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Girls' Education South Sudan 2 (GESS2)

Social & Behavioural Change Communication

Midline Report

September 2021



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Abbreviations

BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
GESS	Girls' Education South Sudan
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CM	Community mobilisation
EA	Enumeration area
EU	European Union Directorate-General for International Cooperation and
DEVCO	Development (renamed to Directorate-General for International Partnerships in January 2021)
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FGD	Focus group discussion
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
IDI	In-depth interview
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISPR	Institute for Social Policy and Research
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PoC	Protection of Civilians site
PSA	Public Service Announcement
(S)GBV	(Sexual) Gender-based violence
SRH(R)	Sexual and reproductive health (and rights)
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan

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Executive Summary

At the time of this research, the GESS programme was funded by the UK aid from the UK government and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) with the aim of transforming the life chances of a generation of South Sudanese children (particularly, but not exclusively, girls and children with disabilities) through education. The programme is implemented by a consortium with BBC Media Action responsible for Output 1: Behaviour Change Communication (BCC), aiming to increase school enrolment, improve girls' educational attainment and reduce barriers to education and promote equity in access for all children.

Based on the lessons from the first phase of the GESS programme (2014-2018), new areas of focus were identified for the second phase (2019-2024) aiming at addressing gender and social norms which affect school attendance, including those related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender-based violence (GBV); and the barriers to education for vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities.

As with the first phase of the GESS programme (2014-2018), radio programming and community mobilisation activities are being used to create a supportive environment where education is prioritised for all. Between 2019 and 2021, selected episodes of the *Our School* radio programme developed for GESS Phase 1 were rebroadcast and delivered to a wider audience. The episodes were selected based on their continued relevance, for instance episodes on supporting children to learn at home during school holidays were rebroadcast during school closures because of COVID-19, and rebroadcasting allowed the BBC Media Action team to rebuild the *Our School* audience while achieving good value for money. Community mobilisation (CM) increased the focus on inclusivity by expanding activities in hard-to-reach areas. From early 2021 onwards, new episodes of *Our School* and Public Service Announcements will be developed that will address the new objectives for GESS Phase 2.

To measure the reach of *Our School* and understand its impact on audiences' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour related to project outcomes, BBC Media Action commissioned a nationally representative midline survey. Data collection was conducted by a South Sudanese research agency, the Institute of Social Policy and Research (ISPR), in March and April 2021 with 3,444 survey respondents aged 15+ across all ten former states.¹

Reach and engagement with *Our School*

Reach of *Our School*² has increased since 2018 when 31% of the adult population, equivalent to 1.9 million people, were reached within the 12 months prior to data collection. In the 2021 measurement, **43% of the adult population said they had listened to the programme at least once in the 12 months prior to data collection, which equates to 2.3 million people**, surpassing the March 2021 project milestone of 1.9 million.

¹ Using the ten-state system prior to the creation of separate Administrative Areas.

² Reach is defined as the number of people who reported that they had listened to the programme at least once in the 12 months prior to data collection. This is a standard definition used by BBC Media Action across projects.

57% of the audience is female, the same proportion as in 2018. While women and people with a lower income are slightly under-represented in the *Our School* audience when compared to the overall sample, this is explained by their lower level of radio access.

Almost three in four (73%) of those reached by *Our School* said they had discussed the programme with others, an increase from 58% in 2018, an indication of increasing levels of engagement with the programme.

Media landscape

Access to radio, mobile phone and internet/social media has increased since 2018, while access to TV has remained stable. Women continue to have less radio access than men and are less likely to control what they listen to on the radio. 79% of male respondents with radio access in their home said they decide what they listen to, compared to 69% of females.

Knowledge about education

Listeners reported higher levels of knowledge about education than non-listeners and were more likely than non-listeners to give correct answers to questions about their knowledge of the education system. **Regular *Our School* listeners are 1.2 times as likely as non-listeners to demonstrate knowledge of the school system** even when controlling for other factors, such as gender, education, and income.

While most respondents overall were able to answer questions about the education system correctly, as in the GESS Phase 1 endline conducted in 2018, less than half of respondents (48%) knew how much it should cost according to law to register a child in a government school (it should be free of charge). It is likely that people are unaware that this is a law because in practice many schools continue to charge enrolment and other fees. When asked about the benefits of education for boys, girls and children with disabilities respondents are less likely to mention that children with disabilities will be able to provide financial support to their families than girls or boys generally. This reflects the view found in previous research that children with disabilities are seen as having less potential to work and contribute financially as they become older than other children. This is a view that should be addressed in future episodes of *Our School*.

Overall, 37% of respondents mentioned four or more benefits of girls' education, a decrease from 49% in 2018. Awareness of four or more benefits of boys' education had also decreased to a similar extent over the same time period: from 50% to 41%. This decrease may reflect the situation at the time of data collection where schools had been closed for more than a year and many households reported that the COVID-19 pandemic also had a negative financial impact on their household, which may trigger them to be less likely to see the benefit of education.

Overall knowledge of education and the benefits of education varies a lot by former states, but the variation is different for different topics. For example, in Lakes, respondents had relatively high levels of knowledge of the school system, laws and GESS initiatives compared to other states. In Central Equatoria they felt the least well informed about education and this is reflected in their relatively lower levels of knowledge of the school system and GESS initiatives than in other states. In Warrap, respondents were the least aware of the benefits of education

for girls and for children with disabilities, while in Upper Nile they were the most aware. This demonstrates how the approach to shifting knowledge needs to be targeted by former states as different states lack knowledge in different areas.

Attitudes about education

Overall, **27% of respondents still feel that when resources are scarce, the education of sons should be prioritised**, although this is lower than the 39% who agreed with this statement at endline in 2018.³ The percentage who said they would prioritise sons was even higher in some states, for example in Jonglei where this was stated by 56% of respondents at midline. When asked how important education is, responses suggest that people in South Sudan see education as a priority for all children, but as a slightly higher priority for boys than girls, followed by children with disabilities, although this varied by state.

Our School listeners also view the education of children with disabilities as less of a priority than the education of other children. This is an attitude that should be addressed in future episodes which will be focusing more on disability inclusion than previous episodes.

Attitudes about sexual and reproductive health and rights

Across several statements about sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), respondents expressed the lowest level of support for the statement about girls' and young women's right to make decisions about the use of contraceptives. This corresponds with findings from previous research which found that people associate the use of contraceptives among young women with promiscuity and feel that women should only use contraceptives once married.

Attitudes about the SRHR of women and girls with disabilities were similar to those about women and girls more generally. This suggests that negative attitudes and norms relate more to gender than to disability.

Regular *Our School* listeners are more supportive of the SRHR of women and girls, including those with disabilities, than non-listeners. Even when controlling for other factors in regression analysis, regular listeners are **1.8 times as likely as non-listeners to demonstrate supportive attitudes towards the SRHR of women and girls.**

Confidence to discuss sensitive topics with children

People lack confidence to talk to children and young people about relationships, sex, and menstruation. Women are more confident than men when it comes to discussing menstruation, but for all other issues there are no differences in the confidence of women compared to men. **While *Our School* listeners are more comfortable discussing sensitive topics with children and young people than non-listeners, there is still room for improvement, particularly on their confidence to discuss relationships, sex, and**

³ These percentages are not directly comparable as the questions were asked slightly differently.

menstruation. This corresponds with findings from the GESS Phase 1 endline survey conducted in 2018.

Behaviour

While the majority of parents talk to their children about their education, parents of children with disabilities are slightly less likely to talk to them about their education than parents of boys or girls generally. ***Our School* listeners are much more likely to talk to their children about their education and talk to them more frequently than non-listeners.**

Regular *Our School* listeners were more likely than non-listeners to have taken action to support the education of their children. For example, even when controlling for other key factors such as gender, income and education, **regular listeners are 1.6 times as likely as non-listeners to report having saved money or sold something to pay for their daughters' school fees.**

76% of listeners said they had taken some action after listening, an increase from 69% in 2018. The action they were most likely to have taken was to send a child to school, but they were more likely to have sent a son than a daughter, and more likely to have sent a child without a disability than a child with a disability. The likelihood that listeners had taken any action after listening varied a lot by state. While in several states, more than 80% of listeners had taken action, only 57% of listeners in Central Equatoria and 62% of listeners in Western Equatoria had done so.

Barriers to education

The main barriers to education for all children relate to financial difficulties, meaning families are unable to afford school fees, books, and school uniforms. Although this can affect the education of any child, when a family is facing financial difficulties, it is more likely to have an impact on girls and children with disabilities whose education is seen as less of a priority.

COVID-19 has had a detrimental effect on education because of school closures and because of the financial impact of lockdown measures. When midline survey respondents were asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on them and their families, the most common impact mentioned was the financial impact, because of limited ability to work and earn money (49%). A close second was 'the impact on the education of my children' (42%).

These impacts disproportionately affect girls as school closures and the financial impact of lockdown have led to increasing rates of early marriage and pregnancy which means many girls may not return to school. The COVID-19 pandemic seems to have also reinforced norms around gender roles. **Girls are also more likely than boys to be cooking in the household and doing other household work during school closures and less likely than boys to have been studying at home,** meaning they will be further behind with their schoolwork even if they do return to school.

However, ***Our School* listeners are more likely than non-listeners to say their children have been studying at home during school closures and this is the case whether they have sons, daughters, or children with disabilities.** Evidence from an evaluation of GESS

PSAs from 2020 also found that listeners had been encouraged to support their daughters to study at home.

Key recommendations

Our School and community mobilisation activities (CM) should aim to address some of the barriers to education, including those that particularly affect girls and children with disabilities.

- *Our School* listeners view the education of children with disabilities as less of a priority than the education of other children. This is an attitude that should be addressed in future episodes which will be focusing more on disability inclusion than the previous episodes.
- BCC activities should aim to increase support for girls' and young women's right to make decisions about the use of contraceptives.
- BCC activities should increase the confidence of parents and teachers to talk to children and young people about menstruation, relationships and sex.
- BCC activities should highlight the benefits and importance of educating children with disabilities, including showcasing their potential to contribute to their community. This approach should be targeted by state, as the relative perceived importance of educating children with disabilities to those without disabilities varies across the country.
- BCC activities should aim to increase awareness of the benefits of education for all children, whether they are girls, boys, or children with disabilities, to ensure that parents see the importance of sending their children back to school now that schools have reopened.
- Considering the increasing rates of early pregnancy some research participants have reported since school closures because of COVID-19, BCC activities should aim to encourage girls who have given birth to return to school and encourage widespread acceptance of this within families and communities. 58% of respondents agreed that 'girls who get pregnant while in school should prioritise looking after their baby' suggesting there are barriers which discourage girls from placing importance on their education once they have given birth. If possible, qualitative research conducted later in the project should also aim to find out more about these barriers and how they can be overcome.
- Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour vary a lot by former states, so the approach to achieving impact among audiences needs to be targeted to address the gaps and barriers most relevant in each state.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1. Programme introduction

With funding from the UK Government's FCDO and Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the second phase of the Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) programme is a five-year initiative running from May 2019 to March 2024. The programme is implemented by Mott MacDonald as the lead agency and supported by BBC Media Action, Windle Trust International, Montrose and Leonard Cheshire as consortium partners. In addition, there are seven implementing partners that work at the state level to deliver GESS activities.

The ultimate intended impact of the GESS programme is to 'transform the life chances of a generation of South Sudanese children (particularly but not exclusively girls) through education, whilst stabilising priority areas of the education sector and seeking to deliver improved quality education'.^v This will be done through five outputs; using radio and community activity to generate attitudinal and behaviour change with regard to educating girls and young women; providing cash transfers to girls and young women to help overcome some of the barriers they face in enrolling and remaining in school; providing capitation grants directly to schools to enable schools to develop themselves, designing and implementing initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools; and generating research to inform the delivery of the programme and to support the education sector as a whole.

BBC Media Action is implementing Output 1 of the programme, the Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) component, to support this ultimate impact. The aim of Output 1 is to increase school enrolment, improve girls' educational attainment, reduce barriers to education and promote equity in access for all children.

Building more support for girls' education in South Sudan through mass media and interpersonal communication began under the first phase of GESS (2014-2018). Led by BBC Media Action, the BCC component aimed to create a supportive environment for girls' education through radio programming and community outreach. A 15-minute magazine-style radio programme branded *Our School* was developed, targeting girls, their parents, community leaders and teachers. This was accompanied by a range of community mobilisation (CM) activities to extend the reach and impact of the radio programming, and public service announcements (PSAs) aimed at building specific knowledge and awareness around cash transfers and capitation grants.

In the first phase of GESS, the *Our School* radio programme reached⁴ nearly a third (31%) of the adult population (people aged 15 years and over⁵) and audiences who listened to the *Our School* programme were shown to be more knowledgeable about the education system; discussed education more with friends, family, and community members; and took a more

⁴ Reach is defined as the number of people who reported that they had listened to the programme at least once in the 12 months prior to data collection.

⁵ The most recent estimated figures have this at 5.5 million at the time the study was conducted [Sudan | Situation Reports \(unocha.org\)](#)

active interest in their child's education by, for instance, talking to them about the importance of education and helping them with their homework.⁶

Whilst the programme was very successful in these aspects, endline research revealed that there were still areas where more work was needed.

- Deep-seated attitudes linked to norms around prioritising boys' education over girls remained.
- Some of the most significant barriers to girls' education are those relating to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender-based violence (GBV). While the first phase of GESS had a positive impact in addressing issues around the value and benefits of girls' education and the role of education in their lives, the more challenging topics of how girls can handle their menstrual cycle, how they can deal with sexual propositions, coercion and force by men and boys, and the topic of healthier pre-marital relationships were discussed less.
- There continue to be large variations among regions in terms of attitudes towards girls' and boys' education. For instance, in the GESS Phase 1 endline study conducted in 2018 only 16% of respondents living in former Lakes State felt it was 'absolutely essential' to send a girl to school, compared with 78% in former Central Equatoria State.⁷

The BCC strategy in the second phase of GESS continues to address the specific issues impacting girls' access to and attainment in education, while including a new focus on disability inclusion and sexual gender-based violence (SGBV). The strategy aims to shift knowledge, attitudes and behaviour among parents and the wider community, specifically to:

- Increase knowledge about school, legal and financial systems, and the benefits of education.
- Improve attitudes towards primary and secondary education for girls and children with disabilities, increase trust in schools and encourage more equitable roles for girls.
- Increase supportive behaviours for girls, children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups (internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, survivors of GBV/forced marriages, etc) including greater parental involvement in school and education, more time for girls' homework, creating safer routes to school and more girls' clubs.
- Increase behaviours supportive of girls' SRHR and safeguarding against SGBV.

At the beginning of the second phase of GESS, selected episodes of *Our School* produced under the first phase (2014-2018) were rebroadcast with a focus on broadening the reach achieved to communities in hard-to-reach areas through CM activities. The *Our School* episodes were selected based on their continued relevance, for instance episodes on supporting children to learn at home during school holidays were rebroadcast during school

⁶ BBC Media Action (2018) GESS Output 1: Social & Behavioural Change Communication Endline Report, <https://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Endline-Output-1.pdf> [accessed 29/03/2021].

⁷ BBC Media Action (2018) GESS Output 1: Social & Behavioral Change Communication Endline Report, <https://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Endline-Output-1.pdf> [accessed 12/05/2021].

closures because of COVID-19, and rebroadcasting allowed the BBC Media Action team to rebuild the *Our School* audience while achieving good value for money.

Starting in 2021, new content is being developed, refining the approach from 2014-2018 and focusing on the outcome areas where less progress has been shown, as well as including the new GESS priority areas of disability inclusion and SGBV.

Over the five years of GESS 2, Output 1 aims to reach 2 million South Sudanese people through radio programming (the target for the March 2021 milestone is 1.9 million) and 2,700 school communities through activities delivered by community mobilisation.

1.2. Study background

The midline survey being reported on here is one element of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approach for the second phase of GESS (2019-2024), which takes into consideration project needs, objectives, budget, local and operational context, and timelines, and builds on the learnings and insights from the research approach in the first phase of GESS (2014-2018). Research is crucial at every stage of project design and implementation, to inform project design and the production of radio programmes and monitor and evaluate project activities at both the community and audience level.

Baseline, midline and endline quantitative surveys were conducted in the first phase of GESS to track the reach of the radio programmes and progress towards achieving project outcomes. For GESS Phase 2, data collected in 2018 for the GESS Phase 1 endline survey acts as the baseline.⁸ A midline survey for GESS Phase 2 was conducted in 2021, findings from which are outlined in this report, and an endline survey will be conducted in 2023. Findings from the GESS Phase 1 endline will be compared with the midline and endline from GESS Phase 2 to track listenership and progress towards project outcomes over time.

In this report, findings from the midline survey are triangulated with findings from desk research and formative research which are separate activities conducted as part of the M&E approach for the project.

Desk research: In July-August 2020, BBC Media Action reviewed existing sources of information related to the objectives of the second phase of the GESS project. This included qualitative and quantitative research conducted under GESS Phase 1 and in other BBC Media Action projects, including research on SRHR under the Amplifying Women's Voices project in South Sudan funded by GAC, as well as wider literature related to the key objectives for the project. This desk review identified knowledge gaps including detailed information pertaining to the reasons girls and young women do not enrol and remain in school and helped to inform areas to be explored further in the formative research and the midline survey being reported on here.

⁸ This was a nationally representative survey with 2,970 respondents, For more details on the methodology see BBC Media Action (2018) GESS Output 1: Social & Behavioural Change Communication Endline Report, <https://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Endline-Output-1.pdf> [accessed 12/05/2021].

Formative research: In November 2020, BBC Media Action conducted formative research using qualitative research methods to inform the design of new *Our School* episodes. The BBC Media Action South Sudan research team conducted 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 8 in-depth interviews (IDIs) in Rumbek, Maban, Pibor and Juba. Research participants included boys and girls of school going age, boys and girls with disabilities, parents of the children with disabilities, and influencers such as education officers, teachers, and community leaders. Findings from the formative research are triangulated with findings from the midline survey in this report to explain some of the reasons and detail behind survey responses.

1.3. Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the quantitative midline survey is to track against output indicator **1.1: Number of people over the age of 15 reached with radio programmes informing of the benefits of education to girls and disabled children**. Data from this midline survey was already used to report against the March 2021 milestone for this indicator. This report includes more detail around the milestone indicator, including a comparison of the reach of the *Our School* radio programme in 2021 with the reach measured in 2018 as part of the GESS Phase 1 endline survey.

As well as measuring the reach of the radio programme *Our School*, the survey also measured the impact of the programme on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour related to project outcomes, repeating some of the questions asked in the 2018 endline survey to track change over time. This report also includes a comparison of the responses of listeners and non-listeners to understand the impact of the *Our School* radio programme on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour. Regression analysis controls for other key influential factors were used when looking at this comparison, increasing confidence that the difference is a result of listening to the radio programme.

The survey also builds on knowledge from the formative research to help guide ongoing production of the *Our School* radio programme, including exploring:

- Knowledge, attitudes, and practices around education of girls and children with disabilities (CWDs).
- Barriers to inclusive education including how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting people's access to, and decisions around education.

1.4. Study objectives

The specific study objectives are outlined below.

1. Track the reach of *Our School*, and how this varies by location and demographics, and compare with baseline reach (from the endline survey from GESS Phase 1, conducted in 2018).
2. Understand levels of media access and use, how this varies by location and demographics, and how this has changed over time.
3. Measure levels of knowledge, attitudes, and practices around education of girls and CWDs, and compare the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of *Our School* listeners and non-listeners to understand the impact of the project so far.

4. Measure attitudes towards access to SRHR for girls and CWDs and confidence to discuss SRHR and early marriage with young people, and compare the attitudes and confidence of *Our School* listeners and non-listeners to understand the impact of the project so far.
5. Explore barriers to school attendance for girls, boys, and CWDs to inform the design of future episodes of *Our School*.

The full research questions are outlined in Annex: Research questions.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study design and approach

A nationally representative cross-sectional survey was commissioned by BBC Media Action. Data collection was conducted by a South Sudanese research agency, ISPR, using quantitative methods.

2.1.1. Data collection and quality assurance

BBC Media Action developed a survey questionnaire using questions from the GESS Phase 1 endline survey, where responses needed to be tracked over time, and adding new questions around disability. The questionnaire was reviewed by the GESS consortium, and their feedback incorporated. ISPR utilised the questionnaire and codebook provided by BBC Media Action to collect data. ISPR uploaded the survey tool onto Kobo software along with audio clips to prompt recall of the radio programme *Our School*. All the enumerators used tablets with offline ability to collect data from the targeted areas across the country. Training was provided to enumerators on the correct use of the tool, supervised by BBC Media Action. The tool was then tested through an initial pilot study in Juba where BBC Media Action worked closely with ISPR to assess practical gaps, technical issues with the online platform and identify key words that needed translation during actual enumeration⁹, and was updated by BBC Media Action after the pilot. BBC Media Action checked the Kobo form for errors in question wording and skip logic (where respondents' responses to certain questions determine which follow-up questions they are asked) before fieldwork commenced.

After the first 100 cases, fieldwork was paused to allow for further checks of the data to identify any issues with question wording, skip logic or enumerator errors. Checks were conducted by ISPR and BBC Media Action.

During training in Juba, the ISPR Research Officers collaboratively established the Juba Arabic and Classical Arabic translations of key technical terms that appeared in the questionnaire. These translations were then compiled and distributed to all Research Officers to use in their training in different field locations, where they also provided enumerators with translation of the technical terms in local languages.

⁹ Enumerators do in-situ translations of the questionnaire, so it is important to have certain key words translated in advance to ensure consistency.

To avoid bias in selecting starting points in the enumeration areas (EAs), these were determined in advance. Starting points used were standardised across locations to either be the Chief's home or office, or the location where the Traditional Court meets.

