

Helpdesk Report: Girls' Education in Sudan

Date: 2 November 2010

Query: What are the major economic and social barriers to girls' enrolment and completion at primary and secondary education levels in Southern Sudan specifically and Central and Eastern Africa more widely? What evidence exists of successfully addressing these barriers?

Enquirer: DFID Sudan

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1. Overview

The main economic and social barriers to girls' education are outlined below. Much of this is drawn from UNICEF (2008). Barriers to education relevant to both girls and boys are then listed separately. Evidence on successfully addressing the barriers was hard to find within the scope of this review. Some papers which make recommendations not based on evidence have also been included as they may be useful.

Major economic barriers to girls' education in Sudan:

- Girls are needed at home to contribute to the economies of their household. In particular, girls are needed to help in the household and in some cases run families when parents have died or disappeared.
- As soon as a girl reaches puberty she is considered ready for marriage. Her marginal dowry value decreases with time after puberty.
- Girls are often lured away from school by marriage proposals from wealthy soldiers.

Major social barriers to girls' education in Sudan:

- Sexual escapades and lack of parental control lead to girls getting pregnant at a young age so they are unable to complete secondary school. Girls are reluctant or unwelcome to return to school after giving birth.
- The onset of puberty and the occurrence of periods shames girls into staying away from school. Lack of privacy in sanitation facilities raises this barrier.
- The prevalence of gender-based violence in schools deters girls from attending.
- Text books often reinforce stereotypes about the subordinate role of women. The social construct of gender. The subordinate role of women is depicted in text books reinforcing this construct.

- More male teachers lead to higher drop-out rates for girls.
- The presence of mature pupils, who were unable to attend school during conflict, creates completion problems.

Economic and social barriers for both girls and boys education:

- Fees are officially not charged but levies continue to be charged to contribute to activities often denied by the administrators.
- Children avoid school to avoid corporal punishment administered by teachers.
- Children engage in trading in local markets instead of attending school.
- Peer influence.
- Psychosocial scars suffered by children during conflict.
- Child-to-child violence.
- Insecurity and safety.
- Poor evidence of education outcomes.

Evidence for successfully addressing barriers to girls' education in Sudan:

- The World Food Programme initiative on keeping girls in school by providing food incentives has had some success. It gives a clear advantage to parents over keeping girls at home for household labour contributions. It also means girls do not have to travel home at lunchtime to eat. However, some evidence was found where the food supplies were delayed or not reaching the schools. It was also found to decrease teacher time as they were taken out of class to prepare meals.
- Poole (2009) does a literature review which gives insight into how female teachers act as positive role models for girls, improve the safety of the school environment, and increase girls' attendance and achievement. Save the Children have run teacher education and training programmes for women. This has had proven results in increasing teaching quality.
- Accelerated learning programmes teach a condensed curriculum. This helps reduce the opportunity cost of education for girls.
- A draft Education Act has a section on gender equity which education administrators claim is adhered to. However, the Teachers code of conduct does not recognise sexual harassment. There is evidence that fears from parents need to be further addressed.

Examples from other countries of successfully addressing barriers to education for refugee girls' (Brown, 2006):

- Sensitising communities to reduce negative attitudes to girls' schooling.
- Campaigns headed by female education coordinators who act as good role models.
- Appointing more female teachers.
- Teacher training to include a gender element.
- Schools and dormitories built especially for girls.
- Separate latrines for boys and girls.

Suggestions for addressing economic and social barriers to girls' education:

- The community taking collective responsibility for protecting girls.
- Ensuring schools with adolescent girls have one respected female teacher assigned to guide, counsel and support the girls especially during their monthly cycles.
- Parent and teacher partnerships educating women and families to appreciate and value women as more than sources of bride wealth.

- Converting churches and other community facilities into satellite feeder schools to reduce long walks to school and associated abduction dangers.
- Using cattle camp as an opportunity for teaching on sex education.

