



# **SOUTH SUDAN RAPID EDUCATION AND RISK ANALYSIS REPORT**

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## CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	6
PURPOSE	6
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	7
METHODOLOGY	7
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK	7
RERA ADVISORY GROUP	8
RESEARCH METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS	8
SITE SELECTION	9
ACCESS TO LEARNING SITES	10
PARTICIPANT SELECTION	10
PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION	11
DATA ENTRY AND TRANSCRIPTION	14
DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING	14
CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS	15
COUNTRY CONTEXT	16
CONFLICT SNAPSHOT	16
DECEMBER 2013 AND JULY 2016 FIGHTING	18
SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE ONGOING VIOLENCE	19
REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PEACE EFFORTS	21
AGREEMENT ON THE RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN (ARCSS)	21
NATIONAL DIALOGUE	21
NATURAL DISASTERS	22
EDUCATION SECTOR	23
QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS	29
ACCESS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	29
EQUAL ACCESS	29
PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING	30
TEACHING AND LEARNING	34
CURRICULA	34
ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES	34
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	35
EDUCATION POLICY	37
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION	37
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS	38
ACCESS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	38
EQUAL ACCESS	38
ACHIEVEMENT	42
PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING	45

FACILITIES	48
TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL	51
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION – TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	51
CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL	53
SUPPORT PROVIDED TO TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL - LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION (LOI) POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION	54
TEACHING AND LEARNING	55
CURRICULA	55
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	62
EDUCATION POLICY	65
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION	65
COORDINATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	69
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	69
ACCESS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	69
EQUAL ACCESS	69
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	70
PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING	71
FACILITIES AND SERVICES	72
TEACHING AND LEARNING	72
CURRICULA	72
ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES	73
TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL	73
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES	73
TEACHER/EDUCATION PERSONNEL SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT	74
EDUCATION POLICY	75
EDUCATION COORDINATION	76
APPENDIX A: GETTING TO ANSWERS MATRIX	78
APPENDIX B. MATH AND READING ASSESSMENT RESULTS	82

## ACRONYMS

AES	Alternative Education System
ARCSS	Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
AU	African Union
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
ECDE	Early Childhood Development and Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIR	Gross Intake Ratio
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
LOI	Language of Instruction
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoGEI	South Sudan Ministry Education and Instruction
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
POC	Protection of Civilians (UN site)
RERA	Rapid Education and Risk Analysis
SMoE	State Ministry of Education
SPLM IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SSP	South Sudanese Pound
TGoNU	Transitional Government of National Unity
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNOCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The last four years of war has devastated South Sudan's education sector. Schools were damaged or occupied by combatants and internally displaced populations, teachers and students were killed, school-going children were targeted for sexual violence and recruitment into armies and parents continue to fear sending their children to school, especially girls. As a consequence, many South Sudanese receive little or no formal education during warring years which is reminiscent of the past wars. The new country has enjoyed international goodwill that increased significantly after South Sudan became independent in 2011. Since the war started again, in 2013, some donors have re-prioritized their support to enable safe environments in order for the most vulnerable, conflict-affected girls and boys to continue learning. The RERA is a tool that USAID developed to analyze a context and understand the relationship between the education sector and the context within which it operates. Applying the RERA aligns with USAID/South Sudan's new 'Way Forward' plan, to better link humanitarian assistance with conflict and development assistance, strengthening community resilience and making the population more conflict-resistant. The Mission will continue support inclusive peace processes at the community level, in hopes such interventions will aid implementation of the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The goal is to improve community ability to manage internal conflicts peacefully and to strengthen dialogue and social cohesion across lines of division. The Rapid Education and Risk Analysis employs a situation analysis methodology and gives in-depth view into the community-level dynamics of risk. It describes how risks interact with education. The RERA was guided by the INEE Minimum Standards for Education domains, including insights into (1) Access and Learning Environment, (2) Teaching and Learning, (3) Teachers and Other Education Personnel and (4) Education Policy (5) Coordination. The data collection tools were designed to address these various domains, and the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained within this report are categorized under these headings. MSI used a mixed-methods approach in conducting the RERA in South Sudan, capturing the perceptions of more than 900 informants across 27 learning sites in five former States: Jonglei, Upper Nile, Unity, Western Equatoria, and Central Equatoria. Quantitative activities include math and reading assessments with Grade Three and Four learners, secondary data forms documenting enrollment and other key educational statistics for learning sites, and in-depth surveys with community level informants on topics such as education access, facilities, and quality. Qualitative activities included focus group discussions with children and teachers, and key informant interviews with stakeholders such as Ministry of Education (national and county levels) officials, community leaders/local authorities, and international NGO/donor representatives.

### RERA PURPOSE

- To gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the conflict and the educational system in South Sudan through consultation with multiple stakeholders
- To identify the risks associated with access to education by studying its link with other sectors and help inform risk mitigation strategies
- To consult with a wide-range of community-level actors to better understand their perceptions of how education relates to conflict.

## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

The Rapid Education and Risk Analysis (RERA) is a situation-analysis methodology that offers a more in-depth view into the community-level dynamics of conflict and how they interact with education and other basic services. The RERA integrates key elements of a conflict analysis, disaster-risk analysis, and resilience analysis with a rapid education analysis, and provides guidance for a national level mapping, stakeholder consultation and analysis process.



The RERA aligns with USAID/South Sudan new ‘Way Forward’ plan. This plan aims to better link humanitarian assistance with conflict- and development-assistance programming to strengthen community resilience and help communities become more conflict resistant. In addition, the Mission will continue its focus on supporting inclusive peace processes at the community level, in hopes such interventions will aid successful implementation of the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, improving community ability to manage internal conflicts peacefully and strengthen dialogue and social cohesion across lines of division.

Specifically, the purpose of the South Sudan RERA is:

- To understand the relationship between the conflict and the educational system in South Sudan through consultation with multiple stakeholders,
- To identify risks associated with access to education by studying the link with other sectors and inform risk mitigation strategies,
- To map the available education service and consult with a wide-range of national and community-level actors about their perceptions of how education mitigates the effects of conflict
- To assist USAID and other donors, Ministry of Education, and local partners with information to inform current and future programming.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

For this RERA activity, USAID has prioritized four themes: access, quality, safety, and government and non-government education institutions. Equity serves as a cross-cutting theme across these four topics. In addition, the RERA aims to assess resilience by determining how educational institutions and school communities manage multiple adversities and opportunities to build resilience and peace.

The RERA will address the following research questions:

6. What are the risks of and opportunities for improving access to education and achievement across South Sudan?
7. What are the risks and protective factors that influence learners’ safety when attending schools/temporary learning spaces/alternative learning programs?
8. What is the relationship between the conflict and service delivery?
9. What is the relationship of conflict and curriculum content?
10. What are external, internal and institutional influences on the learning environment (e.g., state actors, non-state actors, international community)?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

The RERA combines a mix of analytical frameworks. These include conflict analysis, disaster-risk analysis, resilience analysis and rapid education analysis. Specifically, the “RERA seeks a good-enough analysis to capture general information about how education systems, learners and their communities interact with a dynamic, multiple risk environment, and how those risks interact.[The RERA is] a rapid education assessment offers a snapshot of priority education-related needs in an emergency or crisis situation. [...] Conflict analysis examines the causes, stakeholders, dynamics and trends of a conflict, and identifies

capacities for social cohesion. [...] Disaster risk analysis analyzes hazards, vulnerabilities, exposure, capacities for risk reduction, and determines level of risks. [...] Analyses that focus on the resilience of individuals, communities and institutions examine all of the risks, as well as assets and opportunities for systems and communities to confront adversities.”<sup>1</sup>

The South Sudan RERA, therefore, looks at risks and assets/opportunities affecting the education of children and youths, specifically concerning aspects of conflict. The present analysis considers both internal and external risks and opportunities when exploring the factors most likely to contribute to resilience at individual and school/community levels.

In addition, the current RERA was guided by the INEE Minimum Standards for Education<sup>2</sup>'s domains and some of the related standards. The data-collection tools were designed to address these various domains, and , the findings, conclusions and recommendations emerging from this analysis are categorized by these domains.

### RERA ADVISORY GROUP

The RERA South Sudan approach, methodology, data collection and analysis techniques were determined in coordination with the RERA Advisory Group, comprising representatives from USAID Education, Evidence, Goal 1 and Goal 3 teams, and Conflict Advisors.

### RESEARCH METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

MSI utilized a mixed methods approach when conducting the RERA in South Sudan. See Appendix A for Getting to Answers Matrix.

Data were collected using the tools, methods and sources described in Table I.

**TABLE I. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS, METHODS AND SOURCES**

Tool/method	Description	Sources
Secondary data form	Completed using existing enrollment data from the present and prior year for formal and non-formal education, the number of IDP children, and the types of alternative learning opportunities available	School registry, headmaster, head teacher.
In-depth interview (IDI)	Survey conducted with groups in communities, town and POC sites to collect key information on local education issues. Topics included equal access to education, protection and well-being, facilities, curricula, coordination, resources, and parents' participation.	School personnel, education official, religious/faith-based organization representative, women's leader, traditional leader, youth leader, community member, partner organization.

<sup>1</sup> From Draft Rapid Education Risk Analysis (2014)

<sup>2</sup> INEE Minimum Standards for Education (2010)

Tool/method	Description	Sources
Focus group discussion (FGD)	Gathered information from the frontlines of education through children and teachers who have the most on-the-ground knowledge about the lived experience in different learning environments. Administered to groups of about six to eight participants. Topics covered equal access to learning, protection and well-being, facilities in schools, curricula, learning environment, children/youth/community participation, and teacher recruitment and selection	Teachers, female students, male students.
Key informant interviews (KII)	Administered to key stakeholders who are removed from the classroom to provide higher level insights that are meant to encapsulate geographic territories beyond the school or community, and offer knowledge about policies and decision-making from positions of power	Local NGO, community-based organization (CBO), Ministry of Education (national and county levels), Ministry of Youth and Sports, community leaders/local authorities, and international NGO/donor.
Math and reading assessment	The math assessment was administered in the language of the student's choice. The reading assessment was administered in English in surrounding communities and in English and Nuer in the POC sites. Each subject comprises of 10 subtasks and 40 items. The items were generally constructed to measure skills in the early primary school grades. Students in all grade levels took the same assessment, except for the different languages (English and Nuer) in the POC sites.	Administered to five female students and five male students per primary school in Central Equatoria for a total of 100 students – 38 in primary two, 27 in primary three, and 35 in primary four.

## SITE SELECTION

State selection was determined in discussions with USAID/South Sudan, based on where USAID/South Sudan is currently providing funding to UNICEF to implement the Emergency Education project. Of the six locations originally selected, primary data were collected from five former states: Jonglei, Upper Nile, Unity, Western Equatoria, and Central Equatoria.<sup>3</sup>

MSI coordinated with Education Cluster members to identify learning sites with UN Protection of Civilians (POC) sites. To identify learning sites in surrounding communities, MSI obtained a list of schools from the national EMIS office in South Sudan, verified with the respective County Education

<sup>3</sup> USAID workshop participants also selected Lakes as a target state but security concerns prevented the team from collecting data there. Please see “Challenges and Limitations” for additional details.

Departments and UNICEF, based on the criteria noted below. Within each state outside Central Equatoria, MSI purposively selected learning sites within POC sites and in surrounding communities for a total of four learning sites per state. In Central Equatoria, 11 learning sites were selected.

Specific learning site selection criteria included:

- Co-ed government primary schools with both lower and upper grades or ALP level One and level Two,
- Learning centers in POC sites,
- Accessibility.  
Level of Risk, beyond security
- Security
- Functionality (i.e., school is currently operating)

Data-collection teams met with Directors-General of Education in each state and the Director of Education at the county or payam to confirm the school list or reselect schools, as needed.

In total, MSI collected data from 27 learning sites in 11 POC sites and 16 surrounding communities.

**TABLE 2. SITE TYPES**

State	POC sites	Surrounding communities
Central Equatoria	4	7
Western Equatoria	1	3
Lakes	3	1
Jonglei	1	3
Upper Nile	2	2

### ACCESS TO LEARNING SITES

For POC sites, MSI worked with camp leadership and school coordinators in the POC sites to request and gain access.

At the state level, the data collection teams worked with UNICEF, the governor or commissioner’s office, and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), which facilitates relationships between all humanitarian organizations and the government, to gain the proper introductions and approvals. The teams also met with the Director General of Education at the state level and Directors of Education at the county or Payam level for additional approvals needed and to confirm or reselect schools, if necessary.

### PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Once the school list was finalized at the county level, each team worked with the selected school’s head teacher to organize data collection. The teams were also assigned a facilitator, generally a school inspector, who would facilitate team access to schools and appropriate school leaders and communication with the local government, and would mobilize community-level informants. The head teacher organized the focus group discussions with students and teachers based on team requirements, including grade/class and age range.

### PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Primary data collection was conducted from June 16 - July 19, 2017, following a week-long training program focusing on data collection, including safety and security, and data entry. The data were collected by a total of 10 enumerators divided initially into three data collection teams and one team of assessment specialists for the first four states visited, then into two data collection teams for the final two states. Each data collection team comprised one Research Specialist/Supervisor and two Research Associates. The Supervisor acted as a focal point for coordination and communication throughout the planning and data collection period.

To ensure gender and linguistic diversity, each team had one female researcher, who led the focus group discussions with female students, and, wherever possible, team members with appropriate local language skills for the regions visited. As needed, interpreters from a reputable firm with previous experience in the regions were engaged to support the data-collection teams. A Juba-based Team Leader from the home office conducted debriefs with the teams after each day of data collection and provided remote support while the teams were in the field. MSI home office technical team provided on-going support and supervision.

**TABLE 3. SITE VISIT PLAN**

Dates	Research Teams	State	Language	Tools
<b>June 16 – June 27</b>	Team 1 (3 researchers)	Central Equatoria	English, Arabic, Nuer	FGD-Children, FGD-Teachers, KII, IDI, SDF
	Team 2 (3 researchers)	Central Equatoria	English, Arabic, Nuer	FGD-Children, FGD-Teachers, KII, IDI, SDF
	Team 3 (2 researchers)	Central Equatoria	English, Arabic, Nuer	FGD-Children, FGD-Teachers, KII, IDI, SDF
	Team 4 (2 assessment specialists)	Central Equatoria	English, Arabic, Nuer	Math and reading assessment
<b>June 28 – July 5</b>	Team 1 (3 researchers)	Western Equatoria	English, Azande	FGD-Children, FGD-Teachers, KII, IDI, SDF
	Team 2 (2 researchers)	Jonglei	English, Dinka, Nuer	FGD-Children, FGD-Teachers, KII, IDI, SDF
	Team 3 (3 researchers)	Upper Nile	English, Nuer, Dinka, Shilluk	FGD-Children, FGD-Teachers, KII, IDI, SDF

Dates	Research Teams	State	Language	Tools
	Team 4 (2 assessment specialists)	Central Equatoria	English, Arabic, Nuer	Math and reading assessment
July 12 – July 19	Team 2 (2 researchers)	Central Equatoria	English, Arabic, Nuer	IDI
	Team 3 (3 researchers)	Lakes	English, Dinka	FGD-Children, FGD-Teachers, KII, IDI, SDF

Whenever feasible, the interviews were conducted by one researcher acting as main facilitator and supported by a different researcher, as the note-taker. Some interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis. Each researcher was equipped with a digital voice recorder to capture the interview, which was subsequently transcribed.

Interview Type	Respondent Type	Number of Interviews by Location					Total Interviews	# of Stakeholders Consulted
		Central Equatoria	Western Equatoria	Jonglei	Lakes	Upper Nile		
Focus group discussions (FGD)	Students	21 (10 female FGDs, 10 male FGDs, 1 mixed FGD)	8 (4 female FGDs, 4 male FGDs)	8 (4 female FGDs, 4 male FGDs)	7 (3 female FGDs, 3 male FGDs, 1 mixed FGD)	8 (4 female FGDs, 4 male FGDs)	52	414 students (214 female students, 200 male students)
	Teachers	11	4	4	3	4	26	202 teachers (59 female teachers, 143 male teachers)
Sub-national level key informant interviews	Local NGO	0	0	1	0	0	1	64 sub-national level key informants
	Community-based organization	8	0	3	4	5	20	

Interview Type	Respondent Type	Number of Interviews by Location					Total Interviews	# of Stakeholders Consulted
		Central Equatoria	Western Equatoria	Jonglei	Lakes	Upper Nile		
	Ministry of Education (county)	9	2	2	1	2	16	
	Ministry of Youth and Sport	0	0	3	0	0	3	
	Community leader/local authority	10	3	2	4	5	25	
	International NGO/donor	3	1	2	1	3	9	
National level key informant interviews	Ministry of Education	7	--	--	--	--	7	25 national level key informants
	International NGO/donor	17	--	--	--	--	17	
	Local NGO	1	--	--	--	--	1	
In-depth interviews (IDI)	School personnel	17	6	4	7	4	38	111 in-depth interviews
	Education official	4	1	1	1	1	8	
	Religious/faith leader	5	0	3	1	2	11	
	Women's leader	3	1	2	1	0	7	
	Traditional leader	1	0	2	0	1	4	
	Community member	0	0	0	1	0		
	Youth leader	7	1	2	2	3	15	
	Partner organizations	1	0	1	0	2	4	
	Parents	23	0	0	0	0	23	

Interview Type	Respondent Type	Number of Interviews by Location					Total Interviews	# of Stakeholders Consulted
		Central Equatoria	Western Equatoria	Jonglei	Lakes	Upper Nile		
Secondary data form	School records	11	4	4	4	4	27	27 learning sites

**TABLE 4. INTERVIEW TOTALS**

The Assessment Specialists conducted the math and reading assessment with students in primary 2, 3, and 4 in the four POC sites and six primary schools in and around Juba. The math assessment was administered in all schools in the language preferred by the student. The reading assessment was administered in both Nuer and English to each student in the POC sites, and in English only in the surrounding communities.

**TABLE 5. NUMBER OF MATH AND READING ASSESSMENTS CONDUCTED BY SITE TYPE, GENDER AND GRADE**

	P2		P3		P4		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
POC	11	8	2	8	7	4	40
Surrounding Community	11	8	7	10	12	12	60
<b>TOTAL</b>	22	16	9	18	19	16	100

### DATA ENTRY AND TRANSCRIPTION

Qualitative data from focus group discussions and key informant interviews were transcribed from handwritten notes and interview recordings into a Word document. Transcripts were reviewed against the recordings for quality assurance.

Data from the math and reading assessment, secondary data forms and in-depth interviews were entered into an Excel database. Double data entry was used for all of the forms to reduce data-entry error. Using this method, all data were entered into the database. The same data were then entered again in a separate tab with the Excel file by a different data entry operator. The two entries were then compared. Any discrepancies were verified with the original form and resolved.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING



The analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups was conducted systematically to discover patterns, themes, and outliers using a MaxQDA software program. The five key components of analysis are: 1) coding, 2) data reduction, 3) displaying data, 4) drawing conclusions, and 5) verifying conclusions through triangulation of data. MSI defined and applied a coding system to qualitative data to ensure appropriate data reduction and presentation. Bias was reduced by triangulating findings among different respondent types. In addition, both positive and negative outliers were carefully analyzed to detect any potential differences among groups and individuals, especially when analyzing FGDs. These outliers may be particularly telling, given that the samples are not representative. MSI employed cross-case analysis to distinguish findings across different sites.

Wherever possible, qualitative data was converted to quantitative descriptive statistics to establish the magnitude of a response or issue and presented by tool and respondent type. For example, rather than saying “some teachers believe...” MSI estimated the number or percentage of respondents who voiced a particular opinion or belief in many instances, based upon coding procedures and available data.

The quantitative analyses for the assessment, in-depth interview and secondary data form are mainly descriptive. Inferential statistics analyses (such as correlations or regressions) were not feasible given small sub-group sizes (i.e., sub-group comparisons would not be statistically meaningful).

MSI co-created conclusions and recommendations with a range of stakeholders, including representatives from UNICEF, the Education and Children Protection Clusters, the Ministry of Education, USAID, and the RERA Advisory Group, in workshop settings in Washington, DC (September 2017) and Juba, South Sudan (October 2017). These workshops were opportunities to identify assets, opportunities, challenges, and spaces for inter-sectoral coordination and interventions based on preliminary findings from which to generate actionable recommendations for USAID and stakeholders in South Sudan. These workshops were also a chance to contextualize and validate preliminary findings and assess the viability of emerging conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS**

The RERA is meant to be part of an ongoing analysis process, wherein one assessment establishes the challenges, risks, and opportunities faced by children, youth, and school communities in specific conditions. By design, this study does not seek to establish generalizable results representative of the broader population of South Sudan. Because there are many security threats in South Sudan, it is recognized that this study was carried out in a “medium access” environment to relevant stakeholders. Therefore, findings will also be restricted to these types of environments.

Some informants likely had an incentive to disclose limited or false information. For this reason, triangulation of data was a key tactic to increase the validity of RERA findings.

In some instances, specific types of quantitative data collected from the in-depth interviews and secondary data forms were not presented in favor of more-valid primary and secondary data sources. All data will be made available to USAID/South Sudan for further review and analysis.

To the extent possible, local research team members were recruited in accordance with the necessary language skills for communicating with a variety of informants. At times, RERA team members required translation services during data collection, and a professional interpretation firm with experience in the sampled former States was hired to support the teams. The interpreters further added to the gender and linguistic diversity of the data collection teams.

Ensuring the safety and security of the RERA data-collection team was paramount to MSI throughout the assessment. The RERA data collection team experienced two issues with security that affected their ability to conduct data collection.

On June 28, the Bor Community Youth Association threatened Equatorians working with international NGOs, UN agencies and CBOs in Bor. The team, already in Bor, checked in with the MSI security advisor, and the decision was made to continue with data collection as the situation was being closely monitored. The team comprised two Equatorians and one Nuer. On July 3, the Bor Community Youth Association sent a second letter, reiterating its original warning. As a result, the RERA team in Bor refrained from site visits on July 4, 2017, and remained in their hotel. State authorities stepped in quickly to resolve this issue, and the team was able to continue with data collection activities on July 5, 2017.

In response to growing tensions in Bentiu, the UN had raised the security level from green to grey, and only urgent life-saving activities inside the POC site were approved. The team's original plan to travel to Bentiu on July 12 was postponed until further notice. On July 25, based on USAID guidance that additional data for Bentiu was not essential, travel to Bentiu for the current RERA activity was cancelled.

## **COUNTRY CONTEXT**

This section presents an account of main risks (causes, dynamics, consequences and responses) and their links with the education sector in South Sudan.

### **CONFLICT SNAPSHOT**

Southern Sudan seceded on July 9, 2011, six months after an internationally supervised referendum in which an overwhelming majority of the citizens of the region opted for independence. For South Sudanese, independence marked a final end to civil wars with their enemies to the north. The first war began in 1955, months before Sudan gained independence from the British and Egyptian colonial regime, and ceased with the signing of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement, which gave the Southern Sudan region local autonomy. In 1983, the agreement unraveled, and the war resumed, ending with the conclusion of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). The civil war left 2.5 million dead, at least 4 million displaced, and most of the infrastructure in ruins.