To ensure data quality during data collection, Research Officers conducted spot checks each day to assess any sampling or methodological issues, technological problems that occurred, clarification on the questionnaire, as well as any questions or concerns that were brought up by community members and respondents. This information was then included in the field reports submitted each day.

BBC Media Action staff also conducted a field visit in Juba to monitor for errors in sampling and enumeration (e.g. correct translation of key terms). Staff also checked that enumerators were following ethical and COVID-19 guidelines.

Data for this project was cleaned daily by ISPR. Initial data reviews were conducted by Research Officers in the field. Systematic checks and data cleaning were conducted, initially in Microsoft Excel, and a second time in SPSS, in the Juba office. This included checks such as ensuring all data was valid (that not all responses given for each survey were the same, responses matched context, etc.) and correct skip logic followed.

Following completion, ISPR and BBC Media Action conducted thorough checks and data cleaning to correct small discrepancies in skip logic and errors in data entry.

2.1.2. COVID-19 protocols

ISPR provided its Research Officers with the following guidelines to keep themselves, enumerators, and participants safe throughout the data collection process:

- Wear your mask at all times. Encourage your enumerators to do the same for their own safety, as well as that of participants.
- When conducting interviews, maintain a distance of two metres from the participants.
- If possible, try to sit outside rather than inside the participant's home, so that there is adequate airflow to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- ISPR has provided Research Officers with masks and hand sanitizer for enumerators. Please distribute these to the enumerators and emphasise the importance of using them.
- Please do not interview anyone that appears to be visibly ill. Thank them for their time and proceed to the next household.
- If you do not feel well at any time, please call your supervisor immediately, and do not proceed with any meetings or trainings.

2.2. Study participants and sampling

2.2.1. Sampling considerations

Since conflict broke out in 2013, and subsequently in 2016, many South Sudanese have been displaced. According to the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Displacement

Tracking Matrix Mobility Tracking Round 9, there are currently 1.62 million¹⁰ IDPs in the country. The creation of six protection of civilian (PoC) sites in South Sudan, which are in town areas and adjacent to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) bases, led to the creation of new urban areas in the country. In addition, the majority of IDPs live outside of PoCs, including in host communities and in ad hoc IDP sites.

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix estimates that there are currently 1.67 million¹¹ returnees in the country. These returnees often choose to return to urban areas rather than their places of origin, to be able to access services such as healthcare and education. This has been documented in intention surveys conducted by IOM and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in South Sudan.

Beginning in 2020, UNMISS changed the status of Juba, Wau and Bor PoCs to IDP sites, handing over security of the population to the government. It is unclear how this has impacted the IDP population, but as many IDPs indicated in intention surveys that they did not feel ready to return home (due to security, food insecurity, and access to services), it is possible that they also moved to urban areas.

Since the census was conducted in 2008, new urban areas have been established, and existing ones have expanded. This includes the PoC sites, ad hoc displacement sites, refugee camps, as well as the expansion of existing urban areas that hosted an increasing number of IDPs seeking safety and access to services.

As a result, the distribution of sampling was adapted to recognise migration, conflict, displacement, and urbanisation patterns that have been observed since the last census was conducted in 2008 and the aftermath of the 2013 and 2016 violence across the country. The 2008 population census conducted by the Republic of Sudan (prior to secession and independence), remains contested by authorities in South Sudan at the time the census was conducted, with the belief that the population was under-counted.

Based on this context, ISPR estimated the population distribution to be as follows: 50% living in large towns (which includes urban centres and peri-urban areas surrounding them); 40% living in rural areas and 10% IDPs living in IDP sites.

The sampling approach did not include a specific target for the number of people with disabilities. As the sampling approach was nationally representative and interviewed people at the household level, it was decided that this approach should ensure that a nationally representative proportion of people with disabilities would be included. However, there are some challenges including people with certain types of disability in a survey. This is discussed further in section 2.4.4. To ensure comparability with the endline survey from the first phase of GESS, BBC Media Action requested for the sample size to be at least 3,040. The final sample size (number of survey respondents) was 3,444.

¹⁰ See <https://dtm.iom.int/south-sudan> [accessed 14/05/2021].

¹¹ See <https://dtm.iom.int/south-sudan> [accessed 14/05/2021].

2.2.2. Selection of locations

Table 1: Sampling locations and distribution of sample

State	Counties	Sample size
Northern Bahr el Gazal	Aweil Centre	35
	Aweil North	99
	Aweil West	132
Lakes	Rumbek Centre	225
	Cueibet	55
Western Bahr el Gazal	Wau	311
	Jur River	47
Western Equatoria	Maridi	54
	Nzara	47
	Yambio	236
Jonglei	Bor South	75
	Pibor	51
Warrap	Gogrial West	201
Central Equatoria	Juba	682
	Kajo-keji	80
	Yei	253
	Terekeka	74
Eastern Equatoria	Kapoeta South	52
	Magwi	137
	Torit	83
Unity	Rubkona	305
Upper Nile	Renk	210
Total (Two surveys were discarded)		3444

A population proportionate to size sampling approach was used based on the official Boma Populations produced by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and United Nations displaced people database to determine the sample sizes. The sampling framework was then allocated as follows: 50% to large towns, 40% to rural areas and 10% to IDP sites (specifically PoCs), with all 10 former states included. ISPR's research team conducted analysis of the 79 counties and 10 former states to identify the potential large towns based on urbanisation and population sizes. Secondly, an analysis of the rural locations, in terms of access based on security, logistics and flooding, was conducted to determine which areas could be reached. Lastly, the IDP locations were selected from the officially recognized PoC sites by the UN agencies.

Following this, the population sampling was distributed to counties according to population size, based on data available from the 2008 census. The sample for each county was then distributed among EAs. After analysing which counties were accessible, a cluster of accessible counties per state was developed and every second county was selected for the data collection.

2.2.3. Household selection

The enumerators were assigned specific EAs and a central starting point was selected using common features like the local Chief's house or local court. At the centre of the EA, the enumerators chose random paths, by spinning an object at the central location and using a random start number to identify the first household to be sampled. After that, for rural areas, the interval between houses applied was every third house and in large towns every fifth house. After a household was surveyed the enumerator used chalk or charcoal to make a circled initial in place where other enumerators would see it. This ensured there was no double enumeration.

2.2.4. Selection of individuals

Within households the enumerator asked for a list of all adults (aged 15+) and used a kish grid¹² to randomly select the individual to be interviewed. Where the selected individual was not available, the enumerator made up to two additional attempts to interview them.

2.2.5. Weighting

As the final sample breakdown did not match the sampling framework, due to oversampling in some areas to allow for potential data quality issues with some proportion of the interviews, ISPR created weights to correct any imbalance and ensure the breakdown of the sample matched the sampling framework. Weights were applied by county and by the breakdown of 50% large towns, 40% rural areas and 10% IDP sites. The final weighted sample size is 3,446 (the unweighted sample size is 3,444). The figures in this report use the weighted version of the dataset.

2.3. Ethical considerations

BBC Media Action is committed to undertaking research that is of the highest standard, and researchers within BBC Media Action adhere to a strict code of ethics and endeavour to address concerns around consent, confidentiality, anonymity, the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and the potential impact of the research on both researched and researchers. BBC Media Action provided its ethical guidelines to ISPR who made a contractual agreement to follow them and included this in the quality assurance checks undertaken in the field (see section 2.1.1). The ethical guidelines followed include:

This study adhered to strict ethical standards, including:

- Research respondents were fully informed about the purpose, risks, and potential benefits before deciding whether to participate in the study or not. Respondents were also informed that they could withdraw from the interview at any point.

¹² A kish grid is a method used for identifying household members to be interviewed.

- Respondents' consent to participate in the research was sought verbally before the interview after a clear explanation of what participation entails. For respondents who were still minors, consent was sought from their parent or guardian.
- Enumerators from ISPR were trained on safeguarding and disability inclusion, to ensure that people with disabilities (PWDs) were respected and their needs accommodated. BBC Media Action staff working on this study had previously undergone appropriate disability awareness and safeguarding training.
- ISPR and BBC Media Action staff ensured that data was protected and handled with care at all stages of data collection and analysis.

2.4. Study limitations

2.4.1. Lack of up-to-date population data to guide sampling

As explained in more detail in section 2.2 on sampling, the most recent census was conducted in 2008. Since then, there has been large scale displacement and urbanisation, largely as a result of the 2013 and 2016 violence across the country. The lack of up-to-date population data makes it challenging to create a sample that is nationally representative. The sample breakdown between large towns, rural areas and IDP sites was therefore based on an estimate of the population breakdown in those areas. Within those areas, locations were selected based on their population sizes in the 2008 census, recognising that large scale population movement since then means that this breakdown may no longer be accurate.

2.4.2. Inaccessibility of locations and unavailability of households and individuals

Due to the context of South Sudan, security issues, displacement, and adverse weather conditions make some locations inaccessible. These locations were excluded from the sample design. In addition, some locations included in the original sample design had to be replaced after fieldwork had commenced due to the changing situation on the ground.

- Malakal was replaced with Renk due to security incidents resulting from the appointment and arrival of new local leadership. The sample initially calculated out of the total population of Malakal was reallocated to Renk. In terms of context, Renk is relatively stable with limited displacement compared to Malakal. The levels of radio access there was also found to be very high compared to other areas.
- Twic was replaced with Gogrial due to reported insecurity in the selected counties for enumeration.

In addition, other contextual challenges meant that some households and some groups of individuals were unavailable or declined to participate.

- Data collection occurred over major holidays. Easter delayed enumerator recruitment and training in some locations, and Ramadan led to some households in Renk declining to participate.

- The organisation REACH¹³ was conducting a study in the same EAs in Renk, which also led to some households declining to be included in the study.
- At times enumerators reported finding no adults at home, as they were attending church services, farming, or attending market days.
- In Yei, a high number of funerals in one EA made it difficult to find participants in their homes.
- During the daytime hours on weekdays when survey enumeration was conducted, there were usually more women than men available at home to be interviewed. To minimise this bias as much as possible, ISPR included some weekend days in their data collection schedule and made up to three attempts to interview the individuals selected using the kish grid.

2.4.3. Challenge in asking about sensitive issues

Asking about attitudes related to sensitive issues such as SRHR can be prone to social desirability bias, where respondents want to give the most positive, socially desirable response. To minimise bias, a range of different types of questions were used and the questionnaire was piloted to ensure questions were not too sensitive. Findings were Throughout the GESS project, findings from surveys are triangulated with qualitative research. This is also the case for this report where findings from the midline survey have been triangulated with findings from formative and desk research. It is easier to explore sensitive issues in depth in qualitative research as the researcher can build a rapport with research participants and use less direct questioning techniques which can help participants to feel more comfortable discussing sensitive topics and sharing their views.

2.4.4. Challenges including people with some form of disability

ISPR Research Officers and enumerators received training on disability inclusion and sought to ensure that the needs of respondents with disabilities were taken into account, for instance asking if other household members could support if needed. However, it was difficult for people with certain disabilities, particularly people with hearing and communication disabilities, to participate in the data collection process due to the limited availability of interpreters. As shown in the table below, the groups of PWDs with the lowest representation in the sample are those with hearing difficulties and difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood, which may be because of challenges conducting interviews with these groups.

Table 2: Representation of people with different types of functional difficulty in the sample¹⁴

Functional difficulty (moderate or severe)	Percentage
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¹³ REACH conducts data collection, analysis, and dissemination to inform more effective humanitarian action. They work in over 20 countries including South Sudan. See <https://www.reach-initiative.org/>.

¹⁴ Survey questions come from the Washington Group. See <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wg-short-set-on-functioning-wg-ss/>.

Difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses	3%
Difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid	1%
Difficulty walking or climbing steps	3%
Difficulty remembering or concentrating	2%
Difficulty with self-care such as washing all over or dressing	3%
Difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood	1%
<i>Any of the above</i>	8%

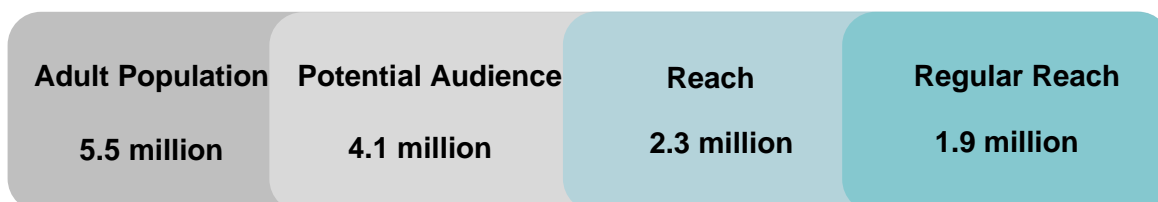
Base: all respondents (n=3,446)

3. Findings

3.1. Audience reach and profile

Our School reached 43% of the adult population (15+) in the 12 months prior to data collection, which equates to 2.3 million people, surpassing the March 2021 project milestone of 1.9 million.

Figure 1: Reach and regular reach compared to the adult population and potential audience



Adult Population: An estimate of the 15+ population, accounting for population movements.¹⁵

Potential Audience: The percentage of survey respondents who reported having access to radio, multiplied by the adult population figure.

Reach: The percentage of survey respondents who had listened to *Our School* at least once in the last year, multiplied by the adult population figure.

Regular reach: The percentage of survey respondents who had listened to *Our School* at least once in the last year, multiplied by the adult population figure.

For more detail, see Annex: Population and reach calculations.

¹⁵ This estimate is an extrapolation based on the 2008 census returns and informed by work conducted by IOM <https://dtm.iom.int/south-sudan>

Reach has increased since 2018 when 31% of the adult population, equivalent to 1.9 million people, were reached. In 2021, 43% of the adult population were reached. Although radio access increased between 2018 and 2021, reach as a proportion of those with radio access (the potential audience) also increased from 54% to 57%.¹⁶, as shown in the table below. All efforts will be made to increase that reach by targeting areas and communities that have yet to be reached.

Table 3: Potential audience and reach in 2018 and 2021

Category	2018	2021
Potential audience (those with radio access)	57%	74%
Reach (% of survey respondents who had listened to <i>Our School</i> at least once in the last year, multiplied by the adult population figure)	31%	43%
Reach (% of survey respondents who had listened to <i>Our School</i> at least once in the last year, multiplied by the adult population figure)	54%	57%

Source: GESS Phase 1 endline survey 2018 (sample size 2,970); GESS Phase 2 midline survey 2021 (sample size 3,446). Both surveys were nationally representative of South Sudan's adult population, allowing for comparisons to be made.

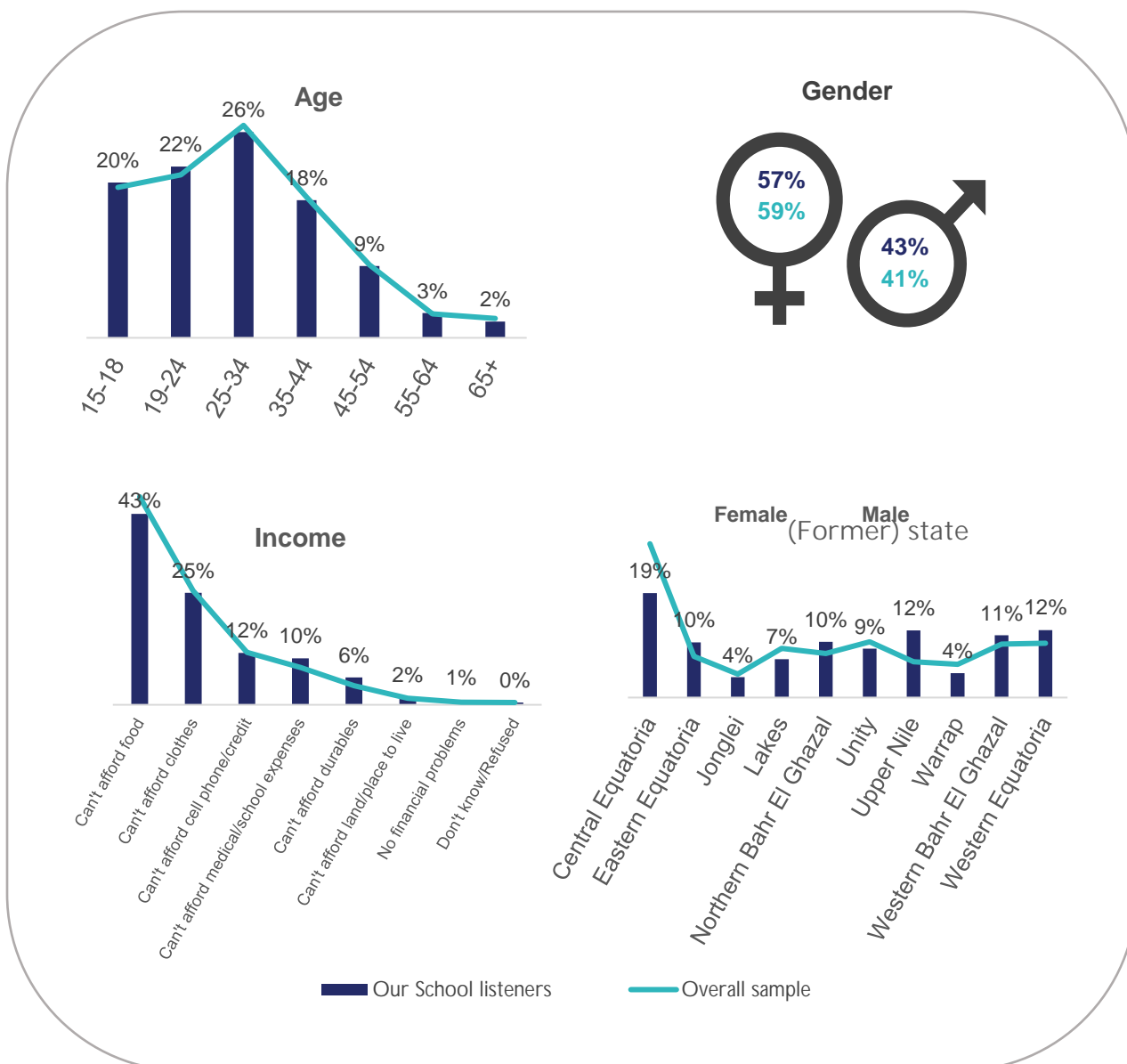
Besides the increase in radio access, there are several other factors which explain the increase in reach of the *Our School* programme. People in South Sudan are also accessing the radio more frequently. Overall, 57% of South Sudanese listen to the radio daily (77% of those with access to radio) now compared to 30% in 2018 (65% of those with access to radio).

Another factor which is likely to be responsible for the increase in reach since the last measurement is that *Our School* is a long running programme with engaged listeners. GESS Phase 2 is building on gains in reach achieved during GESS Phase 1 rather than building an audience from scratch. In addition, although episodes from GESS Phase 1 are being rebroadcast, the episodes were selected to be relevant to the current context, including school closures because of COVID-19. Due to school closures because of COVID-19, children may also be getting more used to using the radio for learning and families may also be seeking out more information about education, boosting the reach of the programme.

Presenters hosting live call-in discussion programmes after *Our School* episodes have also been trained in good moderation skills and how to promote the rights of people with disabilities to ensure that discussions are engaging and inclusive. This included training 12 female *Our School* radio presenters to encourage more engagement from female listeners.

¹⁶ These increases are all statistically significant.

Figure 2: Comparison of audience profile with sample profile



Base = Our School listeners (n=1,46), overall sample (n=3,446). The state breakdown is based on the former ten state breakdown, before the creation of separate Administrative Areas.

The graphic below shows the demographic profile of the *Our School* audience compared to the demographic profile of the sample overall. This shows how representative the *Our School* audience is of the overall population, or whether the audience is skewed towards certain demographic groups.

57% of the *Our School* audience is female and 43% is male. This is the same breakdown as in the endline for the first phase of the GESS project (2014-2018).¹⁷ Women are slightly under-represented in the audience compared to the sample, but this can be explained by women's

¹⁷ BBC Media Action (2018) GESS Output 1: Social & Behavioural Change Communication Endline Report, <https://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Endline-Output-1.pdf> [accessed 12/05/2021].

lower level of radio access. While women make up 59% of the sample, they make up 57% of those with radio access and 57% of the audience. Women also have less control over what they listen to on the radio than men (see Media landscape). Although the female proportion of the audience has remained stable, as reach has increased overall this means that reach has increased among women as well as men.

As in the GESS endline, the audience of *Our School* is under-representative of those in the lowest income bracket (those who said that they ‘do not have enough money, even for food’ – labelled as ‘can’t afford food’ in the above graphic). This can be explained by their lower levels of radio access compared to those with higher income. While those who ‘can’t afford food’ make up 47% of the overall sample, they only make up 43% of those with radio access and also make up 43% of the audience.

The audience under-represents those in Central Equatoria state, while over-representing those in Upper Nile. This could be because of increasing access to different media platforms and different radio stations in Central Equatoria, where the capital Juba is located, giving people more choice. Because of security issues preventing access to Malakal at the time of data collection, in Upper Nile the sample only included Renk where radio access was found to be particularly high, which explains the high level of reach there.

When audience members of *Our School* discuss the programme with others, this is an indication of high levels of engagement and interest in the programme. Almost three in four (73%) of those reached by *Our School* said they had discussed the programme with others, an increase from 58% in 2018. Of those who had discussed the programme, 64% said they had discussed it with friends, 57% with their children, and 56% with other family members.

Table 4: Who did you discuss *Our School* with?

