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Education Policy in South Sudan: Between the Peace Agreement, the Armed Conflict, the Villages and the Camps for the Internally Displaced People

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ABSTRACT

The government of South Sudan is struggling to organize the education system of this new country during the war that ended with the signing of peace agreement in 2005. Initiating the educational policy, reinforcing the education administration, creating a practical curriculum and training teachers are the basic problems needed to solve to insure a good learning future for all. But while searching for the solution to these crucial problems, another rebellion broke up from the sharing power between the president and the vice-president since 2013 undermining the success plan according to the international education plan of education for all, EFA.

This war sent many adults and children in the camps where there are no educational structures welcomed by a deep poverty which obliged everybody to lose or to restart their life full of hopeless.

Keywords: Education, policy, curriculum, peace, training.

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The Educational Environment in South Sudan

During the two decades of civil war in Sudan from 1983-2005, the former Southern Region educational programs from primary to the secondary levels had been interrupted by the civil war. Several schools in the rural areas were closed as many of them were destroyed. However, few schools were established in the areas controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army (SPLM/A) known as under the trees schools operating in makeshift classrooms. Therefore, when a rain comes, classes were interrupted, and kids were sent back home. Thousands of South Sudanese qualified teachers, and the school children had perished during the civil war. Among those who survived the war, some were recruited in the SPLA as "Red Army". Thus, due to lack of training and scarcity of qualified trained teachers to run the schools amongst the IDPs, education standard was very low. The displaced schools were managed by the low education level teachers, it was apparently difficult to lay them off. Consequently, the educational performance in South Sudan did not meet the required International Standard. Even after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in the year 2005, educational policy in South Sudan among the armed conflicts, villages, camps for internally displaced people (IDP) and the national plan for the SDG/2030 remain unpredictable.

The summary of the Global Monitoring Report on education in 2017-2018 Published by UNESCO titled: "Accountability in education: keeping our commitments" reflected two important issues which arose from the government making account to the Sudanese people, for the commitment held in educational matters across country. But this practice is still not easy when the government is pouring into practices that do not support the transparency in the education financial management. The page 17 of this report indicates that the monitoring and evaluation of education must be systematic, but

only one third of the National Education Monitoring reports available covers adult education in South Sudan.

Many organizations are involved in the education system in South Sudan, among them are: Don Bosco Mission, World Vision, World Food Program (WFP) and UNICEF. After the declaration of independence of this new country on July 9, 2011, at the beginning, their work consisted of the implementation of the curriculum from the neighboring countries like Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan and that was used in SPLA controlled areas that caused further implication and confusion in monitoring and evaluation of the standard of the curriculum in South Sudan. Therefore, the new Ministry of Education and general instruction came with a decision to unify the curricula and phase out gradually those foreign curricula. Thus, a curriculum framework was developed that aimed to meet the Education's International Standard, which is currently being taught in all the public schools across the country.

