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*Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality*

# **A high risk of not achieving the set EFA goals: a critical examination of education challenges, policies and strategies in the SPLM administered areas**

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## **ACRONYMNS /ABBREVIATIONS**

SPLM	Sudan People’s Liberation Movement
SPLA	Sudan People’s Liberation Army
GOS	Government of Sudan
INGOS	International Non-governmental Organizations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’ s Fund
AET	African Educational Trust
OLS	Operation Live Line Sudan
EFA	Education For All
ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
PTAS	Parents and Teachers Associations
MICS	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
SBA	School Baseline Assessment
IDEAS	Institute of Development, Environment and Agricultural Studies
UNSECO	United Nations Scientific Education and Cultural Organization
SRRC	Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for refugees
MDG	Millenium Development Goal
SRRA	Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation association, Transformed into SRRC after integration of two movements SPLM of Dr. John Garang and SPDF of Dr. Riak Machar.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES**

The risk of not achieving EFA goals and objectives in the SPLM administered areas has been increased by a number of factors.-

- ◆ The on-going war situation, causing massive population displacement, emigration of qualified trained Human resources (Brain Drain) and Devastating the socio – economic infrastructures.
- ◆ Limited access to education system for a complex combination of reasons, only 30% of the children are in school out of the Total estimated 1.06 million children of school age.
- ◆ Low enrolment and retention. The majority of the enrolled children, especially girls drop out of school before reaching upper grades.

This is attributed to poor teacher quality, inadequate school supplies, lack of relevant school curriculum syllabus; lack of clothing, especially for girls, domestic chores, to mention only a few.

#### **◆ Gender Disparity**

There is a general bias in favour of boys, as opposed to girls. Of 30% of school children enrolled in SPLM areas, only 26% are girls and only 7% female Teachers, out of a total of 7,000.

#### **◆ The unsustainability of Education**

It is difficult to guarantee sustainability of education services because of persistent population movements, heavy reliance on external sources and widespread poverty among the communities.

### **Education Policies and strategies**

- ◆ There are 3 policies – increasing access of school age children to education system, improving the quality education and eliminating gender inequality strategies designed and adopted to implement each specific policy.

#### **Access**

- Building and renovating more schools by communities
- Introducing accelerated learning programme for over aged children and school drops out.
- Encouraging opening of privates.

### **Improving Quality Education**

- Unifying Curriculum for new Sudan to replace foreign curricula. Introducing Distance learning programme to keep teachers in classes while learning at the same time.
- Introducing incoming generating projects that mobilize resources payment for teacher's salaries.
- Establishing sectoral networking and cooperation with other services providers.
- Establishing of schools baseline assessment for data collection and effective management.

### **Gender Equality**

- Creation of a departure for girls and female teacher education
- Sensitization of the community about girls education
- Formulation of regulations for deterring culture hindering girls access to education
- Reducing entry age for girls
- Encouraging boarding schools for girls.

### **Conclusion**

In view of the above formidable challenges, it is hard despite concerted effort to achieve EFA goals and objectives with in the specified period, even if peace were to be concluded soon

## A. INTRODUCTION

This report has been written as a result of an invitation extended to the author by Mariana Cifuentes, acting on behalf of an independent international team, writing EFA GLOBAL monitoring report 2003/04 that is being hosted by UNSECO, Paris, France.

Since the outbreak of the current war in 1983 between the Sudan people's liberation movement and army (SPLM/A) and the Government of the Sudan (Gos), though with occasional military setbacks, the SPLM/A has liberated large part of rural South Sudan formerly under the domain of Gos. In these areas, it has consolidated its authority as the defacto government. Civil Administrative structures have been set up to facilitate and coordinate the delivery of basic social services, Education included to the population in areas that it controls. While the SPLM/A controls most of the rural areas, the Gos still hold out in some major towns in South Sudan where it exercises influence and authority over this civil population that had opted to remain in these towns.

