

FAQs about the Campaign

Q. What is the Go to School Initiative in Southern Sudan?

A. UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) of Southern Sudan, in conjunction with a wide range of partners, including international and national non-governmental organizations, will launch the Go to School Initiative on 1 April 2006. The Go to School Initiative is the MOEST's road map towards achieving the MDGs, Education for All and the targets of the Sudanese reconstruction plan, the 'Framework for Sustained Peace, Development and Poverty Eradication'.

The Go to School Initiative is also one of UNICEF's flagship programmes for 2006-2007 to address the issues behind poor enrollment and retention in primary school. UNICEF estimates that only about 22 per cent of an estimated 2.2 million school-age children are enrolled in primary school, with barely 1 per cent of all girls completing their primary education. The initiative includes construction of classrooms, provision of essential materials for teachers and students, and teacher training to improve the quality of education as well as support to the public sector to enlarge and manage the education system.

Q. What are the primary goals of the Initiative?

A. The Initiative aims to achieve the following:

- enroll **an additional 700,000 children in primary school** for the 2006 school year;
- **900,000 children in primary school** for the 2007 school year;
- by the end of 2007, **1.6 million previously out-of-school girls and boys** will be enrolled in primary school across the ten states of Southern Sudan, demonstrating core competencies in literacy, numeracy and life skills, making a total of 2.2 million.

First, UNICEF plans to construct 1,500 new classrooms (or 200-250 new schools) during 2006. An additional 300 schools should be constructed in 2007. UNICEF is committed to providing a water point and sanitation facilities at all newly-constructed schools, and will also aim, wherever possible, to add safe water and sanitation facilities for existing schools that lack them. Water and separate latrines are particularly important to encourage and help keep girls in school.

Second, the 2006 education programme will continue to provide textbooks, student kits, teacher kits and recreation kits for all schools. Two million textbooks for grades 1-4 and accompanying teacher guides (most in English and a smaller number in Arabic for schools currently using Arabic as the language of instruction) are being distributed.

However, the third most critical resource for expanding access to education is teachers. Southern Sudan will need a minimum of 9,000 additional teachers. Current teacher training programmes in Southern Sudan have the capacity to graduate only about 250 teachers per year. UNICEF is working closely with the CARE/Sudan Basic Education Program (SBEP) to develop a fast track training programme that will provide an intensive two-week orientation course for new para-professional teachers.

Q. How have children and young people's education been affected by the civil war?

A. After bearing the brunt of 21 years of civil war, Southern Sudan's education indicators are among the worst in the world, especially with the return of hundreds of thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees.

There are three times more boys than girls in school and Southern Sudan's dropout rates top the global charts, with barely 1 per cent of all girls completing their primary education. About 8,600 teachers, the majority untrained volunteers, cover approximately 2,000 schools. Many of these 'schools' consist of little more than a chalkboard propped up under a tree. Virtually all schools depend on UNICEF and partners for textbooks and supplies – down to the simplest items such as chalk.

Q. How is the Girls Education Movement (GEM) involved?

A. The Girls' Education Movement consists of groups of children and young people in schools and communities throughout Africa working to bring about positive change in the lives of African girls. Active youth participants or GEMMERS from three neighboring countries of Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda agreed to co-facilitate with Southern Sudanese and share their experiences in micro-planning and social mapping at the school/community level.

Q. Who are the partners involved in the Initiative?

A. A wide range of actors are supporting the Go to School Initiative, including the World Food Programme (WFP) for school feeding and transportation of materials, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for identification of teachers, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) for transportation of materials, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for state level coordination and social mobilisation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for identification of teachers and school construction, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for school gardens, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for life skills and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with technical support. The UN peace support mission in Sudan (UNMIS) is also supporting the logistics effort.

Fostering collaboration and cooperation with multiple NGOs, both local and international, to facilitate the formation of Go To School committees from community to state levels - as well as the development of state and county microplans for school mapping, distribution of materials, recruitment of teachers, and registration of children. Community and faith-based organizations are also helping with social mobilisation and support to the Girls' Education Movements (GEM) networks.

Q. Why this Initiative now?

A. Because Southern Sudan desperately requires more than just incremental change from one year to the next. The signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement has opened a new window of opportunity. The success of the GOSS in cementing the peace will depend, in large part, on its ability to deliver critical social services such as basic education to its people - demonstrating both the immediate benefits of peace as well as its own commitment to the long-term development of its citizens and their right to education.