

Basic Education and Gender Equality



“ *Parents should send both girls and boys to school because they have equal rights.* ”

Sukuk, 22-year-old

ISSUE

Education is a major priority for children in the new nation of South Sudan. Despite education indicators being among the worst in the world, demand for education is high, which is demonstrated through the increases in school enrolment over the past few years.

It is estimated that two million primary school aged children, mostly from rural areas, are not in school, while the few schools that do exist are not conducive to learning. Low rates of primary school completion and high gender, geographic and wealth disparities pose enormous challenges to the development of South Sudan.



The adult literacy rate stands at 27 per cent, and 70 per cent of children aged 6–17 years have never set foot in a classroom. The completion rate in primary schools is less than 10 per cent, one of the lowest in the world. Gender equality is another challenge, with only 33 per cent of girls in schools.

Access to pre-primary and secondary education is even worse than primary education. Only two per cent of pre-school aged children are in early childhood development programmes and a mere 44,027 children are in secondary schools, compared with 1.4 million in primary schools.

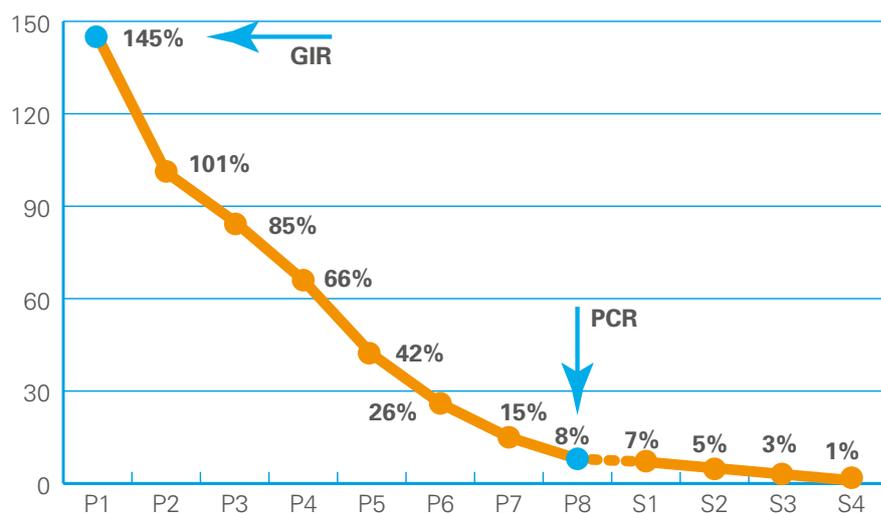
This situation is compounded by the increase in the demand for education by returnee children who have been arriving in the country since late 2010. The already stretched and under-resourced system now has to contend with additional children, placing a further strain on limited resources and capacity.

Education is one of the main priorities for the people of South Sudan. Recent studies show that communities see education as the most important peace dividend. Youth voices also emphasize the need to be educated.

The 'Go to School' initiative, launched by the government in April 2006, has been the biggest achievement to date, enabling the enrolment of more than 1.6 million, up from an estimated 343,000 before the signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 that ended decades of civil war.

The graph below shows the drop-out and completion rate from primary I (grade 1) through to primary 8, giving an indication of the transition to secondary school and the survival rate until the last year of secondary school education. It is worth noting that only 13% of primary schools offer the full primary cycle, from grade 1 to 8.

Cross-sectoral schooling profiles based on EMIS, 2009



PCR – Primary completion rate

GIR – Gross intake rate. Enrolment includes many over-age children

Source: Authors' construction based on EMIS 2009

UNICEF IN ACTION

UNICEF is using three **key strategic approaches** to improve the prevailing conditions:

1. Education Sector Policy and Planning – This includes the passing and rolling out of the Education Act, boosting the development of the education sector, improving evidence-based decision making, planning and budgeting through the strengthening of the Education Management Information System (EMIS), and increasing capacity, especially in response to emergency situations. This approach also aims to improve standards and provide technical support to key education institutions.

