

Investing in Education: A Strategic Plan for Development in South Sudan



A History of Conflict

More than two decades of civil war have had a devastating impact on South Sudan's development as the world's youngest nation. An estimated **2 million Sudanese have died** as a result of the conflict and up to **4 million were displaced**, causing severe, long-term disruption to people's lives¹. South Sudan is now one of the poorest and most fragile countries in the world, where over 90% of the population lives on less than USD 1 per day². The new government lacks the capacity and resources to rebuild the country's economy, society or infrastructure. Internal tensions continue and returnees place an additional burden on severely underserved regions.

In times of crisis, education suffers the most drastic cutbacks. The **national enrollment rate in primary schools is 44%—just 37% for girls**³. Only 7% of teachers⁴ are trained, with ratios of pupils to qualified teachers averaging 100:1, sometimes double in states especially marred by the effects of violence and displacement, and only 12% of all teachers are women⁵. A mere 16% of

¹ United Nations Mission in the Sudan, UNMIS (2011)

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmis/background.shtml>

² Sudan Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2010, The Republic of Sudan National Population Council (NPC/GS) Ministry of Welfare and Social Security (2010)

³ South Sudan, DFID (2011) <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/where-we-work/africa-eastern--southern/south-sudan/>

⁴ Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers to Schooling in Southern Sudan, UNICEF (2008)

⁵ Education for All Global Monitoring Report: Education for an independent South Sudan, UNESCO (2011)

women are literate⁶. Barriers to education for girls include early marriage and pregnancy, physical and mental trauma from conflict, discrimination, violence, lack of sanitation in schools, lack of safety to/in school, domestic responsibilities, cost of materials, and lack of value placed on education, particularly for girls. The country is significantly off-track in meeting several Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including MDG 2 (universal primary education), MDG 3 (promoting gender equality and empowering women) and MDG1 (eradicating poverty).

A Critical Time to Invest

Set against these constraints, there are undeniable opportunities for South Sudan to improve its development indicators. As the nation is home to one of the youngest average age demographics, with **72% of its population of 8.26 million under the age of 30**, investment in the country's youth agenda has the potential to produce catalytic change for the country as a whole. Research has demonstrated that education raises individual incomes, which in turn contributes significantly to economic activity and ensures that the growth is broad-based and improves conditions for even the most marginalized. Through its impact on the economy, **education helps to fortify transitions to democracy** and helps preserve robust democratic governance and can even improve health outcomes. Access to education is a crucial precondition to impact, but what matters most thereafter is the quality of education. Because of these important links to other powerful drivers of development, **educational investments should be understood as dynamic and transformational levers of change**.

Independence has created a window of opportunity to make the transition for South Sudan and the international community from an aid-relationship towards a compact for long-term development and self-reliance—a compact that holds out the promise of strengthened and more cost-effective results. Within its first year of independence, President Salva Kiir signaled a clear intention to prioritize education. That intention was reflected in national planning documents and reinforced by the draft education sector strategy. However, in 2011, **education spending amounted to just 7% of the national budget** compared to 40% for defense.⁷

This year, in an effort to drive the nation's development, donors organized by USAID have committed to provide approximately **\$1.3 billion to South Sudan**—part of the continuing effort to help the new and underdeveloped nation recover from decades of conflict and provide emergency humanitarian assistance where needed. They also indicated a willingness to add new support—**up to \$300 million**—to their existing assistance to South Sudan should the government continue on the right path.⁸

The timing of this opportunity is pivotal. With new incentives and investment in the young nation's development, the Government of South Sudan is now compelled to fulfill its commitment to prioritize key drivers of development such as education. However, without funding specifically earmarked for education, funds from foreign sources will likely be allocated for the endemic

⁶ United Nations Development Program in South Sudan, UNDP (2011) <http://southsudan.undp.org/country-info.php.html>

⁷ Education in South Sudan: Investing in a Better Future, Gordon Brown (2012) <http://gordonandsarahbrown.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Education-in-South-Sudan-investing-in-a-better-future.pdf>

⁸ A New Partnership with South Sudan, A New Way of Promoting Development in Fragile States, Earl Gast (2013) <http://blog.usaid.gov/2013/05/a-new-partnership-with-south-sudan-a-new-way-of-promoting-development-in-fragile-states/>

humanitarian crises that continue to plague the country, excluding long-term development initiatives like education. It is therefore necessary to identify ample sources of funding dedicated to improving South Sudan's educational system to ensure the realization of the nation's full developmental potential.

BRAC's History of Success

BRAC has over 25 years of experience delivering relevant, accessible primary education to out-of-school children, especially girls, from poor, remote and underserved areas. BRAC Bangladesh began with 22 one-room schools in 1985, and now operates **the largest non-government school system in the world.** In Bangladesh, 32,000 BRAC schools now provide **1.2 million students, 70% girls**, with four years of primary education. To date, **almost 5 million children have graduated** from these schools, with nearly 95% going on to enroll in government schools. Children from BRAC schools have performed ahead of their peers in national primary school exams⁹. BRAC's approach has been widely promoted by UNICEF as a high impact, low cost model¹⁰.

