



Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) will transform the lives of a generation of children in South Sudan – especially girls and children with disabilities – through education.

GESS is helping to improve the lives of a generation of South Sudanese children by ensuring the provision of equitable, accessible and essential support to the education sector in South Sudan, with a particular emphasis on girls and children with disabilities.

GESS is a programme funded by UK aid, the Government of Canada, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) the European Union (EU) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) supports the GESS programme, and consortium partners provide technical advice. The partners include the lead, Cambridge Education, part of the Mott MacDonald group; BBC Media Action; Montrose; and Windle Trust International. At the state level, the State Ministries of Education support the Programme's implementation alongside partner organisations, called 'State Anchors'.



Capitation grants enable schools to buy vital resources such as textbooks.

The outcome of the Programme will be an improvement in girls' educational attainment, above what was achieved in the first phase of GESS - building further gains on school enrolment, reducing barriers to education and promoting equity in access for all children, with a focus on those with disabilities.

Activities

The innovative design of the Programme includes a range of integrated activities that are tackling barriers to girls' education simultaneously, supported by technology and informed by research.

GESS' radio programme, 'Our School', inspires communities to support the education of girls and children with disabilities. During year four of the Programme, 'Our School' was broadcast weekly in 7 local languages on 31 partner radio stations across South Sudan. Each 15-minute episode features real-life stories and interviews with girls, parents, school managers and community members.



'Our School' producer interviewing a student in Juba, Central Equatoria State. This photo was taken pre-COVID-19.

‘Our School’ addresses negative cultural attitudes and practical challenges that can affect girls’ education, such as travelling to school safely and budgeting for education. By the end of year two of GESS, approximately 2,321,766 individuals, out of an annual target of 1,900,000, were reached with ‘Our School’ radio programme. This milestone is measured in years two and five of the Programme.

Community mobilisers take the radio programmes to hard-to-reach communities through solar powered and wind-up radios, loaded with the radio programme on SD cards. Mobilisers organise radio listening clubs and community dialogues about girls’ education, supplemented by visual storytelling materials. In one such activity in Eastern Equatoria, parents listening to the ‘journey to school’ episode decided that their children should walk to school together in a group - an idea sparked by the radio programme. A total of 2,734 school communities, out of an annual target of 2,456, were reached through community mobilisation activities by the end of year three of the Programme.

Direct Empowerment

GESS also empowers girls directly by paying cash transfers to eligible girls enrolled in, and regularly attending, classes Primary 5 to Secondary 4.



A Cash Transfer beneficiary in Juba receives her 2020 Round 1 payment whilst following strict COVID-19 protocol.

The Cash Transfers address financial barriers to education by supplementing household incomes, so parents can better afford to send their daughters to school. Upon receiving the money, the girls decide how to spend it.

By the end of year four of GESS, 1,049,220 individual girls had received a cash transfer, exceeding the target of 963,436. The cumulative number of payments by the end of year four stood at 2,064,460, exceeding the target of 2,013,370.

Our [research](#) shows that girls who receive cash transfers remain in school longer and attend school more frequently than those who do not. Research also highlights that they spend the money wisely - mainly purchasing shoes,

uniforms, learning materials or sanitary items.

Girls and their families are also encouraged to use the cash transfers for education-enabling items through ‘Our School’ radio programme and community mobilisation activities.

School capitation grants are also delivered by the Programme. The grants aim to improve the learning environment for girls and boys, as well as learners with disabilities. Schools must meet a number of reporting requirements to be eligible – including having a school governance body in place and making a school development plan and budget.

Schools have invested in renovations to classrooms and other physical infrastructure, as well as learning materials. GESS encourages investments that boost the enrolment and attendance of girls, such as providing sanitary pads.

MoGEI provides primary schools with capitation grants while GESS supports system strengthening to ensure that schools qualify, utilise and account for the money. Secondary schools’ capitation grants are provided by GESS. This collaboration ensures ownership and the sustainability of the Programme.

By the end of year four, 5,968 primary schools were approved to receive a capitation grant, exceeding the target of 5,662. By the end of year four, a cumulative number of 5,121 schools received a grant, out of a target of 4,938. By the end of year four, 249 secondary schools received a grant from GESS, which was just under the year four target of 295 schools.

Innovation

A key innovation is GESS’ use of mobile phone technology to capture learners’ and teachers’ attendance in real-time through SMS reporting into an online database called the Schools’ Attendance and Monitoring System (SAMS). The system is also used to determine the number of girls eligible for cash transfers, as well as schools eligible for capitation grants.



Free SMS reporting enables teachers to use their mobile phones to submit enrolment and attendance data in real time.

GESS collected details of more than 2.02 million learners for Academic Year 2022.

By the end of year four of the Programme, 80% of schools were regularly reporting attendance through SAMS.

Another innovative aspect of the Programme is its conflict-resilient, decentralised implementation structure. Working with community-based programme managers and county-level staff, the Programme is able to operate and deliver, even in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas.

Opportunities

The Knowledge, Evidence, Research & Learning (KERL) component of GESS aims to generate knowledge on best practices in education to better understand what works and does not work when promoting girls' education in South Sudan. The KERL component seeks to develop an evidence base for GESS interventions, linking inputs to outcomes and impact, as well as acting as a broader information hub on girls' education.

Cumulatively, 12 research and evaluation studies were completed and 24 dissemination sessions were held by the end of year four of the Programme.

The second phase of the Programme is targeting children with disabilities, giving them the chance to benefit from a quality education and the opportunity for full participation in society. Disability inclusion will be mainstreamed throughout the whole Programme.

As well as addressing stigma and access to schools, we will help to improve learning for children with disabilities. Improved learning will be done through the promotion of disability inclusion in teacher training, developing appropriate training and learning materials, and championing disability inclusion across all of GESS' quality education activities.

We will ensure that our data is disaggregated, including by disability, and that all Programme research effectively captures unique issues that affect learners with disabilities.

Quality Education

Practical support to schools, teachers and education managers.

This part of the GESS programme is about improving the quality of education and learning outcomes. Members of a community are encouraged to join school governing bodies and are trained to take an active part in the school development process.

GESS's practical support to schools, teachers and education managers is realised through the following five innovative strategies:

- 1 Raising the quality of teachers**
- 2 Improving school governance**
- 3 Mentoring of girls and boys**
- 4 Supporting the Alternative Education System**
- 5 Building the capacity of education managers**

School supervisors are supported through on the job coaching. Providing practical support to schools, teachers and education managers is crucial. Factors that impact the quality of education include the consistent loss of instructional time, language of instruction, low capacity of teachers and limited access to teaching and learning materials.

By the end of year four of the Programme, a cumulative number of 6,240 school management committees had been trained, out of a target of 4,778. A total of 438 education management staff were trained by the Programme.

Mentoring activities resumed in year four of the Programme. A cumulative number of 37913 learners participated in mentoring activities during year four.



INSPIRE EDUCATE TRANSFORM

“What I can add is when the country is in crisis, it doesn’t mean it is the end of the world. When the country is in crisis, people have to encourage themselves so that we get on with education even though you have a problem. You have that chance of education. You have to study.”

Participant in user-testing research, Juba



Girls listen to an episode of the GESS 'Our School' programme on a solar-powered wind-up radio at a session in Juba led by a peer mentor.

Consortium Partners