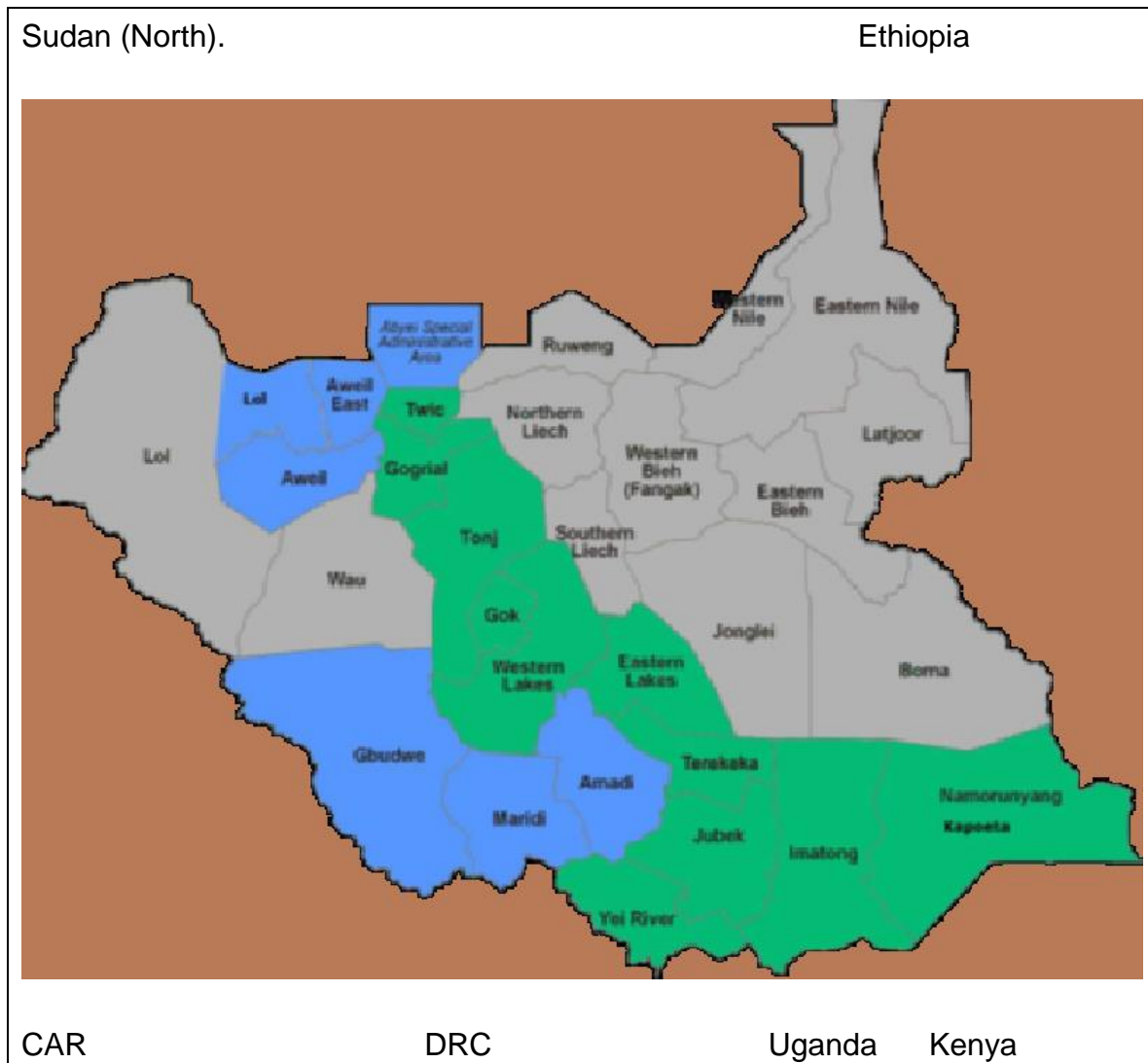
The starting point activity being carried out from the mobilization of different communities aiming to get the parents involved in the education of their children, their registration in different classes in schools, strengthening the teachers' capacity, and reinforcing the management of the school Feeding Program, helping to maintain the students at school during the learning period. However, the storage and distribution of school materials received from the government and UNICEF had been a big challenge. This education mission was gradually supported by the mass media, as many local radios opened in different cities were given freedom coverage of educational programs. Among them, 10 catholic FM radio stations and newspapers reporting on the efforts of the public power in supporting and disseminating the educational activities that gained large impact in different states though some were distorted in areas which are not yet accessible.

This new country recognized by the United Nations is subject to the adoption of article 26 of

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which therefore commits itself to the maintenance of the rights of every child to access to education, and endorses the decisions taken at UNESCO, including education for All, EFA (General Education Strategic Plan 2012-2017), and on 4^e of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, SDG-4/2030 (19-22 May 2015, Incheon, Korea): Ensure access to quality education for

all, on quality basis and promote lifelong learning. This paper presents the education policies of South Sudan as implemented under the Ministry of General Education and Instruction, but there are several challenges in addition to armed conflicts, especially the famine and drought that hit the Horn of Africa, and the life of thousands of children in IDPs and Refugee camps.

