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Provision of Technical Assistance for the support of the Implementation of the Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) in the Sudan

Research Studies

Study 1: Why do children drop out of school? Voices from children and the grassroots

Study 2: Factors affecting the education and retention of girls

Study 3: The quality of the teaching and learning process

Study 4: Community engagement in education

Study 5: The role and value of education – perceptions of parents and community members

Study 6: Improving management for better retention

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I. INTRODUCTION

1 RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

The Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) addresses the reality that many children of school age are not in school, either never having enrolled or dropping out before completing the primary cycle. The most recent numbers from the Government of Sudan date from 2014, in a report supported by UNICEF (2015):¹

- Sudan has 7.9 million school aged children of 5-13 years, of which 3.1 million of them are counted as out-of-school.
- 63% of them are 6-11 year olds who were supposed to be in primary schools, and 53% of them are girls. Each year, 54% of the 6-year-old children expected to start grade one on time do not enroll in schools.
- One third of primary aged children are at risk of dropping out before reaching the final grade in primary school. Girls are more likely than boys to leave school before reaching the last grade.

PERP was designed to address the third of these challenges: how to keep children in school, once they have enrolled, in order that they acquire the basic competencies – literacy, numeracy, problem solving, social skills, and more – in order to continue learning and, later, to engage in productive work and participate actively and constructively in society. The estimate given above of one third of primary school children dropping out prematurely from primary school is shocking enough, but the challenge may be greater than that. In fact, it is difficult to know how big a problem it is – children drop out throughout the school year, some may be absent regularly but still be counted as enrolled, some move with the families and join other schools. There is no doubt that improvements in EMIS from school to national level will, in time, improve the reliability of the statistics of the out-of-school population.

There is also another kind of problem: even if the numbers are known, targeted measures to keep children in school can only be designed and implemented if we know **why** children drop out. Issues such as poverty, traditional culture, gender stereotypes and other social factors immediately come to mind – and indeed they

¹ UNICEF and Federal Ministry of Education. 2015. *Out-of-school children Report*. Khartoum.

play a big role in whether children attend school consistently or not. However, the closer we come to the school, the family and the child themselves, the more we are challenged to understand why a particular child in a particular school and community did not continue in school. Dropout from school is a phenomenon with multiple dimensions, and no single factor or simple solution will adequately account for it or address it. There is a need for a deeper qualitative understanding of the multiple dimensions of dropout, which may lead to a more considered, more nuanced and more targeted set of measures to reduce it and to improve retention, and the aim of the six studies, taken as a whole, was to go some way to meeting this need.

The six PERP studies were designed to complement statistical data by collecting qualitative data to answer the question 'why' and to capture the range of dimensions and factors which contribute to dropout, on the one hand, and to retention, on the other. The kinds of data that the studies present relate therefore to:

- The difference of context: geographic, economic, ethnic and cultural;
- Gender, in relation to socially determined roles and prevailing community perceptions;
- The various levels of intervention and management: family, school and community, locality, state;
- Factors of different kinds involved in dropout: 'pull' factors relating to the environment of the child and her/his community, and 'push' factors relating to the organisation and performance of the education system.

The studies were therefore designed to address these factors, or at least certain aspects of them. The studies could not, of course, address all the factors nor all the contexts, and by no means represent an exhaustive analysis – the areas where further research may be conducted in future suggested in the '*Conclusions*' section, presented separately. The resources made available for the studies enabled three studies to be undertaken in each of the five States involved in PERP – as detailed in Section C below.

The specific nature and purpose of the studies required careful attention to the selection and design of appropriate methodologies.

2 METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain, in a rigorous manner, the systematic data needed to understand the wide range of qualitative factors, the six studies adopted an ethnographic approach. Its characteristics may be summarised as follows:

The central aim of ethnography is to provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature (that is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit, through the collection of detailed observations and interviews. (Reeves, Kuper and Hodges. 2008. Qualitative research methodologies: ethnography. BMJ 2008: 337:a1020)

An ethnographic approach puts the views of actors and those affected by an intervention at the centre of the research, exploring their contexts, their relationships and their perceptions. These studies gave opportunity, often for the first time, for grassroots actors, particularly children, parents and community leaders, to express themselves on questions of education. This gave voice to people who are otherwise rarely consulted, and these voices emerge through the studies. Attention to grassroots perceptions is a feature of all six studies, according to the stakeholder groups affected by the topic under investigation.

The studies also use triangulation, a means within an ethnographic approach to check whether data from one group is congruous with data from other groups, thus lending greater validity to the analysis based on the data obtained. Through triangulation, the studies benefit from the viewpoint and experience of several different actors in the same context and regarding the same phenomenon. In these studies, stakeholder groups included children, parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders – see Table 2 below.

Ethnographic research does not aim for the codified responses that quantitative approaches need to establish generalised patterns, but rather uses open questions and allows the analysis to emerge from the data. This approach also gives respondents the freedom to interpret questions according to their own frame of reference – often a source in itself of new understandings.

In the particular case of examining the dropout phenomenon, the use of ethnographic methodology was particularly important because it gives pride of place to understanding:

- Complexity – recognising that any social phenomenon can never be reduced to a single dimension;
- Context – appreciating the nature and particularities of the layered contexts (personal, family, community, professional, political, cultural, etc) in which the social phenomenon is examined;
- Holistic view: what happens in individual lives and community relations cannot be split into compartments – each part of life affects the others;
- Multiple factors impacting people’s lives: behaviour is subject to many influences – from physical environment to personal characteristics to opportunity/lack of opportunity to values and relationships;
- Stakeholder perceptions: the way people perceive their circumstances, their opportunities, themselves and others affects their actions – these perceptions may reveal attitudes and values that are key drivers – or constraints – of behaviour and change;
- Stakeholder relationships: the relationships that individuals and groups of people have with each other affect their attitudes and the way they behave

Ethnographic approaches cannot give a generalised picture of a phenomenon across society as a whole, and this is a frequent criticism of the method. The findings of an ethnographic study cannot be generalised *ipso facto* to a whole population, given that only a few cases constitute the object of the research. In ethnographic research there is no ‘representative sample’ from which conclusions may be statistically extrapolated to apply to the broader group(s) to which the particular cases belong.

However, this does not mean that results of ethnographic methods have no significance beyond the particular cases examined. The use of rigorously designed methods and the depth of analysis that this approach can provide, particularly with regard to understanding complexity, uncover fundamental principles of human action and behaviour which we may expect to find in other situations and groups, manifested in different ways in different contexts. Above all, the results of ethnographic approaches will signal the multiple factors which any intervention for social change must take into account. In this sense, ethnographic approaches enable more realistic policies to be designed and more careful development approaches to be adopted.

Each study specifies the particular methods and instruments used to explore the dimensions of dropout that it addressed. In general, the instruments included questionnaires on background data, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participatory impact assessment and observation. Every study used several instruments, thus ensuring triangulation of data.

The research was carried out in each case by a senior consultant of international standing in collaboration with one or more national (Sudanese) consultants. The international consultants were drawn from Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sudan and the United Kingdom. In addition to carrying out the research, in each case the international consultant provided mentoring in research methodology to their national team members.

3 SELECTION OF TOPICS FOR STUDY

The original PERP terms of reference suggested a list of possible topics for the studies, with the proposal that the final list should be the subject of consultations with the State Ministries of Education and with the approval of the Federal Ministry of Education through the PERP Programme Advisory Committee. The European Union Delegation in Khartoum also gave input into the selection of topics.

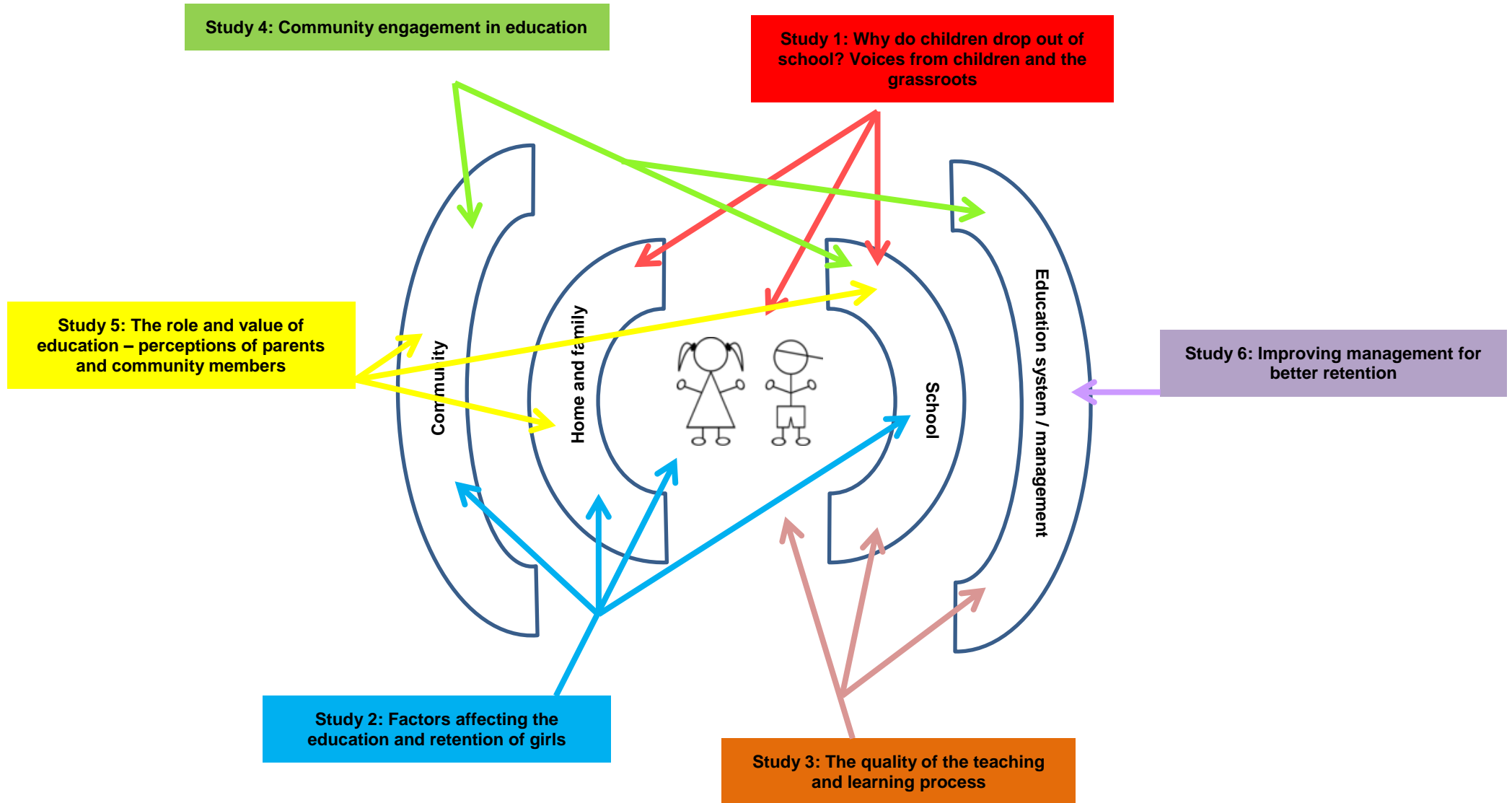
As indicated above, dropout – and measures to improve retention – is a complex social phenomenon with dimensions inside and outside of the education system. In order to capture the nature of the engagement of the multiple stakeholders involved and to understand the broader context in which education is managed and delivered, the six studies covered areas ranging from individual children's experience of dropout, to community and cultural dimensions, and educational practice and management, as follows:

- Study 1: Why do children drop out of school? Voices from children and the grassroots
- Study 2: Factors affecting the education and retention of girls
- Study 3: The quality of the teaching and learning process
- Study 4: Community engagement in education
- Study 5: The role and value of education – perceptions of parents and community members
- Study 6: Improving management for better retention

These topics are by no means exhaustive, and indeed the studies point to the need for further research on dropout (see *Conclusions*). They put the child at the centre and examine educational and community processes as they affect access to education, equity of provision and quality of learning. Five of the studies addressed these dimensions at the community and school levels, while the sixth study examined educational management at the State level. This was in recognition that management of the system as a whole has a critical impact on its performance at school level. The sixth study, the only one to be undertaken in all five PERP states, was also linked with the design of capacity development modules, implemented subsequently as part of PERP technical assistance.

The chart on the following page shows graphically how the six studies addressed the inter-related contexts of the child's education and illustrates the complementary nature of the studies, obtaining data on the dimensions of dropout from different angles and from an overlapping range of stakeholders (see also next section).

Figure 1: Data sources / stakeholder groups for the six studies



4 PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDIES

4.1 Where did the studies take place?

Resources did not allow for all the studies to take place in each of the five PERP States, and so each State was consulted on the topics that they considered most relevant and urgent in understanding the dropout phenomenon in their particular context. In order to ensure an equitable distribution among the five States, a total of three studies per State was agreed. After negotiations, the distribution of the six studies was as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of studies across PERP States

	Blue Nile	Gedaref	Kassala	Red Sea	South Kordofan
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

Study 6 was the only one to be conducted across all five States – the purpose of this approach was twofold: first, in order to be ensure, in the decentralised system that Sudan has adopted, that data collected on the management of education reflected the widest possible input and allowed common patterns to emerge, and second to avoid pointed criticism of any particular State.

Of Studies 1 to 5, each study except Study 2 was conducted in two or three States, enabling comparison and contrast of the data collected. Study 2, on factors affecting girls' retention, was selected only by Red Sea State. Blue Nile and Red States selected Study 5, on community perceptions of the value of education,

because of diverse responses to children's education among the various ethnic groups located in those States.

4.2 Who were the principal stakeholder groups?

As the methodology required, the six studies gathered data from a wide range of stakeholder groups. Each study aimed to identify the stakeholders whose role, functions and perceptions had an impact on the particular aspect of dropout. For example, in giving voice to children to express their experience of dropout (in particular Studies 1 and 2), it was important to gather also the perceptions of those who had an influence on their attendance at school and their progress in learning. Thus the views of parents/caregivers and of teachers and headteachers were sought, providing data which sometimes corroborated and sometimes contradicted the experience of the child and leading to a richer analysis. The other studies took a similar approach. The following table shows the stakeholder groups which each study consulted:

Table 2: Stakeholder groups consulted in the six studies

	Children	Parents / caregivers	Teachers	Headteachers	Community leaders	Education Council members	Education managers	PERP implementing agencies
1	✓	✓	✓	✓				
2	✓	✓	✓	✓				
3	✓		✓	✓				
4		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
5		✓	✓		✓	✓		
6			✓	✓			✓	✓

Each study obtained data by direct dialogue with the stakeholders concerned, through interviews, questionnaires and discussions – except for Study 3 (quality of the teaching and learning process). This study, in addition to direct dialogue, included classroom observation in order to capture the pedagogical interaction and relationship of teachers and children.

5 PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Research is a process whose implementation engages a series of actors and institutions. After the selection of the topics, all six studies followed a similar pattern of design, authorisation and implementation, as follows:

- SOFRECO technical assistance (team leader/programme advisor) developed specific terms of reference for each study, detailing stakeholders to be consulted, proposing the essential research questions to be addressed and possible methods to collect relevant data;
- The international expert designed the methodology for each study, including the research instruments to be used; consultations with the national consultants followed and the latter translated the instruments into Arabic;
- Before implementation of each study, the team of consultants held a day of dialogue and consultations with the FMoE to discuss the instruments, obtain input and decide on any amendments;
- Permissions for the international consultants to undertake fieldwork were sought and obtained from the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) at both national and local levels;
- The team of consultants carried out fieldwork in the respective States, with the full support of the State Ministries of Education, the Locality Education Commissioners and the PERP State Coordinators, who arranged the logistics of the fieldwork; in some cases, owing to local conditions, the international consultant was not able to be present in all the States;
- The international consultant compiled and analysed the data, with input from the respective research team, and made a first draft of the report in English;
- SOFRECO technical assistance (team leader/programme advisor) carried out quality control of the draft report through comments and dialogue with the international consultant;
- SOFRECO had the report translated into Arabic;
- The States where the respective studies were carried out held State Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings on each study to examine it, propose amendments and validate the results of the study. For the most part, the amendments addressed the terminology used (in Arabic) and some clarification of explanations;

- The studies were presented to the FMoE at a PAC meeting, with some discussion on the content and implications of the research;
- The SOFRECO technical assistance team (PERP State Coordinators, team leader/programme advisor, project director) launched a dissemination process at State and Federal levels in order to maximise the use of studies as input into educational policy and planning.

The full cooperation of the actors and institutions involved enabled all the studies to benefit from collection of adequate and relevant data. The principal challenge of implementation resulted from some delays in obtaining the necessary authorisations and in some cases shortened fieldwork periods. In spite of these challenges, each study represents a valid and rigorous examination and analysis of the respective topics providing a basis for policy discussions and a platform for further research.

6 WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE STUDIES

All six studies address dropout, analysing relevant data, drawing conclusions from the findings and making recommendations, but they do so from different angles and focus on different dimensions. It is not our intention here to summarise the studies, as they speak for themselves. However, given that each study takes a unique approach to the phenomenon of dropout, it is helpful to point to the particular contribution of each study, in terms of the approach they adopt and the questions they pose.

[Study 1: Why do children drop out of school? Voices from children and the grassroots](#)

The particularity of this study is to give voice to children who dropped out of school. This is unique and innovative in the Sudanese context and provides rich data on the actual experience of children and the reasons why they were not able, or did not wish, to continue their schooling. The children's own voices are complemented by those of their parents or caregivers, their former teachers and headteachers (when they were in school). The study demonstrates the important role of the child herself or himself in making the decision to leave school. It also shows that dropout is never the result of one particular factor (for instance, poverty or health), but of a combination of perceptions, circumstances and conditions, often with the added dimension of a specific trigger or moment which tipped the balance for the child. In the end, each of the 41 narratives of study illustrates the unique and individual nature of the child's experience and documents the tragic loss of potential that dropout causes.

[Study 2: Factors affecting the education and retention of girls](#)

It is well known that girls in some Sudanese communities face barriers to education. This study shows that these barriers exist both outside the school in the community, and inside the school in terms of the processes and conditions of schooling. The study raises questions based on an analysis of socially constructed gender roles and expectations, and gives priority to expressing the girls' own viewpoint. Further, the relative status of boys and girls in family and community

and the resulting attitudes of adults, particularly fathers, emerge as factors of key importance in retaining girls in school.

[Study 3: The quality of the teaching and learning process](#)

What happens inside the classroom and within the school compound has a direct effect on the motivation and performance of children, but these pedagogical processes are rarely documented. This study provides a unique set of data and insights based on observation of classroom practice, augmented by input from separate student and teacher focus groups. An examination of the physical environment in which children learn and an analysis of school management provide the context for a close observation of lesson delivery, student-teacher interaction and pedagogical method. Discussions with teachers and students also raised the issue of the use of corporal punishment, which is banned but still found in certain places. The study presents teachers' use of blackboard and other teaching materials, documents the nature of the interaction with students and their participation in learning, and analyses the results along the continuum from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogy. These insights provide rich source of data on which improvements in the teaching-learning process are proposed.

[Study 4: Community engagement in education](#)

The country of Sudan has a system of education councils at each school, bringing together parents, community leaders, teachers and the headteacher to support the school's performance. Through interviews and focus groups, this study closely examines the structure and function of these bodies, in terms of the underlying policy, their composition, their mandate and their performance in reality. An innovative means by which the study addresses these issues is to look not only at the ways in which councils currently give support to their school, but also to ask how the councils could address further areas related to the retention of children in school, for example by ensuring greater accountability to the community, multiplying the contacts in the community, or engaging more pro-actively with community leaders. The thorny question of parental contributions is examined in detail, while noting that financial support to the school is not and ought not to be the only support that councils provide. An analysis of the awareness and capacity on the part of parents regarding involvement in what should be 'their' school shows that school councils could have a much broader role in supporting and encouraging the education of all the children in the community.

[Study 5: The role and value of education – perceptions of parents and community members](#)

Sudan has a rich diversity of cultures, all of which have a long history and particular socio-cultural values. If all human cultures value their children and socialise them into these patterns of collective and individual behaviour, not all do it in the same way. This is reflected in attitudes to formal schooling – a particular way, now the global norm, of educating and socialising the next generation. The aim of this study was to understand better the attitudes of different groups within Sudan to schooling and in doing so to provide pointers to the underlying values of these groups regarding the education, in its broadest sense, and the socialisation of their children. By means of interviews and participatory impact assessment groups, the study sought to establish what the perceptions of parents, local community leaders and education personnel were with regard to the content and outcomes of schooling. This involved questions and discussions on the relevance,

suitability and relative importance of different aspects of the curriculum. The value that local stakeholders put on education appears most clearly in their assessment of the outcomes of schooling: does it help the child to understand and live according to fundamental moral and religious values? Does it enable the child to make a living from productive work later on? Does it provide the child with the lifeskills needed to go on learning and to play a positive role in the community? The study details how different groups of stakeholders respond to these questions and how these responses differ across the two States of the study.

[Study 6: Improving management for better retention](#)

Study 6 is different in nature and in scope from the other five studies. It did not address the process and content of schooling, but the management structures and functions at State level. In terms of scope, the study was undertaken in all five PERP States, for reasons outlined above. Interviews and focus group discussions formed the basis of data collection, with education management personnel from the State Minister down, and including a number of headteachers as those who are affected by management processes and decisions. Issues of management policy such as decentralisation and gender equity are addressed, and the practical application of management procedures – communication, teamwork, selection and deployment of staff, among others – is closely examined. The study concludes with recommendations for improvement at State, Locality and school levels, and proposes stronger attention to principles of flexibility, accountability, decentralisation, gender issues, personnel management, and costs and financing.

An analysis of the principal recommendations and their implications for improving student retention and quality learning are found in a *Conclusions* section which is included at the end of the studies

II. Research Study 1 : Why do children drop out of school? Voices from the children and grassroots

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INTRODUCTION

This report is the first of six studies in the framework of the Primary Education Retention Program (PERP). The study aims to provide insight into dropout of school children in Sudan. It reports on the schooling and the dropping out of a total of 41 students in three different states of Sudan: Blue Nile, Kassala, and South Kordofan.

Policies to improve school attendance and to reduce the number of children dropping out of school are critical if Universal Primary Education (UPE) is to be achieved. According to recent evidence² more children are entering primary school in Sudan than ever before, but dropout rates are high. Since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 the average annual enrolment growth rate in primary education has been around 6 percent. However the completion level of primary school (Basic Schools) remains low. Only 54 per cent of those entering Grade 1 are still in school in Grade 8, indicating a high wastage rate through Grades 1 through 7.

As a result of the drop out and non-completion of primary school many children are leaving schooling in Sudan without acquiring the most basic skills. Their brief schooling experience frequently consists of limited learning opportunities in overcrowded classrooms, especially in the lower grades, and with insufficient learning materials. Failure to complete the basic cycle of primary school, Grades 1 to 8, not only limits the future opportunities of these children but also represents a significant drain on the limited resources that Sudan spends on the provision of primary education.

The PERP in Sudan addresses the challenge of reducing drop out of school in five states: Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan. The programme is financed by the European Union, through interventions by SOFRECO (France), Save the Children (Sweden) and UNICEF. As part of the service contract of SOFRECO, six studies were undertaken to better understand how and why children drop out of school or are unable to access schooling. Dropout is known to be a complex and multidimensional problem. The six studies provide a chance to examine the problem from a range of perspectives. The insights of these studies will serve as input into planning, training and the management of schools and the education system as a whole.

² See the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this study in Annex 3.

For the first study, the research was carried out between January and April 2015, with fieldwork in Sudan taking place from 3 to 28 February 2015 in three states: Blue Nile, Kassala and South Kordofan. The research methodology and instruments were validated at the start of the fieldwork in a workshop attended staff of the Sudanese Federal Ministry of Education, by the research team and by representatives of the PERP project.

This report first introduces the research methodology, before presenting the heart of the study: concise vignettes (one-and-a-half to two pages) telling the life history of 41 children has been developed providing a rich source of information. The vignettes are grouped by state and school and start with a short description of the community or village and the school visited, followed by information on the individual child, the family of the child, the perceptions of the child on school days and the reasons for dropping out. These vignettes present the voices of children who have not been able, for a variety of different reasons, to complete their basic schooling; their stories are told in the straightforward style in which they expressed themselves, in order to let their views and perceptions emerge in the most natural and genuine way possible.

The concluding section presents an analysis of the phenomenon of dropout based on the perspectives of the individual life histories. Without going into detail here, one can conclude that there are multiple layers of factors that explain why children drop out from primary school, of which some of relate to the student, such as poor health, or motivation; others to the specific family or community situation of the child such as death of one of the parents, tribal cultures and traditions, or to school-level factors like the poor quality of educational provisions and lack of adequate systems to guide and counsel parents and students. Except for child-specific factors like illness, the factors never stand alone. Child-specific factors are reinforced by other factors – however, students, parents and teachers are not always conscious of the influence of other factors.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Research questions: The research questions as mentioned in the ToR are:

How long was the child in school? What are they doing now?
Was it their decision or their parents' to drop out of school?
What personal and family circumstances may have contributed to dropping out?
What factors relating to their experience of school may have played a role – distance to travel, teacher behaviour, bullying or peer behaviour, poor quality teaching, etc?
What is the child's feeling about dropping out? What would it take for the child to return to school?
What are the attitudes of the child's parents, siblings, his/her teacher and head teacher, or other community member?

This list was supplemented with other questions.³

Methodology: The methodology to collect information for answering the research questions is based on personal life histories, resulting in a series of vignettes, a sociological method based on semi-structured interviews with individuals of the target group. These interviews are supplemented by interviews with others with a

³ See Annex 2: research instruments

view to obtaining multiple perspectives and thus triangulate and validate the responses. The principal language of the interviews was Sudanese Arabic, but for some interviews other (local) languages were used where children were more at ease in expressing themselves through the local language (mother tongue). Interviews were thus conducted with the following stakeholders:

- The child who had dropped out;
- The child's parent(s) or care-giving relative;
- The child's teacher when they were in school;
- The headteacher of the school they had attended.

In this way more information is obtained from the research participants revealing their background, values, social norms or perception of events. The rationale for this approach was based on two fundamental aspects of dropout:

- It is a complex phenomenon, whose causes cannot be reduced to a single factor but must be examined as a web of inter-related factors;
- The impact of the web of factors is ultimately felt by the child himself – it is in the life of the individual child that the multiple factors come together to cause them to interrupt or abandon their schooling.

Statistical studies provide an overview of dropout, indicating the percentage of children dropping out in relation to the school-age population, and such studies may identify a number of high-level factors, such as poverty, health or malnutrition. The way that these factors connect with each child's own experience is in the end unique. Presenting life histories shows that it is difficult to generalize the causes and patterns of dropout, but rather shows how family, individual circumstances and, above all, the child's own perceptions affect the decision to drop out or continue schooling.

Based on information from the different sources indicated, the life histories of children who dropped out of primary school were discovered – 41 children in all. In addition to the interviews with the various stakeholders, the following information was collected:

- national and state policies related to enrolment and retention of primary school students;
- wider context of the life of the primary school students who dropped out. This was done by collecting information about the characteristics of the community, the schools visited and the areas where the school was situated.

Based on the analysis of the life histories and supplemented by the above-mentioned information patterns of factors causing dropout and possible correlations between these factors were identified.

Selection of schools and dropout students: The schools were selected by the State Ministries of Education in



Picture 1 Blue Nile State, Badoas village: Khadija Bint School for Girls

close collaboration with the PERP Coordinators at State level. Five schools were visited in Kassala State, four schools in Blue Nile State by a team consisting of an international consultant, national consultant and two translators, and six schools were visited in South Kordofan State by a second national consultant and three facilitators. The number of dropout students and parents mobilized varied by locality/school. It was easier for the schools to contact dropouts in villages than in urban areas. As a result 17 children, their parents, their headmaster and teacher were interviewed in Kassala State, 13 children in Blue Nile State and 11 children in South Kordofan State. Subsequently 41 vignettes were developed. The names of the children have been changed to protect their identity.

Instruments: The research information was collected using:

- Two structured closed questionnaires for collecting factual answers from students that had dropped out, and from the head teacher.
- Four semi-structured questionnaires (dropout students, parents, headteachers and teachers) for systematically collecting personal experiences and perceptions of others which led to the dropping out of the students.