In the last decade, BRAC International has had success adapting and contextualizing the approach in post conflict/fragile states, including Afghanistan, South Sudan, Northern Uganda & Pakistan. BRAC began working in community education in South Sudan in 2002, in partnership with UNICEF. Like that of Bangladesh, BRAC South Sudan's education model uses **community-based one-room primary schools with sanitary latrines** for poor out-of-school children, adapted to compliment the established South Sudan government curriculum.

In 2008, BRAC South Sudan began its own pilot program with 50 schools and has since expanded to **225 schools** in four states: **(6,629 students: 65% girls)**. An external mid-term review (July 2010) found that BRAC had successfully adapted its educational model for South Sudan's local post-conflict context, that there was strong support and engagement from communities, education officials and other stakeholders, and that grade completion rates (95% in Juba and Torit) were remarkably high. BRAC has been acknowledged as a 'valued partner' by South Sudan's Ministry of Education¹¹, who have requested a further 1,000 schools in remote areas.

⁹ Bangladesh: Education: Primary Schools, BRAC (2011) <http://www.brac.net/content/bangladesh-education-primary-schools>

¹⁰ Education, BRAC (2011) <http://brac.net/content/what-we-do-education>

¹¹ Letter to BRACSS from Undersecretary, MoE, GoSS, 18 July 2011



Strategic Plan

Girl-Friendly Schools

This project will extend BRAC's successful low-cost primary education model in South Sudan by setting up and equipping **300 economical, girl-friendly schools**. As a result of this project, **9,000 children** – most of whom have never been to school before and would not have the chance otherwise – will receive an education. Classrooms will be at least **60% female**. The key target group is **out-of-school 8-11 year olds** from poor and vulnerable communities. Household surveys will ensure that those marginalized because of remoteness, disability or ethnicity will be targeted.

These students will be placed on an accelerated track, **receiving four years of education in three years**. Pedagogical methods are designed to impart relevant, suitable knowledge and an enterprising mindset. Following a model of intensive community engagement tested in Bangladesh, the students will be transitioned to government schools having acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills.

This project will scale up the existing programs in Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei and Lakes and expand to two more states: Western Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal at the request of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of South Sudan. BRAC South Sudan has undertaken detailed consultation and household surveys to identify and learn about these local communities and develop integrated programs including **microfinance, agriculture, livelihoods, education**

and health, tackling different dimensions of poverty to achieve sustainable change. It will build on this knowledge, and consult with the MoE on exact locations of the new schools.

If successful, this initiative will contribute to the achievement of the off-track **MDGs 1, 2, and 3** by increasing the number of disadvantaged children, particularly out-of-school girls, accessing basic primary education, and also by providing them, women teachers, and the wider communities with increased skills and sustainable livelihood opportunities. Having acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills, these students will transfer to & successfully complete the upper cycle of government primary education or access other livelihood development opportunities.

Paraprofessional Teacher Training

Other beneficiaries of this project will be poor local women with a minimum of eight years of schooling who will receive training as paraprofessional teachers or community organizers, increasing their income, status and influence in the communities. **300 young women** from the local communities will benefit from 15 days training as paraprofessional teachers, on-going monthly and annual training, and weekly teaching supervision. In addition to the increased status and influence in their communities, these teachers will receive a monthly salary, providing improved financial security for themselves and their families and opportunities for promotion within BRAC South Sudan.

Community Empowerment

Additionally, **30 local community members (80% women)** will be employed as community organizers & area education supervisors, receiving on-going training and skills development, and will contribute to their household income from their salaries. Placing these women in leadership roles will **enhance their sense of empowerment** and help them to gain respect and influence within their community, some being promoted to staff positions within BRAC. Members of 300 communities, (ca. 2,100 members with 1,200 women) will have opportunities to engage in school management committees overseeing the schools' operations. 9,000-18,000 parents/guardians, the majority mothers, will attend monthly parents' forums, discussing successes and barriers to their children's education such as safety, early pregnancy and marriage, discrimination against girls, lack of child protection, etc. With better knowledge of the issues facing their children, the parents will provide support and advocate for their continued education. Community leaders will take opportunities to influence attitudes, practice and policy beyond their communities. The project will also target the wider communities, working to change attitudes to girls and education, so that the community recognizes the **vital contribution that the girl child can make to social and economic recovery.**

Mothers will also have access to other BRAC programs such as **microfinance, agriculture and livelihood training**, further assisting them to improve their socio-economic status. The wider families and communities consisting of approximately **60,000 people** are poised to benefit indirectly from this project. Up to **18,000 parents and guardians** (primarily mothers) will attend orientation trainings and be fully sensitized to the program in which they are enrolling their children.