

## **DIFFICULTIES FACED BY SOUTH SUDAN AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PARTNERS IN ENCOURAGING FEMALE EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates the difficulties faced by the South Sudanese government and international education partners in encouraging female education. The core purpose of the study was to explore the difficulties faced by the government and the partners in encouraging female education. The prior researchers on gender differences in South Sudan show a little increase in female enrollments in both primary and secondary schools from 39.3% in 2013 to 44.4% in 2017. This research was a phenomenological study, and qualitative research method was used, therefore, the researcher interpreted answers according to the way they were brought by the respondents. Interview, documentary analysis and direct observation were used during the data collection. The study finds out that, there was lack of trust between the government and the partners and inadequate Partnership coordination and monitoring were the main difficulties faced by the government and the partners. Moreover, negative attitudes of the people toward female education, lack of community awareness on the importance of female education policies, political instability that causes external and internal migration and schools' distances have also hindered the smooth running of the strategies employed by the government and her education partners to encourage female education in the country. Therefore, the researcher recommends to the government and International Education Partners, to initiate general awareness campaigns to educate communities on behavioral changes toward female education and the importance of educating a female child.

**Keywords:** South Sudan, international education partners, female education, female, and enrollment.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The results of the referendum conducted in South Sudan on 9th January 2011, made South Sudan a Republic on 9th July 2011, after South Sudanese voted overwhelmingly in favor of secession from the Sudan. This led to the formation of the newly independent country in Africa called the Republic South Sudan. South Sudan was officially declared as an independent state on the midnight of 9<sup>th</sup> July 2011, and became African country number 54<sup>th</sup>, United Nation member country number 193<sup>rd</sup>, and the UNESCO country number 194<sup>th</sup>. The independence of South Sudan did not only end the war, but also put an end to political marginalization from the successive and powerful long-serving government Khartoum on Southern Sudan.

Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011, is the basis of the entire legal framework for every educational policy. It was adopted two days before the independence on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2011, the articles in the Transitional constitution of South Sudan that relate to education are; article 29 pg. 11, on the right to education in art or science and article 38, pg. 17 and 18, this article grantee the right to education of all the citizen without discrimination basing on gender, religion, ethnicity, race, health status including those who are leaving with HIV/AIDS or people with disabilities. The constitution also added that all the institution should promote

education at all level of the government authorities, education partners such as UN and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) are required to invest largely on educational development in the country at the primary and secondary level. During the past few years, there were some little improvements for female-students enrolling in schools and finished their primary studies, some prospects to continue their studies to secondary school. South Sudanese government signed the Memorandum of understanding (MoU) with international education partners lead by UNICEF, Windle Trust International, and other key contributors like the United Nations World Food Programs (UN WFP), they developed a national strategy called Girls' education Strategy (2015-2017). In the strategy, they proposed food for education, take-home food for schooling female students by WFP, to add on the cash transfer to girls by GESS, initiated in 2012 as an additional new approaches used to motivate more female at the schooling-ages to enrolled in school, MoGEI, (2015-2017).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Difficulties Faced by the Government in Encouraging Female Education**

In spite of all the approaches and achievements made by the government in encouraging females education in the country, still the participation of female in education is still low, some considerable difficulties remained, and are still faced by the government of South Sudan, Catherine, H. (2018), the difficulties faced by the government are inter-related and reinforce each other such as the issues of security and gender-based violence are closely related and both have a direct impact on the health and livelihood status of females, communities sometime do not agree with the government education policies to allow their girls to attain education at a certain age, such as age 14 and above, because they consider schooling as a direct way which a girls child can easily turn into prostitution, as they spend some of their time without parents' guidance. Oguta, G. (2013), the distances of the residential areas from school is a leading factor which is noted to have affected female participation in schooling, there were many cases of girls reported missing without a trace in the area. This has created a fear of danger that a female-child could be exposed to abduction, rape or even being killed, all these affect principals' influence on female-child attending in school.

The Pastoralist's continues migration looking for water and pastures for their cattle seasonally, makes pastoralist extremely difficult to target with educational programs and very few attempts are being made to target these students especially women and girls with educational programs. Organizations operating in affected areas generally assume that young cattle herders would show no interest in education or even in vocational training and a settled lifestyle.