Information was collected from four different resources to better triangulate the information.

The study focuses on higher grade dropout children for the following reasons:

- this group of dropouts is closest to completion of school;
- this group has less chance to return to (primary) school than the younger students;
- information from 40 to 45 students from all grades may be too limited for deriving useful policy insight for the various grades;
- interviewing younger students from lower Grades will be more difficult and may have a negative effect on the quality of the information;
- information about the reasons for dropout in the lower grades of primary school (all grades) will be collected by the questionnaires for head teachers; and
- it is easier to communicate with this group and therefore the answers are expected to be more substantive and reliable.

Limitations: In addition to unplanned events and limited communication/internet facilities there were some unforeseen limitations:

- Disruptions during interviews and interference in answering questions by others than those who were interviewed. This made it at times difficult to get answers from the targeted interviewees.
- Interruption of headteacher interviews by duties and telephone calls. Though this influenced the interviews it also gave some insight into the workload of the headteacher and the way the school was managed.
- Often rather general and imprecise responses of headteachers, teachers and parents, e.g. the inability to elaborate on sentences like: *parents are poor* and *her character was unstable*.
- References to factual information were scarcely given.
- Lack to opportunity to cross-check when answers were conflicting.
- Inability to observe classroom practices due to school exams.
- Constraints in tracing boys who dropped out from urban schools (they were often working).

1 VOICES FROM KASSALA

1.1 Basic School for Boys and the Basic School for Girls in Hadalia (Vignettes 1 – 4)

The village : Hadalia is a small village with about 1500 inhabitants, 80 km north of Kassala city along the main road to Port Sudan. Most houses in the village are made from local materials, from mud, straw and wood. The village does not have electricity and direct access to water. The main well is 6 km outside the village. Most people in the village are Hadandawa, one of the most traditional and conservative tribes of Sudan, that only recently started to allow its girls to go to school. A large part of the villagers are, according to the headmaster living under the poverty line, it is not better, it is not worse. Most men work in farming, charcoal, cutting wood, selling water or earn their income in the market area along the main road. Few people have animals. On an average the family income ranges from 300 (wood) to 600 SDG a month.

East of the Red Sea, and including the people of Hadalia, they speak Bedawit⁴ at home and very few people speak Arabic so when children go to school most of them are not able to speak Arabic. Young girls especially had limited possibilities to pick up Arabic in the streets and around the market and are therefore disadvantaged when they enter school where instruction is entirely in Arabic.⁵

The schools: There are two primary schools in Hadalia, the Basic School for Girls and the Basic School for Boys. The boys school has eight classrooms situated on a large sandy field without any shade or play material. The classrooms looked dirty with heaps of sand on the verandas and even in the rooms. Besides the blackboards, no learning materials or other educational materials were identified. The Government provides the school every year with books (student : textbook ratio 2 : 1) and pays for the salaries of six trained, three untrained teachers and one Quran teacher. Grade 1 was crowded with 75 students enrolled and Grade 8 was

⁴ The main tribes east of the Red Sea are the Beja of Hadandawa, Amar'ar Ababda and Bisharin

⁵ Note that the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement of 2006 raised the issue of language in primary schooling: *The use of local languages shall be encouraged at the primarily level and the media to promote literacy and education in Eastern Sudan* (Article 13, paragraph 33).

empty with only seven students. Last year 14 boys graduated from the boys' school. They all continued their education at the secondary school which is situated in the neighbouring village at about 11 km distance from Hadalia.

The girls' school has eight classrooms. Like the boys' school, the classrooms are made of fixed material and the school environment is sandy and lacks greenness, flagpole, playground and other outdoor activities facilities. Like the boys' school, the girls' school it is dirty and sandy. Besides the blackboards no learning materials were identified, the classroom floors are not leveled and the seating is not well organized. There were eight teachers at the girls' school, seven were trained and one was an untrained volunteer. All the teachers came from Kassala town and stayed in a dormitory and therefore there were no difficulties for them to come to school.⁶ On Thursday afternoon all teachers leave for Kassala and return to Hadalia on Sunday morning. The headmaster of the girls school mentioned that it often happens that teachers are absent on Sundays and Thursdays. Like the boys' school the government pays for the teacher salaries and text books (student: textbook ratio is 2 :1).

No student graduated from the girls' school because the highest grade then was Grade 6, but based on the enrolment figures, the survival rate at the girls' school was not better than at the boys' school.⁷ 39% of the girls were enrolled in Grade 1 and 9.2% of the girls were in Grade 7. Based on the current enrolment rate it may be concluded that, similar to the boys' school, the survival rate of the girls is less than 20%.

The nearest Basic School Certificate Examination centre is situated in a neighbouring village at about 11 km distance from Hadalia. One of the girls mentioned that the distance to the examination place handicaps girls from sitting for the exam as their families do not allow them to travel to the examination centre.⁸

For many years the school received food support by WFP. When the support stopped, the enrolment was not affected. A possible reason was that the children did not like the food very much since it tasted different from their local breakfast or '*fatour*'.

The headmaster of the girls' school mentioned that the school environment is very poor and children lack the practice of outdoor activities, although they are seriously in need of it to keep them happy in school and learn things that they learn neither in their community nor in the classroom. The PTA of the boys school is not functioning, and their only role is to encourage students to stay in schools. The village had tried to look for a teacher who speaks Bedawit and Arabic but it was not possible for the teacher to settle in the village.

Children who drop out do not inform the school – they just stay away. So the school is never formally informed that the child left and thereafter the ex students no longer show any interest in the school or in the teacher.

When a child drops out there is no follow-up by the headmaster or by any of the teachers. The headmaster of the boys' school and a number of teachers live in the village, and when they meet their ex students they talk with them to convince them

⁶ Teachers teaching in villages can stay for free in a dormitory. The salary of young teachers varies from 415 SDG gross to 700 SDG depending on their certificate and their final salary may reach 750 to 1800. It is easy to get loans.

⁷ See Annex 1

⁸ In spite of these local perceptions, it should be noted that the SMOE usually assembles students and teachers in examination centres in rural areas with full accommodation, for safety and security reasons.

to return to school. However this is not a very successful strategy and the headmaster adds '*Children who dropped out no longer greet their teachers, they avoid their eyes, in contrast to students who left school with a certificate. The children who dropped out consider the school as the enemy*'. The headteacher thinks that they do not wish to be confronted with school and its teachers, or is it that the school has disappointed them?

1.1.1 Abas, who liked to earn money

The boy and his family: Abas is 19 years old and the third child of a poor family of four children. His father attended the Quran school when he was a child, and his mother never went to school. Both parents are illiterate. His two sisters never went to school but his younger brother is now enrolled in Grade 8. His performance at school was always good, and his parents are planning to send this son to the secondary school. The family is very concerned and supportive to the education of their youngest child.

Abas stays with his parents in the village, however this was not the case during his school years. During this period they lived somewhere else and he lived at the house of the headmaster of the school, who is a relative of the family. When visiting his parents he was often absent for quite a long time from school. His parents are poor. From May till September, the agricultural season, his father works as a farmer tilling the land in partnership with others but this is not enough to survive for the remaining part of the year, so when not working on the fields he works as a free or casual labourer at the market. The family lives in a small house made from mud and straw, the roof is made from straw and wood like most houses in the village. The walking distance from home to school is about 1½ km. Abas used to fetch water from a well which gives fresh water all year round. This is a much longer walk. Earlier the family had some goats and sheep but during the years that Abas was herding the flock, all the goats died.

Abas's school memories : There were many reasons why Abas liked to go to school: he liked the place – where he met his friends daily, played and had fun. Sometimes, maybe once a month, he had to earn some money and was not able to go to school. The money was not meant for his parents e.g. necessary for buying new clothes. This contradicts the comments of the headmaster who stated that Abas was only absent when visiting his parents. He liked all his teachers, they knew a lot and he liked to listen to them. Some of the teachers were from the village and the teachers from outside stayed during the week in a dormitory, so they always came to school and were seldom absent. He did not like the classrooms; they were full of sand and very dusty. Also there was nothing in the class to support the learning, no student aids or maps. Abas did not like his class because the books were always dusty. But he liked the books especially the books for English, Arabic and mathematics. Most interesting, he thought, were the *souras* (chapters from the Quran), although it was not always easy to understand them. In school there was a set of books for every two students. After school he played with his friends and sometimes had to do homework. Mostly the homework was copying the text they read that day in class.

He was a good student and did not have difficulties with understanding the books or the teachers. There were never problems at or related to school. The only bad thing was the poverty at home. If he did not have money to buy breakfast, his friends shared their food with him. The most important reason for him to go to school was

that he learned to read and write. Abas stayed long enough in school to become literate. There are not many books in the village but there are many things to read: signboards, instructions, guidelines on packages, etc... Overall, the possibilities to read a book are limited and there is seldom a chance to read a newspaper in the village. But he sometimes can practise reading when watching TV. For a few pennies one can watch TV, especially football, at somebody's house (satellite dish). Yes, the Primary School Certificate is important and with a certificate you can join the army, become a volunteer in pre-school or become a Quran teacher. For Abas's father, education is important to acquire an adequate standard of living, gaining people's respect. Education will also give you status in the community. His parents though poor always supported the education of their sons. Mostly they were able to cover the cost. The father visited the school when required to ask about Abas's academic performance, and to check if he was attending school.

Reason(s) for dropping out of school : Three years ago, when Abas was 16, he dropped out of Grade 6. According to him his father took him from school to supplement the meagre income of the family, but according to the headmaster he stayed home and no longer liked to go to school because he wanted to earn money. But it was difficult to find work so Abas stayed at home for a very long time doing nothing. Finally his father told him either to return to school or to look after the small herd of the family. For two years Abas looked after the cattle, but the cattle died due to a disease and now Abas hangs out in the market area trying to find a small job as a daily labourer. This is not easy, and he would like to return to school again. He very much regrets that he dropped out from school. This was discussed with the headmaster who agreed that Abas will return to school after the summer holiday – but will this happen?

1.1.2 Ahmed, who did not have money to sit for the exam

The boy and his family: Ahmed is the oldest son of a small and very poor family. His sister is still young and currently enrolled in Grade 3. His parents are poor and illiterate. Ahmed's father worked with the railway and is now retired and sitting at home without work. Ahmed stays with his parents, his little sister and his newly married wife in a small one-room house which they made from local materials. Like all houses, their house has no access to electricity or to safe water. Not far away from the house there is a freshwater well. When he was still at school he regularly helped the family after school with bringing water and firewood for the family.

Ahmed's school memories: Overall, Ahmed always liked to go school. Since he lived more than 6 km away from school he had to wake before sunrise and, after drinking tea, he walked together with the other children from his neighbourhood to school. For almost eight years he walked to school five times a week for about three hours a day. The path from his house to Hadalia was not well graded and there were many rocky stones and thorns, and therefore it was very tiring. Though he did not like the walk to school, he never came too late because he liked school. He was a good student who never had to repeat a class. On the contrary, he was always one of the best students of his year. English was his favourite subject, it is an international language and with English you can speak with people from other countries (a few times he made efforts to speak English) and learn from them. During the first years at school there was a football and the headmaster sometimes allowed them to play in the school yard. When the football disappeared it was no longer possible to play with a ball. Every day there was something interesting happening at school, and often he had a small adventure with his friends outside the

classroom. Yes, he had many school friends in Grade 8, but unfortunately they all left for the secondary school.

Ahmed realised that the school was equipped poorly, but at least it was something, and the teachers were good. He liked them and their knowledge, but most of all he liked the globe and the few maps which were sometimes around – sometimes, because mostly they were locked in a cupboard of the headmaster. Despite the sand on the veranda and in the classroom, the holes in the wall and the lack of exposure to maps and charts, he liked his classroom very much. His parents always supported him to go to school and they never forced him to stay away to supplement the family income. He only was absent from school when he was sick.

His main reason for going to school was because he wanted to go to secondary school. When it was not possible for him to sit for the exam, he first thought that it was possible to sit the next year but when the time passed he gave up. *I was too old for entering secondary school and the primary certificate alone does not help to find a job. There are too many children with this certificate and there are too few jobs for literate labourers.* He believes that the secondary school certificate is a minimum requirement for finding a good job and with that certificate you also can enter university. With primary you can only work as a manual worker. Ahmed's father thought it was a great pity that he could not finish the primary school because nowadays education is important. His father never went to school and therefore always had to work as a labourer. He now regretted that he never went to school because *'he is now missing important things (reading and writing skills) and if he had gone to school he may have been in a better (financial) situation now'*.

Reason(s) for dropping out of school Four years ago when he was 18 years old Ahmed dropped out of Grade 8. The main reason for leaving school was the lack of money to pay the fee for the primary school examination at the end of Grade 8. When, a few months before the exam, it was clear that the family was not able to find the required 200 Sudanese Pounds, he himself took the decision to drop out. Though he did get a school-leaving certificate from the school, he felt quite bad because he almost succeeded to get his primary school certificate. He did not want to return to school because he did not want to repeat the class. In addition, there were other reasons like the long walking distance from home to school, the lack of money to pay for the breakfast resulting in depending on others. So it was mainly due to poverty that he did not finish Grade 8.

Ahmed is now renting a small building in the village where he started a bakery. He employed some bakers and is now selling local bread and supervising the labourers. Now that he is working he sometimes buys a book or borrows a newspaper from a truck driver when available.

1.1.3 Fidda, who was often absent

The girl and her family: Fidda is a girl of 14 years, her parents are illiterate and never went to school. Fidda is the oldest child in the family with one brother and one sister who were still too young to go to school. She lives with her parents in a brick house, not so far from the school. The house is considered better than the other houses of the community as it consists of three rooms and a veranda built from fixed materials. In addition there are two shelters. Her father is a farmer.

Fidda's school memories : Fidda liked to go to school and according to her teacher, she was one of the most intelligent girls in her class and her academic performance was always good. Her favorite subjects were English, Arabic and mathematics, but she also liked singing songs and playing in the school compound. She liked her teachers and appreciated the way her teachers presented their lessons and their explanations. The teachers were always chatting with them and encouraging them to continue their education, and they always gave them unlimited support and encouragement to continue their education. Fidda mentioned that she loved to sit in the classroom close to her friends. She liked the classroom very much, the books, the poems. In some classrooms there were some pictures and maps on the wall. There was nothing that she did not like at school. She and the other girls were never exposed to any type of abuse. Of course there was some teasing on the way to and from the school.

The headmaster mentioned that the turnover among teachers is negatively affecting the motivation of the girls. In a rural village where there is little to do the teachers become very important for especially girls. They easily get attached to their class teachers and they always prefer to have the same teacher the next year, especially the children of the first three Grades.

During the time Fidda attended school, she often had to help her mother with her work at home as she is the eldest daughter. She cleaned the house, washed the dishes, brought water and firewood and looked after her younger sister and brother when her mother was out of the house.

In the Hadandawa culture, the men avoid contact with females and treat them gently. So it was not too difficult for women to move around. Fidda had two close friends at school and together they walked to and from school, played at school, chatted, did their homework, but only at school as they were not allowed to leave home after coming back from school. She was a good student and did not have difficulties with understanding the learning. It was noticed that her Arabic was quite good. When asked about this, she mentioned that although they did not speak Arabic at home this was maybe due to her brightness and to her travelling with her families to other places. These journeys exposed her to people speaking Arabic.

'Only if you go to school can you go to university. School will qualify you for good jobs in the future'. In addition she said 'at school you learn and understand a lot of things'. However she couldn't substantiate this. Fidda and her family see education as a positive thing. According to her uncle education is important for obtaining an adequate standard of living, it allows people to gain public respect and it will increase your status in the community.

Reasons for dropping out of school : Last year, when Fidda was 13, she dropped out of Grade 6. That year she was absent for a long time when she had to join her family on a long wedding ceremony trip to relatives living in other villages. According to the Hadandawa culture, a family does not allow their female relatives to stay behind, so Fidda left school to help the adults in preparing the ceremonies. According to the headmaster these ceremonies can take weeks and they frequently deprive girls of the opportunity of going to school. When she came back to school the academic year was almost finished. Fidda was told that because of the long time she was out of school she had missed a lot of lessons and therefore could not move

up to Grade 7. However she did not want to repeat Grade 6 without her girlfriends, so she did not come back after the summer holiday.

One of her teachers confirmed the story and mentioned that when Fidda had been absent for a week she had asked around. She was then informed that Fidda moved with her family to attend a number of marriages. The teacher was very sad to hear this because Fidda was one of the best students in her class. In the end, the family stayed away for many months, and there was little the teacher could do for Fidda: she would have had to repeat the class. Fidda did not like to do so and therefore she did not return to school after the school holiday.

However, when Fidda again showed interest recently to go to school, the teacher took the initiative to talk to her and her family, and *'we discussed the issue of her education and encouraged them to let her come back to school. Fortunately they accepted'*. Fidda regrets that she did not continue school last year after the summer holiday and realizes that she now missed two school years, but she is happy that her teachers are still at the school. She is motivated again and wishes to continue her education up to university so she can become a teacher in her village and encourage girls to study well.

1.1.4 Nada, who had to help her mother

The girl and her family : Nada is the third child of a family of ten children, four brothers and five sisters. Her father sometimes works on a truck and when there is no truck work he works as a daily worker. One of her brothers is enrolled in Grade 1 and two of her sisters are enrolled in Grades 3 and 6 respectively. None of the brothers or sisters has a primary school certificate. One brother reached Grade 5.

Now Nada is 14 years old and lives together with her younger brothers and sisters and her parents in a local house with two rooms on the main road in the village. The house is made from mud and straw. Since the village has no electricity, neither does their house. Water is bought from a tanker or carried from a well. Her oldest brother is 35 years and is no longer living with the family. Nada thinks that it is about ten minutes' walk from her house to the school.

Nada's school memories: Nada was always a good student who never had to repeat a class. She liked going school and she liked the Quran lessons best. She thought that the classrooms were very clean, however classroom observation showed that they were rather dirty with lots of litter, dust, sand etc. In school she met her friends who sometimes visited her at home after school. When she was still enrolled in school there were never any problems with the other girls, they were all her friends.

For Nada school was important because she liked school better than staying at home, where she always had to help her mother. Her school was a place to meet friends, to play, a place for entertainment, but she could not give a clear explanation why it was

Nada's father explained that most people in the village are poor; they are all poor and not educated like him and his wife. They share the same culture which is supported by the local, traditional leader and focuses on how important it is that women stay at home, work hard to support the husband and his family. Since education for girls is not valued highly, the school is not an obstacle for girls to marry young.

important to go to school. At school you can also learn something and at home there

was only work to be done. At school she did not have to work so much as at home. Because she left school in Grade 3, her reading is weak. Most people in the village think that education is not so important for girls and maybe therefore Nada was seldom encouraged by her parents to go to school. In general the girls of Hadalia marry young. According to the headmaster, most of the parents of the dropouts are illiterate, with low awareness about the importance of education. They feel that education is only important for finding jobs, and jobs are not important for girls, since there are no jobs for women in the village and the community does not allow them to travel to the nearest town. The few educated people in the village do not have very good jobs and are also poor, so there are also no people in the village to look up to.

Main reason(s) for dropping out of school: Almost two years ago, Nada dropped out of Grade 3 of the Basic School for girls in Hadalia. According to Nada, the main reason for leaving school was poverty, including the opportunity cost of being the oldest daughter. However, in the end it was the need to help her mother that caused Nada's drop out. The family had many small children, and her mother thought that it was better for her to stay home and help her with the work. During the years Nada went to school she already helped her mother with the housekeeping. She pounded the sorghum, made coffee, cleaned the dishes, made the fire. This sometimes caused a late arrival at school and when this happened the teacher talked to her. When it happened too often she was punished. Though Nada stated that she never had problems understanding the teacher, this is doubtful since she could not speak Arabic. The teacher did not speak Bedawee, as she was from Khartoum. As a result Nada was still not able to read and write Arabic when she left school in Grade 3. Though Nada did not mention this, it is quite likely that her inability to speak Arabic had a negative effect on her learning and her motivation to go to school and therefore a reason for her to leave school.

According to the headmaster, the support of parents for the education of their children and in particular for the education of girls is weak. Though Nada's parents paid her "contribution"⁹, etc. and were feeding her (of course), they never visited the school. Her father sometimes encouraged her to study, but her mother seldom asked her how she was doing in school. Every day she had to help her mother with the housekeeping and almost weekly she was absent for one or two days to help her mother. After leaving school she continued to help her mother with milling the sorghum, making coffee, cleaning the dishes, cleaning the house, making the fire, etc. According to the headmaster, high absenteeism has a negative effect on learning and results in a high dropout among girls in the lower grades. After children drop out of school, most teachers do visit the families but in vain. They seldom return. *'When we meet them in the village we always talk to them and encourage them to come back to school'*. Nada also wants to return to school, and she wants to become a teacher...

⁹ There are no official admission fees in primary education, but in practice PTAs usually meet and set an amount. To discriminate these fees from examination fees, the present study report refer to them as 'contribution'

1.2 Basic School for Girls in Eshukria (Vignettes 5 – 8)

The village : The Eshukria Basic School for Girls is situated about 15 km outside Kassala town and in the middle of Eshukria, a village with 3000 to 4000 people. Most villagers belong to the Eshukria people, an Arab tribe, and cultivate sorghum and sesame; others are drivers, merchants or work for the government. Some families have animals like sheep and goats but also cows. A considerable number of fathers work in one of the Gulf countries. These fathers and the fathers that work as lorry drivers are therefore seldom home. Their families are run by women. The houses in the village are traditional, and have a round shape, but some families, especially those with one or more men working in one of the Gulf countries, have brick houses. Some of these houses are very large. Most houses in Eshukria have access to water and electricity. Houses that lack access are getting their water by a tanker truck (15 pounds per barrel). According to the headmaster, Eshukria is not a poor village.

The school: Over 230 students are enrolled in the Eshukria Basic School for Girls. At this moment 48 girls are enrolled in Grade 1, and 16 girls are enrolled in Grade 8, indicating that approximately

To motivate the students they are given the responsibility for the opening and closing of the school. Another way to honour them is to make them the leader of one of the two school associations. The school uses different ways to punish students. We stop talking to them and immediately they come and apologize. Sometimes we assign them to clean the classrooms or beat them after weak academic performance and neglecting homework. When they quarrel I also assign them to write particular parts of a book several times and thereafter we reconcile them.

one third of the girls that enter in Grade 1 reach Grade 8. Eleven out of the thirteen teachers are trained or graduated from university.¹⁰ Last year (school year 2013-2014) all 9 girls that passed for their primary school examination continued their education in the secondary school in the neighboring community (2 km). Although the new boys' school was constructed four years ago, the village school was only split this year when the boys moved to the boys' school and the girls remained in the old school. Then the interior of the old village school was renovated. The school has eight classrooms, all with fans, however the school was not connected to the power line. The classrooms were recently painted but did not look attractive, the furniture was very limited. In the higher grades benches were shared by up to 5 girls, and there was little on the walls to admire. The day the visit took place the school started almost one hour late. The headmaster who was newly appointed did not give the impression that he was well organized.

The performance of the PTA is rather weak but recently they are putting some pressure on the government to construct a fence around the school.

1.2.1 Samina, the Sudanese Eritrean girl

The girl and her family: Samina, a girl of 16 years, has a Sudanese father and an Eritrean mother. Both parents never attended school. She is the thirteenth child of a large family of 16 children, 11 girls and 5 boys. Despite this she has one sister who

¹⁰ A trained teacher has a university degree and a teacher training (180 hours) or a secondary school degree with more than 180 hour training.

graduated from the university (accountancy). Three of her brothers are studying in primary school, the fourth one did his secondary education and will emigrate soon to the UAE while the fifth brother who is married completed Grade 6. Six of her sisters married young. They did not complete their basic school. Her two youngest sisters are still enrolled in the basic school.

Her father married four times and divorced from two of them. He now lives with two wives, of which Samina's mother, in Eshukria village. Both wives live together in one house which is like the other houses in the village, built from mud and straw. It has two small houses of one room, a veranda, a shelter, latrines and a bathroom. Her father lives in a separate part of the compound.

Samina's school memories: According to her teacher Samina was a clever student and was doing well in school, her academic performance was very good. She repeated Grade 3 – not because she was a weak student, but because some of her closest friends repeated the class and she did not want to be separated from them.

Samina's father stated that he was satisfied with the school buildings but not with the teaching. The girls are not good in reading and writing. Although most of the teachers were trained and children are spending a great deal of the day at school, their literacy skills are limited. The father sometimes went to the school in the afternoon to complain but he did not observe any change: *'the learning at school goes very slowly'*.

Samina thought that the school is very nice. The classroom was very clean because the students were made responsible for the cleaning of the classroom. The desks in the upper classes were nice because there were only a few girls. However the space in the lower classes was limited. She liked her teachers because they are very good women dealing with us as mothers or older sisters. She enjoyed all subjects particularly the Quran and mathematics as she was dreaming to become an accountant like her elder sister. The most important element in the school has always been her best friend. There were many other friends (10) with whom she spent the day at school. *'We also played with each other at home or did our homework together'*.

Samina showed some disappointment when mentioning the plainness and emptiness of the classrooms. Except for the blackboard, there was nothing to look at, the walls were bare and without colors and there were neither drawings nor pictures in the classrooms. Sometimes the girls were allowed to play with ropes and small balls but mostly nothing was organized. They occasionally practiced physical exercises in the morning session, but she didn't like it *'because the girls were not doing it in harmony'*. Samina did not like all the assignments. She complained that there was often no time for the lessons because they had to clean their dishes and were sent to the grocery and other places to shop for the teachers or to do errands. After school she was often helping her mother and her father's second wife with the work in the kitchen. As her house is the closest house to the school and the school does not have a latrine, many school girls used their latrine and water. She did not like this but it was difficult to avoid since the family has to be generous to them.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Two years ago, when she was 14, Samina dropped out of Grade 6. She felt that her father was not able to cover her school costs and therefore decided to leave school and to help the women at home. Her parents and sisters talked to her but she told them that she no longer liked going to

school because she knew that if she told them the real reason they would not accept it.

Her father regretted that Samina left school because he wants all his children to be enlightened. When she attended school he always encouraged her to study and to do her homework. He further supported her by covering all her needs. He very frequently went to school to follow up matters, to see if she was complying with the rules of the school and to discuss her academic performance with her teacher. In addition he mentioned that *'her older sisters and brothers were monitoring her school results, under my supervision'*. He did not mention that Samina left school during the time she was very sick (Rift Valley fever). Lastly he said, *'I asked her to continue her education but she refused, at that moment I respected her choice but if she decides to return to school I will send her immediately and will continue my support for her.'*

One of the school teachers believes that education is very important and that people without education are equal to nothing, so when Samina dropped out she visited her at home and asked her to continue her education. Then it was not possible for Samina to return to school, but now Samina is sure that nothing can stop her from returning to school. Soon her brother will work abroad and he will assist her father in covering the cost of the family, including the cost for her education. Then she will be able to realize her dream of studying accounting.

However there is one condition for going back to school. Since her friends are now in Grade 8, she prefers to enter in the same grade as her friends. So the headmaster promised to test her at the beginning of the coming school year and if she passes he will accept her in Grade 8.

1.2.2 Seloua, disappointed in the quality of education

The girl and her family: Seloua is 13 years old and the 7th child of a family of 10. Both Seloua's parents are educated, her father graduated with a BA in arts from the Kassala University, and her mother finished Grade 4 of the same primary school where Seloua was enrolled. Seloua has three brothers, all graduated from Secondary School (one brother started university but left university in the first year), and six sisters, two sisters graduated from primary school, one is in secondary, one sister did Grade 7 and the two smallest ones are still enrolled in primary school. Seloua's father works as a farmer on his own land. Like their father, her brothers are working as farmers on their own land. The main house is one rather large room constructed from mud and straw. In addition there are two unattached rooms that are connected by a *rakouba*, a shade, against the sun. The two married sisters left home but of the brothers, one is married and is still living on the compound. The house has access to electricity which makes it possible to watch radio and TV and they have water in the compound.

