MoGEI teacher training department.

The ESs were required to do lesson observations in each of the 20 schools per State every month. After each lesson observation, based on a structured schedule, a discussion with the teacher took place giving feedback using a constructive and supportive approach. The identified strengths of the lesson were shared with the observed teacher along with areas for further development. Through mutual agreement, future action plans with timelines were recorded and followed up by the HT. A continuous feedback loop is critical to improving teaching performance and quality of learning in schools.

HTs also made schedules to observe their teachers regularly. They were also responsible for providing guidance, follow-up support and monitoring of the action plans. Their findings were recorded and shared with the ESs during their next visits.

In addition to the ES and HT classroom observations, the PESs and GESS central team members also observed classroom practices and provided constructive feedback to teachers and HTs. Members of MoGEI also conducted field visits and classroom observations.



*Halima Kenneth, TPD training beneficiary from City Dove Primary School in Juba, Jubek State, demonstrates interactive learning techniques and low-cost teaching and learning materials.*

The draft Minimum Standards (for school practices) checklist developed by MoGEI was used to inform the design of the classroom observation tool used by ESs and HTs.

The ESs were required to prepare a monthly report for the GESS central team, where all information gathered regarding the school and classroom practices as well as the workshops was presented in a consolidated and structured format. Where possible, findings were presented with sources of evidence identified, and recommendations were provided by the ESs. In addition, quantitative data regarding the skills development workshops every month was collected by the ESs through software installed on a smart phone or laptop and electronically shared with the GESS central team.

## Adaptive Programming

A teacher professional development programme operating in a FCAS context should be flexible and responsive to meet the needs of the dynamic context.

Recruitment of staff should be conflict-sensitive, taking into account any affiliations of the staff member and the area they are to be stationed. Different strategies should be designed on a needs basis to ensure the safety of all staff and that duty of care is upheld.

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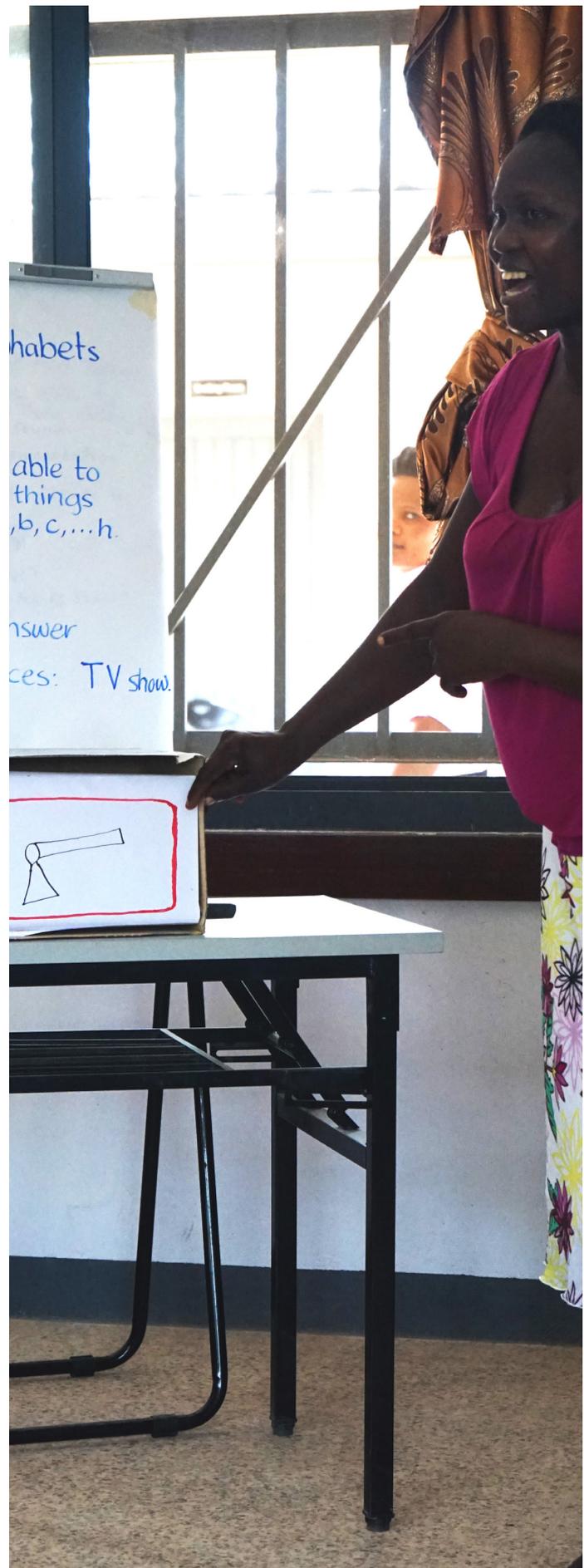


Initially the GESS TPD programme targeted 220 schools and had 11 ESs. One part of the country was badly affected by the conflict, so the ES and other staff were relocated. Activities in that County were closed down to ensure duty of care of staff. Another ES had to leave South Sudan as a result of the conflict, and unfortunately was not able to return. The aforementioned displaced ES was then able to replace the colleague who was unable to return to the country.

It is also a good idea to have central roaming staff in place, in order to respond to the changing needs of the context and to facilitate back up strategies. In one State, an ES was a victim of violence. He was evacuated to Juba until he felt able to go back, and the programme activities were temporarily paused. When he returned, a member of the central team accompanied him to deliver training and classroom observations in some of the schools in order to bring the programme activities back on schedule. Where training had fallen behind schedule, the model of conducting half day trainings with teachers was altered to full day sessions to allow adequate time to cover content and meet the schedule.

A TPD programme should be evaluated once or twice a year to assess overall progress and to use the data, knowledge and new experiences acquired to make recommendations and take action for further improvement. Initially ESs were required to submit a quarterly report to the GESS central team. This was changed to a monthly report as it was felt the information provided quarterly could be richer.

You can find TPD Lessons Learned reports on our website.<sup>1</sup>



*Angelica Angelo, Education Specialist from former Western Equatoria State, at a training session for Education Specialists in Juba*

<sup>1</sup> <http://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/research-reports-2>

# 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.