The Republic of South Sudan, recently emerging from the longest civil war in contemporary African history, and due to power struggle within the ruling party between the president and the former vice president, had led the country re-entered into another civil war and conflict after its independence from the Sudan which has negatively affected the central government to deliver educational services smoothly. The educational infrastructure continues diminishing, and many stakeholders in government and international and local organizations are not sufficiently aware of the needs, challenges, and opportunities that face the females in education. This has led to the thousand displacements of the people from the country to the neighboring countries of Central Africa Republic (CAR), Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan and abroad, such as America and Australia.

Poverty has been shown by maternal malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency, coupled with malnutrition in early childhood has devastating and largely irreversible consequences for cognitive development and learning achievement. Based on the poor economic background of the society, and lack of various economic activities, the central government heavily depended

on the oil as the only source of income. Hence the government is unable to fund the entire sectors particularly the educational sector, Julie A. (1996).

### **Difficulties Faced by International Education Partners in Encouraging Females Education**

Education partners in the Republic of South Sudan are also affected by the same factors faced by the government of South Sudan, but in addition to those are the factors hindering humanitarian's assistance in the country, these factors are mostly fueled by political instability, insecurity made it almost impossible for international education partners to access the interior of the country in greater Upper Nile Region , greater equatoria and Greater Bahr El Ghazal Region, UNINISS (2016). Thousands of people are almost every day displaced in their home town, by either insecurity or hunger caused by the conflict, this population crossed to the neighboring counties, majority of the migrants are women and children, of the school going ages, so it gives no regular attendance to the international education partners to identify the numbers who need help.

Poor connection of physical infrastructure continues to hinder international aid workers. Parts of the country remain unreachable, hence leading to the logistical difficulties since there are no roads only a few airstrips are functioning. The country had been in war for around 50 years, the landmines were heavily planted across the country, some were demined after independent and others are still not demined today, especially around the towns which were contested by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan Armed Force (SAF) from the 1980s to 2005, thus this is hindering access by the humanitarian assistance while insecurity continues to disrupt the provision of aid in some areas. The government of the Republic of South Sudan is not yet in a position to take over the provision of all essential services, let alone to roll out delivery to unreached areas. Janet, W, et al. (2018), there is no enough trained teachers, health workers, administrators, social workers, teachers, or civil servants for this to be feasible, also there are few the water supplies, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities. Around 30% of the school lack pit latrines, this has made it harder for the humanitarian to provide food for education to those schools without latrines and source of water, because for a school to benefit from the feeding program, it must have a water source near the school and a latrine as the basing needs for hygiene, Benjamin C. et al. (2012) and John, N. (2019).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative research method was used to carry out this study. The researcher used face to face interviews and sometimes made some phone calls if the researcher needs further information after the interview. During the interview, the government official from the national Ministry of general education and instruction (MoGEI), these included Director of Gender Equity and Inclusive Education, Director of Accelerating Learning Programs (ALP), Director of primary and Secondary studies and the Jonglei State Director General of education, also the two Head Teachers were interviewed, the Headteacher of Dr. Garang secondary School and the Headteacher of Pongborong primary School. The sources for this research were mainly from primary data and secondary information, the researcher review policy documents on females' education and the view of other researchers, also the Directors were interviewed in the ministry of general education and in UNICEF and Windle Trust International purposely to get a direct answer on the difficulties facing them in encouraging female education, Lastly, six female students were also interviewed. These were where the required information were available on the ground, qualitative research method was used in carrying out this study because Stake, (1995), defined qualitative research as a form of a systematic empirical inquiry into the meaning, qualitative research method always involved interpretation and naturalistic

approaches, meaning that qualitative research study things in their natural selection and setting, and interpret human phenomena according to the way and meaning the people brought them, therefore, this method rhymed with the researcher study, because the purpose of this study was to find out the difficulties faced by government and education partners in encouraging female to participating in education.