Seloua's school memories : Seloua always enjoyed going to school especially because she liked all the teachers very much. They were good teachers who were often telling interesting stories and they were very knowledgeable. In general they treated the students well and, depending upon the teacher, they did not beat the children very much. Seloua was always happy to learn new things. Now she can read and write very well. She also liked mathematics which was not difficult at all. Seloua was ranked second at the end of Grade 6 and never had difficulties in understanding the subjects. At school she also had the opportunity to meet friends. Her friends were an important reason to go to school. School was the place for

meeting friends with whom she could play and chat so, if teachers came late, this was never a problem. Seloua never had any negative experience with regard to fighting or bullying. All her friends still go to school, so now that she is not in school she meets them after school hours.

She was very unhappy with the lack of facilities and schoolbooks. Also, there were not enough books for all subjects especially for Arabic and the Quran. There were no latrines and there was no electricity so the fans in the classrooms were not running and there was no water at the school compound. Though the classrooms were clean there were only four benches for 20 students so they had to share one bench for five students, which made it very difficult for them to write and to sit quietly. At the boys' school they can play football but her school does not have a fence so it is not possible to do games and sport.

Seloua thought it was important to go to school because with the primary school certificate one can enter secondary school. When you are primary educated it is easier to find a job like e.g. kindergarten teacher or nurse. Educated girls enjoy a higher status in the community and you also get more respect from others. Even if you cannot find a job, you can read books, messages and newspapers. Unfortunately newspapers seldom reach the village.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Two months before the interview Seloua dropped out of Grade 7. She was very particular when explaining why she left school: *I left school due to the lack of facilities* and she gave the following overview:

- The school has no fence so they cannot do games
- The school has no latrines so she has to go home if she wants to go to the toilet
- The boys' school has sport facilities
- There are not enough benches so the students are squeezed together

Her parents did not like her leaving school, and her mother talked a lot with her but she is rather assertive and will only return if this situation improves. She also stated that *'for many girls this is the main reason to leave school, although there are also girls who leave school to get married.'* The oldest girl in the class is 14 and 15, the others are all 13. She thinks that most of them will stay in school and will get their certificate.

Her parents were very supportive. When there were not enough books, they bought her the whole set of books at the market. The school has no clear policy on what to do with children who drop out. The headmaster, who was close to the retirement age, was aware of the issue and, according to him, early marriage was the main reason for girls' dropout and he could not change this. It is up to the individual teacher to take action. When Seloua dropped out the teacher came to the house to ask her to return to school but in vain, as Seloua was adamant she did not wish to return.

1.2.3 Mariyam, who was ill for a long time

The child and her family: Mariyam has always been a good student and never had to repeat a class. Her father graduated from primary school, and her mother left school in Grade 6. When they were young, her parents went to the same school as their daughter. Earlier the school was mixed. Her parents married at a very young age when the father was 16 and the mother even younger. Mariyam is the oldest of

a family of four. She has three brothers – one is still small and stays at home, and the other two brothers are enrolled in Grade 1 and in Grade 5. The family lives together with the grandmother in a small house with two rooms in the middle of the village. Her father is a truck driver who often has to drive long distances and therefore it is not always possible for him to sleep at home. During the time Mariyam was in school, she often helped her mother with the household chores and with looking after the smaller children, but this was always before or after school hours and never a reason for not going to school.

Mariyam's school memories: At school Mariyam met her girlfriends and at school she loved her teacher very much. This was the main motivation for her to go to school. She still has friends at school but her best friends are now in secondary school – they all wish to finish secondary school and thereafter to attend College and therefore are not willing to marry at a young age. Mariyam is convinced that her father will not marry her before the age of 20. He told her so and she trusts him. Mariyam was interested in all the subjects and she also liked the books, but when she saw the books of the old curriculum she liked them better.

Mariyam loved her teachers very much but one day her class teacher was transferred, and all the girls felt bad and she became very unhappy. She still has not forgotten her. The new teacher was not nice, she shouted a lot and sometimes beat the students when they did something wrong. There are other things she does not like at school. The school is poor and in need of many things. One day she went with her aunt, a student, to the university and then she saw the trees, the garden, the nice buildings, the equipment and everything was functioning. They visited the cafeteria and saw the kindergarten with the shining walls and with many nice charts and pictures on the walls. This exposure to a real school made her happy and unhappy at the same time because the school she attended had nothing. She then realized that her school was also dull.

The general education system in Sudan has undergone many changes during the last two decades of the 20th century. The system was decentralized to the States but the national MoE sets the curriculum for all parts of the country. The curriculum for the primary level is similar for girls and boys except for the subject of home economics for girls and rural education for boys. However some critics believe that the curriculum is not gender-sensitive, the girls are too much depicted as weak and silly and others believe that the curriculum is too much focused on the traditions of the rural areas and less on preparing the children with skills necessary to actively participate in the 21st century.

There was a lot of repetition during the lesson. The teacher reads, one student reads the same, followed by another and thereafter they had to copy the text. It was always the same. There was never real homework, there was only copying. It was very boring.

Mariyam's father is not satisfied with the level of education and he also thinks that not all subjects are so useful. There are strange and very traditional subjects, and this causes a lot of pain for the children. The father prefers a more active school. The content of the education should also be more interesting. The school does not organize activities for the children. Sports activities and music could also motivate children to stay in school. The children often have to wait for their teachers to arrive at school and sometimes the teachers do not show up and the children are sent home early.

Mariyam thinks that school is very important for each child. At school, children learn how to read and write and when you are literate you can read about other countries. If you have a primary school certificate you can go to secondary school and learn more but also you can find a job. There are many jobs women can do like nurse, teacher, working in an office or in a kindergarten.

Mariyam's parents were always very supportive to the education of their daughter. Because she had no difficulties understanding the learning, she was always the first in her class. Her father was very proud of her and every year when she moved up to the next class he organized a small party for her friends with sweets and cookies. It was a pity that when young he could not go to secondary school because he married at an early age and thereafter it was no longer possible, due to the large responsibilities. He clearly stated that secondary school is important, also for girls. With secondary school, it is easier to find a job. He prefers a late marriage for his daughter because it is a very heavy responsibility for young people when married young and becoming parents. He experienced this himself. Now he is having a good and frequent contact with the teachers of his children. When he visits the school he discusses the performance of his children, the school fee or other issues with the teacher or the headmaster. Unfortunately he travels a lot so he has not so much time, but when not available the mother visits the school because she is also interested in the education of her children.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Some years ago, when Mariyam was ten years old and enrolled in Grade 6 she dropped out of the Eshukria Basic School for Girls. It was in these days that she got a strange kind of infection which caused all kinds of bleeding. For a long time she was very sick and thereafter the infection often almost disappeared but always came back again. In the end, recovery took almost a year and when she recovered and on the point of going back to school the fever started again. During the long period Mariyam was sick, the teachers never showed any attention nor did they facilitate her return to school by e.g. bringing her books to read at home.

Now that it looks as if Mariyam is entirely recovered and when the next school year starts her father will send his daughter to school again. She was unlucky, but since she is still young and always was a very good student she will get a second chance.

1.2.4 Huda, who loves to read the whole day

The child and her family: Huda lives in Eshukria, 11 km south west of Kassala town. She thinks that being the first child in a family is a real burden: *'the oldest child always has to look after the young children and to assist their mother in house work. This is not easy when you also want to go to school'*. There is a wide gap between her and her younger brother and sister. They are still too young to go to school.

Huda lives together with her mother, brother and sister and her extended family, grandparents, two uncles and four aunts and all their children on a large compound. Her father works abroad and seldom visits his family. Huda's mother and father both completed their basic education. The house is built from mud and straw like the other houses in the village. In the compound there are three huts, four one-room houses, a veranda, three shelters against the sun, a latrine and bathroom.

Huda's school memories: Huda liked her school very much particularly her classroom, the teaching, the possibility of meeting friends and doing homework with them. Together with them, she often read and attended additional classes for revision. She also liked her teachers as they worked hard and supported them

wherever they could. The teachers were respected by the community, and gave good attention to the children and their hygiene. If one of them was absent they used to ask other teachers to teach the class. During her school time, Huda helped her mother with the household chores. When she finished them, she immediately ran to her book and started to read, read, read because she loved reading. Her uncle gave her some story books, and she was very happy with the books. She also asked her father to send her more books but he didn't. As mentioned, she was always reading even while she was walking to and from school which was only five minutes' walk from her house.

Currently, now that she left school, she is still using her old school books and reads them over and over. She remembers that her classroom was very nice, the seating was well organized. She liked the bare walls of her classroom without pictures and drawings so nothing could disturb her from concentrating on the lessons. What she also remembered well is the moment when there was a celebration when one of the school books was finished. She liked all school subjects and although she faced some difficulties in English, the teacher was always there to facilitate or to explain matters. Huda had five friends and if not reading they were chatting on their way to and from school. After school they often played together and or did their homework. They always prepared themselves for school at her home or at the home of one of her girlfriends.

Huda's mother seriously regrets seeing her daughter out of the school as she believes that basic education is very important. It is a base for future education and may give the opportunity to be a kindergarten teacher and she dreams of seeing her daughter complete university. Education is important for everything, and it gives women more power and nothing can then stop them. She used to attend mothers' meetings in which they were discussing issues related to the needs of the school and sometimes they gave money to do something in the school.

Reason(s) for dropping out of school: In Grade 6 Huda left school. This was three years ago when she was 12 years old. The main reason Huda left school was the illness of her mother. When her mother got a severe blood infection, Huda decided to stay with her mother at home so she could look after her and her siblings. *'When my mother asked me about the reason I told her that I did not like the school any more. The real reason though was my mother's illness.'* Afterwards, her mother called her uncle. Huda told him the real reasons and she asked him not to tell her mother about this. The uncle immediately came to her mother and instructed her to accept it. *Huda does not like to go school again and I agree with it.*

Huda's mother mentioned that she left school because one of her friends left school. Her mother tried to speak to her but her uncle who was around that day said that there was no need to go to school any longer. Her teacher assured that Huda left the school for the same reason and she added that girls in this village often drop out of school at a certain age for this reason. But as the teacher said: *'The basis for all the reasons given is the lack of awareness of parents about the real importance of finishing their education'*.

Now that her mother recovered from her illness, there is nothing to stop Huda from continuing her education and she will do so because her family decided that she can go to school again. Huda is very happy that she will go back to school and that she can practice her favorite hobby again, reading.

1.3 Basic School for Boys in Sebdarat village (Vignettes 9 – 11)

The village: Sebdarat is a small village with about 3500 inhabitants, 10 km north of Kassala city along the main road to Port Sudan and 2 km from the bed of the Gash river. Most houses in the village are made from local materials, – mud, straw and wood. Most houses in the village have electricity. In the village there is a water yard (tank) where people fetch water, and others buy water from the donkey cart. The main well is 6 km outside the village. Most people in the village are Beniaamir, one of the Beja tribes, but there are also people from other tribes like the Hadandawa (another Beja tribe), Baza and Baria (both originally from Eritrea) and Hausa people (West African routes) living in the village. According to the headmaster most villagers live under the poverty line. The largest proportion of the men work as traders, workers in the markets, smugglers, agricultural laborers on farms, or shepherds. Some of them are government employees. Their salaries range from 1000 - 1500 SDG a month. Sebdarat has two primary schools and two secondary schools, one for girls and one for boys respectively.

The school: Earlier the school did not have a permanent structure. The classrooms were made of mud, similar to the local houses. A few years ago the government constructed a new school with eight classrooms for the boys. Now every grade has a classroom made of bricks and the headmaster has his own office. The school has electricity. The headmaster's office had a functioning fan but the classrooms do not have this facility. The classrooms are all clean and the seating is well organized, but besides the blackboards only few learning materials were identified. Though the school compound is spacious, there are only few trees, especially due to lack of water. Every year the Government provides the school with books (student: textbook ratio is 2:1 and 3:1). In addition they provide for school furniture and pay the teachers' salaries. The school has 15 teachers, five are from the village. All fulltime teachers (13) are trained. The 2 part-timers are not trained. 11 teachers are female and 4 teachers are male.

Last year 61 boys graduated from the boys' school. They all continued their education at the secondary school which adjoins the basic school. There were almost 508 children enrolled at the boys' school. However, the dropout rate is not high as 77 were enrolled in grade one while 52 boys are enrolled in Grade 8. There was no data of the number of children enrolled in the previous years but the data of this year's enrolment shows very few dropouts.

Every day the school opens with a school assembly where announcements are made and where teachers or students sometimes dance and or present other cultural performances. The school regularly organizes sporting and cultural activities. There are also annual events like certificate ceremonies and competitions. The school, as mentioned by the headmaster, uses corporal punishment as the main way for keeping children in line (to concentrate on their studies, behave well, respect the rules).¹¹ The headmaster stated: *'Children who drop out do not inform the school but they just stay away. So the school is never formally informed that a child left, but it is school policy to try to bring the child back to school.'* The school succeeded in bringing back to school many children who earlier dropped out, but

¹¹ It should be noted that in general corporal punishment is prohibited; if it happens, the parents have the right to report it to the Family & Child Protection Department.

they also failed a lot. The headteacher and the teachers who live in the village frequently meet these children and then they talk with them to convince them to return to school.

The school is surrounded by many productive areas such as farms, charcoal-burning places, and animal breeding. Therefore many school children work during their free time to assist their families or to cover their education costs.¹²

The biggest danger for good school results is the outside world according to the headmaster. This world is more attractive for many children than the world of school. Outside the school compound you have the 'TV watch clubs', billiard room, football field, coffee shops and youth club, and those entertainment places intrigued more than the school. But he keeps an eye on the children through hidden eyes... (other children who inform the headmaster regularly about wandering children.)

1.3.1 Issa, who joined the big boys

The boy and his family: Issa's story was rather confusing and often contradicted by the answers of his brother Omari. He also looked nervous. Different from most children he did not look up and never laughed, possibly he was a bit depressed but this is his story, the story of Issa, a 16 year-old boy. Issa stated that his father completed secondary education, that he was working as a nurse at a hospital near Gedaref and that his mother had a primary school certificate. His elder brother had a very different story. Issa's parents were illiterate and his father used to work as guard in a hospital but lately after a heart attack he stayed at home. The family is now surviving with the support of two elder sons who work in a bakery in Gedaref.

During the last years he was at school, Issa did not stay with his parents. He lived and still lives with his brother of 24 years in a room on a block of land owned by his father. The house has no facilities, no latrine, no water and no electricity. The place is not far away from the primary school. Everyone in the village collects water from the water tower or buys water from the donkey cart. His father has two wives and lives with them and 17 children in Umgargur near Gedaref. From the first wife he has five daughters and one son and from the second wife he has nine sons and two daughters. None of them graduated from primary school. A long time ago and when he was still at school, Issa decided to leave home, since the house was very crowded, and to stay with his brother, a casual labourer, in Sebdarat.

Issa however also stated that his mother lived in the village and that he often visited her and that she cooks for him and brings them every day food. This however seems to be unlikely since his parents do not live in the village. He sometimes works as a daily labourer, picking fruit or making bricks but at present he is digging a latrine for the small house where they are living. Nowadays Omari is no longer working because he suffers from severe kidney problems.

Issa's school memories: Issa always liked to go to school. School was never boring, there was always something happening in and around the school. He had many school friends (12) but now he no longer sees them since they all left the village. He does not know if they went to secondary school but he misses them. He also misses school. In the past he never hesitated to go to school and was quite a good student in the first grades since he ranked 15 out of 70 students. He therefore never repeated a class. He liked all subjects, especially Arabic and English although

¹² According to the headmaster 80% of the children of his school work after school, at the weekend and during holidays.

he was never able to speak English – but he can read and write Arabic. Most of all he liked the outdoor activities like playing football. This was sometimes organized by the school (the school had a football) but mostly by the boys themselves. There was often homework for Arabic, English and mathematics. Mostly the assignment was to copy texts from the textbooks since there were not enough books for every child. Only the rich children (six out of a class of 54) had their own book which was bought at the market.

However there were also things at school Issa did not like. Firstly, he did not like teachers who often beat the pupils. Sometimes he was beaten by the teachers with a stick on his back. This happened 4 or 5 times in Grade 7 and after he returned from an absence. Teachers also beat children when they do not do their homework or when their clothes are dirty. He also did not like teachers who asked questions especially not in the English lesson. English was difficult and none of the students understood the lesson so it was always difficult to answer questions.

Issa thinks that a school certificate is very important for someone's future: *'It can help you finding work, e.g. you more easily find a good job and with the primary school certificate you can enter a vocational school and become an apprentice at an electrician's workshop or in a garage'*. If the parents have money you can go to secondary school. It is also important that people know how to read and write. School is important for your future.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Three years ago, when Issa was 13, he dropped out of Grade 7. According to his brother Omari, Issa met a number of boys who had already dropped out and who worked on the farms or brick kilns in Kassala. During the time he was enrolled in Grade 7 he sometimes skipped school and started joining them to work. With the money earned, he used to buy local ice creams and cigarettes. From that time the number of days he did not go to school increased. His brother, who was already staying home due to his illness, did not know about this and when he found out he was sent back to school.

The support to his education by his parents was very limited. For most of his schooldays he stayed without his parents and his father had no money for the schooling of his children because he had too many children. His brother never visited the school and was busy with his own affairs. During the first years at school his brother Omari supported him. When the problems with his kidney aggravated and he no longer was able to work and support his brother, the two elder brothers sometimes sent some money to Sebdarat. So according to the boy, the main reason for dropping out was that he was living alone and nobody looked after him, nobody paid attention to him. There was no support for his schooling. He had no money and nobody helped him. When his father became sick it got worse, he felt responsible to do something for his family. He then believed that it was better to look for a job which he found at a brick kiln. Then he was able to earn some money to support his father's family. So he himself took the decision to drop out from school. His father asked him to return to school but offered no solution, so he never returned to school.

Issa regrets that he dropped out from school but he can only go back if there are financial means to support him. Issa thinks that he might be able to return to school one day. His dream is to become a doctor or engineer, but the fulfilment of his dream is far away. He is now digging a pit latrine for the house. When the house is ready his brother can marry: *'one day I will also marry but only with one woman and I will take the number of children offered by God'*.

When Issa no longer came to school, the headmaster or one of the teachers never contacted the brother to discuss the issue. It seemed that the relationship between the headmaster and the child was never very close. They did not even greet each other when they met during the interview.

1.3.2 Osama, who did not like the school regime

The boy and his family: Osama is 15 years old and the fourth child of a family of six: five boys and one girl. Every day Osama leaves home before sunrise to attend the early morning session at the *khalwa* (Quranic school). The Quranic school is located in the village mosque and has a separate building. It is the same place where his parents got their Quranic education. His father left primary school after Grade 6 and started to work in Kassala town. Osama's eldest brother dropped out from Grade 3, the second brother dropped out from Grade 6. However one of his older brothers is enrolled in the secondary school. Osama's youngest brother is still enrolled in primary school (Grade 3), and the youngest one is under school age. Osama's sister completed her university studies successfully and Osama is very proud of her. He is also happy that she is still living at home.

His house is similar to most other houses of the village: made from local materials (mud, straw and wood) and consists of two rooms and a shelter. In the compound there is one more room where his eldest brother and his family live.

Osama's school memories: For Osama, the basic school certificate is a very important document, a step towards secondary education. The certificate facilitates finding a job or vocational training. His father shares this opinion: *'education is a means for getting a job in the future'*. Therefore his father regrets seeing his child out of school. He is happy with the school and he stated that: *the teachers are good and classes mostly start on time and now that the classrooms are completed and everything is available in the school building, we are proud of the school'*.

Osama liked his school very much. The classrooms were good, the seating was well organized, students were sitting comfortably and the walls were clean. Some walls had pictures and objects on them. He was an average student, but had some difficulties in reading and writing. His favorite subjects were Arabic language and the Quran and of course he also liked the outdoor activities. When he was in school Osama had many friends with whom he played football, chatted, and wandered around in the village and the fields.

The school like most schools in Kassala State starts the day with an opening session of about 15 minutes (Assembly) for all children, with cultural activities. Sometimes the school organizes cultural and sport events after school

According to the headmaster the basic school of Sebdatat is considered one of the best schools in the area. Last year all students who sat to the Basic School Certificate Examination succeeded and the school is trying hard to continue this distinction. The main strategy is to organize lessons for the Grade 7 students during the holidays till two weeks prior to the start of the new school year to keep up their level. After the summer holiday, the eighth Graders have to come to school one hour earlier for a special morning session. The school also organizes two evening sessions per week. So during these days the school keeps the children busy from sunset up to 9-10 p.m.

hours. To motivate the children, the teachers sometimes give them a small reward for good academic performance. According to the headmaster corporal punishment is only used as a means to limit absenteeism and weak academic performance. As

long as the children follow instructions nothing will happen, but if they play or neglect their homework or break the rules *'we use sticks...'*

Osama's weak reading and writing influenced his academic performance negatively, however the biggest difficulty he faced during his schooling was the regular physical punishments and he stated it clearly: *'the only thing I hated in school was the corporal punishment'*.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Two years ago when Osama was enrolled in Grade 6 he left the village school. Osama said that he, like many other children at school, was suffering from the intensive supervision, the tight school program, the regular punishments by the teacher or by the school management and by the community so as to ensure that all children will pass the Grade 8 examination. The management of the school was very keen to ensure a high ranking, preferably the highest in the examination contest of the State. When Osama failed in passing the final examination of Grade 6, his father asked if he wanted to repeat class 6 or if he preferred to go to Quranic school. Osama decided to go to the nearby Quranic school (*khalwa*). His family then sent him to another town to study the Quran but after some time he came back to his village and decided to study it in his village, close to his family. He is now planning to study the Quran up to the end and to become a Sheikh. Unfortunately his reading and writing is still weak and so he is still struggling, also at the *khalwa*. According to his uncle, Osama's opportunities to succeed there are weak: *'he is a mutineer, a boy who loves his freedom and hates to be controlled or punished'*.

One may conclude that the focus of the school on meeting targets, and thus on high performers, and the lack of support to weaker students was the main reason for his dropping out.

1.3.3 Yacoub, who supports the schooling of his brother and sister

The boy and his family: Yacoub Ibrahim is 14 years old. His parents never went to primary school but both went to the Quranic school in the village and so they can read Arabic. Yacoub has one brother who is in Grade 1 and one sister who is enrolled in pre-school. His father has no land and works during the agricultural season on the farms. When the work in the fields ends, he works as a casual labourer in the village or sometimes in Kassala town. Right now his father is helping his uncle with the construction of his house.

Yacoub lives with his parents, brother and sister in a round house with one room that is traditionally made from mud, straw and wood. Next to the house there is a shade to shelter against the sun. The house is about 16 m² and does not have access to electricity or water. They buy water from the donkey cart and their lamp is fuelled by batteries. Yacoub's house was not far away from school and walking to school was not an issue because he always walked there together with his friends.

Yacoub's school memories: Yacoub was a good student and among the first ten students in his class of more than 50 students. He never had to repeat a class. Therefore he is now able to read and write quite well. He was a good student and liked to go to school: *'he went to school with a strong appetite'*. He still likes reading. In the mosque in the village there is a Quran to read and there are books about ancient Muslims scholars which he read with interest. Unfortunately he has no money and time for buying story books.

In the past the school was made of local materials but Yacoub did not mind. So the school did not look special but there was no other choice. He never felt unhappy in the school. This was the place he liked the best. He even sometimes wished he could sleep in the school. At school he liked all the subjects, but what he liked most was when the teacher was telling a story. On those days the students never had to do homework. The only time they had to do homework was before the final examination, then the students were reviewing the books, but this only took place in January and February. His mother thinks that the quality of education at the school was very good but also: *'the most important thing was that the child likes the school'*. The good quality of the school was confirmed by the headmaster who stated that the level of the school was among the best in Kassala State. The students do well especially in Arabic and English, the subject least affected by the new curricula.

There were no serious issues that discouraged Yacoub from going to school. Yet, the number of school books was limited. Every three children had to share one book. They passed the book on every day and they copied the content when necessary. He always thought that he could finish school. There was nothing he did not like at school, there was seldom a fight among the boys, and the teacher did not beat the children very often: *'he was only beaten once, in Grade 2, on his hands'*. *'No, he did not tell his parents about this'*. Why not? *'Because it is normal that the teacher beats a child once in a while'*.

Both parents gave high importance to the schooling of the children and supported him in every way they could. The father loves education and he therefore sometimes gives

The parents also value education for girls. The mother formulated this as follows: 'girls should be educated to know their rights' and 'education for girls gives them a torch to shed light'. When women are literate they can read the Quran and the signs along the road when they are out of the village. Yacoub prefers to marry an educated girl. When a girl is educated it is easier for her to find employment and they are better mothers. Some women in the village do have a paid job. The mother said her husband will allow their daughter to work.

them money for breakfast. The mother clarified: *'At the time that Yacoub went to school the family was very poor and there was only money for one meal a day but she always gave him a cup of sugar water in the morning'*. Yacoub's mother confirmed that her son liked to go school. He often came home with stories and the mother listened to him because she was keen to understand what was going on. This way she kept herself up to date with the progress of her son. She always ensured that his clothes were clean when he was going to school. Both Yacoub and his mother believe that education is very important. The primary school certificate can open doors for children and make it easier to find employment. If a child has a job the entire family will benefit from it. When the child is old and has a good job he can look after his parents. Their daughter attends a private kindergarten for which they have to pay 30 SDG a month to better prepare her for primary school. The mother stated that it will be possible for her daughter to work after finishing school.

Reasons for dropping out of school: At an early age Yacoub started to work in the market or helping his father. He worked at the weekends and sometimes in the afternoon. Despite his work he was seldom absent from school and when he was, he always obtained permission from school. The money he was earning was used to supplement the meagre family income e.g. to pay for his breakfast cost. Four years ago when Yacoub was in Grade 6 he left school. The main reason for discontinuing school was the lack of money. That year the harvest was bad, which affected the family income substantially. At that time his father became very old (54 years) and it was then that he decided to drop out of school and to help his father. His father did not agree and asked him to go back to school, but Yacoub did not return to school.

With the money he is now earning, the family has a larger income so now they have sufficient money for two meals a day. It is now also possible to pay the fee of the kindergarten of his little sister. If Yacoub stops working the other two children will have to leave school. The mother hopes that the other children will not drop out. She is sometimes a bit worried about her son. Though he always says that he is happy, his mother thinks that he is sometimes sad. Soon after he left school he regretted the decision and especially in the morning when he went to work and the other children walked to school. It was his fate – at that moment there were no other options.

1.4 Suweiba Basic School for Girls in Hayelarab Square 21, a suburban area of Kassala (Vignettes 12 - 14)

The area: The Suweiba Basic School for Girls is situated in Square 21 (about 1500 inhabitants). Square 21 is a part of the Banat extension of Kassala town, constructed in the late sixties along the western bank of Elgash river. Most houses in Square 21 are made from local bricks, some of mud, straw and wood and a few from cement blocks. The square is considered an urban community and therefore most houses have access to electricity and water. There are five basic schools and one secondary school in the Hayelarab or Banat area.

The large majority of this area is Hausa, a tribe which migrated during the past two centuries from West Africa. They are Muslims but culturally different from the people in the area. According to the headmaster, most of the families live under the poverty line and therefore many children work. Most men work as freelance laborers in the market or the industrial area, on farms, or as traders. The women and young girls often work as domestic labor. It is common for all Hausa people to work, in order to earn money, even the young children. The Hausa encourage independence starting from early childhood.

The school: The Suweiba Basic School for Girls is one of the three girls' schools in the Banat area, situated in a large walled compound with some scattered trees. Within the compound is a large block of land that was until recently used to grow sorghum by one of the community members who died recently.

More than 800 girls are enrolled in eight over-crowded classrooms which are made of fixed materials. The school environment is poor as it lacks greenness, flagpoles, playgrounds, and facilities for outdoor activities. A few years ago the school decided to establish a new classroom, (from mud, bricks and straw, with three walls) for enrolling Grade 7 girls who could not achieve 50% of the final exam. This way the weaker students can sit for the official Grade 8 exam but do not affect the school average which is important for the school ranking in the State.

The school is overcrowded, and many children sit on the ground due to the lack of desks. Besides the blackboards, few learning materials were identified. The school also lacks latrines – of the four latrines, only one is operating and can be used only by teachers. The school deprived the girls from having breakfast outside the school without consideration to the girls' need to go to the latrine during the day. According to the head of the PTA, this was decided after he found them in a food shop listening to music and dancing with boys.