Who discussed with	%
Friends	64%
My children	57%
Other family members	56%
People in my local community	34%
Community volunteer	17%
Religious leaders	16%
Local influencers/community elders	15%
Government officials	15%
Parent Teacher Associations	11%
Other parents	11%
Radio	11%
School Management Committee	10%
People I work with/colleagues	10%
TV	8%
NGOs	7%
Teachers	7%

Students	6%
School Mentor	5%
Payam Education Supervisor	5%
Newspaper/magazine	3%
Internet (e.g. social media sites)	2%
Other	2%
I don't talk to anyone or get any information on these issues	0%

Base = *Our School* listeners who had discussed the programme (n=1,079)

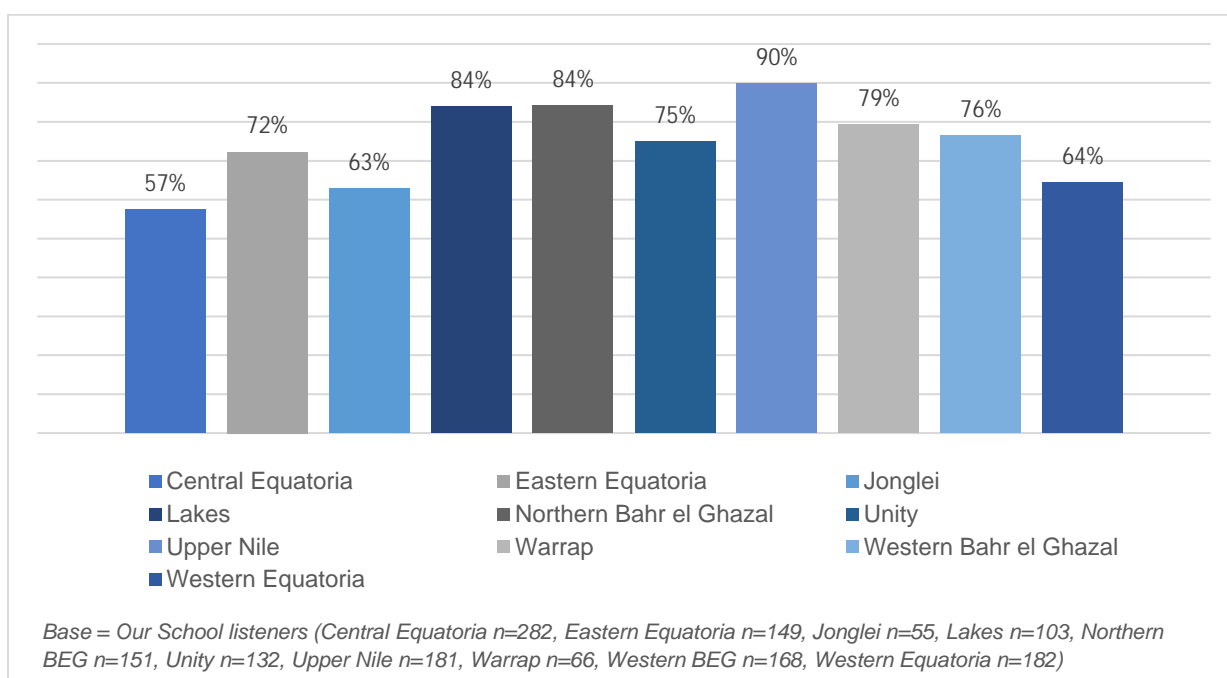
The high levels of engagement with the programme may be because of the relevance of the topics to listeners lives. This is corroborated by a high number of callers to the live call-in discussion programmes that radio programmes host after the *Our School* episodes are aired: 1,347 comments were received through phone calls between April 2020 and March 2021. Partner station presenters said that episodes about particular issues, including episodes on discussing studying at home, parental support for girls and children with disabilities, the immediate benefits of education, menstruation management and gender roles, were engaging for listeners and received the highest number of calls. Some of these topics are of particular relevance during school closures and this may be driving the increased levels of engagement.

Although the number of female callers remains lower than the number of male callers, data from the midline survey shows that levels of discussion did not vary between male and female listeners, suggesting similar levels of engagement with the programme. This would suggest that access to a mobile phone or other media platforms is a more likely reasons why women are less likely or able to contribute to the live discussion programme rather than their level of engagement. We should also recognise that different people engage in different ways. Women may be engaging with those they trust and may be more likely to discuss with their family whereas men may be more likely to want to discuss more publicly. *Our School* should continue to address negative gender norms, including those that deny women access to and control over media and information, explained further in section Media landscape, and those which may disempower women from speaking publicly on important issues. Presenters are also being trained on gender sensitivity in programming to help encourage more women to call into the programme.

Levels of discussion did not vary between age groups, however, levels of discussion did vary by former state. Audiences in Upper Nile were particularly engaged, with 90% saying they had discussed the programme, while listeners in Central Equatoria were the least engaged: only 57% said they had discussed the programme.

The figure below provides some evidence of levels of interaction by listeners with others. Generally the figures are high, above 50% which is encouraging. The evidence is very high in some staes which might warrant further investigation.

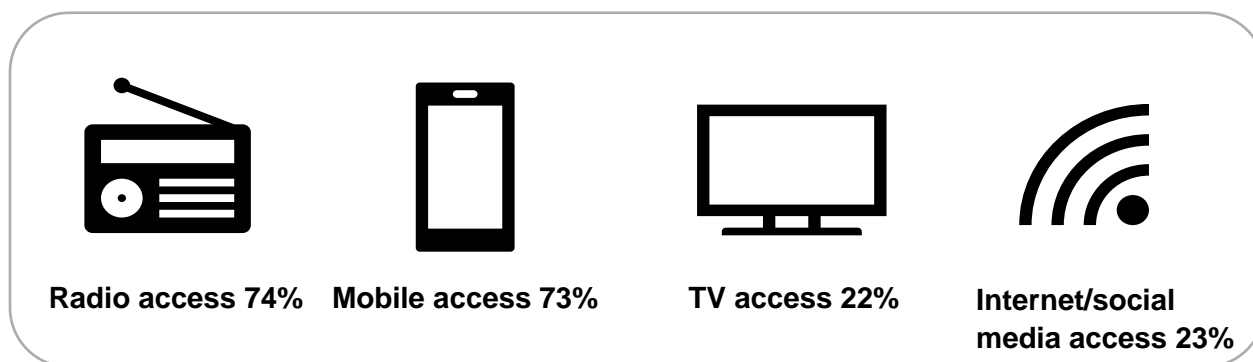
Figure 3: Percentage of Our School listeners who had discussed the programme with others, by former state



3.2. Media landscape

Media access has increased since the GESS Phase 1 endline survey was conducted in 2018. Three quarters (74%) of the population now have access to radio via a mobile phone or a radio set compared to 57% in 2018, and radio remains the most accessed media platform.¹⁸

Figure 4: Media access in 2021



Base = all respondents (n=3446)

This increase in radio access may be partly the result of urbanisation, as discussed in the section on Sampling considerations. The increase may also be partly due to the efforts of NGOs and the South Sudanese government to distribute radios to support distance learning

¹⁸ [South Sudan - Media Landscapes](#)

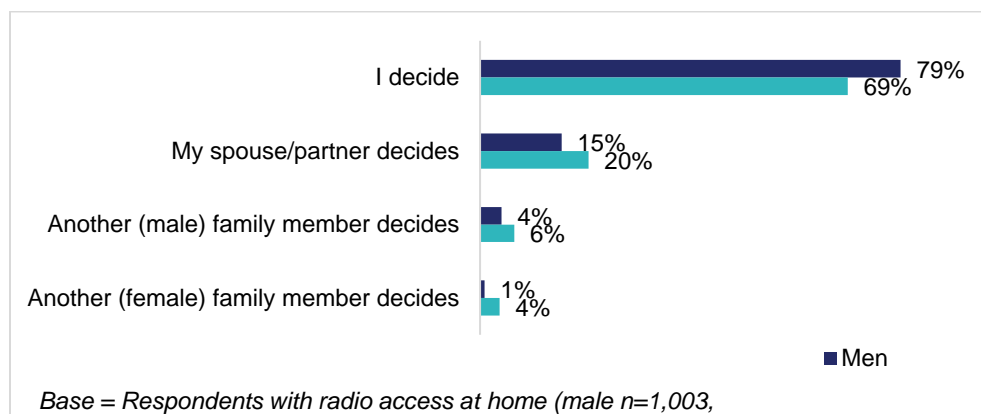
during the COVID-19 period. For instance, under GESS, BBC Media Action distributed over 600 radios for family listening groups across all states.

Radio access among people in South Sudan is increasing along with the frequency of listening to the radio. Overall, 57% of South Sudanese listen to the radio daily, or 77% of those with radio access. In 2018 only 30% of the population listened to the radio daily, or 53% of those with radio access. The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a huge surge in radio listenership in many countries, as people seek out information about the pandemic, and also find that they are spending more time at home because of lockdowns meaning they have more opportunity to listen.¹⁹ This may also be one of the factors driving the increase in frequency of listening to the radio in South Sudan. In addition, several new radio stations have emerged since 2018 which may have boosted radio listenership.

TV access has remained roughly stable (TV access was 24% in 2018, but the difference between 24% and 22% is not statistically significant), while access to internet/social media is increasing. In 2018 15% said they had access to internet/social media in the home or elsewhere, compared to 23% in 2021, representing a statistically significant increase. Online data shows that between 2020 and 2021 the number of social media users in South Sudan increased by 170,000, an increase of 61%.²⁰

Women continue to have less access to media than men. 72% of female respondents said they had access to radio, compared to 78% of male respondents. Women also have less control over what they listen to on the radio. Respondents with radio access at home were asked who in their household controls what they listen to on the radio. 79% of men said they decide themselves, compared to 69% of women. Women were more likely than men to say that their spouse or partner decides or that another family member decides.

Figure 5: Who in your household controls what you listen to on the radio? (by gender)



¹⁹ See for example Universitat Pompeu Fabra – Barcelona (2020) During the coronavirus pandemic, radio has proven to be the medium of reference, <https://phys.org/news/2020-12-coronavirus-pandemic-radio-proven-medium.html> [accessed 21/05/2021].

²⁰ DataReportal (2021) Digital 2021: South Sudan, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-south-sudan> [accessed 17/05/2021]. Note: these figures may not equate to unique individuals as some individuals will have signed up to more than one social media platform.

Women are also less likely than men to have access to TV, internet, and mobile phones.

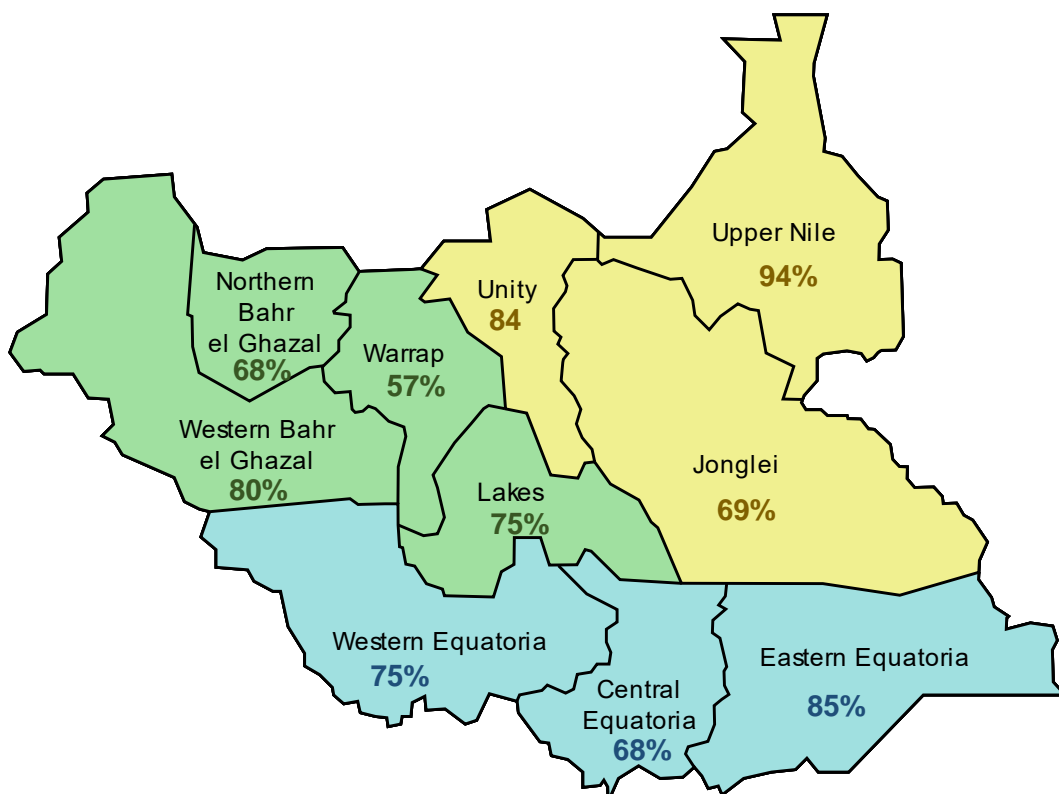
Access to radio does not vary significantly by age. However, control over what to listen to does. Respondents aged 35-44 were most likely out of all the age groups to say they decide themselves what to listen to, while respondents aged 65+ were most likely to say their spouse/partner decides.

Young people are more likely to have access to internet/social media than older age groups, with those aged 19-24 having the highest level of access.

Radio access has increased at the national level, but the increase varies greatly between states. While radio access in Central Equatoria and Jonglei has remained roughly stable since 2018, it has increased a lot in Unity (31% to 84%) and Eastern Equatoria (from 53% to 85%).

Figure 6: Radio access by former states*

Base = all respondents (Central Equatoria n=974, Eastern Equatoria n=261, Jonglei n=148, Lakes n=311, Northern



BEG n=279, Unity n=354, Upper Nile n=227, Warrap n=211, Western BEG n=338, Western Equatoria n=344).

*Note: The state breakdown is based on the former ten state breakdown, without separate Administrative Areas. Due to accessibility, the sample for Upper Nile only included Renk and the sample for Unity only included Rubkona, where radio access was found to be very high.

When asked for their main sources of information about education issues, the top three sources respondents mentioned were friends, family and radio. While media access data shows that access to internet and social media is increasing, only 2% of respondents mentioned internet, including social media, as one of their main sources of information about education issues.

Table 5: Main sources of information about education issues

Source of information	%
Friends	55%
Family	52%
Radio	42%
People in my local community	37%
Religious leaders	34%
Government officials	28%
Teachers	27%
Local influencers/elders	25%
NGOs	21%
Parent Teacher Associations	19%
Students	17%
People I work with/colleagues	14%
School Management Committee	15%
Payam Education Supervisor	12%
School Mother	9%
School Mentor	8%
Other parents	8%
TV	6%
Newspaper/magazine	4%
Internet (e.g. social media sites)	2%
Other	1%
I don't talk to anyone or get any information on these issues	1%

Base = all respondents (n=3,446)

When respondents were asked how much they trust these different sources for information on education issues, religious leaders and teachers were the most trusted sources: 78% trust religious leaders 'a lot' and 76% trust teachers 'a lot'. Trust in radio and friends and family, the sources most likely to be mentioned as main sources of information on education issues, was slightly lower than for religious leaders and teachers, but still high: 68% said they trust radio 'a lot' and 65% said they trust friends and family 'a lot'.

Table 6: Trust in sources for information on education issues (trust 'a lot')

Source of information	%
Religious leaders	78%
Teachers	76%
Radio	68%
NGOs	67%
Parent Teacher Association	66%
Payam Education Supervisor	66%
Friends and family	65%
School Management Committee	63%
Government officials	62%
Local influencers/community elders	59%
Students	56%
School Mother	53%
Other parents	51%
School Mentor	49%
TV	35%
Newspaper/magazine	34%

Base = all respondents (n=3,446)

3.3. Impact

3.3.1. Building knowledge and understanding of education#

Key insights

- 96% of *Our School* listeners said that listening to the programme had improved their understanding of education issues a bit (27%) or a lot (69%).
- Self-reported knowledge about education is higher among *Our School* listeners than non-listeners. 94% of regular listeners said they felt very informed or quite informed compared to 78% of non-listeners.
- Despite only 42% of respondents overall saying they feel ‘very informed’ about education, the majority of respondents (72%) were able to give correct answers across at least three out of four questions measuring their knowledge of the school system in South Sudan.
- However, knowledge that school enrolment is supposed to be free by law is still lower than knowledge of other aspects of the school system. This is likely because many schools continue to charge enrolment fees. *Our School* listeners were more likely to be aware that school enrolment should be free than non-listeners.
- Regular *Our School* listeners are 1.2 times as likely as non-listeners to have knowledge of the school system even when controlling for other factors, such as gender, education, and income.
- Overall, 37% of respondents mentioned four or more benefits of girls’ education, a decrease from 49% at endline, although knowledge of the benefits of boys’ education has also decreased to a similar extent. This decrease may reflect the situation at the time of data collection where schools had been closed for more than a year and because the financial impact of COVID-19 makes people less likely to see the benefit to education.
- Awareness of the benefits of education is lowest amongst the general population for **children** with disabilities.
- Knowledge levels vary a lot by state, but the variation is different for different topics. Many states have high knowledge of some topics and low knowledge of others. This demonstrates how the approach to increasing knowledge among *Our School* listeners needs to be targeted by state.

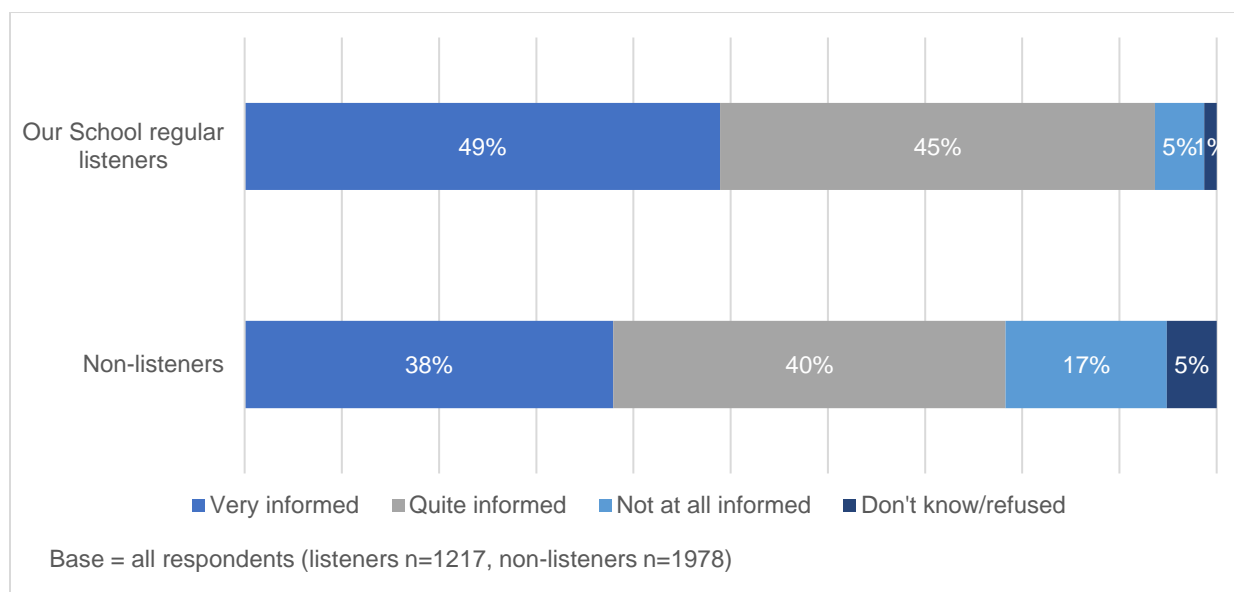
General knowledge of education

Listeners were asked if *Our School* had improved their understanding of education issues overall. 96% said that listening to the programme had improved their understanding a bit (27%) or a lot (69%).

Among respondents overall, when asked how well informed they felt about education in South Sudan, 42% said they feel ‘very informed’ and another 42% said they feel ‘quite informed’.

As shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**, self-reported knowledge is higher among *Our School* listeners than non-listeners. 94% of regular listeners said they felt very informed (49%) or quite informed (45%) about education in South Sudan while only 78% of non-listeners said they felt very informed (38%) or quite informed (40%).

Figure 7: How well informed do you feel about education in South Sudan?



Knowledge of the school system

Despite only 42% of respondents overall saying they feel ‘very informed’, the majority of respondents were able to give correct answers across these questions measuring knowledge of the school system in South Sudan Phase 1 endline, less than half of respondents (48%) knew how much it should cost according to law to register a child in a government school (it should be free of charge). It is likely that people are unaware that this is a law because in practice many schools continue to charge enrolment fees and rely on these to pay teachers’ salaries and purchase learning materials.²¹ Table 7 shows the percentages of the sample who gave correct answers to the different questions.

Table 7: Knowledge of the school system

	% answering correctly
Know how much it should cost according to law to register a child in government school (it should be free of charge)	48%

²¹ See Ibreck, R. et al. (2021) Bridging Divisions in a War-torn State: Reflections on education and civics in South Sudan, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/108882/1/lbreck_bridging_divisions_in_a_war_published.pdf [accessed 18/05/2021].