## **THE FINDINGS**

International organization forms transnational approaches to solve world's problem through cooperating with the international countries and governments, therefore, the government of South Sudan cooperate with UNICEF and Windle Trust international among others, to encourage female children of the school-going age to participate equally in education like males, this cooperation has been faced by numerous difficulties, these difficulties are either political base, environmental base, cultural base or economic based, these are as follow;

### **Lack of Trust between the Government and the Donor Partners**

It is known, in South Sudan, that the number of man-made disasters is many and the international education partners together with the donors got fatigue and has become more prevalent and worrying. Donors and the government exchange accusation between themselves, Donors accused South Sudan government that around 20% of the donation goes on corruption cases, as a result of the continued civil war between the government of South Sudan and the Former Vice president, turned rebel on December 2013, they believe that, this 20% goes on buying military equipment, USA was the leading donor for South Sudan with the 64% according to 2016 fiscal year fund report in South Sudan, but in the light of Trump administration, there is a change in policy as the consequences of the December 2013 war and J1 (the official presidential residence) of 2016 wars outbreak in the country, there were restrictions on South Sudan government projects funding, consequently, international education partners do not have enough fund to support all the projects for female education in the country. On the other hand, the government accused Donors and international partners of imposing their will on the young nation, by threatening of withholding their funds and imposing of sanction either national sanction or individual sanctions, Boboya, J. (2015).

### **Inadequate Partnership Coordination and Monitoring Caused by Bad Weather**

Poor roads and weather condition has ruined humanitarian assistances coordination and monitoring to the local population in the country, for example the internally displaced persons (IDPs) cannot be reached with help because of the bad road which always turned muddy during the rainy season, this made it difficult for the government and the humanitarian to reach them with the assistance and needs for their studies, Charity G. (2016). The Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) understood that monitoring and coordination is the key to success in term of implementing education sector plans. However the lack of all-seasons road limited physical joint monitoring and evaluation of education programs, especially when the meeting is called, because they are conducted at the national level, as such there is insufficient data collection and direct alignment of partners' activities to female, this is especially in the state level, MoGEI, (2018-2022).

### **Lack of Finance**

As a result of the government and international education partners limited resources to education, the shortage of finance to support education which is both faced by the government and international education partners affected most of the female projects. The country is facing a lot of economic challenges, as a result of the political struggle between the government and the former Vice president of the Republic of South Sudan, who turned rebel, MoGEI, (2018-

2022). The war has caused a lot of challenges in economic because the donors restricted funding as a way of pushing both the government and rebel to sign the peace deal, this has to affect the ministerial support to the schools, also the donors are committed to assist the worsening humanitarian condition such as health, Agriculture among others. The Director for education in UNICEF, testified during the interview;

*“UNICEF is offering a lot of support in South Sudan, not only in education but in some departments like in health we are supporting malnourished children, therefore, we should have to do prioritization on the urgent issues such as outbreak of epidemic diseases like cholera, these need quick response has given the first priority by the organization, this always keeping education a less priority”.*

Moreover, UNICEF committed at the international level because there are increase in the number of refugees in the world, which also need UNICEF assistances in other African countries, Asian countries like Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and the Latin American countries. Because the competition for resources is intense with political atmosphere across the globe and are all seeking for support. Therefore, South Sudan is not the first priority since there are more worsening humanitarian condition in Asia, Southern American countries and other parts of Africa, these countries need more assistances than South Sudan.

### **Conflicting laws**

The conflicting applications of the customary and the constitutional laws in the country has affected the government and international education partners in implementing female education policies, because the customary laws at most of the time, didn't consider most of the international human rights and more specifically the women rights. South Sudan local government act conferred some legal duties to the local authorities such as chiefs in the rural areas, the application of these laws are based on the beliefs and tradition of each community, and as a results, these laws does not observe international women laws and are sometime abused and used as a defense mechanism by the lawbreakers, especially the schoolboys who impregnate school girls, their cases are settled in the local courts which always favor them and give them right to become family even if they are still minors. Also, these laws did not favor females at all aspect apart from the right of getting married and bearing children, CN Trueman, (2015), this is against the feminist theory, feminist advocates for equality before the law regardless of gender. In the customary laws, it grants children only right to safety and food, therefore, there was a total violation of the child Act (2008), and article 28 on the right of every child to education, these two laws are usually violated and the lawbreakers are not arrested by the authorities, this was articulated by the director of Gender, Equity, and inclusive education in the interview that:

*“There is no punishment given to the lawbreakers by the law authorities, this has made child rights look useless”* impregnate a girl and a girl is given to him as a wife instead of punishing him so that the other students can take an example.