With an average of 100 children per class, last year 42 girls graduated from the school and all except one continued their education at the nearby secondary school. The dropout rate is not high except for Grade 7 – in the previous year, more than 65 girls dropped out because they couldn't achieve the 50% pass required for entering Grade 8. The school has 13 trained teachers, 3 untrained teachers and one teacher doing her national Service, all paid by the Government. Three teachers have a Hausa background but, like the other teachers, they live in Kassala town and therefore leave school immediately after the last lesson. This may explain why they do not pay any attention to dropout issues and why they had no idea about what really pushed the children out of school.

The school uses corporal punishment as the only means for maintaining punctuality, discipline and for ensuring that girls do their homework. The parents have to pay an annual admission fee of 50 SDG and after 3 months a monthly PTA contribution of 5 SDG.¹³

The school lacks electricity and the PTA chairperson mentioned that it needs only 12000 SDGs to bring two poles for electricity. The school also buys water on a daily basis to secure drinking water for the girls and other people in the school.

1.4.1 Najam, who failed the Grade 7 examination

The girl and her family: Najam is 16 years old and the youngest of a family of eight: four brothers and three sisters. The oldest brother is about 30 years old. Her father and mother never went to primary school but they attended the Quranic school in Kassala for two or three years. Her brothers all graduated from primary school. One of her sisters graduated from secondary school. Another sister, the one who is representing the mother, left school after failing to pass the Grade 8 examination.

Najam lives with her brothers and sisters and their parents in a house close to the school which is owned by her aunt. The house has three rooms, a shade, a kitchen, and a bathroom with a pit latrine. The house is connected to piped water, but not to the electricity grid: they get electricity from the neighbors who are connected to the mains. Her father works as a truck driver and is seldom at home. Her brothers have all managed to find a job. One works as a car washer, one is soldier, one is a construction laborer and one is currently enrolled in the police school. One of her sisters sells clothes, one is teaching at a Quranic school, and the third sister stays at home to help the mother who cannot leave home when her husband is absent.

Najam's school memories: Najam liked to go to school. During the day there was a long break, often longer than one hour, which was considered the best part of the day. This break was always used for playing and chatting with her girlfriends. At school she had many, many friends. With some of them she also played after school. Though she is no longer at school they still meet and she still plays with them. Her favorite subjects were Arabic, mathematics and English. She liked these subjects because they were interesting and useful because she learned how to read and write, to make calculations and to speak English. It is a pity that she still cannot speak English. She liked her teacher because: *'she was teaching and guiding the students'*. *'The teachers work for our interest and benefit'*. Another reason that encouraged her to go to school was her interest in sport and games. Every weekend the students organized sport activities, football, jumping, etc. Sometimes a teacher was there to guide them but mostly they did this on their own.

There were also things that Najam did not like about school. From Grade 1 to Grade 7 the classroom was very crowded sometimes with more than 90 children. There was only room for ten benches and though five children were squeezed in each bench the remaining students had to sit on the footrest of the bench, on the floor in the corridors and in front of the blackboard. This meant that the children were always quarrelling about the seating. The limited space made it very difficult to write. Reading was also difficult due to the shortage of books. In Grade 7 there were 65 students and it was always very noisy – especially when sitting at the back it was

difficult to hear the teacher. Sometimes a student was beaten; fortunately this happened only once when the teacher found out that she had allowed her girlfriend to copy the homework exercises from her. Sometimes they were beaten on their hands, sometimes on their back, and the number of lashes differed from 1 to 8 depending on the gravity of the incident. No, the girls never told their parents about the beatings. Once Najam was insulted very badly by her teacher, but even though she was very disturbed and cross with the teacher, she did not tell her parents about this.

For children who fail to pass the Grade 7 exam the school offers the possibility to continue with Grade 8 in an additional Grade 8 class. So the school has two classrooms for Grade 8. Or as Najam says: *'there were two Grade 8 classes. One in the classroom of the main building for the clever students, those who passed the Grade 7 exam, and one in a mud classroom for the 'stupid' students who failed to pass the exam'*.

The primary school certificate is important because with this certificate you can continue your education. If you do not have a certificate you can never get a real job. It is equally important for boys and for girls to graduate from primary school. Since she does not have that certificate many people will appreciate her less, meaning her value on the wedding market will be less. She therefore very much regrets that she was not able to continue school.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Najam dropped out from the Augba Ibn Nafia Basic School for Girls at the end of Grade 7. During the time she was at school she was a quite a good student. In Grade 7, a class with more than 60 students, her performance was always around number 20 to 30. At the end of Grade 7 she had to sit for the examination organized by the MoE of Kassala State. Her marks were 125 while the minimum marks required for going to Grade 8 were 140. This bad result mainly resulted from an illness during the time of the examination. She did not want to repeat Grade 7 and therefore she did not return to school. The parents did not like her decision and tried to convince her to return to repeat the year, but Najam refused. It was also not possible for her parents to pay the admission fee of 150 SDG a year and a monthly school fee for the 'special class' so then was no other option but to stay at home. The failure to pass the examination was therefore the main reason for dropping out from school at the end of Grade 7.

From the school side there was no follow-up on students who drop out. No teacher ever came to visit their house. Her parents always supported her to go to school and always paid the monthly "contribution". Her father told her that when he can pay the fees she will be enrolled again after the summer holiday. The school has agreed to accept her enrolment in the 'special class' – the one under the shelter

1.4.2 Jamila, who failed the Grade 8 examination

The child and her family: Jamila just turned 15 years. Her father, who died one and a half years ago, graduated from primary school, and her mother left school in Grade 5. She is the oldest child of nine, with five brothers and three sisters; the smallest brother is still at home. The other four brothers and three sisters are studying in the basic school, in Grade 8 (sister), one in Grade 6 (sister), two in Grade 5 (brothers), in Grade 3 (brother), two in Grade 1 (brother and sister).

Her father married two wives and they all live together in a small house built of mud with only two rooms, kitchen and WC. The house is of a lesser standard than the average house in the area. Her father was a farmer in Gedaref state and in addition

to this he cultivated sorghum on a large plot within the school compound as well as operating the school water pump and doing many things for the school to compensate for the use of the land. During the time Jamila was in school she used to help her mother in cleaning the house, washing clothes and dishes and sometimes assisted her with her work as a domestic servant at someone else's house. However, all this work took place after the regular school hours and or during weekends and school vacations, so she never was absent from school because of her work duties.

Jamila 's school memories: Jamila enjoyed going to school as she was learning so many new things. Her favorite subjects at school were Technology and mathematics, but she liked the Quran most and read the Quran on a daily basis. She dreamed of joining the secondary school and even to go to university since she believed that education was crucial in her life and essential for her future. At school she had so many friends – almost half of her classmates were her friends. There was a lot of friendship at school, they used to put chairs in the yard and chat and if one of them forgot their breakfast and did not have money to buy it they just shared their breakfasts.

On the other hand, Jamila complained about many issues in the school, such the corporal punishment by the teachers e.g. when girls were quarrelling or when making a lot of noise and the school policy with regard to sick leave as it

There was one teacher Jamila disliked very much. This teacher was not nice to the girls and she beat them harshly when they did something wrong. Although her teaching was good she was also very nervous. Sometimes she beat a child without reason. She also punished the entire class when it was too noisy. When something went wrong and she did not know who caused this she wanted to know from the class who did so. However mostly the girls protected the girl so the teacher used to beat all the students in the class.

was compulsory to come to the school first and to register your name even if due to your illness you were not able to walk the school. If not, you were beaten upon your return to school.

One of the school teachers claimed that the school was paying attention to the issue of dropout by supporting the children to succeed in the Grades 7 and 8. This is because most students leave school when they fail, and the teachers were totally frustrated because all their effort was gone with the wind. She blamed Jamila and her family for dropping out: '*she was always in disagreement with her teachers and used to get herself into trouble with them*'. The teacher was sure that her family was putting pressure on Jamila to work instead of completing her education.

Jamila said that her family was not very supportive and interested in her education. They only visited school when the teachers wanted to take in the school fee and never went to see the teachers to discuss her performance.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Until Grade 7 Jamila was a good student, she never had to repeat a class. However at the end of that grade the results of the final examination were not good. Unfortunately she scored less than the required 50%, and so, according to the school policy, she either had to repeat Grade 7 or she had to join the 'special' Grade 8 class at school. Another possibility was to attend an alternative Grade 8 class organized by the (teachers') Union. For both alternatives one has to pay a considerable fee. Since Jamila did not want to repeat the class she opted for joining the 'special' class housed in a shed made from local materials at the same compound. However despite the second-class treatment of the students,

they also had to pay 150 SDG for this favour. However, her family failed to secure the 'contribution' on time. Her mother came to the school with 60 SDGs but the school management refused to receive the money and accordingly Jamila's mother decided to take her out of school.

The headmaster was a bit embarrassed. He really appreciated Jamila's father and what he did for the school. He said that if Jamila's mother had insisted a little bit more, we would have released her from paying the 'contribution' as a respect for her fathers' memory. The headmaster now understood that the family was angry and that they took the girl out of the school. But it did not seem that he was going to contact Jamila's mother. So the main reason that Jamila left school was the lack of money to pay for admission to the 'special class'.

However despite the lack of money Jamila will return to school again. Not at the Suweiba school but at another school where her cousin is teaching. Jamila is very optimistic about this *'my cousin will assist me in doing my homework and explain the difficult lessons if needed'*.

1.4.3 Amirah, whose mother died recently

The girl and her family: Amirah is 15 years old and the second child of a family of five children. Her parents are divorced, and both parents remarried. Six months ago her mother died shortly after the delivery of a baby. Her parents never went to school but they went to the *khalwa*, the Quranic school. Amirah has one brother and three sisters who are all enrolled in school. The boy is the oldest and enrolled in Grade 8 – he will sit for the exam this year. The boy will continue with a vocational school to become a mechanic. Amirah lives with her grandmother and four brothers and sisters in a house only one block away from school. The house has four rooms, one bathroom, one pit latrine but no shade. There are no trees on the compound. The house is surrounded by a mud wall and has water and electricity.

At home the family speaks Hausa but she learned Arabic in the street and from her friends. So by the time she entered primary school there were no problems with understanding the teacher. Since the death of her mother, the grandmother looks after the children. The grandmother went to the *khalwa*, and can read but not write Arabic; she generates some income by washing clothes and making ice creams. The father of the children is a daily labourer and very poor. Every now and then (three months) he brings ten pounds. Sometimes she visits her father on the Juma (Friday). Now that his second wife also died he now has to look after the children of two families.

Amirah's school memories: Amirah was an average student but she never had to repeat class. She especially liked to go to school for meeting her girlfriends. The best moment in the class was when they were asked to open their books. She liked to read a book but the school did not have reading books. But she also liked to read the *fighs*, or stories about the prophet. The girl did not like all her teachers. Some teachers did not explain the lessons very well, and especially these teachers shouted at students who did not understand the lesson. Sometimes they also pushed their thumbs in the chest of the girls and there were two teachers who beat the children every day with a ruler or with a small branch from a tree. But other teachers never punished any student, they were always nice.

The basic school certificate is very important, because it helps you to progress in life. Amirah: ' the primary school certificate is highly appreciated by the community

and therefore my mother supported me to go to school and never allowed me to stay at home'. She was only absent from school when she was ill. Her mother visited school when needed. After her death a teacher came to her house to present her condolences. The grandmother also supports the education of her grandchildren. Sometimes the community helps and neighbors who are well educated sometimes review her lessons. In addition her uncle supports the family financially. The grandmother thinks that education is important for every one because: 'When you can read, you can understand more things and if not you live like a goat. Every child, boy or girl has the same right to education. It is good for both'.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Amirah left the Thoyba Basic School for Girls in Kassala town at the end of the previous school year. The main reason for leaving school was her failure to pass the Grade 7 examination. She passed Grade 7 but her results were classified by one teacher as not good enough for going to Grade 8. After the summer holiday Amirah no longer wanted to go to school but her grandmother sent her back to school. Then she was told that she could start in Grade 8, but the 'alternative Grade 8 class' for which she had to pay a special fee of 150 SDG. So then Amirah took the decision to discontinue her education and is now washing clothes for people in the neighborhood; in this way she is able to contribute to the education of her brother and sisters. The grandmother does not know why Amirah no longer wants to go to school.

Amirah regrets that she left school and wishes to be enrolled in Grade 8 after the summer holiday. The grandmother also wants Amirah to return to school and is supporting her decision. Now Amirah is attending evening class organized by the teachers' union to refresh her school knowledge so it will not be difficult for her to return to school after the summer holiday.

1.5 Ogba Bin Nafee Basic School for Boys in Mastoura (Vignettes 15 – 17)

The community: Situated at about ten km from Kassala centre, Mastoura was established less than 50 years ago by the Kassala municipality to attract people of the Rashaida tribe, a nomadic tribe that migrated in the first decade of the 20th century from the Saudi Arabian peninsula to Sudan, to settle close to Kassala. Now there are more than 10 000 people living in Mastoura, most of them Rashaida people, Muslims but with their own culture. Most houses in the square have access to electricity and water and nowadays are made of red bricks, cement and other fixed materials. Only a few houses are made from mud, straw and wood. It is said that the Rashaida people are rich, very rich. Most of them are still pastoralists but at the same time traders, gold diggers, smugglers and many families have one or more relatives working in Saudi Arabia or other Gulf states. This can be observed by the numerous 4-wheel drive cars parked outside the compounds. '*The Rashaida people are not interested in school and if they are interested in education they prefer sending their children to private sessions*' (headteacher).

Many Rashaida families spend certain times of the year with their animals in the fields, taking their children with them so many students are absent from school for months. After the animals return to the village, the children return to school. The school management shows empathy and accepts them immediately and without punishment. However, the long absence has a negative impact on the child's academic performance. One of the teachers mentioned that: '*fathers always take*

mothers with them to their workplaces and/or the market. This affects family control over the children. The children and especially the boys often wand around which has a negative effect on their behavior at school'. It seems that education is not the first priority of the Rashaida people and if they consider education, it is because of the importance for earning money and not as a means to enlighten the person and the community.

The school : The Ogba Bin Nafee Basic School for Boys consists of eight grades and eight classrooms built of fixed materials, with enough seats for all students (421 boys and 10 girls¹⁴) but the seating is not well organized. The walls of the class room are full of former students' signatures with neither pictures nor teaching aids. Though the school compound was fenced with fixed materials, outsiders crossed the school compound, and some youth regularly disturb the place and sometimes harass the girls¹⁵(observation and also mentioned by one of the school teachers).

The school has electricity and access to water, but despite this, few trees were identified in the yard. There are six functioning latrines, two are used by teachers. The school lacks the infrastructure for outdoor activities. Twenty teachers (17 female and 3 male) work in the school. Seven of them work fulltime and the others are part-timers, and most of them (12) are trained. Only one teacher lives in Mastoura, all the other teachers commute to Kassala and do not have any relation with the village except for their job. The teachers apply corporal punishment as the only means to maintain punctuality, discipline and ensure that students are doing their homework.

Last year, 27 boys and 13 girls graduated from the school. Except for three boys, they all continued their education at the secondary school. Though the dropout rate is not that high in the first four grades of the school, it is very high in the higher grades. In Grade 5, 15 boys dropped out and in Grade 6, 29 dropped out. Thereafter, it stabilizes somewhat most likely because of the forthcoming Grade 8 examination and prospect of the school certificate. According to the Headmaster and a teacher, many children of this Rashaida community drop out at a young age to join the adult world. The boys stay outside and work with the men, and the girls stay home with their female relatives. Possibly the decision to drop out is further influenced by the large number of dropout children who get together at the school compound as if it is a market place. Their influence on the retention of the smaller children may not be positive.

The PTA of the school was not functioning which may indicate a lack of interest by the community in the school and or a lack of contact between the school and the community. This may be substantiated by the fact that all the teachers left school directly after the lessons stopped and the practice or better the non-practice among the teachers of visiting the parents when children drop out to discuss their possible return. However the headmaster puts the blame on the Rashaida people: *'It is a rich village, many houses have TV and many parents drive expensive cars, so there are no financial reasons for the children to drop out. Many parents do not value education and tell their child to stay home whenever children may be of use'*.

¹⁴ The nearby girls school has only five Grades. In this school, all the girls are enrolled in Grade 6 and 7 only.

¹⁵ It was observed that the children of this school community were much more assertive as compared to other communities. They were not only following but entered the classroom where the interview took place, did not want to leave and were disturbing the interview.

1.5.1 Bakr, whose parents are not interested in education

The boy and his family: Bakr is 13 years old and the second child of a family of seven children. He has three brothers and three sisters. The oldest child is a sister who got married last year when she was 15 and recently had a baby. Both his parents are illiterate. All his brothers and sisters went to school, however they all left school in Grade 3, so none of them obtained the primary school certificate. Together with most of his brother and sisters, including the married sister, her baby and her husband, he lives in the house of his father's first wife. The other wife lives elsewhere with her family. The mud house, which is close to the school, consists of three rooms, a pit latrine and kitchen all made of mud, has electricity and water and is fenced by a mud wall.

The boy's father is a merchant who buys clothes in Saudi and so he frequently goes there for a few months. All the boys assist their father with the distribution of the clothes. A few times a week he has to work for his father by visiting shops to collect money or to follow up on the distribution of clothes. It is an easy job and most of the time he is idle.

Bakr's school memories Bakr liked to go to school and to play with his friends. The school often started late, and during the day there was a long break offering plenty of time to play. His favorite subject at school was reading the Quran because when reading this you will be rewarded in your second life. He liked his teachers, they were nice and friendly and knew a lot. He was not able to describe his relationship with the teacher. They never visited his home and it may very well be that since all the teachers came from another community, their role was limited to the drillings in the classroom. Bakr stated that he was a good student and during his six years in school he was seldom punished, in fact only seven times and, according to him, this was justified since he did not do his homework or he did not remember something. He did not tell his father because he knew he was wrong. Beating children is a part of life in this community; they are used to being beaten by the teacher or by their father or mother. However, according to his teachers *'Bakr was not a pleasant student. He was one of the most difficult boys to handle and often quarreled with his classmates'*. But according to Bakr he loved school, especially when he could sit near or in the window so he could look outside. His classroom was not very good, the floor was full with cracks and holes, the walls were chipped, but for him it was a very nice class.

Bakr and his aunt both stated that education is good for the future. It is good when you can write, can read the Quran and learn about what is right and wrong. A primary school certificate is also good because it gives you status, and status is important for the future. The certificate protects you and if you are educated, other uneducated people can consult you.

The family supported Bakr by providing clothing, shoes, and money for his breakfast. However they never helped him, or showed interest. The father was mostly absent and it was beyond the control of the mother whether her children went to the market or did not want to go school, let alone to visit school. The aunt who accompanied Bakr was divorced and was therefore free to move.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Less than three years ago when Bakr was in Grade 6 he dropped out from the Ogba Bin Nafee Basic School for Boys. He left school because he had to join his father when he went to the mountains to dig for gold. He liked this trip of 20 days though the work was very hard and tiring. Despite

the fact that they did not find gold, they went again several times to the mountains. Once he returned with 1000 SDG in his pocket. His father took his brothers and sisters out of school at an early age after they were able to read write a little. Bakr was able to stay at school longer because his mother insisted at that time that he should improve his reading and writing. He was very happy with this. Though the boy stated that the monthly contribution of 5 SDG was another reason for leaving school, this is doubtful since every day he got 3 SDG to pay for his breakfast at the school compound.

When Bakr was able to read and write well, his father thought this was good enough. It was time to get involved in the family affairs and told his son to stay home, and so he discontinued his education. The aunt confirmed that nobody in the larger family finished primary school. Now he feels sad when he sees other children going and coming from school. He often asked his father to allow him to go back to school and was often promised that he could return after the summer holiday, but it never happened. Right now he is doing almost nothing and his father is thinking of taking him to Saudi to work as a shepherd.

One can only conclude that the father withdrew his children from school because he does not value basic education let alone wishing to send his children to enter secondary education – rather he saw a boy's role as working and earning money for the family.

1.5.2 Khalid, who lost interest in education

The boy and his family: Khalid is the second child of a family of only two children. Both his parents are illiterate and his elder brother left the school three years ago before being certified and is now working in Saudi. For a child like Khalid, and for other children and particularly boys of the Mastoura community, going to school was an activity that had to compete with many other activities some of which were very attractive, such as travelling to Gulf States to work there, joining the smugglers, herding the animals in grass pasture, and not forgetting gold mining.

Khalid is 14 years old with a wild hairstyle and dirty clothes. His mother divorced many years ago and as she mentioned *'his father left the family and is now living far away. He then said 'consider me as a dead man' and he never showed any compassion for his two sons'*. Indeed, after the father left he never ever communicated with his children let alone paid the family anything for covering the cost of their living including education. The mother and her children live in the home of the mother's brother according to the traditions of the tribe. Their house is similar to most of the houses in the community. It is built of bricks, sand and cement and consists of three rooms, one shelter, a kitchen and a latrine. The compound is surrounded by a fence. The entire family is illiterate. Khalid's brother, who is three years older than him, studied up to Grade 5 of the same school when he dropped out. His uncle tried to send him back to the school but he refused, so then the uncle sent him to private school but in vain.

Khalid's school memories: Khalid was not a very good student, as confirmed by his mother, and performed less well than the average student; his academic performance was quite weak but he learned how to read and write. He liked school very much, was always happy, and learned many new things. He never had problems listening to the teachers. He disliked a few things such as dirty classrooms and the unorganized way of seating. They were sometimes sitting here and sometimes there, there was also quite some quarrelling in the classroom.

Although he did not like quarrelling it sometimes happened and this was a very common phenomenon at school. (The teacher said that he was well known for his continuous quarrelling and breaking rules and regulations). He had friends supporting him when he was quarrelling. This behavior often resulted in punishment and sometimes in small scratches or small bumps. He had one close friend playing with him, having breakfast together, chatting and defending each other in quarrels.

Khalid also thought that school was sometimes boring. The school did not organize outdoor activities mainly because all the teachers left the school after the lessons.

He liked the rules and regulations of the school. Khalid's mother was not very satisfied with the school: 'although the teachers are teaching well and the environment is good but there is no follow-up of the children's performance by the teachers and there is a lot of fighting going on'. She felt discriminated when he was still scoring less than the average after having asked the teacher to tutor Khalid privately.

Khalid was never assigned to do any work at his home. Khalid's family showed interest in his education, they always covered the cost related to his schooling – monthly fee of 5 SDG, 5 SDG per day for buying *fatour* and other school costs like pens and pencils, and when needed they paid for his textbooks. However, they never asked him anything related to school or showed appreciation or interest.

Reasons for dropping out of school : Two years ago Khalid had to repeat Grade 5. He did not like to sit in a class with younger children so he left school. The same had happened with his older brother who failed in Grade 5. According to the teachers, Khalid *'was not well monitored by his family who were of the opinion that the academic performance is the full responsibility of the teachers only'*. They also mentioned that the parents only took the responsibility for the covering the cost of his education. They never interacted with the school or followed their child's behavior or attendance.

He also looked up to his elder brother working in Saudi Arabia as a shepherd. The brother promised Khalid to bring him to Saudi to join him in his work. This added to his disinterest in schooling as he immediately started to dream about this new life working abroad. Right now the boy is still wandering around with his friends in the market area, and except for helping his uncle at his company occasionally, he is doing nothing.

Due to the lack of parental support, the encouragement of his brother to come to Saudi, and his weak academic performance Khalid and was not interested in repeating Grade 5. The school had too little to offer to motivate him to come back after the school holiday.

1.5.3 Fatma, who started school when she was ten years old

The girl and her family: Fatma is twenty years old and the third child of a family of five children. She has two brothers: the elder brother left school in Grade 7 and the second one completed Grade 8. Her two sisters are still studying; the eldest one is at university and the second one in Grade 8. Her family belongs to a minority in the community of Mastoura, they are from a small tribe with Eritrean roots. Her father is a brick-maker and the Muezzin of the village mosque. The family lives in a house of lower quality than the other houses in the community as it was built of mud, straw and wood. It consists of a one large structure, one room, a shelter, a kitchen and a

latrine. The house is located in the eastern part of the area and far away from the school. Both of her parents are illiterate.

Fatma's school history: Fatma went to Grade 1 when she was already 10 years old, so right from the start she was one of the oldest students in her class. Every day Fatma had to walk for more than half an hour to reach school. During the daily walk to school she often was hassled by youth or adolescents who were wandering in the street looking for girls or waiting to harass them by either asking funny things or asking them to come with them and have sex with them. It was therefore not easy for a girl of her age to walk with her young sisters this long distance to school. But she believes that it is important to go to school and to learn how to read and write and to understand life better. Fatma mentioned that she had so many friends in the early years of her schooling. They used to chat and play during breaks and after lessons, doing their homework and study together. They sometimes came together after school hours or at the weekend to play or to study as a group, explaining school subjects and encouraging each other to study well. But when they were getting older and had to move from the girls school to the boys school, some of them left school to marry and some of them left for other reasons, e.g. they had to join their families (nomads) during the rainy season or because of their families' desire to keep them away from the boys at the school.

Her favourite subjects at school were the Quran and Technology, mathematics and English. Although she liked mathematics and English it was difficult to understand these subjects. Fatma disliked the beating at school and her teacher mentioned that she always convulsed after being beaten. Her parents did not show a lot of interest in her education and supported her only financially with money for breakfast and school cost.

One of the teachers who knew Fatma's family and her siblings since their first days in school informed us that Fatma entered school in the middle of the academic year. The headmaster refused to enroll her but she convinced him as she showed him a recommendation from someone the headmaster knew. In the lower Grades of primary school Fatma did well but when she became an adolescent her behavior changed a bit and most of the time she was staring at nothing and the teacher thought that she was not stable. She also used to convulse when beaten and the teacher suspected that she did not have a stable character and suffered from a psychological disorder. She blames her family for this as they did not give her enough attention as an adolescent girl, in a sensitive period and in a community like Mastoura where youth are always harassing girls and not afraid of anyone.

One day her father came to the school complaining that Fatma was bleeding during the night. The headmaster called the teacher and investigated the matter with her, but the teacher told her that the bleeding may have been the result of her quarrelling with another girl. During the quarrel she was pushed from the top of the desk onto the ground. The teacher beat both of them with her hands but did not cause any bleeding. The school teacher suspected that there is another reason but she was afraid to tell her family the real reason behind her bleeding.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Fatma left the school in Grade 8 when she was 17 years old. Her elder sister who is now studying at the university was very adamant in stating that the family was not able to cover the cost of her sister's education after the elder brothers left for gold mining for months and it was not possible for them to send money to the father (brick-maker). After her oldest sister divorced, the family had to support the cost of her the study at university. So Fatma

dropped out for financial reasons. According to one of her teachers Fatma also left school because she was older than the other girls in the class. Fatma and her sister assured us that she will immediately continue her education if the economic situation of the family improves

According to the policy of the National and State Ministry of Education every school should have a PTA (Parent Teacher Association). The main role of the PTA is to assist the school management and act as a link between the school and the community. Only a father of children in the school can become a member of the PTA. The main objectives of the PTA are to contribute and solve school-related problems and to approve the amount of the monthly school fee to bridge the gap in the school budget.

Nowadays Fatma works at home and is involved in all the household chores like cleaning, washing clothes and cooking, and making *kisra* which she already used to do when she was at school.

Since Fatma's father and two of her brothers are working it may very well be that the financial reasons to leave school were used as a pretext for reduced motivation, as a result of the dropout of her friends and the long and stressful walk to school. The fact that she was one of the oldest students in the class may have aggravated this.

2 VOICES FROM BLUE NILE

2.1 Khadidia Bint Khuweilid school in Badoas (Vignettes 18 and 19)

The village: Khadidia Bint Khuweilid Basic School for Girls is situated in Badoas village (about 10 000 inhabitants) 30 km north of Erruseiris, on the eastern bank of the Blue Nile river. The road from Erruseiris to Badoas is a graded sand road. During the rainy season it is difficult for vehicles to pass and after heavy rains the village often becomes isolated from the nearest town. In emergency situations the villagers have to cross the river and walk for 5 km to reach the Eddamazine highway. Most houses in Badoas are made from local bricks, some of mud, straw and wood and some were built from red bricks. Badoas is considered a rural area, and most houses lack access to electricity and water. Some homes are connected to a small generator (private enterprise) and everyone brings water from the river or takes water from the well in the village. Most people belong to the Fallata tribe, who originate from West Africa (Mali, Benin and Niger). The Fallata people mostly work as farmers cultivating sorghum, traders or are fishermen who fish in small boats on the Blue Nile. Only a few are pastoralists. The second tribe is Hausa, who like the Fallata migrated during the past two centuries from West Africa, and they similarly work as farmers, traders and fishermen. They are known for their preference for independence starting from the early childhood, so, in contrast to the rest of the community, they often to take their children out of the school at an early age. The third tribe is Kamateer, a tribe with Arab roots. In general they are better educated and most of them work as farmers or government employees.

