Provision of Education in a post-conflict country

A case of South- Sudan

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Abstract

While the world is experiencing an unprecedented period of peace in many countries and contexts, vast numbers of people are perishing in civil wars and from other diversities associated with failed and corrupt political systems. Countries on every continent suffer from poverty and insecurity, in part because of their political leaders' decisions and actions. Poor leadership can take a devastating toll on provision of social welfare and human security and dignity. Conflict has fundamentally distinct effects on education. Against the background of civil unrest it has become apparent that education for thousands of children is at stake and should be a major priority. As the world moves closer to Millennium Development Goals deadline, these goals especially goal number 2 and 3 will not be met by the deadline and we have no idea when, if ever, these goals will be achieved. The question is then, what will be done to start moving these numbers in the right direction, not just to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals, but because it is the right thing to do. This paper is a desktop review of education situation in South Sudan. It presents an overview of the primary education in south Sudan. Curriculum, teachers and financing shall be given attention in this paper among other issues

Key Words: Education in Fragile States, curriculum, Teachers, Financing, South Sudan, post-conflict

Background Information

War has been described as 'development in reverse'. Even short episodes of armed conflict can halt progress or reverse gains built up over generations, undermining economic growth and advances in health, nutrition and employment (UNESCO,2011). Despite all efforts by governments, civil society and the international community, the world has not achieved Education for All. There are still 58 million children out of school globally and around 100 million children who do not complete primary education. Inequality in education has increased, with the poorest and most disadvantaged shouldering the heaviest burden (UNESCO, 2015). Conflict remains a steep barrier, with a high and growing proportion of out-of-school children living in conflict zones. More than 172 million people globally were estimated to be affected by conflict in 2012 (UNESCO, 2015). Nicolai et al., (2014) notes there is a major challenge in addressing or analysing education in emergency situations. This is because there is lack of evidence on the educational and economic costs of disruption of school-age populations at the country level. Yet even without discreet data and evidence it is clear that education systems are disrupted during conflict and especially in protracted conflict countries. Conflict affects education directly and indirectly. The proportion of out-of-school children living in conflict-affected countries increased from 30% in 1999 to 36% in 2012.Based on the trends of the past five years, 57 million children are projected to be out of school in 2015 (UNESCO, 2015). These statistics give the government a compelling reason to actand lessen the burden and sufferings of the majority of the poor children who are the major victims. In the absence of solutions conflict crisis

threatens to jeopardize the Education for All goals adopted in 2000. A conflict can also transmit damage to the future because education is so central to progress in other areas, such as child survival, health, economic growth and conflict prevention (UNESCO, 2011). UNESCO (2011) notes that armed conflict is destroying not just school infrastructure, but also the hopes and ambitions of a whole generation of childrennot only in South Sudan, but in all conflict b-affected countries.

South Sudan Focus

South Sudan is the world's newest state, emerged out of a long national liberation struggle, and is now facing significant internal conflict since December of 2013.South Sudan has a troubled history, most of it characterized by domination by external powers, which has resulted in disfranchisement and underdevelopment, a situation that has gone on for centuries. This dark history has involved various kinds of subjugation, including Egyptian domination, slave trade and attempted forced conversion to Islam. The British colonialists then dominated the region with most of the South isolated from the North. However, there was hope that at independence the region would be integrated with the rest of British East Africa. But the independence of Sudan in 1956 brought even further domination of the South with most administration positions in the South occupied by the northerners and the dream of joining the rest of East Africa completely lost. The South at that point thought that the only way to resist domination was some level of provincial autonomy, warning that failure to win legal concessions would drive the South to rebellion. But by 1955, the seeds of rebellion had already been sown and southern army officers anticipating marginalization by the North, mutinied and formed the Anyanya (snake venom) guerrilla movement to demand justice, recognition, and self-determination, from the North. As expected, at independence on 1 January 1956 the new constitution was silent on two crucial issues for southern leaders: the secular or Islamic character of the state, and its federal or unitary structure. This scene shadowed the country for the next half a century when the North in 1958 began instituting a policy of 'Islamization' and reneged on the implementation of a federal system that would have guaranteed autonomy for the South
The Anyanya I war lasted until March 1972, when it ended with the signing of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement with Sudan under General Nimeiri granting limited autonomy to the South, which ushered in a ten year period of peace for Southern Sudan. But in May 1983, continued marginalization and Islamization accompanied by the introduction of Sharia Law by President Nimeiri prompted a group of soldiers led by Colonel Gerang to revolt against the Sudan Army and eventually form the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). This episode of the war lasted up to 2003 when the SPLA/M and the Khartoum.In 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in Nairobi, Kenya on 9 January 2005.