Map 1. Showing General situation of education system in South Sudan



Source: Ministry of General Education and instruction of South Sudan, 2016.

South Sudan is the youngest country in the world that declared its independence through the referendum organized with the participation of its people in diaspora in 2011. The Declaration of Independence of South Sudan as mentioned above ensued on July 9, 2011 after a long

political negotiations process culminating in the signing of the cessation of fighting between the Muslim in the North and the Christian in South. During this period, the population was deprived of all means of livelihood, and was unable to meet the general conditions of education. The

glimmers of hope for a lasting peace already encouraged thousands of refugees to return to their country from the neighboring countries. This new African country has an area of 644.000 Km², larger than the total surface of France which stretches over 543,965 Km².

Unfortunately, while the ethnic conflict and the Rebellion that broke out on December 15, 2013 ravaged the country, it threw many families into the camps of internally displaced people (IDP). However, since the beginning of the year 2017, President Salva Kiir signed a law bringing the number of States to 32. At equal division, each state would measure 20,125 Km² of surface. This insecurity problem also affected education program at all levels as many of the potential teachers and school children continued to leave the country.

The formal education of South Sudan has acquired a structure resulting from the combination of education systems in neighboring countries including Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan (north), which also hosted thousands of refugees during the last twenty years of struggle with active ingredient from the wars that led to the division of this great country into two: The North and South.

The education policy changed from Arabic to English that was taken as a medium of instruction in all the schools in the South. The introduction of a new unified National Curriculum strengthened education standard in South Sudan because other foreign Languages such as French, Swahili and Arabic were included as elective subjects in the unified new curricula. The purpose was to facilitate marketability to the South Sudanese with their friends in the neighboring countries, promoting South Sudan to compete at inter-national market.

As in Kenya, the South Sudan education system is in the form of 8-4-4, which means that it takes 8 years for primary school, 4 years in high school and 4 years in the first cycle of the university. But the nursery school accommodates three-year-old for three years, qualifying them to enter the

primary school, which they have to start at the age of 6 years.

Taking English Language as an official medium of instruction in teaching was based on the Interim Constitution of 09 July 2011, Section 6.2). The official school year Calendar covers the period between February and December of the year, a total of 210 days divided into three quarters (General Education Act, 2012). Ethnic languages are recognized alongside Arabic to convey moral and religious values. The latter is mainly practiced in the states located on the shores of northern Sudan and introduced at Primary 5 to P8 as a subject.

Signing of peace agreements in 2005 and the beginning of the rebellion in 2013.

This rebellion triggered by the First Vice-President Dr. Riek Machar was initiated to manifest his discontent from the abuse of power-sharing with President Salva Kiir and counts several victims living in the hundreds of the IDP camps scattered all over the country.

Since 2002, the politico-military movement (Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army, SPLM/A), who was fighting the Khartoum government was also embarking on the improvement and organization of education policies to promote the sustainable development.

In the National Journal on Education for All (EFA), 2015 in South Sudan, the Minister of Education says that the consequences of armed and non-armed conflicts have caused the displacement of 866,000 Children at school age, with an estimate reported 400,000 children who dropped out of school. And therefore, it was foreseeable that South Sudan could not achieve the objectives of the EFA.

The challenge of the development of the education system is accentuated by the insufficient budget allocated to the Department of National Education which has affected many projects for the construction of schools and teacher training structures and to ensure their regular monthly salary payment.

Following the signing of the peace accords in Kenya in 2005, the Ministry of General Education and Instruction was concerned about the adoption of several innovative policies related to the curriculum development and education of the early childhood in 2006 and of syllabus referring to it during the same year. In 2007, the Government adopted the pre-primary management and administration policy, the conceptual document for early childhood development and education, and its course of action.