According to the headmaster, the economic situation of the majority of people is neither good nor bad. Some people live under the poverty line and few people are well off. In this mixed community the people mostly speak their own language at home but use Arabic as the lingua franca in the village.

The school: the Khadidia Bint Khuweilid Basic School for Girls is one of three schools in the area. The village also has a basic school for boys and a secondary school serving the girls from Badoas and neighboring villages. The school is situated in a walled compound with huge neem trees giving good shade in the yard, which is used by the teachers as a meeting place. The school serves 486 girls studying in eight classrooms. The classrooms are made of fixed materials. The school has a

good theatre, a flagpole but no playgrounds. Besides the blackboards, few learning materials were identified. The school is fortunate because 12 out of 14 teachers are from the village. Two of them are trained; all the other teachers are secondary school graduates without adequate training. Last year 35 girls graduated from the school and all except two continued their education at the nearby secondary school. The dropout rate is not high except for Grades 6 and 7 students as the number of children enrolled in Grades 4 and 5 during the school year 2012-2013, respectively 68 and 65, was reduced considerably to 45 and 42 when they moved up to grades 6 and 7.

According to the headmaster the PTA functions well and is supportive. Led by the PTA, the people of the village have constructed five classrooms. The PTA has also assumed responsibility for maintenance of the school. They do not play any role in the issue of dropout and according to the headmaster some PTA members are the parents of children who dropped out recently.

The school uses corporal punishment for maintaining punctuality, discipline and for ensuring that the girls do their homework. The parents have to pay 50 SDG per child and after 3 months a monthly contribution of 5 SDG.

2.1.1 Noor, who could not improve her performance

The girl and her family: Noor is 17 years old and the oldest of a family of five children. All her brothers and sisters are still enrolled in school. Her oldest brother of 16 is enrolled in Grade 3 of High School and soon he will sit for the Sudanese Higher Secondary School Certificate. If he succeeds the family plans to send him to university. Noor's youngest brother and her two younger sisters are enrolled in the primary school in the village. Both her parents are literate. Her father left school after Grade 4 and her mother left school in Grade 6. Her father drives a small taxi in Eddamazine, and so can visit the family only on Fridays.

Noor lives with her family and her aunt and son, the sister of her father. On the same compound there are three round houses (*gotia*): one for the parents, one for the aunt and the girls, and one for the boys. The family normally sits in the compound and the brothers meet their friends in their home. Soon the house will be connected to the main electricity line. They mostly buy the water from the *karow*, the donkey cart, and otherwise the women have to walk to the well. It is about 15 minutes' walk from the compound to the school, but the walk to school was never a problem because it was not far and they all walked together.

Noor's school memories: Noor went to school when she was about 8 years old. She started school later in order to help her mother with the household and the small children. Her brother went to school, though he was younger, when he was six. He did not have to help his mother because he is a boy. She thought that this was during the time her father became a diabetic who then sometimes stayed at home sick and could not work, and therefore the family had less money.

Noor always liked to go to school. She was never bored and there was a lot of time play with her friends. She can read and write quite well and she can also do simple calculations. Noor thinks that she was a medium/good student, however her teacher said that she was a weak student who was barely literate. She also learned Islamic studies and English but she forgot the English words when she left school. She especially liked reading the school (text) books. In school there were only schoolbooks but in Grade 6 and 7 the children were sometimes allowed to read one of the books of the teacher during the school break. Once she started to read a book

but she never finished it. When she looks back she especially enjoyed the activities organized during special days. Often there is an assembly before the school starts where all the children gather class by class outside, the head master makes a speech, followed by a presentation, and some singing.

Despite her weak performance she was never discouraged to go to school. There were seldom problems. Yes, she was once punished and whipped two or three times when she did something stupid. But then she learned from her mistake and never did it again.

Noor thinks that it is important for all children to go to school: '*there you learn things that you do not learn at home and when you have a school certificate it is easier to find a job.*' It is important to continue your education. Her family planned to send her to secondary school and thereafter to university so she could work as a TV presenter. In the village there are few opportunities for girls to work; they can look after small children, there are cleaning jobs in the hospital and work at school or in a government building. She would also like to find a job in the village or in Eddamazine where she has relatives. With the money she earns she can support the family. Part of this money will be saved by her parents for her marriage. Although parents do not have to pay for their daughter when they marry a girl has to bring certain goods with her when she is going to marry.

Reasons for dropping out: Last year, at the start of Grade 8, Noor left the Khadidia Bint Khuweilid school in Badoas. The main reason for this was that her parents did not have the money to pay for the 'contribution' of 10 to 15 SDG a month. At that time her father was facing a serious "health problem and therefore the opportunities for him to work were limited. She then took the initiative to stay at home to save her parents the cost of education although her parents did not agree. Now her father's health is fine again, but the girl does not want to go to school any more. Now she wants to work. Also, her friends are no longer at school and stay at home. She likes staying at home, doing the household work together with her mother, aunt and girlfriends. At the end it became clear that the girl took the decision because she realized that she could not pass the school examination.

This was confirmed by the teacher. She was of the opinion that Noor dropped out because her performance was very weak and it was very difficult for her to improve her achievements. When she realized that it would become very difficult to pass for the primary school exam she dropped out. So it was not because of the financial situation the family. If you are a good student in Grade 7 or 8 and the family has no money the school does not ask for 'contribution'. The school or one of the teachers will pay for it. This happens often in villages. Note that the school fee is only 2 SDG per month and families with many children enrolled pay 5 SDG but it sometimes happens that parents have not paid the 'contribution' for a long time and then they have to pay 15 SDG or more.

2.1.2 Fatima, the sister of the university student

The girl and her family: Fatima is 17 years old and the seventh and youngest child of a family of seven children, three boys and four girls, who lost their father a long time ago. Since then, the mother has headed the household, but after graduation from primary school her brothers support her. Her elder sister is studying at university, while two other elder sisters left school in Grade 8. An older brother is enrolled in High School in the nearby town of Erruseiris and one of her sisters is still enrolled in primary school. The family lives in a house built of red bricks, mud and

wood similar to the rest of the houses in the village. The house has three rooms, a shelter, a kitchen, a bathroom and in addition there is one room made of mud where her elder married brother lives since he prefers to stay close to the family.

Fatima's mother, who studied up to Grade 3, is the village's midwife. This job gives her special status in the community. Her income is limited but sufficient to cover the needs of her children. Now that two boys are working, the economic situation of the family has improved. Her mother is very happy with her daughter who is studying at university, and the mother thinks that she can take it easier after her daughter's graduation. She considers the basic school certificate as a bridge between the village and the secondary school. The mother did not know at which grade Fatima left school, but she seriously regretted that she dropped out as she wanted her daughter to be enlightened and to find a job in the future.

Fatima's school memories : Fatima enjoyed her school very much: *'the classroom walls were covered with charts, maps and pictures and the outer walls had nice paintings.'* She also liked her teachers who always worked hard to explain matters and make subjects easy for them. The students had a lot of fun with them, chatting and laughing a lot. Her favorite activity in the class was studying the textbooks. She liked many subjects but her preferred subjects were Arabic and English, mathematics and history. Although she faced some difficulties in understanding English and mathematics they still were her favorite subjects. Fatima had five friends in her class and they always studied together at one of their homes. If one of them had to see the teacher they always went together to the office. They played together and of course they chatted a lot. Except for one day when she was bullied by elder students, Fatima had no bad experience during her school time.

During her school time Fatima helped her mother after school hours and in the holidays with cleaning the house, washing dishes, cooking, ironing clothes and all the other house work. Her mother visited the school regularly, mainly for paying the monthly school fee. Sometimes she was informed by one of the teachers about mistakes committed by Fatima or one of her sisters. The only one who showed real interest in her education was her elder sister, the one studying at university. She also helped her with her homework.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Three years ago Fatima left the Khadidia Bint Khuweilid basic school for girls in Grade 7. Fatima was sitting for the final examination of Grade 7 but unfortunately she failed to achieve the required score to qualify for Grade 8. This exam is required to ensure that all students who enter Grade 8 are of a level good enough to succeed in the Basic School Certificate Examination. Fatima did not want to repeat Grade 7, so she left school at the age of 14. If she had repeated the class, it would no longer have been possible to sit with her friends in the same class.

Thereafter she missed all her friends who made it to Grade 8. Her mother did not approve of Fatima leaving school without the certificate but added that Fatima was never a very good student and that it was difficult for her to pass the exam. The mother emphasized that financially it was possible for Fatima to sit again for the exam, but that Fatima lost interest and the desire to study realizing that it was no longer possible to sit with her close friends in the same classroom. Though her mother regretted her dropout because *'without education she will not be independent and she will not be able to support the family,'* her support to her daughter when in school was limited since she never made inquiries at school as to

why Fatima failed to pass the exam, nor did she ever ask her daughter anything about her progress during the previous grades.

The headmistress of the school agreed with Fatima's mother that she was not a very good student and subsequently her academic performance was mediocre and that she lost interest in going to school after failing to pass the examination. The headmistress assured us that she asked some students about the whereabouts of Fatima and gave the message that Fatima was always welcome to come back to the school. *'If she comes back, the school will give her all support needed.'*

Fatima is now working at home and busy with the household chores which she already used to do when she was studying in school. Fatima assured us that she will go back to the school if she feels that she can improve her academic performance.

2.2 Basic School for Boys Al Imam Al Mahdi in Tayba Al Bililab village (Vignettes 20 to 24)

The village: Tayba Al Bililab is a village on the eastern bank of the Blue Nile, 25 km North of Erruseiris town. The village is surrounded by sorghum fields and wide farmland fed by an average annual rainfall of 800mm. The village of less than 6 000 is mainly populated by people of the Kinana tribe, a tribe with Arab roots, which settled down less than a hundred of years ago in the area. In addition to the two primary schools the village has a health centre.¹⁶ According to one of the teachers who is from the area, the economic situation is moderate. Most people are pastoralists or combine pastoral life with agriculture. The literacy rate among the Kinana people in Tayba is high. Most houses in the village are built from red bricks, mud, wood and straw. For drinking water the village depends on the river. Although there is a water point in the community, the water is a bit salty, so most families send their children, often one of their sons, to the river to fetch water. This is not the only job that children do – they also support their families by looking after the animals and by working in the agricultural fields during the rainy season. This affects their school attendance negatively. In addition to the direct support to their family, many boys work at the market or elsewhere in the village in the afternoon or during the summer holiday. The weekly market on Tuesday attracts many children. According to the headmaster and teachers, who are all from the community, they regularly visit the market to discourage the school children from working at the market.

There are about 100 people in the village with a secondary school certificate. However, the village has no suitable employment possibilities for them. The only possibilities are to join the army or become a school teacher. About ten people have a university degree but they did not find a suitable job either. Following the tribal traditions, child marriage for girls and boys is still common, however nowadays, girls mostly marry when they are at least 15 years old and boys after reaching the age of 18.

The school: Until a few years ago the school was co-educational but after the construction of a new boys' school, the mixed school was split into a school for boys and a school for girls. The Elimam Elmahdi basic School for boys consists of 8 grades and 8 classrooms. The school has 16 teachers, 7 male and 9 female, but

¹⁶ The Health Centre is not functioning well because the health cadres do not live in the village.

only six of them are trained teachers – all are fulltime. Two of them are from the village, the others board during the week in the village. Grades 1 and 2 have their own (untrained) teacher, the other 14 teachers teach in the remaining six Grades.

Last year 12 boys and 15 girls graduated from the school, all the boys and 10 of the girls passed to the secondary school which is located in Erruseiris town 25 km far from the village. There were almost 330 children enrolled at the school this year. Children drop out in every grade but it was noticed that the dropout in Grade 5 is a bit higher as compared to other classes. Of the 60 students who studied two years ago in Grade 4, there are now only 25 left in Grade 6.

The PTA of the school is not very active – only five of the 12 members are active. They support the school in everything as mentioned by the headmaster. In particular, the PTA sets the annual school fee which is used to cover the expenses, especially for food for those teachers who board in the village. They do not play any role in supporting the school in reducing the dropout rate.



2.2.1 Adil, who loves to be outside

The boy and his family: Adil's is one of the youngest children of a family of ten children – his parents are not literate. Four sisters and three brothers went to school but did not finish primary school. Now they are all married; the sisters left home and the brothers live with their young families at the family compound. Two sisters are younger than him; one of them is still enrolled in primary school and an older brother is enrolled at the High School in the nearby town Erruseiris. At night Adil's father works as a guard at the boys' school and during the day he works as a casual labourer in the village. Two of his brothers are shepherds and are away with their goats most of the year, and one brother drives a truck.

The whole family – his parents, grandmother, brothers and his youngest sister – lives in a compound, situated at about 15 minutes' walk from the school. The married sons live in their own place, the parents have their own place and the grandmother sleeps with the younger children in another small house. All the houses are made from local materials. Though they sleep in separate places, the family eats the food, prepared in the family kitchen, together. The village has no electricity, and water is taken from one of the water points in the village. However, most people of the village prefer to drink the water from the river Nile which is just outside the village. It is Adil's daily duty to provide the family with water.

Adil's school memories: Adil is a tall boy of 15 who had to repeat twice. He did not like school, ever. In Grade 1 he was quite a good student but thereafter he lost interest and he sometimes did not understand the lesson. This was maybe due to his frequent absence from school since he often had to help his parents. He never objected to this because he really liked to be outside. At school he had three good friends with whom he played and that was the main reason he went to school. His friends are still enrolled and are planning to go to Secondary School. But he knew that his results were not good enough to pass the Grade 7 exam. Adil thinks that there is nothing bad about school but he did not like it, as most subjects, except for mathematics, were boring. It was always the same. His heart did not like it. In all classes there was a shortage of books and he had to share books with somebody else. They sometimes had to do homework, especially during the weekend, and sometimes he was punished, beaten on his back or on his hands, but it was not the reason for dropping out, *'he just did not like school and staying inside all day.'* When he became a bit older, he sometimes earned some money by helping traders or farmers and he liked this much better than going to school.

Adil's father and mother never went to school because when young they were nomads. His father regrets this now because he cannot write his name on a paper and he cannot understand written directions e.g. the notes of the PTA. Adil believes that education is important because if you have a certificate it is easier to find employment especially in town. But not for himself: *'he was never interested in going to secondary school.'* He found work without the primary school certificate.

His father also said that he always supported the education of his children since *'you are only poor when your mind is poor'*. Not only did he provide food, clothing and 'contribution' but he also paid for the breakfast which children buy at the school compound. So he strongly supports the education of his children. Two of his children, a boy and a girl, are still in school. He sometimes visits his daughter's school. He stated that there is good contact between him and the school, but from

his responses it did not become clear if this was related to his work as a guard at the school or to the enrolment of his children.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Two years ago, when Adil was 13 years old, he left school. It was in the middle of the school year of Grade 7 and not long after his father had to go to Khartoum for an operation on his leg. He then decided that he no longer wanted to go to school and started to look for work since he could not leave school without having a job. Now he is young, now he is fit, now he can earn money! He found a job and loves working. He often works on a construction site and if there is no work in the construction business, he looks for work as a porter at the market or collects firewood which he sells to others. As a daily worker, he was always able to earn some money. Upon his return, his father told the boy to go back to school but he refused because he hated going to school and continued to work. Now it will be possible for the other two children to continue their education.

Adil frequently stated that there were no financial reasons for his dropping out. For reasons unknown he entered the 'life of work' at a younger age. He liked being outside and was possibly encouraged by the little money he earned. However it is quite possible that this may have had a negative effect on his school performance and subsequently his school results, together with a lack of motivation. The fact is that the world of work attracted him more than the world of school. Realizing at a certain age that he could never enter secondary school, he started to focus more on work. Possibly he was also encouraged and if not motivated by his big brothers and sisters for they all left school at a young age and long before graduation.

The father never discussed the dropout of his son with the headmaster or with any of the teachers. The teachers also never visited his house when serious issues arose. The earlier statement of the father that education was very important appeared shallow after his son dropped out *'it is also important to respect the will of your children so when Adil no longer wanted to go to school, I respected this.'* One may therefore conclude that the boy was clearly not at ease with study and that his desire was not so much pursuing primary education but rather earning money.

2.2.2 Haider, who missed the Grade 7 exams

The boy and his family: Haider is a 17 year-old boy and the fifth child of a family of eight children. He has two brothers and five sisters. Both his parents never went to school and are illiterate. All his older sisters went to primary school, however, except for his fourth sister, none of them completed primary school: the first sister left school in Grade 6, the second in Grade 7, the third in Grade 6, and the fifth in Grade 7. The fourth sister is now studying in secondary school. Haider has two brothers younger than him. The youngest is still under school age but the first one is attending kindergarten.

Haider's family lives in a small house similar to most houses in the area, which are built from red brick, mud, wood and straw. The house consists of five small one room houses, a pit latrine and a bathroom. So there is quite a lot of room and this is maybe due to the marriage of one of Haider's sister to a builder, the most famous builder in the village, who lives near the family.

The boy's father is the day guard of the basic school in the village, the same school where Haider went, and in addition he works as a farmer. Thus the father is exposed to educated people such as teachers, educational leaders and other professionals visiting the school. He is fully aware of the positive impact of education as he has been working there for many years and saw children who graduated from the school

and came back as teachers or health workers in the village or were holding positions outside the village e.g. in government jobs. So, he is fully aware of the importance of education and able to identify the negative consequences of dropout. For the father, education is very important: *'it gives status to the person and his family in the community. This person will earn money and be able to support his family.'*

Haider's father was satisfied with the quality of education at the school and he mentioned that the Grade 8 students are now camping at school to prepare themselves for the examination. According to him, this reflects the commitment of the school towards the success of the children.

Haider's school memories : Haider liked to go to school to learn new things. He liked his teachers – they were nice and friendly. Sometimes they organized sports activities or cultural programs for them. His favourite subjects at school were Arabic, history, and mathematics, particularly geometry, and he dreamt of becoming an engineer because he enjoyed making geometric calculations. He especially enjoyed the assembly meeting at the beginning of the day. Often students performed cultural activities or they made music. Haider did not repeat any of his grades, but at an early age he left school after the second class for months and when he came back he joined his friends in the third class, passed the final examinations and continued with them.

Haider stated that during his school years he was punished only twice. He disliked the beating very much but stated that: *'teachers did not beat the students without reasons.'* But most of all school was for him the place for meeting his friends. He very much liked to spend time and play with his classmates. Haider has five close friends and they studied and chatted the whole day. During weekends they used to spend entire days near or in the river, wandering around the village and playing together. But when Haider grew older he was often asked to assist his father on the farm, but according to his father this was only during the agricultural season. He was never assigned to do anything more.

Haider and his father both stressed that education helps in finding a job for earning money. The primary school certificate is especially good because it allows someone to compete in government jobs such as police, security and teaching.

The family supported Haider's schooling by providing clothing, shoes, and money for his breakfast. Since his father was working at school he was always close to his son if needed. No, as an illiterate man it was not possible for him to follow his performance or encourage him to read or do his homework.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Two years ago Haider dropped out from the Elimam Elmahdi Basic School for Boys. During the last months of Grade 7, he became very sick and so missed the final examination. He did not want to repeat the class because he had to sit with students who were not his friends. So when he recovered, he started to work in construction with his brother-in law, the best builder in the village. Haider assured us that he was happy because his childhood dream to become an engineer came true. Although he is working as a junior he considers himself as an engineer. His father mentioned that Haider left school because he felt that the family was very poor and in need of his support. The father asked him to continue his education but he refused. *'In our community the elder son is the one who stands beside his father.'* I regret, the father added, *'that my son left the school because I want him to have a good job. If he decides to go back to school I am not going to stop him.'*

Haider emphasized that he regrets dropping out, and when his friends passed the examination for secondary school he was very affected and so sad because of the missed opportunity to study with them. However, the reality is that Haider is earning some money which right now is valued by father and son more than the primary school certificate.

One may conclude that the inability to sit for the exam disrupted Haider's vision for his school career, he lost motivation and then felt that rather than repeat Grade 7, it was more important to contribute to the family income.

2.2.3 Mohamed, who could no longer combine school and work

The boy and his family: Mohamed is 14 years old and the youngest child of a poor family of eight children. His father and his mother never went to school and both parents are illiterate. His father has a small piece of land and works as a farmer. His two brothers were in school but both of them dropped out before completing the basic school. The first one dropped out from Grade 5 while the second one spent only one year in school. None of his five sisters ever went to school. Although the family lives opposite the school the father is not aware of the name of the school. According to the headmaster: *'this is not common but it is not rare either since many people in the community are often not aware of the importance of education and often send their young children to follow the animals outside the village.'*

Mohamed lives with his parents who are very poor in a house of wood, straw and mud and therefore of lower quality than most houses in the village which are constructed of red bricks, mud, wood and straw. Mohamed's family's house is small and consists of only one room, one shelter, a pit latrine and a place to take a bath. The compound was only fenced on one side of the main road leading to the market.

Mohamed's school memories: Mohamed's school performance was always good and in the first grade he was the best in his class, but his parents never paid any attention to this distinction. Possibly due to the lack of support and attention by his parents, or possibly due to other reasons but as the years were passed his results became less and less satisfactory. So, in Grade 2 he was the fifth and in Grade 4 he was ranked eleventh and in Grade 5 he left the school, with literacy skills but before sitting the final exam.

Despite this, Mohamed enjoyed going to school. He loved his teachers as they were teaching them a lot of things about Sudan, its people, products, history, etc. The classrooms had fans and sometimes there was electricity and there were nice drawings on the outside walls of the classroom. His favorite subjects were mathematics, the Quran, and Arabic, and Mohamed had four close friends with whom he studied, chatted, played and sometimes did mischief at school. He sometimes visited them at their homes and together they roamed around the village and its surroundings.

Mohamed mentioned that in the early years at school they did sport and gymnastics, but later these lessons were discontinued and replaced by other subjects. The thing he disliked the most was the corporal punishment – beating with a little branch by the teachers. He was sometimes beaten for talking in class or during the morning session/assembly or for coming late for the morning session. Mohamed was often late – being the youngest child he was responsible for bringing water from the river to his compound, for searching for firewood and for feeding the donkey. When at the river Mohamed generally took the opportunity to refresh himself in the water of the river because he loves swimming. When he was late no-one at home cared. No-one

asked him the reason for being late, and no-one blamed him for going too late to school. No-one was really interested in his school time: *'it was seen as a period to pass, a period to grow up before starting to work.'*

Mohamed believes that education is important as, in addition to learning how to read and write, one can learn a lot of other things about life. His father also thinks that education is important because it is easier for an educated man to find a job.

Reasons for dropping out of school : Two years ago, when Mohamed was 13 years old, he left school. It was a couple of months before the end of Grade 5. He felt that his family was not supportive to his education and that he was given too many responsibilities which were sometimes difficult to combine with going to school. His schooling was never their priority, and they never helped him to finish school. In addition there were always problems related to 'contribution' and breakfast money.

The father stated that he is becoming old and that he needs to benefit from his child as much as possible. He confirmed that he often lacked the money to cover the cost of Mohamed's education. However the teachers mentioned that the school does not ask for fees from the poorest people and that for Mohamed it was quite possible to take his breakfast at his house opposite the school.

One may conclude that Mohamed's lack of interest and motivation to go school was especially fed by the parents (father) who never valued the education and the future of their children. The family did not facilitate or support him when he was young and when he grew older the pressure on the boy to support the family increased. So by the time he reached Grade 5, Mohamed felt it was better to drop out and to look for a job to support the family financially, *'no-one cared so why should I?'* After he dropped out his father never contested his decision... on the contrary.

Mohamed also mentioned that he thought that working was more important than going to school. Possibly this impression was caused by the focus on work and the disinterest in his education by his family. *'No-one ever cared about my education and no-one asked me about anything regarding my schooling.'* The headmaster confirmed what Mohamed said and mentioned that rather than motivating his child the father pushed the child out of school. *'After he left the school',* added the headmaster, *'his mother brought him back to school and the school accepted him in his class again, however after a few weeks he left again.'* *'When I met his father in the village he always promised that he would bring Mohamed to school the next morning but he never did'* and then he concluded: *'During the first school years Mohamed was one of the best students of his class but within the family there was no-one who could serve as a role model – his parents, his brothers and sisters, they were all illiterate. The family did not value education.'*

After he left school, Mohamed found a job in one of the village restaurants. He now gives his father 90% of his salary and keeps two pounds for himself: one for buying bean nuts and one for watching TV in the club. He does not show any regret for having left school as he has a job and is earning money.

2.2.4 Qudira, who was not allowed to sit for the Grade 8 exam in town

The girl and her family: Qudira is 15 years old. She is the third child of a family of seven children, four boys and three girls. Her two oldest brothers are in Secondary School, two other brothers are enrolled in Grades 3 and 4 of the same primary

school and her twin sisters are still too young to go to school. Qudira's father never attended school but her mother can write and read because she completed Grade 4.

Qudira lives with her parents in a compound in two huts and close to the boys' school. Her parents sleep in one hut and all the children sleep in the other hut. In the compound there is a separate place for cooking but there is no latrine. In contrast to the other compounds, their place has no fence which is causing a lot of problems because goats can move freely. Her father farms land that he is renting from the landowner. He is only there during the cultivation time. The remaining time of the year he makes charcoal and collects firewood.

Qudira's school memories : Although most girls go to school when they are eight years old, Qudira entered school when she was seven. She was always a good student, never had to repeat a class and never had difficulties in understanding the subjects, except for English. This was a very difficult subject also because the teacher was not trained and could not speak English. For two years Qudira attended the boys' school because the girls' school in the village did not have Grades 7 and 8 at that time. The ten girls had their own section in the classroom and there were never any problems with the boys. Sometimes the boys tried to attract their attention, but in her class the teacher kept a close eye on them.

She liked going to school, she took pleasure in the opening ceremony with its songs and poems, she liked mathematics and Arabic, and other lessons, and enjoyed her friends and her teachers. The nicest time in school was in Grade 4 because her teachers and their lessons were very interesting. Grade 7 was not so pleasant, the teachers were not so good and the lessons were very boring. Her Grade 8 Arabic teacher she liked the best because he could explain the grammar very well and therefore she and all the other children understood everything. On the other hand, she did not like another teacher in Grade 8 for the opposite reason, '*he was not clear and did not make efforts to explain.*' In Grade 8 she was beaten twice like most of the girls. To prepare herself for the Grade 8 exam she went to evening classes (one SDG per evening).

The possession of a primary school certificate is very important for Qudira because it can help her to continue her education and to find work e.g. as a midwife but also as a cleaner. It is also important for a mother to be literate because, like her mother, she can help her children with their homework at home.

Reasons for dropping out: One month ago when she was a student in Grade 8 she dropped out together with all the other eight girls in Grade 8. None of them sat the Grade 8 examination which takes place over a two week period in Erruseiris. This town is more than 20 km away from Al Bilibab village, and so students have to stay in Erruseiris for the exam period. This year none of the girls had relatives in Erruseiris¹⁷. If they had graduated they could have attended the secondary school in Erruseiris but without relatives it is too far to commute to school daily. During the dry season it is less than an hour but during the rainy season the travel time is much longer, so if you wish to continue your schooling you need to have relatives in Erruseiris. The boys who attend secondary school stay in a boarding house for boys but there is no boarding house for girls. If there was a relative her parents would not have any objection.

¹⁷ The some does provide accommodation during the examination, but these girls and their families either were not aware of the possibility, or did not wish to use it (preferring that the girls stay with relatives).

There were no financial reasons why she left school. The main reason was that the parents of the girls were concerned about their safety. Now she is working at home. Hopefully they can sit for the exam next year but this can only be the case when they solve the problems of accommodation, or maybe it will be possible to organize the exam closer to their home or to arrange for transport. Qudira really hopes so as she wants to go to secondary school.

