

Building a better future:

Education for an independent South Sudan



Education for All Global Monitoring Report
Policy Paper – June 2011

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Overview

In July 2011, South Sudan will become an independent nation. It will start life at a crossroad. The new country faces immense challenges and immediate threats. Yet it also has a unique opportunity to break with a past blighted by war and chart a new course. Decisive leadership by the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) and resolute support from the international community could transform the lives of southern Sudan's people and make the new nation a human development success story.

Education has a vital role to play in building a better future for South Sudan. As one of the new country's founding fathers, Dr John Garang, constantly emphasized, it is through education that people and countries build the skills needed to strengthen self-reliance, expand choices, and create shared prosperity. As in other areas, the GoSS faces great challenges in education. South Sudan starts independent nationhood close to the bottom of the global league table for educational opportunity, especially for young girls. It has some of the world's lowest primary school enrolment rates, highest dropout rates and widest gender disparities. With a national population that is somewhat bigger than that of New York or London, the entire secondary school population could be accommodated in just five schools in those cities – and the girls in the last grade of high school in fewer than a dozen classrooms. With limited financial resources, high levels of poverty and insecurity, a fragile peace, and weak institutions, it will not be easy to change this picture.

Yet the challenges should not detract from the immense opportunities. Since the 2005 peace agreement, the primary school population has risen four-fold, by over 1 million children. More teachers are being recruited, classrooms are being constructed and many children are getting their first textbooks. The government has set the goal of achieving universal primary education and doubling the secondary school population by 2015 and is putting in place plans to improve quality. The targets are ambitious. But they reflect the hopes, aspirations and expectations of South Sudan's parents and children – and they are grounded in the Millennium Development Goals.

Successful construction of an education system that extends opportunity for quality education to all would transform the lives of South Sudan's people. It would provide a powerful impetus towards a lasting peace, shared prosperity and accelerated human development.

Aid donors have a vital role to play. The government and the country's people urgently need support. Development assistance is already making a difference. But current approaches to aid fall far short of what is required. The slow pace of disbursement under a pooled fund administered by the World Bank has hampered financing for education. And the overall aid effort suffers from under-financing, fragmentation, weak coordination and a failure to put in place long-term financing commitments. Changing this picture would help to deliver an education peace premium and create the conditions for accelerated progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Education in South Sudan – some key facts

South Sudan has some of the world's worst indicators for education. Among the headlines:

- There are in excess of 1.3 million primary school age children out of school. South Sudan stands second-to-bottom in the world ranking for net enrolment in primary education – and bottom of the world league table for enrolment in secondary education.
- Young girls in South Sudan face extreme disadvantages in education. Girls are less likely to enter school, more likely to drop out, and there are just 400 in the last grade of secondary education. Today, a young girl in South Sudan is three times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than to reach grade 8.
- There are acute shortages of trained teachers. The ratio of pupils to qualified teachers averages 100:1, but is double that level in some states. Just 12% of teachers are females, which reinforces gender inequalities.
- Textbooks are in short-supply. There is just one English and math book for every four students, which hampers effective learning.
- The school infrastructure is in a weak state. Despite a major drive to build new classrooms most children are still learning under tents, in the open air, or in semi-permanent structures. Around one-third of South Sudan's schools do not have safe drinking water, half are without access to latrines, and there is limited access to health centres.

Experience from other post-conflict countries demonstrates that rapid progress in education is possible. In the case of South Sudan, failure to deliver an early peace premium in education as a first step towards the construction of a national system that provides good quality learning opportunities for all will have profoundly damaging consequences for employment, poverty reduction and prospects for building a country that offers shared prosperity, democracy and security for all of its citizens.

Introduction

In July 2011, South Sudan will become Africa's 55th country and the world's youngest. Hopes and aspirations for the new country are running high. But South Sudan faces daunting challenges. The peace settlement itself is under threat. Recent actions by the Sudanese government in Khartoum, including the seizure of territory and militarization of the border, have raised questions over its commitment to peace. Within South Sudan, mass poverty, widespread violence and insecurity, limited access to basic services, and weak government institutions pose formidable barriers to human development. Set against these constraints, there are immense opportunities. After decades of armed violence, the people of South Sudan at last have an opportunity to build a better future. Permanent peace, stability and prosperity hinge critically on the new government and its aid partners delivering an early and visible peace premium on the path to long-term reconstruction.

Education should be a core element of the peace premium. Across South Sudan demand for education is high and rising. Having seen the hopes of earlier generations blighted by war, millions of parents want what parents everywhere across the world want for their children – the chance for them to realize their potential. People are making extraordinary efforts to achieve that goal. By taking decisive early steps to support those efforts by providing teachers, building classrooms and ensuring that children have access to books, the government

can, with donor support, demonstrate that peace delivers. Failure to respond to the expectation of a better future will inevitably exacerbate social tensions, with potentially damaging consequences for peace – and a failed peace in South Sudan will have consequences for the entire region.

The education system also provides the government with an opportunity to develop a school curriculum that challenges the ethnic and group-based prejudices that continue to fuel violence. Good quality education is vital for the attainment of wider goals, too. It is one of the foundations of sustained and dynamic economic growth, poverty reduction, advances in public health, and the development of a democratic society that offers equal opportunities for all of its citizens. And education is a basic human right – part of the birthright of every child in South Sudan. The Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan, which directs the government to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), reflects this in its provision for free and universal basic education.

Education illustrates both the immense challenges and the opportunities facing the new country. South Sudan will embark on independence with some of the world's worst indicators for education. Fewer than half of primary school age children are in school. There are deep disparities linked to gender and inequalities between states. Most adults are illiterate. And there are chronic shortages of teachers, classrooms and books. The government has limited financial, technical and human resources with which to build a national education



Hai Tokyo School classroom, Juba, South Sudan

system. That is why prospects for success depend heavily on the strength of the partnership between government and aid donors.

Evidence from other countries provides a cautionary tale and some important lessons. The 2011 UNESCO *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* provides a detailed analysis of the experience of several low income countries emerging from conflict. Many of these countries have swiftly reverted from peace back into cycles of armed violence. Governments have often failed to use the window of opportunity created by a cessation of hostilities to give people a stake in peace through improved access to basic services, jobs and security. The international aid community has also been at fault. Countries emerging from armed conflict need secure and predictable long-term development financing, backed by support for peace and security. All too often, the governments of post-conflict countries are provided with short-term, unpredictable humanitarian aid, which is of limited value in delivering effective results and building capacity.

Some of these problems have already emerged in South Sudan. The aid partnership in education has a mixed record. Several donors have moved rapidly to exploit the new opportunities created by the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. UNICEF's 'Back to School' programme, in particular, has facilitated a marked increase in enrolment numbers. The Basic Services Fund (BSF), has provided a channel through which bilateral donors have supported the work of non-government organizations working in education. Many new classrooms have been constructed. And donors have supported the development of a credible, if still embryonic, national planning process. Despite these very real achievements, the collective donor effort has fallen far short of expectations and the best practices established in other countries emerging from armed conflict. Disbursement under the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), the flagship aid programme created under the 2005 peace accords, has been far too slow, reflecting the World Bank's failure to put in place flexible, results-based operational practices at an early stage – a failure that has been partially corrected since 2010. Problems in donor coordination and the fragmentation of support through a large number of small-scale projects have created further difficulties. And South Sudan still lacks the type of predictable, long-term aid commitments that have facilitated rapid advances in other post-conflict countries, including Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

A fragile peace, a vulnerable country

The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that started South Sudan's journey to independence was a remarkable achievement. It brought to an end one of the world's most brutal and long-running civil wars, raising hopes for peace and security across the region. In a referendum in 2011, 98% voted in favor of independence. For most people, the motivation behind that overwhelming vote was straightforward: a yearning for peace, an end to domination by the North and a greater say in their own affairs, and a concern to see the region's mineral wealth used to improve social and economic conditions.

The education system was profoundly affected by the civil war. Chronic under-financing and the use of schools to impose a language, culture and curriculum viewed by the vast majority of South Sudanese as alien and oppressive were a source of resentment. During the conflict itself, the government in Khartoum and pro-government militias systematically targeted schools and schoolchildren. Meanwhile, the wider effects of war – poverty, disease, mass displacement and the diversion of resources into armed violence – destroyed opportunities for education on a vast scale.

In education, as in all other areas, sustained peace is the single most important condition for human development in South Sudan. That condition is not guaranteed. In mid-2011 the achievements of the CPA are at greater risk than at any time since 2005. The North's occupation of the contested border region of Abyei and incursions in Southern Kordofan has resulted in mass displacement, and its military build-up along the border and the escalation of fighting in Darfur have raised concerns that South Sudan's short interlude of peace may be disrupted by renewed conflict.

The international community has a vital role to play in averting that outcome. The United Nations Mission in Southern Sudan (UNMIS) should be strengthened to enforce compliance with the terms of the 2005 peace agreement, as envisaged under its mandate, and to provide more effective protection to civilians. UN Security Council members should signal an intention to cancel debt relief talks, introduce targeted sanctions and suspend the normalization of diplomatic relations if the Sudanese government reverts to violent confrontation. China has a particularly important role to play – and a reason to act. As a major source of investment and development assistance in northern Sudan, the Chinese government has considerable diplomatic influence in Khartoum. Given that the effectiveness of that investment and support is dependent on the development of peaceful relations between South Sudan (the location of major oil fields) and northern Sudan (where oil is refined) a reversion to armed conflict would have damaging consequences for Chinese commercial interests. Looking beyond commerce, China's response to developments will provide a litmus test of Beijing's commitment to an expanded role in the wider international partnership for poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa.

Other threats to peace and security are rooted in complex group-based conflicts. Persistent and long-running localized disputes linked to scarcity of resources, disputes over land and water, cattle raiding, and political control intersect with clashes between groups with different tribal or ethnic identities, and with intra-group rivalries. Local or even individual disputes can escalate rapidly into clashes involving identity, group affiliation and hostile perceptions of other groups. In some states, disputes over access to grazing rights and water are further complicated by cross-border tensions. Resolving these tensions and building effective national security and law agencies are vital conditions for progress in South Sudan. Like education, justice and security are important public services which have a critical role to play in poverty reduction.

