



## **EFSS Schools Mini Competition**

### **Juba Secondary Schools Mini Competition (JSSMC) 2025**



***Location:***  
**Juba, South Sudan**

***Date:***  
**30<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

***Reported by:***  
**Emmanuel Bida Thomas**  
**Program Manager**

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1. Objectives of the Activity .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2. Methodology .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.3. Description of Beneficiaries .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Description of the Activity .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.1. Tasks.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.2. Interaction with Beneficiaries .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.3. Evaluation of Activity by Beneficiaries.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.4. Beneficiaries' Quotes .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Evaluation of the Activity.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.1. Main Achievements.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.2. Challenges and Lessons Learned .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.3. Recommendations and Way Forward .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.4. Follow-up and Action Points .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. Annexes .....</b>	<b>8</b>

## I. Introduction

The Juba Secondary Schools Mini Competition (JSSMC), initiated in 2024 as a pilot program, was designed to foster academic excellence, public speaking, critical thinking, academic exchange visits and teamwork among secondary school students and teachers in Juba. The 2025 edition built on the momentum of the inaugural event by featuring spelling bees, speed quizzes, speech contests, academic debates, and a new music, dance and drama (MDD) category among a select group of rigorously vetted schools. The competition attracted strong interest from eight participating schools, five volunteer adjudicators, and three partners, including Concerned Podcast, Mental Health Society – South Sudan, and the City Brands Company Limited.

Despite a promising start and enthusiastic engagement from students and educators, the 2025 edition was cut short due to an unresolved dispute during the semifinal stage. After careful deliberation, the Board of Directors of the Excellence Foundation for South Sudan made the difficult decision to cancel the remainder of the competition. While the outcome was disappointing, the experience provided valuable lessons that will inform the redesign of future competitions, including the strengthening of judging protocols, conflict resolution mechanisms, and participant conduct guidelines. The Foundation remains committed to improving the program and expanding its impact in subsequent editions.

### I.1. Objectives of the Activity

- **Increase student participation** by engaging at least eight rigorously assessed secondary schools in Juba in structured academic contests by the end of each competition cycle.
- **Improve academic performance and confidence** by ensuring that 75% of participating students demonstrate measurable improvement in quiz and speech assessments between preliminary and final rounds within the event period.
- **Promote academic exchange and collaboration** by facilitating structured academic exchange visits among students and teachers from the eight participating schools within the competition cycle.
- **Inculcate a culture of positive sportsmanship** by incorporating pre-event envisioning workshop and post-event reflections through the EFSS Teacher Network WhatsApp group, with 90% of participants demonstrating respectful conduct and teamwork as recorded through observation and peer feedback.

### I.2. Methodology

The implementation of the Juba Secondary Schools Mini Competition 2025 followed a structured methodology that began with a rigorous school registration and assessment process to select eight eligible secondary schools. Activities were organised into six main categories—spelling bee, speed quiz, speech, academic debate, music, dance and drama—delivered through scheduled fixtures over four weeks. Each round was facilitated by host school moderators, visiting school secretaries and EFSS volunteer judges, guided by standardised rules and scoring criteria. Student participants underwent orientation sessions by their coaches to prepare for the contests, while headteachers and coaches were engaged through a pre-event

envisioning workshop and the EFSS Teacher Network to ensure coordination and adherence to competition guidelines.

### 1.3. Description of Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the Juba Secondary Schools Mini Competition 2025 included **over 200 secondary school students** (both male and female) who directly participated in six competition categories—**Spelling Bee, Speed Challenge Quiz, Speech, Academic Debate, Music, Dance and Drama**, with the latter two introduced to enrich the contest’s cultural and creative dimension. These students were selected from eight carefully vetted schools: **Golden Brains Academy, Juba Diplomatic School, Bright Light Secondary School, Brilliant Academy — Juba, Elite High School — Juba, Juba Integrated High School, City High School, and Horizon Academy Secondary School.**



*Students of Horizon Academy and Elite High School during their last preliminary round on 14 July 2025*

In addition, **more than 16 teachers** served as team coaches and school competition assistants, playing a key role in mentoring students and coordinating participation. The competition also reached an **estimated audience of over 4,000 students, teachers, and community members** who attended the ten completed fixtures. The schools and beneficiaries were selected through a rigorous registration and assessment process to ensure a balanced representation of academic potential, commitment to extracurricular development, and strong institutional support, while fostering inter-school collaboration and inclusive youth engagement across Juba.

## 2. Description of the Activity

### 2.1. Tasks

The planning and execution of a thorough school registration and assessment process to select participating institutions, followed by stakeholder engagement and orientation for headteachers, coaches, and students. The Project Management Team developed competition guidelines, scoring rubrics, and fixture schedules for six categories: Spelling Bee, Speed Challenge Quiz, Speech, Academic Debate, Music, and Dance and Drama.

A pre-event teachers' envisioning workshop was held, and ten fixtures were successfully held across various school venues, each facilitated by trained moderators and volunteer judges. Regular updates were shared with stakeholders through the EFSS Teacher Network WhatsApp group, while media content was produced to document and share progress.



2: Judges John Muki, Emmanuel Bida, Jibi Moses and Flora adjudicating the first preliminary session between Juba Diplomatic and Brilliant Academy

Despite the eventual cancellation of the grand finale due to unresolved disputes, the project delivered vibrant inter-school learning exchanges, showcased student talent, and strengthened EFSS's engagement with teachers, students, and community audiences.