2. Key document

A Report of the Study on Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers to Schooling in Southern Sudan

UNICEF, 2008

[http://www.unicef.org/sudan/SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS TO SCHOOLING IN SOUTHERN SUDAN.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sudan/SOCIO-ECONOMIC_AND_CULTURAL_BARRIERS_TO_SCHOOLING_IN_SOUTHERN_SUDAN.pdf)

This study gathers and analyses evidence on education in southern Sudan from multiple sources.

Economic barriers to girls' education:

- Children contribute to the economies of their household. Girls often stay at home to help the mother with younger siblings and household chores.
- As soon as a girl reaches puberty she is considered ready for marriage, her marginal value decreases with time after puberty.
- Girls are often lured away from school by marriage proposals from wealthy soldiers.

Social/cultural barriers to girls' education:

- Home making as a cultural obligation for women.
- Culturally, girls are perceived as family assets and a source of wealth from dowry.
- Social construct of gender. The subordinate role of women is depicted in text books reinforcing this construct.
- Gender-based violence in schools.
- Sexual escapades and lack of parental control lead to girls getting pregnant at a young age so unable to complete secondary school. Girls are reluctant to return to school after giving birth. Improved sex education would help to prevent unwanted early pregnancy.
- The onset of puberty and occurrence of periods shames girls into staying away from school. Lack of privacy in sanitation facilities raises this barrier.
- More male teachers lead to higher drop-out rates for girls.
- Presence of mature pupils, unable to attend school during conflict, create various completion problems.

Barriers for girls and boys:

- Fees are officially not charged but levies continue to be charged to contribute to activities. This is often denied by the administrators.
- Children avoid school to avoid corporal punishment administered by teachers.
- Children engaging in trading in local markets instead of attending school.
- Peer influence.
- Psychosocial scars suffered by children during conflict.
- Child-to-child violence.
- Insecurity and safety.
- Poor evidence of education outcomes.
- Human resource constraints.

- School infrastructure and facilities.

Evidence on addressing barriers for girls:

- The World Food Programme initiative on keeping girls in school by providing food incentives has been successful. It gives a clear advantage to parents over keeping girls at home for household labour contributions. However, some evidence was found where the food supplies were delayed or not reaching the schools.
- The Go-to-School initiative, started in 2006, partially removing economic barriers allowing everyone free access to education. Adults who had missed out at school age started attending schools. Teenage girls felt unsafe in classes with adult men and parents were concerned about safety. This had a negative effect on girls' completion.
- A draft Education Act has a section on gender equity which education administrators claim is adhered to. However, the Teachers code of conduct does not recognise sexual harassment. There is evidence that fears from parents need to be further addressed.

The report makes many suggestions are made for addressing barriers to education, including:

- To help ensure security and comfort for girls, society as the custodians of its members should take a collective responsibility in protecting girls. The community should devise ways to arrest those who transgress. Teachers, managers of education and other civil servants, NGO workers and military officers should be made accountable to lead by example.
- The struggles of puberty that girls go through must be addressed at policy level by requiring all schools with adolescent girls to have one respected female teacher assigned to guide, counsel and support the girls especially during their monthly cycles.
- Partnerships should be made with parents and schools. As part of this partnership, long school holidays could include life skills programmes at community level. Parents and teachers can jointly provide talks and educate mothers and families to appreciate and value women as more than sources of bride wealth.
- Long distances travelled to school increases the chances of abduction. PTAs working with communities should initiate creative ways of addressing this challenge such as converting churches and other community facilities into satellite feeder schools. This can also address the problem of poor roads.
- Camps where young girls often fall pregnant should be used as learning points not just for literacy but for life skills especially with regard to sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

3. Relevant documents

Promoting the Education Rights of Girls in South Sudan

Brown, T., 2006. *Human Rights Tribune*, p20

<http://www.hri.ca/pdfs/HRT%20Volume%2012,%20Issue%201,%20May%202006.pdf>

This article focuses on the vulnerability of refugee girls also dealing with problems of poverty. The author finds the following approaches to be useful components of successful girls education in refugee/returnee situations:

- Sensitisation of communities is vital and should be unremitting because a great deal must be done to change the population's negative attitudes towards girls' education.