Several important initiatives have been undertaken to address peace-building concerns. The GoSS in 2006 created a Peace Commission to develop proposals for promoting peaceful conflict resolution and subsequently created a Ministry of Peace. However, limited government presence, the proliferation of small arms, ethnic tensions and impunity for human rights abuses remain major barriers to reconstruction, alongside the threats posed by cross-border incursions and the activities of the government in Khartoum. This is another area in which a strengthened role for UNMIS could make a difference. While its remit includes providing support for institutions that strengthen the rule of law, demobilization and demilitarization, it currently lacks the financial, technical and human capabilities to play an expanded role.

Public perceptions of government policy will inevitably be shaped by the post-conflict environment. No region and few families have escaped the impact of armed violence. The legacy of that violence means that people across the country are susceptible to mobilization around concerns over the real and perceived implications of government policies for fairness, equity and group-based disparities. The Government of South Sudan (GoSS) has recognized the weight of this legacy. As the South Sudan Development Plans puts it:

Low levels of trust feed on weak institutions, a lack of transparency and the logistical difficulties of communication. The complex history of inter-communal conflict has also bred a widespread sense of marginalization, and suspicion that neighbouring groups are more favoured than one's own.

Policies for the education sector provide one channel through which the GoSS can address the underlying causes of low trust. It can ensure that resources are allocated on the basis of need rather than location or group identity. And it can use the education system to combat prejudice. However, it is important that the development of public policies in education, as in other sectors, takes place in the context of wider planning frameworks for peace-building that take into account the legacy of conflict, and provides an assessment of how specific policies might play out in the post-conflict environment.

Education sector strategies cannot be considered – or developed – in isolation. The education system is an important element in the reconstruction process in its own right. Yet what happens in schools and what children are able to achieve inevitably reflects the wider social and economic environment. The two defining features of that environment in South Sudan are poverty and vulnerability.

Two decades of civil war have left South Sudan one of the most impoverished countries in the world. Recent estimates suggest that around half of the population survives on income levels below the national poverty line. Even in a year of good harvests, around one in five people require emergency assistance. In 2010, the World Food Programme estimated that 3.2 million people were facing acute or chronic food insecurity. The debilitating impact on children is evident: one child in three is moderately or severely stunted because of malnutrition. Children and women face particularly acute health risks. One child in nine dies before the age of 5, and only 28% receive a measles vaccination in their first year. The reported maternal mortality ratio is the worst in the world. It is around five times the level in Uganda and four times the level in Kenya. Women face a one-in-seven lifetime risk of death in pregnancy or childbirth, reflecting their limited access to basic health services, skilled care, and high levels of maternal malnutrition. This backdrop has important and adverse consequences for education. Early childhood malnutrition and micro-nutrient deficiency, which can start in the womb, damage the brains of growing children and harm cognitive development. They are among the surest predictors of low levels of achievement in school.

High levels of vulnerability mean that even small external shocks can have catastrophic consequences. The vast majority of the population relies on farming and animal husbandry, even though the country is heavily dependent on food imports. Over 90% of households report suffering shocks every five years. Drought is the most widely reported source of shock, followed by loss of livestock, crop diseases and illness. This also has consequences for education. Evidence from many countries shows that sudden losses of income associated with external shocks is a major factor forcing parents to withdraw children from school. That evidence points to the importance of social protection programmes that transfer income to vulnerable households during difficult periods, preventing temporary shocks from becoming a source of long-term disadvantage in education. While many of the most widely cited social protection programmes that have been successful in protecting and expanding opportunities for education are in middle income countries – such as Brazil and Mexico – there is experience in low-income countries that may have relevance for South Sudan. One relevant regional example is Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme, which has targeted support to households in drought prone areas.

There are large regional variations in reported levels of income poverty. Incidence rates vary from 26% in Upper Nile



A girl writes on the blackboard at a newly built school in Gudele district on the outskirts of Juba, South Sudan

© UNESCO/AM. Hofer (2011)

to over 60% in Warrap and Jonglei, and 76% in Northern Bahr Al Ghazal. Disparities in health indicators are also marked. While poverty, malnutrition and maternal and child indicators are clearly associated, the correlations are not always clear cut: some regions with lower levels of poverty have high levels of malnutrition, for example. Understanding how these different patterns of disadvantage intersect is critical for the development of the national anti-poverty strategy. It is also important that the GoSS carefully assesses the implications of the different patterns of deprivation for education, and that it works to integrate education policy into the wider national anti-poverty strategy.

All governments in poor countries emerging from conflict face constraints as they embark on social and economic reconstruction. Yet few countries have faced reconstruction needs on the scale of South Sudan under such immense constraints. In some respects 'reconstruction' is a misleading depiction of the process. The GoSS is constructing new political institutions, along with new health, education and other basic service systems if not from scratch, then from a very limited starting point. Most government ministries lack rudimentary computing equipment, let alone a properly resourced and staffed public service and administrative system.

Progress in education will be heavily influenced by the environment for public finance. The construction of the education system requires both large-scale, up-front capital investment to expand the physical school infrastructure, and secure financing for the payment of teachers and provision of

textbooks through the recurrent budget. The latter is important for an obvious reason: there is little point in government investing heavily in the recruitment and training of teachers today that it cannot pay in two year's time.

The current financing environment is not conducive to supporting an education strategy of sufficient ambition. While South Sudan has a potentially rich natural resource base, the government is heavily reliant on oil revenues, which make up over 95% of its annual budget. Oil wealth represents an opportunity and a threat. Invested wisely, it could provide the investment that enables South Sudan to make a breakthrough in human development and foster the country's most important asset base: the skills and competencies of its people. The threat comes with the volatility of revenue streams from oil, upward pressure on the currency, and the fact that production is projected to decline quite steeply from 2016. The global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 clearly demonstrated the risks associated with dependence on oil as falling prices compromised the government's ability to pay salaries, transfer resources to states and maintain critical investments. The 2009 budget was cut by almost one-third, severely compromising progress in health, education and other key areas. Managing the oil economy to stabilize revenue flows and support long-run human development as well as current consumption is vitally important.

Will the GoSS succeed in avoiding what has been termed the 'resource curse' of extensive mineral wealth and convert oil assets into human capital? The answer to that question will depend partly on the GoSS's spending priorities, the

effectiveness of its anti-poverty programmes, and commitment to equity. But it will depend also on whether or not the new country can escape the spiral of violence and insecurity that have blighted the lives of its people for so long. In 2010, around one-third of the budget was allocated to security – some five times the allocation to health and education combined. Continued threats posed by the government in Khartoum and the severity of internal conflict have made it politically difficult to cut security spending. Yet there is a very high price to be paid for that spending in the form of lost opportunities for investment in human development and economic growth.

An education system facing huge challenges

While progress in education will inevitably be influenced by developments in other areas – including child and maternal health, poverty reduction, economic growth and security – education itself has a crucial bearing on prospects for peace, productivity and progress in public health. Without the expansion of broad-based, equitable learning opportunities, South Sudan will not generate the economic dynamism – or produce the doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers and entrepreneurs – needed to build shared prosperity and advance human development.

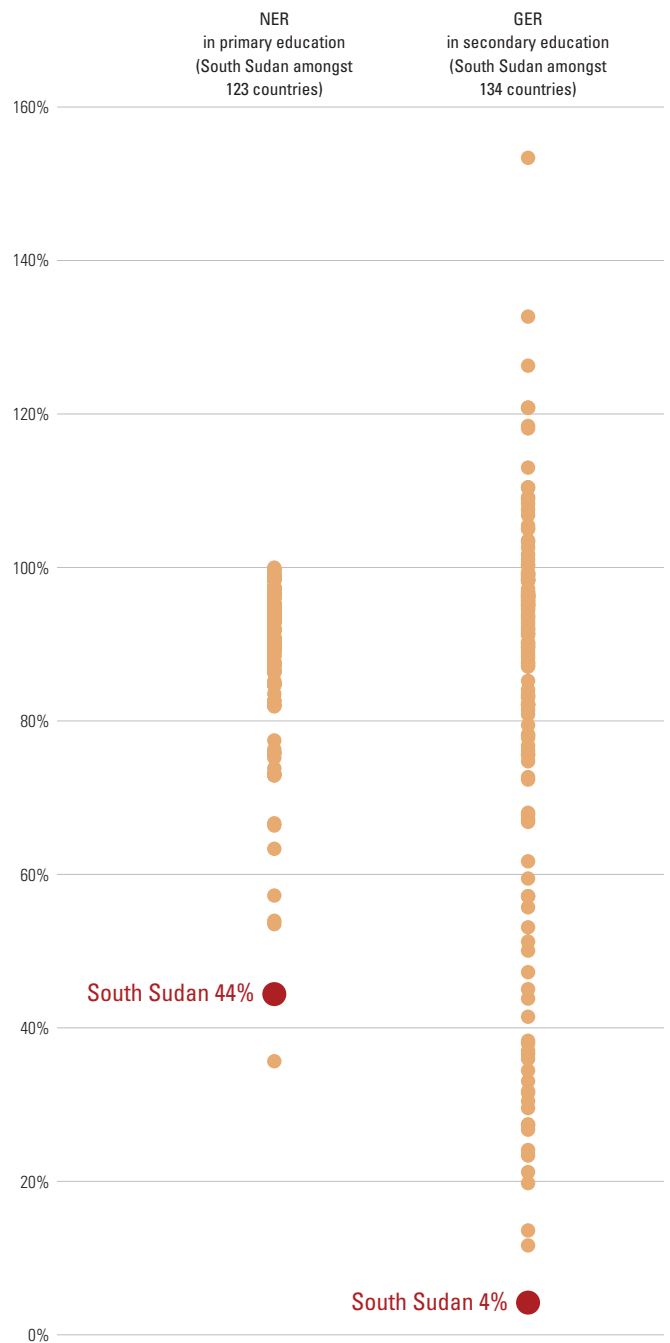
As in other areas, it is difficult to develop a clear picture of the state of education because of data limitations. Those limitations start with basic demography. The 2008 census for the whole of Sudan recorded a population of 8.3 million in southern Sudan (though the GoSS does not accept this figure). Since 2005 probably over 2 million refugees and IDPs have returned to southern Sudan, many suffering secondary displacement since arriving. Current population estimates range between 9 million and 14 million. There is also considerable uncertainty over the age profile of the population, though the average age of the population is very young – probably around half of the overall population is under the age of 18. These uncertainties imply that data on school enrolment, and particularly net enrolment (which measures the share of the primary school age population in reported as being in school), should be treated with extreme caution.