This brought an end to the 22-year conflict between the North and the South, culminating in the January 2011 referendum and independence on 9 July 2011. South Sudan is a young country with half (51%) the population under the age of eighteen and 72% under the age of thirty. It has a population of 8.3 million according to the Fifth Sudan Population and Housing Census (2008), of which 1.4 million live in urban areas, while 6.9 million live in rural areas. The population is currently predominantly rural (83%) and dependent on subsistence agriculture. Poverty levels are exceptionally high. Oil revenues create the misleading impression that South Sudan is a country with relatively high levels of per capita income. In fact, over 80 per cent of the population is estimated to live below the international poverty threshold of US$1.25 a day (UNESCO, 2011). One of the characteristics of fragile or post conflict states is inability or unwillingness of the state authority to deliver to the majority of its people such core functions as security, protection of property, basic services and essential infrastructure(UNESCO,2011). Education is one such basic service; access to quality education itself is seen both as a basic human right and a means to fulfilling other rights (Brookings, 2007).

Education in South Sudan

In a post conflict country education should be a core element of the peace premium and it is normally one of the main priorities. Recent studies show that communities in south Sudan see education as the most important peace dividend (GoSS, 2012). Across South Sudan demand for education is high and rising. Education has a crucial bearing on prospects for peace, productivity and progress in public health and overall development. 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 (GoSS, 2012).

The primary sector last 8 years from P1 to P8, number of primary schools in South Sudan is 3,639, where 70% primary schools are government-owned. Progress in education mirrors wider developments since the peace accords of 2005. There have been recorded important advances, albeit with marked disparities across states. 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 Government of South Sudan (GoSS) does not accept thisfigure). 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 should be treated with extreme caution

South Sudan's education indicators remain among the worst in the world despite increases in school enrolment over the past few years (IRIN ,2012),It ranks second lowest at44 % out of 123 countries on net enrolment rates for primary education, bottom of the ranking at 4% for 134 countries with enrolment datafor secondary education, and bottom of the global league for gender parity in primary education where for every 10 boys there are 7 girls and 5 girls for every 10 boys in secondary schools,. It is estimated that more than one million primary school aged children, mostly from rural areas, are not in school, while the few schools that do exist are not conducive to learning. The completion rate in primary schools is less than 10 per cent, one of the lowest in the world. It is important to note that access to pre-primary education is which is supposed to be feeding the primary sector is even worse than primary education.Only two per cent of pre-school aged children are in early childhood development programmes (UNICEF, 2012).The increase in the demand for education by returnee children who have been arriving in the country since late 2010 compounds the infrastructure issues. The already stretched and under-resourced system now has to contend with additional children, placing a further strain on the limited resources. Gaps between the gross enrolment ratio and the NER point to a large over-age population in primary school. This is because most children enter school late. Children attending classes at the appropriate age for their grade are a small minority –almost 90% are over-age(UNICEF, 2012).

The quantity and quality of teachers in South Sudan remains unknown. GoSS (2012) reports between 7,500 and 15,000 of South Sudan's teachers are untrained. Just over 2,000 have a diploma certificate. Reports from the government of South Sudan indicate that by 2013, national total numbers of students were 1,311,467 with an average number of teachers at 13,261 Primary School Teachers, 47% Primary School Teachers Trained;with the increase in enrolment since the 2005 peace agreement; the pupil-to-teacher ratio has risen to 50:1 (GoSS, 2012) . Among the teachers only 12 % are female teachers. This obviously can have a negative impact on the enrolment and retention of the girl child and other gender related disparities. The vast majority of these untrained teachers also work under extraordinarily challenging conditions.Enrolment has grown rapidly; student: teacher ratios at the primary level have grown steadily worse; physical facilities have not kept pace with demand; there is a shortage of teaching and learning materials; teachers are frequently underpaid or received their salaries with a 2–3 month delay, leading to strikes and even violence in some states.

Challenges of Provision of Education

The impact of armed conflict on education has been consistently and systematically underestimated. Education systems cannot be fully insulated from the effects of violence. However, current patterns of violence, with armed parties actively targeting children and schools, are destroying opportunities for education on what may be an unprecedented scale (UNESCO, 2011). Despite the positive developments in the education sector, major challenges exist that may hinder the achievement of the MDG target on education in all parts of South Sudan. Much is left to be done regarding coverage, efficiency, quality, equity and relevance. Some of the challenges include**:**

Dropout Rate

In South Sudan, 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. Reports quote almost 90% of all the students as over-age. Literature points to evidence that there is a strong association between delayed entry into primary school and risk of drop-out (UNESCO, 2011). 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. A large number of children had never attended a school or had to leave school due to the two decade civil war. After the war, they re-entered school while over-age. As a result, they often drop out before completion of the primary school cycle. This is particularly true of girls.