The new country, with land area of 644,330 square kilometers and population of 8.3 million according to a 2008 census, became the 54<sup>th</sup> member of the African Union (AU) and 193<sup>rd</sup> member of the United Nations (UN). It has a huge developmental potential, with abundant natural resources, including the Nile waters, fertile arable land, populous livestock, oil and minerals, as well as the goodwill of the international community that translated to billions of dollars in assistance.<sup>4</sup>

The destruction wrought by the years of war, however, meant the country had to start from the bottom of the development ladder with some of the worst socio-economic indicators in the world. Moreover, the leaders of the new country had to grapple with external and internal conflict dynamics.

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<sup>4</sup> Maxwell, D., Gordon, R., Moro, L.N., Santschi, M. and Dau, P. (2016) 'Trajectory of International Engagement with State and Local Actors: Evidence from South Sudan' SLRC Working Paper 46, London, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.

Although the split was peaceful, South Sudanese leaders and their counterparts in the new northern neighbor had failed to resolve several critical issues, especially demarcation of the border between their countries, ownership of Abyei and sharing of oil resources. In January 2012, South Sudan shut down its entire oil production because the two countries could not agree on fees South Sudan was to pay for the use of the pipelines taking oil to export terminals on the Red Sea. This move harmed both countries, but particularly South Sudan, which was overly dependent on oil revenues.

Before 2012, South Sudan oil revenues amounted to 60 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and 98 percent of exports. The loss of oil revenues resulted in a devaluation of the South Sudanese pound (SSP), a spike in inflation and a significant reduction of government expenditure on social services.

Following the oil-production shutdown, relations with Sudan took a dangerous downward dive. In April 2012, the armies of the two countries clashed over the contested border area of Heglig, or what South Sudanese called Panthou. A return to a full-scale war was averted through robust intervention by the UN Security Council. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon accused South Sudan of infringing on the sovereignty of Sudan and demanded the withdrawal of its forces from the border area.<sup>5</sup> Even its strong supporters, such as the United States, blamed South Sudan for sparking the fighting and demanded the withdrawal of its forces.

The AU led efforts to reconcile the two countries. On September 27, 2012, a Cooperation Agreement was signed by presidents of both countries in the Ethiopian capital. The two countries agreed on terms that made it possible to resume oil production. Also, the two countries agreed to cease aiding rebel groups operating out of their territories. However, acts of violence by the Sudanese Armed Forces, particularly their fighter planes, continued along the common border area.

South Sudan resumed oil production in April 2013, but the damage wrought by the shutdown had taken a toll on its economy. Relations with Sudan remained contentious with both countries repeatedly accusing each other of supporting rebel groups threatening their security. In January 2017, South Sudan Defense Minister Kuol Manyang Juuk said anti-Khartoum elements from South Sudan had been expelled, and Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour stated that Sudan would end negative activities against South Sudan<sup>6</sup> but normal ties are yet to be restored.

As South Sudan grappled with external pressures, especially those posed by the Sudanese government, it also faced mounting internal challenges, particularly disputes among its top leaders. In 2012, former Vice President Riek Machar, Secretary General of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) party Pagan Amum, and the widow of the late John Garang expressed interest in contesting the chairmanship of the SPLM, held by President Salva Kiir.<sup>7</sup> In July 2013, the president fired Riek Machar and dissolved the entire cabinet, exacerbating tensions.

Religious leaders failed to dissuade the leaders from pursuing this dangerous course.<sup>8</sup> Underlying the heated political rivalries were weak institutions, rampant corruption and other abuses of power,

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<sup>5</sup> Odula T, 'South Sudan president: Sudan has 'declared war'', *Associated Press*, 24 April 2012, [http://seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2018055419\\_apafsouthsudansudan.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2018055419_apafsouthsudansudan.html).

<sup>6</sup> *The Dawn* (2017) 'Juba 'moves out' SPLM-N rebels' Vol. 1 Issue No. 273 page 2.

<sup>7</sup> Nyaba, P.A. (2013) 'It wasn't a Coup- Salva Kiir shot himself in the foot' *Juba Monitor* 3(203) December 31

<sup>8</sup> Tombe, E.S (2015) In hope & despair: Serving the people, church and nation of South Sudan, Juba, Rajaf Diocese.

tribalism and nepotism, inequitable provision of basic services, widespread illegal possession of small arms, and war-related trauma. These factors eroded public trust in the leaders and governance institutions.<sup>9</sup>

The external and internal crises exerted huge economic and social costs on the country. The World Bank estimate for South Sudan's GDP per capita was \$1,111 (current US\$) in 2014, almost half of what it was before the oil shutdown in 2012. The country ranks 181st out of 188 countries on the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Multidimensional Poverty Index and is among the bottom five countries for 11 of the 22 Millennium Development Goals.<sup>10</sup> Official estimates of the Government of Southern Sudan, released in 2009, report that more than half the population lives in poverty, particularly in Northern Bahr El Ghazal (75 percent), Unity (68 percent) and Warrap (64 percent).<sup>11</sup> The situation of many South Sudanese got worse as the country became more unstable after independence.

## **DECEMBER 2013 AND JULY 2016 FIGHTING**

On December 15, 2013, soldiers loyal to President Salva Kiir, an ethnic Dinka, and those backing then Vice President Riek Machar, a Nuer, fought in Juba. In the midst of the fighting, thousands of Nuer civilians were killed, and the survivors fled to United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) bases.<sup>12</sup> Riek and soldiers loyal to him fled the city, and the conflict quickly spread to other areas. Dinka civilians in predominantly Nuer areas were targeted by Nuer fighters in apparent retaliation.

What started as a potential dispute among leaders of the country acquired ethnic overtones. The violence reinforced a historical ethnic divide between the Dinka and Nuer, with civilians from both groups bearing the brunt of the hostilities. It mirrored a bloody SPLM/A split in 1991, when factions of the movement committed atrocities against civilians from both groups.<sup>13</sup>

As the fighting escalated, Uganda sent soldiers to support the government, which alleged Riek had attempted a coup against the elected president. Riek rejected this allegation and founded a new rebel movement, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM IO).<sup>14</sup>

In late December 2013, the U.N. Security Council authorized the deployment of 6,000 security forces and 7,600 peacekeepers to the country. In January 2014, both parties signed a Cessation of Hostility Agreement, but in February fighting re-erupted in Unity and Upper Nile, and it reached Jonglei in the subsequent months. Moreover, the UNMISS compound was attacked in April 2014 and aid workers were assassinated in the Upper Nile. At this point, roughly 850,000 persons were temporarily cut from

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<sup>9</sup> UNICEF (2015) 'South Sudan: Conflict Analysis Summary', April.

<sup>10</sup> UNDP (2016) *Human Development Report 2016*, page 225  
[http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016\\_human\\_development\\_report.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Official Republic of South Sudan estimates from 2008 with the national poverty line set at 72.9 SSP per person per month. (Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation (SSCCSE), 2009) Other estimates, as the World Bank's, report that at least 80% are income-poor living with less than 1 USD a day. Given the development of the conflict, these estimates have most likely changed since.

<sup>12</sup> African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan (2014) 'Final Report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan' Addis Ababa, 15 October.

<sup>13</sup> Jok M. J. and Sharon E. H. (1999) 'Sudan's Prolonged Second Civil War and the Militarization of Nuer and Dinka Ethnic Identities', *African Studies Review* 43(2): 125-145.

<sup>14</sup> BBC (2014) 'South Sudan coup plot baseless, says Machar', 29 January. Available from:  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25954280>

aid when aid workers were forced to relocate, and river and air restrictions hindered the delivery of assistance in the Upper Nile.

In May 2014, parties to the conflict signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and the Agreement to Resolve the Crisis in South Sudan, yet fighting continued in Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile. A second agreement was signed in August 2015, but conflict resumed three months later. By early 2016, the conflict had spread beyond the Upper Nile to Equatoria and parts of Bahr el Ghazal. In July, fighting broke out in Juba between guards of the president and those of First Vice President Riek Machar.

The U.N. Security Council authorized the deployment of a 4,000-strong Regional Protection Force to the country to protect civilians and vital facilities but, they began arriving in Juba only in August, one year from the time they were authorized. Since then, violence has intensified, and in November 2016, the U.N. warned escalation of violence could turn into “outright ethnic war” and genocide.<sup>15</sup> So far, the feared genocide has not happened but the fighting has spread as rebel groups proliferated, with devastating repercussions.<sup>16</sup>

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE ONGOING VIOLENCE**

*Displacement:* The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) estimates 290,000 persons returned from the north to South Sudan in the six months prior to April 2011, and even more returned after independence in July 2011. Further, internal displacement and flight to neighboring countries spiked as a result of the December 2013 and July 2016 crises, when millions were forced to relocate. As of April 30, 2017, more than 3 million South Sudanese have fled their homes; about 1.9 million have been internally displaced (with about half of them being 18 years old and younger) and 1.2 million have gone to neighboring countries — predominantly to Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Ethiopia.<sup>17</sup> As the flight of refugees from the country continued, in August 2017 the number of South Sudanese registered in Uganda surpassed 1 million.<sup>18</sup>

*POCs and other settlements:* Some internally displaced persons (IDPs) have found refuge in POC sites in Unity, Central Equatoria, Upper Nile, Western Bahr El Ghazal and Jonglei. By December 2016, POC sites held more than 212,000 IDPs (the highest number since the conflict began), 188,000 in informal settlements and 231,000 in nearby camp and camp-like settings without formal structures. Even those in POC sites are not free of risk. Women and girls face sexual violence inside the POC sites, and inhabitants are living in below-minimum standard conditions with limited water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities and space to move freely.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the number of POC sites and other camp or camp-like settings has decreased significantly due to security concerns. Exo Camp in Western Equatoria was closed in February 2017, and Lasu camp in Central Equatoria has been extremely difficult to reach since July 2016.

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations News Centre (UNNC), (2016). ‘Risk of ‘outright ethnic war’ and genocide in South Sudan, UN envoy warns. Available at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55538#.WDSSVneZPAw>

<sup>16</sup> Roque, P. C. and Miamingi, R. (2017) ‘Beyond the ARCISS: New Fault lines in South Sudan *East Africa Report 9* Institute of Strategic Studies.

<sup>17</sup> (UNOCHA, 2017)

<sup>18</sup> Robinson, C. (2017) ‘South Sudanese refugees in Uganda now exceed one million’ UNHCR 17 August <http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/stories/2017/8/59915f604.html>

<sup>19</sup> Op cit.

*Infrastructure and water:* Damage, destruction and neglect of infrastructure and roads are major consequences of the conflict. Only about half the population has access to a clean water supply, and at least one-third of the population has to walk more than 30 minutes to collect clean water. There are also regional disparities in access to clean water.

*Purchasing power and nutrition:* Purchasing power has also been severely affected by the conflict. Inflation increased by 661 percent from July 2015 to July 2016, and the price for basic food items — such as sorghum, maize and beans — has increased by 600 percent since 2015. By July 2016, 4.8 million persons — about 40 percent of the country’s population — were estimated to be severely food insecure, representing an increase of more than 1 person since 2015.<sup>20</sup> In February 2017, famine was declared in counties across Unity and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and famine alerts were later raised for other counties. The number of food insecure persons was projected to rise to 5.5 million at the height of the lean season in July 2017.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, in June, the government and aid organizations announced famine was no longer occurring in Leer and Mayendit, and deterioration had been arrested by sustained humanitarian intervention.<sup>22</sup> More than 250,000 children and 339,000 lactating women were estimated to be acutely malnourished. While there are no exact estimates, many children have already suffered from irreversible cognitive impairments as a product of chronic malnutrition (two years or more).

High inflation and the difficulty of getting U.S. dollars have had negative repercussions on the operations of aid organizations. For example, a 2016 UNICEF report declared limited availability of hard currency and fluctuating exchange rates made it difficult to cost and plan activities and hard for organizations, especially national NGOs, to retain highly skilled staff, as they sought jobs where salaries were paid in U.S. dollars.<sup>23</sup>

*Cattle raiding:* In addition to the political conflict, communities also struggle with inter-community violence, mainly as a result of cattle raiding. During the dry seasons, pastoral communities herd their cattle towards areas with more abundant pasture and water resources, leading to clashes between communities.<sup>24</sup> For centuries, cattle raiding has been a source of violent conflict in South Sudan, but the recent surge in violence, proliferation of small arms and lack of resources have dramatically increased the level of cattle raiding — it is estimated that more than 5,000 civilians have been killed in these raids since 2011.

*Gender-based violence:* Gender-based and sexual violence are endemic, used as a weapon of war and pervasive along refugee routes, at POC sites and in nearby zones. The rate of sexual violence has increased since July 2016. From January to September 2016, more than one in five cases of gender-based violence involved sexual violence by armed actors, and almost half of the cases were domestic violence.<sup>25</sup> In addition, as a result of economic pressures and food insecurity, negative coping

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> South Sudan National Bureau of Statistic (2017) ‘Press Release: Launch of IPC Report: The Status of the Food Security and Nutrition in the Country’, 21 June, Juba, South Sudan

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> UNICEF (2016) ‘emergency education South Sudan Programme FY2016 Third Quarter Progress Report’, Juba

<sup>24</sup> In northern areas, there is a rainy season from June to September, followed by the harvest season from October to January. In southern areas, the rainy season goes from April to June, a harvest season in June and July, a second rainy season from August to November and a second harvest in November and December. Food aid is programmed primarily during lean or non-rainy months.

<sup>25</sup> (GBVIMS, 2016)

mechanisms, such as child labor and child marriage, are increasing.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, there has been an increase in the number of girls and young women who have been trafficked by armed groups to work as cleaners and cooks. In Juba, fears also abound of rising prostitution by youth as a coping measure in the face of deepening economic problems.<sup>27</sup>

*Socio-emotional well-being:* Conflict has also taken a toll in the psychological well-being of the population. About 60 percent of survey respondents from six states reported the loss of close family members since the conflict erupted, and 40 percent reported having witnessed the killing of friends or family members.<sup>28</sup> More than 1 million children and about 40 percent of the population are in severe need of psychological support as they experience a wide array of symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression.<sup>29</sup>

## **REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PEACE EFFORTS**

### **AGREEMENT ON THE RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN (ARCSS)**

After fighting broke out in December 2013, The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiated a mediation process between the government and the SPLM IO, and the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) was concluded in August 2015. Pursuant to the agreement, a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) was formed in April 2016, with Riek Machar becoming first vice president in Juba. The July fighting in Juba forced him to flee the country, and he went into isolation in South Africa. His former ally, Taban Deng Gai, replaced him as first vice president of the country.

The implementation of the agreement has not ended violence across the country, causing frustration inside and outside the country. In July 2017, the European Union, U.S., U.K. and Norway announced a freeze of further funding to the peace process as the violence spread across the country.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, at their 31<sup>st</sup> Extra Ordinary meeting on August 12, heads of state and government of the IGAD came up with a new initiative, the Revitalization Forum, to relaunch the implementation of the ARCSS. It is not certain if this will end the violence and restore peace to the country.

### **NATIONAL DIALOGUE**

Internally, the government has been forging ahead with peace and reconciliation efforts. Speaking at the Transitional National Legislative Assembly on 14 December 2016, President Salva Kiir initiated a process of National Dialogue to “end violent conflicts in South Sudan, reconstitute national consensus, and save

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<sup>26</sup> (CARE, 2016)

<sup>27</sup> Odongo, O. (2017) ‘Prostitution is taking toll on the youth’ *Juba Monitor* Vol. 7 Issue No. 980 Wednesday, February 980.

<sup>28</sup> (UNDP, 2015) The survey targeted 1,525 individuals in 11 locations across central, eastern and western Equatoria, Jonglei, Upper Nile and Lakes, including POC sites, camps and urban and rural communities. The method employed was a four-stage mixed-methods approach using a series of purposive and random sampling techniques.

<sup>29</sup> (Amnesty International, 2016) and (UNDP, 2015)

<sup>30</sup> Reuters (2017) ‘Western donors freeze support for ‘obsolete’ South Sudan peace deal’ 21 July <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-unrest/western-donors-freeze-support-for-obsolete-south-sudan-peace-deal-idUSKBN1A61XG>

the country from disintegration and usher in a new era of peace, stability and prosperity.”<sup>31</sup> Through presidential orders, he constituted a National Dialogue Steering Committee and Secretariat to oversee the process. On May 22, the members of the Steering Committee and Secretariat were sworn in, and the process formally began but armed opponents of the government have so far not agreed to take part in the initiative despite efforts to bring them on board. Key global players, including the U.S., U.K. and Norway, have remained skeptical, due to concerns about continued violence in parts of the country and doubts about the inclusivity and credibility of the process.

## **NATURAL DISASTERS**

Natural disasters present significant risks to South Sudanese, especially to education efforts. Shortages of food — at the extreme, famine conditions — have long inflicted pain on South Sudanese, many of whom have also experienced significant risks of seasonal flooding.

An assessment by the Educational Cluster in 2016, which focused on the impact of the ongoing conflict, found a lack of food was consistently reported by those interviewed as the main cause of dropout across the country.<sup>32</sup> Although Bahr el Ghazal has been less affected by violent conflicts, it faces serious seasonal food shortages. Key informants in the assessment highlighted school feeding as the main priority intervention required.<sup>33</sup> As mentioned earlier, in southern parts of the former Unity State, food shortages worsened to famine conditions in early 2017, often attributed to ongoing hostilities.<sup>34</sup>

The same study found only 60 percent of schools in the country were accessible by car or motorbike during the dry season, decreasing to almost half in the rainy season when more than 50 percent of schools could be accessed only on foot, conditions worst in Upper Nile being the worst. Before the outbreak of violence, 80 percent of the schools in that region were accessed only on foot, almost double the percentage of those accessible during the dry season.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mayar, Salva Kiir (2016) Concept Note of South Sudan National Dialogue, Juba South Sudan

<sup>32</sup> The Education Cluster (2016) ‘Joint Education Needs Assessment’, Juba, South Sudan, page 5.

<sup>33</sup> The Education Cluster (2016) ‘Joint Education Needs Assessment’, Juba, South Sudan, page 7

<sup>34</sup> See, for example Sworo, Charles Elisha (2017) ‘5.8 M people in dire need of assistance’ *Juba Monitor* Vol. 7 Issue No. 982 Saturday, February 11.

<sup>35</sup> The Education Cluster (2016) ‘Joint Education Needs Assessment’, Juba, South Sudan, pages 6-7.



## EDUCATION SECTOR

Southern Sudan emerged from the decades of civil war in 2005 with a devastated education sector. Combatants targeted educational infrastructure, and occupied some buildings. As a consequence, a large number of Southern Sudanese failed to receive formal education.

The end of war provided opportunities for rapid development of educational activities, made possible through international goodwill enjoyed by the Southern Sudan region, which became independent in 2011. Donors and NGOs played a vital role in developing the educational sector. Some of the key improvements are highlighted below as well as the damage resulting from the return to war in December 2013. how education has influenced conflict dynamics (increasing or reducing grievance) and disaster vulnerabilities.

*Institutions and systems:* From 2005, institutions and systems were gradually put in place. A ministry responsible for education was established and policies adopted. After independence in 2011, rapid progress occurred, including setup of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST).<sup>36</sup> States, through their State Ministries of Education (SMoEs), are autonomous and solely responsible for the local provision of primary and secondary education. Their responsibilities include hiring and paying teachers and other school personnel, along with other administrative duties. Funds for teacher salaries are received from the central government, though they are largely insufficient, so classes are typically given by volunteers are paid with school fees collected from parents.

The South Sudan education system has a twofold structure: (1) a formal education system of eight years of primary instruction, four years of secondary, and higher education (typically four years); and (2) a system of non-formal education —called the Alternative Education System (AES) — that provides education to individuals of all ages.<sup>37</sup> In 2015, there were 1,000 AES centers, 3,000 primary schools and 245 secondary schools reported.<sup>38</sup>

*Access:* More than 70 percent of the population older than 15 is illiterate, 60 percent of males and 83 percent of females. Access to education rose considerably after the CPA, from 0.7 million in 2005 to 1.4 million in 2011. Nevertheless, , less than half of the school-aged population was enrolled by 2013, and more than 1.17 million children between the ages of three and 18 have lost access to education since December 2013.<sup>39</sup> An assessment conducted by the Education Cluster between November and December 2016 found 25 percent of primary schools closed, 31 percent had been under attack by armed forces or groups, 25 percent of schools were either open-air or under a tent or tree, enrollment had dropped by 10 percent, and teacher presence had declined by 31 percent.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the huge impact of the political crisis on the enrollment as evidenced by reports by development partners, the figures produced by the South Sudan Ministry Education and Instruction (MoGEI), or 2016 EMIS, show enrollment has been on the rise. The school-aged population (three–17 years old) is set to grow by half a million over the next five years to reach an estimated 4.9 million in

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<sup>36</sup> This ministry was split into two, one responsible for general education another with higher education.

<sup>37</sup> (Nordic Consulting Group, 2015)

<sup>38</sup> (Government of the Republic of South Sudan , 2015)

<sup>39</sup> (UNOCHA, 2017)

(South Sudan Education Cluster, 2016)

<sup>40</sup> The GoRSS included developed ECDE guidelines, policies, syllabus and regulations in 2006 but the effort was not translated in an actionable set of common practices.

2020.<sup>41</sup>The overall number of students recorded in 2013 was 976,225, in 2015 was 1,192,381, and in 2016 was 1,407,669.<sup>42</sup> The greatest number of primary and secondary schools was reported in the present Yei River State, obviously no longer the case, as the state has since been engulfed in fighting that has forced most of its inhabitants to flee to Uganda. The ministry has pointed out some limitations with statistics, noting insecurity made it difficult to conduct comprehensive educational censuses in 2015 and 2016. In 2015, schools in only seven of the former 10 states were covered, and in 2016 the number declined to only six. Moreover, the data reflected the pre-July 2016 situation, meaning it did not take into account the closures of schools and huge displacement of people in Equatoria that happened after this date.

*Schools:* The 2008 census recorded some 3,639 schools, with 302 of them specifically for secondary education. Since 2013, about 70 percent of the 1,200 schools in Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile were closed. In 2015, 36 percent of classrooms were reported to be permanent structures and 27 percent semi-permanent, as opposed to 25 percent and 29 percent, respectively, in 2009<sup>43</sup>. About 31 percent of schools nationally have suffered at least one attack from armed forces or have been reported to be under military control. Roads and common routes are littered with explosive devices, leaving an additional 300 schools unsafe and abandoned. Additionally, textbooks are in short supply, with a pupil-to-textbook ratio between 1:4 and 1:9 for primary and secondary school respectively.

Yet, 2016 MoGEI EMIS statistics indicate an increasing number of classrooms, from 18,843 in 2013 to 25,303 in 2015, and to 26,460 in 2016.<sup>44,45</sup> But the figures also show a great increase in the number of roof-only and open-air schools: in 2015, there were 1,429 roof-only schools, and in 2016 the number rose to 8,340. No explanation is provided for this (e.g., whether these construction efforts are in POC sites or surrounding communities), but it might reflect the massive displacement.