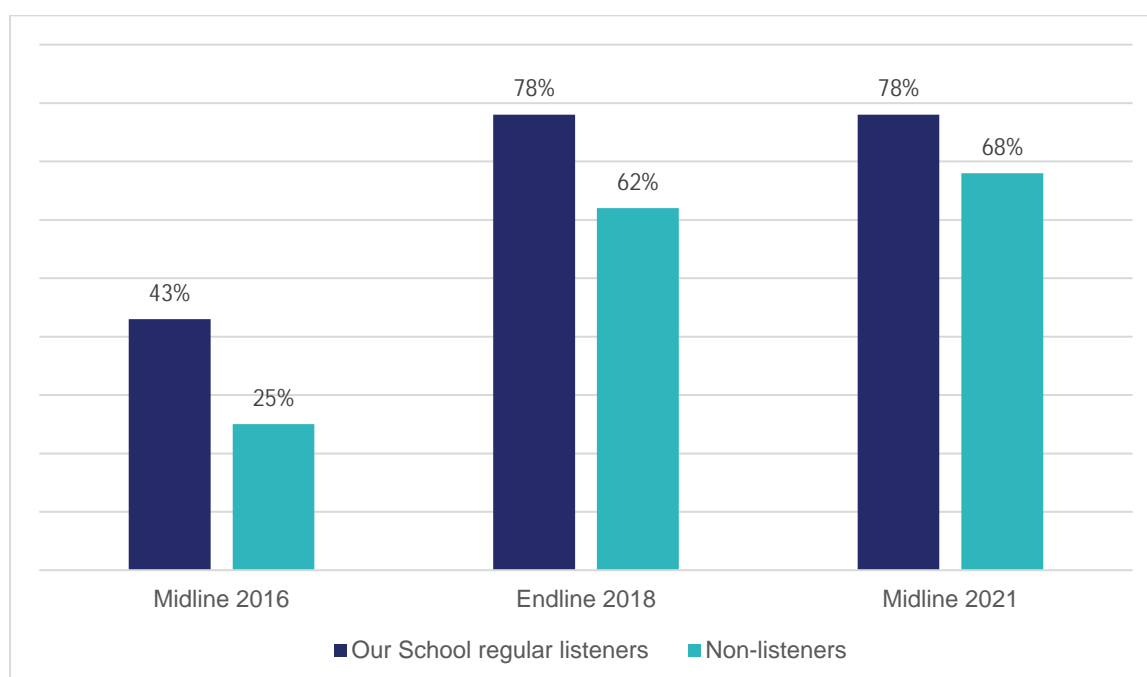
Know the correct age a girl should start primary school (five or six years old).	75%
Know the correct age a boy should start primary school (five or six years old).	76%
Know how many classes there are in primary school (eight).	90%
Know what days of the week a boy should attend primary school (Monday to Friday).	94%
Know what days of the week a girl should attend primary school (Monday to Friday).	95%

Base = all respondents (n=3,446)

In the GESS Phase 1 endline, 66% of respondents were able to give at least three correct answers from the four questions: at what age should a boy start primary school, at what age should a girl start primary school, how much should it cost to register a child in a government school and how many classes are there in primary school. By midline, this had increased to 72% giving at least three correct answers from the same four questions.

Regular listeners of *Our School* were more likely than non-listeners to give correct answers across these questions measuring knowledge of the school system. For example, 58% of regular listeners are aware that school registration should be free of charge, compared to 43% of non-listeners. As in the endline, they were also more likely to give at least three out of four correct answers from the four questions (as mentioned above). 78% of regular listeners gave at least three out of four correct answers compared to 68% of non-listeners. Although because of general increases in knowledge in the wider population, the gap between regular listeners and non-listeners is narrowing, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Knowledge of the school system (three or more correct answers) by *Our School* listenership at different timepoints



Source: GESS Phase 1 midline survey 2016 (sample size 2,987), GESS Phase 1 endline survey 2018 (sample size 2,970); GESS Phase 2 midline survey 2021 (sample size 3,446)

Regression analysis conducted on the endline data showed that regular *Our School* listeners were more likely than non-listeners to have knowledge of the school system, even when controlling for other factors that could have influenced knowledge, such as gender, income and education.²² Similar analysis conducted on the midline data (2021) shows that this continues to be the case: regular *Our School* listeners are 1.2 times as likely as non-listeners to have knowledge of the school system even when controlling for other factors.

Knowledge of laws related to education

Respondents were also asked about their knowledge of laws related to education. Among overall respondents:

Table 8: Knowledge of the school system

	% answering correctly
Know that it is taken from law that ‘parents are entitled to be informed of the progress, behavior and attendance of their children at school’.	89%
Know that it is not legal that ‘a teacher is permitted to use physical punishment on children’	35%
Know that it is taken from law that ‘all children are required by law to complete their primary education’.	91%

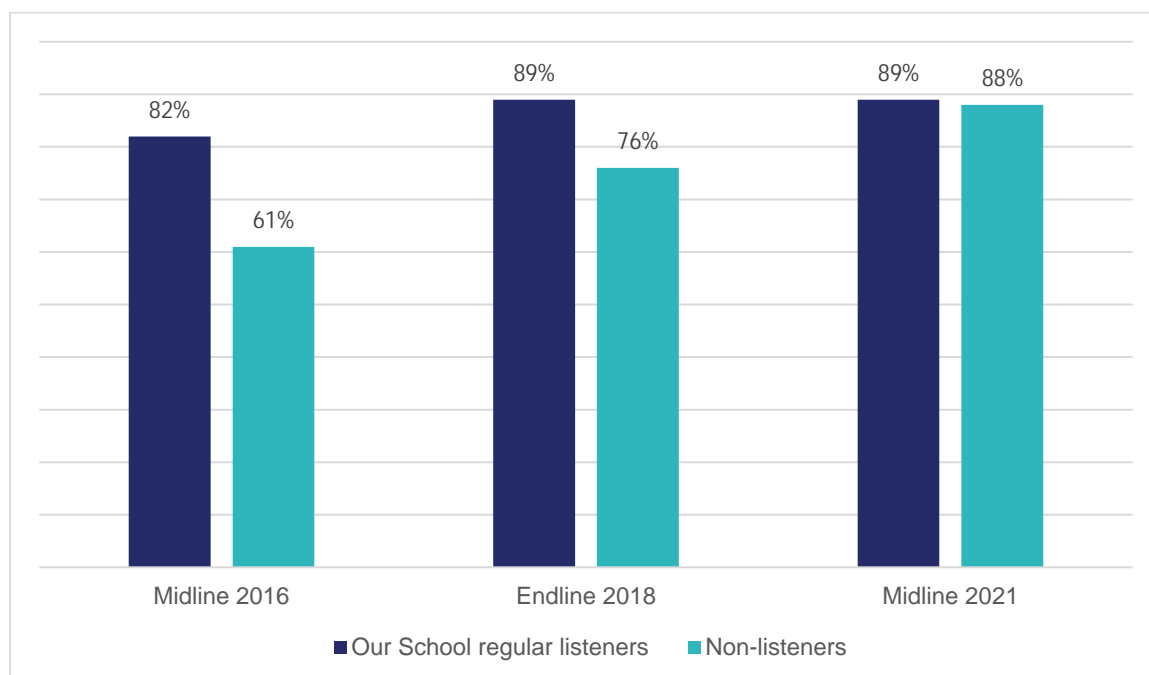
Base = all respondents (n=3,446)

While knowledge that physical punishment is illegal is lower than knowledge of other laws, knowledge has increased from 24% at endline (2018) to 35% at midline (2021).

Overall, 88% gave at least two out of three correct answers on the above questions and knowledge among the wider population has increased to the extent that regular *Our School* listeners are no longer more likely than non-listeners to have knowledge of laws related to education. This could be due to the government’s focus on education and the number of organisations which are supporting education across South Sudan. See Figure 9 for breakdown at last three points data collection.

²² At GESS 1 endline, regular *Our School* listeners were 1.4 times as likely to have knowledge of the school system as non-listeners, even when controlling for other influential factors. The odds ratios from the regression analyses conducted at endline and midline are not directly comparable as the models included slightly different control variables, for instance the midline regression models included disability as control which was not measured in the endline survey.

Figure 9: Knowledge of laws related to education (two or more correct answers) by *Our School* listenership vs non-listeners at different timepoints.



Source: GESS Phase 1 midline survey 2016 (sample size 2,987), GESS Phase 1 endline survey 2018 (sample size 2,970); GESS Phase 2 midline survey 2021 (sample size 3,446)

This is confirmed by regression analysis. When regression analysis was conducted on the endline data it showed that regular *Our School* listeners were 1.6 times as likely as non-listeners to have knowledge of laws related to education (defined as two or more correct answers) even when controlling for other potentially influential factors, such as gender, income, and education. However, similar analysis conducted on the midline (2021) data showed that regular *Our School* listeners are no more or less likely than non-listeners to demonstrate knowledge of laws related to education.

When looking at the separate questions, while regular listeners are more likely than non-listeners to be aware that parents are entitled to be informed of the progress, behaviour, and attendance of their children at school, and that physical punishment is not permitted by law, they are less likely than non-listeners to be aware that children are required by law to complete their primary education. At endline in 2018, the opposite was the case: regular listeners were more likely to be aware of this than non-listeners. The result at midline may be because of the context when the survey was conducted where schools had been legally mandated to remain closed for more than a year to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Knowledge of benefits of education

Respondents were asked about their awareness and understanding of the benefits of education for girls, boys, and children with disabilities. Responses are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: What do you think are the benefits of education for boys/girls/children with disabilities?

	For boys	For girls	For children with disabilities
It will create opportunities for them in the future/they can get a good job	87%	82%	84%
They can learn good things/develop skills/be intelligent	59%	52%	62%
They can provide financial support to their marital families	56%	47%	46%
They can provide financial support to their parents' families	52%	53%	44%
They can better look after their marital family [non-financial support]	26%	22%	21%
They can better look after their birth family [non-financial support]	19%	20%	16%
They can give back to the community/the country	24%	21%	19%
They will be respected in the community	21%	22%	21%
They will command a higher dowry	-	13%	6%
Other	2%	2%	2%

Base = all respondents (n=3,446)

Despite respondents being most likely to say that 'it will create opportunities for them in the future/they can get a job' for children with disabilities, they are less likely to say that it will benefit children with disabilities to provide their families with financial support. This reflects the view that children with disabilities are seen as less able to work and contribute financially. GESS formative research and other BBC Media Action research has found that people with disabilities in South Sudan lack support from their communities to access education and employment. They told us that their communities do not think of them as people with the potential to be productive in society and they face great difficulties accessing both education and employment. They are regarded as unfit for any work due to their disability and this acts as a barrier to them finding employment.²³

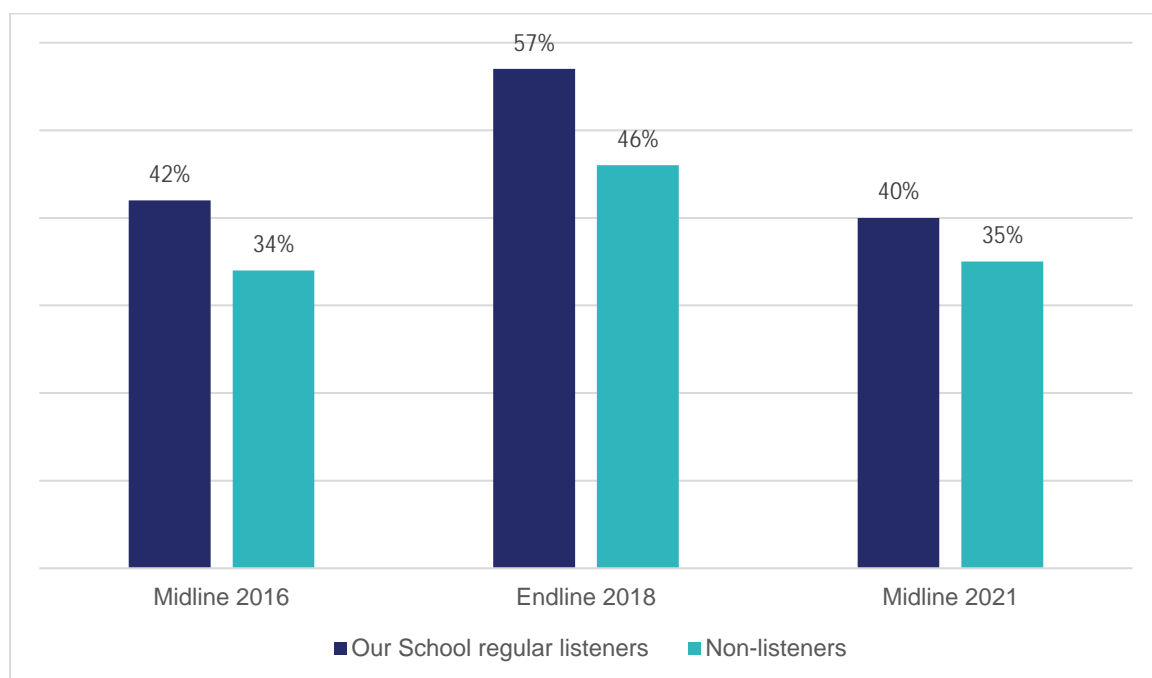
Overall, 37% of respondents mentioned four or more benefits of girls' education from the list in Table 9, a decrease from 49% at endline. Awareness of four or more benefits of boys' education had also decreased to a similar extent over the same time period: from 50% to 41%. This decrease may reflect the situation at the time of data collection where schools had been

²³ GESS formative research (2020); formative (2018) and longitudinal (2019) research conducted under BBC Media Action's EU DEVCO-funded project, aiming to enhance Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for young people in South Sudan.

closed for more than a year, resulting in increased rates of early marriage and pregnancy and a reinforcement of gender roles where girls were more likely than boys to be cooking in the household and less likely to be studying (see section Overcoming barriers to school attendance). Many households also reported that the COVID-19 pandemic also had a negative financial impact on their household, which may trigger them to be less likely to see the benefits of education. The impact of COVID-19 on education is explored further in section Overcoming barriers to school attendance.

As shown in Figure 10, while awareness of the benefits of education for girls has decreased among both listeners and non-listeners, regular listeners are still more likely than non-listeners to be aware of the benefits of education.

Figure 10: Awareness of four or more benefits of girls' education, by *Our School* listenership at different timepoints.



Source: GESS Phase 1 midline survey 2016 (sample size 2,987), GESS Phase 1 endline survey 2018 (sample size 2,970); GESS Phase 2 midline survey 2021 (sample size 3,446)

However, the results of regression analysis give a slightly different picture. Regression analysis conducted on the endline data showed that regular *Our School* listeners were 1.2 times as likely as non-listeners to mention at least four benefits to girls' education, even when controlling for other potentially influential factors such as gender, income, and education. However, similar analysis conducted on the midline (2021) data showed that, once controlling for other factors, regular listeners were less likely than non-listeners to mention at least four benefits of girls' education. This may be because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it is not clear why, regular listeners were more likely than non-listeners to mention that the pandemic had impacted their finances negatively: 57% of regular listeners said the pandemic had impacted on their ability to earn money compared to 45% of non-listeners. As mentioned above, these financial difficulties may make people less likely to see the benefits of education.

Among overall respondents, awareness of the benefits of education was only slightly higher for boys than for girls: 41% of respondents were aware of four or more benefits of boys' education, while awareness was lowest for children with disabilities: 35% of respondents were aware of four or more benefits of education for children with disabilities, although only slightly lower than for girls. *Our School* should aim to increase awareness of the benefits of education for girls, boys, and children with disabilities to ensure that parents see the importance of sending their children back to school now that schools have reopened.

Awareness of GESS initiatives

Respondents were asked if they were aware of GESS initiatives to support education.

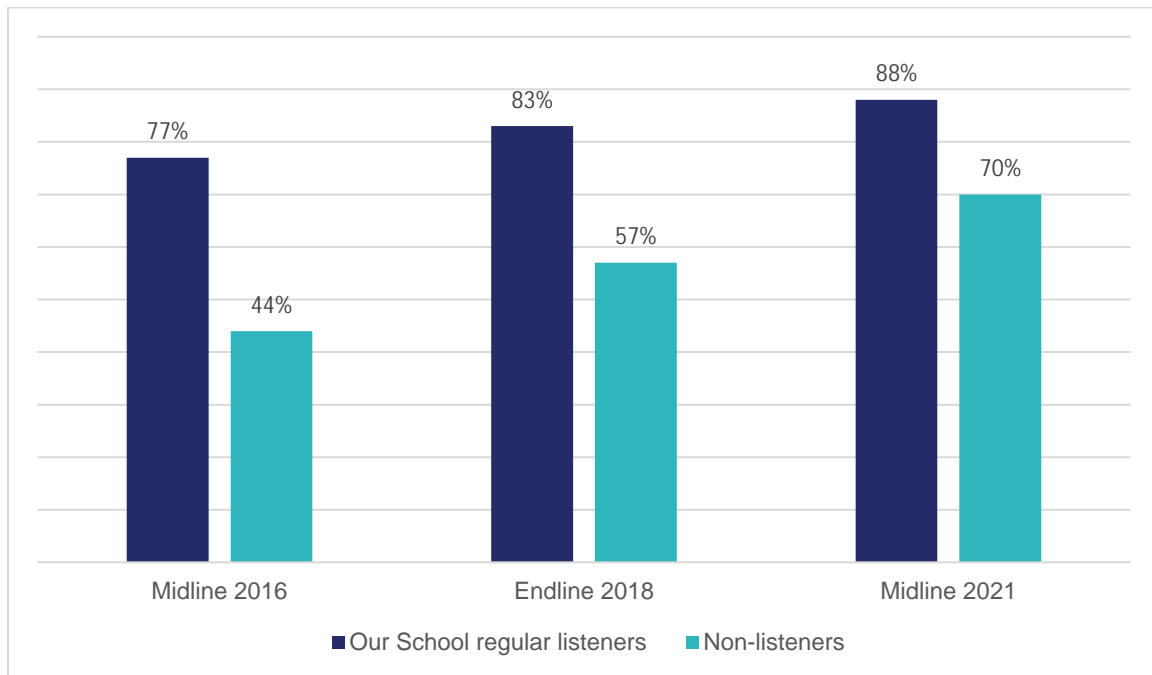
- 91% were aware of cash transfers to girls and their families.
- 77% were aware of initiatives to encourage the enrolment of girls and boys with disabilities.
- 73% were aware of training for teachers.
- 70% were aware of school capitation grants.
- 69% were aware of training for head teachers.
- 68% were aware of the provision of textbooks.
- 64% were aware of training for the school management committee.
- 53% were aware of school mentors.

Overall, 77% of respondents were aware of three or more of the initiatives listed compared to 65% at endline. These overall percentages do not include awareness of initiatives to encourage the enrolment of girls and boys with disabilities as that was not asked about in the GESS Phase 1 endline.

While knowledge of other aspects of education was not significantly different for men compared to women, men were significantly more likely than women to be aware of three or more GESS initiatives. This perhaps reflects their higher levels of radio access and access to information more generally due to gender norms that can prevent women from having access to information and control over what they listen to on the radio.

As in previous surveys, regular *Our School* listeners were more aware of these initiatives than non-listeners, although due to increased knowledge in the population overall, the gap between listeners and non-listeners is narrowing.

Figure 11: Awareness of three or more GESS initiatives by Our School listenership vs non-listeners at different timepoints.



Source: GESS phase 1 midline survey 2016 (sample size 2,987), GESS phase 1 endline survey 2018 (sample size 2,970); GESS phase 2 midline survey 2021 (sample size 3,446)

Knowledge variation by former state

Overall knowledge of education and the benefits of education varies a lot by former states, but it differs for different topics.

Table 10 below shows levels of knowledge in each state across the different topics. The colour scales show which states have relatively higher or lower levels of knowledge for each topic (for each topic the lowest percentages are in red while the highest percentages are in green to allow for comparison among former states).

Table 10: Knowledge of education by states.

State	Central Equatoria	Eastern Equatoria	Jonglei	Lakes	Northern Bahr el Ghazal	Unity	Upper Nile	Warrap	Western Bahr el Ghazal	Western Equatoria
'Very informed' about education	32%	32%	37%	56%	68%	36%	48%	51%	39%	42%
Knowledge of school system (3 out of 4 correct answers)	56%	79%	66%	94%	92%	77%	88%	82%	72%	61%
Knowledge of at least 2 laws related to education	87%	85%	88%	97%	88%	93%	81%	83%	84%	92%
Aware of at least 3 GESS initiatives	59%	80%	81%	95%	83%	95%	87%	68%	76%	86%
Aware of at least 4 benefits of girls' education	41%	31%	40%	43%	27%	21%	78%	20%	35%	35%
Aware of at least 4 benefits of education for children with disabilities	40%	27%	36%	37%	24%	26%	69%	15%	36%	27%
<i>Base = all respondents</i>	974	261	148	311	279	354	227	211	338	344

In Lakes, respondents had relatively high levels of knowledge of the school system, laws and GESS initiatives compared to other states. In Central Equatoria they felt the least well informed about education (along with Eastern Equatoria) and this is reflected in their relatively lower levels of knowledge of the school system and GESS initiatives than in other states. Respondents in Northern Bahr el Ghazal were the most confident about how well informed

they were, but then only demonstrated high knowledge of the school system and more average levels of knowledge across other topics. In Warrap, respondents were the least aware of the benefits of education for girls and for children with disabilities, while in Upper Nile they were the most aware.

This demonstrates how the approach to shifting knowledge needs to be targeted by former states as different states lack knowledge in different areas.