2.2.5 Abdel, who ran out of years

The boy and his family: Abdel is 20 years old and the youngest of the family. He has two sisters and four brothers. Abdel's father and mother never went to school and are illiterate. When his parents were young, they were still nomads but about 30 years ago the family settled in the village. One of his sisters and two of his brothers are married. His sisters never went to school and his brothers all left school in the early grades of primary school. Abdel lives with his parents and all his brothers, their wives and children, and one sister in the family compound which is very close to the school. The brothers and their families have their own place on the compound. Abdel's father tills the land during the rainy season and helps the butchers in the village to slaughter their animals. One brother is a soldier, one is a shepherd and often away with his herd (sometimes for longer than six months), the other two brothers are daily workers. The three families share the kitchen and the food: the men eat together and the women eat together. The house does not have access to electricity and water.

Abdel's school memories: Abdel always liked going to school. He never had problems understanding the learning. He liked all the subjects and especially the English, Arabic and Quran lessons. He was always one of the best students and never had to repeat class. He liked his teachers – some of them he really loved because they were very kind and respectful and very good at explaining things. Other teachers were not so friendly to the students and some teachers were not good at explaining new concepts. Despite this, he always enjoyed school and sitting in the classroom. Though some teachers were better than others, he never had any problem with understanding the school books. School made him happy. In his early school years they still went to the old school, made of mud and local materials, but with the support of the School Development Fund (WB) the village got a new boys' school.

Every day Abdel went to school, he was seldom absent but after school hours he had some duties like fetching water from the river Nile using the donkey. That was and still is his duty.

Abdel thinks that a primary school certificate is important because it helps you find a job. With a certificate it is easier to join the army, or to work in a hospital: *'If you wish to have a government job they always ask for this certificate.'* On the one hand, people in the village think that the primary school certificate is not important, but on the other hand they value secondary school and university. His father regretted that he never went to school, but this was not possible because he had to look after the herd. Earlier, his family had many cows but all the cows died due to a disease. He very much values education as substantiated by the following comments, *'now you have to find a job to earn money'* and *'it is very difficult to find a job without certificates'* and *'if I had gone to school it would have been easier to find a job'*. But these words of wisdom did not prevent him from allowing his son to leave school.

Abdel's father mentioned that he was always following the school results of Abdel. He frequently visited the school to discuss matters with the teachers. In addition the family supported him with food, clothing and 'contribution' (5 SDG a month), and breakfast. They also sometimes paid 15 SGD a month for the evening lessons organized by the teachers of the school to improve the academic results of the students. This was compulsory. But like many other families, the parents' skills to motivate, encourage, help Abdel beyond the financial support were limited.

Reasons for dropping out of school: When Abdel was 14 years old, he dropped out from Grade 6. Two years later, he returned to school, went back to Grade 6 and was enrolled in school for more than two more years. After having studied for one month in Grade 8 and when he was 18 years old he dropped out again.

The main reason for dropping out in Grade 6 was increased poverty, according to Abdel. His father was getting old and broke his arm so he could no longer work fulltime, and at the same time the harvest was not so good that year. The rest of the family was not able to support him. His brothers are not earning a lot and needed all the money earned to cover the cost of their families. The reasons for dropping out are a bit doubtful since there were four older brothers and also because Abdel mentioned that he was not able to find a job and stayed at home doing nothing.

This all changed when one of his brothers got additional work and committed himself to pay for the cost of Abdel's education. Thereafter Abdel went back to school and improved his reading and writing considerably. Unfortunately and by the time Abdel was 18 years old, his brother lost his second job and again Abdel dropped out. Now he is twenty, he can read and write very well but unfortunately he still did not find a suitable job. He often goes to Eddamazine to look for work, but till now in vain.

It seems that there were a number of unfavorable conditions that led to Abdel's untimely departure from school. When the financial support from his brother suddenly terminated, there was no support from the other family members to overcome the (limited) financing of the cost for schooling for the remaining months. Possibly the father felt that also in light of his age (18 years) it was enough. No efforts were made to bridge the remaining period.

Though his father did not like the fact that Abdel left school *'there was no alternative: the school does not have possibilities to help a poor student (but he never asked either!) and he did not like to ask others.'*

2.3 Al Yasir Basic School for Boys in Essawra in urban Eddamazine (Vignettes 25 and 26)

The community: The construction of Essawra locality, located 2 km north of the centre of Eddamazine town, started in the early sixties. Now Essawra numbers about 6 000 inhabitants with different tribal backgrounds. Most houses in the area are made from bricks with tin roofs, and some, often the houses of the poorer people, are made from mud, straw and wood. Few houses are made from cement blocks. As in other officially established urban communities, most houses have access to electricity and water. There are five basic schools in the area and there is one secondary school. According to the PTA of the school *'the financial status of most families is reasonable and only few families are living under the poverty line.'* Men work in the industrial area or at the market, or are traders, government employees or daily laborers. A certain corner of the area is populated by people from the Hausa and Fallata tribes. These people are known for encouraging independence in their family members starting from early childhood and therefore support their young children in earning some money wherever they can.

The school: This area of Essawra has two schools, a girls' school and the Al Yassir Basic School for Boys. The boys' school has a large yard with many trees surrounded by a fence. The outer walls of the classrooms have nice murals. There are eight classrooms, all built in brick, to house the 501 boys, indicating densely populated classes.¹⁸ The school has access to electricity, six latrines, two for the teachers and four for the 501 students. The school lacks playgrounds and facilities for outdoor activities.

Last year (2013 – 2014) 42 boys sat the final basic school certificate examination and 15 of them passed the exam, while at the end of the school year 2012-2013 the same number sat for the exam and 37 of them passed the examination. No explanations could be given. Annually the Government provides the school with books, seating and pays the teacher salaries. Sometimes the government sends teaching aids and stationery. The school has a total of 28 teachers, 16 are trained, while 12 are untrained. Besides the blackboards, no learning materials were identified inside the classroom but the walls were clean and the seating is well organized to ensure that all children have enough space to sit and move. All of the teachers live in the area. The headmaster is quite happy with the functioning of the Parent Teachers Association: *'most achievements of the school during the previous years in terms of rehabilitation and maintenance were the fruits of the efforts made by the PTA members. They follow and monitoring the improvement of the school environment and try to help where possible.'* The PTA has 12 members, although only six are active while the rest are always busy. According to the PTA Chairperson, *'this year an office was constructed from temporary materials to host the large number of teachers.'* In contrast to other schools, this PTA collects money from individuals in the community. Parents do not have to pay a monthly contribution.

The school has adopted corporal punishment as the only means to maintain punctuality, discipline and ensure that the boys do their homework. Despite the fact

¹⁸ Grade 1 has 71 students and Grade 8 has 51 students indicating that the school despite crowded classrooms has a relatively low dropout rate of less than 30 %.

that all the teachers live in the community, they have no idea about what really pushed children out of the school.

2.3.1 Sharif, who found himself a good job

The boy and his family: Sharif is 16 years old and the second child of a family of five children. Both parents are very keen to educate their children and therefore strongly support their oldest daughter's study at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Eddamazine. Sharif's younger brother is enrolled in Grade 4, his second sister in Grade 2. The youngest child is only two years old and therefore not in school yet. His father went to school and can write and read, but his mother never had the chance to go to school and is still angry about this.

Sharif's family lives with his unmarried aunt, unmarried uncle and his grandmother in one house. The house is made of bricks and has two rooms with two verandas. Close to the house the family has constructed a veranda to shelter against the sun – this is the place where they sit together. The house is connected to the water system and has electricity. His father is a driver of a minibus in Eddamazine.

Sharif's school memories: Sharif was schooling at the Al Yasir Basic School for Boys in urban Essawra. His house was close to school like most houses of children in the area, so when needed, he could quickly run home. But not all students live close to school, and some have to walk for more than half an hour but this was also because the family had moved.

In the lower grades he was one of the best students of the class but later he became an average student. He can read well and make all calculations, but his writing is not so good. He does not understand why he makes many spelling mistakes since the other boys in the class can write very well. Maybe he did not pay so much attention to it. In the higher grades his motivation to study decreased. He was more interested in playing football or watching TV than doing homework or preparing himself for the school exams at the end of the year. When he got older his interest in school diminished and his interest in working increased.

A major reason for going to school was to meet his friends and to play with them. When the teacher was absent they were allowed to play football. In Grades 5 and 6, the class played football every week but after this teacher left the school the football hour stopped. Sharif liked most of his teachers, especially his Arabic teacher because he was friendly and could explain the grammar very well. But certain parts of the Islamic lessons he did not like because the teacher was not so good in telling stories and during these hours the classroom became very noisy.

The class was clean. They were sitting on long benches where six students could sit. For some subjects there was one book for three students but mostly they shared one book between two students. The homework was done in close collaboration with the other students with whom the book was shared. In Grade 8 he bought some books from the market e.g. mathematics, Arabic and Islamic Studies. At school he was seldom bored. There was a good atmosphere at school, sometimes they quarrelled and sometimes there was a fight, but the next day everything was forgotten. However, some boys did fight a lot especially the boys in the lower grades.

In the months before the holiday, the school organizes an evening class for students of the higher grades to prepare for the exams of Grades 7 and 8 (cost 1 SDG for each class). These lessons are at the home of the teacher. The lessons are not

compulsory, so only 15 to 20 students attend these classes. In addition these teachers organize tests (2 SDG for every test).

Sharif went to school because he wanted to educate himself. He was motivated to go to school to get better job opportunities. He and his parents think that a primary certificate is important because *'it can help you to find work and it will facilitate when you wish to have a driving licence'*. If you have a certificate you can also play an important role in the community. *'A man can only get a function in a community committee if he can read and write'*. However, although his family does not need his financial support, he increasingly started to dream about finding a nice job.

Main reasons for dropping out: A lot of Sharif's friends worked during the holidays at the market. After the holiday they returned to school and continued their education but some boys got used to the 'life of work' and they dropped out. At the start of the summer break after he passed the Grade 7 examination Sharif searched for a job at the market and he was lucky because he found himself a good job: he became a banana vendor. He was lucky as there was at that moment a large difference between the purchasing and sale price of the bananas and he earned good money, ranging from 70 to 100 SDG a day. Most of the money earned he gave to his father. This was used to support his sister's study but he kept some money for buying clothes.

After the summer holiday he was absent a few times to work and when he returned school the headmaster asked him to bring his father to school. He felt very embarrassed to come to school with his father and became very angry. The next day he refused to go to school and he never returned to school again. That was in 2014, in the first month of Grade 8. Every day his father and mother asked him to return to school but in vain. Later that year the prices of the bananas dropped sharply and he made only 15 SDG a day. At that moment he regretted his decision to leave school. He now works on his father's minivan collecting the money of the passengers. His father asked him to return to school again, so after the holiday he will go back to school to finish Grade 8.

2.3.2 Asif, who got used to the life of work

The boy and his family: Asif is 16 years old and the oldest child a soldier who works close to the Sudanese-Ethiopian border. Asif has four sisters and three brothers and all of them are enrolled in the basic school, except for one sister who attends kindergarten. This shows the strong interest of the family and in particular of the mother in education.

The family lives in a rather simple house, simpler than most houses in the area, made of mud, straw and wood. The house consists of one room, a kitchen and two shelters, a bathroom and a pit latrine. Since the father is mostly absent, the mother looks after her eight children, playing the role of mother and father. Now that the children are becoming older there are also more problems to be solved. She follows her children's academic performance, ensures that they all have stationery etc. and visits school regularly to monitor their performance: *'I ask the teachers to inform me if there is anything regarding my children's behavior or academic performance and I pay for everything related to their education and if needed I send them to private lessons.'* Neither of his parents completed their basic education; the father studied up to Grade 6 and the mother studied up to Grade 3, so the mother cannot read and write very well but still monitors the reading and writing skills of her children: *'I ask*

literate friends to check their reading and writing but nowadays I ask the elder children to assist the younger.'

Asif's school memories: Asif enjoyed going to school. It is also important since *'education is essential for the person's progress and development.'* He never repeated any grade and his academic performance was quite good. He mentioned that the quality of education was good and that there was nothing at school or in class that he disliked. He liked his teachers very much as they treated the students gently, taught them well, and he learned a lot of things from them. He only faced difficulties in understanding the English language and the 'Malbasuna' (our clothes) subject.¹⁹

His favourite subjects were mathematics, the Quran, science, Islamic studies and Arabic. Asif had many friends, who chatted and had fun in the school yard, and after school they often wandered around and played together at the area near the bridge. There was a time that Asif suffered from bullying by a group of adolescent boys who called themselves Negers (from negro), so sometimes there was a fight but he defeated them mostly with supported from his friends.

He was always supported by his parents. They believe that finishing basic school is important and wish all their children will be able to complete their education up to university. The mother thinks that the basic school certificate is a bridge to secondary school: *'This certificate which will allow every person to find a good job or to join the university.'*

Reasons for dropping out of school: Three years ago, in Grade 7, Asif left school. He felt that his mother was suffering too much from all the chores for her large family. First, his father delegated them to take his monthly salary from the Military Area in Eddamazine, and Asif realized that this money was not enough. So during the summer holiday after Grade 6 he started to work in the afternoons. He went to the market, rented a wheelbarrow and carried goods from one place to the other. When school started again he worked after school hours, but the work was very tiring and it affected his concentration at school. Gradually he started to realize that it was better to drop out. So he decided to work full time and left school without informing his mother.

As a policy the school sends a letter to the parents after three days of absence but this did not happen. However, noticing that Asif no longer attended school regularly, his mother went to school and asked the teachers to show her the attendance record of her child. Then she discovered that he was often absent. She discussed the issue with his father who told her to be patient since Asif was in a sensitive period and: *'soon he will become mature and then he will go back to the school.'* However the boy never went back to school and his mother regrets this. Now three years later, Asif is still working at the market. He would like to re-enter school after the school holidays but it is unlikely that this will happen.

¹⁹ This is one of the subjects of 'man and his environment' that teaches children practical subjects like 'how to sew suitable clothes for each season of the year'. The subject does not have practical lessons on how to sew.

2.4 Saad Ibn Abi Waqas Basic School for boys and girls in Goani village (Vignettes 27 to 29)

The village : Goani is a village about 20 km north-east of Eddamazine town and about 5 km from the highway from Eddamazine to Khartoum. Goani means ‘place of the religious men’ – a Bernu word. The Bernu tribe settled in the area about two centuries ago, on their way from West Africa to the Hajj in Saudi – in Goani they are in the majority. They are Muslims but there are some cultural differences from other people in the area. Other people are from the Fallata tribe (West Africa), the Hamaj tribe, the indigenous people of the Blue Nile State, and from the Ambararo tribe, as the nomadic people of the Fallata are called. The headmaster estimated that the village has about 9 000 people. Most of them are farmers cultivating sorghum, bean nuts and millet in the rain-fed fields surrounding the village. The rest are fishermen, pastoralists or traders who sell the seasonal crops produced in the area. Goani is a green area full of neem trees and surrounded by plenty of baobab trees (*tebedli*), one of the biggest trees in the world and which produces good fruit with medical usages. According to one of the school teachers who belongs to community, the economic situation of the majority of people is neither good nor bad, with some people living below the poverty line.

One of the school teachers mentioned that, in addition to enrolment in the government school, many people still send their children to one of the Quranic schools. Some villagers prefer to send their children to the Quranic school only, and a small minority believes that modern education is against Islam and therefore *haram* and absolutely forbidden by God.

Goani has one water point which is able to provide safe drinking water to more than 50% of the people in the village; the remaining people depend on the Blue Nile for their water. The children, especially the boys, are responsible for bringing water to their homes. It was noticed that women, in addition to their traditional role in the family, are economically active by participating in agricultural activities and animal herding.

The school: The Saad Ibn Abi Waqas Basic School for boys and girls has eight grades and serves 165 boys and 137 girls studying in eight classrooms. Six classrooms of the school were built of local material (wood, straw and ropes), and two classrooms and one office were built of red brick. Currently two new classrooms and one office are in the final stage of construction, and for another block the foundation was laid. It is expected that the new classrooms, financed by the Islamic Relief Agency, will be ready prior to the start of the new school year in May.

The school lacks the infrastructure for outdoor activities, and no playgrounds were identified. Besides the blackboards and the school benches, no learning materials were observed in the classrooms. Only two out of the 16 teachers are trained (secondary school degree with more than 180 hour teacher training), five of them are university graduates while the remaining teachers have the Sudanese Certificate (Secondary School). Two teachers are resident in Goani village while 14 teachers are not from the village. The community is responsible for securing accommodation, meals and other types of incentives for the non-resident-teachers. To pay for this, the school levies monthly ‘contribution’. Last year 13 boys and one girl graduated from the school. Except for four boys, they all continued their education at the secondary school which is located in Abu Hasheim village, 5 km from Goani.

In Goani, the PTA was established after introduction of the relevant government policy. Its role is to assist the school management and act as a link between the school and in the community. Some of the PTA members frequently visit the school and contribute to solving problems faced by the school. They support the school in everything, as mentioned by the headmaster. The PTA decides the level of the 'contribution' and they use the money to bridge the gap in the school budget. According to one of the teachers, PTA members play no role in the issue of dropout.

2.4.1 Alia whose mother became sick

The girl and her family: Alia does not know her age, only her father knows her age, but she looks about 14 years old. Her father can read and write Arabic which he learned at *khalwa*, the local religious school. Prior to the establishment of a primary school, most boys in Gomi went to that school. Alia is the next to oldest child of a family of five children. She has one older sister, two brothers and a small sister who studied this year respectively in Grades 6, 3 and 1.

She and her brothers and sister live with their parents and they share the compound with other relatives: her grandmother and an uncle, who works in Saudi, and his wife and children. There are five buildings on the compound; three are made of bricks and two from local materials. There is a water tank close to the house but when it is busy they fetch the water from the hand pump elsewhere in the village. The river is one hour away on foot, but the school is close to the house. Her father is a taxi driver and works in Eddamazine. He comes home every second night because he has a second wife in Eddamazine.

Alia's school memories: Many boys go to one of the six *khalwas*, before or after school. There they also learn how to read Arabic. At a very young age Alia wanted to learn how to read and write, but the *khalwa* is for boys only, so she went at a young age to the co-ed school. She was always quite a good student but in Grade 3 she had to repeat the class not because she was a weak student but because she was too small compared to the other children of her class.

Alia always liked to go to school. Her school was the place where she met with friends and of course learnt how to read and write. She liked the teacher of Grade 7 best because she explained things very well. But there were other teachers she did not like because their subjects were difficult and they could not clarify them. The teachers seldom beat the students. Even though the classroom was made of local materials and others from brick, she liked it better than her own home: *'as there is much more work to be done at home as compared to school.'*

Except for the schoolbooks there is often nothing to read in a village. Villages like Goani seldom have a library. So the opportunities for children to read a book other than the school books are very limited. In most of the villages there are very few institutions, shops or workshop with signboards, records or documents that people can read. The possibilities to practice reading skills are therefore very limited. This may bring a high risk that children's literacy skills will lapse after a number of years.

During a normal school day she had no duties before she went to school, but after coming back she had to clean the room, wash the utensils, or assist with preparing the evening meal. Sometimes, especially on Saturday, she had to wash clothes and when she was younger she had to look after her small brothers and sister. Her parents supported her to go to school and paid the school costs but were not so

interested in what was happening at school, never asking her anything about it. They never visited the school or a teacher to discuss the progress of their children. Even so, her parents believe that education is important for boys and girls and she fully agrees with that. With a primary school certificate it is easier to find a job e.g. as midwife or cleaner. A certificate gives a person more status because it shows that one can read and write a bit. She also can read and write but some of her girlfriends can read better. On the other hand there are also many girls in the village who cannot read and write.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Last year during the rainy season Alia dropped out of Grade 7. Her mother got ill and was taken to the hospital in Eddamazine. The treatment by the hospital took a long time and in the meantime her mother was staying with her parents in Eddamazine. During that period she and her older sister had to do the household chores and prepare food for the younger children etc. The two older sisters had to work on the land during the agricultural season. So early in the morning they left for the countryside and in the afternoon they returned to the village to clean the house. From that day there was no longer time to go to school.

Now her mother is healthy again and returned to the village. Her sister is married and left the compound but Alia is still at home. She starts the day by making tea for the family. Thereafter she has to wash the utensils from the dinner of the previous evening and to prepare *fatour*. During the day she also has to look after the younger children and then she prepares the evening meal together with her mother. Though her father does the shopping in Eddamazine, there is sometimes an opportunity to buy something in the village. She still visits her friends because they live close to the house, but she never went back to school.

2.4.2 Suleiman, who sacrificed school to support his brother's study

The boy and his family: Suleiman is 17 years old and the second child of a family of three. His father went to the (informal) Quranic school (*khalwa*) and at home his father now leads his own *khalwa*, Suleiman has no idea about the education level of his parents, however his father can read and write. Suleiman has one brother who is in Grade 8. His elder sister left school in Grade 7. His father is working as a farmer and after the agricultural season he trades crops. He buys crops from farmers in the area and sells them in Eddamazine. So he travels regularly to Eddamazine. His father believes in the importance of education and he certain about this: *'If you want to have a good life, you have to learn as it will allow you to understand everything and enable you to differentiate between halal and haram.'*

Suleiman lives with his parents, brother and sister in a house which is not very different from the other houses in the village, built of mud, wood and straw. There are two rooms, a pit latrine and a place to take a bath on the compound. The house is surrounded by a weak fence made of wood and straw that often falls down during heavy rains and as Suleiman is the eldest son, he is responsible for maintaining the fence during the rainy season. They buy water from the donkey cart and use light from the private generators operated by some people in the village. Suleiman's house is only five minutes' walk from the school.

His mother lost nine children during pregnancy or within a few days of the births. He is really influenced by these sad occasions and full of sorrow and a bit emotional when mentioning it. This may explain the limited work he had to do during his school

years and the strong relation between Suleiman and his brother Eissa who is a Grade 8 student and one of the best students of his class.

Suleiman's school memories: Suleiman's academic performance was always rather weak, mostly he was among the last ten performers in his class and therefore he is not able to read fluently. Except for Grade 7, he never had to repeat a class. He always liked to go to school as he was not only free from home duties but he could also move around the school yard and practice sport. His preferred subjects were mathematics and history.

He disliked the classrooms because they were built of wood and straw and in the rainy season the roof could not protect them from the rains. Suleiman has two close friends – they used to study, play, swim and wander around in the fields close to the village. They were always together. He liked only two teachers from the school staff, because they knew how to teach and whenever he missed class they explained the content of the lessons he missed. Suleiman's family was not very supportive of his education. Of course, they paid for everything but except for the financial support there was no other support. They never encouraged him and they did not show a lot of interest in his school life. His father was always travelling to Eddamazine and had no time to assist him. He only came to school when the 'contributions' were due.

For Suleiman the basic school certificate is not important but he does not know why. At the same time, Suleiman mentioned that he is very proud of his cousins, who made it into University and who now have good positions. It fills him with sorrow that he could not learn as well as his cousins but he hopes that Eissa, his younger brother, will study as well as his cousins. So far so good, because Eissa's academic performance is very good. He added that he would still like to be educated: *'if there is an adult education program I will join immediately.'*

Reasons for dropping out of school: Suleiman dropped out from Grade 7 this year. He made the decision to stop his education himself and without consulting his parents. The main reason was that he wished to support his father. His father inherited a big farm from their father, with his brothers and sisters. Not so long ago they divided the large piece of land and he started to cultivate his part by himself. Earlier the father worked together with his brothers but the division of the land had alienated the brothers so they no longer collaborate with each other. Anyway, Suleiman decided to support his father in cultivating the vast area of land.

He also mentioned that his parents agreed that Eissa will be supported to complete his education because he is very good student. And here there is a contradiction because his mother told him that his father is not able to cover Eissa's education and that Suleiman has to assist his father. This way it will be possible for his younger brother to complete his education. Now Suleiman works making mud bricks in the village and when the agriculture season starts he will join his father on the farm. Suleiman is happy to be able to support his father financially and, in that way also, his brother's education. Some weeks ago his uncle who lives in Khartoum asked his father to send Suleiman to Khartoum to assist him in building his house. Suleiman is also happy for now he will travel to Khartoum and meet his cousins.

Suleiman, who left the school to ensure a bright future for his brother has a big dream of building a nice house for himself and ensuring a good future for his children.

2.4.3 Asad who started a small *dukan*

The boy and his family: Asad is 21 years old and the youngest son of a family of six children. His parents never went to school but they both studied at a *khalwa*. This was possible for his mother because her father was a sheikh. Asad has two older brothers and two older sisters, both married. The eldest brother studied at a *khalwa* and the second one sat for his secondary school exam. One of his married sisters completed Grade 5, the other never attended school. The younger sister completed Grade 5 and will go to Grade 6.

Asad is still living with his parents, his younger sister and one of his married brothers on a compound not far away from the school. On the compound there are two small one-room buildings, one made of mud and one of bricks. One of the rooms has a light connected to a private generator which runs from 7pm to 1am. For water they depend on the water tank. Though his parents attended a *khalwa* they can only write their names and read the numbers. When he was young his father learned to make *djallabia's* (Sudanese dress for men and women) and ever since he has been working as a tailor in his own little workshop in the village.

Asad's school memories: Asad had to repeat class at the end of Grade 1, not because he was a weak student but because he was still very small. This happens often. So in communities where most children enter school late, at the age of 8 or 9, the children that entered school at the right age run the risk of being penalized for the fact that they are too small for moving up to the next class.

Every day he liked going to school. Also because he was living close to the school he was always one of first children to enter the compound. He was rewarded for that by the headmaster of the school by becoming the key holder, the one responsible for opening the gate and the teacher's room. Asad had many friends at school. Now they all have graduated from primary school and some of them went to secondary school but they are still his friends. Of all the classes he liked the daily opening session, the school assembly, the most. A couple of times he acted in a small play during the session.

Finishing primary school is important because when you have a certificate it is easier to find a job. You cannot find permanent employment without a certificate. His father supported his children to go to school and to stay there. He often met a teacher in the village and then they also talked about the education of his children. He was always happy when they passed the exam at the end of the year. When they receive their annual

The father of Asad was one of the founders of the school. First the village only had religious schools but some parents wanted to establish a real primary school. Other parents were against this idea. At the end they had a meeting and there it was decided that parents who wanted to send their children to the *khalwa* could do so but that it was also possible for parents to send their children to the newly established primary school. The government encouraged them by providing uniforms, and they started with 50 students and one teacher for Grade 1. The school started with rooms made of mud, then the community constructed brick classrooms and now the school, supported by an Islamic Fund, is getting two blocks with six new classrooms. Though the father is very happy with the new classrooms, the ideal is to have a girls' school and a boys' school. There were never problems between the boys and girls at the school, because Goani is one large family, but it is just better.

certificate at the end of each school year he read them aloud and showed them his happiness.

Reasons for dropping out: Five years ago when Asad was 16 years he dropped out from primary school. He had just completed Grade 6. He was a good student and always one of the top ten students of the class, and there were no serious reasons why he dropped out. His father gave him everything he wanted. The most important reason for parting with school was that he did not understand certain things and that the teachers did not support him in understanding things better. At a certain moment when he did not understand the lesson he asked the teacher to explain the lesson, but she told him that she did not have time. The other children did not understand the lessons either but never raised their hands. Another time she told him that he will never understand it. Then Asad told his father that he hated school, he felt humiliated by his teacher and among his class fellows. He disliked the school so much that he did not want to go to school again. Never again! His father and mother talked to him but he did not want to listen to them. Some teachers came to his house to apologize, but he was stubborn and did not come back.

A few weeks later Asad left for Eddamazine. There he was driving a *fw* (donkey cart). Initially he liked living in the large town, got new friends and earned good money, but after four months he started to dislike the town, missed his family and friends and returned to the village. In the meantime his father had set up a small *dukan* (grocery shop) for him. He now regrets that he did not finish his schooling, because with a certificate it would be possible for him to go to Eddamazine or to Khartoum to find real employment, but in Goani he is also happy.