The MoGEI has prioritized the rehabilitation and construction of child-friendly formal and AES classrooms, schools and centers. The government has also put significant efforts into adult literacy campaigns. Education programs are greatly needed in rural areas that have been without education services for years. Schools in other zones are currently suffering from overcrowding as they receive a flood of displaced children, especially those in western Equatoria.<sup>46</sup>

*Early childhood education enrollment rates:* According to the 2015 Education Sector Analysis, the 2013 EMIS reported 652 pre-primary centers in South Sudan servicing 77,000 enrollees. The 2015 EMIS reported 733 early childhood development focused learning sites and 89,000 enrolled students. Meanwhile, the 2016 EMIS reported 702 early childhood learning sites and 102,092 enrolled students. The needs for systematized, nationally driven early childhood development is especially pressing as it lacks a harmonized curriculum, systematic funding, teacher training and monitoring and evaluation guidelines.

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<sup>41</sup> 2015 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) smoothed population projection estimates; UN growth rate estimates (UNPD, 2015)

<sup>42</sup> See table 3.2.1 page 22 in Ministry of Education and Instruction (2017) *2016 National Education Statistics for the Republic of South Sudan*, Juba, South Sudan.

<sup>43</sup> (UNESCO, 2016)

<sup>44</sup> See table 3.6.1 on page 40 in Ministry of Education and Instruction (2017) *2016 National Education Statistics for the Republic of South Sudan*, Juba, South Sudan.

<sup>45</sup> The “Learning for Peace” report provides some data to support the hypothesis that the increase in schools and classrooms has reduced pupil to teacher ratios – however this data is from 2009-2013.

<sup>46</sup> (UNOCHA, 2017)

*Primary enrollment rates:* Primary enrollment rates doubled between 2000 and 2005 and then again between 2005 and 2009. In 2011, the primary net enrollment rate (NER) and gross intake ratio (GIR) were 43 and 90 percent, respectively. The gap between NER and GIR was due to the large number of over-aged children in primary school (about 44 percent) and an overall late entry to the formal education system. Enrollment decreased considerably around grade four, when only 18 percent of those enrolled in grade one were still enrolled. Some counties in Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Western Bahr el Ghazal states were not offering the full 8-year primary cycle. In 2011, only 17 percent of primary schools offered a full primary cycle across the country, according to EMIS data. In 2015, the NER for primary education stayed at 43 percent, while the GIR dropped to 76.1 percent. There were an estimated 1 million primary students, 60 percent male and 40 percent female.<sup>47</sup> In 2016, the NER for primary education was 50.4 percent, and the GIR 123.2 percent.

*Secondary enrollment rates:* Formal secondary education is divided into academic and TVET, while the AES also provides programs targeting youth and adult education and training. In 2011, the secondary NER and GIR were 2.3 and 5.9 percent, respectively and approximately 60 percent of those enrolled did not enroll in the fourth year of instruction. In 2015, the NER for secondary schools rose to 2.9 percent and the GIR rose to 10.2 percent. In 2016, NER was 3.5 percent and GIR 12.5 percent.

In 2013, there were 208,000 students reported to be enrolled in AES, making it the second largest part of the education system. AES programs had a significantly lower dropout rate than the formal secondary education system and had a 6:4 male-female gender parity.<sup>48</sup> In 2015, the number of students enrolled in AES dropped by half, to a little over 106,000. The TVET sector remains largely undeveloped and with little guidance, frameworks and policies. Most programs are provided by international and local NGOs, volunteers and community groups, but there is no harmonization of efforts either locally, regionally or nationally.

Despite the ongoing crisis, the country has been able to organize secondary school exams but the impact of the conflict is still evident in the performance of the candidates. Speaking at the release event of the results, the Minister of General Education and Instruction, Hon. Deng Deng Hoc Yai, stated that passing rate of South Sudan Certificate of Secondary School Education (SSCSE) had dropped by 2 percent compared to the passing rate the previous year. In fact, he noted that the number of students who did not sit in 2017 had slightly increased compared to the figure of the previous year.<sup>49</sup> Specifically, in 2017, 19,487 students took the exam and in 2016 the number of those who sat for the exam was 22,181. Hon. Deng Deng Hoc Yai attributed the change to the ongoing conflict in South Sudan.

*Alternative Education System (AES) enrollment:* The AES was established in 2002, as an effort to integrate out-of-school children and young demobilized soldiers. It includes Basic Adult Literacy (BALP) and Accelerated Learning (ALP) programs, Community Girls Schools (CGS), Intensive English Courses (IEC), Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) and pastoralist education. The BALP targets literacy needs for young adults from the ages of 18 and up. In 2011, approximately 95 percent of the 1,026 AES centers were identified as BALP and 75 percent incorporated ALPs, many of which were managed by development partners. Only about half of the AES centers were nested in a building and only 8 percent maintained

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<sup>47</sup> (Government of the Republic of South Sudan , 2015)

<sup>48</sup> (World Bank, 2012)

<sup>49</sup> Oketayot, S. (2017) 'Passing rate dropped by 2% in South Sudan Secondary Certificate' *The Dawn* Vol. 2 Issue No. 447 Monday 28 August.

their own independent spaces. Additionally, facilitators were usually volunteers and there were no monitoring and evaluation policies established to assure the quality of the education services provided.

*Recruitment of students as soldiers:* Even though both the SPLM and SPLM-IO have signed UN agreements to end and prevent the forced recruitment of children, it continues to be a common practice. Over 17,000 children are estimated to have been recruited by armed actors. More than 9,000 displaced children are not accompanied by an adult, increasing their risk of being either killed or forced to join an armed group.

*Gender and urban/rural enrollment:* There are wide gender and socioeconomic disparities in primary school enrollment. Only 17 percent of girls are expected to complete the eight years of primary school, compared to 30 percent of the boys. Students living in urban areas are 33 percent more likely to ever enroll in the first year of primary school when compared with their peers living in rural areas.<sup>50</sup> The gender gap grows after primary education. In 2009, girls made up 37 percent of the total primary enrollment rate, 27 percent in secondary education, 24 percent in higher education and 40 percent of the enrollment in AES.

*Teacher recruitment and training:* The ongoing conflict has severely stagnated teacher recruitment, training and deployment programs across the country. Before the conflict broke, the government estimated there were about 25,000 and 1,700 primary and secondary teachers respectively and less than 15 percent of primary and secondary teachers were female. In 2009, the average pupil-teacher ratio was 52 including volunteer teachers and 81 excluding volunteer teachers. Regional disparities were significant, with the ratio excluding volunteer teachers varying from 31 to one in Central Equatoria to 84 to one in Jonglei. In 2015, 25,000 primary teachers were again reported and the number of secondary teachers dropped to 3,000. The number of AES teachers amounted to 4,400.

As the conflict widens, even the popular media in South Sudan is reporting on teachers abandoning teaching because of low, and irregular, payment of salaries. For example, in Pochalla County, Boma State, education is reportedly on the “brink of collapse.”<sup>51</sup> The County Education Director allegedly said that there are only 20 teachers left in the seven primary schools, which have 2,000 registered students. He added that a government teacher only gets 500 SSP per month, and teachers in the county have not been paid for the last six months, and so they have gone to work for NGOs.

*Learning outcomes:* There is a lack of consistent data on learning outcomes in South Sudan. However, in a test administered to a sample of grade 6 students in primarily urban areas of four states, students responded correctly to only 35 percent of language and 29 percent of math questions. When the same test was administered to 160 teachers, the mean scores were 62 percent and 63 percent in language and math respectively.<sup>52</sup> The results are not surprising, since it is estimated that only about 50 percent of the primary and 40 percent of the secondary teacher workforce — most primary dropouts themselves — are trained. An Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and an Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA) were carried out by Montrose in late 2015 and 2016 in 25 purposively sampled primary schools in

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<sup>50</sup> (World Bank, 2012)

<sup>51</sup> Dogga, Morris (2017) ‘Education in Pochalla on the brink of collapse’ *Juba Monitor* Vol. 7 Issue No. 1135 Monday 21 August, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem. The test was administered to 1,800 students in grade 6 of 107 schools in the states of Central Equatoria, Lakes, Upper Nile and Western Bahr Ghazal during July/August of 2010. The sample included mainly urban schools. No additional details on the test design were provided.

English and 5 local languages: Bari, Dinka, Natoposa, Nuer and Zande in grade 1-3.<sup>53</sup> Due to the small sample size and the sampling method, the findings cannot be generalized. The report concluded the following:

Learners in the sample schools are not being effectively taught to read in English or their national language. At the end of P3, most learners cannot identify a single word in their national languages or English. The low reading levels could be attributed to the teacher-centered pedagogical practices observed during lesson observations.

Learners who performed better than average in literacy were in most cases being taught by teachers supported by NGOs. As a result, they had access to Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) and made use of them in the classroom. They also generally practiced child-centered teaching methods in comparison to the predominance of teacher-centered pedagogy in the other schools.

Results from the EGMA showed that South Sudanese children generally perform better and closer to the levels expected at the end of P3 in numeracy, than they do in literacy.

As found in other recent studies in South Sudan the levels of use of Learning and Teaching Materials (LTM) including textbooks is exceptionally low. This is particularly worrying where so many of the teachers are untrained.

*EMIS:* In 2006, the GoRSS launched its Education Management Information System (EMIS) with the aid of USAID, UNICEF and FHI 360. Education censuses were conducted each year from 2007 to 2015 (with the exception of 2014) and over 85 percent of the country was reached using a remote system. Since 2011, four states have developed their local capacity and SMOEs have managed their own data collection, allowing the MoEST to plan more effectively and reducing the data coverage gaps.<sup>54</sup> However, human capacity remains one of the major challenges in the education sector at the senior levels, especially regarding monitoring and evaluation, reporting and dissemination of results at local and national levels. Moreover, the MoGEI offices are typically understaffed and employees are overworked.<sup>55</sup>

*Language of instruction:* Language is a vital component of identity.<sup>56</sup> In 2011, the government established English as the official language of instruction, although most teachers had been educated and trained in Arabic. The shortage of English textbooks also presents a major impediment to using English as the language of instruction. Training teachers in bilingual teaching skills and intensive English is critical for students' success but has not been a widespread practice. Moreover, a National Languages Implementation Guidelines was developed by the MoEST in 2014 to provide options and develop strategic actions to improve mother tongue instruction.

*National Curriculum:* In 2015, the MoEST launched the first-ever National Education Curriculum Framework for early childhood education, primary and secondary levels and AES with support from UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). It is competency-based and introduces life skills and peace education at all levels. It focuses on strengthening early literacy and peacebuilding life

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<sup>53</sup> (The Republic of South Sudan, 2016)

<sup>54</sup> (EFA, 2015). Nonetheless, concerns have been raised regarding the veracity of locally collected EMIS data.

<sup>55</sup> (Sigsgaard, 2013)

<sup>56</sup> (UNESCO, 2011).

skills (around themes such as identity, tolerance, cooperation, etc.). Prior to this Framework, schools were using curricula that were either locally-developed or from neighboring countries.

## QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

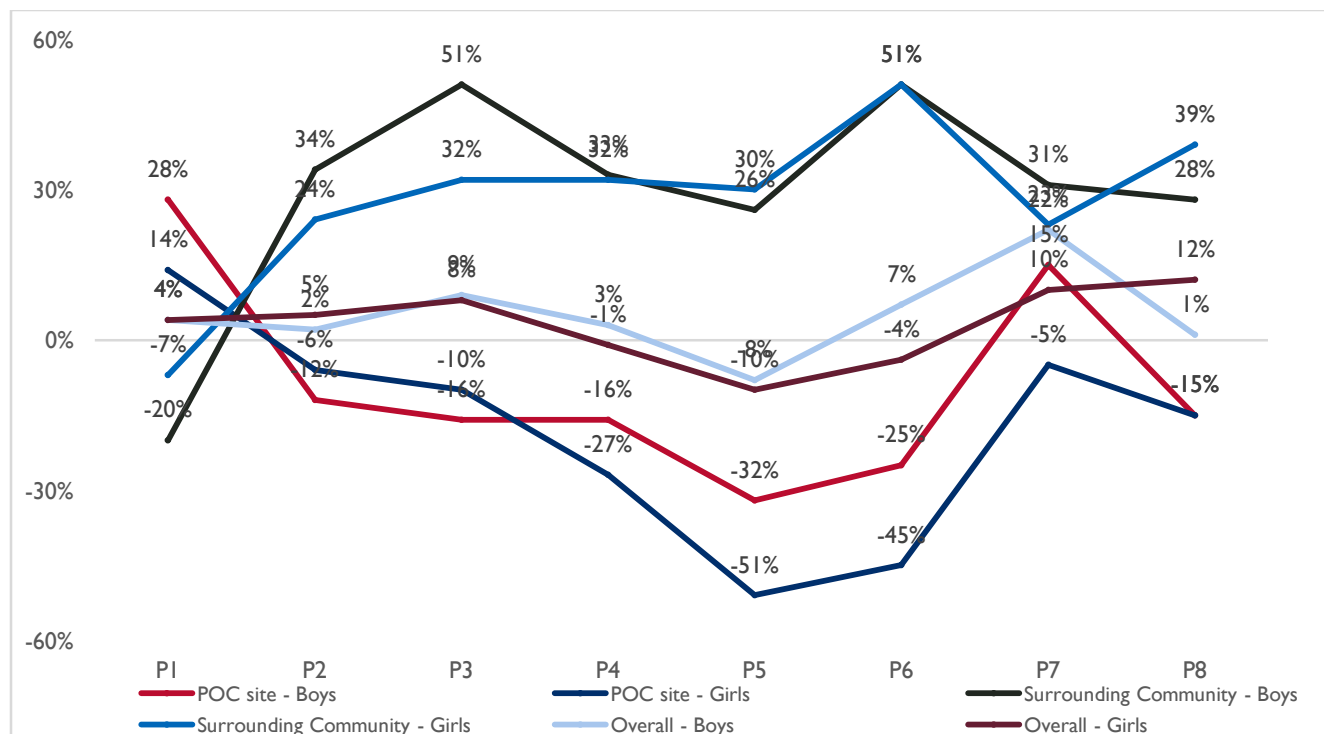
The quantitative findings presented here by INEE domain<sup>57</sup> were gathered through in-depth interviews with community-level informant groups that provided their perceptions of local education issues, the secondary data form completed using school records in consultation with head teachers and school directors at each of the 27 sites, and the math and reading assessment conducted in and around Juba.

### ACCESS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

#### EQUAL ACCESS

Table Six presents secondary data on the change in enrollment between 2016 and 2017 based on enrollment data collected from the schools visited for this study. With the exception of primary 1 students in POC sites, all other grades show an increase in student enrollment in surrounding communities and a decrease in enrollment in POC sites between 2016 and 2017. Primary five students saw a decrease overall in enrollment numbers, as did primary four girls and primary six girls. Specifically, the rate of P5 enrollment increases less than P4 students, as is the case for students in POC sites, or decreases more than P4 student, as is the case for students in surrounding communities.

**TABLE 6. PERCENT CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT BY GRADE AND GENDER FROM 2016 TO 2017**



Source: Secondary data form

<sup>57</sup> Only the INEE domains and standards that are relevant to the current RERA design are listed.

Secondary data on enrollment for students in primary school and alternative educational opportunities was also captured. Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), which is an alternative mode of education that consolidates learning for boys and girls and men and women aged 12 and above who have missed some or all of their formal primary education, compresses eight years of primary schooling into four years and was the most common type of educational opportunity found. Of the 27 sites visited, 10 had records for ALP enrollment.

Additional alternative educational opportunities captured by the secondary data form include: three functional adult literacy classes, one community girls school, and one early childhood development center/pre-school. Table 7 shows the enrollment numbers for these programs.

**TABLE 7. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE BY STATE AND GENDER – NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED, 2017**

State	Primary (P1-P8)		ALP		Community girls' schools		Functional adult literacy		Early childhood development/pr e-school	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Central Equatoria	6018	4185	882	277	0	0	200	208	0	0
Western Equatoria	1291	1065	71	106	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jonglei	1243	1009	178	152	0	0	0	0	0	0
Upper Nile	995	880	310	116	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lakes	2167	630	258	119	164	74	125	50	149	87
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11714</b>	<b>7769</b>	<b>1699</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>87</b>

Source: Secondary data form

In-depth interview respondents were asked to quantify the percentage of learning environments that were currently in operation that were temporary, semi-permanent and permanent structures in South Sudan. Taking school personnel and education officials as an example, about half of these informants believed that the majority of school structures were temporary (compared with semi-permanent or permanent). Representatives of partner organizations held varied opinions. A wide range of informants was asked to quantify the percentages of teaching and learning materials lost or damaged as a result of the conflict. Interestingly, about two-thirds of school personnel and education officials reported that none or some of teaching and learning materials were lost or damaged.

## PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING

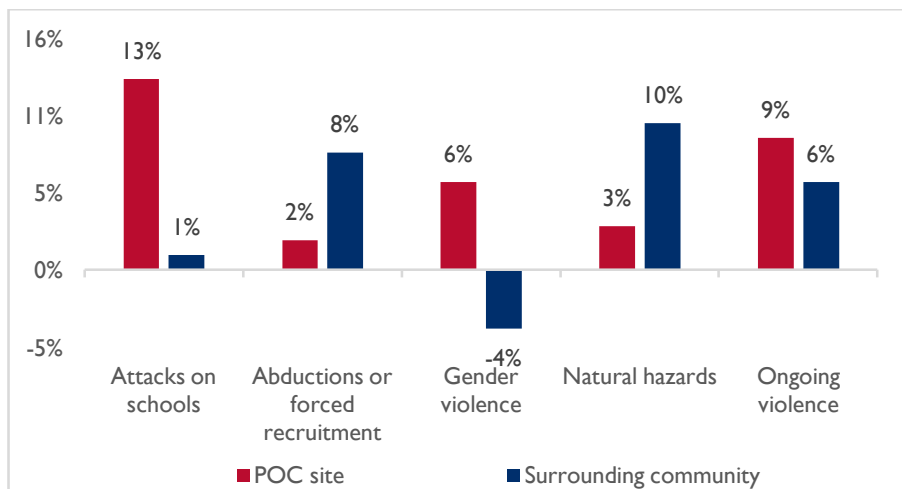
Table 8 below shows IDI respondents' perception of risks for students and teachers in the community changed from 2016 and 2017. The proportion of respondents increased indicating attacks on schools, abduction or forced recruitment, gender violence, natural hazards and ongoing violence as a risk for



students and teachers across site types. The sole exception was gender violence in surrounding communities, which decreased in the proportion of respondents indicating this as a risk.

**TABLE 8. PERCENT CHANGE IN PERCEPTIONS OF RISKS PRESENT FOR CHILDREN AND TEACHERS FROM 2016 TO 2017**

Average percent of respondents answering “Yes” to each category

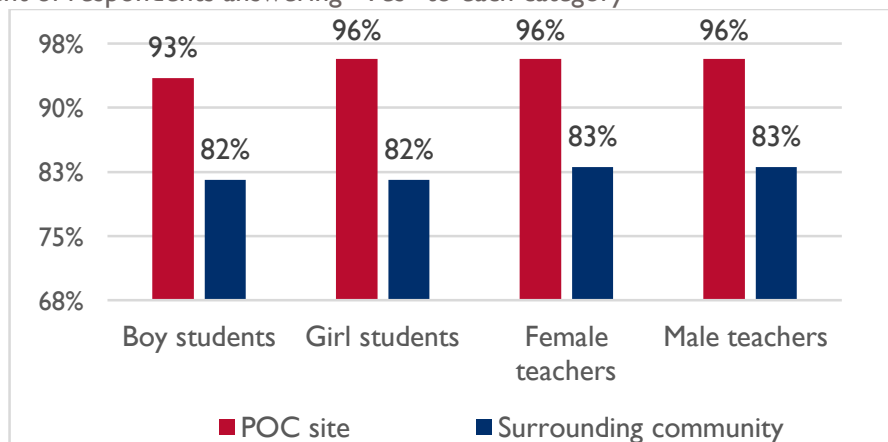


Source: In-depth interview

IDI respondents also indicated their perception of the safety of students and teachers at school (Table 9). While respondents generally felt these groups to be safe in schools, a greater proportion of respondents from POC sites felt that students and teachers were safe in school compared to their counterparts in surrounding communities.

**TABLE 9. PERCEPTION OF SAFETY IN LEARNING SITES**

Average percent of respondents answering “Yes” to each category



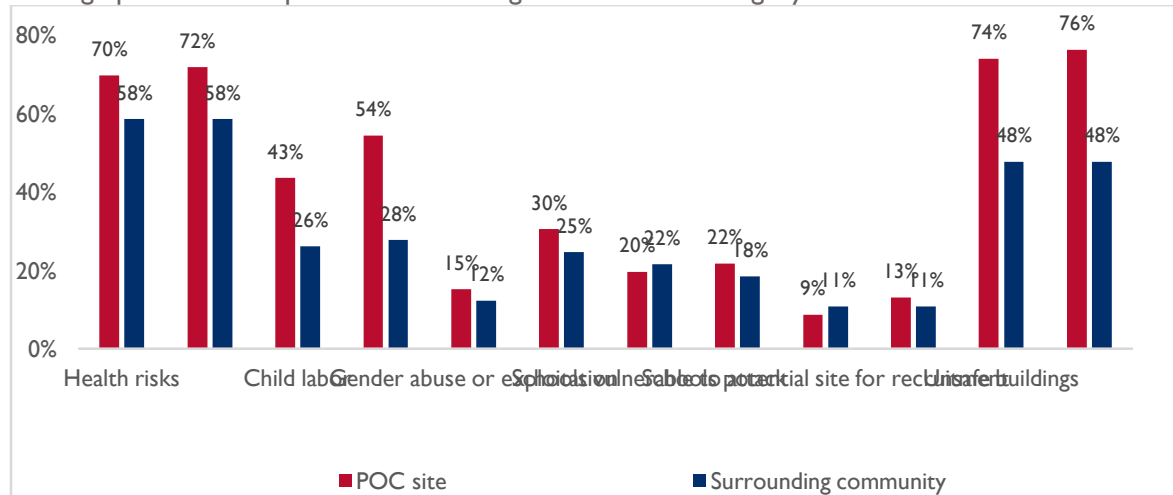
Source: In-depth interviews

Table 10 shows IDI respondents’ perspectives regarding specific risks for children while at school. A reported 76 percent and 74 percent of respondents (out of a total of 111 respondents) indicated female students and male students in POC sites, respectively, were endangered by unsafe buildings, the highest rated risk for students in POC sites. Only 48 percent of the IDI respondents indicated students at

schools in surrounding communities were at risk from unsafe buildings. The highest cited risk for students in surrounding communities related to health, reported by 58 percent of all respondents. Some 43 percent of boys and 54 percent of girls, were perceived to be at risk of child labor in POC sites, while 26 percent of boys and 28 percent of girls, perceived to be at risk of child labor in surrounding communities.