- Girls' education campaigns should be spearheaded by the appointment of female education coordinators who not only act as good role models but can lead and coordinate the campaign.
- It is necessary to appoint more female teachers in schools including senior teachers where at least one is responsible for mentoring the girls in each school.
- Training courses for teachers and any other type of training should always include a gender element.
- Secondary schools should be supported to enable more girls to pass through the education system and become teachers and other role models.
- Schools and dormitories should be built especially for girls to enable them to study in a safe and comfortable environment and keep them at school.
- To help girls stay in school and continue on to higher learning, girls should be given full or partial scholarships thus lessening the financial burden on their parents.
- Separate latrines should be constructed in mixed-gender schools and girls should be provided with sanitary materials and decent clothes to avoid embarrassment at school.

South Sudan Education Emergency

Brown, T., 2006. *FMR Review*

<http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/EducationSupplement/13.pdf>

A less gender focused version of the article above which may be useful for reference.

The Implications of Female Teachers Shortage on Girls' Education: Exploring Policy Options for Southern Sudan

Poole, H., 2009. *INEE*

http://www.ineesite.org/uploads/documents/store/Poole_The_Implications_of_Female_Teachers_Shortage_on_Girls_Education_in_Southern_Sudan.pdf

This study finds few evidence-based studies that have been conducted to evaluate the specific relationship between female teachers and female students. However, available literature on teacher and student characteristics, as well as evaluations of country-specific data, indicates a strong positive relationship between the two groups. The recruitment of female teachers may be a key policy tool for governments who may wish to improve gender parity in their schools. Policy-makers should be aware of the causes of the low number of female teachers and, while the scope of this paper did not allow for a full analysis of these causes, it did seek to emphasize the high costs female teachers face when entering and sustaining their professions, and the need for national teacher recruitment strategies to address women's particular needs. The current available literature offers a promising insight into how female teachers do indeed act as positive role models for girls, improve the safety of the school environment, and increase girls' attendance and achievement.

Study on Governance Challenges for Education in Fragile Situations. Southern Sudan Country Report

European Commission, 2009

http://www.ineesite.org/uploads/documents/store/Country_Report_-_Sudan.pdf

This report analyses sector performance, assesses sector fragility and governance. It does not focus on girls but the education sector for all. Some lessons and good practices are drawn out. Recommendations are given to for improving education programme planning and for enabling aid effectiveness and sector governance.

The Future is Now: Education for children in countries affected by conflict

Save the Children, May 2010

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_11364.htm

Learning From Those Who Live It

Save the Children, 2008

www.savethechildren.net/media/.../GlobalEvaluationMidtermReport2008.pdf

4. Background materials

Will you listen? Young voices from conflict zones

UN, 1997

http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/UNICEF_Will_You_Listen_090607.pdf

This report compiles the views and recommendations of 1,700 children and young people in 92 countries. Page 10 lists views on education from children, not from Sudan but from other conflict affected countries.

Progress to universal primary education in southern Sudan: a short country case study

UNESCO, 2003

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001467/146755e.pdf>

This paper was written before the peace agreement but maybe useful background reading.

Camfed Governance Accounting to the Girl. Working Towards a Standard for Governance in the International Development Sector.

Linklaters, 2010

http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/Camfed_Linklaters_Accounting_to_the_Girl.pdf

Report on Camfed governance model which delivers girls education in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Works because it renders account to the girls it supports and is rooted in the community.

The barrier to education for girls is fundamentally, chronic poverty but also small details such as not being able to afford uniform or pens.

5. Additional information

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About Helpdesk reports: The HDRC Helpdesk is funded by the DFID Human Development Group. Helpdesk Reports are based on up to 2 days of desk-based research per query and are designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues, and a summary of some of the best literature available. Experts may be contacted during the course of the research, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged.

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