The period since the signing of the CPA has been one of extraordinary expansion in basic education. In 2009 there were 1.3 million children in primary school. That figure represented a fourfold increase over the number in 2005. The secondary and vocational education systems are also expanding.

Despite these advances, on almost every indicator for access to education South Sudan is at or near the bottom of the international league table. It ranks second lowest out of 123 countries on net enrolment rates for primary education, bottom of the ranking for 134 countries with enrolment data for secondary education, and bottom of the global league for gender parity in primary education (Figures 1 and 2).

South Sudan starts independence at the bottom of the world league table for education

Figure 1: Enrolment rates, most recent year



Sources: UNESCO (2011), Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

Within South Sudan, there are marked disparities between states for each of these indicators. The 2010 Education Management Information System (EMIS) provides a wealth of data on the state of education. Among the headline messages to emerge:

- **Access is limited.** The estimated net enrolment ratio (NER) for primary school is 46%, though this figure should be treated with caution. Data on the age of children attending

South Sudan gender disparities are among the widest in the world

Figure 2: Countries ranking on the Gender Parity Index (GPI), most recent years



Sources: UNESCO (2011), Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

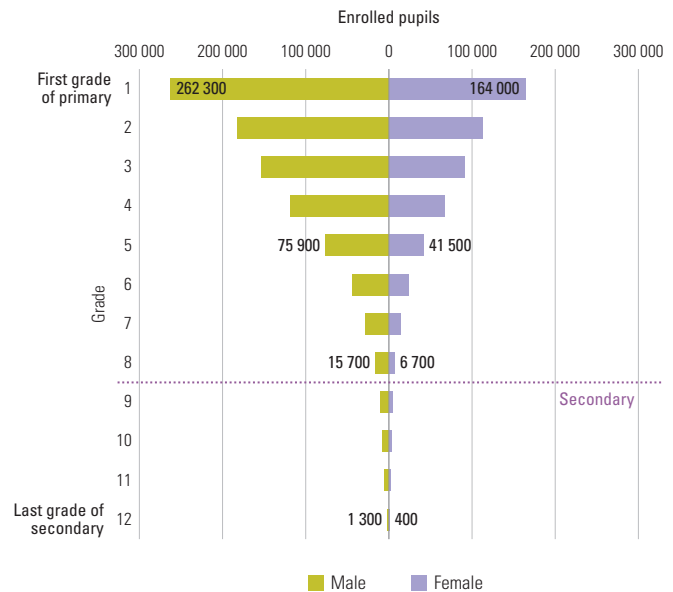
school is very limited and the size of the primary school age population has increased with the return of refugees and displaced people. Even so, on a conservative estimate, there are probably around 1.3 million children out of school.

- **Most children entering school do not complete a full primary cycle.** In 2010 there were just over 426,000 children in Grade 1 but only 117,000 in Grade 5 and 22,000 in Grade 8. In other words, fewer than half of primary school age

children are in school – and fewer than half of those who enter school get four years of education (Figure 3). Children born in South Sudan are more likely to die before the age of 5 than they are to complete a basic education.

The trickle-down effect: few children make it through primary school

Figure 3: Enrolment by grade and gender for primary and secondary school, South Sudan 2010

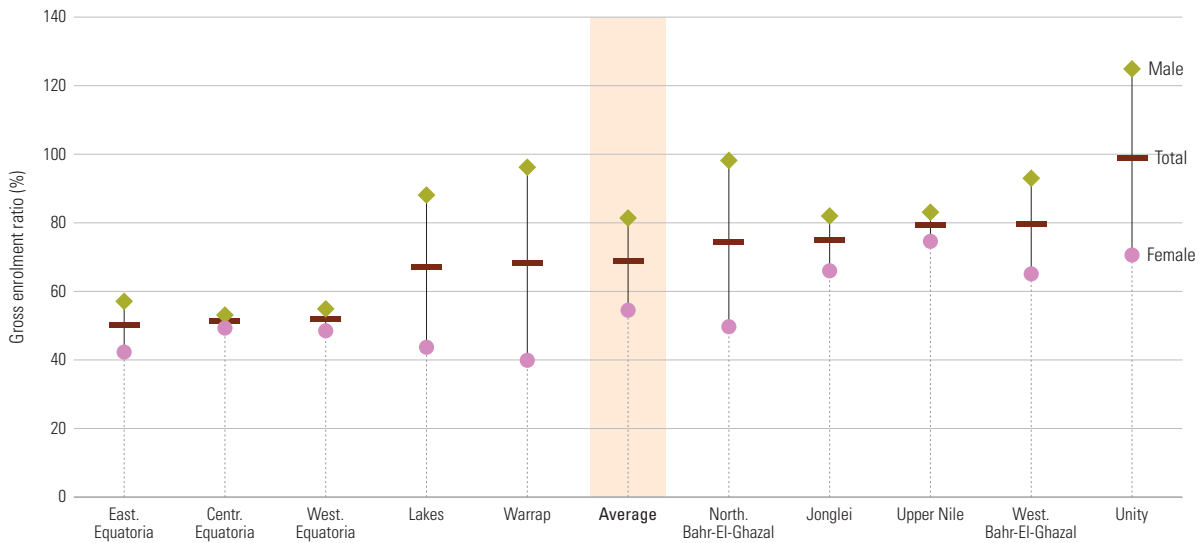


Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

- **Young girls face particularly extreme disadvantages.** Girls are less likely to enter school and more likely to drop out early. For every 20 girls entering Grade 1 of primary school, just eleven make it to Grade 3 and one reaches Grade 8 (Figure 3). Today, a young girl in South Sudan is some three times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than she is to get eight years of basic education. Patterns of gender inequality vary across states (Figure 4). They are relatively low in the three Equatoria states, which have the lowest levels of enrolment, and in Upper Nile and, to a lesser degree, in Jonglei, where enrolment rates are higher. However, the association between enrolment rates and gender disparity is not clear-cut. In North Bahr-El-Ghazi, Warrap, Lakes and Unity, which have levels of enrolment above the national average, boys are more than twice as likely as girls to be in school. These figures underline the importance of combining policies aimed at increasing overall enrolment with targeted incentives and support for girls' education. Measures are also needed to combat the legacy of adult illiteracy. It is estimated that only around 8% of women in South Sudan are literate, possibly the lowest female literacy rate in the world.

Enrolment levels and gender disparities vary across states

Figure 4: Primary gross enrolment ratios by state and gender, 2010



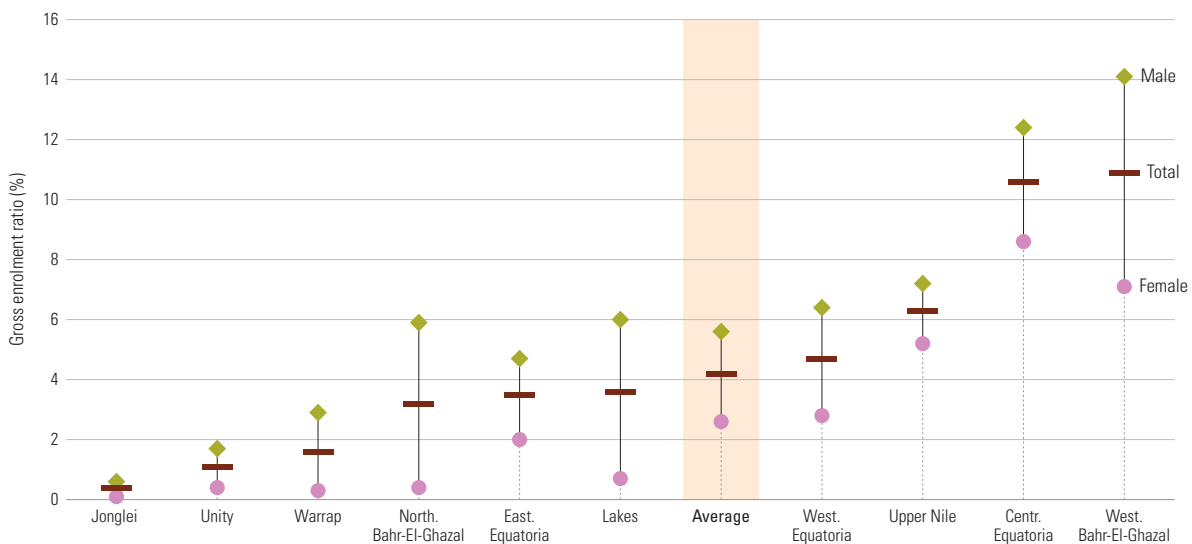
Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

■ **Most children enter school late.** Gaps between the gross enrolment ratio and the NER point to a large over-age population in primary school. Children attending classes at the appropriate age for their grade are a small minority – almost 90% are over-age. The education strategy has to address this issue. Evidence from many countries points to a strong association between delayed entry into primary school and risk of drop-out. That risk is particularly pronounced for young girls, notably in environments characterized by early marriage and a household division of labour that places extensive demands on the time of adolescent girls.

■ **Few make it through to secondary school.** It is estimated that only around one child in ten finishes primary school, with girls half as likely to complete as boys. This means that very few children get to secondary school. The gross enrolment ratio is 4%, once again with marked variations across states (Figure 5). In 2010, there were 34,000 children of all ages in secondary school – and just over 1,600 in the final grade. Girls comprise just one-third of the secondary school population, and 400 of the students in the last grade.

South Sudan's secondary schools have low enrolment with marked differences between states

Figure 5: Gross enrolment ratios in secondary by state and gender, 2010



Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).



A female student of Hai Tokyo School on the outskirts of Juba, South Sudan participates in an English reading exercise

© UNESCO/M. Hofer (2011)

These outcomes reflect the state of the human and physical infrastructure of South Sudan’s education system. They also highlight the severely under-reported scale of the education challenge facing the government. With a national population that is somewhat larger than that of major population centres in the developed world such as New York, London or Paris, the entire student population of South Sudan in the last grade of secondary education could be accommodated in just a couple of schools in these cities – and in the case of the female population around a dozen classrooms.