**TABLE II. RISK FOR CHILDREN WHILE AT SCHOOLS/LEARNING SITES**

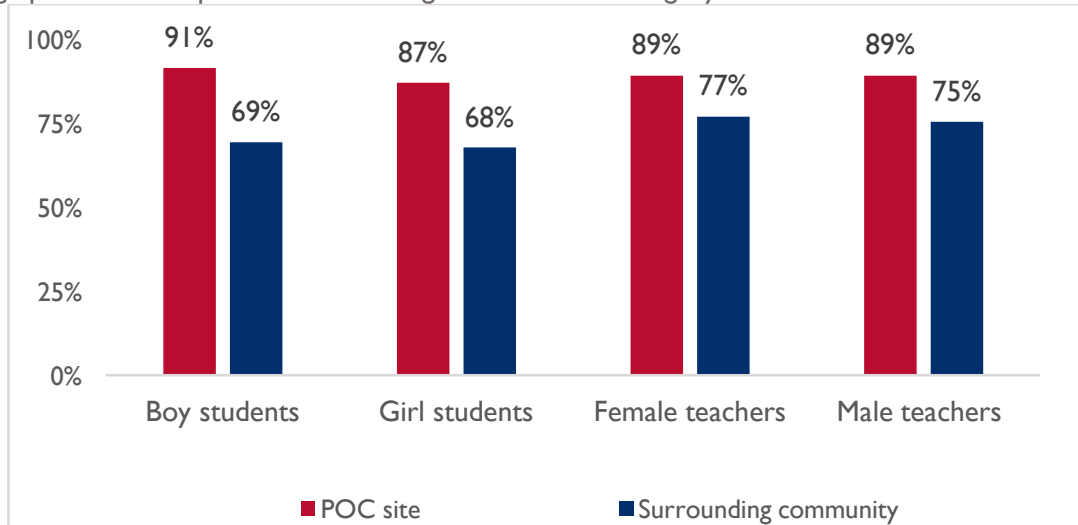
Average percent of respondents answering “Yes” to each category



Source: In-depth interviews

**TABLE 12. PERCEPTION OF SAFETY DURING COMMUTE TO/FROM SCHOOL**

Average percent of respondents answering “Yes” to each category



Source: In-depth interview

Data from the in-depth interviews show 91 percent of respondents in POC sites believed boys were safe commuting between home and school, while 87 percent of respondents from POC sites said girls were safe during their commute, contrasted to 69 percent of respondents in surrounding communities stating boys were safe commuting to school and 68 percent saying girls were safe walking to school.

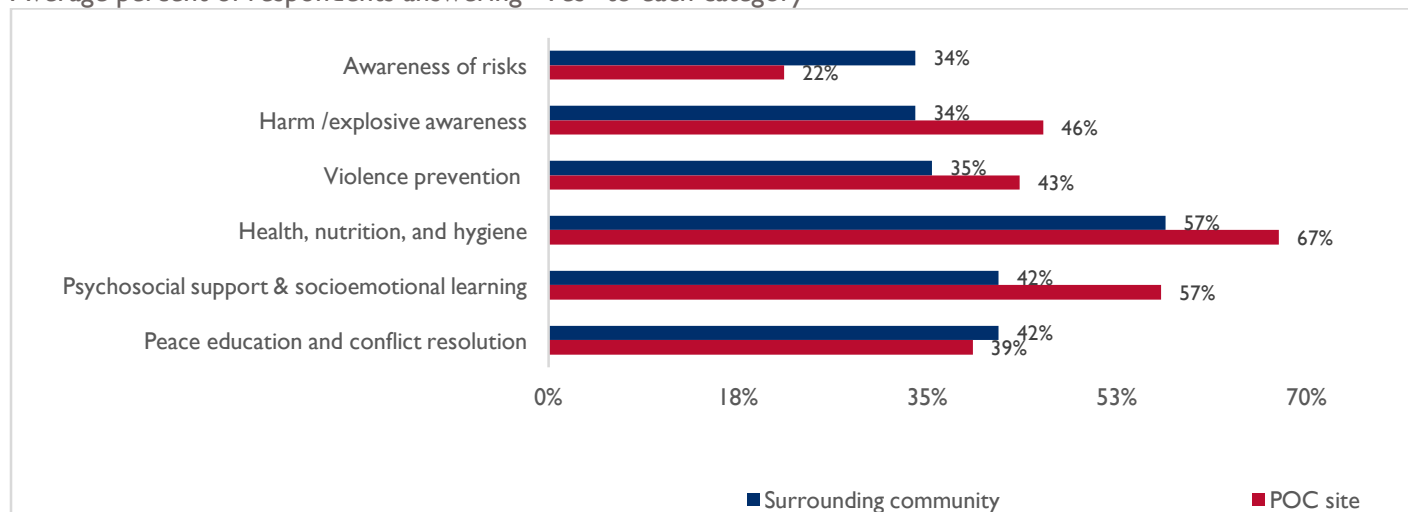
## TEACHING AND LEARNING

### CURRICULA

Table 13 presents responses from various community members regarding peace education subjects that have been introduced in either POCs or surrounding communities.

**FIGURE 13. INTRODUCED TOPICS IN SCHOOLS/LEARNING SITED TO HELP LEARNERS HELP WITH EMERGENCY**

Average percent of respondents answering “Yes” to each category

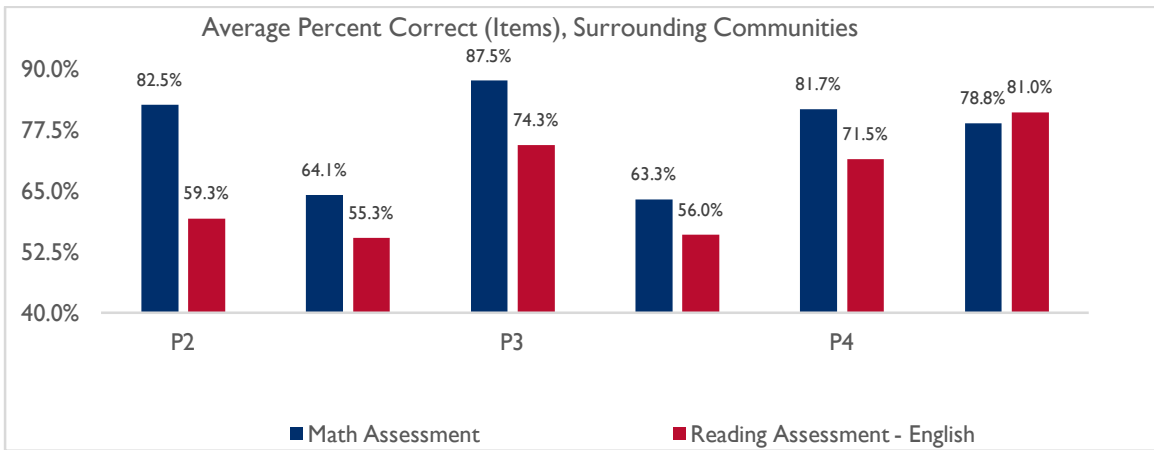


Among the emergency education topics, “health, nutrition and hygiene” was ranked at the top for both POC sites and surrounding communities, although respondents in POC sites reported it at a higher rate (67 percent) than surrounding communities (57percent). “Awareness of risks” was rated the least present (22 percent) by the POC site respondents, and fell among the lowest for the surrounding communities (34 percent). Moreover, POC sites have received each of the topics more than in surrounding communities, with the exception of “peace education and conflict resolution” and “awareness of risks.”

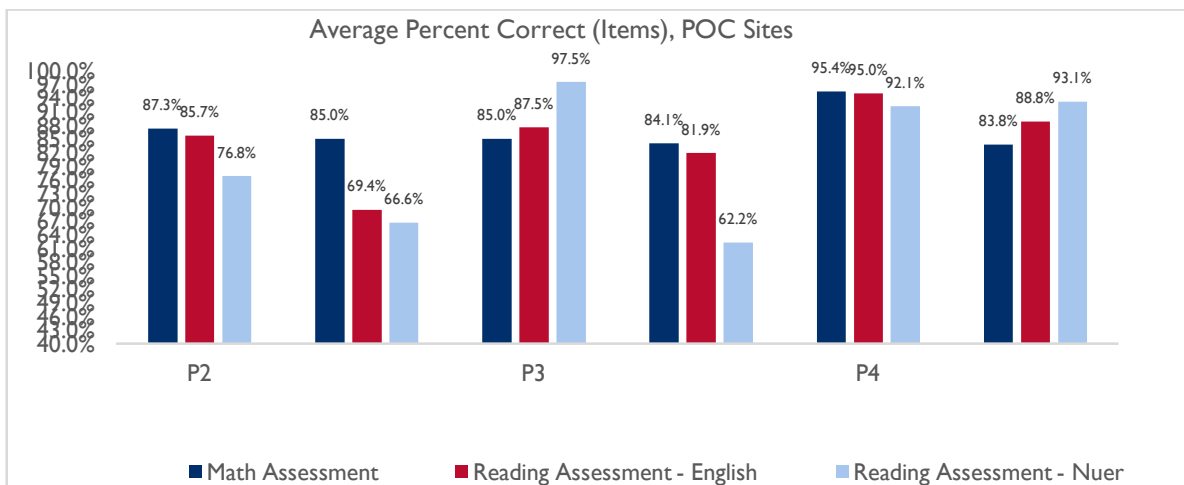
### ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

As described in the Methodology section, a math and reading assessment was conducted with grade two, three, and four students in and around Juba. Table 14 and Table 15 present the average percent of items correct for the math and reading assessments from schools in the surrounding community and POC sites, respectively, by assessment type, sex, and grade.

**TABLE 14. STUDENT ASSESSMENT AVERAGE CORRECT ITEM, SURROUNDING COMMUNITY AND POC**



**TABLE 15. STUDENT ASSESSMENT AVERAGE CORRECT ITEM, POC SITE**



Overall, the students in both the surrounding communities and the POC sites demonstrated significant strengths on the assessments. Student in POC sites scored higher than students in surrounding communities, with the exception of P3 male students in surrounding communities who scored 1.5 percent higher on average than their POC site counterparts in math. The largest difference in scores between site types is among P2 female students (20.9 percent), and between P3 female students in both math (20.8 percent) and reading (25.9 percent). In both site types, students scored higher in math on average than in reading, with the exception of P4 female students, who scored slightly higher in reading. Female students scored lower in both math and reading assessments in both surrounding communities and POC sites.

Students in POC sites, who were tested in both English and Nuer for the reading assessment, generally scored higher in the English administration, with the exception of P3 male students and P4 female students.

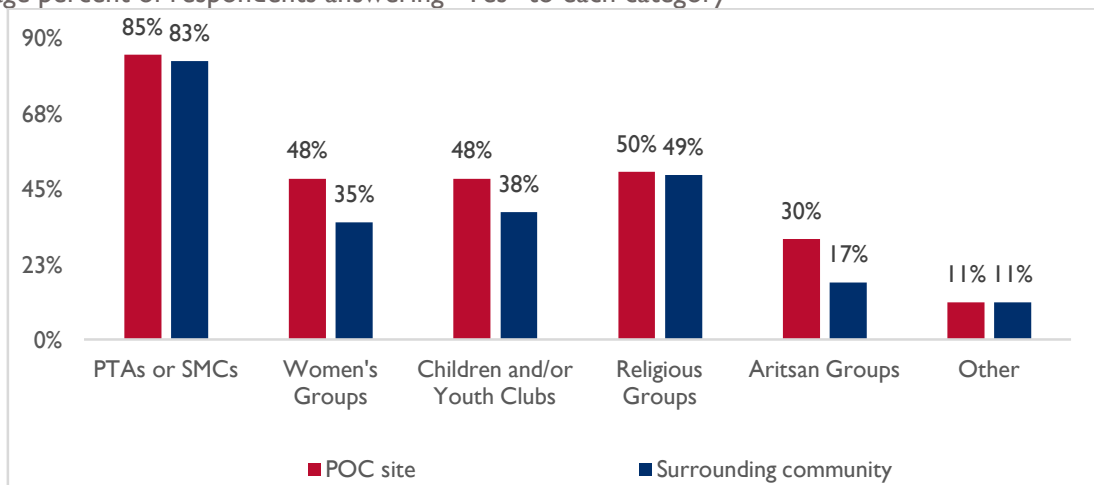
Additional results can be found in Appendix A.

**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

In-depth interview respondents shared their perceptions of various community groups' involvement in supporting education. As Table 16 shows, PTAs or SMCs are consistently seen as being the most active in supporting education in communities in both POC sites (85 percent) and surrounding communities (83 percent). Religious groups are the second most involved community-based group in both POC sites (50 percent) and surrounding communities (49 percent). In POC sites, women's groups and children/youth clubs follow closely behind with 48 percent of respondents indicating these groups as supporting education, while in surrounding communities, they appear less present with 35 percent and 38 percent of respondents indicating their involvement, respectively.

**TABLE 16. COMMUNITY-BASED GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY SUPPORTING EDUCATION**

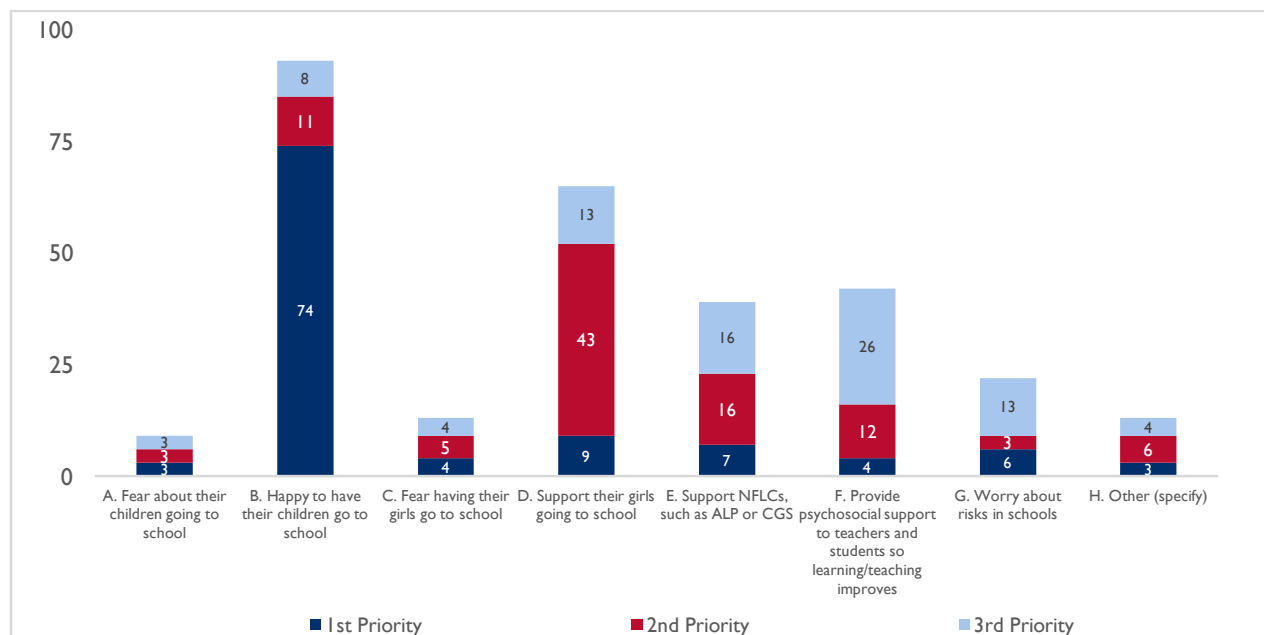
Average percent of respondents answering "Yes" to each category



Source: In-depth interview

The in-depth interviews also gathered community-level respondents' perception of parents' priorities regarding the education of their children (Table 17). Respondents indicated most parents approve of their children attending schools, including their daughters, and their support for access to education eclipses their fears. These figures suggest that while parents may be worried about their children's safety, their preference in theory would be for them to attend school.

**TABLE 17. PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL RESPONDENTS ON PARENTS' PRIORITIES REGARDING THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN**



Source: In-depth Interviews

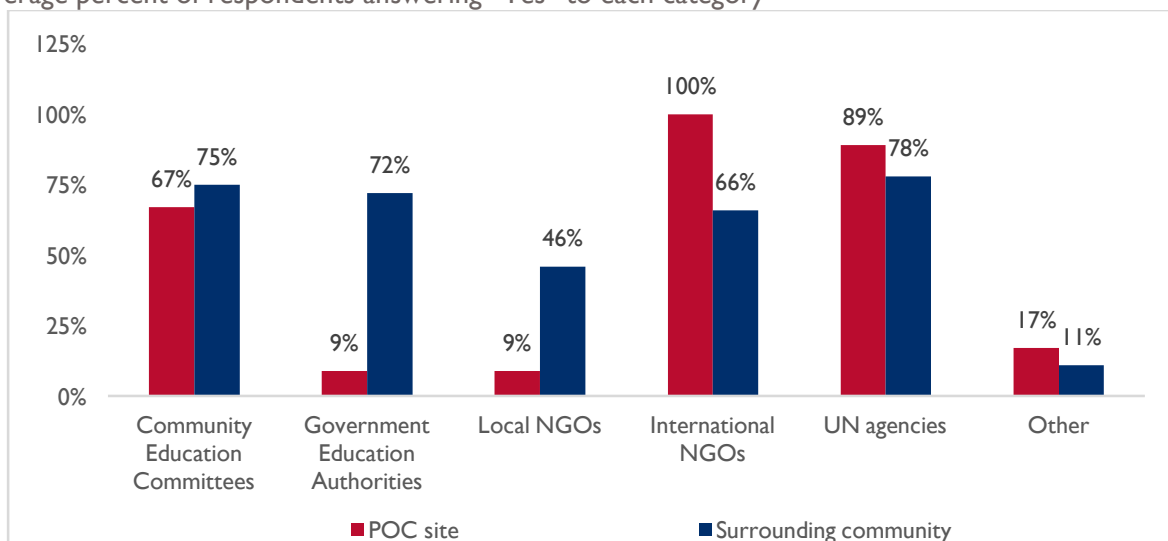
## EDUCATION POLICY

### PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

As shown in Table 18, INGOs and U.N. agencies are more active in POC sites (reported by 100 percent and 89 percent of IDI respondent, respectively) than outside of them (66 percent and 78 percent respectively). Community Education Committees are important actors in all sites, as indicated by 67 percent of POC site respondents and 75 percent of surrounding community respondents, while government education authorities are minimally perceived as being involved in POC sites (9 percent) contrasted with surrounding communities (72 percent). Local NGOs are perceived to be far more present in surrounding communities (46 percent) compared to POC sites (9 percent).

**TABLE 18. ORGANIZATIONS IN COMMUNITY SUPPORTING EDUCATION**

Average percent of respondents answering “Yes” to each category



Source: In-depth Interviews

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The findings presented here by INEE domain<sup>58</sup> were triangulated across the qualitative data gathered through the RERA, including focus group discussions with teachers and students, and national and sub-national interviews. Where possible, attempts were made to quantify the qualitative data by approximating percentages of key informants who held particular views.

### ACCESS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

#### EQUAL ACCESS

##### GROUPS LEAST LIKELY TO BE IN SCHOOL

Nineteen of 26 teacher focus groups and 29 out of 52 student focus groups identified children who had lost or become separated from their parents as those most often not in school. Respondents indicated that without support from their parents, these children are not able to pay their school fees and often must work to support themselves and surviving family members or care for family members at home, as described by a focus group of female students:

“Those children who are taking care of their young ones [are not in school]. Their parents were killed during the conflict in [this area] so no one is taking care of them. One of my friends could not come to school. When I advised her to come to school she started crying because she remembered her parents who were killed during the war, [and] she said to me, ‘If my parents were to be alive I

<sup>58</sup> Only the INEE domains and standards that are relevant to the current RERA design are listed.



would have also joined school but who will take care of our children if I go to school?”

Respondents, including 21 out of 52 student focus groups (12 female student groups, 9 male student groups), 9 out of 26 teacher focus groups, and 17 out of 89 key informants, have also indicated that girls have limited access to education. Marriage for girls was frequently cited as a reason why girls do not or stop attending school as marriage is seen as a means for the child to contribute to her family's livelihood through the dowry, and as explained by a focus group of male students:

“...[T]heir parents say that the girls will bring a lot of cattle when they get married so by going to school they will be taught bad cultures. That is why some parents don't allow their girls to go to school.”

Several key informants at the sub-national level also spoke about how the lack of secondary school can lead to early marriage. Without the option to continue their education after completing primary eight, girls stay at home and instead get married, which generally means the end of their studies.

Other reasons given for why girls are not able to come to school are responsibilities at home, especially if one or more parent has been lost, fear of getting abducted or assaulted, need to work and being overage. Several key informants at both the sub-national and national level indicated that girls are not in school due to security concerns, especially while traveling to and from school.

Pastoralists, for whom “...cattle are the staple in the order of value, tradition and belief and represent a core thread in the institution of identity”<sup>59</sup>, were also commonly cited by respondents as a group that is frequently not in school. One teacher group summed up the input of many of the respondents:

“For pastoralist, boys are made to look after the cattle as well as to participate in the farm work and other issues within the communities. [For] pastoralists, sending the boy to school to learn is a loss rather than gain. They ask that if we send the boy to school who will look after our [cattle]? Who will care for the old age father and old age mother? Whereas when a girl is born to a family, they will make her to stay at home until she [is] married. A girl is considered as source of income for the family [through the dowry in the form of cattle]. That means a girl is to be brought up in good manner so that she gets married with cows. These are some of the basic reasons why boys and girls are not sent to school in South Sudan rural communities.”

Similarly, a County Education Department official explained that:

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<sup>59</sup> [http://southsudanhumanitarianproject.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/formidable/Pastoralism-Conflict-Recovery-Roundtable\\_May2016-1.pdf](http://southsudanhumanitarianproject.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/formidable/Pastoralism-Conflict-Recovery-Roundtable_May2016-1.pdf)

“...The cattle keepers [see] education [as] less important than their cattle. For instance cattle keepers look [at] parents who send their children to school as those who are poor and do not have the source of wealth they [would] have with cattle. This thinking is affecting school enrollment for both boys and girls. Girls are said to be banks and are protected at home. [Girls are] not to join school as they think a girl in school will be spoiled and not earn more cows. So such girls are denied the right to go to school [and are] instead taken to the cattle camp to drink milk so that she can grow quickly [and be] ready for marriage.”

Furthermore, as pastoralists move with their cattle in search of grass, they do not have regular access to schools. According to an international NGO/donor representative:

“[It is a] very fluid social system, where grandmothers, grandfathers, [and] small children were stuck in villages, but the rest moved around for a 6 – 7 month period, depending on grass availability. It’s only when people came back as the rains intensified or at the end of the rainy season around July, August, and September that they would find themselves in the same places as their families.”

#### **OBSTACLES TO EQUAL ACCESS**

Respondents reported the lack of schools nearby has greatly hindered students’ access to education. Five of 52 student groups, eight of 26 teacher groups, 17 of 64 sub-national level key informants, and 10 of 25 national level key informants specified that schools have closed due to the conflict. A few others stated that schools have also closed as a result of flooding. Several key informants at the national level reported schools used as military camps. Schools are closed from a few weeks to years.

Several focus groups cited the distance to the nearest school as a barrier to education, especially in surrounding communities, and particularly during period of heavy rain and for students with disabilities in areas with bad road conditions. Transportation is either is unavailable or unaffordable.. One focus group of male students from a surrounding community reported:

“Children who live in a far location from the school cannot come to school. For example, we live in [a] residential area which is far from the school. So we have to come to school on foot as we have no money for transport to school. We often arrive at the school late and find that the teacher has entered the class and about to finish the lesson. When entering the class very late we cannot understand the lesson. This is what happens to children in this community.”

In addition, a sense of insecurity exacerbates the challenges of traveling long distances to school. As one focus group of male students explained:

“I am interested to learn in the school. But given the long distance where I live as well as the insecurity threats which limit the movement of people in this country, I do not know whether I will achieve my learning.”