With this polarization, dividing the south into 'enclaves', each warring party (SPLM/A Gos), having established its influence and Authority over the people in areas it controls, each is claiming sovereignty and legitimacy over the Sudan. The SPLM/A refers areas consist of three regions:- Equatorial, Upper Nile and Bahr El Gazal plus Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile which are geographically located in Northern part of Sudan but under its control as "New Sudan" while that of the Gos As "Old Sudan".

It is against this background that this paper is being presented to assess only the status of primary education system in the SPLM administered regions of Southern Sudan instead of the whole Sudan.

The purpose of this paper is to critically assess the scope and nature of educational challenges between 1993 – 2002 that tend to impede the achievement of the three quantitative EFA goals and objectives (universal primary education, gender equality and improvement in quality of education) ; second, identify SPLM policies and strategies which are in operation or are planned that have the greatest potential to help realize the MDG and EFA goals; third assess the past and future role of international assistance in helping to achieve the EFA goals.

The paper is presented in sections. Section B provides a short Historical background on education. Section C Educational challenges. Section D looks at policies/strategies. Section E examines the role of international assistance and Section F concluding summary of the extent and nature of risks inhibiting the achievement of the set EFA goals and objectives.

The methods employed were: - review of available relevant Literature obtained from Agencies participating in Education programs; SPLM Education Secretariat, SRRC, Interviews with key informants and author's own field experience.

## **B. A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF EDUCATION IN SPLM AREAS**

At the outset of fighting in 1983, Education sector was the first casualty. The GOS forces either turned some schools into garrisons or deliberately destroyed them and materials used for Bomb shelters or bunkers. Pupils and teachers because they were suspected of collaboration with the “rebels” had to flee for refuge in Ethiopia. So Schools mostly in the rural areas were closed at the start of the War.

When it became apparent that there was no hope for resumption of education, the local communities voluntarily sent their children to PINYIDU camp in Ethiopia in pursuit of education. In 1998 children trekked to Ethiopia where over 15,000 (800 girls /700 boys) were registered by UNHCR as unaccompanied minors. With the fall of MENGISU REGIME in 1991, the same children retreated to Kakuma refugees Camp, Kenya. Some Perished on the way and only about 12,000 reached Kakuma (Radda Barnen, 1994). It is estimated that a quarter of these Minors, including girls managed to resettle in USA, Canada, Australia respectively, again in pursuit for quality education.

At present there are over 1,700 schools with disparate curricula/ syllabuses, run either by communities with NGOS support or by church –based organizations which are relatively better of in terms of quality education. However, SPLM education secretariat provides guidance and direction to both systems.

## **C. Educational Challenges**

The Education system in the SPLM – held is community Based, though with substantial inputs from the international community through the UN system and International GOS. But efforts are being shattered by several formidable factors. Key among them are: -

### **War Environment.**

Apart from the persistent displacement of House – holds and communities that have affected access to and opportunities for schooling, there is a critical dilemma of whether or not to invest in education, given the obvious and high risk involved. How Resources could be allocated amid competitive needs of humanitarian emergency intervention, human investment and the war efforts?

### **Limited Access of School Age Children to Education System.**

The war disrupted and paralysed the whole education in South Sudan. From 1983 to 1992 the fighting intensified and the living conditions of the civil population started to deteriorate, forcing the international community to direct intervention first to life saving and life sustaining activities to the neglect of Education Service.

Donors were therefore reluctant to support programmes besides Emergency Relief Food Aid. For example, more than 80% of the US 155 million pledged to the UN INTER – AGENCY APPEAL in 2001 was Food Aid. Education, health, water and sanitation assistance combined to only about 9% (World Bank 2002). Further, communities were highly vulnerable and could not on their own initiate education programme either. In consequence, a complete generation gap of education was lost.

Faced with ever increasing demand for education, some basic Emergency Primary Education was first started in 1993, especially in relatively stable areas of Western Equatorial. With an estimated population of 1.06 million children of school age (6-14 years), the World Bank estimated that only 30% are enrolled in schools in the SPLM administered areas.