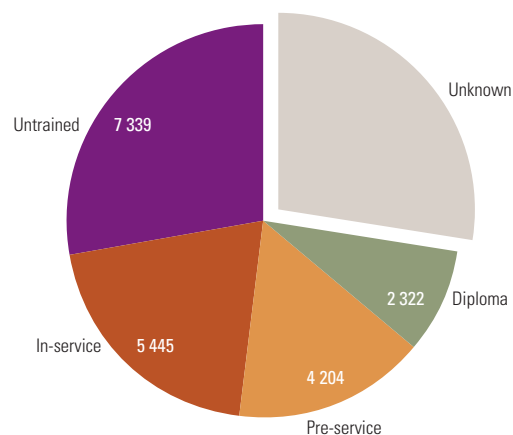
Figures on enrolment and school attendance understate the scale of the challenge facing South Sudan. The new country has yet to conduct on any scale assessments of what children who are in school actually learn. Ultimately, the aim of an education is delivering the teaching that cultivates literacy, numeracy and learning. In the case of South Sudan, it can be predicted with some confidence that many of the children reaching fourth grade or higher of basic education will not have mastered even the most basic reading and numeracy skills, limiting the potential for later learning.

No education system is better than its teachers. Ensuring that children have access to teachers who are trained, supported and motivated to raise learning achievement levels at the heart of the reconstruction challenge. With the increase in enrolment since the 2005 peace agreement, the pupil-to-teacher ratio has risen to 53:1. That figure obscures several important dimensions of the teacher deficit. The qualification status of a large section of South Sudan’s

teacher workforce is unknown, but between 7,500 and 15,000 of South Sudan’s teachers are untrained. Just over 2,000 have a diploma (Figure 6). The national ratio of pupils to *qualified* teachers is over 100:1. There are marked variations across states both in the pupil-teacher ratio, and in the profile of the teacher work force. The pupil-to-qualified teacher ratio in Jonglei is over 200:1. In some states – including North Bahr-El-Ghazi, Warrap and Lakes – over half of the teacher workforce has just a primary education (Figure 7).

South Sudan teachers – most are untrained but there are big data gaps

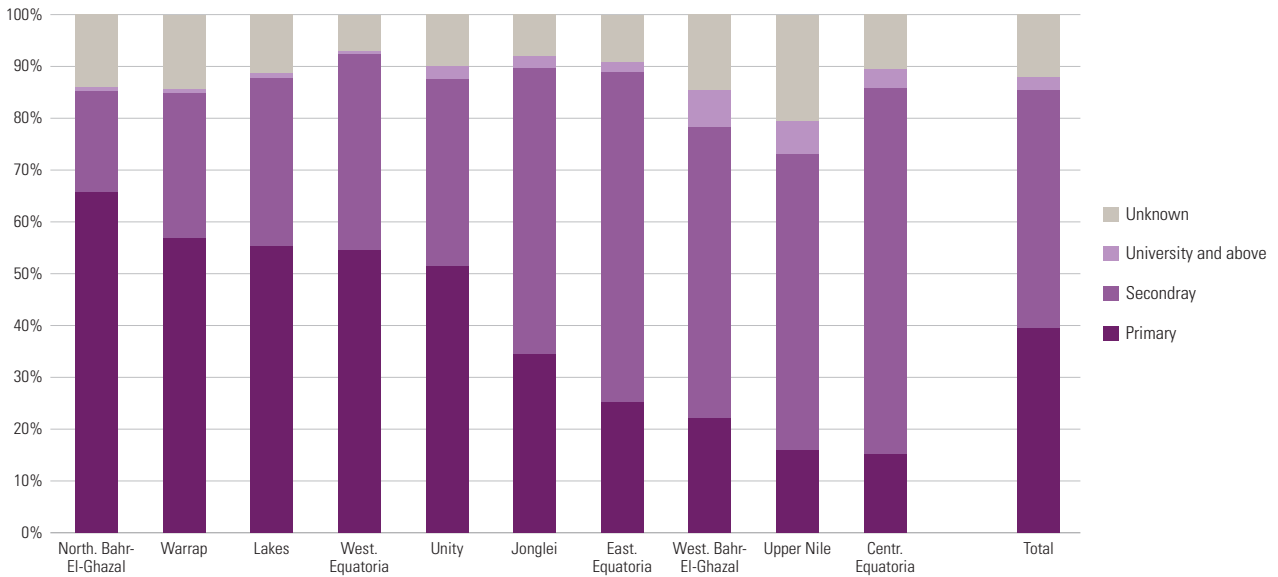
Figure 6: Primary teachers’ professional qualifications by type of qualification, 2010



Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

Many teachers have just a primary education

Figure 7: Primary school teachers' academic qualifications by state, 2010



Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

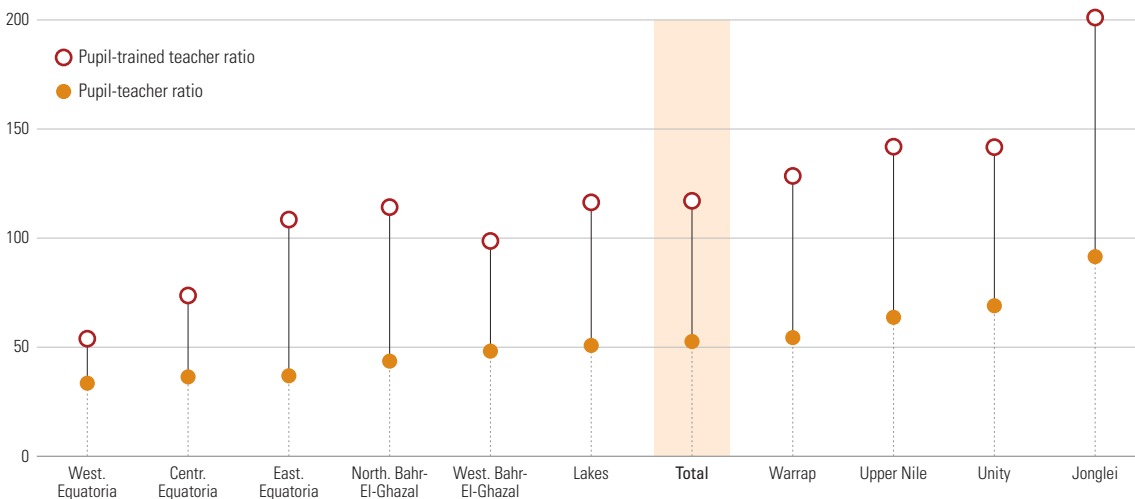
Females comprise just 12% of the overall teacher work force, but far less in some states (Figure 8). The generalized absence of female teachers almost certainly reinforces gender inequalities across the education system. Evidence from other countries points to the presence of female teachers as a significant factor in determining whether girls attend school, and their learning achievement levels.

While good teaching and motivated teachers can overcome many constraints, the learning environment also matters – and for most of South Sudan’s children it is in a poor state.

The number of classrooms has increased dramatically since the peace agreement, with almost 5,000 new structures created between 2008 and 2010 alone. This has made it possible to absorb the surge in enrolment while reducing the pupil-classroom ratio, from 194:1 to 134:1. The share of permanent structures in the stock of classrooms has also been increasing. But most children are still learning under tents, in the open air, or in semi-permanent structures (Figure 9). Around one-third of South Sudan’s schools do not have safe drinking water, half are without access to latrines, and there is limited access to health centres.

South Sudan pupil-teacher ratios are too high

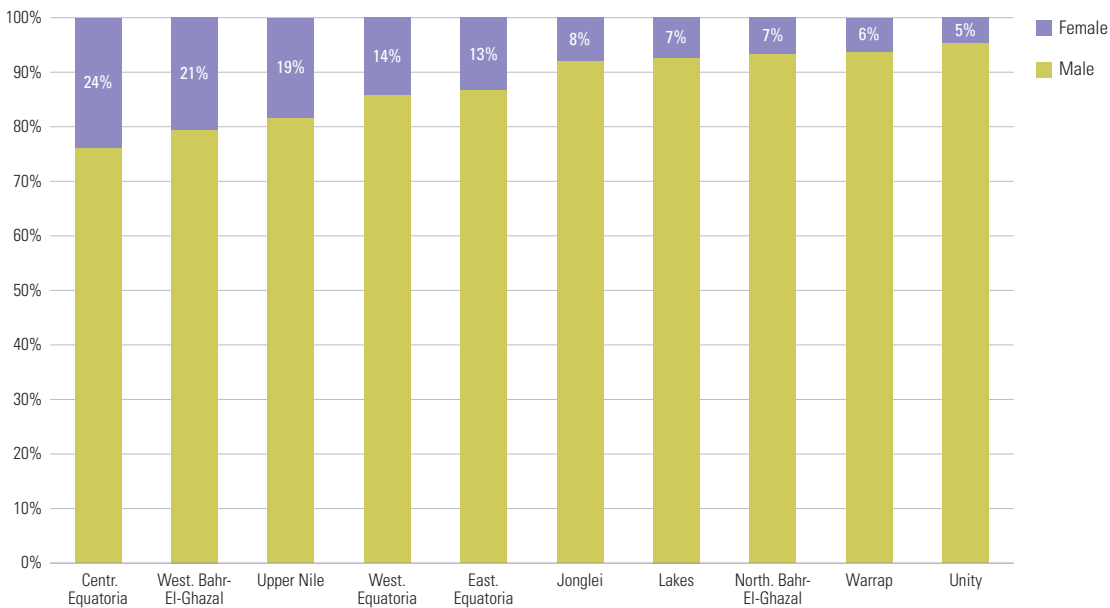
Figure 8: Pupil-teacher ratio and pupils-trained teacher ratio by state, 2010



Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

There are not enough female teachers

Figure 9: Primary school teachers by gender, by state, 2010



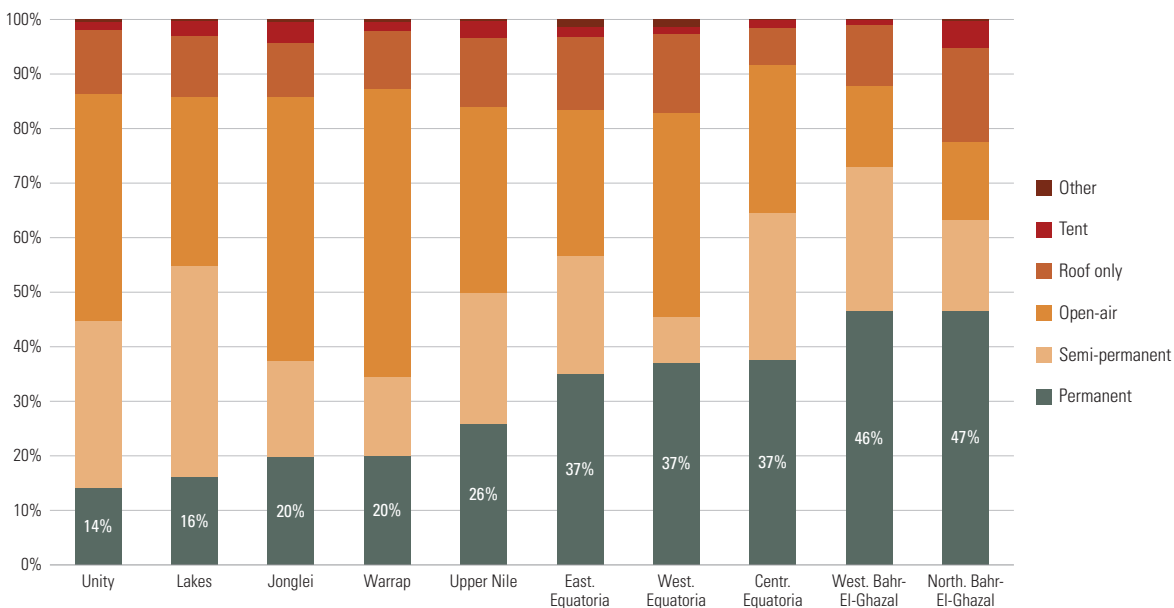
Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

Access to books is an obvious requirement for effective learning. Here, too, South Sudan faces extreme deficits (Figure 10). On average, there is just one English and one mathematics book for every four students. But this average masks marked disparities between states. In Unity, there are 10 pupils to every math book (Figure 11). Shortages of English-language text books threaten to compromise

curriculum reform. The GoSS has established English as the medium of instruction. It is already the dominant language of instruction in the first and second years of primary school, with just one-third of schools reporting mother tongue as the primary language for teaching. Textbook shortages will compound the problems associated with early learning in a language other than the mother tongue.

Few of South Sudan's children are taught in permanent classrooms

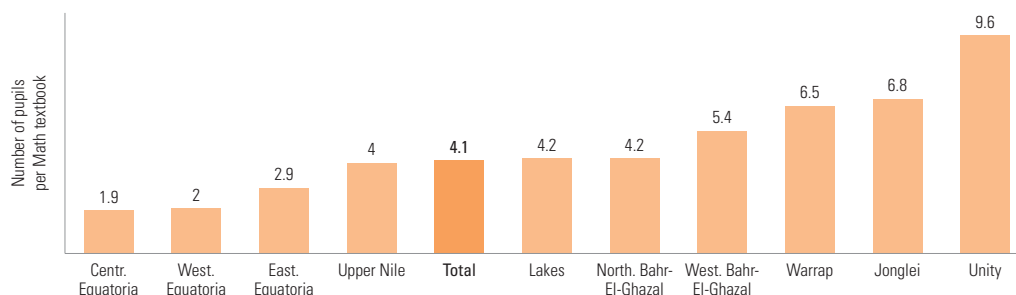
Figure 10: Primary school classroom by type of construction, by state, 2010



Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

Not enough books to go around

Figure 11: Pupils-textbook ratio (Math) by state, 2010



Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011b).

Education planning – a high level of ambition

The GoSS is embarking on education reconstruction with limited resources but a high level of ambition. Its strategy reflects a strong commitment to the MDGs and wider Education for All goals, and the recognition that education plays a key role in enabling economic growth and human development.

The education sector strategy in South Sudan is a work in progress. The period since the 2005 peace agreement has been one of intensive policy development, with the GoSS setting broad goals and priorities in the South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP), the Ministry of Education setting budget priorities, and an Education Sector Strategic plan (ESSP) under preparation. The SSDP aims by 2013 to increase the primary school net enrolment ratio (NER) from 46% to 63%, to double the secondary NER from 4% to 8%, and to expand the coverage of literacy and alternative education programmes. Among the key provisions:

- **Teacher recruitment:** By 2013 the GoSS aims to recruit an additional 23,400 primary school and 1,400 secondary school teachers, and to reduce the qualified teacher-to-student ratio from 1:117 to 1:50.
- **Teacher training:** The aim is to provide in-service and pre-service training for an additional 7,000 primary school and 900 secondary school teachers.
- **Textbooks:** The aim is to reduce the ratio of textbooks to primary school children from 4:1 to 1:1 by 2015 for both primary and secondary school. This will require an additional 5.6 million primary school textbooks and 576,000 secondary school books.
- **School and classroom construction:** Targets set for 2013 include the construction of 4,000 primary school classrooms with latrines, 800 community girls' schools and 80 girls' boarding schools, along with 67 secondary schools (and 10 "model" secondary schools, one for each state).

- **Strengthening equity and school retention:** The capitation grant for primary and secondary schools has been set at \$2 per student, for both primary and secondary school; with provisions made for bursaries of \$75 for 5,000 girls.

These are demanding targets. The broad framework addresses the core challenge of rapidly expanding access while improving quality. Inevitably, however, there are problems to be addressed. While the SSDP and priorities set by the Ministry of Education are broadly compatible, there are some significant inconsistencies with respect to financing provision, costing and measurement – for example, the ESSP uses the gross enrolment ratio (GER) rather than the NER for setting targets. Aligning targets with budgets and financial planning is another priority. The SSDP provides detailed costing for achieving targets set for 2011-2013. Average annual spending requirements set out in the SSDP are estimated at \$177 million over the next three years. However, budget allocations have so far been weakly aligned with education targets set out in the overall framework – and real spending in 2010 fell short of planned spending because of shortfalls in oil revenue. The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) for 2011-2015, which is still under preparation, is expected to provide more detailed planning estimates and budget allocations.

Looking beyond finance, the GoSS faces a range of planning challenges that are beyond the scope of this briefing paper, but two of which merit mention. First, progress towards many of the key goals that have been set will hinge on the development of effective institutions, rules and administrative processes. The recruitment and professional development of teachers and school inspectors, the management of transfers to local government, and strengthening of information, assessment and monitoring systems, to mention just a subset of requirements, will require the rapid development of national capacity. Developments in the education sector will inevitably be influenced by the wider strengths and weaknesses of the public finance management system – but they will also leave their own imprint on that system. The two major items of education budget expenditure are procurement for classroom construction and teacher salaries, both of

which are prone to corruption. The most effective antidote to corruption is budget transparency and the development of effective teacher management systems.

The second concern is the integration of education into the wider national strategy for poverty reduction. Even the most effective school-based education policy interventions in South Sudan will fail unless the country maintains progress in other areas, including economic growth, employment creation, improvements in public health, and improvements in the rule of law. In this context, the GoSS needs to attach considerable weight to equity in the allocation of resources across states and groups.

Education planning is inevitably affected by the wider political environment. While the 2005 CPA was a breakthrough, South Sudan is not a standard "post-conflict reconstruction" environment. That is partly because of the high levels of violence that have persisted. In 2009 alone, some 2,500 people were killed and 350,000 displaced. The process of political transition has been marked by persistent, group-based, localised conflict, with particularly heavy concentrations of violence during the 2010 election in Lakes, Upper Nile, Warrap and Jonglei. With high levels of displacement

continuing, the GoSS and aid donors face the difficult task of integrating what are currently short-term and unpredictable aid flows into long-term financing plans. At the same time, the destabilizing nature of group-based violence underscores the importance of building an education system and school curriculum that is geared towards mutual understanding and shared identity.

One area in which education has not to date been well-integrated into wider national planning is demobilization. Six years after the peace settlement, South Sudan still lacks a strong national strategy for the demobilization of former combatants, many of which had limited opportunities for education in their primary school and adolescent years. In Mozambique, UN agencies, bilateral donors and the post-conflict government put in place extensive support programmes aimed at facilitating the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life through financial support for livelihoods, skills training and, in the case of adolescents and young adults, second chance education. In the case of South Sudan, the tendency has been to place ex-combatants in public sector jobs – an approach which is unsustainable and a source of potential inefficiency in public administration.



A boy listens to his teacher during a lesson at the improvised Hai Kugi School on the outskirts of Juba, South Sudan

Aid efforts need to take a long-term perspective

While South Sudan approaches independence with a fragile peace, weak institutions, limited resources and shocking human development indicators, it has an opportunity to chart a new course. Seizing that opportunity will require not just national political leadership, but sustained support from the international aid community. For aid donors, the peace settlement in South Sudan also presents an opportunity, as well as a challenge. The opportunity is to move beyond a development assistance model geared towards emergency humanitarian aid and towards a new partnership that supports a transition to self-reliant growth and accelerated human development. The challenge for donors is to develop aid modalities that facilitate a transition from humanitarian to long-term development assistance, deliver early results on the ground and build capacity.

That challenge is particularly marked in the education sector. In contrast to the position in basic health and nutrition, where donors have considerable experience in providing support through the humanitarian aid system, experience in education is limited. Following the 2005 peace settlement, the Ministry of Education had to be created virtually from scratch. It had no staff, no policy, limited equipment, and no reliable system for collecting information. That picture has started to change. The GoSS has signaled that education will be a national priority. Support from donors has facilitated the development of an education management information system (EMIS), basic administrative systems, and an embryonic national planning structure. However, while much has been achieved over the past five years, far more needs to be done to ensure that the international aid effort delivers effective support for the development of a national education system.

The aid environment

Aid reporting systems make it difficult to provide a clear overview of development assistance flows to South Sudan since 2005. Funding information reported through the OECD and the United Nations humanitarian system relates to the whole of Sudan, and does not differentiate between Darfur, southern Sudan and the rest of the country. The following provides a brief snapshot of the aid environment.

Over the past decade, Sudan has been a major recipient of aid. In 2009, it received \$2.4 billion in development assistance. The country was, for the fifth consecutive year, the world's largest recipient of humanitarian aid, which accounted for over 60% of development assistance. Disaggregated figures for southern Sudan suggest that the United States accounted for 42% of support over the period 2005-2009, with four other donors – in descending order the European Union, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway – accounting for another 43%.

After the signing of the peace agreement, donors sought to shift their funding portfolios for southern Sudan away from humanitarian aid and towards recovery and long-term development. During a conference in Oslo in January 2005, donors pledged \$4.5 billion in development assistance for the initial period 2005-2007. Disbursements to South Sudan have fallen far short of the pledge. From 2005 to 2009, slightly over \$1.5 billion in international development assistance was provided, excluding humanitarian aid. In other words, over the course of five years South Sudan received less than half of the aid pledged for the first two years. With the slump in oil revenues after the decline in international prices during 2008 and 2009, dependence on aid has increased. The \$739 million pledged in 2010 represents an estimated 40% of the national budget.