2. Improved Quality of Education – The creation of learning spaces that are safe, effective, inclusive, gender-sensitive, protective and healthy. As part of the emergency response, even temporary learning arrangements should comply with the South Sudan Minimum Standards for Education. The life skills component of lessons will include literacy, numeracy and information on primary HIV prevention, key health and WASH messages and psychosocial support.

3. Education for Children and Young People Out of School – This involves the provision of flexible learning opportunities for children and young people who have missed out on the first chance to go to school, or whose life circumstances do not allow them to attend formal school. Links are made between the formal and non-formal education systems and through partnerships with agencies that deal with youth employment issues.

The UNICEF Education Programme in South Sudan has contributed to the following **key achievements**:

- Development of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP).
- Development of the Education Policy and related Education Bill in their final stages, and the attendant advocacy for its enactment by the Legislative Assembly.
- Increased primary school enrolment from 0.6 million children in 2005 to 1.4 million in 2009.
- Increased secondary school enrolment from 15,000 in 2005 to 44,000 in 2009.
- Improvement in the school environment as a result of building new classrooms and providing water and sanitation facilities.
- Enhanced in-service teacher development programmes.
- Provision of teaching and learning materials to schools in all 10 states of South Sudan.

Challenges

Numerous challenges remain in implementing education interventions in South Sudan. Poor infrastructure complicates and increases the cost of supply delivery while less than 40 per cent of teachers are properly trained and qualified. A shortage of more than 25,000 classrooms leads to overcrowding, and in a large number of counties recurrent emergencies and insecurity delay the distribution of educational materials to schools, and compromise attendance during the school year.

PLANNED RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

Over the period 2012–13, UNICEF aims to build on the achievements of the previous years to contribute to improving education in South Sudan.

The overall programme result for the UNICEF Education Programme is to ensure that the country is on course to achieve universal participation and increased and equitable completion of quality primary education, with parity among boys and girls. To achieve this result, efforts will be made to ensure the implementation of the following:

- The **ESSP** is **formulated** and **implemented**, including the finalization of policies and legislation.
- The **EMIS** annual census is **fully operational** in all states and capacity developed at all levels.

PARTNERSHIPS

UNICEF works closely with the Ministry of Education, and uses the Education Forum to determine priorities for the education sector. The Donor Group and UN agencies are part of the forum, including WFP, UNHCR and UNESCO, as well as international and national NGOs.

- Significant progress has been made in **mainstreaming minimum standards for education in emergencies** into government policies and budgets, including provision of protective education services to children affected by conflict or other humanitarian crises.
- A **strategy** to address socio-cultural and other barriers is functional, enabling the acceleration of girls' enrolment, retention and completion of basic education.
- A **child friendly school plan** is in place and functional, enabling the delivery of an inclusive, quality and relevant education for all children and youth.
- A **life skills strategy** and plan are developed and functional to provide a broad range of essential knowledge and competencies to all children and youth.

ESSENTIAL STATISTICS

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|---|---------------------------|
| Gross primary enrolment rate | 69% (boys 82%/girls 55%) |
| Net primary enrolment rate | 44% (boys 51%/girls 37%) |
| Gender parity index (primary) | 0.59 |
| Gross pre-primary school enrolment rate | 6% (boys 5.5%/girls 5.7%) |
| Net pre-primary school enrolment rate | 2% (boys 2%/girls 2%) |
| Primary completion rate | 10% (boys 14%/girls 6%) |
| Children aged 6–11 out of school | 1,022,100 (64%) |

Source: Sudan Household and Health Survey 2010 and EMIS 2011

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For more information, please contact:

UNICEF South Sudan
Totto Chan Compound
P O Box 45, Juba, South Sudan

Tel: +211 91 2176145
+44 20 3357 9224

Email: juba@unicef.org

Web: unicef.org/southsudan

Facebook: [UNICEF-South-Sudan](https://www.facebook.com/UNICEF-South-Sudan)