3.3.2. Fostering supportive attitudes towards education and sexual and reproductive health and rights

Key insights

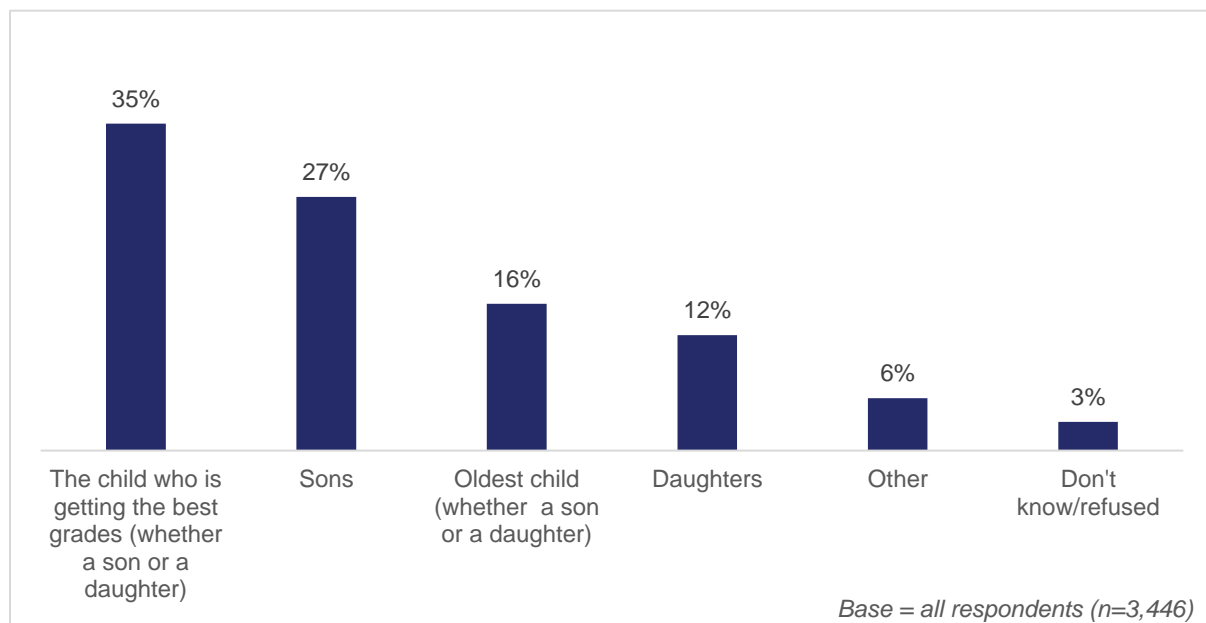
- 27% of respondents still feel that the education of sons should be prioritised. This varies a lot by state, for instance in Jonglei 56% of respondents think the education of sons should be prioritised when resources are scarce, a higher proportion than in any other state.
- Regular *Our School* listeners are no more likely than non-listeners to agree that 'girls and boys in South Sudan should have the same rights to education' and less likely than non-listeners to disagree with the statement that 'girls can do as well as boys in subjects like maths and science', suggesting that there may be negative attitudes among new audience members that need to be addressed in future episodes of *Our School*.
- Overall, respondents see education as a high priority for all children. However, the education of boys is seen as a slightly higher priority than that of girls, followed by children with disabilities. *Our School* listeners as well as a non-listeners also view the education of children with disabilities as less of a priority than the education of other children. This is an attitude that should be addressed in future episodes which will be focusing more on disability inclusion than the previous episodes.
- The relative priority of education for girls versus children with disabilities varies by state. In most states, the education of a girl is seen as a higher priority than the education of a boy with a disability. However, in Lakes and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, the education of a boy with a disability is seen as a higher priority than that of a girl.
- Some respondents are concerned about the safety of children in school. One in five agree that 'school is a place where girls can get "spoiled" by men or other boys' ("spoiled" in this context means corrupted or mishandled and could refer to girls getting into pre-marital sexual relationships), and a similar proportion agree that 'school is a place where boys can meet other boys who they get into trouble with'.
- The prevalence of these concerns varies a lot by state. Respondents in Warrap, Western Bahr el Ghazal and Eastern Equatoria seem the most concerned about the safety of girls and boys at school, while respondents in Lakes are the least concerned.

- Across several statements about SRHR, the lowest level of support is for girls and young women to make decisions about the use of contraceptives. This corresponds with findings from previous research which found that people associate the use of contraceptives among young women with promiscuity and feel that women should only use contraceptives once married.
- Attitudes about the SRHR of women and girls with disabilities were similar to those about women and girls more generally. This suggests that negative attitudes and norms regarding SRHR relate more to gender than to disability.
- Regular *Our School* listeners are more supportive of the SRHR of women and girls, including those with disabilities, than non-listeners even when controlling for other factors in regression analysis.

Attitudes about the importance of education for girls, boys, and children with disabilities

The endline survey from the first phase of GESS found that deep-seated attitudes around prioritising boys' education over girls' when resources are scarce remained. 39% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'if there is a limited amount of money for education it should be spent on sons first'.

Figure 12: If there is a limited amount of money for education whose education should be prioritised?

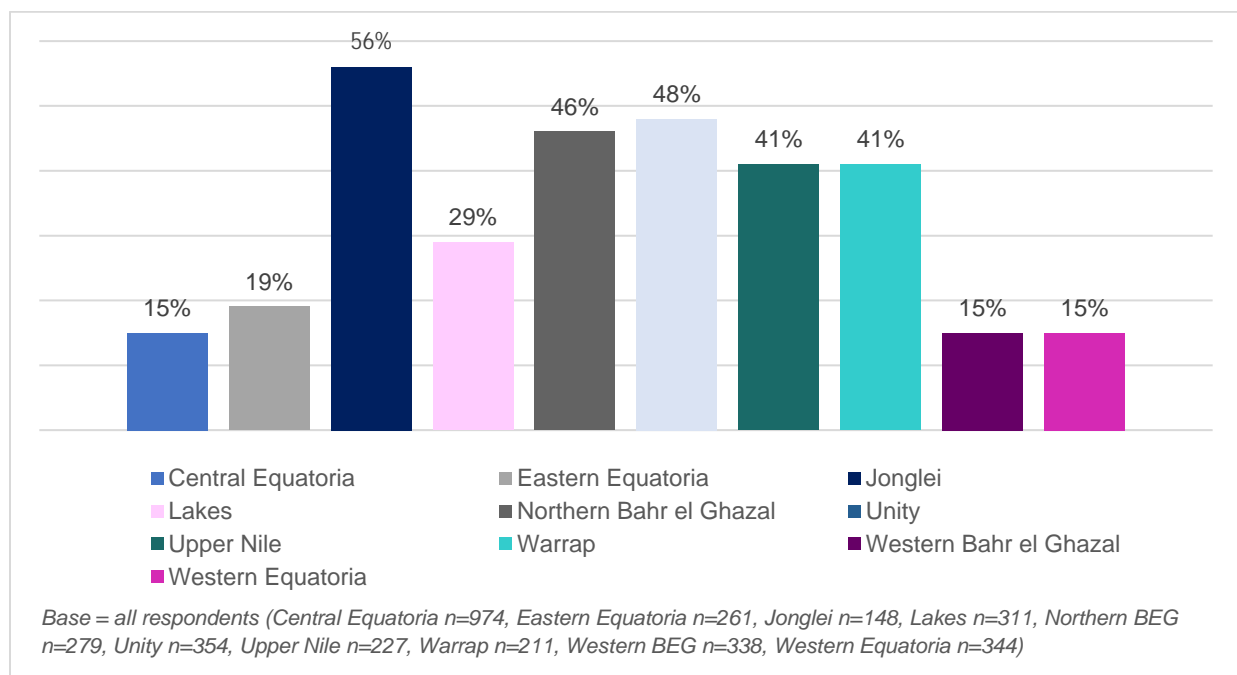


Respondents in this midline survey were asked 'if there is a limited amount of money for education whose education should be prioritised?'. The most frequently mentioned response (35%) is that the 'the education of the child who is getting the best grades should be prioritised (whether a son or a daughter)'. However, 27% of respondents still felt that the education of

sons should be prioritised, although this is lower than the 39% who agreed with this statement at endline.²⁴

Figure 13 shows how the prioritisation of sons varies a lot by state. For instance, in Jonglei 56% of respondents in the midline survey think the education of sons should be prioritised when resources are scarce, a higher proportion than in any other state, and above 40% of respondents said this in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, Upper Nile and Warrap. In Central Equatoria, Western Bahr el Ghazal and Western Equatoria only 15% of respondents prioritise the education of sons.

Figure 13: Percentage of respondents who think that when resources are scarce the education of sons should be prioritised, by former states.



Some respondents were resistant to the idea of prioritising the education of one child over another. Most of the 'other' responses given by 6% of respondents mention the importance of treating sons and daughters equally, that all children should either be sent to school or remain at home without discrimination, and that instead of prioritising the education of one child they would struggle to find the money to pay for all the children to attend school or talk to the school administration to arrange to pay in instalments.

Regular *Our School* listeners are more likely than non-listeners to say the education of the child who is getting the best grades should be prioritised. This may be because they feel that children who are most successful in their education will have a higher earning potential later. 37% of regular listeners said this compared to 34% of non-listeners. There were no significant differences between listeners and non-listeners on other response options: regular listeners are just as likely as non-listeners to say that the education of sons should be prioritised when resources are scarce.

²⁴ These percentages are not directly comparable as the questions were asked slightly differently.

96% of respondents agreed that ‘girls and boys in South Sudan should have the same rights to an education’, up from 66% at endline in 2018. While in the endline, regular *Our School* listeners were more likely than non-listeners to agree, even when controlling for other factors that may influence attitudes, such as gender, income and education, similar analysis conducted on the midline data shows that this is no longer the case. When controlling for other factors, regular listeners are no more or less likely than non-listeners to agree.²⁵

In addition, while at endline in 2018, 93% of regular *Our School* listeners agreed that girls could do as well as boys in maths and science compared with 85% of non-listeners, at midline listeners are slightly more likely than non-listeners to *disagree*: 9% of regular listeners disagreed compared to 4% of non-listeners. This perception relates to gender norms that assign particular roles to boys and girls and assume that boys and girls have different skills and abilities based on their gender. Listeners’ feedback on *Our School* episodes about gender roles showed mixed reactions. Most listeners said that there is no work that boys or girls cannot do and urged parents and teachers to assign work equally between boys and girls. One listener mentioned the importance of not giving her daughter too many household chores to allow her time to do her schoolwork.

“I realised that when I used to go to school and found out from the head teacher why [my daughter] was failing. This was the time I stopped her doing household chores and she is now performing well in school” (Female listener, Radio Don Bosco in Tonj)

However, some listeners continued to express the widely held view that boys and girls have different abilities.

“For me girls should not be given equal roles in school because there are other types of work that boys cannot do completely”. (Male listener, Maridi FM)

This may partly reflect negative attitudes among new audience members, as the reach of *Our School* has increased since the previous measurement. These attitudes take time to shift and should continue to be addressed in future episodes of *Our School*.

When asked how important it is to send a girl, a boy, a girl with a disability and a boy with a disability to school, responses from overall respondents show that education is seen as a high priority for all children, with more than four in five respondents saying the education of these children is ‘very important and should be prioritised’. However, the education of boys is seen as a slightly higher priority than that of girls, followed by children with disabilities.

Formative research and desk research showed that some people in South Sudan do not view PWDs as worth educating and as people do not think they have the potential to be productive in society and contribute anything worthwhile to their community. As such, people discourage parents of children with disabilities from educating them.

²⁵ When we refer to ‘agree’ in the endline survey, this includes the ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ responses. In this midline survey, it only includes ‘agree’. The midline questionnaire only included the response options ‘agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’ and ‘disagree’ as BBC Media Action have found in surveys in South Sudan in the past that including ‘strongly agree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ options confuses respondents.

“[People in the community] ignore us, even they discourage us and our parents, they say why do you volunteer yourself to send a disabled child to school? What can she/he achieve?” (Schoolgirl with a physical disability in Rumbek, GESS formative research)

“I can’t waste resources on disabled girl that is less valued in the community.” (Father, Pibor, GESS formative research)

The extent to which the education of girls and children with disabilities is seen as a lesser priority and the relative importance of gender versus disability in predicting how valued education will be varies by state. In most states, the education of a girl is seen as a higher priority than the education of a boy with a disability. However, in Lakes and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, the education of a boy with a disability is seen as a higher priority than that of a girl.

Table 11: Percentage of respondents saying that the education of these groups of children is 'very important and should be prioritised', by former states.

State	Central Equatoria	Eastern Equatoria	Jonglei	Lakes	Northern Bahr el Ghazal	Unity	Upper Nile	Warrap	Western Bahr el Ghazal	Western Equatoria
A boy	94%	88%	92%	88%	86%	90%	90%	85%	87%	98%
A girl	90%	79%	86%	78%	76%	95%	87%	81%	81%	98%
A boy with a disability	86%	79%	74%	80%	85%	94%	66%	75%	79%	81%
A girl with a disability	86%	76%	73%	79%	77%	91%	70%	81%	80%	82%
<i>Base = all respondents</i>	974	261	148	311	279	354	227	211	338	344

Figure 14: Percentage of respondents saying that the education of these groups of children is 'very important and should be prioritised', by reach of Our School.

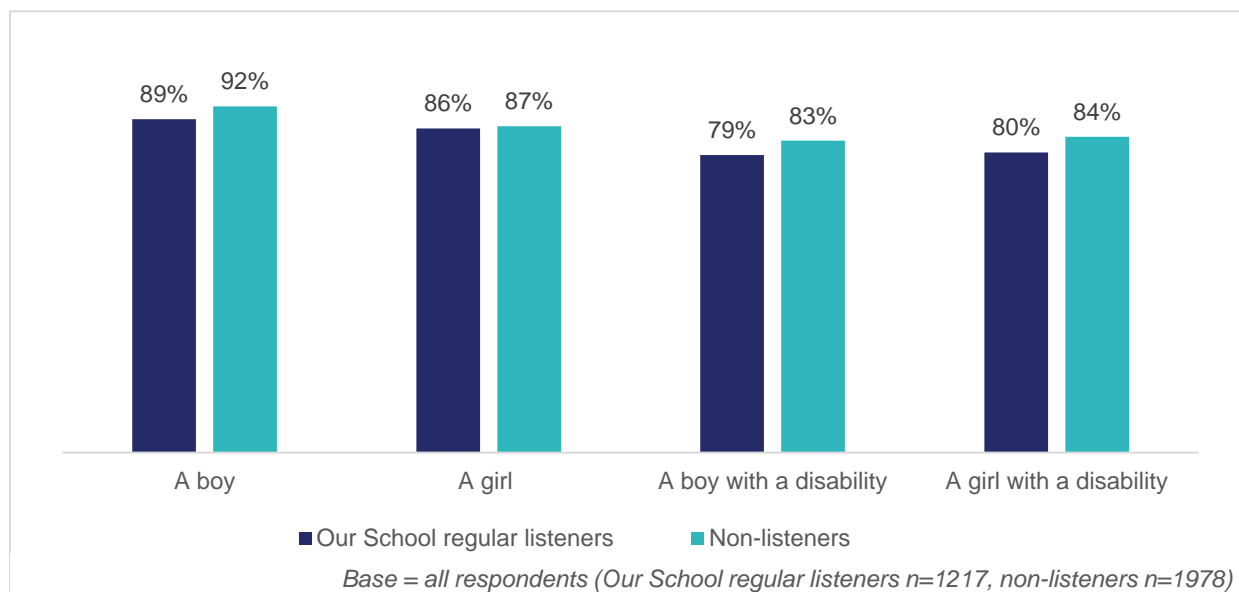


Figure 14 shows survey responses from regular *Our School* listeners compared to non-listeners. Regular *Our School* listeners also view the education of children with disabilities as less of a priority than the education of other children.

There were no major differences between regular listeners and non-listeners on the importance they place on girls' education. This is also the case when controlling for other potentially influential factors such as gender, income, and education. This differs from the endline where regular listeners were 1.5 times as likely as non-listeners to believe that it was 'absolutely essential' to send a girl child to school, even when controlling for other factors.²⁶

At midline, non-listeners were slightly more likely than listeners to place importance on the education of boys generally and boys or girls with disabilities. These differences may be reflective of the negative attitudes among new audience members that require time to shift. However, responses to other survey questions about education for children with disabilities show mixed results. *Our School* listeners are more likely than non-listeners to agree with the statement 'children with disabilities should have the same rights to education as other children': when controlling for other potentially influential factors in regression analysis, regular listeners are twice (2.0 times) as likely to agree with this statement. Regular listeners are also more likely to agree that children with disabilities should be taught together with other children in the same classroom, however once controlling for other factors, regular listeners are no more or less likely than non-listeners to agree with this.

²⁶ The answer options for this survey question differ slightly between the endline survey and the midline survey as the number of answer options for this question was reduced to make the question easier to respond to. In the endline survey the most positive response option was 'absolutely essential' while for the midline survey it was 'very important and should be prioritised'.

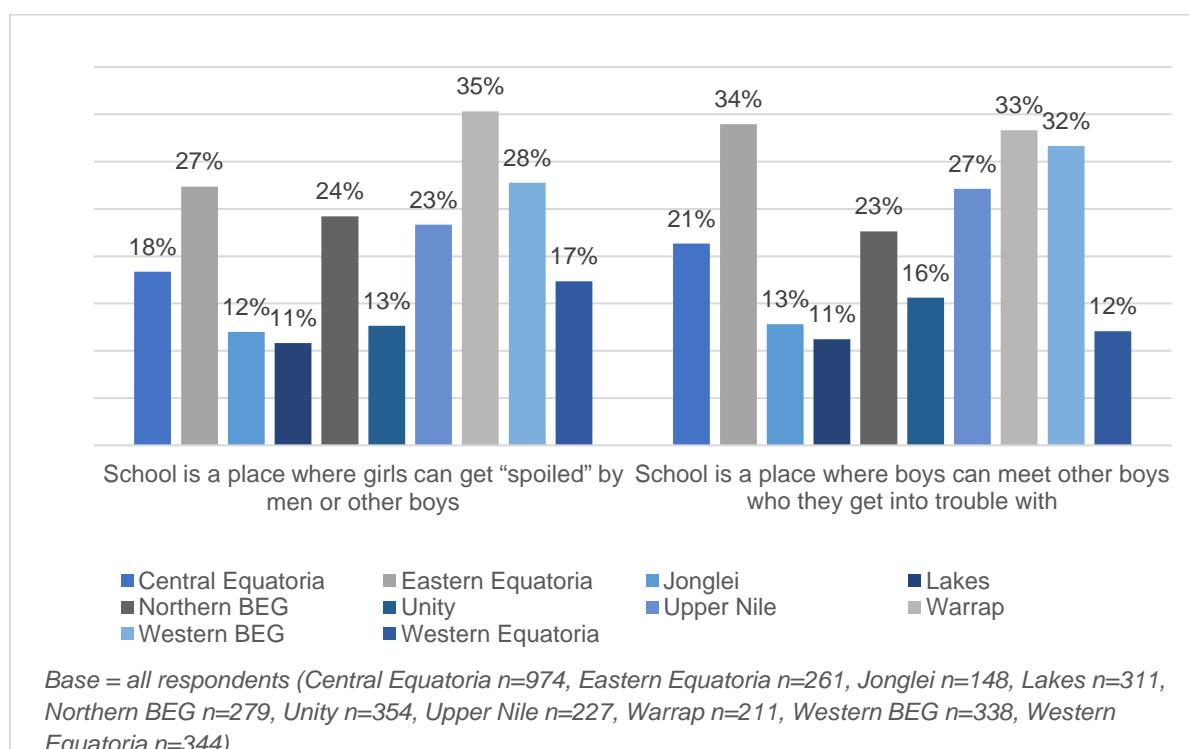
As new episodes of the *Our School* programme are being produced, they will include more of a focus on the education of children with disabilities, so we would expect to see more impact in this area at the endline stage.

Trust in schools to provide safe and inclusive education

There are mixed views when asked about the safety of children in school. While nearly all respondents (96%) agree that ‘school is a safe place for children in our community’, one in five (20%) agree that ‘school is a place where girls can get “spoiled” by men or other boys’ (“spoiled” in this context means corrupted or mishandled and could refer to girls getting into pre-marital sexual relationships) and a similar proportion (22%) agree that ‘school is a place where boys can meet other boys who they get into trouble with’.

The prevalence of these concerns varies a lot by state, as shown in Figure 15. Respondents in Warrap, Western Bahr el Ghazal and Eastern Equatoria are most likely to agree that ‘school is a place where girls can get “spoiled” by men or other boys’ and that ‘school is a place where boys can meet other boys who they get into trouble with’. Respondents in Lakes are the least likely to agree.

Figure 15: Concerns about safety, by former states (percentage who agree with these statements).



This lack of trust among some people may act as a barrier to them sending their children to school so it is important for *Our School* to address these concerns.

Survey respondents were asked about their confidence that schools are providing education inclusive of girls and children with disabilities. Around nine out of ten respondents agree that ‘girls’ needs are well taken care of at school’ (87%) and ‘schools provide separate toilets for girls’ (90%), suggesting very high levels of confidence that schools are meeting the needs of female students. However, this could be an indication of over-confidence and lack of

awareness of the true situation. Research from CARE International in 2014 showed that lack of separate and adequate bathroom facilities is one of the barriers preventing girls from attending school, particularly during their menstruation, and a cause of discrimination and violence.²⁷ WASH research conducted by GESS in 2021 found that only 60% of the 4,159 schools they accessed had toilets and only half of these had separate toilets for girls, with only 316 schools having menstrual hygiene components: buckets, soap and waste disposal. The COVID-19 response to reopening schools is to address to some extent this issue.²⁸

Those reached by *Our School* are slightly more likely than non-listeners to agree that 'schools provide separate toilets for girls': 91% of regular listeners agreed compared to 89% of non-listeners, suggesting that the programme may have increased trust in schools to provide for girls' needs.

Among overall respondents slightly lower confidence was expressed when talking about the needs of children with disabilities. 83% agreed that 'schools are able to support girls and boys with disabilities to do well at school' and 76% agreed that 'schools are physically accessible for children with disabilities.'

Formative research found that even when there are separate toilets in schools for girls, they may not be accessible for girls with disabilities, meaning they have nowhere to change their clothes and sanitary pads during menstruation. This results in girls with disabilities staying home during their menstruation. The girls with disabilities across all locations included in the formative research suggested that they should be given separate toilets and bathrooms in schools for privacy. Responses to the midline survey questions about support and accessibility for children with disabilities do not vary by reach. As disability has not yet been a key focus of *Our School*, and will be included more in future episodes, we should expect to see more impact on this at the endline stage.