Several pooled funds emerged after the 2005 peace agreement. Under the Oslo accords, a Multilateral Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) was established under World Bank administration to channel donor support for long-term reconstruction. The Basic Services Fund (BSF) was created to provide support through non-government organizations operating in difficult areas. Meanwhile, the Sudan Recovery Fund (SRF) was envisaged as a bridging mechanism to smooth the transition from humanitarian to long-term development financing.

Performance under the pooled funds has been mixed. The MDTF got off to a slow start and built up a poor track record on disbursement over several years. While donors committed over \$350 million in 2005, by the end of 2007 only \$110 million had been disbursed. By the end of 2009 the disbursement figure had still only reached \$212 million. Disbursement rates have improved over recent years, after criticism from donors and an internal World Bank review led to significant changes in administration and staffing. Spending reached just over \$400 million in January 2011. Indeed, spending in 2010 was almost as high as total spending for the previous four years combined. Despite this improvement, the MDTF has not served South Sudan well. Far too large a share of the \$548 million paid in by 14 donors has been left locked in World Bank accounts when it could have been used to put children in classrooms, provide basic health services and construct roads. By contrast, the far smaller BSF has built up an impressive track record in delivering support and has received broadly positive independent evaluations.

The performance of the MDTF has been particularly problematic given the central position that it occupies under the Oslo framework. Factors behind the slow pace of MDTF disbursement have been widely debated and analysed. World Bank reports have highlighted problems in government capacity, procurement processes and reporting arrangements. Independent evaluations have recognized problems in these areas but also draw attention to evidence of the World Bank's own failings. One major multi-donor evaluation concluded: *"The administration and disbursement of funds was*

complicated by lengthy bureaucratic procedures within the World Bank administration, causing serious delays in implementing projects and increasing frustration from government partners and donors alike." Another evaluation, conducted by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), reached broadly similar conclusions. Given the highly predictable nature of the constraints facing the Government of Southern Sudan, the World Bank's somewhat delayed discovery of capacity problems remains difficult to justify – and the failure of the MDTF hampered the efforts of donors to deliver results on the ground and significantly weakened the peace dividend.

Humanitarian aid continues to dominate overall development assistance flows to South Sudan. This funding is dominated by support for food aid, reflecting a focus on immediate emergencies. The share of humanitarian financing requirements covered through appeals processes typically range from 68% to 98% for food aid, declining to 40%-50% for health and nutrition, and 4% for education, though much of this is directed towards school feeding programmes. A significant (but declining) proportion of humanitarian funding – 11% in 2008 – is channeled through the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), which is supported by 10 governments.

Individual donors have developed a wide variety of arrangements for delivering aid. Some have preferred to work bilaterally, using contractors or non-government organizations – the United States is the most prominent example. Other donors – particularly Canada, the Netherlands and the UK – have preferred to work through various pooled funds, or to combine funding for pooled funds with bilateral programmes operating through the GoSS, or through a variety of projects.

The complex patchwork of aid arrangements makes it difficult to provide an overall assessment. However, the Donor Books prepared by the GoSS have identified a range of concerns associated with high transaction costs, weak donor coordination, and limited harmonization. Many of the problems documented by the government and in independent evaluations are familiar themes in the wider dialogue over aid effectiveness:

- **Project proliferation.** The very large number of small projects supported by aid donors creates difficulties in reporting and coordination. In 2009, the education, health, social development, humanitarian and accountability sectors had an average project value of below \$2 million. There were 174 projects in the health sector alone (compared with 97 in 2008).
- **Reported expenditure.** Just 38% of the amount of aid budgeted for 2009 was reported. The gap between donor budgets and expenditure is very large across all sectors, though it is unclear whether the gap represents low expenditure or poor reporting. A review carried out by

the Joint Donor Team in 2009 concluded that few donors submit projects for appraisal to the relevant GoSS agency (the Inter-Ministerial Appraisal committee).

- **Limited predictability.** Uncertainties over future aid flows (see below) compound the uncertainties associated with the domestic revenue base. Donor commitments drop off dramatically from 2010, making it difficult for the new government to plan for the future.
- **Weak alignment.** At the 2008 Oslo donor conference, the GoSS requested that at least 80% of donor funds be directed towards the six priority areas identified in the national poverty reduction strategy – security, roads, primary health care, basic education, water and production. In 2010, around 64% of support was directed towards these areas.

The failings of the MDTF have compounded wider problems in aid governance. There are many advantages to donors pooling resources in a post-conflict environment. It enables aid agencies to share the cost of fiduciary management, to generate wider economies of scale in administration, and to coordinate their support for national plans. For aid recipients, pooling mechanisms can lower the demands on scarce human resources, reduce the transaction costs associated with reporting to several donors, and facilitate capacity building. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) provides a striking example of a pooled funding model that has delivered significant results not just in terms of improved human development outcomes, but also in building national planning capacity. While South Sudan has six major pooled funding mechanisms in operation, only around one-fifth of all donor commitments in 2009 originated through these mechanisms. The shortcomings of the MDTF have contributed to the fragmentation of aid by creating incentives for donors to shift their resources either into bilateral programmes or into alternative pooled funding mechanisms, not all of which have met the standards set by the BSF. For example, while the SRF has filled a gap, its very high overhead and running costs – 16% annually – have prompted some commentators to question whether it represents value for money.

Aid for education

Developments in the education sector reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the wider aid partnership. Much has been achieved. Increased aid has played an important role in getting an additional 1 million children into school, in constructing classrooms, hiring teachers, creating an information and data system and – critically – building national capacity. Yet progress in education has been hampered by wider problems in aid governance and financing – and delivery on the ground has fallen far short of expectations. There is a real danger that opportunities to deliver a peace dividend in education will be squandered, with potentially damaging consequences for the wider reconstruction effort.

One of the difficulties facing the GoSS and donors alike is the large margin of uncertainty surrounding government financing. The surge in economic growth registered by Sudan in the decade to 2008 prompted a high level of optimism regarding the government's financing capacity. That growth surge was driven principally by oil – and southern Sudan received around half of oil revenues, or \$2 billion annually. There was an assumption that these revenues would continue to grow, with the GoSS taking on a commitment to match donor funding through the MDTF. However, revenues fell dramatically over the period 2008-2010 because of a slump in oil prices, making it difficult to pay teachers and health workers or maintain matching financing arrangements. With oil production projected to decline to 2019, a small formal economy, high levels of poverty and limited tax collection, it is a matter of urgency that oil wealth is invested in the physical and human capital infrastructure that will be vital to South Sudan's future.

Development assistance occupies a significant role in the financing envelope for education. It represented 38% of planned spending for 2010. In the absence of a more detailed budget framework for assessing financing needs and future government revenue, it is difficult to establish with any accuracy whether current aid levels are consistent with the external financing requirements for the goals adopted by the GoSS. Given the large out-of-school population, the shortages of teachers, the need for improved teaching quality and infrastructure constraints, a scaled-up aid effort in education would appear to be a priority.

Several major bilateral agencies are involved in financing education. The 2010 budget report records 30 separate projects supported by nine bilateral donors and the European Union, with a total value of \$37 million. USAID is the largest bilateral donor, with seven projects valued at \$18.6 million reported in the 2010 budget. The agency has a strong track-record in southern Sudan. It was the lead donor behind the development of the Sudan Basic Education Programme (2002-2006), which laid the foundations for reconstruction of the education system. The current US aid programme emphasizes strengthening education quality through teacher training. Following the recommendations of a major review in 2009, there are plans to expand support in this area through a flagship programme on professional development for teachers. USAID has also prioritized gender equity in education, notably through scholarship programmes aimed at creating incentives for girls to progress into secondary school and become teachers. The Japanese aid agency, which reported \$5.1 million in aid in the 2010 budget through two projects, has played a major role in supporting reconstruction and school building programmes. Other major donors include Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom.

UNICEF is one of the lead agencies in education. In 2010, it reported project spending of around \$18 million, with a primary focus on access to basic schooling and education quality. The UNICEF-led "Go to School" initiative represents one of the most significant interventions in the sector to date. Enrolment in primary school increased from less than half a million children in 2004 to 1.6 million in 2008. An emergency

Children at the Hai Kuqi School on the outskirts of Juba, South Sudan. Coming out of a long civil war, the country lacks educational facilities for its fast growing population, relying heavily on NGOs like BRAC to provide support for school programmes.



classroom construction programme and the distribution of 4.6 million textbooks in 2006 alone facilitated the expansion of school attendance.

Aid delivery mechanisms also have to be strengthened. As in other sectors, support to education is highly fragmented, with large numbers of small projects being implemented by a wide range of actors:

- Of the 41 education projects officially recorded in government accounts, 31 involve finance of less than \$0.5m; and just seven have a value in excess of \$1 million;
- The average value of recorded education projects is \$677,492;
- Another fifteen projects are listed, but with insufficient financial data for reporting on value.

The large number of donors involved in education in South Sudan inevitably creates problems of coordination. Those problems are compounded by the wide array of delivery mechanisms and governance arrangements. Some major donors – notably USAID – do not participate in pooled funds and operate through projects managed outside of government financial management systems. Other donors channel resources through pooled funds, which have their own governance structures, or a mixture of projects and GoSS financial and budget systems. While donors have developed several coordination mechanisms, there have been problems in aligning and harmonizing support behind government plans. Education sector financing has been very directly affected by the problems associated with the World Bank's governance of the MDTF. Under the Education Rehabilitation Project, the MDTF had by the end of 2009 made cumulative commitments of \$25.5 million in education, but just one-third of this amount had been disbursed – and the disbursement rate for education was far below the average across all MDTF programmes.

One consequence of slow disbursement is that South Sudan has fewer classrooms than might otherwise be the case. The original plan was to fund the construction of 100 primary schools – a modest ambition given that a Joint Assessment Mission estimated that over 4,000 schools were required. The target was subsequently revised down to 44 schools. By mid-2010, only 12 had been constructed. World Bank evaluations have identified higher than expected procurement costs and GoSS procedures as the problem. Yet most of the difficulties identified in these evaluations were highly predictable and could have been resolved through stronger support for capacity building. The performance of the Basic Services Fund, which has succeeded in constructing 34 schools and training 800 teachers, highlights the shortcoming of the World Bank's management over the first four years of the MDTF. As in other areas, inflexible approaches to the management of the MDTF have weakened the peace dividend and undermined the wider donor effort.