3 VOICES FROM SOUTH KORDOFAN

3.1 Al Toba Basic School in Al Toba Village (Vignettes 30 and 31)

The village: Al Toba is a village in the rural area west of Kadugli town, inhabited by people from different tribes and clans. The houses, which from a distance look alike, are mostly built of local material, although some people have started to use red bricks and zinc sheets even in absence of urban planning. The village is three kilometers off the main, graded pipeline road linking Khartoum with the oilfields. The local community is involved in agriculture (fruit & vegetables), livestock (cows, sheep and goats) and commercial activities. This can be observed by the movements to and from the weekly market days and fruit and the vegetables transport to Kadugli, Al Kweik and the oilfields. Still, vast areas remain unused – a 'no man's land'. In general, the different groups co-exist peacefully, farmers and nomads. However sometimes there are incidents related to grazing land and access to water resources, posing threats to social peace. For the most part, these conflicts are brought under control by virtue of tribal bonds and efforts by traditional leaders from both sides. Through mediation and reconciliation between the individuals concerned, they bring the parties together and mostly achieve out-of-court settlements. The village lacks electricity but the school uses a borrowed 10 KVA generator.

The headmaster made the following comments in relation to issue of dropout

- Children younger than 10 years usually do not drop out. According to him neither poverty and subsequent inability to cover 'contribution', nor distance to school or limited learning abilities or teacher attitude are responsible for dropout. Rather, the lack of awareness among parents about the importance of education, family movement (especially nomads) and prolonged illness are the real reasons for the high dropout rate in the village.
- For the elder students and in addition to the above mentioned reasons, child labour, herding the cattle is a main reason. For nomads, livestock is a top priority and the herding takes place between June and October, at the time children have to go to school.
- Another reason is the incidence of (forced) marriage. This may explain why there are only 9 girls in Grade 7 and, most probably, always fewer girls than boys in Grades 1-8. According to the headmaster, the villagers are relatively rich as their daily livelihood is based on fruit, vegetables, crops and livestock which are in high demand. Thus, it seems that they prefer to use their money to marry more than once (polygamy) than investing it in education.

The school: Al Toba Basic School is a school for boys and girls with 382 students (210 boys / 172 girls). The high enrolment of girls at the mixed gender school shows the interest and support of the community to girls' education. This is different from the past when only boys went to school. The school has 10 teachers, 7 male and 3 female. Only one teacher is from the village. Three of them (30%) were trained, with a university degree and more than 180 hours training. During the school year 2013-2014, 22 students (15 boys / 7 girls) graduated and entered secondary school which is 27 km away from the primary school.

The school has eight class rooms and two offices. The latrine building is one room partitioned into three to serve students (boys/girls) and teachers. The main concerns of the school relate to the lack of access to safe water, good space for a playground, and inadequate seating facilities. The school has established a system to record absenteeism, whereby an absent child is observed at the morning parade or in the class. If a child is absent a parent is summoned to come to school to clarify why the child is absent.

Earlier the children were enrolled in a school made of thatch by the local community, 300 meters from its current location. After the PTA approached the government, funds were allocated in 2009 to build the current school. The villagers chose the current location for reasons they thought more feasible, including enough space for future extension. Despite the good quality of the buildings and fence, it seems that the school has not been well-founded, resulting in visible cracks in the classrooms, head teacher's office and partial damage to the boundary wall. According to the headmaster, the government (State Ministry of Finance) paid a contractor who paid no attention to technical issues as the location was different from rocky land. The headmaster was expecting that the school would collapse within three years.



3.1.1 Hassan who had difficulties understanding Arabic and English

The boy and his family: Hassan is 19 years old and the oldest son of a family of four children. His father left school in Grade 2, and his mother never went to school. One brother and one sister are still enrolled in school. He lives with his parents, his two brothers and one sister in a house which looks similar to most village houses disadvantaged by a remote water source, and no electricity. The house is quite far away from school (though unable to tell the exact distance) but on his way to and from school, Hassan never faced negative experiences such as bullying, fighting or teasing.

Memories about school: Hassan thinks that a primary school certificate is important as it paves the way to getting a job and widens one's understanding about life and changes one's perception. This is why he always liked going to school, to learn the Quran and Arabic although he finds it still difficult to understand both Arabic and English. At school Hassan met his four friends with whom he did his homework. In addition to these friends there were also other schoolmates with whom he played. Meeting his friends was an important reason for going to school. He liked the school because it was a real building with desks and a blackboard which made it different from the normal buildings in the village.

His parents paid attention to his schooling, supported him with the necessary requirements and sometimes rewarded him with something extra when he was at school. His father followed up matters with the head teacher and staff during his school visits. Although Hassan was a serious and a good student who never

contributed to classroom disorder, he repeated class twice. According to him these repetitions were mainly due to his frequent absence from school, often more than once a week, to help his parents.

There was not a lot of corporal punishment at school. According to the headmaster corporal punishment is officially banned and therefore practicing corporal punishment is punishable by law. Nowadays it is only practiced as a last resort and when necessary. According to the headmaster corporal punishment does not contribute to the dropping out of children.

Hassan's father, did not like going to school, but at the same time regretted leaving it at Grade 2 because he thinks that education, and especially having a primary education certificate, helps people get a suitable job, '*a good future life is only possible with education*'. He explained that as a farmer his life would have been better off if he was educated.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Hassan left school two years ago when he was a Grade 7 student. For Hassan the main reason was that he had to help his parents. But there were also other reasons like his weak academic performance, resulting in two repetitions, and the limited number of books in the class. He always had to share books with other students which was not always easy in light of the distance to the houses of his classmates.

However, this contradicts the main reasons that Hassan's father gave. He rejected the idea that Hassan's school career suffered under the workload at home, but explained Hassan's decision to drop out as dissatisfaction and disappointment about the quality of education and teacher absenteeism. The father added that '*the school lacked school books and other materials*'. He did not think that corporal punishment was a reason for Hassan's dropping out. Hassan never complained about corporal punishment, so his father could not claim otherwise. And again the father stated that he regretted that his son left school and that he is unwilling to go back.

The teacher always visits children and their family who prematurely leave school. He is encouraging students to return to school and tries to find solutions for dropout causes. He succeeded in most cases but a few parents refused to respond positively to the headmaster's requests.

Unlike other dropouts, Hassan admitted that he took the decision to drop out himself and not his father. He therefore did not blame his father. Now when he realizes that it is difficult to find a good job and that his literacy skills are still weak, he regrets that he dropped out from school. Unfortunately, Hassan has no idea how to realize going back to school because he cannot meet the cost to finance basic school needs like uniform, shoes, books and 'contribution'. His father expects that Hassan will go back to school after the upcoming Primary School Certificate Exams.

3.1.2 Faten, the orphan

The girl and her family: Faten is 11 years old and the 4th out of seven children, all girls. Her father died some years ago. Faten lives with her mother, who is paralyzed, and four sisters on a compound in Toba village. The house is not far away from the school. Two of her elder sisters got married and live with their husbands and children somewhere else in the village. Both her parents attended primary school for a few years. Her mother can read and write a bit. Two of her sisters are still in school; four sisters left school before completion because the family could not pay the 'contribution'.

After the death of her father as a result of the civil strife in this part of the country, her mother became the head of the family. Supported by her two married daughters and an aunt she is now taking care of her daughters. The aunt takes Faten to her house as it is a help to her paralyzed sister.

The mother has good relations with the school and teachers, especially the headmaster whom she meets almost every day. She claims to have supported Faten during the years she was in school with her school work.

Faten's school memories: Many things encouraged Faten to go to school. Faten had friends at school and enjoyed being together with them, to play, to study and doing homework together. Neither Faten, nor the headmaster, or her mother considers corporal punishment as a discouraging factor.

Faten's role models were the seven girls from the village who earlier graduated from the school and continued their education in a fixed primary school and who are now enrolled in secondary school. She always looked up to them and it was very encouraging for her to know that they were able to continue their education.

Faten found mathematics and science boring and difficult to understand but she did not dislike these subjects. This, among other things, contributed to a rather weak performance and the subsequent repetition of two classes. However despite her weak performance and the boring subjects, she liked going to school. She could not further substantiate why she liked going to school. On the other hand, Faten was also discouraged to go to school for a number of reasons related to unfavourable conditions at school and within the family. Though she mentioned that she seldom had to stay home to help her mother and that her mother supported and encouraged her to go to school, she also mentioned that she often stayed with her aunt who did not pay a lot of attention to Faten's going to school. Her teacher mentioned a number of factors like poverty, unattractive school environment and family neglect that discouraged Faten to go to school.

Faten believes that education is good for everybody and that a primary school certificate is important. Her mother, who is quite ambitious, believes that primary education and the primary certificate are good, paving the way to recruitment as teacher, engineer or physician. Her mother said that she supported the education of Faten wherever she could and that she never asked Faten to help her with the household chores because she herself never had the possibility to finalize school. However, more than once a week her aunt asked for her help which resulted in the frequent absence of school. This was before Faten left school for good.

Faten's mother was quite satisfied with the quality of education her daughter was receiving. In the absence of a father, life, especially feeding her seven daughters, was difficult for her.

Overall the picture is not very clear: on the one hand, Faten said that she was seldom pressured by her mother to stay at home and help her with the household, but on the other hand she also pointed out a lack of support by her mother and her aunt.

Her teacher feels satisfied with the teaching profession and thinks it is important to uplift the children of the nomad community from illiteracy to people with knowledge. He is encouraged by the children's motivation to come to school and their eagerness to learn, accepting and responding to his instruction.

Main reasons for dropping out of school

One year ago when Faten was ten years old she dropped out from Grade 4. There were many reasons that contributed to Faten's dropout. First of all, there was always a lot of work to be done at home. In addition her mother could not give her the support which was required. Not only were the financial means limited, but there was also little encouragement and attention to her schooling. However it was the weak academic performance followed by need to repeat Grade 4 that triggered her dropout. For the mother, this was the main reason to ask Faten to stay home. However at the end it is not clear if Faten's weak performance was the cause or the result of the frequent absence from school.

Unlike Faten, her mother clearly states that it was necessary for her daughter to support the family with the household management. This became especially important after her husband's death. When due to frequent absence Faten had to repeat class, the decision was made to leave school.

The headmaster believes that, being a weak student, Faten was not very motivated to go to school. In addition to this there were some factors like the family's lack of money, the unattractive school environment, and the lack of support by her mother that contributed to Faten dropping out.

On the one hand Faten regrets being out of school, but on the other hand she is not interested to return to school because of her poor academic performance. Faten's mother said that it is not possible for Faten to return to school, but she did not further clarify this.

3.2 Dameek Nomadic School in Barno village (Vignettes 32-34)

The village: Barno village is situated along the main paved road linking Al Kweik, the locality seat, with Khartoum and the oilfields. Along the road is the main oil pipeline from the oil fields to Port Sudan. The village has a moderate market place where farmers, nomads and other community groups exchange locally produced and imported commodities and services.

The people of Barno depend economically on agriculture (crops, fruit and vegetables), cattle herding and commercial activities. The area has vast areas of fertile land but the access to land is currently restricted by security concerns – sometimes travel permits are needed. The village has plenty of water sources, but lacks safe water. Because the village is not what the government calls an urban planned area, it lacks services like water and electricity supplies. Local investors have introduced generators providing electricity to the private sector if affordable.

The school: In Barno village there is a 6-Grade private primary (co-education) school for children whose parents can afford to pay 'contribution'. In addition and especially to address the nomads' right to education, the State Ministry of Education approved the Dameek Nomadic School in 2003. In the past nomadic students used to be enrolled in boarding schools provided with all learning utilities and school feeding. Later on this policy changed when the government introduced the idea of 'mobile teacher', most probably from the same community, to accompany nomads when migrating. The school is five km from the main road, at a place which was selected by the nomads, considering walking distances from the surrounding nomad settlements. When choosing the location of the school the nomads also considered the right of the farmers to water. This is needed because nomads as cattle owners,

and at the expense of their rights to water, health and education services, never settle near water sources, but move on. This is to avoid conflicts with farmers on water-related issues, and the herds could damage crops before harvest. It is therefore important for farmers and nomads to maintain good (working) relationships.

Dameek Nomadic School has one trained teacher who is the headmaster and who teaches in all three Grades. The students of these three classes are accommodated in three classrooms, two in nice-looking tents and one in a shabby shelter made of local material. In the school 71 students, (33 boys/ 38 girls) are enrolled. In addition there is preschool for children of 4-5 years. After students graduate from Grade 3 they can enroll in Grade 4 of full-fledged primary schools in other villages to complete the Basic School (Grade 8). The nomad school has no benches and the students sit on stones in dirty unorganized classes. The school has a small but clean yard with volleyball net. According to the headmaster, the school was approved in 2003 as the first nomadic school in South Kordofan, and the first batch of students went to secondary school in 2008. The transfer to another school is sometimes a good excuse for the child to drop out. Moving to a new village, new culture, norms and people would prompt questions regarding transportation means, accommodation and feeding issues, at least breakfast, especially if it is not a boarding school. The nearest secondary school is in Alkweik 40 km from the Nomadic School. There is also a shortcut via Al Bardab which is only 15 km from Dameek but this crosses a no-go area because of insecurity and therefore nowadays is not possible.

3.2.1 Khaltoum who deliberately left school

The girl and her family: Khaltoum, a 14-year-old girl lives with her parents, who never went to school, in a nomad house similar to others. The house has no electricity and no direct access to water. She is the fourth among five brothers and four sisters. One brother graduated from secondary school, and the other brothers and sisters left school without a certificate. Three boys and two girls still attend school.

The father and older brothers are cattle herders with an interest in agriculture to meet all life expenses. Therefore they are also cultivating the land for supplementing their basic needs. They use the remnants of the harvest for feeding the livestock during dry season. Being illiterate himself, Khaltoum's father thinks that education is important and therefore supported his daughter with rewards, uniform and absolute freedom to choose. However, the headmaster believes that there is still a lack of awareness about the importance of education due to persisting negative social perceptions that it is a waste of time to send your children for such a long time to school. At the end it results in joblessness. According to the nomadic community, it will be more fruitful to invest time in livestock. Possibly this may count more for boys than for girls since the father mentioned: '*Khaltoum was seldom asked to work at home*'. and he also regretted that Khaltoum left school and that she was determined not to return to school again, because he believes that: '*one of his responsibilities is now not fulfilled*'.

Memories about the school: Khaltoum used to walk to school. This was never a real problem since she liked school. The learning in the school went without difficulties and therefore she did not repeat classes. Yes, she was a good student

and never had difficulties understanding subjects for which she had all the books. She liked especially Arabic and mathematics, which she easily understood.

She believes primary education is good and a certificate is important. She likes the school, class, especially when the teacher writes nicely on the blackboard telling them what to do and how to do it. She has many friends with whom she played and learned together. There were never problems in and around school and she was never harassed on her way to and from school. She also liked her teachers in all subjects.

Khaltoum's father used to communicate with the school to check the functioning of the teacher and monitored the performance and behavior of his children in and out of school. He is satisfied with the quality of education of school and that his children can read and write, take care of prayers and he believes that thanks to the school they have become more responsible.

During the time she went to school she often – at least once a week – helped her parents after school hours. She liked going to school because all her brothers and sisters went to school and

Some children, and especially the children of the lower Grades, are very close and often emotionally attached to their class teachers. They therefore prefer to work with the same teacher. They get very distracted when teachers are transferred to another school like the case of Khaltoum who loved her teacher very much. When the teacher was transferred she became very unhappy. And to make things worse the newly appointed teacher often beat them

they went together. However her father was not very happy with the two-tent school environment and without desks to sit on. It looks very poor when compared to other schools and this does not make a school very attractive for children. It might be good during the dry season but difficult to endure in rainy season.²⁰ He also said: 'As such walking to school is not a problem, nomads are used to it, they are always on the move but is the school attractive enough to walk to and from it, five days a week for six months?

Corporal punishment, though adversely affecting other communities, is not a big deal to the rather violent nomads' community. Nomadic children do it among themselves more frequently than at school. The head teacher thinks using more subtle means to retain nomadic students is the only way out, not violence or abusive treatment.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Khaltoum dropped out from Grade 4 in 2011. She left school to help her father on the farm and to manage the house. Being one of the oldest girls she felt responsible for helping her parents. But she also said that she was disappointed in school despite her father's support and encouragement. This is maybe fed by the lack of motivation to walk everyday to school, a school which did not come up to her expectations.

Now, three years later, she is remorseful that she left school. Now she helps her parents, and is not willing to return. It is not clear whether her father tried to push her to return to school, or whether, having found a helping hand, he kept silent. Khaltoum is on the one hand indifferent about her dropout decision, but on the other

²⁰ This nomadic school falls in the group B of the education system calendar, meaning that in contrast to other schools it usually closes in June and resumes work in October after 4 months summer vacation during the rainy season, which is good for nomads.

hand interested in going back to school because she is still dreaming of becoming a teacher.

'Consented child labour' is a main dropout reason, and children do not feel exploited; they rather enjoy helping their parents. Nomadic Grade 4 students are annually transferred to Dameek and Al Kweik, the villages with a full-fledged primary school. The transfer to another school may be seen as too big a step to take. If families are not in favour of letting their daughters go to a permanent primary school, it may also contribute to their dropping out prior to their graduation from the nomad school.

Sometimes tribal clashes contribute to dropout. Especially in cases that families, due to disputes and thus for their safety, have to move to other communities or villages. There they have to stay until a solution is found between the two camps, e.g. homicide cases where mediators intervene to convince both sides to accept an out-of-court settlement which is often more feasible than going to court. If the victimized family accepts 'diya' (blood money), then the issue is solved. If the family insists on retribution, this means continuation of court proceedings until the defendant is found guilty or innocent. It might take years to reach a settlement in such cases. Children fall victims of such proceedings, and become over-age, as time passes.

3.2.2 Abdallahi, who dropped out when the time came his father needed him

The boy and his family: Abdallahi is a 15-year-old boy and the oldest son of the family. His father dropped out from Grade 2, his mother never went to school and is illiterate. Three of his brothers and sisters are still enrolled in school, two in Grade 1 and one in Grade 2. However, in all the literacy skills of his brothers are weak because none of them reached Grade 3.

They all live with their parents in a house similar to the other houses of the nomadic community, houses without electricity. In summer, water provision is a problem. Abdallahi's family survives on the bare minimum earned by herding cattle and by farming during the rainy season. His father was the one who communicated with the teacher to follow up the progress of his children at school. The family supported the education of their children but their (financial) support was limited due to financial constraints.

Abdallahi's school memories: At school and in the class Abdallahi met his friends. He got along well with everybody and was never harassed on the way to school. He enjoyed being away from home and had interest in going to school and he liked the school environment. He also liked the headmaster/teacher who was always around at school. His favourite subjects are the Quran and poetry, although he first found it was difficult to recite. According to the teacher/headmaster the level of education of Abdallahi was good and the teacher has a close relation with the students.

Abdallahi thinks that it is good that children go to school; education is essential and the primary education certificate is important. He likes going to school in order to become a teacher or engineer. Abdallahi's father has a positive perception about the importance of education and primary school certificate. To him, education develops people and leads them to globalization in terms of radio listening, TV watching and interacting with the outside world.

The headmaster/teacher was from the same community, so they all shared the same culture. He was known to everybody in the village and he knew all children and the family background of the children. In the past, according to Sudanese

culture which still prevails in many states, families do not send girls to boys' schools. Now things have changed in favour of co-education in rural areas where boys and girls have access to education as a fundamental human right – quality education is second priority.

Observation showed that the physical environment of the school is poor. The tent classes are made from local materials and have their limitations and are therefore not an attractive learning environment. It gets boring sitting on stones under a shabby shelter with no protection from heat, cold or dust.

Main factors for dropping out of school: Abdallahi dropped out from Grade 4 when he was 11 years old. The most important reason for his dropping out was the regular workload at home. He always had to help his parents. In addition, there was the lack of financial support to cover the cost of schooling. Village life, especially among nomadic tribes, attracts and supports dropout as peers are seen roaming around and enjoying social and cultural events without being accountable to parents and or others. This may indicate that when there are no sanctions children have no interest going to school.

In addition, Abdallahi always had to help his parents during the agricultural season on the farm, and during the other months he had to walk with the cattle to the grazing land and water points and to help his younger brothers with homework. In the end, his father took the decision and Abdallahi left school to help his father and manage the house. Although he dropped out, Abdallahi contested the decision for a while because he very much liked going to school.

One may conclude that his father's support to education of Abdallahi was very limited and only as long as he could manage to do so financially. He would also give conditional approval for the child to go back to school if his financial situation improved. If parents decide that their children have to stay home to help them, it becomes difficult to extract the real causes behind this decision. Likewise, the son's contribution to the family income will not be transparent, if ever calculated. Maybe because of this the family still retains three children in school. For them it is still not urgent to support the family. They still are too small to work and it may be for the convenience of the family that they stay in school. However this was no longer the case for Abdallahi as he had to take care of grazing the animals and this prevented Abdallahi from going back to school.

According the headmaster/teacher: *'persistent absenteeism often results in repeating and repeating often and ultimately leads to dropping out. This is often due to the demand of parents to stay home to help them with the agricultural work'*.

3.2.3 Amal, whose family did not value education

The girl and her family: Amal is a 15-year-old girl who attended the nomad school for boys and girls in Dameek. She is the 5th among four brothers and two sisters and lives with her parents in a nomadic house that has no electricity and running water²¹. Her father is a farmer and cattle herder.

Her parents never attended school. Her elder sisters never went to school and her three elder brothers children left school in Grades 5, 6, and 7. Her youngest brother is still attending school.

²¹ The only house enjoying solar energy is the head teacher's house.

Amal's school memories: Amal has good memories about the time she went to school. The school was not far away from her house and she never encountered problems in reaching school. She liked her teacher, his way of teaching and explaining. When she had to do homework she often did this together with her schoolmates.

In general, Amal's performance was good and she never had to repeat a class. She was not so good in mathematics and sometimes had difficulties in understanding certain concepts, but she still liked going to school.

Amal was discouraged from going to school by the low enrolment of children, but fortunately the number of girls outweighed that of boys. This is surprising since her community does not really support girls' education.

It is not clear how many students who graduated from the nomad school continued their education at schools in the neighbouring towns or villages, let alone the number of children who earlier attended the nomad school and then went to secondary school

Amal thinks a primary school certificate contributes to the social status of a person. She therefore regrets that she dropped out from school and that she could not complete school like her schoolmates. Her father, who regrets that he never went to school, thinks that education is good and important because it helps the community to interact, develop and progress. He thinks that education and a primary school certificate are important because they facilitate interaction with other communities and pave the way to progress and development. He also said that he communicates with the headmaster when necessary to follow up and supervise how his children make friends in school. He also claims that he supported Amal to go to school and encouraged her sometimes with incentives. He is also of the opinion that good-quality teaching will lead to success which in turn takes students to secondary schools and further to university. So for him education is the way to employment and to job security.

The comments made by the headmaster on the perceived importance of education by Amal's family are very different: *'the family is affected by local culture and environment and, therefore, ignorant of the importance of education which is considered a low priority. Moreover, the elder brother has pressured his younger brothers to drop out and help the family'*.

He regrets his daughter left school. If she had not dropped out she would be educated by now.

Main factors for dropping out of school: Two years ago, when Amal was 13 years old, she dropped out from Grade 4. The main reason for this was the lack of support by her parents to complete school. More than once a week she had to help her parents at home with the household duties but also with duties on the farm. Often she could not go to school which affected her school performance negatively. However her father claimed that the family supported the children's education. Anyway, Amal gave up. She no longer wanted to go to school and was apparently not asked to change her mind.

Her father mentioned three reasons why Amal left school: she wished to help her parents, the difficulty to combine school with the workload at home and on the land, and his financial inability to support the schooling of his daughter. According to the

headmaster, the children of Amal's family were also being demotivated by their brothers and sisters and their friends who dropped out earlier.

The lack of awareness about the importance of education in combination with the unattractiveness of the nomadic school (lack of books, unattractive curriculum and very basic facilities) were important reasons for leaving school, according to the headmaster. For some children the walking distance to school was a reason to discontinue.

The question remains though why Amal's parents first send their children to school for a number of years and then decide to allow them to stop. One can only conclude that at a certain moment the disadvantages to go to school outnumber the advantages.

The headmaster said that he was never absent from school – if there was no school the children will return to their homes and getting them back to school would take a lot of effort and time. He added: *'to create more parent support for education it is therefore important to employ at least one more teacher and to create a more conducive learning environment by providing desks and learning aids'*.

3.3 Keiga Girls School in Keiga (Vignettes 35 and 36)

The village: Keiga Village is situated north-east of Al Kweik, 11 km from the tarmac road linking Kadugli to Dilling, El Obeid and Khartoum. It is inhabited by more than 4000 people of different tribes, Nuba, Arabic nomads and other Sudanese tribes. The main economic activities are agriculture, livestock and commerce. Local communities exchange commodities in permanent and shifting weekly markets. The Keiga Friday market is famous for its agricultural products, fruit and livestock. In general the people live peacefully together but occasionally there are seasonal farmer-nomad disputes that are solved by the leaders of the community

The school: Keiga Girls' School is a nice-looking, well-designed and well-constructed school with eight classrooms and two offices. The school was built by Care International with the support of the local community (bricks, stones and sand). Of the seven teachers (five female, two male), three live in the village. Only one teacher is trained. According to the headmaster, the school is fully furnished and has all basic classroom utilities. The classrooms are well organized and clean with good flooring. The school has a clean yard and good, clean latrines and as a whole looks very attractive.

The teacher interviewed mentioned that he enjoys his work because it is part of his responsibility towards the community. He rewards children when they carry out their duties, or when they behave well, when showing good manners and when respecting their teachers and each other. On the other hand, the teacher says he has to deal with certain incidents where he has to talk and listen to different students and judge the situation accordingly. Punishment, which is usually in the form of blame, warning or reprimand, seldom results in lashes. According to him, counselling precedes punishment.

There are 367 students enrolled in Keiga Girls' School. Last year 23 girls graduated, 18 of whom were admitted into secondary schools in Al Kweik town, 11 km from Keiga. In 2014-15, 29 out of 32 girls moved from grade 7 to 8 (90.6%).

3.3.1 Khadija agreed with her mother to drop out

The girl and her family: Khadija is 16 years old and lives with her parents, three sisters and three brothers in Keiga village. Both father and mother are illiterate. Her mother regrets that she was not able to go to school. The two older brothers left school without a certificate and are now working. Two younger sisters successfully completed Grades 3 and 8 and the youngest is not attending school yet. They live in a house similar to the other houses of the village with no electricity or water supply. Khadija's father is a farmer and her mother supports him in the farming. When the agricultural season is over, both parents do casual work, providing firewood to the local market.

Khadija's school memories: Every day Khadija used to walk together with her friends to the school which was not far away from her house. Her friends were very important because she spent most of the day with her friends. She liked her school because there she learned to read and write. She liked her classroom, and English, the Quran and history were her most favourite subjects, but she found science difficult to understand. Khadija said she was quite a good student but she had to repeat once due to weak performance.

Khadija thinks that a primary school certificate is important because you may need it one day to show it to authorities or if you wish to continue your education. She always wished to become a physician or engineer but had to give up this dream after dropping out of school. Now she regrets that she left school, not only because she cannot become a physician or engineer but also because she can no longer see and socialize with her school mates. Now that she left school, she recognizes more clearly the importance of a school certificate. Her mother thinks that education and a primary school certificate are important because children learn how to be take responsibility and how they can take care of children. The parents therefore bought her a set of books for all the subjects.

Since her father was always busy the mother used to communicate with the school, headmaster and teachers when necessary. Although she never went to school herself, she is satisfied with the quality of education at school and she thinks that the teachers take care of the children.

Khadija's teacher claimed that she knew the background of all the children and believes that the main cause for the dropout of many girls is the financial situation of the families. The parents do not have the money to pay for school uniform and other learning expenses. This contradicts the school policy that it is not necessary for those children who cannot afford it to wear a school uniform. It is the general poverty which leads to the family's inability to support child going to school. Moreover, it is very common that children are held back to help with the workload at home as well as on the land when needed.

Main reasons for dropping out of school: Khadija had left school six months before the interview, when she was a Grade 8 student. According to Khadija, she was frequently absent from school to help her parents and the frequency of her absence increased as she got older. This is not totally admitted by her mother who claims to have seldom asked her to stay at home to help the family. In addition, Khadija mentioned the negative attitude of her teacher. However, according to the headmaster corporal punishment is very limited at this girl's school and therefore it is unlikely to be an important reason for dropout. Khadija dropped out because she got used to staying at home and lost interest in going to school.