Future episodes of *Our School* should also focus on addressing trust in schools to provide inclusive education, as well as encouraging greater parental involvement in their children's education and encouraging their children's schools to provide for the needs of girls and children with disabilities.

Attitudes about the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, girls, and people with disabilities

GESS phase 2 includes a new focus on attitudes and social norms around SRHR that act as barriers to education for women and girls, including those with disabilities. Gender norms deny women and girls power to decide for themselves about the use of contraceptives, when to start having children, how many children to have and when to get tested for STIs and HIV. This can result in unhealthy sexual behaviours and early marriage and pregnancy, which often prevents girls from completing their education.

²⁷ CARE International (2014) 'The girl has no rights': Gender-based violence in South Sudan, <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/the-girl-has-no-rights-gender-based-violence-in-south-sudan> [accessed 17/05/2021].

²⁸ GESS (2021) WASH Facility Assessment in Schools in South Sudan: Draft Report.

Respondents in the midline survey were asked about their attitudes about the SRHR of women and girls generally, as well as those with disabilities. There was a significant association between listenership to 'Our School' and positive attitudes of women and girls around decision-making on who and when to marry. Only 19% of the female respondents who are reached by 'Our School' radio programme disagreed with the statement that 'Women and girls should have the right to choose when to get married' as compared to 24% of the women who were not reached by the radio programme.

However, just under three-quarters of respondents expressed support for women and girls, including those with disabilities, to access SRH services: 72% agreed that 'a girl/young woman has the right to access sexual and reproductive health counselling in a clinic' and 74% agreed that 'women and girls with disabilities have the right to access sexual and reproductive health counselling in a clinic'.

Support for the rights of women and girls to make their own decisions about the use of contraceptive methods, when to get pregnant and when to get married was slightly lower than support for decisions about accessing services.

- 57% agreed that 'a girl/young woman has the right to decide if she wants to use contraceptive methods to avoid pregnancy'.
- 62% agreed that 'women and girls should have the right to choose when to get pregnant'.
- 68% agreed that 'women and girls should have the right to choose when to get married'.
- 71% agreed that 'women and girls with disabilities should have the right to choose when to get married'.

Attitudes about the SRHR of women and girls with disabilities were similar to those towards women and girls more generally. Respondents were roughly as likely to support the right of women and girls with disabilities to access SRH counselling and to choose when to get married as they were to support the rights of women and girls in general. This suggests that negative attitudes and norms relate more to gender than to disability in this case. However, there are other barriers to children and young people with disabilities accessing services. Formative research found that children and young people with disabilities face particular difficulties in accessing health services in general because health workers prioritise the treatment of children without disabilities who are generally seen as having more value in the community. In research conducted under the Life in Lulu project in early 2021²⁹, people with disabilities in Rumbek and Juba also mentioned that hospital buildings are often inaccessible for people with physical disabilities.

Across the statements included in the midline survey, the lowest level of support is for girls and young women to make decisions about the use of contraceptives. This corresponds with findings from research conducted in 2019³⁰ for the Amplifying Women's Voices project funded by GAC where many research participants said that use of contraceptives among young women is associated with promiscuity and prostitution and that women should only use

²⁹ Life in Lulu formative research conducted by BBC Media Action in early 2021.

³⁰ GAC formative research conducted by BBC Media Action in 2019.

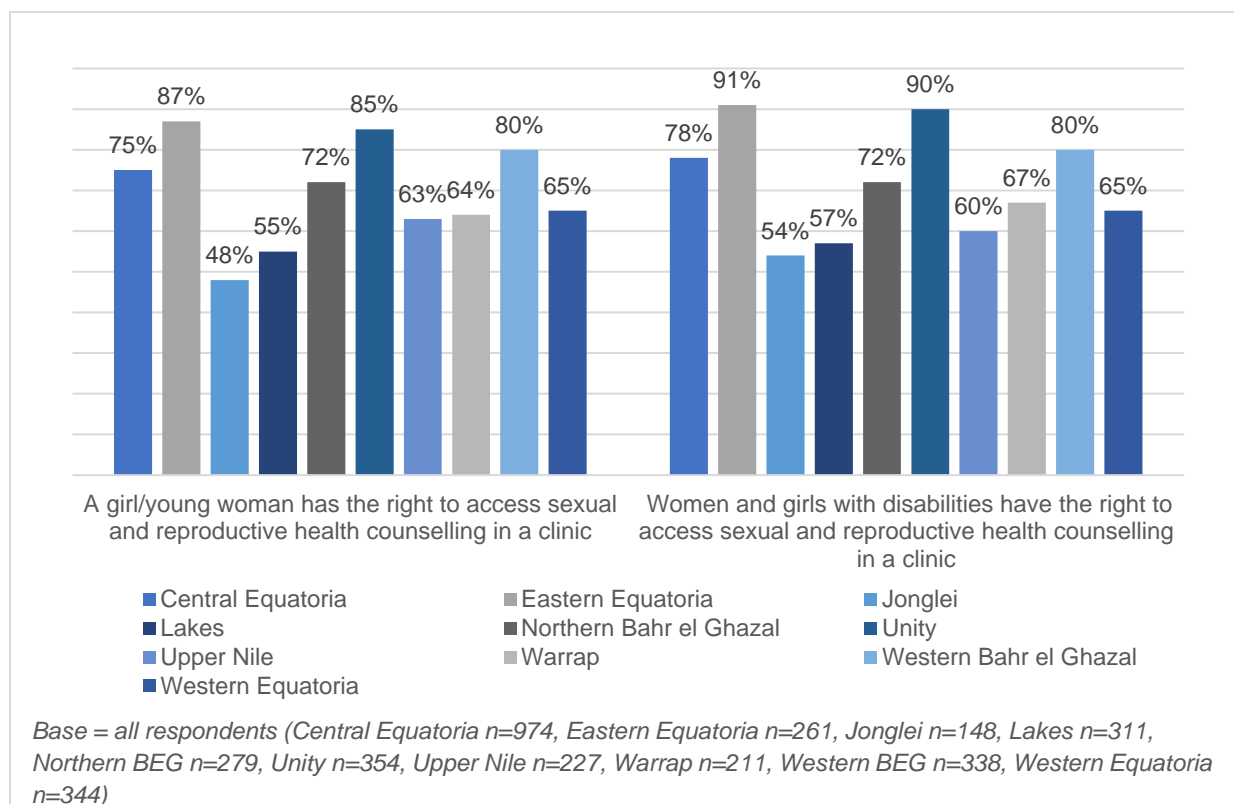
contraceptives once married. Even while married, it is seen as a man’s decision rather than a woman’s decision.

"[People in the community] say this family planning is not good for young people because it creates prostitution [...] This is the understanding of some communities that if young people are practicing family planning then they will start misbehaving. Like issue of using condom, you just go with a man anyhow. But if you don't use that family planning, you can be intact. You don't move with men." (Director of Reproductive Health, State Ministry of Health, Torit, GAC formative research)

Support for the right to decide on the use of contraceptives and the right to choose when to get married was lowest among the oldest age group. For instance, only 44% of respondents aged 65 and above agreed that ‘a girl/young woman has the right to decide if she wants to use contraceptive methods to avoid pregnancy’, while 51% disagreed. However, views about women and girls’ rights to choose when to get pregnant did not vary much between age groups.

Attitudes varied a lot by former state. Respondents in Eastern Equatoria, Unity, and Western Bahr el Ghazal were more likely to express support for women and girls, including those with disabilities, to have access to SRH services, while in Jonglei and Lakes states they are less likely to express support for access to SRH services.

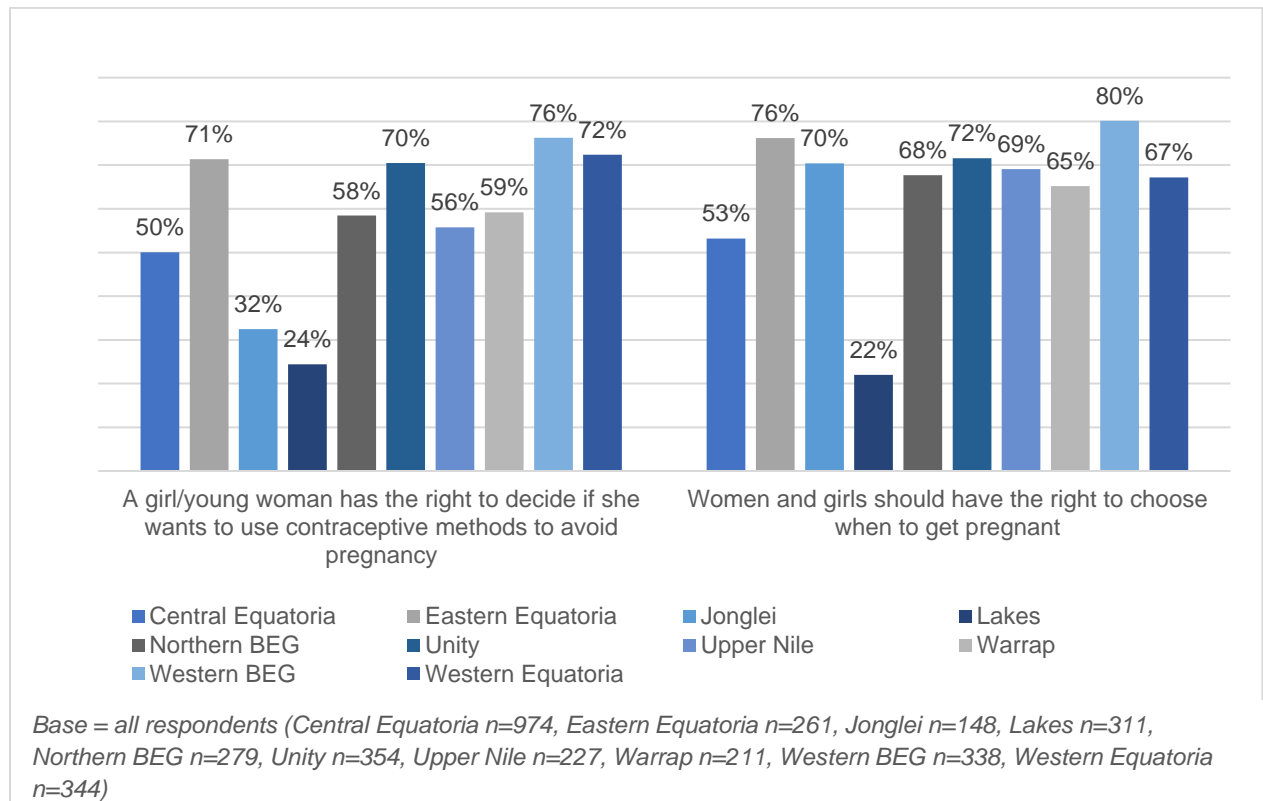
Figure 16: Supportive attitudes towards accessing SRH Services by former states.



Support for women and girls’ decision-making also varied a lot by state, as shown in Figure 17. Support for decision-making around contraceptives and pregnancy is highest in Western Bahr el Ghazal where 76% agreed that ‘a girl/young woman has the right to decide if she

wants to use contraceptive methods to avoid pregnancy' and 80% agreed that 'women and girls should have the right to choose when to get pregnant' compared to 24% and 22% respectively in Lakes.

Figure 17: Support for women and girls' decision-making around SRHR by former state (percentage who agree with these statements).

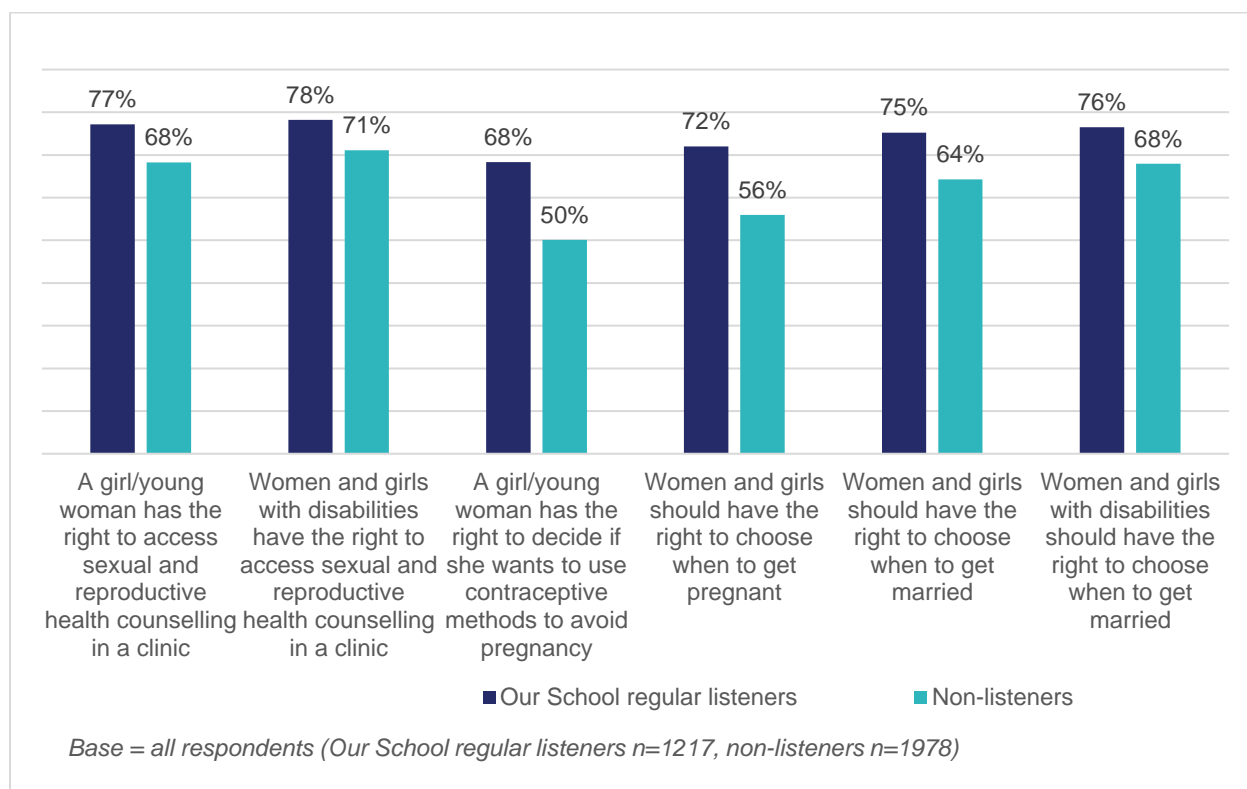


Support for decision-making across all these statements also increases among those with higher levels of education, suggesting that schooling shifts these perceptions and increases support for women and girls' decision-making around their SRHR.

Responses to questions about SRHR did not vary much by gender, although male respondents were slightly more likely than female respondents to agree that 'women and girls with disabilities should have the right to choose when to get married' (74% of male respondents agreed compared to 70% of female respondents). It is not clear why this is the case.

Our School covered several topics related to sexual and reproductive health between April 2020 and March 2021, including puberty, menstruation, and early marriage (see Annex: Topics covered by *Our School* between April 2020 and March 2021). Listening to *Our School* is associated with higher levels of support for women and girls' access to and decision-making around their SRHR. Listeners are more likely than non-listeners to agree with all these statements, as shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Support for women and girls' access to services and rights to make their own decisions around SRH, by *Our School* listenership vs non-listeners (Percentage who agree with these statements).



Regression analysis conducted on the midline data shows that regular *Our School* listeners are 1.8 times as likely as non-listeners to agree with all these statements supporting women and girls' SRHR, even when controlling for other factors that may influence attitudes.

Analysis of listeners' comments from live call-in discussion programmes hosted by radio stations after *Our School* is broadcast shows that episodes of *Our School* about early marriage triggered discussion among listeners about the importance of girls continuing with their education rather than their families arranging for them to get married early to bring wealth to the family. Listeners talked about how the issue of early and forced marriage can be addressed in their communities, for instance through reporting the issue to the police.

“An 18-year-old girl from Terekeka County ran away to Mundri because she was forced to marry an old man. When we learned about the issue, the community was concerned and encouraged her to report the issue to the police.” (Male listener, Maridi FM)

However, there is still a sizable majority of listeners who do not support decision-making around contraceptives, pregnancy, and marriage and, like non-listeners, listeners are less likely to support decision-making around contraceptive use among girls and young women than decision-making around other issues. It is important for these attitudes to continue to be addressed in future episodes of *Our School* to build on the impact already achieved.

3.3.3. Building confidence to discuss sensitive issues with children and young people

Key insights

- People are more comfortable talking to children and young people about issues such as STI testing and delaying marriage, than discussing relationships and sex, menstruation, and ways of avoiding unplanned or unintended pregnancy.
- Women are more confident than men when it comes to discussing menstruation, while for all the other issues there are no differences between the confidence of men compared to women.
- Respondents in Western Equatoria are the most likely to be comfortable talking to children and young people about relationships and sex while respondents in Northern Bahr el Ghazal are the least comfortable.
- While *Our School* listeners are more comfortable discussing sensitive topics with children and young people than non-listeners, there is still room for improvement, particularly on their confidence to discuss relationships and sex, and menstruation. This corresponds with findings from the GESS Phase 1 endline survey.

Findings from the endline survey conducted for GESS Phase 1 found that *Our School* had encouraged listeners to discuss education and the importance of studying hard with their sons and daughters. However, there had been limited impact on encouraging parents to discuss more sensitive topics with their children such as talking to their daughters about how to manage their menstruation and how to deal with men and boys. The endline report recommended that future programming should seek to address this and build parents' confidence in having discussions about sensitive topics with their children.

Previous BBC Media Action research, including GESS formative research, found that while in some schools, teachers and health workers talk to girls about menstruation and provide guidance, in general it is seen as the responsibility of mothers to teach their daughters about the menstrual cycle so that they can manage their menstruation well.

“When a girl starts menstruation, it is the role of the mother to speak to her and advise her on what to do during menstrual period and to take care of herself.” (Father of child with a disability, Maban)

However, mothers often do not have the knowledge or confidence themselves to discuss these things with their daughters. For instance, a religious leader in Juba mentioned that some mothers without knowledge of SRH will not teach a girl what to expect and when she starts her period, they may tell her she is dirty and make her feel shame. Mothers need a better understanding of reproductive health and menstruation so that they can confidently discuss these issues with their daughters and teach them how to manage their menstruation. Without

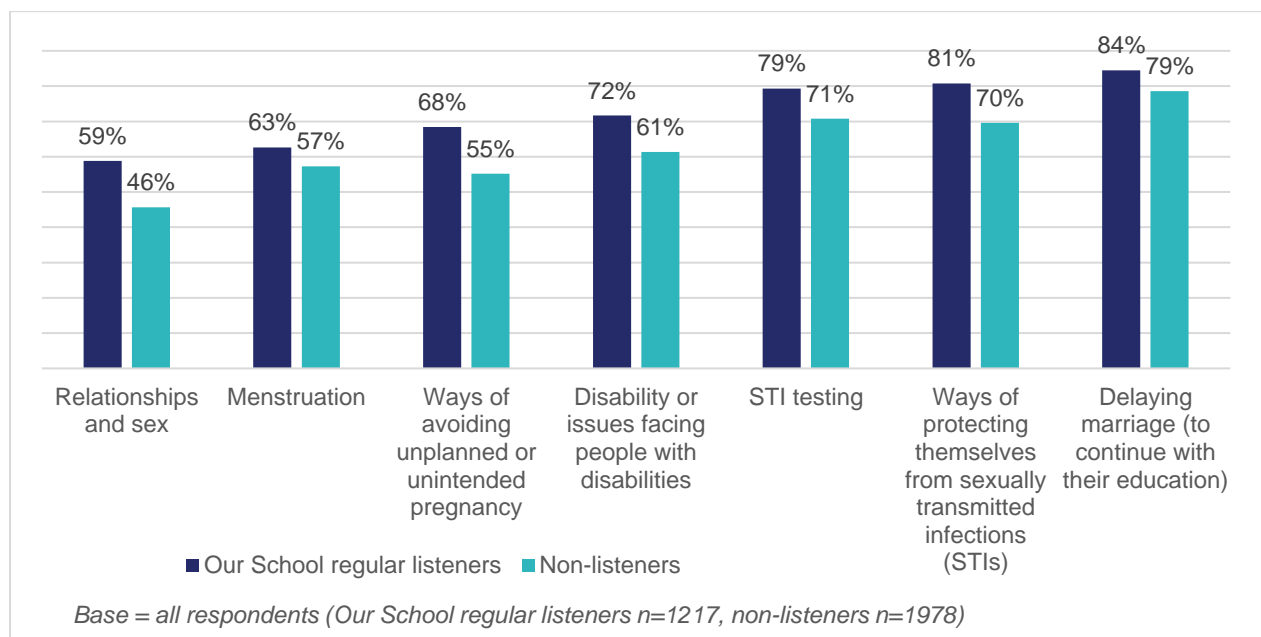
this understanding, and without the provision of sanitary pads, girls will struggle to manage their menstruation and lack confidence to continue attending school.³¹

Findings from this midline survey suggest that people are more comfortable talking to children and young people about issues such as STI testing and delaying marriage, than discussing relationships and sex, menstruation, and ways of avoiding unplanned or unintended pregnancy. Women are more confident than men when it comes to discussing menstruation, while for all the other issues there are no differences between the confidence of men compared to women.

Respondents in Western Equatoria are the most likely to be comfortable discussing relationships and sex and menstruation with children and young people. Respondents in Northern Bahr el Ghazal are the least comfortable discussing relationships and sex, and respondents in Jonglei and Upper Nile are the least comfortable discussing menstruation.