Looking to the future, the medium-term financing horizon is clouded by uncertainty. Donors have yet to put in place viable long-term strategies aimed at supporting reconstruction in education. While UNICEF's annual funding to education is substantial, it is currently secured on an annual basis from a variety of donor sources. This limits the scope for shifting from annual to multiyear funding. USAID funds are programmed and then allocated on an annual basis by the US Congress. While conflict-affected states are a priority in the current strategy, basic education is not – and future funding could be compromised by congressional approaches to the fiscal crisis. Given the fragility of planning processes in South Sudan, it would appear to be important that donors undertake multi-year commitments to finance education construction – and that they report in a transparent fashion on disbursement levels.

Several of the key pooled funding mechanisms also face an uncertain future. The mandate of the MDTF was due to expire at the end of 2011. While the Trust Fund has now been extended for one year to facilitate the completion of projects, the closing date for individual grants is June 2011. With the BSF, which was extended in 2010 under an interim arrangement, coming to a close at the end of 2011, there will be no pooled fund through which to improve overall coordination and harmonisation. Moreover, several major donors to the pooled funds – for example, the Netherlands, the largest source of finance for the BSF – have signaled an intention to reduce the weight attached to basic education in their overall aid priorities.

Continued reliance on humanitarian aid has complicated the transition to longer-term development financing for education. Recent analysis of humanitarian aid in conflict-affected countries has drawn attention to the limited support provided for education. In 2008-2009, the sector accounted for just 2% of humanitarian aid – and it had the largest gap between humanitarian aid requests and financing. The humanitarian aid profile for Sudan broadly conforms to this picture, although education accounts for a somewhat larger share of the Common Humanitarian Fund support for South Sudan. From an education financing perspective, humanitarian aid suffers both from the neglect of education and from short-term appeals and financing cycles which produce unpredictable outcomes. In the case of the CHP, the small size of average grants – \$330,000 in 2009 – means that many agencies use the facility as a “top-up” mechanism, rather than for core financing.

Given the scale of reconstruction needs in education and the fragility of national institutions, current aid efforts suffer from under-financing, unpredictability and the absence of a credible strategy for long-term support. Failure to change this picture will have wider consequences. In the absence of sustained and effective support from donors, the government of South Sudan will be unable to provide broad-based and equitable opportunities for learning, undermining prospects for peace, stability and security.

An international partnership for education for all in South Sudan

Independence provides an opportunity for the Government of South Sudan, the international community and civil society organizations to come together and ensure that future generations enjoy a right denied to earlier generations – the right to fulfill their potential through opportunities for education.

Priorities for the government

The immediate challenge for the GoSS is to back a high level of ambition with realism in planning and practical measures to create an enabling environment for accelerated progress in education. That means building a strong public finance management system, developing transparent and accountable systems of governance, and ensuring that the education system emerges as a force for peace, employment and expanded opportunity. Among the priorities:

- **Ensuring that education planning is guided by a conflict analysis.** The legacy of conflict hangs over all aspects of social, economic and political life in South Sudan. It follows that all aspects of public policy have the potential to directly or indirectly influence prospects for post-conflict reconstruction. This is especially true in education because developments in the sector have such immediate, direct and visible consequences for public perceptions of the peace premium. For millions of displaced families returning to South Sudan, the accessibility and quality of the school system is an immediate concern (see below). Moreover, the marked education disparities between states, linked in turn to ethnic and group-based inequalities, will inevitably influence perceptions of fairness and the perceived legitimacy of the GoSS. While recognizing the very real constraints associated with the weak capacity of governments, it is important that the government uses the policy tools at its disposal – including conditional transfers to states, capitation grants, classroom construction, teacher provision and training facilities – to redress inequalities.
- **Using schools as a vehicle for peace-building.** Education systems can play a vital role in creating a sense of shared identity, overcoming prejudice and supporting attitudes conducive to peaceful conflict resolution. They can also play a role in exacerbating underlying conditions that give rise to conflict. Under the previous education system, the imposition of Arabic language and a curriculum viewed as hostile to non-Arab peoples were elements in a wider strategy of social, cultural and economic domination by the government in Khartoum. The adoption of an English-language curriculum represents both a practical and symbolic break with the past. But it is important that the teaching of history, religion and other subjects reflect a commitment to peace-building, mutual respect and understanding between the different groups and peoples that make up South Sudan's society. This is an area in which international agencies have been slow to provide support for the GoSS.
- **Managing reintegration.** On some estimates, about 2 million people have returned to South Sudan since the peace agreement. In 2010, the GoSS outlined an initiative – the Accelerated Returns and Reintegration Programme – aimed at facilitating the return of up to 1.5 million southern Sudanese living in the north and Egypt. While the return of people since 2010 has been slower than anticipated, a continued flow of people into conflict-affected states is likely. The education sector is not currently equipped to absorb returnees. Apart from shortages of teachers and classrooms, returning students face a range of problems. Children who have attended Arab-speaking schools in the north and Egypt will need extra English classes so that they can follow the new curriculum. Transitional programmes aimed at facilitating reintegration need to be scaled up with donor support. Priorities include creating and staffing assessment centres to establish the education levels of children entering the new school system, identifying qualified teachers among returning IDPs and including them in the pool of teachers for the South, and creating a transitional body of bilingual students and volunteers to provide English language classes.
- **Developing a strong education sector strategy.** The current strategy sets bold targets and broad financing provisions, but it is not clear that they are well aligned. Far more detailed assessment is needed of the costs of achieving the goals set with respect to education quality, classroom construction and support for marginalized groups. The next step is to develop a sector-wide planning framework that integrates education into medium-term budget financing, identifies with greater clarity the policies required to achieve national goals and – critically – identifies financing gaps. The GoSS also needs to ensure that its education goals are reflected in budget priorities. Between 2006 and 2010, education accounted on average for 6%-10% of budget spending. That figure is considerably under half the budget share in countries that made rapid progress towards Education for All, and it represents a very low percentage for a country with such huge needs.
- **Identifying cost-effective solutions and partnerships.** Given the immense deficit in physical infrastructure and the large up-front capital costs of reducing that deficit, there is a premium on the identification of cost-effective interventions. Expensive designs for schools and teacher training facilities may be an unaffordable luxury that diverts resources from areas that deliver results, such as incentives for girls' education, teacher training and the provision of textbooks. The Ministry of Education decision to adopt a cost ceiling of \$500,000 for 8 classroom schools is a step in the right direction. And the GoSS should build on the current partnerships with NGOs and church-based groups that have a proven track record in delivering education geared towards the national curriculum.

■ **Narrowing disparities between states and groups.** As highlighted in this paper, the education system in South Sudan is characterized by low levels of provision and high levels of inequality. In keeping with the national commitment to equal opportunity, it is important that the GoSS adopts strategies aimed at strengthening equity. Given that states are responsible for delivering basic services – including education – the current system of conditional transfers to states should ensure that school capitation grants, support for teacher training, and spending on classroom construction are based on formulae that reflect a concern to reduce inter-state disparities. The GoSS should consider incorporating into the national strategy for education equity-based targets that set goals for reducing inequalities across states, groups and gender.

■ **Strengthening data and monitoring.** Effective financial planning and administration in education depends critically on the availability of robust, reliable and relevant data. South Sudan has had an EMIS system in place since 2006. It provides detailed information on enrolment and the state of the school infrastructure. However, data on teachers are more patchy. The most recent EMIS reports that the qualification status of over one-quarter of teachers is unknown. This is problematic because conditional salary transfers for 2011 will be geared towards linking pay to the grade and qualification of teachers. States will not be allowed to use the salary transfer to pay for unclassified staff. Moreover, there are discrepancies between the number of teachers reported in the EMIS and the number of teachers on payrolls. Another area that is not well covered at present is reporting on school inspectors. The GoSS and donors should continue to strengthen the EMIS system, while strengthening the data reporting systems operated through local governments.

■ **Enhancing education quality.** There are no inherent trade-offs between increased access and enhanced education quality. However, increasing enrolment in the face of acute shortages of qualified teachers, poor infrastructure and limited access to books poses obvious threats. Ultimately, no education system is better than its teachers. That is why the GoSS and its development partners should prioritize the goal of recruiting over 23,000 qualified primary school teachers by 2013, with expanded pre-service and in-service training.

■ **Getting it right in the early grades.** Ensuring that children acquire sound early reading and numeracy skills in the early grades provides a foundation for future learning. Conversely, failure to impart these skills diminishes future learning achievement and increases the risk of dropout. Several countries and regions – including Ghana, the United Republic of Tanzania and Madhya Pradesh state in India – have combined rapid increases in enrolment with improved learning achievement outcomes by strengthening the focus on early reading and numeracy. Successful strategies

A student writes on a blackboard at High Kugi School on the outskirts of Juba, South Sudan



include increasing the number of qualified teachers in early grades, setting clear targets, rigorous assessment and support for teachers.

■ **Tackling gender inequality.** South Sudan has some of the world's largest gender disparities in education. Closing these disparities will require policy interventions at many levels. National and state level political leaders need to challenge public attitudes and social practices (such as early marriage) that deny young girls opportunities for education. Targeted incentives such as stipends and cash transfers conditional on girls being in school could help to increase enrolment and strengthen retention. In addition, the GoSS and states should integrate into national education goals supplementary targets for improved gender equity. Halving gender disparities as part of the national commitment to achieve a net enrolment ratio of 63% would help to focus policy on strategies for greater gender equity.

■ **Prioritizing the recruitment and training of female teachers.** Gender disparities in the teacher workforce reinforce gender disparities in school. Closing these disparities and achieving the goal of 25% of female teachers at the primary school level will require targeted interventions, including a scaled-up bursary programme for girls in secondary school and the creation of an incentives programme to encourage female entry to teacher training.

■ **Linking health and education.** Childhood malnutrition in the early years, often linked to illness, is a strong predictor for failure in education. Hunger in the first two years of life has long-term and potentially irreversible consequences for cognitive development. Strategies for combating early childhood malnutrition should be seen as an integral part of the wider education strategy.

