Major developments, April-June 2020:

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of South Sudan closed all educational institutions in March 2020 as a precautionary measure, directly impacting over 2 million school-going children. In addition, restrictions on travel and guidelines on social distancing limited the capacity of UNICEF and its partners to respond and to continue to provide education services across the country.

As of June 2020, an estimated 1.5 million children were attending radio lessons provided by the Ministry of Education and General Instruction (MOGEI) with technical support from UNICEF and funding from USAID, Norway and the European Union. The radio lessons are aired since April 2020 on South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation and UN Radio Miraya.

UNICEF procured over 40,000 radio sets to be distributed to the most vulnerable children with no access to radios or mobile phones in the home. To strengthen the quality of the lessons and address bottlenecks in terms of scheduling and other logistics, UNICEF supported the MOGEI to collect feedback from children, caregivers and other community members. Their recommendations were shared with the MOGEI Emergency Taskforce to adjust lesson plans, timetables and delivery mechanisms where necessary.

Given concerns over the longer-term impact of school closure on children learning and psychological wellbeing, UNICEF, the Government of South Sudan and the Education Donor Group have highlighted school reopening as a major priority moving forward. UNICEF, in collaboration with the Education Cluster, is supporting MOGEI to develop a school re-opening framework, with protocols and a School Checklist for the Safe Reopening of schools.

1,758,280 textbooks distributed
248,456 of out-of-school children provided with access to education in emergencies
865 teachers and caregiver trained on basic pedagogy and learner-centered methodologies
Major challenges:

- Closure of schools has increased challenges to reach all children through distance learning due to limited resources and availability of radios.
- Closure of schools also impacted children’s access to school meals and increased the risk of malnutrition, and home related abuse and violence.
- Travel restrictions and COVID-19 related guidelines severely impacted the capacity of UNICEF and Implementing Partners to provide education services across the country.
- COVID-19 related school closures have significantly increased the risk of drop out and non-return of qualified teachers back to schools.

Solutions:

- UNICEF will support MoGEI to reopen schools in a safe and secure learning environment by engaging all relevant sectors; Health, WASH and protection.
- Continue and strengthen remote learning beyond COVID-19 pandemic to access hard to reach children in the country.
- UNICEF will continue to support the delivery of essential education services outlined under the package of the Government led “Back to Learning Initiative”, to increase access to education services in hard to reach locations.
- Enhancing teacher capacity by emphasizing quality and measurable outcomes for children on the larger scale with the remedial actions.
- Support children to come back to school and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on children learning on the longer term.

Situation snapshot:

- 2.2 million children out of school
- 63% teachers without formal training (unqualified)
- 1/3 schools damaged or destroyed

UNICEF targets for 2020:

- 729,000 of out-of-school children provided with access to education in emergencies.
- 5,500 teachers and caregivers trained on basic pedagogy and learner-centered methodologies.
- 322 classrooms built and rehabilitated.

Funding situation:

2020 UNICEF South Sudan education appeal:

US$ 42,8 M

Current funding gap:

63%

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