While *Our School* listeners are more comfortable discussing these topics than non-listeners, there is still room for improvement. For instance, as shown in Figure 19, only 59% of regular *Our School* listeners feel comfortable discussing relationships and sex with children and young people, and only 63% feel comfortable discussing menstruation.

Figure 19: Percentage of respondents who feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics with children and young people, by *Our School* listenership vs non-listeners.



³¹ Formative research conducted in February-March 2019 for the Amplifying Women’s Voices project funded by Global Affairs Canada.

It will be important for future episodes of *Our School* to continue to build knowledge of these issues as well as building parents' confidence to talk to children and young people about them in an age-appropriate way.

3.3.4. Taking action to support the education of girls, boys, and children with disabilities

Key insights

- Parents were asked if they had ever talked to their children about their education. While the vast majority talk to them at least occasionally, parents of children with disabilities are slightly less likely to talk to them about their education than parents of boys or girls (with or without disabilities).
- Regular *Our School* listeners are much more likely to talk to their children about their education and talk to them more frequently than non-listeners. Even when controlling for other potentially influential factors, regular listeners are twice (2.0 times) as likely as non-listeners to frequently discuss education with their daughters.
- While parents of boys were more likely to have taken action to support their education than parents of girls or parents of children with disabilities, the difference was quite small, and the types of actions taken were very similar.
- Fathers were more likely to have taken action to support their child's education than mothers which may be because men have more decision-making power in the home, particularly when it comes to financial matters.
- Regular *Our School* listeners were more likely than non-listeners to have taken action to support the education of their children. For example, even when controlling for other key factors such as gender, income and education, regular listeners are 1.6 times as likely to report having saved money or sold something to pay for their daughters' school fees.
- 76% of listeners said they had taken some action after listening, an increase from 69% in 2018. The action they were most likely to have taken was to send a child to school, but they were more likely to have sent a son than a daughter, and more likely to have sent a child without a disability than a child with a disability.
- The likelihood that listeners had taken any action after listening varied a lot by state. While in several states, more than 80% of listeners had taken action, only 57% of listeners in Central Equatoria and 62% of listeners in Western Equatoria had done so.

Parents/guardians were asked if they had ever talked to their child/children about their education. While the vast majority talk to them at least occasionally, parents of children with

disabilities are slightly less likely to talk to them about their education than parents of boys or girls generally, as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Have you ever talked to your child/children about their education?

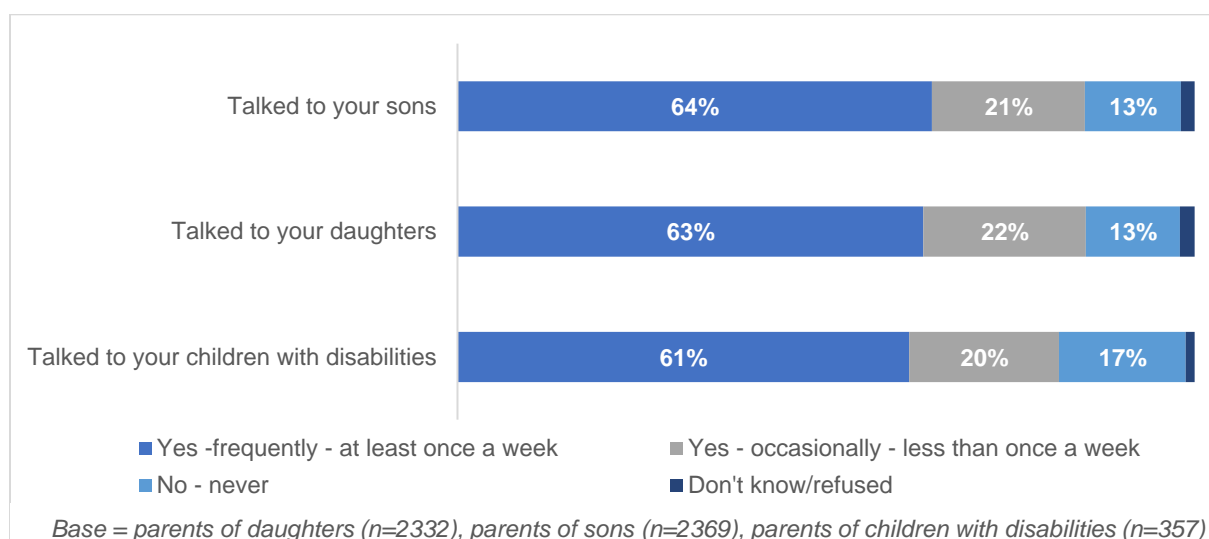


Table 12 shows the topics parents had discussed with their children broken down by sons, daughters, and children with disabilities. Overall, topics discussed were similar whether with a daughter, a son, or a child with a disability (in the GESS endline topics of discussion with daughters and sons were also similar regardless of the gender of the child). Parents who had talked to their children about their education were most likely to talk to them about the importance of studying hard and their hopes for the future/jobs and careers. They were more likely to talk to their sons about their hopes for the future than their daughters or children with disabilities.

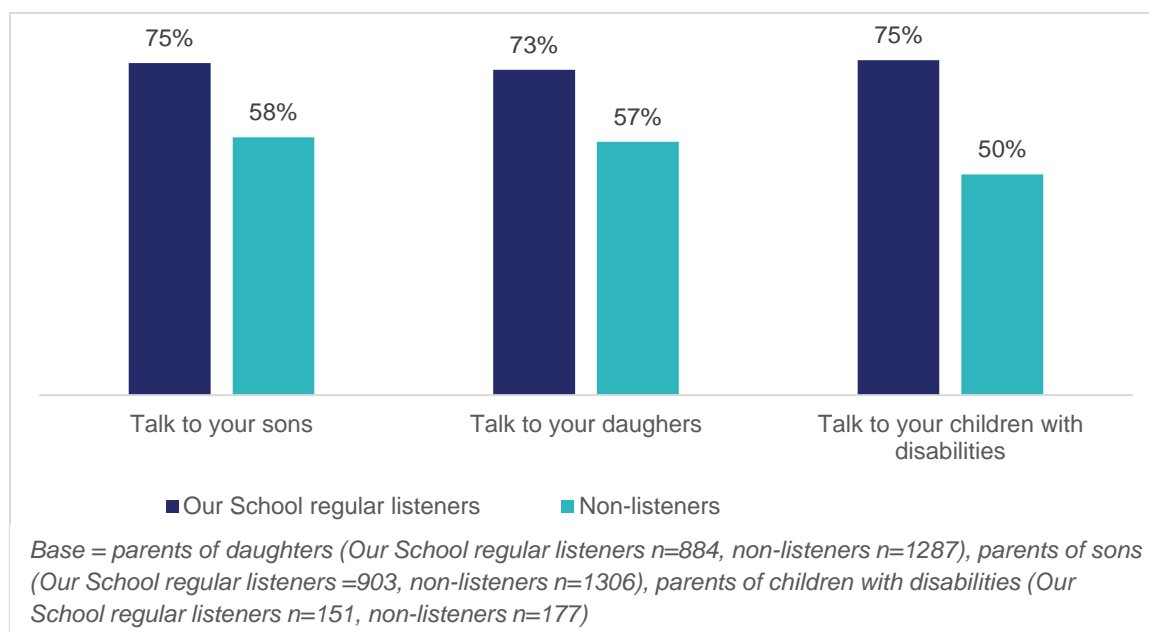
Table 12: Education topics parents had discussed with their children.

	Sons	Daughters	Children with disabilities
The importance of studying hard	89%	91%	87%
Hopes for the future/jobs and careers	66%	59%	62%
Homework	39%	37%	42%
What the child is learning at school	28%	27%	29%
Success/failure in exams	24%	22%	27%
How to behave on the way to school and at school	17%	15%	15%
The facilities at school	12%	11%	14%
How to keep safe at school	11%	9%	12%
The quality of the teaching/behaviour of the teacher	11%	8%	11%
The other children at school	6%	5%	8%
How not to get pregnant/get a girl pregnant	5%	7%	8%
How to deal with men and boys/how to deal with girls	3%	4%	4%
How to handle their periods and attend school	0%	6%	0%
Other	1%	1%	0%

Base = parents who had talked to their children	2017	1988	292
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Regular *Our School* listeners are much more likely to talk to their children about their education and talk to them more frequently than non-listeners and the difference is largest for children with disabilities. The breakdown for frequent discussion among regular listeners compared to non-listeners is shown in Figure 21 below.

Figure 21: Have you ever talked to your child/children about their education? - Yes – frequently by *Our School* listenership vs non-listeners



Regression analysis conducted on the endline data in 2018 showed that regular *Our School* listeners were 1.3 times as likely as non-listeners to frequently discuss education with their daughters, even when controlling for other potentially influential factors such as gender, income, and education. Similar analysis repeated on the midline data showed that regular listeners continue to be more likely to discuss education with their daughters than non-listeners: regular listeners are twice (2.0 times) as likely as non-listeners to do so.³²

Listeners’ comments from live call-in discussion programmes show that *Our School* encouraged some parents to talk to their children about their education and their school experience, even during school closures.

“I now talk with my daughter. I tell her examples of successful women in the country. She is now performing well. Since the time schools closed, I have been encouraging

³² The odds ratios from the regression analyses conducted at endline and midline are not directly comparable as the models included slightly different control variables, for instance the midline regression models included disability as control which was not measured in the endline survey.

her to keep reading and she is doing well. Thanks to GESS.” (Female listener, Kuajok FM)

Parents/guardians were asked if they had ever taken any action to support the education of their children. While parents were most likely to have taken action to support their sons’ education and least likely to have taken action to support the education of their children with disabilities, the difference is small.

- 79% of parents/guardians of boys had taken action to support their sons’ education.
- 76% of parents/guardians of girls had taken action to support their daughters’ education.
- 75% of parents/guardians of children with disabilities had taken action to support their child/children with disabilities’ education.

The actions they had taken were very similar whether a boy, a girl, or a child with a disability. Table 13 below shows the full breakdown.

Table 13: Actions taken by parents to support their child's education.

	Sons	Daughters	Children with disabilities
Saved money/sold something to pay for school fees	82%	81%	81%
Saved money/sold something to pay for uniforms/books	58%	55%	57%
Talked to them about how important education is	54%	54%	53%
Talked to them about their school day	29%	27%	27%
Talked to them about how they are being treated by teachers and other pupils	14%	12%	11%
Helped them with their homework	15%	13%	15%
Freed up time from housework so that they can study	16%	14%	14%
Made sure they have had a good meal before school	10%	9%	10%
Talked to them about how to deal with men and boys (if a girl)	-	6%	4%
Talked to them about how to deal with girls (if a boy)	5%	-	3%
Done something to make their journey to and from school easier/safer	8%	6%	6%

Visited the school they attend	11%	12%	12%
Helped them to receive a cash transfer	-	7%	5%
Done something to help make the school more accessible to a student with a disability	-	-	6%
Other	1%	1%	1%
<i>Base = parents who had taken some action</i>	<i>1869</i>	<i>1764</i>	<i>268</i>

Fathers were more likely to have taken action to support their child's education, whether a girl or a boy, than mothers (they are also more likely to have taken action to support their children with disabilities, but the difference is not statistically significant). This may be because men have more decision-making power in the home, particularly when it comes to financial decisions.

People with higher levels of education were more likely to have taken action to support their child's education.

Regular *Our School* listeners were more likely to have taken action than non-listeners.

- 86% of regular listeners with daughters had taken action to support their education compared to 68% of non-listeners with daughters.
- 88% of regular listeners with sons had taken action to support their education compared to 73% of non-listeners with sons.
- 84% of regular listeners with children with disabilities had taken action to support their education compared to 66% of non-listeners with children with disabilities.

Regression analysis conducted on the endline data showed that regular listeners were more likely (1.4 times as likely) than non-listeners to have saved money or sold something to pay for their daughters' school fees, even when controlling for other factors that might influence behaviour, such as gender, income, and education. Similar analysis conducted on the midline data shows that this continues to be the case: regular listeners are 1.6 times as likely to report having saved money or sold something to pay for their daughters' school fees.³³

Our School broadcast episodes about how parents can support their children to continue studying at home during school closures because of COVID-19. Listeners' comments from live call-in discussion programmes show that they appreciated these episodes and found them very relevant. They said that it was important to remind parents to support their children to continue learning and remain focused while studying at home. Some listeners mentioned actions they had taken which were inspired by the programme.

³³ The odds ratios from the regression analyses conducted at endline and midline are not directly comparable as the models included slightly different control variables, for instance the midline regression models included disability as control which was not measured in the endline survey.

“I help my children by buying them pens, books and a radio set for listening to learning programmes. I also review books together with them”. (Male listener, Radio Easter)

Listeners were asked if they had done anything or taken any action as a result of listening to *Our School*. 76% of listeners said they had taken action, a higher proportion than at the endline from GESS Phase 1, where 69% of listeners said they had taken action. Actions taken are outlined in Table 14 below. The action they were most likely to have taken was to send a child to school and were more likely to have sent a daughter than a son and a child without a disability than a child with a disability.

Table 14: Self-reported actions taken by Our School listeners as a result of listening.

Action	Percentage
Sent a daughter to school	73%
Sent a son to school	65%
Sent a child with a disability to school	45%
Saved money/sold something to help a daughter to go to school	37%
Saved money/sold something to help a son go to school	25%
Saved money/sold something to help a child with a disability go to school	20%
Spoken to a daughter about her education	21%
Spoken to a son about his education	18%
Spoken to a child with a disability about their education	11%
Spoken to another family member about education	12%
Spoken to someone outside the family about education	10%
Encouraged a daughter to stay in school	12%
Encouraged a son to stay in school	10%
Encouraged a child with a disability to stay in school	6%
Helped a daughter with her homework/helped a daughter to continue learning at home	5%
Helped a son with his homework/helped a son to continue learning at home	4%

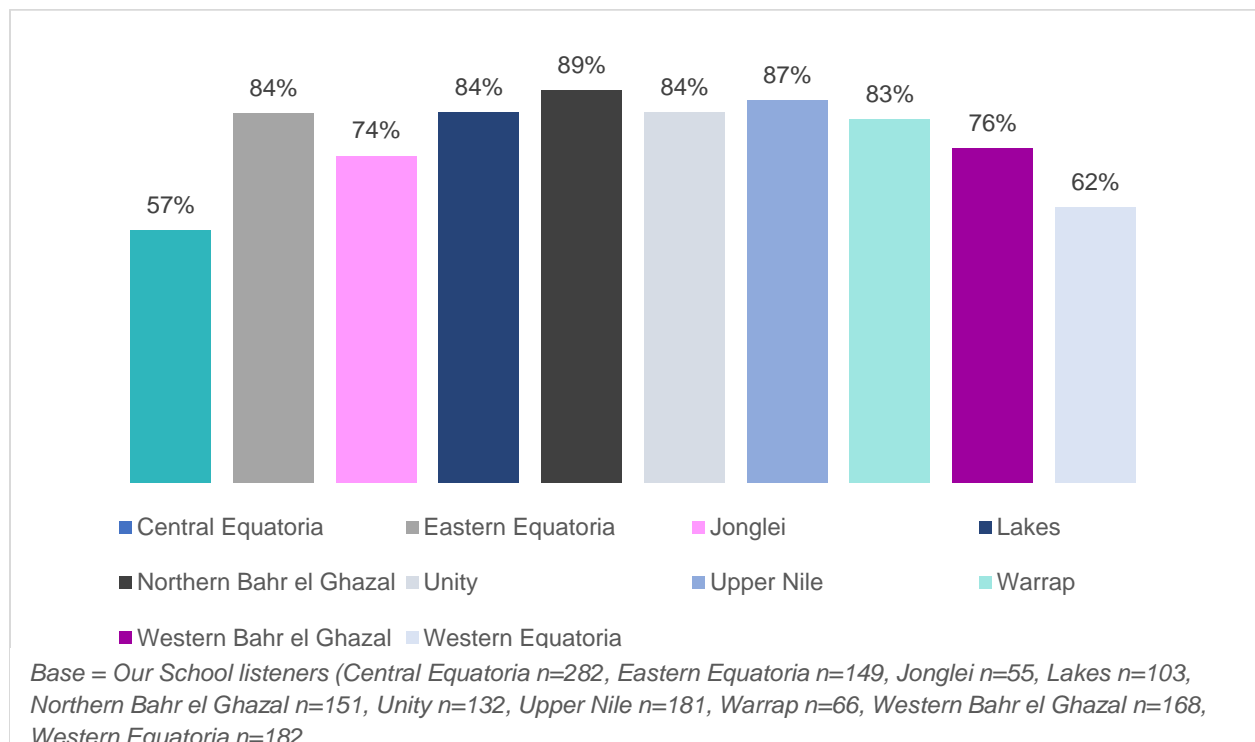
Helped a child with a disability with their homework/helped them to continue learning at home	3%
Done something to make it easier/safer for a daughter to travel to school	3%
Done something to make it easier/safer for a son to travel to school	3%
Done something to make it easier/safer for a child with a disability to travel to school	3%
Visited a school	6%
Spoken to the teacher or school administration about a child's education	4%
Asked the school how it is spending school funds	3%
Participated or engaged in a PTA (Parent Teacher Association)	2%
Participated or engaged in a School Management Committee (SMC)	2%
Worked together in community to do something to support the school	3%
Participated in an initiative related to girls' education	3%
Ensure the child goes to school every day	6%
Other	4%

Base = Our School listeners who had taken action (n=1111)

Listeners were more likely to mention sending a daughter or a son to school than in the GESS Phase 1 endline. At endline 56% of those who had taken any action said they had sent a daughter to school. This increased to 73% in this midline survey. And at endline 47% said they had sent a son to school, compared to 65% at this midline. This is very promising considering the context of school closures because of COVID-19, although it may reflect action taken prior to the pandemic.

The likelihood that listeners had taken any action after listening varied a lot by state (see Figure 22). While in several states, more than 80% of listeners had taken action, only 57% of listeners in Central Equatoria and 62% of listeners in Western Equatoria had done so.

Figure 22: Have you done anything or taken any action as a result of listening to Our School? (by former state)



3.3.5. Overcoming barriers to school attendance

Key insights

- Financial difficulties in families can have an impact on any child, however, when a family is facing financial difficulties, it is likely to have more impact on girls and children with disabilities whose education is seen as less of a priority.
- COVID-19 has had a detrimental effect on education because of school closures and because of the financial impact of lockdown measures. When midline survey respondents were asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the most common response given by participants was the financial impact because of limited ability to work and earn money (49%). A close second was 'the impact on the education of my children' (42%).
- These impacts disproportionately affect girls due to increasing rates of early marriage and pregnancy which means many girls may not return to school now that schools have reopened.
- Girls are also less likely to be studying at home than boys meaning they will be further behind with their schoolwork even if they do return.
- *Our School* listeners are more likely than non-listeners to say their children have been studying at home during school closures and this is the case whether they have sons, daughters, or children with disabilities.

General barriers to education

In the midline survey, parents whose children were not attending school before school closures were asked for the reasons why not. The most common reason that was mentioned by all participants was that their child is too young to go to school (65%). The second most mentioned reason was that they cannot afford to send the child to school (32%). Those who mentioned being unable to afford to send their children to school were significantly higher for those with no schooling than those with education and mentioned significantly more by parents with disabilities (46%) compared to those without (31%). This reflects the differing financial situation of people with disabilities compared to those without 56% of respondents with a moderate or severe disability said that they did not have enough money even for food compared to 46% of those without disabilities.

Over half of those from the Upper Nile reported being unable to afford to send their children to school (59%) with those from Jonglei, Lakes and Northern Bahr el Ghazal close behind.

While financial difficulties impact on the education of all children, they have a disproportionate impact on girls. As mentioned earlier in this report, in times of financial difficulty the education of boys is prioritised. In addition, desk research and formative research for this project found

that early marriage and pregnancy are among the main factors contributing to the lack of education among women and girls. Other key barriers to girls' education include fear of sexual harassment and sexual violence on the way to school; lack of bathroom facilities and menstrual hygiene products which can lead to girls being ridiculed and discriminated against, which discourages them from attending school; gender norms which mean girls are expected to help more around the house, and lack of female teachers in many schools which could improve perceptions of safety and provide role models for girls.³⁴

Barriers affecting children with disabilities

In the midline survey, respondents were asked for the main reasons why children with disabilities drop out of school. The main reasons were financial. A high majority (84%) of participants said that the reasons why children with disabilities in their community drop out of school was due to not enough money for school fees. This was followed by 'not enough money for school equipment (books etc.)' (41%) and 38% saying 'not enough money for school uniform'. Although financial difficulties affect all children, section 'Fostering supportive attitudes towards education and sexual and reproductive health and rights attitudes' outlines findings from the midline survey that suggest that the education of children with disabilities is seen as less of a priority than that of other children.

Desk research and GESS formative research also found that people do not view children with disabilities to be worth educating as they are seen as unable to be productive in society and unfit for any work.³⁵ This means that when parents have limited resources and are forced to prioritise the education of one child over another, they may be less likely to choose to educate the child with disabilities.

Children with disabilities participating in GESS formative research said that they often face criticism and discrimination in the community because of their disability and the community discourages their education. They also lack support at home where they are treated differently to other children, for example being given less food than other children, because they are seen as less valuable and less worthy of spending resources on.

Children with disabilities also mentioned that while many teachers are supportive, children with disabilities face marginalisation and bullying from other children at school and they also struggle with transportation to and from school.

“Despite the great encouragement from teachers, some pupils in the schools do not like sharing ideas with us the disabled children instead they stay far away from us.