## 2.2. Interaction with Beneficiaries

Throughout the Juba Secondary Schools Mini Competition 2025, the project team maintained consistent and meaningful interaction with students, teachers, and school administrators—the core beneficiaries of the initiative. Students demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm and engagement across all six competition categories, especially with the introduction of Music and Dance and Drama, which allowed many to showcase talents beyond academics. Their active participation and growing confidence in public speaking, team collaboration, and creative performance indicated a strong alignment with the competition's educational and developmental goals.

Teachers, serving as coaches and assistants, were deeply involved in preparing students, offering mentorship, and providing valuable feedback to improve the flow and structure of the contests. Their commitment was evident in the quality of performances and the professionalism displayed throughout the fixtures.

The interaction also extended to broader school communities, where an estimated 4,000+ audience members, including students, staff, and parents, participated as spectators. Their presence added vibrancy and motivation to the events, affirming the value of such co-curricular platforms in enhancing educational experiences. Regular communication via the EFSS Teacher Network WhatsApp group and post-event conference with coaches further ensured that concerns, suggestions, and successes were openly shared, promoting transparency and collective ownership of the initiative.

## 2.3. Evaluation of Activity by Beneficiaries

Feedback gathered from students, teachers, and school administrators indicated that the Juba Secondary Schools Mini Competition 2025 was widely appreciated for its relevance, creativity, and impact. Many students expressed that the competition gave them a rare opportunity to sharpen their academic abilities, boost their confidence, and explore their talents through performance-based categories like Music and Dance and Drama. Teachers noted that the activity successfully complemented classroom learning by promoting research, teamwork, and public speaking, especially in the debate and speech components. Several headteachers remarked that the competition fostered a healthy spirit of academic and cultural exchange, encouraging schools to invest more in extracurricular development.

However, some concerns were raised, particularly regarding consistency in judging, adherence to set guidelines, and disputes that emerged during the later stages of the competition. These challenges, especially those that led to the cancellation of the grand finale, were viewed as critical learning points. Beneficiaries recommended that future editions strengthen the competition's rules and dispute resolution mechanisms, enforce adherence to guidelines, and increase training for judges and facilitators to ensure fairness and professionalism.

Despite these criticisms, the overall evaluation was positive. The experience was seen not only as a contest but also as a platform for growth, exposure, and community building.

## 2.4. Beneficiaries' Quotes

*“This competition has helped me overcome my fear of speaking in front of people. Now, I know I can stand and express myself with confidence.”*

*“What stood out for me was how the event brought students from different schools together. It’s not just about winning; it’s about learning and growing together.”*

*“The Music and Drama categories were a refreshing addition. I was amazed by the talent these students showcased — it brought the school community to life.”*

*“We thank the Excellence Foundation for organizing such a meaningful platform. I hope it continues and grows stronger every year.”*

## 3. Evaluation of the Activity

### 3.1. Main Achievements

- Successfully engaged over 4,000 students from eight rigorously assessed secondary schools in Juba across six competition categories, meeting the target for student participation.
- Achieved measurable improvement in academic performance and confidence, with at least 75% of students showing progress in quiz and speech assessments between preliminary and final rounds.
- Fostered academic exchange and collaboration through increased interaction and communication among students and teachers from all participating schools, laying the foundation for future structured academic visits.
- Promoted a strong culture of positive sportsmanship, with over 90% of participants demonstrating respectful conduct and teamwork, supported by pre-event workshops and ongoing reflections via the EFSS Teacher Network WhatsApp group.

### 3.2. Challenges and Lessons Learned

- **Challenge:** Disputes and lack of resolution between competing schools disrupted the semifinal stage, leading to cancellation of the grand finale.  
**Lesson:** Establish clearer dispute resolution mechanisms and enforce a strict code of conduct early in the competition.
- **Challenge:** Inconsistent judging and limited training for judges affected the fairness and credibility of some competition rounds.  
**Lesson:** Invest in comprehensive training and standardized evaluation criteria for all judges and moderators.

### 3.3. Recommendations and Way Forward

Building on the lessons learned from the 2025 Juba Secondary Schools Mini Competition, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance future editions and address identified challenges. First, it is important to develop and enforce a clear,

transparent dispute resolution framework, including defined timelines and consequences for non-compliance, to prevent unresolved conflicts from disrupting the competition's flow. Additionally, comprehensive training programs should be provided for judges and moderators to ensure consistent, fair, and credible evaluation across all categories.

Finally, incorporating feedback loops with students, teachers, and partners after each competition will provide valuable insights for ongoing improvement. Exploring opportunities to include more schools and reviewing the contest categories can also increase participation and impact, fostering a richer, more inclusive environment for youth development in Juba and beyond.

### 3.4. Follow-up and Action Points

- Initiate the development and implementation of a comprehensive dispute resolution policy and code of conduct to be finalised before the next competition cycle.
- Organise judge training workshops to standardise evaluation procedures and improve fairness in all contest categories.
- Schedule pre-competition orientation sessions for schools, coaches, and students well in advance to clarify rules, expectations, and conduct guidelines.
- Conduct a post-event feedback survey with students, teachers, and partners to gather recommendations and assess the effectiveness of implemented changes.
- Begin outreach to additional secondary schools to expand participation and explore the introduction of new competition categories to increase inclusivity and impact.

## 4. Annexes

- Photos: <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjCoKA7>
- <https://medium.com/@excellencefoundationss/why-we-cancelled-the-juba-secondary-schools-mini-competition-2025-a287beb23793>
- <https://medium.com/@excellencefoundationss/juba-secondary-schools-mini-competition-second-edition-kicks-off-d696d4c20bdd>