These conflicting laws impacted females negatively, and the practicality of it is against the sustainable development goals which aim at equality before the rule of law and guided all sex from exploitation based on the law, also this conflicting laws have made female more vulnerable especially in the rural areas, because they were brought up under the same laws so they view themselves in the same light of just being a weak gender, Mark, G et al. (2017).

### **External and Internal Displacement of the People**

The Findings according to UNINISS, (2016), a large number of South Sudanese pupils and teachers have fled the country to the neighboring countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and



Ethiopia, or are displaced internally, in searching for the better life in the camps where they are provided with the basic needs such as food, shelters, and opportunities for primary schooling, foreign teachers who were teaching in South Sudan went back to their countries after the July 2016 crisis leaving some students without subject-specific teacher. This was especially in the most affected areas of the greater Upper Nile region. During the crises the pastoralist communities migrated deeper into the countryside, either in the deep swampy areas in the Sudd or deep in the thick natural forests of the Badingilo Game Reserve, this migration has ruined the humanitarian assistance of cash transfers and school feeding interrupted. Also, Mobiles schools were established by AES and the education partners have ceased to operate completely; this has affected the schooling for those who were displaced because it became hard for them to be reached, Charity, G. (2016).

The conflict also has caused rural-urban migration, UNMISS in 2016, the United Nation Mission in South Sudan. estimated that, more than 200,000 Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) were being sheltered in the UNMISS in the six major protection Sites of Civilian (PoC) the across the country, people migrate to towns for protection, this has made Juba a most crowded city in South Sudan, this increase in population in the towns has led to the scarcity of schools and school materials, facilities, teachers and classroom overcrowding, in Jubek State, the average ratio of teacher-pupil was 1:145, MoGEI, (2017-2022), this has led to a high dropout rate in schools.

Most of the schools in the Upper Nile region were destroyed by the war in 2013, and some were being used as a military barracks for the rebel since the beginning the conflict, UNICEF, (2017), specified that nearly 45 schools were occupied by armed forces or used by the military purposes. This has caused doubt to the international education partners who help the government in constructing schools. As a result, the parents whose children were in those school decided to send their children to other towns or decided to let them stay at home, in this case, girls were the victims because they do not like always to separate with their parents.

### **Early Marriages**

Early marriages are against the SDGs 2030 agenda because it didn't give grantee equal education opportunities to female-children. Most of the respondents emphasized on the cultural practice of early marriages among the communities in South Sudan as the leading factor affecting the government and international education partners to achieve full participation of female in education, Monica A, (2013), and Mhele, K, & Ayiga, N. (2013) indicated in their findings that there were numerous challenges faced by female starting from the household to the community level, these challenges are directly or indirectly faced by female especially girls, the researcher has agreed with her, because feminism theory indicated that any practice that denied a girl or women participation or considered inferior is against the theory, therefore, this societal practices such as gendered division of labor leave female with the heavy task of household work such as cooking, washing the family cloths, taking care of the young ones can lead to a student dropout. Oguta, G. (2013), the researcher agreed with his finding that early marriages either as a result of pregnancy or force marriage known by the parent, has led in most cases either the girl remained under the responsibility of their parents or the boy who impregnated her, took her to his home. Also as a society in some part of South Sudan, some topic in school like reproductive health, sexual education and puberty adolescent are much considered as taboo and it gives most of the parent to look at school as one the institutions that encourage prostitution, because talking about reproductive organs is considered unethical among most of the communities in South Sudan, MoGEI,(2018-2022). And most importantly the virginity of the girl during her marriage ceremony has let some parent keeps their daughters

at home with them leading to low enrolments in the schools, the loss of virginity before marriage is also one of the things that worried both parents and female students, the head-teacher said during the interview;

*“Loss of virginity worried both the parents and their daughters; parent fears that their daughters will get spoil through mixing with the boys in the school and on their way to and from the school, so they opt to remain with their daughters at home just waiting for marriage.”*

Culturally, virginity was one of the most celebrated things among the communities in South Sudan, during the wedding, virginity is witnessed officially by ladies, and if it is not there, then it is a big shame to both the parents of the bride and herself, therefore, it has to be protected because it adds more value to the bride and led to an increase of the dowries.