³⁴ See Oxfam (2017) South Sudan Gender Analysis: A snapshot situation analysis of the differential impact of the humanitarian crisis on women, girls, men and boys in South Sudan, March-July 2016; CARE International (2014) 'The girl has no rights': Gender-based violence in South Sudan; BBC Media Action (2018) GESS Output 1: Social & Behavioural Change Communication Endline Report.

³⁵ Formative (2018) and longitudinal (2019) research conducted under BBC Media Action's EU DEVCO-funded project, aiming to enhance Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for young people in South Sudan; GESS formative research.

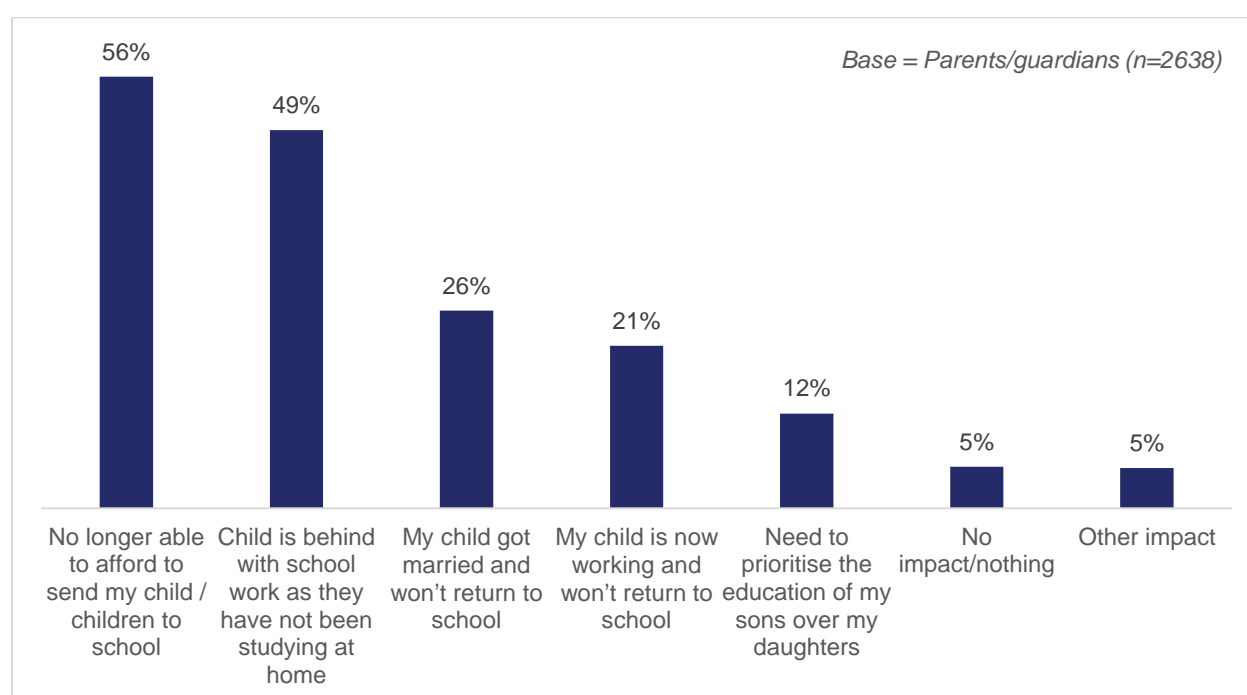
Sometimes we feel out of place.” (FGD with girls with disabilities, Rumbek, GESS formative research).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted children’s education due to school closures between April 2020 and May 2021 and because of the financial impact of lockdown measures, including increased prices of goods. When midline survey respondents were asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the most common response given by participants on the impact of COVID-19 on them and their family was the financial impact because of limited ability to work and earn money (49%). A close second was ‘the impact on the education of my children’ (42%).

Parents were asked about the specific impacts of the pandemic on their children’s education. As shown in Figure 23, the most common answer given was that they were ‘no longer able to afford to send my child/children to school’, mentioned by 56% of participants with children. This was closely followed with 49% of those participants stating their ‘child is behind with schoolwork as they have not been studying at home’ and 26% of participants said, ‘my child got married and won’t return to school’.

Figure 23: What impact has the coronavirus pandemic had on the education of your children?



5% of respondents (138 people) talked about other impacts than those listed, including early pregnancy, children becoming stubborn and lacking discipline without school, children forgetting what they learned, boys joining gangs and drinking alcohol, and children getting into trouble and getting involved with crime.

BBC Media Action research conducted in early 2021 looking at the impact of COVID-19 on social cohesion and conflict dynamics in communities found similar issues. For example, research participants in Malakal PoC mentioned that young men who are unoccupied since

school closures are starting fights which can escalate into disputes at the community level. Children are loitering in the PoC and in the market doing nothing and there has been an increase in crime.³⁶

Many of the impacts on education mentioned by midline survey respondents disproportionately affect girls. Research from the University of Juba highlights the impact of financial constraints on girls' education as parents prioritise the education of boys over girls, and rates of early marriage increase as the dowry payment provides a source of income for families in financial difficulties.³⁷ This was confirmed in several BBC Media Action research studies conducted in 2020 and 2021, where research participants reported that school closures and economic difficulties caused by the pandemic have resulted in increased rates of early marriage in some areas. They also reported increased rates of early pregnancy among unmarried school-age girls.³⁸

“The high prices made some of the girls to risk going and getting money from their [male] friends [who may coerce or pressure them into sexual relationships]. In the process most of them end up getting pregnant.” (FGD with women in Juba, GESS formative research)

“Many girls got impregnated meanwhile a good number of them practice prostitution. If schools were working, girls would have been protected because there will be no time for them to practice prostitution.” (Community leader, Malakal PoC, Life in Lulu formative research)

Research from the Windle Trust in Lakes and Unity states also confirmed that school enrolments for girls are down with increased rates of early pregnancy, increased rates of early marriage due to financial hardship, and families moving away from the area to find alternative means of survival due to interruptions in humanitarian support provided in the area. They highlighted the importance of encouraging young mothers to return to school after giving birth.³⁹ The *Our School* programme should also aim to address negative attitudes towards girls returning to school after having a baby: although 94% of respondents in the midline survey agreed that ‘girls who have had a baby should be encouraged to return to school’, 58% of respondents agreed that ‘girls who get pregnant while in school should prioritise looking after their baby’ suggesting there are barriers which discourage girls from placing importance on their education once they have given birth.

Girls are also less likely to have been studying at home during school closures, meaning they will be further behind with their education. In the midline survey, parents were asked what their children have been doing at home during school closures because of COVID-19. As shown in Table 15, studying was not in the top three activities for boys, girls, or children with disabilities. However, girls were much more likely to be cooking in the household and doing other

³⁶ Life in Lulu formative research conducted in 2021.

³⁷ University of Juba (2020) Gender and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments of COVID-19 Pandemic in Juba Municipality, South Sudan.

³⁸ BBC Media Action (2020) Evaluation Report GESS 2 PSAs; Life in Lulu formative research conducted in 2021; GESS formative research.

³⁹ Windle Trust International (2021) The impact of Covid-19 school closures on girls' education in South Sudan: The case of Lakes and Unity states.

household work than boys or children with disabilities and girls were also the least likely to be studying.

Table 15: During school closures since April (because of the COVID-19 pandemic), what have your children been doing at home?

	Sons	Daughters	Children with disabilities
Cooking in the household	20%	70%	45%
Staying idle (not doing anything)	45%	32%	42%
Doing other household work	47%	51%	46%
Studying	29%	25%	33%
Playing games	48%	30%	37%
Visiting other places, friends, relatives	25%	21%	20%
Watching TV/listening to the radio	9%	8%	8%
Doing some work outside the household	13%	8%	8%
Other	5%	4%	4%
<i>Base = parents/guardians</i>	2369	2324	356

A University of Juba study in April 2020 also found similar results: girls were much more likely than boys to be spending time cooking in the household and less likely than boys to be studying at home, suggesting the pandemic is reinforcing traditional gender roles.⁴⁰

The likelihood that children have been studying at home also varies significantly by state, as shown in Table 16 below. For example, in Central Equatoria girls and boys were equally likely to be studying at home, while in Jonglei boys were much more likely than girls to be studying. The breakdown for parents of children with disabilities has not been included as the number of respondents with children with disabilities broken down by state would be too small to make reliable conclusions.

Table 16: Percentage of parents who said their children had been studying at home during school closures, by former states.

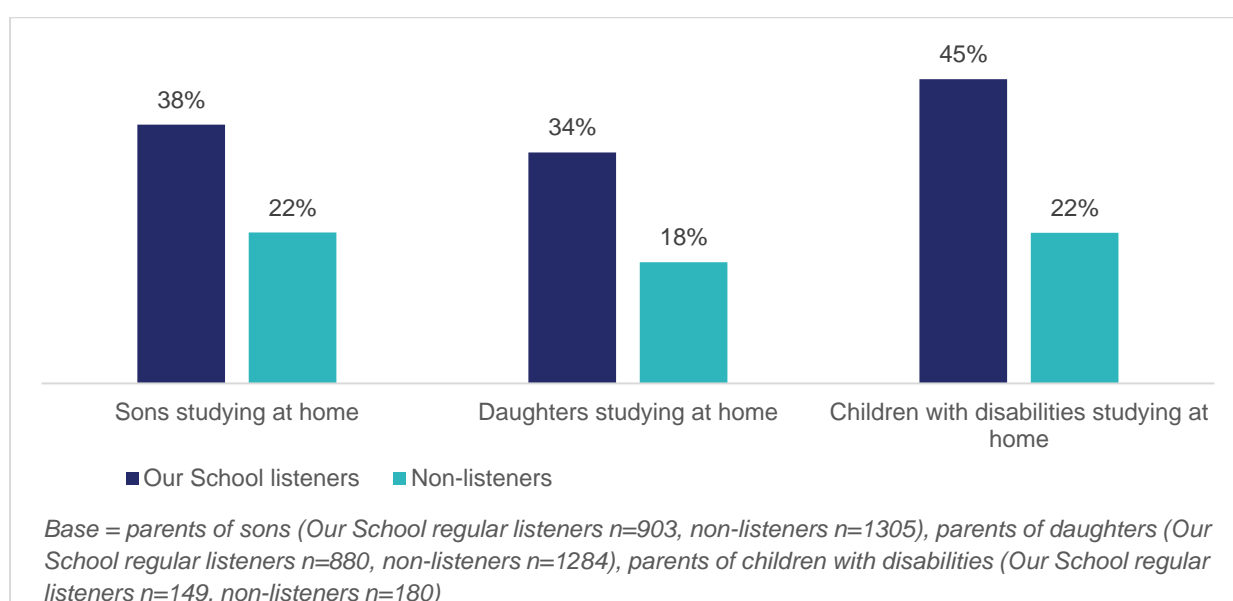
State	Central Equatoria	Eastern Equatoria	Jonglei	Lakes	Northern Bahr el	Unity	Upper Nile	Warrap	Western Bahr el	Western Equatoria
Sons	27%	44%	33%	25%	35%	11%	46%	15%	31%	33%
Daughters	27%	42%	19%	16%	30%	8%	43%	17%	23%	29%

⁴⁰ University of Juba (2020) Gender and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments of COVID-19 Pandemic in Juba Municipality, South Sudan.

Base = parents of sons/daughters (base sizes are different for every box in the above table, so have not been included here)

Our School episodes selected for rebroadcast during school closures included those which talked about how to support children to study at home when schools are closed⁴¹ and PSAs broadcast in August 2020 also highlighted the issue of school closures and aimed to encourage parents to support their children to learn at home. As shown in Figure 24, *Our School* listeners interviewed in the GESS midline survey were significantly more likely than non-listeners to mention that their children were studying at home. The biggest difference could be seen for children with disabilities – 45% of regular *Our School* listeners mentioned their child with a disability was studying at home, compared to 22% of non-listeners.

Figure 24: Percentage of parents who said their children had been studying at home during school closures, by *Our School* listenership vs non-listeners.



Research conducted to evaluate the impact of the PSAs in August 2020 showed some examples of listeners encouraging and supporting girls to study at home. For example, one female listener from Torit said that she had reduced the housework for her daughter and given her more time to study.

“After I have listened to the message it tells us to support our children by giving them time to revise their books, so I supported my daughter by reducing work to allow her time to revise her books.” (Female listener, Voice of Eastern Equatoria)

Responses to the midline survey show that even children who are studying lack access to basic equipment and internet connection to support their studies and this is the case for all children, whether boys, girls, or children with disabilities. Almost every parent interviewed in the midline survey said that their children do not have access to a computer (97%) or the

⁴¹ These were produced in GESS Phase 1 to encourage parents to support their children to continue to study during school holidays, but the same advice applies for school closures for any reason.

internet (92%). 79% reported their children do not have access to a desk and around half reported that their children do not have access to study materials such as schoolbooks (46%) or notebooks and pens (53%). These responses did not vary significantly between parents of boys, girls, or children with disabilities.

However, *Our School* listeners were more likely than non-listeners to say that their children have access to a quiet place to study, a desk, and study materials, suggesting the programme may have encouraged parents to prioritise these things. One listener calling into a live call-in discussion programme, for example, mentioned providing pens and books for his children to help with their learning (see section Taking action to support the education of girls, boys, and children with disabilities).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Children with disabilities

- *Our School* listeners view the education of children with disabilities as less of a priority than the education of other children. This is an attitude that should be addressed in future episodes which will be focusing more on disability inclusion than the previous episodes.
- People undervalue the education of children with disabilities because many people do not see their potential to contribute to the family financially. BCC activities should showcase positive role models and success stories of children with disabilities who have been successful in education and careers and highlight the benefits and importance of educating children with disabilities. This approach should be targeted by state as the relative perceived importance of educating children with disabilities to those without disabilities varies across the country.

Benefits of girls' education

- Overall, people are less aware of the benefits of girls' education than at baseline. This decrease may reflect the situation at the time of data collection where schools had been closed for more than a year. Awareness of the benefits of education is also low for boys and is lowest for children with disabilities. *Our School* should aim to increase awareness of the benefits of education for girls, boys, and children with disabilities to ensure that parents see the importance of sending their children back to school now that schools have reopened.
- Overall knowledge of education and the benefits of education varies a lot by former states, but the variation is different for different topics. In many states, knowledge is high for some topics and low for others. This demonstrates how the approach to shifting knowledge needs to be targeted by former states as different states lack knowledge in different areas

Health Issues

People associate the use of contraceptives among young women with promiscuity and feel that women should only use contraceptives once married. BCC activities should aim to shift negative attitudes and norms, including among men and boys, that deny girls' and young women's decision-making power about the use of contraceptives, including those who are unmarried.

- People lack confidence to talk to children and young people about menstruation, relationships and sex. While *Our School* listeners are more comfortable discussing these topics than non-listeners, there is still room for improvement. BCC activities should aim to increase confidence among parents, teachers, and other key people in children's lives to talk to children and young people about menstruation to support girls to manage their menstruation well and continue to attend school. BCC activities should also build confidence to talk to children and young people about relationships and sex to support them to have healthier pre-marital relationships.
- Considering the reported increasing rates of early pregnancy since school closures because of COVID-19, BCC activities should aim to encourage girls who have given birth to return to school and encourage widespread acceptance of this. 58% of respondents agreed that 'girls who get pregnant while in school should prioritise looking after their baby' suggesting there are barriers which discourage girls from placing importance on their education once they have given birth.

5. Annexes

a. Research questions

The research sought to answer the following research questions:

Table 17: Research questions and sub-questions addressed in the midline survey.

Research questions	Sub-questions
What media do people in South Sudan consume?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has access to radio, TV, mobile phones, newspapers, internet, social media changed over time? • Who/how many people <i>own</i> a radio set/a mobile phone with radio access? Who controls what is listened to on the radio? • What formats/types of content do people access through each device? • How does access vary by location and demographics? • What sources of information on education do people use? (including media sources as well as individuals, such as family members, and organisations/sectors such as government). Which sources do they trust the most?
What is the reach and regular reach of <i>Our School</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many adults and children aged 15+ have listened to <i>Our School</i> at least once in the last 12 months? How many listen regularly (to at least every other episode)? • How does this vary by age, gender, disability, location, education, income, etc? • How engaged are listeners?
What is the reach and regular reach of <i>Let's Talk About Us</i> ? (<i>These findings are not included in this report as they relate to the Amplifying Women's Voices project funded by GAC and will</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many adults and children aged 15+ have listened to <i>Let's Talk About Us</i> at least once in the last 12 months? How many adults listen regularly (to at least every other episode)? • How does this vary by age, gender, disability, location, education, income, etc?

<p><i>be reported to GAC separately)</i></p>	
<p>How is listening to <i>Our School</i> associated with audiences' knowledge about education in South Sudan? How does this compare with the endline survey from GESS Phase 1?</p>	<p>How is listening to <i>Our School</i> associated with audiences' knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school system in South Sudan? • legal and financial systems related to education? • elements of the school system that support girls' education and the education of children with disabilities/other vulnerable groups? • the benefits of educating girls, boys, and children with disabilities?
<p>What impact does listening to <i>Our School</i> have on attitudes related to education for girls, boys, PWDs and other vulnerable groups in South Sudan? How does this compare with the endline survey from GESS Phase 1?</p>	<p>How is listening to <i>Our School</i> associated with attitudes about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance and benefits of sending daughters, children with disabilities and children from other vulnerable groups (e.g. IDPs) to school? • trust in schools to provide safe education? (including safeguarding from physical and psychological harm, including SGBV)? • trust in schools to provide inclusive education (including an equitable environment for girls and children with disabilities)? • the rights of women, girls and PWDs to have access to SRHR? • the rights of women and girls (including those with disabilities) to choose when to get married/when to get pregnant?
<p>How is listening to <i>Our School</i> associated with confidence to discuss issues relate to SRHR, early marriage and early pregnancy with children and young people? How does this compare with the endline survey from GESS Phase 1?</p>	<p>How is listening to <i>Our School</i> associated with confidence to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRHR issues with young people (e.g. menstruation, STI testing, family planning) • early marriage and early pregnancy (e.g., parents choosing to delay marriage of girls/reject marriage offers, parents being persuaded by girls and teachers not to marry their daughters off, community members encouraging parents/girls to delay marriages, community members talking to young people about prevention of early pregnancy, etc)

<p>How is listening to <i>Our School</i> associated with parents, teachers and other community members taking action to support the education of girls, boys, PWDs and other vulnerable groups?</p> <p>How does this compare with the endline survey from GESS Phase 1?</p>	<p>How is listening to <i>Our School</i> associated with parents, teachers and other community members taking action to support the education of girls, boys, children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups (e.g., IDPs) through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible use of cash transfer and capitation grants • greater parental involvement in school/education • giving girls more time for doing their homework/supporting children to study at home during school closures • saving money to support education • sending girls, boys, and children with disability to school • delaying marriage to allow girls, boys, and children with disabilities to continue with their education
<p>What are the main barriers to school attendance? (focusing on knowledge gaps, rather than covering all barriers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the barriers to school attendance for PWDs? • How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting people's decisions around and access to education?

b. Population and reach calculations

Due to displacement resulting from insecurity, the total population figure in South Sudan provided by the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) might be inaccurate, as PRB projections do not take into account unusual migratory rates. This affects the total reach figure in millions extrapolated from the percentage of those reached by *Our School*, as this extrapolation uses PRB data. The following estimation has therefore been calculated to estimate a more conservative reach. The method used is similar to that used for the reach calculations for the GESS Endline survey in 2018.⁴²

Table 18: Population and reach calculations.

Description	Figure
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⁴² BBC Media Action (2018) GESS Output 1: Social & Behavioural Change Communication Endline Report, <https://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Endline-Output-1.pdf> [accessed 12/05/2021].

South Sudan 2020 Population Projections (PRB World Data Sheet 2020, https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/letter-booklet-2020-world-population.pdf)	11,200,000
% of population aged 15+ (PRB World Data Sheet 2020)	58%
Population 15+ NOTE: Excludes changes resulting from large migration movements	6,496,000
Number of South Sudanese refugees in other countries (Source: UNHCR refugees from South Sudan as of 31 March 2021 https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/86037)	2,225,053
Estimate of % of refugees aged 18+ NOTE: We could not find the age breakdown for all South Sudanese refugees, only those in Sudan so used the Sudan figure as an estimate for overall refugees. The breakdown for 15+ is not available. (Source: UNHCR South Sudanese Refugees in Sudan Dashboard as of 28 February 2021 https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85494)	47%
Number of South Sudanese refugees in other countries aged 18+	1,045,775
Estimate of population 15+ minus refugees	5,450,225
Potential audience: % of adult population with access to radio (Source: GESS Midline dataset, 2021)	74%
Potential audience: number of adult population with access to radio	4,051,208
Reach: % of adult population who listened to <i>Our School</i> at least once in last 12 month (Source: GESS Midline dataset, 2021)	43%
Reach: No. of adults who listened to <i>Our School</i> at least once in the last 12 months	2,321,766
Regular reach: % of adult population who listened to <i>Our School</i> at least twice a month in last 12 months (Source: GESS Midline dataset, 2021)	35%
Regular reach: No. of adults who listened to <i>Our School</i> at least twice a month in last 12 months	1,924,087

c. Topics covered by *Our School* between April 2020 and March 2021

- Puberty

- Family support for girls (and children with disabilities/presenter guide)
- Getting ready for school
- Fulfilling rights of children with disabilities
- Regular attendance
- Parental support
- Classroom behaviour
- Building trust among students
- Girls passing exams (and children with disabilities/presenter guide)
- How do you know that your child is learning?
- Budgeting for Christmas alongside education
- Home support
- Discussing school at home
- Age girls should first go to school
- Community support for girls' education (and children with disabilities/presenter guide)
- Boys' education over girls
- Consequences of earlier/forced marriage
- Laws around forced marriage
- Gender roles
- Gifts and lifts
- Menstruation