### **Low Enrollment and Retention**

Having enrolled more children in school is no cause for complacency. Retaining those already enrolled is equally challenging. According to AET, the majority of the children who are in school (62%) are in the first two grades (one and two). There is high drop out rate from grade one onwards. This finding has been confirmed by World Bank which estimates the Total enrollment in grades 6, 7 and 8 at 3%, 2 % and 1% respectively. That is, the higher grades the smaller the number of pupils enrolled. But the drop out rate for girls is greater than that for boys.

In comparison with North Sudan and Government held areas in the South, the enrollment in Government held areas is better than in the SPLM areas, about 57% in Juba, Wau and Malakal towns (UNICEF / OLS 2001 b). So Retention is not a problem. About 96% of children entering grade one ultimately reach grade 5.

Several surveys conducted and discussion with key informants attribute the low enrollment and retention of girls to the following:-

- Cultural attitude of the society. Domestic work for instance, is regarded as the inherent domain of women. UNICEF/OLS MICS revealed that 74% of girls under 5-17 years are engaged in House-Hold Domestic chores as compared to 60.8% of boys in the same age category; parents would prefer to educate boy-child rather than a girl –child because a girl would be married away, leaving the future responsibility of the family to the boy and so investing in a boy is seen as more beneficial; it is perceived that sending girls to school will expose them to undesirable foreign cultures, values, attitudes and life styles that may alienate them from the local community. It is believed that such “exposed girls” will bring less bride price, compared with those who have not attended schooling. In the traditional setting, especially among the pastoralist communities, girls are much valued and accorded proper care by parents so as to bring more bride price. In Bahr El ghazal, for instance, a Dinka girl could bring as many as 300 heads of cattle. Hence they are considered as a source of wealth.

- Lack of role models. Few women are holding public positions and girls are not motivated to aspire for any future career.
- Early marriages and early pregnancies cause girls to leave school earlier.
- School environment is not girl friendly. For example, no separate toilets for boys and girls and lack of sanitary towels, etc.
- Insecurity. In the context of the war in Sudan where the civilian installations are considered as legitimate military targets by the Gos, parents would not take chances to allow their children, particularly girls to travel long distances away from homes; thus the shorter the distance to school, the more girls can enroll.

### **Poor Quality Education**

While there are about 1,700 schools in SPLM – held areas, most remain of sub standard in qualitative and quantitative terms. This is due to the following factors:-

#### **(i) Inadequate School Facilities.**

In 1999, SBA indicated that only 20% of schools were made of permanent classrooms. Whereas, 42% were taught under trees (out door classes); only 34% of the schools had a health facility in the school or nearby (within a 30 –minutes walk); 55% of schools were reported as having a clean water supply; limited teaching, reading/learning materials; average number of text books per is 132 and average number of text books per pupil is one book for every 1.7 pupils.

#### **(ii) Poor Teacher Quality**

Out of about 7,000 primary school teachers, only 7% are trained and with regional variations. For example, in upper Nile Region only one out of 50 teachers is trained. Most teachers have only 5 years schooling (care int. Sudan). Further, no any teacher training institutions, making it difficult for demand to create its own supply.

Most teachers are volunteers and therefore no selection criteria needed even though many may not necessarily possess relevant academic qualifications. Retaining the already trained teachers is another aspect of the problem.

With no formal reward system or at best with incentives as low as an average of US \$ 25 per teacher per year and given the limitation of patriotism and spirit of volunteerism, teachers tend to look for “greener pastures” out side the education establishment, especially with the humanitarian Agencies, being the sole employing sector in the SPLM-Held areas. However, no quantitative figures indicating the trend of teachers exiting the occupation due to lack of any study. Nonetheless, Field Observations suggest a high turn over of teachers. So the issue of Teachers’ payment is critical.