Priorities for aid donors

South Sudan's development partners operate in a difficult environment marked by weak government capacity, fragility, insecurity and extreme poverty. Much has been achieved. But donors need to develop an aid architecture that is more effective in delivering results. The 2011 UNESCO *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* provides an overview of aid practices that have proven effective in supporting rapid progress in education in post-conflict countries. These include an early transition from humanitarian aid to long-term development financing, multi-year aid commitments, an emphasis on capacity building, and support for the development of education sector strategies. Many of these conditions have been absent in South Sudan (Box 1). The consequences of under-financing, weak coordination, the proliferation of pooled funds and underperformance

of the MDTF are particularly evident in the education sector. Among the priorities for the future:

- **Creating a consolidated pooled fund to replace the MDTF with a specific window for education.** While the performance of the MDTF and, to a lesser degree, the SRF has been disappointing, pooled funding has major advantages for donors and the GoSS. It reduces the administrative burden on individual donors by sharing costs and shifting the burden on to a single administrative agent. It also facilitates a greater degree of coordination and harmonization with the potential for reduction of the transaction costs for the GoSS. Donors should replace the current patchwork of funds with a single pooled fund that meets the criteria for minimizing transaction costs, while providing flexible, predictable, long-term support to the evolving education sector strategy. The Basic Services Fund should be integrated into the new facility. Within the pooled funding system there should be a specific window for education.
- **Improving the predictability of aid.** Unpredictable aid will have highly destabilizing consequences for reconstruction of the education system. Donors should strive to ensure that annual aid commitments are fully disbursed, and

Box 1. The key role of aid in post-conflict reconstruction: lessons from the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report

Every country emerging from conflict faces different risks, threats and opportunities. Donor strategies have to be adapted to specific circumstances – and there are no blueprints. However, the 2011 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* draws on experience from a wide range of conflict-affected states to identify some broad guides to aid policy.

- **Securing peace.** Many countries emerge from armed conflict only to slip back into renewed violence. Timely support from the international community can mitigate that risk. In Sierra Leone, military intervention by the United Kingdom in 2000 helped to underpin a fragile peace agreement. Three years later, the Pacific Islands Forum mandated the deployment of a military force in the Solomon Islands, demobilizing militias and restoring security. In the case of South Sudan, the international community could do far more to strengthen peace prospects. For example, the UN Security Council could signal that it will respond to military action by the North through targeted economic and diplomatic sanctions, and that military intervention will be considered. Empowering UN peacekeeping forces to provide greater protection to civilians would also contribute to peace and security on the ground.
- **Providing long-term and predictable financial support.** To put their education systems on a path to sustained recovery, post-conflict governments have to meet significant up-front capital costs, especially in classroom construction, as well as recurrent costs for teacher recruitment and training. Given the weakness of government systems and the risks of renewed conflict, donors have to operate in a difficult financing environment. However, early, consistent and sustained donor support has contributed to some striking post-conflict recovery stories in education and other sectors in countries such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique. All too often, however, donors continue to provide intermittent and limited support through short-term and unpredictable humanitarian aid flows. Such practices have held back efforts to rebuild the education systems of countries such as Burundi, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- **Pooling resources.** Delivering support through pooled funds offers many advantages in post-conflict countries. It enables donors to share risk, limit the cost of fiduciary management, and support reconstruction efforts in countries where they lack an established presence. For aid recipients, pooled funding has the potential to lower transaction costs, limit demands on scarce human resources and facilitate donor coordination behind national priorities. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), administered by the World Bank, has been very effective in building the capacity of the national education system. By contrast, as we highlight in this paper, the World Bank's record as an administrator of the MDTF for southern Sudan is far weaker.
- **Supporting national planning.** Sustained progress in education ultimately depends on the development of national administrative and planning capacity and the integration of education into a functioning and transparent public finance management system. As highlighted in the 2011 *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, this has been a priority area in the aid partnerships of countries such as Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Mozambique. Early investment in the development of education management and Information Systems (EMIS) is critical in facilitating national planning in education.

commitments should be linked to the government's three-year medium-term expenditure framework monitored by the Budget Sector Working Groups. Donors should support and strengthen the Aid Information Management System through transparent reporting on commitments and disbursements, and evaluation of outcomes.

- **Undertaking long-term commitments.** Constructing an education system in South Sudan is a long-haul process that has been compromised by short-termism in aid provision. This problem has been aggravated by continued dependence on humanitarian aid, much of which operates through highly unpredictable fund-raising cycles. The lesson from successful reconstruction exercises in other post-conflict countries is that donors need to signal a clear intention to stay for the long haul, backing education plans with long-term, multi-year aid commitments.
- **Working through government.** As in other sectors, almost all of the aid currently channeled to South Sudan is directed to projects, with a large share of the transfer taking place through non-government organizations. In keeping with the Paris Principles for aid effectiveness, donors should incrementally raise the share of project support directly managed by the government and channeled through government budgets, using government systems. Similarly, donors should transfer to the government responsibility for service delivery, focusing project support on the development of education infrastructure.
- **Prioritizing capacity development.** Building the capacity of South Sudan's civil service and public institutions holds the key to effective and accountable aid. In the case of education, the development of the Education Management and Information System is a priority. Donors should also work with the government of South Sudan to strengthen the public finance management system.
- **Drawing on the Fast Track Initiative (FTI).** South Sudan represents a test case for the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, which is administered by the World Bank and operates under the auspices of a wider education for all partnership. The GoSS is currently preparing a request for support, which donors and the FTI secretariat should ensure receives swift endorsement. The FTI's Catalytic Fund should be used to provide immediate support for the priorities set out in the education strategy, with a focus on teacher training, gender equity, education quality and classroom construction. The October 2011 Catalytic Fund replenishment meeting provides an opportunity to request additional resources for South Sudan.
- **Managing the integration of humanitarian aid into long-term recovery financing.** Humanitarian aid for South Sudan has leveled off since 2005, while development assistance is on a slowly rising trend. Given the fragility of the peace process, the potential for group-based conflict, and acute

vulnerability of a large section of the population to malnutrition, humanitarian aid will continue to play an important role in South Sudan. Donors will also have to respond to problems of secondary displacement, as returning IDP and refugees face difficulties with resettlement. As the ongoing displacement crises in Abyei and South Kordofan demonstrate, there is also an urgent need to ensure that education is adequately addressed in the humanitarian response conflict in disputed areas. However, the terms on which humanitarian aid is provided has to be reconsidered, with far more emphasis placed on flexible responses to long-running emergencies. In the case areas characterized by high levels of resettlement and renewed displacement, it is important that humanitarian aid is integrated into national financing strategies for education.

Priorities for other international actors

International solidarity could play an important role in supporting the development of South Sudan's education system. Many international NGOs have been directly involved in South Sudan for many years, whether in delivering basic services and humanitarian support, or in drawing the world's attention to human rights abuses. These agencies now have an opportunity to put South Sudan on their global campaigning and advocacy map – and few issues merit more urgent attention than education. Similarly, South Sudan could become a focal point for many of the new education partnerships that have emerged in recent years bringing together private companies, philanthropic foundations and other actors.

- **Putting South Sudan on the global campaigning map.** After a brief period of intensive interest, South Sudan has drifted out of the global media spotlight and has reverted to its more familiar status as a forgotten conflict-affected country. Low levels of visibility will inevitably diminish public interest in rich countries, which will in turn weaken the pressure on donors to mobilize resources for reconstruction. Non-government organizations and coalitions such as the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) should be encouraged to make South Sudan a centerpiece of their campaigning and advocacy efforts. Activities should be identified that enable concerned groups to make a difference. Among the priorities and associated financial costs are:
 - recruiting 23,400 primary teachers and 1,400 secondary school teachers at a cost of \$3,178 and \$9,417 respectively per teacher;
 - providing in-service training for 3,000 primary school teachers at a cost of \$589 per teacher;
 - procuring 5.6 million textbooks for primary at a unit cost per book of \$4;
 - building 800 community girls' schools under AES at a unit cost of \$3,737 per classroom;
 - providing another 5,000 girls with secondary school bursaries at a unit cost of \$75.

■ **Linking teacher training to the information highway.**

Information and communication technologies (ICT) and open resource education materials provide new opportunities for improving teacher training. However, South Sudan is excluded from these vital resources through the high cost of Internet connections. Open source education material providers – such as the Massachusetts Institute for Technology and the Open University – should work with the GoSS and its development partners to develop appropriate material for teacher training. Telecommunication and ICT companies should work with the GoSS and donors to lower the costs of Internet connections, equip teacher training facilities with computers, and network teacher training institutes to facilitate the delivery of virtual training, assessment and monitoring.

■ **Harnessing the potential of the expatriate community.**

South Sudan's diaspora represents a huge national asset. Overseas southern Sudanese provide remittances, support during periods of stress and humanitarian crisis, and networks that have worked tirelessly to increase public awareness and media interest in their country. One prominent example is the subject of a best-selling account of the "Lost Boys," who has created a foundation that supports secondary education. Less well-known are the thousands of organizations and the many entrepreneurs

who are deeply committed to the development of South Sudan. Education is a natural focal point for their solidarity – and a credible, accountable, results-oriented pooled fund could provide a window for converting their financial support in expanded opportunities for learning.

Conclusion

South Sudan is a country that will start independence at a crossroad. There is a real danger that a long-running war will be replaced by a fragile peace punctuated by frequent episodes of violence and persistent insecurity across much of the country. The fragile gains in human development achieved since the 2005 peace agreement could stall, or be thrown into reverse. But another future is possible. Decisive leadership by the GoSS backed by a concerted international aid effort could transform South Sudan into a development success story. There is a real opportunity to exploit the window of opportunity created by the peace agreement to set the country on a trajectory that offers hope, development, shared prosperity and common security for all of the people of southern Sudan. Putting in place an education system that equips South Sudan's children with the skills, competencies and attitudes they will need to build a better future for their country is the starting point for a break with the past. ■



A boy listens to his teacher during a lesson at the improvised Hai Kugi School on the outskirts of Juba, South Sudan

Principal sources

This report draws on a range of sources. The analysis is informed by UNESCO's 2011 Education for All, Global Monitoring Report, *The hidden crisis: armed conflict and education*, which examines in detail the problems facing education systems in conflict-affected countries. The report is available at: <http://www.efareport.unesco.org>. Other key documents consulted include the following:

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