In 2008, the government adopted the policy of professional coaching around the teaching profession and the teacher training manual, to better strengthen the education development at the national and international levels.

However, the rebellion that erupted in 2013 until 2017 significantly interrupted smooth implementation of education program in South Sudan because many International organizations working on Education Sector left the country. In addition, plight of many qualified teachers for safety to the neighboring countries especially to Uganda, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), many schools in South were deserted or remained closed. In the neighboring countries, thousands of the South Sudanese children in refugee camps could not have the opportunity of quality education to meet their aspiration, cultural heritage and identities. Another problem, after the completion of secondary education, many of them were forced to drop off the spirit of education as they could not afford to pay for matriculation to high institution of learning in the foreign countries.

The Situation of Education in the IDP Camps

The General Education Act (2012): Since the end of the civil war between the north and the south of Sudan, keeping hope for a lasting peace, the military Government of South Sudan has committed itself to framing its educational policy in the standards required by the international bodies offering services in several vital areas, having acceded to the international

sovereignty, South Sudan gained recognition by the United Nations. This Government has put all its efforts in place to demonstrate confidence that would build strong relationships with its social and trade partners. This process has been strengthened by means of laws, acts and regulations and the exercise of its power to improve the living conditions of the citizens. Among the most important policies; was the program for the "Early Child Development and Education (ECDE), its Curriculum and the syllabus in 2006. There was also the policy for management and administration in Pre-School (2007). The guideline for ECDE (2007), the teacher and teacher trainers training manuals (2008), the concept paper for ECDE (2007), the draft of guiding rules and regulations for establishment and management of Pre-primary schools (2012), the General Education Act (2012) developed a draft of ECDE management policy framework (2014), and the General education policy framework (2015). Nevertheless, all these attempts for educational reform in the country remained unaccomplished due to interruption by perpetual general insecurity situation.

The General Education Act defines the principles and goals of general education, but its materialization remains hampered by financial and insecurity problems as mentioned above. Also the structure of the general education system, the quality that needs to be strengthened and maintained by all means, the resources allocation, the financial management and the maintenance of accountability at all the levels of the public administration, the extension and defense of the rights of learners and parents, to adopt efficiency in the management of both Public and private schools, develop teachers employment system, their training and remuneration, their rights and obligations, popularize the Code of Conduct and behavior management of students , and finally, the maintenance and development of the discipline mechanism at school were not put in place.

At the state level, it could be seen from county education to Payam and Boma levels that, teachers do not have the capacity to improve education administration as well as teaching across the country. The number of primary school teachers as reported by EMIS (2008) was 23,025 of which “about 38.8% of them are primary six leavers and below, 15% are junior school leavers. This means, about 54% of the existing primary school teachers are under qualified since they have not completed primary eight which is the minimum requirement for admission to teachers training programs”. In some cases, as it was reported by the same source that “primary three leavers are appointed as teachers. In other cases, primary five finalists teachers are assigned to teach in primary eight classes, which they have never been to”. This was extremely unprofessional in education policy. EMIS 2008 also reflected gender disparity in teachers’ recruitment. “The number of female teachers as registered during that year was only 12% of the existing primary school teachers were females, which required serious attention and actions to be taken by the ministry to increase the number of trained and qualified female teachers in South Sudan”.

In addition, aggravated by the prevalence of continuous instability in the country, education standard continued to diminish gradually that brings up the need in policy-making since the social environment is affected by the displacement of the population leaving villages empty because many citizens live in IDPs camps. All the efforts for the practicability of these policies are affected by the armed conflicts where the government invest much money on purchasing weapons and trying to bring around the table of negotiation, the different rebel movements, sacrificing the educational process of thousands of adult and young South Sudanese.