An international NGO/donor key informant further explained the challenge to locating schools where accessible to all in the community:

“When we ask children how far they have to walk, you can see how challenging this was. What it basically described was the decentralized settlement patterns. It’s not like a system in the UK where you have very nuclear village, you have a church, school, and everything is clustered around that, as you go further away from that central point, everything becomes more spread out, then you see fields, then the next village. Here you have a series of hamlets, stretched, a couple of people here, another clump over here, another couple people here and there. You just keep going like that until you realize that wherever you put a school, it’s going to disadvantage people who are somewhere else. Some will say it’s not a problem because they are actually right next to the actual school structure, while others will say they have to walk five hours. You realize there is a big question mark about how to strategically structure education for some parts of the country because settlements are very stretched.”

Of the 67 community and national level key informants that spoke of ethnicity, over half believe stated ethnicity does not directly affect school access. In fact, nearly all sub-national level key informants from POC sites (11 out of 13) that addressed the effect of ethnicity on education access indicated ethnicity is not an issue at the POC sites. According to a representative from a CBO: “Ethnicity has not affected education in [the] POC. The POC is holding different ethnic tribes, and all of them are attending school freely. People in POC sees each other as brothers and sisters.”

Likewise, in surrounding communities, 21 out of 30 sub-national level key informants that spoke of ethnicity indicated that ethnicity does not directly affect access to education. One head teacher interviewed by the RERA team explained that:

“School is like hospital, school has no tribe. School has no tribe, it considers everybody; you just want to transfer knowledge to children [who are the] future generation; a hospital also treats everybody, even the enemies. The hospital and school are the same, their relationship [to people] is the same...”

Yet, other key informants at the national level and from surrounding communities said that while ethnicity does not directly affect access to education, conflicts between ethnic groups do adversely affect access outside POC sites. Teachers and students are unable to safely travel to and from school, schools are closed as a result of fighting, and many have been displaced. A sub-national level key informant states:

“The ethnicity has affected negatively education access for majority of children in South Sudan. As a result of the conflict, most communities have moved from their state of origin to neighboring countries and some of them stay as internally displaced person under the protection of civilian sites [POC sites]. The conflict has disrupted the community setting, hence some of the children do not live with

their parents. These children, they have no support because they are far away from their mothers or fathers and have no access to education. The ethnicity has affected even the family who can afford to send their children to school.”

## ACHIEVEMENT

Although not an INEE Minimum Standard, factors in South Sudan that affect student achievement were explored through this RERA.

Sub-national level key informants and teachers, in particular, indicated overcrowded classrooms, as the result of an influx of displaced students, schools being closed by conflict, and a lack of teachers (due both to displacement and lack of motivation), were affecting achievement. Displacement affects achievement in two ways – first, it affects the displaced students since they are leaving their community and school, thus disrupting their education. Then, as they enter a safer community and enroll in school there, those schools become overcrowded, thus affect achievement for existing students and the displaced students. A focus group of teachers explained:

“...[E]nrollment has increased because some school have closed down due to conflict, especially in schools in the outskirts of [town]. This increase in the number of children has made it difficult to control the learners in the class because you find that there are over 200 learners in a class and yet there are supposed to be 45 learners per class. 45 learners per class is manageable because it will be easy for me identify a dull child and this makes it easy to provide additional support to the child during the lesson.”

Another teacher group in a surrounding community said the school had to limit the number of children, as there was not enough room for everyone. One county education official explained teachers are teaching shorter classes in an effort to accommodate all the students:

“We have a limited number of classes given the huge number of students in this school. We teach in one class for thirty minutes so as to give the chance for the other children to attend lessons. One lesson is given thirty minutes. Imagine, when will the teacher clean the blackboard? And when will he explain the lesson to the pupils?”

Respondent groups across both POC sites and surrounding communities frequently stated that interruptions in their education have adversely affected their learning and achievement. Displacement was the most commonly mentioned reason for a student’s education being interrupted, cited by 18 out of 52 student groups, 17 out of 26 teachers groups, 10 out of 25 national level informants, and 23 out of 64 sub-national level informants. Children who flee the fighting are not able to attend school either at all or regularly. In some cases, they constantly move from place to place and cannot enroll in school. For others, they are in a location that has no school nearby.

“The conflict affected me seriously because this time I would have been in primary 8 but now still in primary 6 because I stayed without school for two years when there was no primary 5 in the POC and so I have to lose my 2 years without studies.” – Female student

One respondent said fleeing to neighboring countries without taking their school certificates makes re-enrolling difficult.

Schools closing due to the fighting also disrupts learning as students are not able to make consistent progress. As described by a community leader key informant:

“During this conflict, they have missed many days of school. We have 210 days. In 2016, some of the schools...missed fourteen days because the schools were closed. They failed to finish their syllabus. That has an impact on children’s achievements.”

Other respondents said children unable to attend school regularly will forget what they have learned, fall back in their studies, not have the option to sit for exams, and as a result, repeat their classes. Some do not return to school when the option is available. Several respondents said their school closed right before exams, so students could not be promoted to the next grade.

A county education official explains how the interruption of education due to the conflict further compounds challenges for girls:

“Due to fighting, some syllabus may not be finished or covered and so that affects the children performance in the exams, and the most affected children are girls because if the girls could not pass to the next class she approaches marital age before completing her school and hence she will obviously drop out for marriage.”

One teacher focus group also described how participation in initiation ceremonies affected the ability of teenage boys to progress in school: “Here when they are conducting initiating ceremony in August to October, children have to stay in the villages for those months, when they come back to do exams, they can’t perform better because they are out of school for [so] long.”

The emotional and mental distress experienced by children as a result of the conflict was cited by over half the teacher focus groups, as well as nine of 25 national level key informants and 21 of 64 sub-national level key informants as a barrier to student achievement. Twelve focus group of students directly stated that conflict-related distress has affected their ability to learn and attend school, while additional student groups mention experiencing distressing events without explicitly mentioning how it has affected them. Specific aspects of the conflict mentioned include witnessing violence, the death of loved ones, separation from parents, the fear of hearing gunshots, and constant displacement. According to one community leader,

“Because of the rampant fighting education always get interrupted. Children are always kept on run for their lives, and again start learning again. When child[ren] hear the gun shots [they] get confused and even the mind is not ready to learn. Children stay in fear when they hear the guns. Children are not able to follow their classes. Now others have been in the same class.”

A teacher focus group further described how the conflict has affected children: “People ran from town to POCs because of conflict, and some children are traumatized when talking to them as a teacher, they just cry without telling you what a reason is.”

As result of their experience, several respondents have said children have lost hope and motivation, including an international NGO key informant:

“Children’s dreams are shattered. Normally I ask my own children what they desire to become when they complete their education, but the response I get is not appealing to me at all. One told me he has no dream, yet the same child told me in 2014 and 2015 that he wanted to be a pilot and he loves mathematics. [He] even he requested me to buy for him a computer.”

Hunger adversely affecting a child’s ability to come to school and concentrate once there was frequently cited from all respondent types, with nearly three-fourth of teacher focus groups and more than half the student focus groups (13 female student groups, 14 male student groups). This issue has been mentioned slightly more in POC sites than in surrounding communities (more than 65 percent versus less than 55 percent). According to one focus group of female students, “Even for us who come to school, understanding becomes difficult because we are [too] hungry to put attention to the teacher.”

Lack of money to purchase food, inability to cultivate due to conflict, flooding affecting some regions, economic crisis affecting prices at the market are all reasons given for children unable to access food.

Many respondents explained that teachers are often not at school due to low or unpaid wages, which affects their ability to progress through the curriculum. Some teachers engage in other work to compensate for the lack of monetary incentives as a teacher. A focus group of male students from a surrounding community explained:

“In our school we have [some] teachers, but there are teachers who are absence. They [do] not come daily...[Those] teachers [do]not come to school because they do...jobs in the community. Some of them say the money in the school here is very little.”

Several student focus groups said that even if teachers come to school, they are not motivated to teach. Respondents also cited teachers who had fled the community due to insecurity or live far away and do not feel safe traveling to and from school.

A few student focus groups cited the lack of qualified teachers as an impediment to student achievement. According to a focus group of male students:

“We have [a] lack of trained teachers. Our teachers, they are not well trained. Some of them may be they are from low level of education but, they are volunteering themselves. That is why we don’t concentrate on education well.”

One focus group of teachers from a POC site specifically noted that qualified teachers often seek employment with NGOs, as they are seen to pay employees better. A key informant at the national level similarly said:

“Qualified teachers leave profession they leave for greener pastures like NGOs, companies to support family. Salary doesn’t get paid for 3 – 4 months. [This leaves] volunteer teachers [who] are not qualified.”

Several other respondents echoed this sentiment, including a key informant at the national level: “[T]he teachers we have are volunteers. There is crude teaching. Learning is not taking place. Sometimes, two lessons are taught in a day out of 16. How do you measure performance? Teaching is not taking place, learning is not taking place.”

Of note is a focus group of male students from a surrounding community, stating that their learning “...[was] not affected, we passed well because the teachers are teaching.”

A different focus group of male students also from a surrounding community mentioned that teachers were not at school that day because they were in a training provided by an international NGO so many students did not come to school.

## PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING

In addition to asking IDI respondents about their perception of students’ safety during their commute between home and school, as presented in Table 12, enumerators also inquired about this with key informants, teachers and students. Eighteen female student and 15 male student focus groups, of a total 52 student groups, said they did not feel safe traveling to and from school. Students report getting harassed by others, having to deal with drunken men or street children, traffic, snakes and other wild animals, or getting caught in the cross-fire of violent situations. Students reported seeing guns or soldiers with guns on the streets and fearing they would be kidnapped. Across all focus groups, including those with teachers, the most frequently cited safety issue while traveling to and from school is the risk of girls being raped.

The concern with safety decreases the closer the school is to the student’s home. Most students who say they feel safe going to and from school attend schools close to their homes, the large majority of whom attended schools within the POC where they live. One female student noted, “I feel safe coming to school because I live just next to the school,” while her female classmate stated, “I don’t feel safe because I come from very far to school, and I fear of what may happen to me on the way since this country is not safe anymore.”

The majority of students interviewed walked to school whether the school was near or far. Other modes of transportation cited were bicycles, motorcycles, or buses. To increase their safety while commuting between home and school, participants in several student and teacher focus groups said students advised to travel in a larger group. Key informants at both the state and national levels spoke less directly about the safety of students traveling to and from schools, but acknowledged the issue.

While they feel less safe commuting between home and school, students said they feel safer while at school. Forty-two of the 52 male and female student groups discussed feeling safe at school. Fourteen of the 26 teacher groups mentioned that schools are safe spaces and there is not much to fear while school is in session. Focus groups of students and teachers at schools located in POC sites cited more frequently that they feel safe while at school, compared with those at schools located in surrounding communities. This is in line with IDI respondents believing that students and teachers are safe while at the learning site (see Table 9), with students and teachers in the POCs were perceived to be safer than those in surrounding communities.

When asked where in the school students feel safe, some students noted the school compound, as a whole, is safe. Most students specifically mentioned the classrooms, the teachers or head teachers' offices, and the playground as safe spaces at school. One male student stated "if there is any fighting, you may run inside the class and save yourself." Another male student agreed that safe places at school are the classes and school compound "because the teacher will take responsibility and everything will be good." Most students agreed with this statement and talked about how they feel safe at school because they feel protected by their teachers. Students also said that while they are at school, they are around friends and teachers which makes them feel safe.

Students also spoke about feeling unsafe at school due to reasons that range from minor fighting among students over limited resources to a general sense of unsafety because of the larger conflict within South Sudan. Among focus groups that discussed feeling unsafe at school, the majority were at schools outside of the POC sites. When comparing across all respondent types, the most frequently cited source of unsafety for students while at school is the bad structural conditions of school facilities (27 out of 52 student focus groups, six out of 26 teacher focus groups, and seven out of 99 KIIs). For those focus groups that spoke about bad school facilities, 45 percent were from schools in surrounding communities while 39 percent were from POC sites. Fear of the immediate area outside of the school compound was due to the possibility of being exposed to harmful elements such as wild animals (e.g., snakes, dogs), soldiers who may harass or abduct students, strangers who can harm students, or traffic accidents.

Key informants at the sub-national level discussed the lack of safety for students within schools related to conflicts arising due to the limited resources available to students, such as minor fighting between students over school materials or benches in the classroom. Among key informants at the national level, the most frequently cited issue causing conflict at school is the general sense of insecurity among students as a result of the larger conflict within the country.

### **SAFETY ISSUES THAT WOMEN AND GIRLS FACE**

Respondents from both focus group discussions and key informant interviews talked about safety issues that girls specifically faced in South Sudan, such as harassment at school, sexual abuse they may face at school, or issues and concerns they have during menstruation. Seventeen of the 52 focus groups with male and female students mentioned girls being harassed by (five male groups, 12 female groups). Students did not provide reasons for the activity but acknowledged it happens, and female students especially noted it makes them fearful when they are at school. In three female student focus groups, participants discussed the issue of girls getting being on their way to school or getting pregnant and not being able to come to school due to shame or fear.

Female students and teachers also discussed menstruation as an issue female students faced at school. During menstruation, students tend not to come to school because of pain or insecurity. Five of the student and teacher focus groups talked about how support in providing sanitary products to girls for use during menstruation can help them feel more secure in attending school. In some schools, male and female students share the same latrines, which makes female students feel uncomfortable and insecure, particularly during menstruation. A teacher group cited a lack of sanitary facilities as one reason girls do not attend school. When comparing across POC sites and surrounding communities, most issues relating to girls discussed above were relatively even.

Sixty-six out the 74 key informant respondents at the sub-national level also discussed safety issues affecting girls. The most frequently cited safety issue was sexual abuse (10 interviews). At the national level, key informants also discussed sexual abuse affecting girls most frequently. Of the 25 respondents at the national level, six respondents talked about the issue of early marriage being an effect of schools closing due to the conflict, resulting in the loss of opportunities for continued education, or the loss of resources, forcing parents to find the means to secure additional resources, which include marrying off



their daughters. National level key informants also talked about abuse girls face at school, by male students or teachers.

While the IDI did not specifically explore safety issues affecting female students, it did capture respondents' perception on the risks for both male and female students, as presented in Table 10.

### **RECRUITMENT AND OCCUPATION OF SCHOOLS BY ARMED FORCES**

As discussed previously, respondents spoke of how the conflict has affected their education as well as their living situations. Students are afraid to walk to school, particularly if they have to leave when it is still dark. Key informants described how the conflict has made it difficult for children to go to school because their schools are now closed; they are displaced; or they fear what dangers could exist outside of their homes. Across all respondent types, 12 interviews (two out of 26 teacher focus groups, one out of 25 male student focus groups, and nine out of 99 KIIs at the national and sub-national levels) specifically mentioned conflict and security issues affecting students and their education. These issues include occupation of schools either by armed forces or IDPs and refugees, or recruitment of children by armed forces.

A variety of informants, including one male student focus group, two teacher focus groups and four national informants, discussed the issue of boys being recruited by armed forces either by force or willingly because they have no hope for the future. These key informants also spoke of schools being occupied by armed forces. One national level respondent declared schools occupied by armed forces cause “fear in the community [...] rape is rampant and girls fear to go to school.”

### **SOCIAL COHESION**

Although social cohesion is not a topic discussed in the INEE Minimum Standards global tool, the assessment team deemed it appropriate to highlight instances in which respondents discussed where social cohesion exists. Social cohesion was not defined for respondents, and while some spoke to inter-group cohesion, others spoke to intra-group cohesion. Where it is clear that respondents were speaking about either type of cohesion, this is highlighted in the report.

All respondents discussed communities' social cohesion as having been affected by the conflict in South Sudan. Communities' lack of social cohesion can also be attributed to lack of resources, political issues, ethnicity, tribalism, clans, land (which relates to school if the school is situated on contested land), and the economic crisis. One international NGO key informant stated, “Over the past years, cohesion has lessened. Even where there had been more cohesion, that is no longer there. The conflict may have renewed broken relationships or broken those that had cohesion.” Respondents also spoke about how the conflict has affected education by destroying schools, causing people to flee, and instilling fear in people. Students talked about lack of social cohesion among themselves at school due to insults and harassment of students. Most students and teachers, however, refer to these as normal and minor conflicts that happen among students everywhere, and not specific to the conflict in South Sudan.

Despite these broken ties, social cohesion still happens. Thirty-four of 52 student groups and two out of 26 teacher groups cited school and sports events as a form of social cohesion. This response was given with equal frequency by groups in both surrounding communities and POC sites. Other forms of social cohesion that were discussed include communal work and schools as a space that brings people together cohesively.

Twenty-four of the 25 male focus groups stated that students support each other in various ways including sharing school books and pens when others do not have any. One male student stated, “We support ourselves during difficulties and encourage each other to achieve education.” In addition to sharing material things, students also said they discussed issues. Female focus groups expressed the same

sentiments. They share books and pens with their friends, work together on schoolwork, and share and discuss their issues. Teachers talk about children supporting one another through playing together and by walking home together to keep safe.

All 25 national level respondents also spoke about cohesion positively. The most cited form of social cohesion that happens in communities is around school or sports events which appeared in 15 interviews. School events include activities such as board games when students can come together, and clubs that bring together people with particular interests such as football, debate, health, music, drama, peace, and Bible study groups. Parties that celebrate the beginning and end of school years bring students, parents, and communities together. Schools also have designated events, such as parent days and sports days, when different student groups compete against each other. Additional forms of social cohesion include meetings with parents and teachers, construction of schools where community members come together, and meetings that bring Ministry of Education personnel and chiefs together. Social inclusion is also evident in church, traditional and cultural activities, working together for the same NGO, living among same ethnic group members, and intermarriage between different ethnic groups.

Informants at the sub-national level discussed different forms of social cohesion much more frequently (64 of 74 respondents). Respondents often mentioned social cohesion at the school level, talking about the different relationships that exists in the community including individuals at the school and the relationships that it generates between the parents and community members. Other respondents talked about how a school unites communities because it brings students together for learning purposes. One sub-national level MoGEI key informant, in particular, stated:

“Since school started this year, it has become like a place to unite us. These days, you can see children of different tribes studying together not like when the war was still going on.”

## FACILITIES

As mentioned above, students indicated most often that school facilities' structure and maintenance were of most concern in relation to the lack of safety at school. Students stated that they did not feel safe in certain areas of the schools, most commonly latrines and classrooms, because they are afraid of being hurt by the collapsing structures. Weather conditions also affect the classroom's physical environment. During the rainy season, water gets into the classroom, and students cannot come to class. During the dry season, the sun makes the classroom extremely hot, causing dehydration. This issue came up for both students in POC sites and schools in the surrounding communities, although almost twice as frequently in the latter.

Students complained of the few latrines for the student population. Sometimes they had to share them with the community or with students of the opposite gender, which also made students feel unsafe. Many students said they were afraid of falling into the latrines, because they had not been maintained and were collapsing. One female student focus group said the classroom was unsafe because students defecated there.

Students also identified fences as a form of security. In focus groups where the school had a fence, respondents said they felt safe because the fence keeps others out. Teachers said fences helped keep students stay in school. In other focus groups where students said their schools did not have fences, they said anyone could walk into the school, so they felt unsafe. Several teachers spoke of looting occurring on unfenced compounds. Students also discussed school grounds full of rocks, unpaved, or with uncut grass, which could cause injury to students. Students mentioned conflicts arising around

water sources, but did not go into detail. Differential Effects of Conflict and Natural Disaster on Learning Environments

Interviews and focus group discussions held with a range of key informants in this assessment validate the results of many previous assessments as to the negative impact of a constantly shifting political and security context on the education sector in South Sudan. Three compelling quotes from national and sub-national level informants illustrate this:

“[C]onflict has affected learning a lot. People are on the run, schools are destroyed, economy is destroyed, and education is not a priority. Teachers are not receiving their salaries. There are about 1.8 million out of school children.”

“As people are displaced, schools are occupied. School is the first place to accommodate refugees. Schools are attacked, may be due to revenge or maybe due to resources. Could be multiple reasons. Conflict affected safety. We get reports of instances of looting; everything is looted. Anything that can fetch money is taken. Also revenge. Some personal fights happen in schools. You saw what is on the wall. Recently a partner said that school supplies were taken and teachers were abducted. One or two teachers were former fighters and they were taken back to the army.”

“[The ongoing conflict has resulted in] too few schools. Schools have been destroyed or taken over by armed forces. Some of them have become feeding centers rather than learning centers because teachers are absent. Infrastructure has been destroyed and/or used for other purposes. There are psychological effects on people. People are afraid to go to school. There are many conflict lines, with conflicts existing between different groups. It has taken the learning back many years.”

Students are often moving from place to place or dropping out of school due to the conflict. As one male teacher noted, “Warring parties do not respect schools. They destroy schools and books. There is no protection.” Another national level key informant stated, “When there is displacement, the first place to accommodate people is school. Which means children will lose weeks or months of learning. When there is famine, the first concern for families is to get food and water. Children are taken out of school to find food for the family.”

A national level informant employed with an INGO hypothesized that:

“1 in 3 schools [are] closed, occupied, destroyed, affected safety, WASH/Hygiene, roofs of schools have torn off, damaged and unhygienic, school records are destroyed, furniture destroyed. At the Payam level, no money to replenish. At the state/county levels, there is more money, but cannot reverse what has been done through conflict. State also cannot invest in education, NGOs must provide resources.”

The majority of students and community level informants residing in POC sites said they felt safer within the POC sites and perceived the quality of education to be slightly higher compared with schools in surrounding communities. This perception was discussed at the validation workshops in Washington, DC, and Juba, South Sudan, and may be due to the ethnic homogeneity within the POC sites.

Yet, students attending schools within one POC site reported the conflict had made the situation worse “because people are confined in small places like IDPS camps” and that “people are not comfortable because of the conflict, most people are traumatized and start looking on others with bad heat.” In about one-third of sub-national level interviews, informants noted that cramped or inhospitable living conditions propel students and their families to relocate to Uganda if they can afford to do so. Those who have relocated have not returned. In some communities, these informants report that those students “enrolling now are mixed with community children and IDPs from other locations.” One female student’s experience summarizes this emerging pattern:

“Some of our parents lost their jobs when the war erupted in Juba and so it become difficult to support our education and limited our self to the schools in the POC which may not be offering quality education. Some of my friends whose parents are still working manage to get out from the camp, others went to Kenya or Uganda and are now studying in good schools.”

While the majority of students reported feeling unsafe outside the classroom due to the ongoing conflict (e.g., “Yes, it is because of the conflict; that’s why you see soldiers moving with guns everywhere making us to fear, sometimes they shoot the guns anyhow, and sometimes they kill people without any problem”), students in one focus group discussion specifically noted that “there are other safe places outside the classes but inside the class we fear the roof may fall on us.”

Over 90 percent of male student and female student focus groups alike confirmed that students often drop out or miss classes due to a range of factors including:

- Ongoing conflict and insecurity (e.g., children are abducted or teachers are killed, poor quality facilities);
- Inaccessibility due to flooding;
- Sickness, hunger and have no food;
- Lack school materials, such as books and pens, and inability to afford school equipment; and
- Low teacher salaries, leading to teacher strikes and school closures.