### **C. Lack of Unified Curriculum/Syllabus**

At present no single UNIFIED Education curriculum and syllabus in the SPLM administered areas. Attempts to develop the new Sudan curriculum/syllabus are yet to bear fruition. As an alternative, use is therefore being made of the curricula and syllabuses of the neighboring countries of Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia. Each region or a county opts of an affiliation to school in a country that it borders or has easy access to it. This arrangement has two major problems. First, the content and relevance. Every country has its own unique culture, values and environment, which may not necessary be appreciated and relevant in another country. Thus, using disparate foreign education curricula is obviously inappropriate in the context of South Sudan. Second, lack of common standardized examinations and certification.

### **Gender Disparity**

Like most African societies Southern Sudan is a male-dominated society, where female folk are cultural, socially and traditionally segregated and assigned periphery role and status. Female are therefore perceived as good as nothing but only at domestic work. With this negative attitude and institutionalized prejudices, girls are not accorded equal educational opportunities as boys for reasons earlier given above. This prejudicial practice could be well illustrated by school enrollment and attendance of 30% of school children enrolled in Southern Sudan, only 26% are girls. Girls drop out earlier and more rapidly than boys with the result that only 7% of the Teachers are women (World Bank 2002).

Sensitizing and orienting the society to change their deep-rooted cultural bias against women in general can be a daunting undertaking.

### **The Unsustainability of Education Services.**

Continuity of education cannot be certainly ensured because of the following problems: -

- Sudden displacement of population arising from insecurity.
- Heavy reliance on external International Donors whose interests and needs keep on changing.
- Inability of the communities to live up to their commitments due to widespread poverty, caused by the economic collapse.

## **D. Education Policies and Strategies**

### **Policies**

In recognition of the urgent need to restore the collapsed basic education services, resulting from the impact of the war, the SPLM has developed the education policy of the new Sudan, designed to organize education programmes in all SPLM administered regions so to overcome the challenges impeding the implementation. The policy focuses on the three key priority areas:-

**First**, expanding basic primary education to increase access of school age children to education system by increasing enrolment and retention percentages, Introduction of non-formal and alternative modes of education and establishment new schools in under privileged areas.

**Second**, improving the quality of education through curriculum development and reform, school supplies, teacher education, training and support, and healthy learning environment.

**Third**, bridging the gender inequality by increasing enrolment and retention of girls in schools, training more female teachers and education managers. Administrators, creating girl-friendly environment, focus on underprivileged areas and use of alternative modes of education and including non-formal.

### **Strategies**

#### **How to Increase Access To schools**

In order to increasing the enrolment rates, the following strategies have been initiated:-

- (a) Mobilizing and sensitizing local communities to renovate repair and construct more schools to accommodate more children and to reduce distances to and from school. There has been positive and impressive response from communities in building schools.
- (b) Initiation of Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP)  
It targets both the over aged children who are out of school and school drop outs. A curriculum has been designed / developed parallel with that of the formal education. The prescribed course for, ALP will be 4 years a opposed to 8 after completion, they will have the choice of either joining secondary school or vocational training.
- (c) Establishing special Schools  
For the disabled who are denied access to formal education system due to their disability. Or those with special needs e.g. demobilized Child – soldiers.
- (d) Encouraging Establishment of Private Schools  
Most church based organizations are presently managing a sizeable number of school relatively better organized than the community schools.

## **Improving Quality Education**

To ensure quality and relevant education, the following strategies have been adopted:-

- (a) Unifying curriculum for new Sudan education system to supplant foreign curricula. The Curriculum development is already in advance stage and implemented in lower grades in some regions has started
- (b) Introducing Training of primary School Teachers by Distances Learning. This would improve the quality of teaching while maintaining teachers in the schools. A centre for the training of teachers by distance learning established with the support of AET / UNICEF /OLS at Yambio Institute of development, environment and agricultural studies (IDEAS). This programme is already operational.
- (c) Introducing and strengthening Income Generating Schemes that Mobilize Resources for payment of Teacher Salaries.
- (d) Establishing Institutional and sector cooperation and liaison with other service providers to ensure the provision of water sources, Health and Sanitary facilities to Schools, aimed at creating an enabling environment.
- (e) Establishment of School baseline assessment of collecting baseline data on schools including information on pupil numbers and gender, teachers qualifications and quality of teaching, school facilities and supplies; training Head teachers in organization and management skills and training parent teacher Associations (PTAS) to encourage in decision –making within education.