The General education Strategic Plan 2012-2017

To guide the operational framework of the general education activities, the Government

has adopted a strategic plan designed with the necessary objectives to support the education and training programs. This general education strategic plan for the period from 2012 to 2017 is entitled: « Promoting learning for all ». As a result, 20 Country Education Centers (CECs) two each to be established in the former Ten States across the country to conduct In-Services training to the teachers and Education Administrators at the state level. However, due to Teacher attrition as a result of low Remuneration, inadequate teacher education & training facilities plus dilapidated infrastructure in the National Teachers Training Institutes (NTTIs) as well as in the County Education Centres (CECs), this program only improved a little of the educational standard.

Despite the fact that the General Education Act 2012 plan advocated Government of Sudan’s plan to achieve 7 goals: to promote equity and increase access to general education, and improve the quality of general education and provision of adult learning, many challenges sprung up from strengthening human and institutional capacities because due to lack of transparency and accountability in managing the funding for education, donated by Partners in Education Group ((PEG) who were participants in the Cluster of monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan of the general education,

The strategic education plan responds to the various declarations adopted by the member countries of the United Nations during the meetings, with the support of UNESCO. The general guideline for the education was declared in the forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 which adopted the principle of education for All (EFA), in line with the Millennium Which culminated in the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-2030), based on "Strengthening lifelong learning opportunities by ensuring the access of all people to quality education in equality". Importance is given to education because it opens up the means to fight poverty, and to promote the development of peace in the country and between peoples,

promoting the creation of jobs through the establishment of new businesses and therefore the establishment of a fair economy, which benefits the population.

Challenges to the implementation of education policies

In the report published in 2012 by the World Bank in collaboration with the Government of South Sudan, titled "Africa Human Development Series # 70595", some of the challenges of general education are analyzed and commented upon by the rise of enrolment in schools from 2000 until 2009, supported by volunteer teachers, but there was a lack of school documents for teachers and students. After this period, the situation of education has fallen again at the lowest level as during the period of the wars that led to the independence of this new African country.

In the publication of the Institute for Education Planning and the Government of South Sudan, on the analysis of the "education sector in 2016, some important points should be stressed: the severe and rapid deterioration of the economy of South Sudan affects past investments and progress in education, universal education remains a daunting challenge with the high level of dropout. At a time when insecurity prevents children from accessing the school, making the learning and teaching environment impracticable, no matter what contain the policies, the entire population cannot benefit from the education programs. The country faces a lot of consequences as many students leave school without a good knowledge to support a productive life. The management of teachers suffers from financial constraints and negatively affects the commitment of new employees. The payment of insufficient wages to primary school does not promote the production of quality education".

The Globalization in Business Involves training competitive skills to ensure balance in the management of services and capital markets that facilitate the marketing through the sale and entry of currencies that maintain the production

and stabilize the national economy. The development of competitive resources must be supported by the development of information technology and communication (ITC) that the South Sudan is still struggling to grant itself. The state of the roads remains catastrophic not knowing how to connect the 32 states that this young country currently counts.

Environmentally, South Sudan is a swampy land especially in Greater Upper Nile State that gives too much grief to economic operators, with the bad experience of 2007, it happened to meet vehicles rented by World Vision to serve populations in food but for lack of roads, and under the Rain blow, the vehicle was often abandoned for several months waiting for the ground to dry, so to try to travel before the next rain falls.

It is regrettable to note that since the time of the wars and after having acquired its independence, this country is based on development aid and humanitarian aid with fewer programs on reconstruction and economic development in the fledgling Nation. With the rebellion that erupted in 2013, the government is now working to maintain the security and survival of displaced populations, who live in the camps within their country while increasing the number of children, who have dropped out of school, instead of carrying out its plan for the development of villages, cities and towns, infrastructures to house various services, including hospitals, schools in all States, National Universities, roads, and airports.

The Government of South Sudan still carries on its shoulders the heavy burden of general education of its population. The starting point seems already acquired, that of the recognition by its peers from around the world in order to help it implement the declarations adopted in the General assemblies at international level, but nothing is yet won because this country still requires enormous resources on the technical, financial and material level in order to achieve objectives. Thereafter, providing everlasting peace, to maintain the acts, laws and regulations

adopted within the framework of strengthening the local capacities of the South Sudanese.