One national level informant voiced the perception “the impact on the learning environment in South Sudan is not due to natural disasters. There are floodings and other such things, but it’s the conflict that has affected education.” This perception was also voiced at the validation workshops held in Washington, DC, and Juba, South Sudan, with implementing partners and other critical stakeholders active in the education sector in South Sudan. Specifically, the famine that informants are affected by is a result of the conflict.

Students and teachers alike referenced the impact of natural disasters on learning environments in South Sudan. For example, one teacher stated “some classrooms are under trees, and children cannot study when it rains. Also, some children cross rivers or streams to reach school. When there are floods, they cannot reach school. They stay [at home] for a week or so before going back.” Another teacher similarly noted that “flooding often affects the school, i.e. water fills up classrooms during rainy seasons, waterborne diseases affects children during rainy season, and children (especially young ones) struggle coming and going to school during rainy seasons due to flooding.”

## TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

### ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION – TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Overall, more than 90 percent of national and sub-national level key informants consistently reported ambiguity or bias behind teacher recruitment at the national level and placement in community or POC site schools. At the national level, the process typically consists of the advertisement of available teaching positions by the national government. The government is responsible for interviewing, selecting and placing successful candidates in schools. The South Sudan teacher recruitment process was described by one national level key informant as “dynamic with many factors at play. Ministry officials are engaged in all stages. In some places the [officials can] cause challenges. For example, issues like payment of salaries and incentives become politicized in some places. The stakes are high. At the national level, the will is there but considering the spread of the country and the attendant challenges it does not amount to much. Especially, the new states established mean more bureaucracy. Efforts are being made but how information flows to the counties, to the Bomas is an issue. Also, there is the question of capacity, deployment of personnel. Politicization or bias of teacher recruitment was mentioned in over half of the interviews conducted with key informants at national and state levels, who often noted “the recruitment is not merit-based; there is ethnic favoritism and nepotism.”

A national level key informant employed with an international NGO also suggested the need to contextualize appropriate teaching qualifications in South Sudan as it

“has been in crisis situation for a long time. Before the conflict, there were people with the necessary skills but what are you now left with? Some teachers have not completed secondary schools... In learning spaces, teachers have varying capacities. Many of them are volunteers. Some have not been trained as teachers. The minimum requirement would be that the community accepts the teachers to teach their children; the good will of the community is important. In some of the POCs, some teachers took manual jobs leaving teaching because of the pay.”

State variations in teacher recruitment were also reported, with every state responsible for recruiting its own teaching personnel. Nonetheless, these respondents also noted a strong preference for creating a more-objective and impartial recruitment and deployment system given the highly politicized nature of teacher recruitment. The majority of teacher focus group discussions (22 of 26) noted a concern that appointment of teachers, especially in government schools, is based on relationships (i.e., government officials will appoint people they know well or can relate to). Teachers were also concerned the system of teacher appointments and placements was not transparent.

In addition, teachers are not given permanent contracts – in one focus group discussion, a teacher said as they are “considered as temporary, thus, they have no government benefits meant for teachers when they resign, and their complaints are met with warning letters and or even dismissal from the schools.” The instability of teaching positions was described as a key factor contributing towards low levels of motivation among teachers in the majority of teacher focus group discussions.

On the other hand, in all teacher focus group discussions conducted in this assessment, teachers noted the importance of being from the community in which you are teaching as “now people fear to go some places.” One national key informant further noted there was

“no way to employ certain teachers into other communities – they will be killed. Must be from their communities. Can be difficult too because chiefs want their friends to be teachers so they can get salaries. It is a challenge to recruit women to be teachers. In the Equatorial regions, in Jonglei, for example, it would be an issue. Teachers are restricted in where they are able to work.”

The majority of school leadership both within POC sites and in surrounding communities interviewed reported facing challenges in staff recruitment and retention, and reported that, due to the ongoing conflict in South Sudan, some staff are still unable or afraid to come to work.

One national level government official interviewed reported that it was “...difficult for teachers working in schools for [a] long time. Payams are very strong and can do very well, remove teachers when necessary.” But this informant noted that the system was an informal one with minimal resources. Often tradeoffs must be made – for example volunteer teachers may be available but lack the necessary education and training. Teachers who have themselves not completed primary or secondary school are recruited to teach at those levels given the substantial need for teachers.

While there is an urgent need and a desire for a teaching force with the appropriate degrees and diplomas, these are often difficult to find given the low salaries, unsafe and taxing working conditions. One national-level stakeholder from an international NGO noted that

“...the ideal candidate would be one who has university education. Language skills in English, Arabic, and mother tongue. When recruiting: look at types of trainings that they have received, ask contextual questions about teacher and pupil situations, teacher management styles, pedagogy, how to plan lessons, access – promote girls to class, clubs, 5 minute presentations of lessons.”

In fact, the minimum standard in teacher qualification is secondary school completion. A teacher’s salary is determined on years of service and highest academic achievement. All national level informants who responded to questions about teacher recruitment systems in South Sudan noted it is exceedingly difficult to find those who meet these criteria.

More than 75 percent of focus groups involving teachers and sub-national level key informants expressed concern over the issue of teachers’ salaries not being paid fully or being paid late. This was a shared concern for school level stakeholders both within POC sites and surrounding communities. These respondents linked the lack of salaries (as well as exceptionally low salaries or the inconsistency of payments) with poor teacher attendance and low motivation among teachers, which they reported to be a major problem.

Across most teacher focus groups, teachers consistently requested higher salaries and consistent payment. Teacher strikes related to the lack of salary payments were also reported in some instances (though not in recent years). In one focus group of teachers from a surrounding community, a teacher noted “their salary had been about \$3/month which might not get paid for several months.” An INGO active in the area is “working to pay them \$40/month.” These teachers are walking long distances to schools, sometimes more than two hours each way, suggesting the need for consistent and safe transportation for teachers to and from schools. The aforementioned INGO noted an increase in salary would enable teachers to secure safe and consistent transportation to and from their schools, as well as obtain some necessary teaching supplies.

In addition to the salary issue, about half of the teachers focus groups noted frustration with environments in which they teach, citing temporary structures; absence of teaching and learning materials for all subjects, tables to store documents, and computer labs (as well as computer training). All national-level key informants noted the impact of the absence of school resources (and in some cases, too few schools due to the conflict) on teaching quality, and subsequently teacher motivation. In one focus group, teachers said “schools that were looted during the conflict. The teachers are not able to teach, due to lack of teaching materials that the teachers need to follow in the curriculum. The education of the state is very low due to the fact that teachers are not empowered and not capacitated to support teaching, i.e., lack of training material.”

### CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

Previous education assessments have documented the limitations of the South Sudan current capacity to produce teachers through its Teacher Training Institutes and in-service programs. Such reports have suggested that “in addition to sheer numbers, a variety of “cross-cutting issues” must also be considered in the recruitment and training of new teachers – e.g., regional equity, ethnic balance, gender equity in the teaching force, and language-appropriate recruitment and placement among others. Only by using a variety of methods of teacher recruitment and training are Southern Sudan’s teacher needs likely to be met”<sup>60</sup> The interviews and focus group discussions conducted through the RERA have further validated these assessments. There remains a significant need for teacher training to be available for all of the schools regardless of whether they were government run or privately operated. One national key informant employed with the Government of South Sudan noted that “innovative educational organization, teacher education programs, stronger school-level governance systems, coordination of learning assessments, objective teacher placement systems and further professionalization of the teaching field” are sorely needed in South Sudan.

In focus group discussions held with teachers both within POC sites and in surrounding communities, the majority of respondents said teachers often feel tentative, due to the challenges they face, as well as their own limited educations. Community acceptance can also be a severe constraint teachers, face that can impact their levels of self-confidence and motivation. Interestingly, some teacher focus groups who reported having lower levels of preparation or credentials still reported having a good grasp of teaching methodology, while struggling with the content area. Some teachers also reported struggling with classroom management skills given the multiple and varied cognitive/academic and socio-emotional needs of their students. Taken together, these factors contribute to educators’ “fragile professional identity” in South Sudan.

More than 75 percent of teacher focus groups in the South Sudan RERA reported struggling with self-confidence issues related to their ability to teach, even those teachers with years of teaching experience but little to no formal teacher training. Training in activities such as how to create lesson plans, or even the “affirmation that teaching in your own community during this war is as important as education or a teaching certificate” would provide a great deal of motivation.

Evidence points to the critical role of teachers, specifically in conflict contexts, in restoring a sense of calm within the community and meeting children’s “physical, cognitive and psychosocial needs.”<sup>61</sup> Robinson and Latchem further add that “the quality of teachers and teaching is affected by two related

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<sup>60</sup> Kirk & Winthrop, 2007.

<sup>61</sup> Kirk & Winthrop, 2007, p. 715.

aspects: (a) the conditions of teachers in a changing environment, and (b) their training and professional development.”<sup>62</sup> Ginsburg and Pigozzi add, “recruitment, fair payment, and training of teachers is paramount to improving the quality of teaching.”<sup>63</sup> Perceptions of violence, the stress and uncertainty associated with chronic instability and ongoing conflict, the absence of relevant and consistent professional support for teachers and other education personnel, all can substantially influence both student achievement as well as the experiences of all actors involved in the educational system such as teachers, school directors, etc. More than 50 percent of key informants interviewed at the national level noted that the conflict had a substantially negative impact on the quality of training provided to teachers. Key concerns cited by students and teachers in focus group discussions suggested teachers’ levels of professional competence were harmed by the conflict in South Sudan through mental exhaustion linked to fear for their personal safety, anxiety, and depression.

In sum, a quality education requires a complex array of factors, and the majority of respondents in this assessment placed teachers at the core of quality education delivery, in particular given the conflict context of South Sudan. Teachers must be paid consistently and have a “decent salary.” Teachers must also be provided with a streamlined package of ongoing training and professional development in order to respond appropriately to the myriad needs of students in the midst of ongoing conflict and natural disasters faced in South Sudan. Yet, as one INGO employee noted, “From the government’s budget, we know that there is limited budget for education. The national allocation is down to 3 percent. Teachers’ salaries are not being paid. The government is not contributing to education. There are dedicated people in the ministry of education. Plans are optimistic, but not fit for current situation. Priorities of the government needs to be realigned with current situation.”

#### **SUPPORT PROVIDED TO TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL - LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION (LOI) POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION**

Language of instruction remains a significant issue for the nation. In 2007, English was adopted as the national language, presenting challenges to teachers and students in Arabic-speaking regions.<sup>64</sup> Further, mother tongue instruction was also prioritized, which, in South Sudan, involves many indigenous languages. This issue is deeply politicized and highly sensitive in the current conflict context, given that the community view of language is inextricably linked with tribal customs and history. The current assessment revealed a mixed level of understanding of current LOI policies in South Sudan. One state-level key informant stated, “the LOI to be mother tongue for the first three years of school – and this can be up to the discretion of local authorities.” This approach was applauded by at least one-third of the respondents who commented on this issue, as it allows children to communicate freely and comfortably with each other throughout the primary cycle.

Another state-level key informant said the situation is more challenging, and is based upon the “number of children who speak one language. Many ethnic groups together, then English or Arabic are used.” However, a third key informant at the state level said, “I can say it is only government that know the policies established to determine the language of instruction in South Sudan, we only received our texts in English.” This opinion was held by the vast majority of teachers interviewed for this assessment at schools within POC sites and in surrounding communities – books are typically only available in English and not in local languages.

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<sup>62</sup> Robinson and Latchem, 2003, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Ginsburg and Pigozzi, 2010, p. 559.

<sup>64</sup> Beleli et al., 2007.



In one instance, a key informant noted a substantial difference in the quality of education provided to students attending a school in the POC sites versus those attending schools in the surrounding community. This respondent noted:

“I was in [community x] in the POCs. The children there are better placed in comparison to those in the town. I saw a teacher preparing children for exams in the town. The children were struggling to say the words. The teacher asked a child to write the letter on board but could not. I know the children are Dinka and the language used at home is Dinka but the teaching is in English and that is the problem. The child is struggling to make the transition from mother tongue to English. Also, teachers are not well trained.”

One national informant employed with an INGO cited at least one previous study conducted on the effect of LOI and teaching quality as a promising avenue for South Sudan. This study suggests teachers in developing countries were more motivated to teach when they are able to speak in the maternal language (among other factors, including a reduced curriculum and increased contact hours).<sup>65</sup> Such a combination of factors has been linked to the success of community-managed schools with teachers drawn from local populations, even using teachers with minimal formal schooling.

Overall, the LOI policies in South Sudan appear to be encouraging in reflecting the true linguistic and tribal diversity of South Sudan but overly ambitious – translation of the policy to practice poses a significant challenge for school staff and policymakers alike given the number of languages that exist and the absence of material and financial resources and political implications.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

### CURRICULA

A Ministry official reported the Sudanese curriculum was in use prior to 2005, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed. At that time, efforts were made to develop a curriculum suitable for Southern Sudan, through a series of workshops that used curricula from Uganda and Kenya as models. The respondent explained that the “South Sudan Curriculum” was a knowledge-based curriculum, which encouraged memorization over activity-based learning methods.

According to the Global Partnership for Education, a revised curriculum framework was launched in 2015:

“The review of the curriculum was grounded on key legal documents, including the interim Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan (2011), the Education Act (2012), and the [General Education Strategic Plan \(2012- 2017\)](#), which guide education and the development of South Sudan.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> DeStefano, 2007, pp. 160-161.

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/south-sudan-celebrates-its-first-comprehensive-curriculum>

The education Ministry in South Sudan has announced that the content has been created for grades one to 12 of the formal system and grades one to eight of the non-formal system. These include the curriculum framework, syllabi, subject overviews (for early childhood development, primary one to eight, secondary one to four, ALP, and community girls' schools), and a teachers' classroom assessment guide. Nonetheless, some key informants said teaching and learning materials meant to support teachers and students alike in implementation of the new curriculum have not yet been developed or rolled out to schools.

The process for developing the curriculum appears to have been inclusive and participatory. A team of 200 members worked together to design it, "(including 31 women) comprising curriculum designers, subject experts, university lecturers and teachers, alternative education specialists and facilitators, as well as curriculum experts from the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), who worked with the Curriculum Foundation (UK)."<sup>67</sup> The formal curriculum was developed through a series of workshops including 140 specialists to provide representation of all ten states.

In contrast to the prior curriculum, the new one is outcome-based rather than learning-based, and encourages student-centered teaching methods.

"It is called outcome-based curriculum and is good for us. It is based on competences, creativity, skills, cooperation and attitudes. It is learner-centered, where the teacher is a mentor or a facilitator. The teacher introduces the topic and the students do the work and supervise; and students report back what they have done. We want to stimulate the mind so as to think rather than copying what someone knew." – Ministry official

The new curriculum is said to follow an "8-4-4" structure – with eight years of primary school, four years of secondary school, and four years of tertiary school – and introduces early childhood development (ECD) schooling.

Despite the recent efforts undertaken by government and partners, almost all respondents at the local levels said there was no change in the curriculum content since either the 2013 or 2016 conflicts.

"There is no change in the curriculum, since the war started in 2013, nothing has been working with this government. Education is just left without any attention, it is the community who is trying with the help from the NGOs to provide us books and helping the teachers. No changes made on any education books." – PTA Chairman.

Moreover, interviews show schools have been using sources from a variety of different places. Among the international community, the most commonly cited curricula include the original South Sudanese curriculum, followed by the Kenyan, Ugandan, and Sudanese curricula. One respondent also mentioned the use of the Ethiopian curriculum near the border with Ethiopia. Some national Ministry officials also recognized this fact during KIs.

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/south-sudan-celebrates-its-first-comprehensive-curriculum>

“South Sudan has had a curriculum for many years. In going from place to place, it’s likely that schools in these different places are using different curricula. To really know what is making a difference, have to go to the schools to see the instructions and guidelines being followed. A lot of things may seem to be in order on a high level, but it’s not what happens on the ground.” – Ministry official

At the sub-national level, most respondents claimed that the South Sudanese curriculum was being used (49 respondents). The next most commonly reported curriculum was “East African” (9 respondents), followed by “Sudanese” (5 respondents) and “Ugandan” and “Kenyan” (4 respondents each). Therefore the most commonly used curriculum in the areas sampled for this study use the old South Sudan curriculum but there is still significant use of foreign curricula in schools.

The table below provides a breakdown of curriculum type by state according to sub-national level KIs:

**TABLE 19. CURRICULUM TYPE BY STATE**

State	Curriculum Type					
	South Sudanese	"East African" (unspecified)	Sudanese	Ugandan	Kenyan	"Foreign" (unspecified)
Central Equatoria	18	9	2	4	4	0
Western Equatoria	5	0	0	0	0	0
Jonglei	9	0	0	0	0	1
Upper Nile	10	0	3	0	0	0
Lakes	7	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Sub-national level key informant interviews

Central Equatoria has the largest variety of curricula, with respondents identifying South Sudanese, “East African, Ugandan, Kenyan and Sudanese curriculum as being offered. Respondents in Upper Nile also reported using the Sudanese curriculum, not surprising, given its proximity to Sudan.

In interviews, respondents were asked whether the curriculum incorporates the needs of various groups of students (e.g., IDP, pastoralists, male/female, people with disabilities, different ethnic groups). Five Ministry officials responded favorably and one provided a negative answer due to a perceived absence of material for students with disabilities. Within the positive feedback, one Ministry official alluded to the specific needs of pastoralists being addressed:

“The curriculum is for all types of learners, such as blind, deaf or people from pastoralist background. The syllabus is relevant to their situations. For example, there are books for pastoralists. The teachers move from place to place with them, teaching.”

The INGO/donors informants at both the national and sub-national levels had more nuanced replies to the same question. Of the 27 KIIs conducted with this respondent group, nine favorable answers were provided compared to eight unfavorable; other interviewees lacked information concerning the curriculum. Within this group of 17, some spoke in relation to the new curriculum while other addressed the curricula being used in schools. Among those that referred to the new curriculum, some examples of inclusivity provided were the representation of pastoral children, peacebuilding elements and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) content.

When teachers were asked the same question, respondents from 10 of 26 focus groups believed different students’ needs were addressed, while respondents from 15 groups said they were not. For those with a favorable view, they most often cited the mix of gender-related topics, and one respondent commented different tribes were portrayed in the curriculum. Those with unfavorable views argued the needs of children with disabilities were not met through the curriculum, nor were they represented in the material. A smaller number of critics felt foreign curricula or language of instruction were not appropriate for their students. One respondent said the South Sudanese curricula ignored the presence of Islam and Arabic in South Sudan, and another decried the absence of sex education for girls, positing that its absence results in girls’ vulnerability to early pregnancy.

“Not all children are considered in the curriculum content because; disabled children like deaf and blind are not presented at all” – Teacher

“The curriculum is not sensitive to the fact that there are different religions in the country thus, there is no official book for teaching Islam. There is no book for teaching Arabic and books being used in schools are directly adapted from Uganda, Kenya or even UK and not suitable especially for lower primary teaching in the context of South Sudan. There is need to review and develop a curriculum that is inclusive and comprehensive.” – Teacher

Among community members, practically all said there was no differentiation in the school curriculum. Some contended the lack of differentiation unified the children, while others argued it meant special needs were not addressed.

Twenty-three of the 25 female student focus groups said what they learned in school would help in getting jobs, and 12 said it would improve healthy habits. In addition, 10 of the female student focus groups volunteered that science was a particularly helpful subject, and five of the female student focus groups called English instrumental for employment. Three groups mentioned CRE as a useful subject, and two groups mentioned math.

“The subjects will be useful because if I learn science I will become a doctor, or a teacher, or a governor. I will also know between good and bad or evil things. I will

know which good food to eat and the bad one not to eat and I will be healthy.” – Female student

Eighteen of the 25 male focus groups addressed the same question. Of them, 13 groups felt what they learned would lead to a job, and three said the curriculum would help them be healthy. Nine groups mentioned the usefulness of science, five referenced math, while three groups argued that English, social studies, and CRE were beneficial.

“I hope I will be someone in the future. I will be a learned person in future. Education is a key to success.” – Male student

“It is useful for me. I see people holding positions of ministers and vice president. I want to be like them in the future.” – Male student

When female students were asked specifically if they felt there were any missing subjects in the curriculum, respondents in six of the 25 groups had no additional subjects to suggest. The remaining 19 groups provided recommendations, and two of six groups with respondents saying no additional subjects were needed also provided recommendations. The subjects mentioned by these 21 groups included: agriculture (11 groups), Arabic (seven), computer lessons (six), and art and crafts (five). In addition, three different groups proposed French, health education, writing and home economics, and two said reading, “technical training,” and dance/drama should be added. Seven languages were requested in total, with Arabic being the most frequently sought.

The same question was asked to male students during focus group discussions. Three groups said they had no other subjects in mind. Similar to the female students, the most common subjects requested included agriculture (12 groups) and Arabic (10), followed by computer (four), social science (three), Dinka (three), arts (three), French (threes), science (two groups), English grammar (two groups), and home science (two groups). Five different languages were suggested, as well as the overarching description of “mother tongue.”

In addition, Arabic was requested by students across all five states visited (five groups in Jonglei, four in both Central Equatoria and Western Equatoria, three in Upper Nile and one in Lakes) by both male and female students. French was in demand among students in Central Equatoria (three), Western Equatoria (two), and Upper Nile (one), perhaps influenced by the presence of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) or the Central African Republic (CAR). According to the UNHRC, 5.4 percent of refugees in South Sudan are from the DRC, and 0.7 percent are from CAR.<sup>68</sup> Other languages requests were made in Lakes (one group for Dinka), Upper Nile (one for English), Jonglei (two for Dinka, two for Kiswahili and one for English), and Western Equatoria (one for “mother tongue,” one for Zande, and one for Lingala).

When considering peacebuilding content, teachers related the question to the curriculum they used and not the newly developed curriculum. Within the 26 teacher focus groups, eight groups said peacebuilding was not included in the curriculum. On the other hand, 12 groups said peacebuilding was

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<sup>68</sup> <http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/country.php?id=251>

integrated within Christian Religious Education (CRE) classes, and 10 groups said those themes were woven into social studies (SST). Three groups also referenced the existence of “peace clubs” for students, and three groups said they had sports/recreation activities helpful in building peace. Other schools also offer opportunities for sports and drama, although teachers did not refer to those as specifically peacebuilding in nature.

Aside from integration of peacebuilding topics, some issues with curriculum content were mentioned that have the potential of leading to some tension or conflict among communities. These pertain to the “old” South Sudanese curriculum, as well as some of the foreign curricula in use. Among these concerns are the following:

- Portrayal of only four out of the 64 South Sudanese tribes in textbooks (student groups, partner organizations); overemphasis on one tribe in particular (student groups, teacher groups); “absence of certain community needs” (teacher groups).
- Mother tongue not being taught, despite desire for it (student groups).
- Use of English instead of Arabic; lack of “religious guidelines and information.”
- Use of foreign curricula neglecting South Sudanese culture, values, and history (religious leaders, teacher groups).

Contrary to teachers and community members, Ministry officials consider the new curriculum when responding to questions in regards to peacebuilding. Of the nine KIs with Ministry officials, six respondents answered that there were peacebuilding activities in the curriculum. Two of the respondents also called peacebuilding a cross-cutting issue in the curriculum, two respondents said gender was a major theme, and two respondents cited sports as part of peace education within the curriculum.