## **Improving Gender Equality**

Having recognized the general bias in favour of Boys, as opposed to girls in relation to schooling, specific strategies have been planned and adopted to address this imbalance.

- (a) Creation of a department for girls and female teacher Education and female teacher Development within the SPLM secretariat of education- This department has to make sure that all policies are gender sensitive.
- (b) Sensitization of the community with regard to girls education. Promotion, Advocacy groups for girls Education (PAGE) has been formed to conduct awareness campaigns. These are special interest groups that liaise with the education providers.
- (c) Formulation of regulations for deterring culture hindering girls' access to education
- (d) Encouraging boarding schools for girls, especially upper primary grades.
- (e) Reducing entry age for girls from 7 to 6 years. To enable them gain knowledge and skills before they reach adolescent stage when most drop out of school,.

- (f) Provision of scholarships for girls and female teachers a motivation to them.
- (g) Affirmative action programmes such as quotas.
- (h) Adopting deterred measures against early drop outs.
- (i) Raising profile of some women to public and decision-making positions so as act as role models. Two women have been appointed, to public positions, our as SPLM county secretary, yambio and the other commissioner (minister) for social affairs in SPLM executive body.

## **E. The Role of Humanitarian agencies in Education System**

The SPLM secretariat of education though mandated to organize education system across SPLM administered regions has limited capacity in terms of budget and qualified /trained personnel. Its main contribution has been policy formulation and direction. So the education cost has been shouldered mainly by the impoverished communities and Humanitarian agencies respectively. Local communities have been involved in the renovation and maintenance of school buildings and support to volunteer teachers. The humanitarian operating agencies on the other hand have been playing crucial and dominant role in the establishment of education system. The key Roles have been.

- ◆ Advocacy and Lobbying for the plight of the War affected children
- ◆ Fund raising
- ◆ Financial support
- ◆ Technical assistance
- ◆ Capacity building (training / Institutional strengthening)

Of more than 45 UN agencies and international NGOs operating in SPLM administered areas, only twelve have been participating in education sector. The organized activities centered around teacher training, supply and distribution of school material, vocational training, psycho-social training of the war traumatized children, child protection (demobilization of child- soldiers, tracing and re integration of unaccompanied minors and child abductees ).

Despite being a community based education system, yet decisional role, planning, implementation and even monitoring an evaluation of programmes and projects largely rest with the implementing agencies. This situation is so because the agencies seem to be feeling the gap of the so-called lack of ‘‘internationally recognized government in the SPLM held areas’’.

If peace were to come to this war torn part of Sudan and an internationally recognized administration with adequate budget established, the role of humanitarian agencies would be confined to facilitation of rehabilitation and development programmes.

However they would still play a vital role in capacity bulding

## **F. Conclusion**

While there is a serious genuine commitment clearly demonstrated by both the SPLM authority and the local respective communities, achieving the EFA goals and objectives by 2015 is not only unthinkable but unrealistic in the context of Southern Sudan. This is largely due to the on-going war, and its consequences. The attendant insecurity and instability will continue to dislocate civil population, making it difficult to provide education services on permanent basis; economy far from recovery, no employment opportunities and communities will get poor and poorer and will not afford paying for education cost and donor fatigue. War therefore remains a major hindrance to development of which education is a part and parcel.

Second, dependence on external assistance. Education is a heavy and long-term investment cost that can not be wholly externally financed without national public inputs, otherwise it is bound to be unsustainable, given the fact that donors have their own interest and needs that keep on changing.

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## **Persons Interviewed**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
1. Mr. Kosti Manibe	SPLM education Commissioner – Nairobi
2. Mr. Aloisio Emor	SRRC Liaison officer Nairobi
3. Mrs. Wendy Fenton	SCF (UK) Programme director -Nairobi
4. Mr. John Lado	TORIT County (Teacher) -Nairobi