Dropout rate Per Class in primary between 2010 and 2011

Primary Level	%
P1-P2	21
P2-P3	15.9
P3-P4	18.6
P4-P5	31.9
P5-P6	31.2
P6-P7	29.3
P7-P8	20.0

Source:GoSS, 2011; UNESCO, 2011

Quantity and quality of Teacher

A teacher's role involves more than simply standing in front of a classroom and lecturing. In fact, even though a teacher spends the majority of the day in the classroom, the actual teaching component is only part of the job. No education system is better than its teachers. Years of conflict in South Sudan have not allowed for consistent training of teachers.After conflict, the supply of teachers especially trained teachers is unlikely to keep pace with the demand generated by a return to school (UNESCO, 2011). Teacher recruitment, training and deployment require long-term planning even in stable and progressing countries. Due to protracted conflict, many of the trained teachers have left South Sudan either for other government jobs, local and international organizations or have left the country. Many also have become internally displaced over the period of conflict. Only 45% of the teachers working in South Sudan are considered trained and 40% are primary school leavers. The student teacher ratio (STR) is 50.1. However, many teachers working in South Sudan are volunteers, waiting for recruitment of paid teachers. Teacher absenteeism is common and this hampers student learning.

Infrastructure

The experience of South Sudan cautions against understating the importance of physical infrastructure and teaching materials in any education narrative. There is a continued international dialogue on policy approaches which emphasis quality of teaching and learning outcomes in the achievement of Education for All. South Sudan is still struggling with access and therefore a consideration of school inputs should be a major concern for both the government and development partners. Major inputs such as classrooms, books, blackboards and desks are needed urgently. Continued localized conflicts in several counties have greatly contributed to children being displaced from their communities and moving to areas where access to schooling is not assured. This has continued to strain the already inadequate physical infrastructure and lack of resources for training and/or recruiting teachers.Classroom shortages are pervasive. According to World Bank-Global Partnership for Education (2011), One third of the children 'in school' are being taught in the open air and another quarter in semi-permanent or basic classrooms. The average pupil classroom ratio is 134:1.Provision of latrines and safe drinking water is limited , with the 2009 EMIS reporting just half of schools having access to both facilities. Textbooks are in short supply, with an average pupil textbook ratio of 1:4 rising to the worst case scenario of 1:9 in some parts of the country.

Language and Curriculum implementation

UNESCO (2011) highlights the value of language in post-conflict situations. The report notes that, "No issue better demonstrates the tough choices facing post-conflict governments than approaches to the language of instruction. Language is a vital component of identity. It is central to how people and countries define themselves. The language of instruction in school is one of the vehicles through which identities are forged. In some countries, governments have used the education system to promote a 'national language' aimed at creating a sense of national identity. Yet in some contexts, this approach might be seen as an undermining identity and reinforcing subordination of ethnic minorities.

South Sudan is making the transition to an English language education system. The government has also 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. However, many of the country's trained teachers and better-educated adults learnt in Arabic, rather than English. Different curricula are used in different parts of the country, reflecting past adaptations by local communities to the long-running civil war. While national data is limited, partial evidence points to high levels of teacher absenteeism and low levels of instructional time. Unsurprisingly, the majority of schools and teachers do not currently cover the syllabus they are expected to teach (World Bank-Global Partnership for Education , 2011),

There are shortages of English-language text books in South Sudan. Textbook shortages compounds the problems associated with early learning in a language other than the mother tongue. Complicating matters is the fact that South Sudan has decided to switch from offering instruction in Arabic, which is associated with the north, to teaching in English. This tends to threaten and compromise curriculum reform.Another major challenge in curriculum implementation is that a large part of the South Sudan population is semi-nomadic and this prevents them from attending formal schooling (GoSS, 2012).

Way Forward

Long-term reconstruction of education in South Sudan depends on the development of effective national education planning systems. This is a process that has to start early, even against the backdrop of an unstable political environment, and continue through progressive stages. As the country move along the planning continuum, the challenge is to develop policy instruments that link goals to the provision of inputs, the development of institutions, and national financing strategies and involvement of all the education stakeholders including the parents.

The future of education in South Sudan should be focused on multidimensional approach. Since 2009, theGoSS 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 GoSSsetting broad goals and priorities in the South SudanDevelopment Plan (SSDP), the Ministry of education settingbudget priorities, and an Education Sector Strategic plan(ESSP) under preparation. The SSDP aims by 2013 to increasethe primary school net enrolment ratio (NER) from 46% to63%, to double the secondary NER from 4% to 8%, and toexpand the coverage of literacy and alternative educationprogrammes.

Among the key provisions:

- *Teacher recruitment*:the available data reports that GoSS aims to recruit anadditional 23,400 primary school and 1,400 secondary schoolteachers, and to reduce the qualified teacher-to-studentratio from 1:117 to 1:50 by 2013.
- *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

Conclusion

Education is more than just a fundamental right; it helps pave the way to a successful and productive future. The country still faces a daunting state-building task that necessitates laying solid foundations in order to ensure a sustainable future. Two decades of war have destroyed the education system leaving limited poor institutional support mechanisms to deliver quality education. As the deadline for millennium goals ends in 2015, Republic of South Sudan remains with some of the world's worst indicators for education. Education is undoubtedly the base for reconstructing sustainable development for South Sudan.

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