“[There is] critical thinking and working in groups; and also there is culture and heritage. We have to know our culture. Moreover, children must learn to be good citizens, with no xenophobic behavior. Dances are to be performed, and so that learners can love one another. Also, religion is a must in all forms in the new curriculum. This is a country which needs God. The new curriculum is to create unity, love and peace among ourselves through the activities done in class, cooperation. Giving examples of love through drama, dance, sports and other activities is important. [...] There is a lot of creativity and skills imparted. It is different from the old one which teaches memorization” – Ministry official

“Peacebuilding is a crosscutting issue as well as gender, environment, which should be included in all learning. The life skills and peacebuilding was launched in 2015 after the conflict, and so reflected the conflict situation.” – Ministry official

Similarly, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) confirms many of these findings in describing the new curriculum<sup>69</sup>. The GPE reports the curriculum aims to focus learners on their “shared national identity”, and emphasizes values such as justice, democracy, tolerance, and respect as well as human rights and gender equity. These values are said to be “mainstreamed throughout the curriculum”.

Although the textbooks are not yet available, the MoGEI official Subject Overviews document outlines the presence of these values<sup>70</sup>. The curriculum is said to have three cross-cutting issues: 1) peace education, 2) life skills, and 3) environment and sustainability. These issues are most evident in expected learning outcomes for the following subjects: social studies, religious education, the arts, and physical education and health.

One of the four “strands” of social studies, is peace education guided by the question: “How can we live together peaceably?” Peace education outcomes for social studies include the following:

- Learners should find out about the strategies used to promote peace and harmony;
- They should know about different sorts of rights, such as constitutional and human rights;
- They should be aware of the importance of HIV/AIDS and STIs and the need to promote gender equality;
- They should build their own skills of peaceful living and conflict resolution and be committed to peace and reconciliation.

There is also a focus on learning about landmines and unexploded ordinance in P2 and P3. Religious education focuses on spiritual understanding and a range of studies that includes the major world religions (Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism) as well as African spiritual figures. The inclusion of numerous religions is a positive step, given the prior focus on Christian Religious Education (CRE) alone. Nevertheless, textbooks and teachers will need to be careful in their presentation of these, especially when approaching locally relevant religions and figures (e.g., Christianity versus Islam and gods and prophets from local tribes).

In the arts, students are encouraged to learn to appreciate the visual arts, dance, and drama from their own and other cultures, which promotes multicultural values of peace education. In Physical Education and Health, students are expected to develop team work skills that could also contribute to peacebuilding.

In addition, national languages used in P1-P3 are to be selected by the school itself, which, in theory, is good practice, so long as parents and community members are involved in making this decision. English

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<sup>69</sup> <http://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/south-sudan-celebrates-its-first-comprehensive-curriculum>

<sup>70</sup> [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/ss\\_curriculum\\_framework\\_-\\_subject\\_overviews.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/ss_curriculum_framework_-_subject_overviews.pdf)

is used in P1-P3, though only orally, and P4 is the transition year for introducing English in reading and writing. Arabic is offered in P5-S4, and is compulsory in P5-P8. The addition of Arabic is useful given the demand of Arabic among students, although some may disagree with its introduction in P5 as opposed to an earlier grade.

## **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Key informants and focus group participants (students and teachers) reported PTA/parents as being the most active/influential community group in schools settings. Their involvement, according to respondents, can be both positive and negative. On the positive side, parents/PTA members were the most likely to mobilize actors, either through awareness raising, advocacy or mobilization of funds and/or initiatives. They are also the most likely to volunteer their time to either teach or build a school. Parents/PTA often play a critical role in resolving problems among students and promoting peacebuilding activities.

Respondents, said parents also influence the education environment by keeping their children from attending school. Their most cited reasons for doing so included safety, fear of their daughters getting pregnant or because they needed children to help them at home when they are unwell. As the in-depth-interview results in Table 6, reveal, however, most parents approve of their children attending schools, including their daughters, and their support for access to education eclipses their fears concerning it. These figures suggest that while parents may be worried about their children's safety, their preference, in theory, would be for them to attend school.

School Management Committees (SMCs) are made up of the head teacher and elected members, including a local government official, a chairperson, and a head boy and girl<sup>71</sup>. Teachers, international NGOs/donors, Ministry officials, local NGOs and County Education Department officers portrayed SMCs as helping to solve problems in schools and resolve and prevent conflicts in general. SMCs were referenced far less than PTAs by respondents, which may be the case if there are fewer SMCs formed in schools. SMCs were often said to work with PTA members, and, to a lesser degree, to mobilize funds and resources. A few respondents said SMCs were responsible for recruiting teachers and creating and implementing school-development plans, as well as controlling school fee policies. The PTA and SMC were often cited by key informants and focus groups (68 of 99 KIs and two of 26 teacher FGDs) as governance bodies to ensure security within schools. Teachers said the PTA role is to collaborate with community members to help children co-exist peacefully, particularly while at school. Sixty-eight key informants spoke about the PTA and SMCs and their roles to ensure schools remain safe for students. Notably, SMCs did not come up in conversation at all during student focus groups discussion.

Key informants and focus groups participants provided their input about sources of support available to students at the schools, particularly with regards to safety and security at the school level. Across all focus groups and key informants at state and national levels, the most frequently cited response was teachers. Additional groups that were cited as sources of support to ensure the safety of students include (in descending order of frequency) PTAs and SMCs, community leaders and members, the church, and police or other government authorities.

Teachers cited themselves and schools administrators as the people to whom students turn during conflicts while they are at school. Twenty-two of the 26 teacher focus groups said teachers support

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<sup>71</sup> [http://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/32\\_EES\\_Madi\\_Role-of-SMC.pdf](http://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/32_EES_Madi_Role-of-SMC.pdf)



students while school is in session. In addition to providing lessons, teachers also provide activities for students that enable them to focus on things other than their pain. Additionally, teachers' responsibilities towards students extend to ensuring their safety and security while they are at school. At school, teachers are usually the first line of support when students experience harm. Students also cited teachers most frequently as a source of support when they are at school. Forty-seven of 52 student focus groups said they could rely on their teachers for support. One male student, in particular, stated, "I can talk to my teacher and tell him that I need help."

In addition discuss safety and security at schools, key informants and focus group participants discussed instances in which communities become more unified. Respondents mentioned different community leaders' essential roles in ensuring unity within the community. Other themes that emerged more frequently among the 74 sub-national level Klls that were related to social cohesion amongst various communities included intermarriage between different ethnic groups (19 Klls), cultural or traditional activities (14 Klls), the church (17 Klls), and communal work or activities (14 Klls) such as eating together or coming together at a common gathering place.

As previously noted, the church has a strong influence in schools and communities. Among the male student groups, some examples of references to the church/religious leaders include sending youths to help build a school, paying visits to children to teach the Bible, fostering a community of friends, and encouraging students to trust their teachers. A female student said she could turn to her pastor if someone at school were harmed. All respondent groups had a positive perception of church involvement in education. Among teachers, INGOs/donors, Ministry officials, County Education Department officials, local NGOs, CBOs and other community leaders, respondents called the church a major contributor to social cohesion through prayer, song, dance, and peaceful messages. In addition, many churches run their own schools, and are directly involved in education provision and teacher recruitment. Churches are known for encouraging students to attend schools, and there were also references to churches teaching mother tongue and adult education.

"They go to the church and in the church we don't have one only tribe in the church, we are having many tribes in the church, whereby I and you might know each other and tomorrow also you meet me and said, I met you last time in the church and for so and so and so, this also make people to be together and the same to the ethnic group." – Community leader

"All the schools are closed. But now they are trying to start from primary and those who came with their children let the school to be functioning. It is a way I encourage those who are outside that, the education is started. The children are in the school and everything is going slowly and slowly. I think Episcopal Church they had. The Episcopal Church, I learned that their school is opened. Some children came and they opened." –Religious leader

Youths also have a positive and negative influence on education settings. When asked about children/youth's involvement in schools, 12 of 25 male student focus groups and 15 of 25 female student focus groups said they are involved in cleaning school grounds by either sweeping or cutting grass around the schools. Three male student groups said children do not provide support, while 23 female student groups reported the same. Students often interpreted this question as relating to providing financial support, which explains why they cited help cleaning the school as well as "no support" – two seemingly contradictory answers. Three male student groups and three female student groups said

youths are involved in schools as teachers. A less common response from both gender groups was material and financial provision from children/youth and help in building schools. A few female and mixed gender student focus groups also elicited responses about youth's involvement in theft, rape, harassment, fighting and gang activity.

“I don't feel safe on my way to or from school because there are a group of boys who disturb us on the way to school or back home. Some girls have been raped on their way to school.” – Female student

In focus groups of teachers, respondents often reported some trouble caused by youth. Examples include theft, carrying guns, trashing schools, sexually harassing and stealing from girls, and attacking students. On the other hand, some groups reported youths were involved in either security or peacekeeping. Similarly, one CBO member alleged youths were involved in robbing, killing and drinking. Other community leaders reported youth clubs and youths active in peacemaking, teaching, and playing with other youth groups. INGOs/donors also shared negative responses in relation to youths, saying they stole, misused bathrooms, were armed, and were “trouble makers,” although they also said youths play with other groups. Klls with County Education Department officers and a national ministry were more positive, with responses about their support as teachers, or in the Young Men's Christian Association and in a student union.

Women's groups are also active in the educational realm. Key informants at both the national and sub-national levels said women's groups are responsible for promoting social cohesion and peacekeeping. In fact, their role is at times described in a manner akin to the church, as women are said to provide morality in the community, advise children, and provide moral support to teachers.

“At least these days through the [...] project the women made peace initiatives. The women [from two different tribes] plan[ned] and thought of talking to the [members of a third tribe] in the POC. [...] We had a very good face to face meeting for the first time and everybody's fears were cleared away that day. We reconcile[d] and agreed to live together as one. Women started that peace initiative and later on when the men saw that the women were interacting without any problem, the men also started joining us in coming together.” – Women's representative

Respondents from the national ministry, the County Education Department, CBOs, and the community described women as food and water providers for schools. Women's groups are also involved in providing funds and other resources, as well as volunteering time to help build the schools or teach if they are educated. They also encourage students and parents to send their children to school, and in some communities, monitor children's attendance in schools.

Village chiefs/elders are a final category of community members with a high degree of involvement in education. Across the different respondent groups, the most common association with village chiefs is their role peacekeeping/resolving conflicts, followed by solving community problems in general. In addition, several respondents argued village chiefs could be great advocates for encouraging children to go to school. A smaller number of respondents mentioned their ability to mobilize funds in the community, followed by their role in donating land to for schools. On the other hand, several less positive references arose in interviews with INGOs/donors about village chiefs being nepotistic in

pushing for friends to be hired as teachers, as well as allowing certain “cultural practices” to take place, such as girl marriages.

## **EDUCATION POLICY**

### **PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

One of the most positive aspects of the government’s involvement in education is a supportive policy environment. This is most apparent in the new curriculum framework as well as the draft Education Strategic Plan (ESP 2017-2022). In particular, the ESP frames the plan around contextual risks and risk mitigation, and aims to promote resilience and social cohesion. The document also lays out priority programs, expected outcomes, and an M&E framework.

At the school and community level, KII and FGD respondents discussed several topics that could be utilized to form policies or regulations. When asked about mechanisms that might exist at schools to address or prevent conflicts such as forms of violence or harm against children, KII and FGD respondents noted that schools have rules and regulations in place to address conflicts that might arise at school. In five (of 26) teacher focus groups, participants spoke about school policies, rules, and regulations in place to address conflicts and violence in the schools, but did not go further into describing these policies. In one teacher group, participants discussed the teachers’ code of conduct, a regulation on which they were trained and which helps them ensure that their own behavior is aligned with expectations. Another teacher focus group specified that their school has a strong school administration and a disciplinary committee to handle issues, as well as a strong female teacher who provides guidance to girls. In one of the teacher focus groups, a teacher mentioned that he and two other colleagues received peace building and conflict mitigation training. They created peace, debate, and Bible clubs so that students from his school could work together despite their different tribal backgrounds. This teacher also noted that, in addition to the clubs, they are also providing counselling and guidance to the school. One teacher mentioned that there are no systems in place to address violence at the school where he works because there have not been any conflicts at the school. Sixteen key informants discussed peacebuilding efforts as opportunities to instill security in the schools. Additionally, a few student focus groups said that along with a fence, their schools also employed gatekeepers who managed the inflow of students and teachers, which reassured students that they are safe.

Aside from the school and community level, there are a host of different actors working in and influencing education in South Sudan, as presented in Table 17, which shows various community members’ perceptions of different actors involved in their communities.

Regarding government capacity, respondents most often spoke in regards to meager financial resources, will versus capacity, and the effects of redrawing state/county lines in political administration. Respondents from both the national and sub-national levels agreed government has a low resource capacity. This is especially true for the MoGEI, which UNICEF reports to have received only 5 percent of the national budget in 2014-2015, in contrast to nearly 50 percent of the budget for security and rule of law<sup>72</sup>. A Country Education Department official specified that in 2014-2016, they were receiving operating grants from the government, but that was no longer the case. In addition, a member of the

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<sup>72</sup> [http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/61951/1/\\_smbhome.uscs.susx.ac.uk\\_dm50\\_Desktop\\_file.pdf](http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/61951/1/_smbhome.uscs.susx.ac.uk_dm50_Desktop_file.pdf)

INGO/donor group argued that most resources have been provided by NGOs since 2013. On a related note, a Ministry official said resource mapping was needed to verify what was coming from donors versus the government.

Respondents grappled with the prioritization of education versus the capacity of government officials. The County Education Department officials argued that the government was trying, and thus had the will, but lacked the capacity. Among the members of the INGO/donor community, several respondents argued that the government has the capacity but does not prioritize education, and others stated that at the Payam/county and state levels, more could be done. A few others said the government was trying, that the technical staff was competent and hardworking, and that there were “good people” in the ministry.

Several respondents also mentioned challenges that arose with the recent creation of additional states and counties. One INGO/donor respondent called the situation “a profound mess.” Similarly, one Ministry official described the challenge created by the changes in government roles and responsibilities:

“Now, the government in South Sudan has changed its administrative set up. There used to be 10 states in South Sudan, now there are 33 states. There were 79 counties, now there are more than 200 counties. People are at a loss for what to do. They might be the same people who have worked there for several years since independence, but now, they have different roles. There is also no capacity. People deal with these changes and lack of capacity in different ways at the different government levels. Some people still function as if there are 79 counties. It’s difficult for the central government to deal with this. The government is at a loss. It’s even difficult for them to know who is on their payroll.”

The different programs sponsored by the international community have been reviewed in the background section of this report. In addition, priority areas uncovered during interviews include: girls’ education, primary education, AES/ALPs, and children from pastoral communities. Outside education, WASH activities were often reported in school settings. On a related note, the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management is seeking to develop a Natural Disaster Risk Management policy to mitigate the risks of drought and famine<sup>73</sup> with the South Sudan Red Cross supporting the government in this effort. The South Sudan Red Cross is “also preparing to collaborate with the Ministry in the development of community level risk assessments, awareness raising on risk and reduction strategies and the development of effective early warning systems at the grassroots level”.

Returning to the topic of education, aside from service delivery, respondents often referred to the international community in terms of providing protection and security. In focus groups of male and female students and teachers, and in KIIs with community leaders, respondents most often discussed the protection provided by the U.N. in POC sites. Interestingly, a male student noted in one focus group that UNMISS works only for those inside the camp and is not concerned for anyone outside of it. Only one teacher group said that INGOs/donors 1) gave counseling and guidance, 2) supported efforts

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<sup>73</sup> <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-law/news/africa/drafting-a-disaster-risk-management-policy-in-south-sudan-if-we-fail-to-plan-we-plan-to-fail-73938/>

concerning Gender Based Violence (GBV), 3) removed water from POC camp using a machine, 4) vetted teaching applicants, 5) helped students with disabilities, 6) built a school fence, and 7) restricted entry into POCs. In KIIs with INGO/donor representatives, respondents discussed the international communities' role in ensuring school buildings are only used as sites for learning, protecting children, and giving children a home. One of these respondents complained of insufficient funding for emergency preparedness.

Respondents also commonly referenced INGOs/donors peacebuilding efforts. Community-based informants said INGOs advocate for peaceful coexistence, including among youth, and use sports as means for peacebuilding. INGOs/donors themselves made multiple references to recreational and athletic activities and peacebuilding curricula, radio and drama programs. They also mentioned uniting people by hiring people from different tribes to work together, and working with government. One respondent suggested INGOs/donors focused more on peacebuilding than learning.

Fewer respondents said INGOs/donors activities affected the supply of education service delivery. The chief example provided by INGOs/donor representatives and sub-national level informants was of INGOs luring away qualified teachers and education officials by offering better-paying positions. A few respondents said even security guards hired by INGOs were paid better than teachers or even education inspectors.

“I who is talking myself, the salary is not enough, my children are now in the university now and can't continue with their studies as am not able to pay my children's school fees” am now thinking where can I go to look for a job, should I go for agriculture, agriculture you can even die, if continue like this I will leave my job, because why should I work, the salary will not be enough, should I die or its better I go and look for any job even if being a watchman in NGOs or a better place” –County Education Department inspector.

INGO/donor representatives and informants from the community also said donors are pulling out programming support, either due to decreased funding or conflict.

The next most common argument about INGOs/donors was that they take the place of the government by providing educational services and materials. This opinion was shared by INGOs/donors and sub-national level informants. One respondent said, “the only industry left is the aid industry.” A Ministry official also complained groups will go into schools without requesting permission from the government.

Finally, a few respondents from the INGO/donor community asserted actors in their group might have contributed to tension. For example, during a food shortage, food was provided to IDPs, causing the neighboring community to be resentful. In another example, a Ministry official was not taken up on his idea because one group said it was their type of work. Another respondent reported having heard complaints that access to funding was only for emergencies.

Similarly, the UNICEF report found members of the ministry at the national and sub-national levels, as well as education partners, were concerned about “the emergence of a parallel system of education, based on the use of different curricula, teacher training programs, and management approaches (e.g., school fees), in humanitarian contexts [...] provided nearly exclusively by (international) humanitarian organizations, with limited government engagement”. The report also documents perceived inequities in the humanitarian resource allocation. At the time of the report, most funding for education was going towards three states in particular that were experiencing the worst of the conflict: Jonglei, Unity and

Upper Nile. Other states were left with the impression that they were punished for being stable, and that violence was being rewarded. Moreover, “the diversion of funds from development to humanitarian response since late-2013 has significantly affected the operation of South Sudan’s education sector, placing additional pressures on a system that was already reproducing patterns of inequity and pressures for conflict.”

Education for children and youths in government- and opposition-held territories is often described by respondents as separate entities. A UNICEF “Learning for Peace” Report<sup>74</sup> terms them “parallel systems of education.” One INGO key informant explained:

“If you are perceived to be aligned with the IO, you will often end up [...] out in the bushes with no access to education. While people who are perceived to be aligned with the government are able to remain in towns or village centers with access to the services they usually have. We have tried to come up with these stop-gap measures like the funding of teacher incentives in IO areas and that kind of thing to try and counteract it a little. [...] They haven’t stopped us from giving the incentives in the IO areas for teachers – the government hasn’t stopped us.”

Although the ministry promotes the provision of education to all, according to a member of the INGO/donor group, it is not always easy to work with the government on doing so for political reasons.

Another perspective is found in the February 2016 UNICEF report<sup>75</sup> – issued before the July 2016 surge in violence. The report argues the government is not viewed as legitimate in opposition-held areas, and, therefore, cannot provide services:

“In many conflict-affected communities, including opposition-held areas, the government is viewed with hostility, and MoEST education services may be viewed as tools of the government, which restricts MoEST officials’ access here due to security concerns. This raises questions about how to support government services in a context in which the government is a key conflict actor. In cases where the government cannot provide education, humanitarian services are necessary.”

The same report acknowledges that DfID Girl’s Education South Sudan project was providing capitation grants in opposition held areas. The government might gain legitimacy in SPLM-IO- held regions if the SPLM-IO selects the education ministry, an opportunity it is allowed on a rotating basis under the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict<sup>76</sup>. Unfortunately, the MoGEI is not viewed as the most appealing ministry pick, nor would the SPML-IO be considered legitimate by others, as indicated in the UNICEF report:

“The education ministry may be among the last selected, due to its limited resources, may be allocated fewer government resources, and perceived as less legitimate at central and local levels if it is under the control of the political opposition.”

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<sup>74</sup> [http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/61951/1/\\_\\_smbhome.uscs.susx.ac.uk\\_dm50\\_Desktop\\_file.pdf](http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/61951/1/__smbhome.uscs.susx.ac.uk_dm50_Desktop_file.pdf)

<sup>75</sup> [http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/61951/1/\\_\\_smbhome.uscs.susx.ac.uk\\_dm50\\_Desktop\\_file.pdf](http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/61951/1/__smbhome.uscs.susx.ac.uk_dm50_Desktop_file.pdf)

<sup>76</sup> [http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/61951/1/\\_\\_smbhome.uscs.susx.ac.uk\\_dm50\\_Desktop\\_file.pdf](http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/61951/1/__smbhome.uscs.susx.ac.uk_dm50_Desktop_file.pdf)

Another challenge identified by a respondent is that the school calendars for children in IO- and government-held zones were different, and the need for a national unified calendar. The IO also influences the education system by either recruiting or attracting students to join them, thus taking them away from schools.

## **COORDINATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

With regards to coordination bodies, most respondents at the national level referred to the Education Cluster and other clusters, working groups/steering committees, the Education Donor Group, and the Partners in Education Group. The MoGEL plays an active role in convening these different actors. Aside from the national Education Cluster, there is also a cluster operating at the state and county levels. Specific organizations were also referenced, such as UNICEF, UNOCHA, UNKEA, UNHCR, WFO, UNFPR, ACTED, and Intersos. At the local level, respondents identified PTAs as being the primary point of coordination, with churches, SMCs and Board of Governors, chiefs and commissioners also providing support, though to a much smaller degree. SMCs and Board of Governors have the potential of providing a stronger link between teachers, students, and local government, since they are made up of representatives from each of these groups. In POC sites, Camp Management Committees, which are described as IDP leadership groups in the POC sites that provide a link between communities and NGOs, are another important group.

Representatives from the national ministry reported that the Education Transfer Monitoring Committee (ETCM) coordinates cash transfers, that sectoral plans and the national education forum provide a basis for coordination, and that it is developing a sector-monitoring-and-evaluation strategy. One official expressed the desire to create a public website to help stakeholders make informed decisions, and another rebuked donors for going directly to schools without communicating first with the ministry. A member of the international community cited obstacles to coordinating with the government. CBOs members said a women's union and "peace committee" also acted as coordinating mechanisms.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

RERA findings described in this report have led to a number of findings and recommendations. The RERA technical team, in close coordination with USAID/South Sudan, held two validation workshops in Washington DC and Juba, South Sudan. These workshops provided a critical opportunity for the RERA team to assess the relevance of preliminary findings and conclusions and the viability of emerging recommendations with key stakeholders who will ultimately be responsible for taking these recommendations forward. As with the findings, the conclusions and recommendations below have been organized by INEE domain. Note only the INEE domains and standards that are relevant to the current RERA design are listed below.

### **ACCESS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

#### **EQUAL ACCESS**

##### **CONCLUSIONS**

**The conflict has magnified challenges experienced by groups most likely to be out of school: orphans and separated children, girls, and pastoralists.**

- These groups are out of school due mainly to economic reasons and responsibilities outside of school, such as caring for family members, early marriage for girls, working to earn income, and rearing livestock.
- The conflict has also increased the number of separated children.