### **High Turnover of Teachers**

The educational sector experienced a high turnover of teachers' particularly female teachers, and the reason cited to have been responsible for the female turnover is insecurity and the fear of safety, However, some irregularities like the delay of salaries, low teachers' salaries, though it affects both sexes, women are quick to opt for alternative means of getting better jobs, which can feed their families. This act replace the qualified teachers with unqualified teachers who are available, this has contributed to poor knowledge retention and lack of mentors for girls in school and possibly discouraged them from attending the school and cause high dropout of girls from the schools. The negative perception of teaching as a profession has contributed to the reduction in students aspiring to become teachers or choosing education as a career.

### **Schools Distances**

The distance of the schools has contributed to low attendance of female students, female consider themselves as weak gender that can easily be out powered by any force, like rapping, kidnapping, and many other sorts of inhuman activities, Oguta, G. (2013). Oguto in the literature review talked of the school distance as a factor affecting female attendance in school in East Africa as a region, this is better in the other Eastern African Countries, the distances of schools in South Sudan are very wide because of the war which broke out in Juba City on December 15th, 2013 and again on July 8th, 2016 causing people to leave their villages. Some of the school remains in the out sketch of villages as the results of internal displacement of the people from South Sudan to other safe places within the country like urban centers or internal displaced camps, other crossed to the neighboring countries of Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Central Africa Republic, Sudan and Egypt, (GESP 2015-2017). As a result, the few remaining inhabitants grouped themselves to stay together in one place, leaving some of the schools at a distant at the outer core of the villages.

The distances of the school especially in rural areas are frustrating, some of the school were built from 2005-2013 when the country was in total peace, these schools where left in the outer core of the residential places, this made both teachers and students travel to the school in the morning and come back homes in the evening, this has caused doubt to some parents and tiredness to some student, some student decided to remain at home due to either fear of the distance or the insecurity on the way to and from the school. Some parents don't trust the position of the school, because around some area in the rural, the cattle raiders sometimes raid cattle around this school, placing this at the highest risk. Therefore, some parents end up staying with their children at home, which is against the sustainable development goals 2030, the basis of all educational rights, it advocates for equal participation and removal of all sorts of barriers that can prevent children from attending the school either in the rural or in urban centers,

therefore, the above factors are all against the SDGs for they don't lack the flexibility of female students to attend the schools.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the presented results, discussion and conclusion, there are several issues which need to be addressed in order to enhance the improvement of female participation in education.

- ❖ Female education policies should be reviewed to take full account and the participation of all the stakeholders about female education in the country.
- ❖ The government should create awareness group at all level of the government and among the societies, household, schools, stakeholders including chiefs and the parents, to understand the importance of female education, this awareness should be conducted at least ones annually, in all the states of South Sudan.
- ❖ Girl Education South Sudan (GESS), should still cooperate with the government and renew the cash transfer which ended the last year 2018 and continue with giving cash money to the government because it has contributed most to the increment for female enrollment in both primary and secondary school.
- ❖ World Food Program should continue with the provision of food for education and a take-home food for girls, as it was testified by Michael Lopuke Lotyam, the undersecretary in the national ministry of general education and instruction during the interview with Citizen news agency on 4th, August 2018, "that food for education and take-home food has improved general attendances and more specifically female enrolments", through this approach, vulnerable students can continue with their studies without dropout looking for food to themselves or for their families. Therefore, the retention for the female in the school would have been achieved.
- ❖ UNICEF and Windle Trust International should mobilize some more funds to continue to conduct teachers training to improve teachers' profession in order for them to love their duties.

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