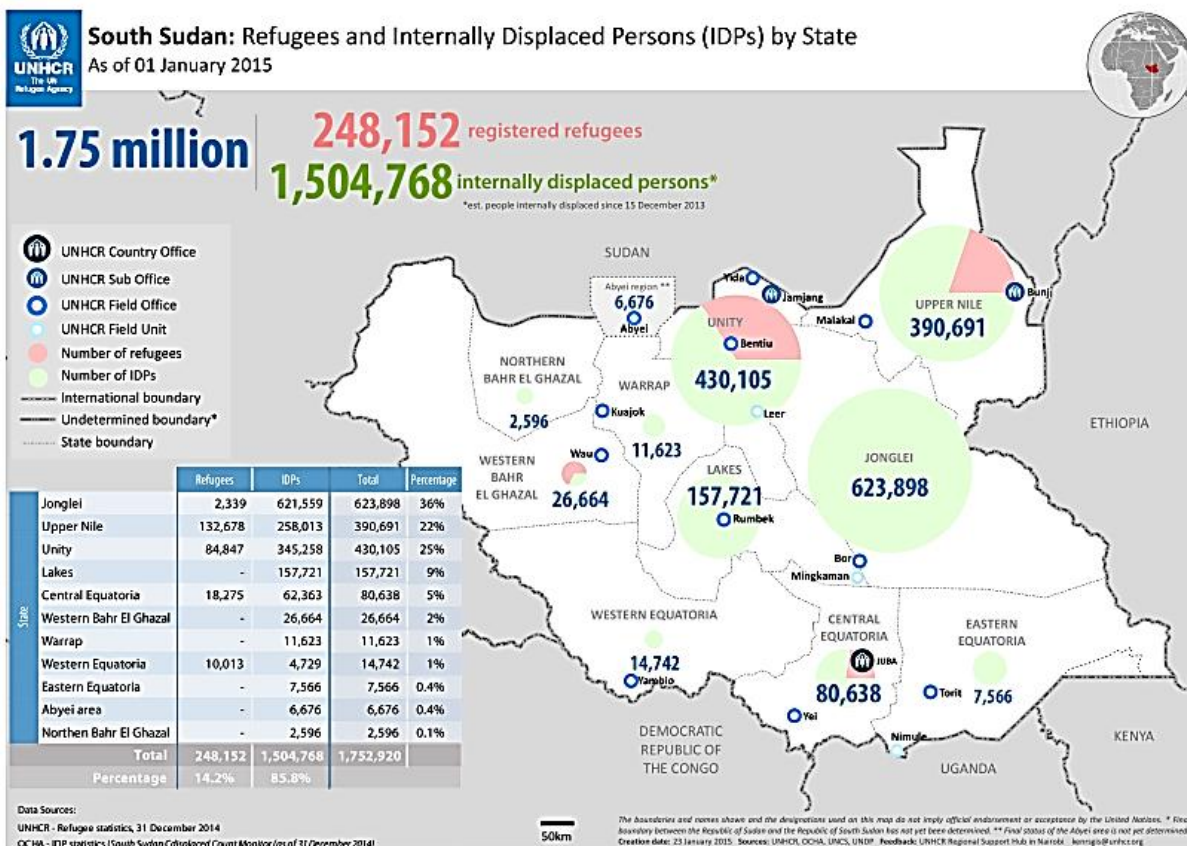
The government sought ways of framing general education at all levels of pre-primary, secondary schools and the university but its effort is engulfed in the search for solutions to keep the peace shaken by this rebellion that already

dragging too long and affecting the populations victims in different ways.

Annex

The challenges to the application of education policies are multiple. UNHCR established an E-2015Number of Refugees and displaced persons.

Map 2: Showing locations of South Sudan Refugees and Internal Displaced Person (IDPs) by States



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