**School closures due to the conflict have further reduced the number of accessible schools.**

- Access is frequently limited by the lack of schools nearby, often as a result of schools closing as a result of attacks on education (e.g. destruction, looting, occupation, etc.)
- Transportation options to the nearest school often do not exist or are too expensive.

**Ethnic identity seems to have little influence on access in POC sites and certain surrounding communities, probably due to the mono-ethnic makeup of those areas.**

- Nevertheless, ethnic-related conflict adversely affects access to schools in surrounding communities. In these communities, teachers and students are unable to safely travel to and from school, schools are closed, and populations are displaced.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The MoGEI, with support from USAID and qualified implementing partners, should:

- Identify innovative ways to **adapt education services**, including accelerated learning programs, TVET, and other non-formal education programs, to the needs of out-of-school groups.
- Work with community groups to **identify existing safe transportation options** for all children and teachers.
- Work with relevant implementing partners to help communities enhance children’s security to and from school through **training in self-policing systems**
- Support development of education facilities and services that for **temporary spaces and closer** to where students reside (e.g., smaller community schools).
- Develop capacity among pastoral community members to provide **mobile schools** in which individuals are trained, equipped and embedded with migrating groups.
- Develop policy statement on **criteria of school accessibility** (e.g., all children will have access to education within one kilometer their residences).

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

**CONCLUSIONS**

**The ability of students to learn is hampered by multiple, often -compounded factors.**

- In addition to mental and emotional distress and hunger, other factors cited included overcrowded classrooms, interruptions in education, and the lack of teachers. Two or more of these factors often affect students simultaneously

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The MoGEI, with support from USAID and qualified implementing partners, should:

- Coordinate with County Education Departments, schools leaders, and PTA to develop **criteria for new volunteer teachers and recruit and train qualified members of the community** to support learning; provide volunteer teachers with incentives (e.g., transportation stipend, feeding, and housing); and ongoing/regular training.
- Invest more resources in expanding existing programs on training teachers and community members to provide **psychosocial support** to students.



- Coordinate with appropriate actors across sectors to implement **school feeding programs** equitably targeted across geographic regions to provide relief for short-term hunger.

## PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING

### CONCLUSIONS

The majority of children do not feel safe on the route to and from school.

- Depending on the location, students fear various threats: conflict crossfire, armed soldiers, men with arms, harassment, sexual violence, kidnapping, street children and wild animals.

Most student report generally feeling safer in school, but still cite specific risks.

- Factors make students feel unsafe at school include: structural conditions of school facilities (latrines and classrooms); flooding; harassment by other students; violence erupting in school, possibly as a result of the larger conflict (e.g., students from different ethnic groups fighting); Issues between parents and teachers/school administrators

Women and girls, in particular, face a range of threats while at school.

- Sexual harassment by other students and sexual violence by male students and male teachers.
- Menstruation, during which they might choose not to attend school, and early marriage, causing them to drop out of school to care for their new families.

Teachers and PTA/SMCs are seen as trusted authority figures and have taken on the responsibility of providing safety and security for students. This task includes protecting students from conflicts arising inside the school and from external threats that could penetrate to the school setting).

Schools, teachers, and students have been deeply affected by the conflict.

- In general, students live in fear and might choose not to attend school or join armed groups, either voluntarily or by coercion.
- Schools have been closed completely due to occupation by armed groups or IDP/refugees.

A range of activities in the wider school community appears to offer collaboration and social cohesion including:

- Schools and school activities create a sense of community among students, their respective communities, and school authorities, and allow them to interact with one another positively.
- School or sports events (games between different school groups, board games, debate/drama/peace clubs, bible study groups, parties that celebrate the beginning and end of the school year)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

USAID, in coordination with qualified implementing partners, should:

- Work with MoGEI and partners to explore developing or adapting education delivery closer to students' dwellings to decrease the commute time, and to enable students to travel during daylight hours.
- Help the MoGEI enhance training to PTA, SMCs, and teachers to better meet the needs of women and girl students.

- Support MoGEL efforts to identify locally generated solutions to protect women and girls in school.
- Help the MoGEL strengthen and expand teacher training in psychosocial support.
- In collaboration with the MoGEL and the Education Cluster, make resources available to meet teachers' own psychosocial needs.
- Support all supported schools with implementation of a teacher- and student-oriented Code of Conduct focusing on positive discipline in schools.
- Coordinate with appropriate MoGEL departments, WFP and other organizations providing food aid to implement targeted school feeding and teacher ration programs (to appropriate localities and during particular seasons)

In turn, the MoGEL, with support from USAID and qualified implementing partners, should:

- Support PTAs, SMCs, student groups and communities in collaborative risk mapping and reduction, including identify ways to protect students walking to and from school, including navigating traffic.
- Protect schools as civilian, neutral locations, and prevent occupation of school facilities by armed groups.
- Work with the international community and donors to provide additional external support for new school locations and resources when schools become occupied.

## FACILITIES AND SERVICES

### CONCLUSIONS

- Risks affecting students' safety include structural conditions of school facilities, such as latrines and classrooms, flooding.
- Women and girls face additional challenges that affect their education, such as menstruation, during which they may choose to not attend school.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

USAID should:

- Consider providing sanitary supplies for women and girls so they can attend school more regularly.
- Consider assisting the MoGEL and Education Cluster in procuring local materials to construct and maintain school facilities.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

### CURRICULA

#### CONCLUSIONS

Significant confusion surrounds the South Sudan curriculum. Schools currently use resources from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and elsewhere.

- Key informants named as favorable aspects of the national curriculum: focus on peacebuilding, citizenship, practical skills and TVET, reference to religious diversity(suggesting a focus on social

cohesion), using national languages of English and Arabic, highlighting gender-related topics and portrayal of different tribes.

- Less favorable viewed was the range of external curricula employed in schools suggest that it does not address the needs of children with disabilities, and depicts foreign history instead of South Sudan history.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Partners in the Education sector should bring different communities together (POC/non-POC sites, different ethnic groups and religions) in programming efforts, to mitigate the divide between groups. Continue to include peacebuilding activities (peace clubs, sports/recreation, debates, drama, poems and songs) in future program design. Capitalize on the curriculum framework's emphasis on teamwork.

## **ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

**Students in POC sites are performing better than their peers in surrounding communities.**

- Students in POC sites scored higher overall on math and reading assessments than those in surrounding communities. This outcome can be interpreted as a growing differential between identify groups and a potential driver or further grievance.
- Overall, while scores can be considered somewhat strong, female students, student in surrounding communities, and reading instruction are in need of additional support.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Ministry of Education, with support from donors such as USAID and selected implementing partners, should:

- **Enhance equity and learning outcomes between POC sites and surrounding communities**, as POC sites might have greater safety and higher-quality education
- Include **support for the areas of weaknesses identified by the assessment snapshot** education programming/interventions.

## **TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL**

### **ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

**Ongoing conflict and insecurity has severely disrupted teachers' presence in the classroom and the professional and material support they receive.**

- Students are dropping out or missing classes due to multiple factors, including teacher absences or poor teacher performance.
- Teachers report low or inconsistent salary payments, undermining motivation and enthusiasm for teaching.
- Teachers consistently request continued support in instructional techniques and educational materials in local languages (most texts in English).

- Some teachers struggle with classroom-management skills, given the multiple and varied cognitive/academic and socio-emotional needs of their students.
- Process for teacher recruitment are perceived as unclear or not merit based at county and community levels.
- Some teachers with less preparation or fewer credentials still report having a good grasp of teaching methodology and enjoy time in the classroom.
- Teacher-recruitment process is perceived as unclear or not merit based at county and community levels.
- Community acceptance can also be affect teachers’ self-confidence and motivation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education, with support from donors such as USAID and selected implementing partners, should:

- Provide **language training programs for teachers to support the LOI policy** of teaching in local languages in the early years and transitioning to English in primary school. Training modules should be **consistent among implementing partners** through the Education Cluster platform, so numbers and types of participants are defined and tracked, training materials are contextualized appropriately and implemented with fidelity. The MoGEI should, with support from donors and other organizations participating in the Education Cluster and other multilateral mechanisms in South Sudan, coordinate and manage the standards guiding teacher-training efforts within South Sudan.
- (Cross referenced with Teaching and Learning) In preparation for the roll out of the revised curriculum, develop training modules to orient teachers in its implementation and support timely MoGEI production of appropriate teaching materials in language of instruction.
- (Cross referenced with Access and Learning Environment) Invest more resources to expand existing programs on training teachers and community members to provide **psychosocial support** to students.
- Support current and interested community volunteers with **training on teaching techniques and using locally available resources** for teaching and learning
- (Cross referenced with Access and Learning Environment) Work with and build capacity of existing groups within the schools and the communities, such as the PTA, to **mobilize community members in support of education**

## TEACHER/EDUCATION PERSONNEL SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

### CONCLUSIONS

**The “teaching force” in South Sudan is a disparate group that struggles with a “fragile professional identity.”**

- Teachers often leave their posts for better-paying jobs in other sectors. Some teachers report willingly returning to the armed forces.
- Community members increasingly are stepping into teaching posts, leading to the need to reconsider “appropriate” teaching qualifications in this context.
- Deployment is a significant issue given the conflict – teachers not from local communities are at severe risk.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education, with support from donors such as USAID and implementing partners convened through the Education Cluster mechanism, should:

- Map the qualifications and experiences of volunteer teachers to **develop a medium- and long-term plan for their registration and training/support**. In coordination with an INGO operating in South Sudan called IMPACT, the MoGEI should track the numbers and qualifications of teachers through a human-resource management system developed by IMPACT.
- (Cross referenced with Access and Learning Environment) Coordinate with County Education Department, school leaders, and PTA to develop **criteria for new volunteer teachers and recruit qualified members of the community** to support learning; provide incentives (e.g., transportation stipend, feeding, and housing) and ongoing/regular training.

## **EDUCATION POLICY**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **The current system for teacher training and compensation is insufficient**

- The international community, including the EU and USAID, are providing financial incentives to teachers (to both certified and volunteer teachers), though many teachers are still without pay.
- “In order to ensure a coherent system of in-service teacher upgrading training including maximizing the use of partner training initiatives, The Ministry will work to establish and implement a Teacher Education Accreditation system. This system will clarify the certification requirements for all teachers, including those trained by partners (primarily NGOs, GESS, UNHCR and UNICEF). It will provide a framework for partners so that they can align their teacher training initiatives with government priorities, ultimately helping to meet the need for qualified teachers throughout the country.” Education Sector Plan
- The combination of existing pre-service and in-service training options is not sufficient to meet the need to improve the qualifications of teachers. Currently only two (of seven) TTIs are operating in the country.

#### **The national budget for education is unable to sustain the education sector**

- The Government budget allocation for education is dwarfed by that of other sectors

#### **The recent change in administration through the addition of states and counties has caused much confusion, though South Sudan has a positive policy environment**

- Several respondents also spoke of challenges created by the recent creation of additional states and counties.
- One of the most positive aspects of government involvement in education is a supportive policy environment. This support is most apparent in the new curriculum framework as well as the draft Education Strategic Plan (ESP 2017-2022).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The MoGEI should:

- Increase the proportion of budget to education to assess learning outcomes as a long-term priority, among other measurements of quality education in South Sudan. A variety of reliable and ongoing measurements of education quality will help to improve the system.
- Use RERA results to advocate for continuing the GESS program in some form.
- Create a medium- and long-term plan for institutionalizing the registration and compensation of teachers of all kinds (volunteer, trained, partially trained) within the government apparatus.

USAID should support the MoGEI to:

- Develop a short-, medium- and long-term plan with stakeholders from all levels, community groups, states, and political parties for education achievements, such as the SDGs, and using the draft Education Strategic Plan (2017-2022) as the guiding framework.

## EDUCATION COORDINATION

### CONCLUSIONS

#### **Coordination remains a challenge, leading to gaps in efforts.**

- Research findings are often not appropriately shared among partners.
- Education service delivery is complex and fragmented among different actors in South Sudan, which has led to parallel systems of education, that overemphasize humanitarian versus development work, and a low national budget for the sector.

#### **The education cluster works as a positive coordinating body between both the national and subnational levels, as well as between the MoGEI, donors, and implementing partners.**

- The MoGEI plays an active role in convening these different actors.
- Aside from the national Education Cluster, a cluster operates at the state and county levels. This cluster is critical to ensuring consistent dissemination of national-level policies.

#### **There are important opportunities for inter-cluster coordination.**

- WASH and health activities are commonly present in communities.
- The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management seeks to develop a Natural Disaster Risk Management policy to address drought and famine. The South Sudan Red Cross is supporting the government in this effort.
- Famine is a major risk faced by many children in South Sudan.
- A range of activities in the wider school community appears to advance collaboration and social cohesion including:
  - The church serves as a place of communion, and its leaders serve as authority figures from whom community members seek support.
  - Cultural activities or practices bring people together, but also serve as an opening for other groups to participate and learn traditional or cultural activities.
- Parent Teacher Associations and School Management Committees offer crucial sources of support to schools, as well as social cohesion, collaboration and risk reduction.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

USAID should:

- Continue to support MoGEI efforts to establish and support SMCs and PTAs (work that had already begun under the USAID Room to Learn project that has now closed) and build their capacities to collaborate with local government and communities. Be sure to involve other key community members in education efforts such as village chiefs and women’s groups.
- Help the MoGEI and qualified implementing partners identify opportunities for community and extracurricular activities in and around schools.

Donors and well equipped implementing partners should:

- Better coordinate advocacy efforts around key inequities emerging from the RERA, such as:
  - Education as an opportunity for peacebuilding and security,
  - Better quality of education within POC sites, as contrasted with surrounding communities,
  - Inconsistent/absent teacher payments, and
  - The desire for vocational and workforce development

The MoGEI, through the Education Cluster mechanism, should:

- Develop a short-, medium- and long-term plan with stakeholders from all levels, community groups, states, and political parties to plan towards longer term education achievements such as the SDGs.
- Pursue opportunities for stronger inter-cluster coordination (UNOCHA), especially with issues of DRR, WASH, health and nutrition, so education can meet other humanitarian needs, for example, school feeding programs.’

## APPENDIX A: GETTING TO ANSWERS MATRIX

Research Question	Types of Data to be Collected	Data Collection Method	Existing Documents with Relevant Data	Data Analysis Methods
I. What are the risks and opportunities to improving access to education and achievement across South Sudan?	Enrollment rates/estimates	Secondary Data Form	UNICEF Emergency Education Reports EMIS data (most recent is 2015) South Sudan Education Cluster report (Nov 2016) EGRA data (Montrose, 2016)	Descriptive statistics Content analysis Cross case analysis depending on site.
		Desk review		
		IDI		
	Attendance rates/estimates	Desk review		
		IDI		
	Mapping of education sites in and around POCs	Desk review		
		IDI		
	Number of IDP children in POC sites versus number enrolled in learning centers	Secondary Data Form		
		Desk review		
	Reasons children don't attend school (across different groups such as boys, girls, IDPs, children with disabilities, etc.)	FGD with teachers		
		FGD with children		
	Groups that are most likely not to attend school and reasons for this	KII		
		FGD with teachers		
		FGD with children		
		IDI		
Ways in which the conflict and natural disaster affect education access	KII			
	FGD with teachers			
	FGD with children			



Research Question	Types of Data to be Collected	Data Collection Method	Existing Documents with Relevant Data	Data Analysis Methods
		IDI		
	Ways in which conflict and natural disaster affects education achievement	FGD with teachers		
		FGD with children		
		KII		
	Results of math and reading assessment	Math and reading assessment		
	Availability of learning/training opportunities	FGD with teachers		
		KII		
		FGD with children		
		IDI		
	Opportunities and priorities for improving education	FGD with teachers		
2. What are the risks and protective factors that influence learners' safety when attending temporary learning spaces/schools/AE S centers?	Protection cluster statistics	Desk review	Attacks against schools map (2017); Joint Assessment Mission Northern Sudan (2004) Assessment Needs Report Displaced Persons South Sudan List (2011) Conflict Analysis Summary- South Sudan (2015) - PBEA summary Education Cluster Assessment	Descriptive statistics Content analysis Cross case analysis depending on site.
	Psycho-emotional state of children	FGD with children		
	Mapping of organizations in sites	Desk review		
	Safety of children in and around school	FGD with teachers		
		FGD with children		
		KII		
		IDI		
	Emergency plans at school	FGD with teachers		
		FGD with children		
		KII		
Social cohesion	FGD with teachers			
	FGD with children			

Research Question	Types of Data to be Collected	Data Collection Method	Existing Documents with Relevant Data	Data Analysis Methods
		KII	(2016) Humanitarian Needs Overview (2017) South Sudan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (2016)	
	Effect of conflict on safety	FGD with teachers		
		FGD with children		
		KII		
		IDI		
	How does safety differ for different groups (IDPs, girls/boys, children with disabilities, etc.)	FGD with teachers		
		FGD with children		
	Availability of facilities, resources and services	FGD with children		
		IDI		
	Use of schools as shelters or weapons depot	IDI		
3. What is the relationship between the conflict and service delivery (teacher qualification/language of instruction)?	Processes for teacher recruitment and salary payment	FGDs with teachers	UNICEF Emergency Education data Mott Macdonald data on teacher tracking	Descriptive statistics Content analysis.
		KII		
	Conflict and natural disaster effect on learning environment	KII		
		FGD with teachers		
		FGD with children		
		IDI		
	LOI policies	Desk review		
		FGD with teachers		
		KII		
	Parental involvement in supporting lessons	IDI		
	Teacher qualification levels in different sites	FGD with teachers		
		KII		
	Appropriate language skills/materials in various sites	IDI		

Research Question	Types of Data to be Collected	Data Collection Method	Existing Documents with Relevant Data	Data Analysis Methods
4. What is the relationship between the conflict and curriculum?	Relevance of curriculum content depending on different children (IDP, children with disabilities, girls/boys, etc.)	FGDs with children	South Sudan Curriculum Framework	Descriptive statistics Content analysis.
		FGD with teachers		
		KII		
	Impact of conflict on curriculum (pace, content, delivery)	FGD with teachers		
		KII		
	Conflict sensitive education curriculum content	FGD with teachers		
KII				
5. What are the external, internal and institutional influences on the learning environments (e.g. state actors, non- state actors, international community)?	Efforts carried out by partner groups in target areas	KII	Learning For Peace Report (Feb 2016) Key Education Policy documents Education Cluster Mapping	Descriptive statistics Content analysis Cross case analysis depending on site
		IDI		
	Capacity of central and local education offices	KII		
	Community groups and work	FGD with teachers		
		KII		
	Coordination of various groups.	IDI		
KII				

**TABLE A1. GETTING TO ANSWERS MATRIX**

## APPENDIX B. MATH AND READING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Math and reading assessment scores are presented both in average percent correct and average raw score.

**TABLE B1. AVERAGE CORRECT ITEMS BY GRADE AND GENDER – SURROUNDING COMMUNITY SUB-SAMPLE**

Assessment Type	P2		P3		P4	
	Male (n=11)	Female (n=8)	Male (n=7)	Female (n=10)	Male (n=12)	Female (n=12)
Math Assessment	82.5% (33.0)	64.1% (25.6)	87.5% (35.0)	63.3% (25.3)	81.7% (32.7)	78.8% (31.5)
Reading Assessment - English	59.3% (23.7)	55.3% (22.1)	74.3% (29.7)	56% (22.4)	71.5 (28.6)	81.0 (32.4)

Source: Math and reading assessment

**TABLE B2. AVERAGE CORRECT ITEMS BY GRADE AND GENDER – POC/IDP SUB-SAMPLE**

Assessment Type	P2		P3		P4	
	Male (n=11)	Female (n=8)	Male (n=2)	Female (n=8)	Male (n=7)	Female (n=4)
Math Assessment	87.3% (34.9)	85.0% (34.0)	85.0% (34.0)	84.1% (33.6)	95.4% (38.1)	83.8% (33.5)
Reading Assessment - English	85.7% (34.3)	69.4% (27.8)	87.5% (35.0)	81.9% (32.8)	95.0% (38.0)	88.8% (35.5)
Reading Assessment - Nuer	76.8% (30.7)	66.6% (26.6)	97.5% (39.0)	62.2% (24.9)	92.1% (36.9)	93.1% (37.3)

Source: Math and reading assessment

Math Assessment Section	P2		P3		P4	
	Male (n=22)	Female (n=16)	Male (n=9)	Female (n=18)	Male (n=19)	Female (n=16)
Numbers	97.2% (15.5)	87.9% (14.1)	96.5% (15.4)	84.4% (13.5)	98.0% (15.7)	93.8 % (15.0)
Operations	87.2% (14.0)	69.1% (11.1)	88.2% (14.1)	69.1 (11.1)	86.2% (13.8)	78.1% (12.5)
Shapes and Time	55.7p% (4.5)	58.6% (4.7)	65.3% (5.2)	55.6% (4.4)	65.1% (5.2)	56.3% (4.5)

**TABLE B3. STUDENT MATH ASSESSMENT AVERAGE TOTAL ITEMS CORRECT BY SECTIONS, GRADE AND GENDER**



Source: Math and reading assessment

**TABLE B4. STUDENT READING ASSESSMENT AVERAGE TOTAL ITEMS CORRECT BY SECTIONS, GRADE AND GENDER – ENGLISH**

Reading Assessment Section	P2		P3		P4	
	Male (n=22)	Female (n=16)	Male (n=9)	Female (n=18)	Male (n=19)	Female (n=16)
Letters and Sounds	90.5% (10.9)	85.4% (10.3)	94.4% (11.3)	87.5% (10.5)	95.6% (11.5)	90.6% (10.9)
Words	73.3% (5.9)	64.8% (5.2)	81.9% (6.6)	67.4% (5.4)	82.2% (6.6)	87.5% (7.0)
Reading Sentences	59.1% (4.7)	40.6% (3.3)	58.3% (4.7)	41.0% (3.3)	71.1% (5.7)	75.0% (6.0)
Reading and Listening	62.9% (7.5)	52.1% (6.3)	69.4% (8.3)	65.3% (7.8)	69.3% (8.3)	77.6% (9.3)

Source: Math and reading assessment

Reading Assessment Section	P2		P3		P4	
	Male (n=11)	Female (n=8)	Male (n=2)	Female (n=8)	Male (n=7)	Female (n=4)
Letters and Sounds	83.3percent (10.0)	82.3percent (9.9)	100percent (12.0)	68.8percent (8.3)	95.2percent (11.4)	100percent (12.0)
Words	72.7percent (5.8)	57.8percent (4.6)	100percent (8.0)	51.6percent (4.1)	83.9percent (6.7)	84.4percent (6.8)
Reading Sentences	63.6percent (5.1)	56.3percent (4.5)	100percent (8.0)	51.6percent (4.1)	92.9percent (7.4)	93.8percent (7.5)
Reading and Listening	81.8percent (9.8)	63.5percent (7.6)	91.7percent (11.0)	69.8percent (8.4)	94.0percent (11.3)	91.7percent (11.0)



**TABLE B5. STUDENT READING ASSESSMENT AVERAGE ITEMS CORRECT BY SECTIONS, GRADE AND GENDER – NUER**



Source: Math and reading assessment