It was observed that school attendance in Grades 5-8 was low. This may indicate that it is a normal practice for many families in the village to hold children at home when there is a need, or to allow girls to stay at home when they want to. In combination with the regular absenteeism of the teachers, it feeds the vicious circle of high absenteeism among students and teachers leading to low performance, then to low motivation, and to high absenteeism. The bottom line is that this situation may be the result of weak school management. Weak school performance may not contribute to a growing awareness about the importance of education by parents. In light of their limited interest in education, they send their children to school as long as they do not need them at home or on the farm.

This low attendance combined with limited achievements at school may also have had a negative effect on Khadija's motivation. Her friends often had to stay at home and she sometimes stayed at home so the learning was limited and her performance was therefore rather weak. Her dream to become a professional diminished as the years passed.

At the school there is a certain indifference among teachers on the incidence of dropping out because, to them, it is not a big deal as the dropout percentage is low. When children drop out the school does not make efforts to follow up with families to see if the school can retain these children.

So Khadija's dropout may have been a combination of reasons. It may be that after a number of years of irregularly helping her mother at home her performance at school declined. At the time she was in Grade 8 she realized that it was difficult to pass the exam. As the parents realized that Khadija became stronger and stronger, they perceived that it was more valuable for Khadija to stay at home permanently. An additional advantage was that by staying at home, they did not have to pay the recurring cost for her education. Mother and daughter therefore jointly decided that it was better for Khadija to drop out and stay at home.

Although it was mentioned that if the financial situation of the family improved Khadija would go back to school, in light of the fact that two of her brothers were already working and supporting the family, it is unlikely ever to happen.

3.3.2 Dina lost interest in going to school

The girl and her family: Dina, 15 years old, is the oldest child of a family of eight children (four brothers and three sisters). One brother and three sisters attend school. Her brother will go to Grade 2, and her sisters just completed Grades 4, 1 and kindergarten. Her mother went to school but dropped out from Grade 3, but her father, a farmer, has no educational background. She lives with her parents and 7 brothers and sisters in Keiga village.

The house in which they live is similar to the other houses of the village. The house does not have electricity and water is provided by hand pumps. In the dry season this is sometime a problem.

Dina's school memories: Dina was always interested in going to school. She liked her class because all her friends were with her in the same class and after school they did their homework together. The Arabic and Quran lessons she enjoyed the most. English was very difficult and even in Grade 8 she was unable to understand English.

Dina thinks that a primary school certificate is important to continue learning in secondary schools and beyond. She also believes that education is important for developing people for life and preparing them to find a job. Her mother agrees with this and says that education is good for human development. However according to Dina, her mother never made a substantial effort to support the schooling of her daughter, never showing interest or encouraging her.

Her mother said she visited the school to discuss matters with teachers when necessary. She was satisfied with the quality of education and that the students were performing their duties as required.

Dina had to repeat class three times, but did not disclose why – it was perhaps because she was a weak student or often had to help her parents.

During the years she went to school and being the oldest daughter Dina had to support her family and especially her mother with the daily house hold chores, before and after school, as well as during school hours. So she often had to miss classes. Her parents are poor so their financial

During the morning parade or during the first period in their respective classrooms, the school identifies who is present and who is absent. This makes it possible to connect absenteeism with dropping out. According to the headmaster, the school has a policy of following up on children who dropped out. First of all, the school makes efforts to communicate with the concerned families to find out if the cause of the absence is temporary or longer term. If the absence results in dropout, the school makes efforts to convince the parents that education is important for their child. However though quite aware of the causes for the dropout, the teacher does not persuade parents to change their minds or to find a solution to retain the child in close collaboration with the family.

support was limited to the most essential things, e.g she did not have school books for all subjects and therefore lacked the books for the Quran and Arabic. In addition, they were always busy and therefore did not pay attention to her school career. This of course did not motivate Dina very much to continue her education.

According to teacher the quality of the educational facilities at school was poor (school and class environment). In addition there was high teacher absenteeism.

Both had an unfavourable effect not only on the school performance but also on Dina's motivation.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Dina dropped out from Grade 5 in January 2015, two months before the annual school exam. This was mainly due to the need to support her mother on a permanent basis and after the family failed to pay the 'contribution'. With this decision, her hope to become a teacher ebbed away.

Although the teacher knows the background of children who dropped out, he does not make any attempt to undertake follow up. So when Dina dropped out the teacher neither contacted the family nor did he take any action to retain her in school.

Her mother believed she was always supportive to her education. In spite of this, she regrets that Dina dropped out, because she was close to her exam and cannot now continue learning like her other schoolmates. Unfortunately, her family's inability to pay 'contribution' prevents Dina from resuming school life. It is remarkable that her parents never discussed this issue with the school administration. So she now is supporting her parents instead of being supported by her parents to continue schooling.

Dina hopes that the financial situation of her family will improve and that she can go to school again.

3.4 Koya Nomadic School near Al Kweik (Vignettes 37 and 38)

The village: The Al Kweik or Koya Nomadic School is situated west of the main road linking Kadugli to Khartoum and 3 km south west of Al Kweik village. The place used to be the temporary camp for the nomads during the rainy season, but four years ago the nomads decided to settle there permanently, during both rainy and dry seasons. With its specific houses, it still looks like a nomadic settlement, but it is very close to an urban village with police, army and security HQ. As a locality seat, Al Kweik has health, education and other services. The first nomads started to construct brick houses at their compound, a sign of permanent settlement. However, the nomads still walk up to 10-20 km away from the village to look for food for their herds. Sometimes they hire shepherds (or use their children) to take care of cattle.

The school: The Koya school has six classrooms with a small but clean yard and four full time teachers. The school started as a community-funded nomadic school.

In 2014 the State Ministry of Education received funds from UNICEF to build four emergency classrooms. Although it looks far better now, the headmaster and the PTA members complained that two classrooms are still made from local

According to one the headmasters interviewed, a few years ago the WFP provided food for a breakfast for all students. This resulted in higher enrolment. When WFP stopped the food support, about 40 students dropped out from school. However, this contradicts the fact that there is no absolute poverty in the village. The dropout may be explained by the fact that these children were children of poor nomads/refugees who left the village at a certain moment. Possibly this moment coincided or was close to the moment that WFP closed its program.

materials. The new classrooms are semi-open and provide shelter against the sun and to some extent rain – when there are heavy winds or showers it affects the teaching and learning. In addition there is seasonal dust and sand in the

classrooms making it difficult to keep the places clean. The SMoE plans to reconsider this design of the school and is looking into the possibility of upgrading the school, in close collaboration with the PTA, by constructing two more classrooms, one teacher office and a store to avoid theft. Although the PTA provided bricks to build the office, this has not materialized yet.

The school does not have electricity or access to water and there is no boundary wall. Water is supplied by a donkey-driven cart. According to the PTA, UNICEF is waiting for the government to fulfil its commitment to provide a local contribution before funding a water hand pump.

All new classrooms are somewhat clean and have large blackboards painted on the wall, and cement floors. Every class has sufficient, good-quality desks but since the classrooms are open and as there is no guard they are vulnerable to theft – so the students take their chairs and desks home every day. Maybe as a result of the constant moving of the desks, the seating is not very well organized. Every morning, some students have the duty to clean the classrooms, however there are students who still have to get used to this idea and are therefore not so committed. In any cases, the school is somewhat attractive compared to other nomadic schools and much better than the temporary arrangements of the past.

Except for one teacher, they all come from other villages and small towns in the area. The headmaster keeps a telephone directory to communicate with parents in case they are needed to discuss any school affair, including temporary student absence or dropout. The only teacher from the village (female and untrained being a secondary school graduate) mentioned that she is very motivated to teach at the school. She was enjoying the teaching and she is aware why children drop out. When one of her students drops out, she meets the family, discusses the matter and sometimes they reach a successful solution and the girl comes back to school. Four teachers (one male and four female) come from remote areas and are subject to absenteeism. According to the headmaster this could be improved by the construction of a dormitory where the teachers could stay during the week.

3.4.1 Yassir, the prospective engineer

The boy and his family: Yassir is 13 years old and lives with his ten-member family in Koya on the western side of the tarmac road, three km from Al Kweik, the locality HQ. His parents never went to school. His father is a casual worker using his donkey-driven cart to collect and sell firewood and transport local building materials. He is the 3rd among three brothers and four sisters. His eldest brother assists his father and his elder sister assists her mother at home; two brothers and one sister go to school, having just completed Grade 5 and Grade 6 respectively. All the children stay with their parents, in a traditional nomadic house similar to the other houses of the nomadic camp. Yassir's father is a PTA member and has excellent communication with the headmaster and teachers. The headmaster praised him for the continuous services he provides to the school and staff.

School memories: Only a few months before the interview, Yassir dropped out and so his school memories are still warm. He liked school, was a good student and never repeated classes. He liked to learn new things and was especially good in reading. All his friends were attending school. With them he shared the benches and the books. There were never problems going to school, it was safe, there was no bullying, fighting or teasing. However, it was unfortunate that he had difficulties with understanding the Quran and *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Yassir did not like his

teachers because there was a lot of corporal punishment. He sometimes had to stay home to help his parents.

Yassir has a good perception about the importance of going to school and importance of education: the primary school certificate is important for getting a good job and only with a certificate can you improve your living conditions. Although his father is not educated, he regrets that Yassir left school. His father said that when he compares his current situation with that of his peers who went to school he sees the difference. They are now important people holding high level jobs and using luxury cars. *'only when you finish your primary school and continue your education will your future be better than your parents', and you can get high level jobs.'*

Reasons for dropping out of school: Only recently, in January 2015 Yassir dropped out from Grade 6. According to Yassir, he often had to stay home to help his parents, at least once a week. He also remembered that his schooling was limited by the lack of books. He had to share books with other children and they did not have money to buy books for all the subjects. This did not motivate him to go to school and hampered his learning.

The teacher, who knows the background of all his students, explained that his departure from school was mainly due to the worsened economic situation of the family. Yassir's reasons for dropout (over-age, poverty, parent's lack of awareness about importance of education and poor quality of education) were well-known to the teacher but he could not reverse it. However sometimes he manages to bring a child back to school. Not so long ago he met with the parents of a girl who dropped out and tried to convince them about the importance of education for the girl and for the family; as a result of the meeting the girl resumed schooling. It is not clear if similar efforts had been exerted to get Yassir back to the school.

According to Yassir's father, the family needed his support to herd the cattle, and they were no longer able to support him financially for school needs, e.g. to buy the required books and other materials. His father hopes that it will be temporary. He plans to send Yassir back to school if the situation improves.

Yassir regretted that he dropped out because his friends are still at school and now he no longer can join them, but right now he is not planning to return to school because he is too busy with herding the cattle. And he added *'life is difficult for me. Now that I am herding the cattle I can support my family with additional income which will help my family to buy food and other basic life needs'*. Yassir once asked his father to give permission to return to school but his father refused. Despite this, Yassir still dreams about becoming an engineer.

3.4.2 Anwar who contested his father

The boy and his family: Anwar lives in Koya village, three km from Al Kweik village. He lives there with his illiterate parents and his eight brothers and sisters, of whom three sisters and two brothers do not go to school. Anwar is the oldest child and ten years old. His younger brothers and sisters are still not attending school. Their house is similar to the other houses of the village, it is – made of wood and bent bamboo which gives it the characteristic ball shape, covered with local material mats and plastic sheet to protect against the rain. This design makes it possible to move the house when needed. The house is not too far away from the school.

The main source of income of the family is from cattle. Though the father is often away with the herd, this did not prevent him from staying in touch with the headmaster and teachers to follow up on Anwar's progress at school and to make sure that he was attending school. The father claimed that he was encouraging and incentivizing Anwar during the time his son was at school.

School memories: At all times Anwar liked going to school since it was there that he met his friends and where they played together. He was very happy when the new emergency classrooms were opened. The classes gave the school more status. He had books for all the subjects and did not remember anything negative about school nor mention anything he disliked during the years he was at school. Anwar was a good student but not so good in all subjects, e.g. he had some difficulties with reciting the Quran from memory. Despite this, the reading of the Holy Quran was his favourite subject. There were no difficulties going to school, it was safe, and he was never harassed. He also liked his knowledgeable teachers.

Anwar mentioned many reasons why he liked going to school. He walked there with friends, played with them and did homework together. The school has four nice classes, knowledgeable teachers and interesting subjects, especially the Quran. But Anwar was disadvantaged by the domestic workload and especially by the task of looking after the herd of his father. This was a big responsibility because when an animal got lost, was stolen or killed it was a big loss to the family and aggravated the income situation.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Anwar left school one month before the interview, dropping out from Grade 3 when he was ten years old. In Grade 2 Anwar started to get responsibilities for the herd, especially during the weekends and in Grade 3 he often was absent from school, at least once a week, to help his father with the herding of the flock. Anwar's father admits asking Anwar to stay at home to help him with the grazing of the herd. Anwar said that the frequency of absence from school increased during the last year which had a negative effect on his school performance. At the end he was forced by his father to leave school permanently. Anwar initially refused to accompany the cattle on a daily basis because he wanted to finish his school but his father forced him to do so. Now the father regrets that he asked his son to stop his schooling and admits that Anwar was right in contesting the decision. He says frankly that he does not want to see Anwar illiterate like him or to replicate his bad experience and so he is looking for an experienced and responsible person to take care of the flock.

Anwar also regretted dropping out because it is no longer possible to see his friends and play with them. Now he is active every day in leading the herd to the pastures. So the work as a shepherd prevents him from going back to school. Anwar does not like being a shepherd as he wished to become a teacher.

According to the headmaster, student dropout is mostly due to poverty, and the subsequent inability of the family to support the child, but even more to forcing their children to help the family in herding and with collecting water. In addition the headmaster said that there were other factors such as the limited school infrastructure (no fresh water, no electricity, the curriculum, the quality of the books and the quality of teaching).

3.5 Abdullahi ibn Abbass School in Murta village (Vignettes 39-40)

The village: Murta village is a residential area situated about 7 km north of Kadugli town and west of the main road to Khartoum. As indicated by the name of the village, the majority of the people are from the Murta tribe. The school site is neighbouring a number of newly constructed government buildings like the three-storey ministerial building, a stadium and the building of the State Police HQ. In addition the village also accommodates the new town bus terminal and Kadugli's livestock market. This place was chosen at the end of the eighties to temporarily accommodate people fleeing the war zone and as a result many IDP people have settled down in the village. It was never planned to accommodate so many people for a long time. The authorities do not have any idea when the people can return. It looks as though a substantial number will stay in Murta village permanently. Almost all the people live in houses made of local material but some already decided to construct houses made of baked bricks, since they have decided, regardless the outcome of the war, to stay in Murta.

According to the head teacher, most IDPs do not feel they are part of the Murta community and are therefore not loyal to this place. They always think of leaving as soon as they feel it is safe to go back to their places of origin. They feel like guests, and guests will leave at some point. Until then, they earn their living from small scale farming around the village as it is unsafe to go to the bush. They also keep goats, sheep and cows and live a rural life in the suburban area. Most men earn their living by doing casual work in town and on the farms. Some women work as tea makers in the neighbouring market and in Kadugli, but there are also men and women making and selling charcoal.

The school: The Abdullahi ibn Abbas school was built in 1986 especially to meet the need for education of the IDP children. The school has eight classrooms and two offices built by a national NGO which continues taking care of the school, teachers and students. On the same compound there is a newly built health centre with two rooms and two verandas. Two dispensaries and a lab room are under construction. This health centre serves the school, the village and the surrounding community, including Kulba village and Shaeer village.

The school has 17 full time teachers, seven male and ten female, and one part-timer, a volunteer teacher. Four teachers are trained and therefore officially trained. Two teachers live in Murta, the other teachers use a collective mini-bus to come to school. Last year, 22 students graduated from the Abbas school; except for one, all went to secondary schools in Kadugli.

The classrooms of the school are somewhat clean, it has clean latrines and direct access to water. The school yard is quite

According to one of the headmasters, the Parent Teacher Association has 11 members, 10 fathers and the headmaster. They meet on request of the headmaster. This year the headmaster called a meeting 3 times. Mostly, less than 5 fathers show up. During the last meeting they discussed the following topics: girls dropout, early marriage, school environment, latrines. At every meeting they repeat the same topics. After the meeting they go home and nothing happens because those members who can afford do not come to the meeting, afraid that the school will need money. So the PTA makes promises but nothing happens.

clean and tidy without dangerous rocks and debris so children can play without problems. Seating is inadequate and disorganized, making the classrooms less attractive. Some basic classroom utilities like blackboards and chalk exist but there are frequent shortages. It is an old school building with flooring that needs maintenance. The headmaster said that there is a plan to renovate and rebuild the school.

Because the school has no fence, passers-by also cross the school yard, sometimes with animals, causing interruption to teaching and learning.

3.5.1 Said, the brickmaker

The boy and his family: Said is 15 years old and is the youngest of a family of five children. He lives with his mother and four sisters in Murta village in a simple house no different from the other houses of the village. Said's father died but this happened a long time ago because the boy did not remember when it happened. Thereafter his mother remarried a soldier. His mother did not like going to school so she left school in Grade 2. However, she regrets that she dropped out of school. Said did not know if his father went to school. His mother thinks that education is important for her children, however none of his four sisters ever went to school. His mother supported him to go to school so that when he graduates he will be able to help her and his sisters. She never communicated with the headmaster or teachers. She is satisfied with the quality of education at the school because teachers are doing their best providing children with knowledge. The parents benefit indirectly when their children go to school because it is a safe place for children, they make friends and they are also learning something from the teachers. She used to ask Said and his sisters to help her, but did not say how often.

School memories: Said went to school when he was already ten years old, but that was the case with most children. He always liked going to school. He very much liked the school subjects like reading and writing, was a good student and never repeated classes. He thinks that the primary school certificate is important because it can help when searching for a job. He also liked his class teachers and their teaching. The only thing which hampered his schooling was the lack of books. For some subjects, such as science and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), there were no textbooks.

The subjects he liked most were mathematics and the Quran. At first he had some problems in understanding science and mathematics but later on he managed and liked these subjects. Said's friends also went to school, most of them in the same class. After school hours they walked home together and when they had time they played together. He never faced problems at school or walking to or from school, and was never harassed on the way. When at school Said always thought about becoming a teacher.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Last year, when he was 14 years old and enrolled in Grade 4, Said dropped out of school. He said that at a certain time he often had to stay home to help his family. He missed class often and so fell behind at school. He also mentioned that his mother (and step father) failed to support him, always being behind in paying the 'contribution'. For these reasons, the frequent absence from school and the lack of support, he decided to drop out. Anyway, he now regrets that he is no longer enrolled at school. Every time he sees his schoolmates going to school, he feels uncomfortable that he is no longer with them. He is now a brick maker. Mother regrets that the family could not support Said's

schooling but added that he can go back to school again if the financial situation of the family improves.

According to the headmaster, who is from the village, there are three reasons why young children drop out of school: poverty (inability to pay 'contribution'), repetition (only one student but later on returned to school) and the walking distance to school.^{22 23} He also mentioned that some children work after school polishing shoes, washing cars and helping tea-making ladies in the markets. The oldest boys sometimes leave school because they are attracted by the salaries of the army. The headmaster personally followed up on four dropout cases, and succeeded in bringing one student back to school. He failed to bring back the other three cases because they were adversely affected by the surrounding environment (parents, friends, community).

One of the female teachers from the village was not enjoying teaching because she believes that education is politicized, the curriculum is not suitable, the teacher training is outdated, and there are insufficient books. The teacher followed up on many dropout cases especially of children affected by the ongoing war. According to her, many school children have been recruited into the military and tempted by high salaries, thus contributing very much to the relatively high dropout among boys. She pays special attention to the issue of dropouts because she believes that education is the pillar of human welfare and important for promoting and maintaining basic national standards.

3.5.2 Mohamed's parents could not pay the 'contribution'

The boy and his family: Mohamed is 14 years and lives with his large family in Murta village in a house similar to the other houses of the village. The house has no electricity and they get the water from the hand pump (well). Mohamed's parents never went to school and are illiterate. He is the 2nd of a family of 15 children and he has seven brothers and seven sisters. Five of them are enrolled in school, three brothers are in Grade 2 and 4 and two sisters are enrolled in Grade 1 of Secondary School and one child is in kindergarten. His father is a casual worker and makes charcoal, and his mother cleans houses, cooks and collects firewood. Their income is barely enough for feeding the children.

Mohamed's mother feels sorry that she never went to school because she thinks that education is important and that the primary school certificate is vital because it is a blessing of life and we should thank God for this. In her opinion one cannot have a decent life without education. His father is the one who communicates with the school, with the headmaster and teachers if necessary. He is the one who attends PTA meetings and goes to school to pay the 'contribution'. He supported Mohamed's progress and is satisfied with the quality of education at the school because it lets children learn, behave well and become knowledgeable.

School memories: Mohamed liked going to schools and never had to repeat a class. To him, the most interesting subjects at school are Arabic and mathematics. He did not like science, which he found boring. He had a good time with friends during and after school time. He liked teachers who taught well and who never applied corporal punishment. Every day, except for the days he had to help his

²² Parents have to pay a 'community contribution' determined by the PTAs to support the education needs, however mostly this money is used to support the teachers e.g. for contribution to transportation, lodging, and food.

²³ However the reality is that IPD students live within 500 meters from the school and other students have to walk a maximum distance of 2 km.

parents, he walked to school with his friends. He remembered leaving school because his family could no longer pay ‘contribution’ and monthly contribution.²⁴ He did not have books for all the subjects; he was missing Arabic and mathematics textbooks.

Mohamed believes that a school certificate is very important, and liked going to school because he wanted to learn. He did not report anything he disliked.

Reasons for dropping out of school: Mohamed left school in 2014 when he was enrolled in Grade 4. The support of his family was minimal and they often did not have the money to pay the ‘contribution’. They were not interested in his schooling and there was also some pressure from the family to look for a job and support the family financially. At a certain point, he was no longer motivated to go to school, so he himself took the decision to drop out. No one forced him to drop out of school. His mother claims however that they were supporting Mohamed when he went to school because she thought that education would benefit him and improve his life when he graduates. She admits tasking Mohamed with work at home e.g. to purchase food at the market, to fetch water etc but he was never forced to look for a part-time job. Also in contrast to what Mohamed stated, the mother mentioned that she suggested to Mohamed that, in light of the bad financial situation, it was better to look for a job. Mohamed contested for some time but took the decision after all. It is not known what father thinks.

His mother stated that she regretted that he dropped out because now it will not be possible to obtain the certificate and therefore difficult to find a job that can support the family. She hopes that the financial situation of the family will improve. If so, Mohamed will resume school. Mohamed also regrets staying at home without education because it is shameful to stay at home while other children are going to school. After he left school, he looked for work and is now working as a casual worker at a brick kiln.

The female teacher mentioned that the government's policy that education is free is sheer propaganda, now that the financing of primary education is in the hands of the PTAs. Interestingly she also mentioned the lack of a system to follow up on absenteeism and dropout.

3.6 Al Zahra Girls’ School in Tillo area (Vignette 41)

The village: Tillo is an unplanned urban area situated at about 7 km east of the centre of Kadugli town. The largest part of the road is tarmac but the last part is a dirt road of bad quality. Being established by the settlers and not a part of an urban planned area, Tillo is neither connected to the main electricity grid nor to the water supply. Transportation from Tillo to town is difficult. Often people first have to walk some distance before they find some means of transport. The population consists of people of different ethnicities who live together without problems. Most of them live in houses built of local material. Of late, several families started to use baked bricks for constructing houses. North of the village one can see the mountain but most of the surrounding area consists of vast areas of fertile land. It is therefore not surprising that most people earn their living from farming, although there are also

²⁴ At the beginning of every school year the headmaster and the PTA call for a meeting with parents in which the monthly contribution is agreed (SDG 5-10 per student).

cattle owners. The poorest people are the casual workers who often live below subsistence level.

The school: The Al Zahra Girls' School lies in the east of Kadugli town, 2 km from Tillo Boys Secondary School. Originally it was an old (co-ed) school but in 2003 it was renovated by Save the Children Sweden (SCS). SCS built two classrooms, one office and the fence. In addition, the school has five permanent classrooms, and two emergency classrooms. The Grade 8 classroom is made from local material. The school is surrounded by a boundary wall but about five meters fell down because of heavy rain, as the foundation was probably not too good. The SCS also provided the school with a cupboard, four teacher desks, six chairs and textbooks for all grades. Back in 2003 the SCS promised to upgrade the school into a model school but this never materialized. The State Ministry of Social Welfare (Child Welfare Council) and the Ministry of Education (Girls' education department) in close collaboration with UNICEF provided school uniforms for all students of the first four grades and promised gradually to provide the remaining students of the other grades with uniforms. Most teachers live in town and come to school every morning by a hired minibus. The PTA pays the monthly travel cost to and from school.

From the outside the classes look quite attractive with painted murals made by the efforts of the school management and PTA. Inside the classes are somewhat clean. The facilities of the classrooms are basic. All classes have blackboards and there are benches, however the seating of most classes is not adequate. The school has a clean playground within its boundary. Besides the salaries of the teachers and of the two guards and three cleaners the government supports the school with a few books.

3.6.1 Ilhan, whose father died

The girl and her family: Ilhan is 15 years old and living with her family in a traditional house in Tillo village. The house does not have electricity. Her parents never went to school. When her father died, her mother started to make and sell tea at the market. Ilhan is the oldest of four children. Two brothers go to school, both in Grade 2, but her sister does not attend school. Her mother has a positive perception about school and thinks that the primary school certificate is an important qualification. She has good contacts with the headmistress and teachers and she frequently visits the school to pay the 'contribution' and to discuss the performance of the children. She is satisfied with the quality of teaching at the school.

School memories: Ilhan liked to go to school. She was quite a good student although she had to repeat a class once, but she had no difficulties with understanding the learning. Her parents bought her books for all the subjects so she always could do her homework. Of all the subjects she liked Arabic the best. She had friends with whom she shared her books. During the break and after school hours whenever there was time she played with her friends. She liked all the teachers except for one who, according to her, insulted her religion. There were never problems with other students in and outside of school, and she was never harassed. She liked walking to school. More than once a week she had to stay at home to help her mother.

Reasons for dropping out of school: In 2012 when Ilhan was 12 years old she dropped out of school. The main reason was that she was big enough to help her mother at home. This way it was easier for her mother to work outside.

The headmistress considers poverty and lack of awareness by parents about the importance of education due to social and family situations to be the dominant causes of dropout. She also mentioned that although corporal punishment is officially banned, it continues to be practiced by some teachers, however with reservation. When children drop out there is some follow up by the school. The headmistress mostly meets with the parents to find out the reasons for dropout. Once she admitted a girl free of charge because her father was killed by the rebels.

The teacher interviewed is from the village and knows the background of children. She enjoys teaching and not only because she is getting paid for it, but also because she has a commitment to the community. Moreover, she wants to pass a message and wants to be an example, facing up to the challenges of her work. When children drop out she often knows the reasons and personally intervenes with parents to explore why the child dropped out and to discuss alternatives. According to her, Ilhan dropped out because she had nobody to take care of her.

Despite poverty and very low income, Ilhan's mother is committed to help her children in school but her possibilities are limited. She did not ask Ilhan to stay at home to help her. According to her, Ilhan dropped out because she wanted to support her mother and her other brothers and sisters. The mother now regrets that Ilhan is not going to school like other girls, because education is everything in life. It would have honored the family and Ilhan to have a good job, if she continued schooling. However, *'you never know,'* said the mother, *'maybe Ilhan is going back to school again next year.'*

4 ANALYSIS OF THE VIGNETTES

INTRODUCTION

From the vignettes developed in the different localities and states it became clear that both demand and supply driven factors are embedded in different contexts, which make circumstances for dropping out specific to each case. This explains the numerous elements and particulars that are relevant for explaining reasons for dropping out. They are grouped under three headings, each with their own sub headings:

- Socio cultural and intellectual demand-side barriers and bottlenecks;
- Economic demand side barriers;
- Supply-side barriers and bottlenecks.

Thereafter some more general conclusions will be given.

4.1 Socio-cultural and intellectual demand-side barriers and bottlenecks

4.1.1 The child's interest in schooling

School as a social place:

Almost all students interviewed mentioned that one of the main reasons for going to school was to meet their friends. School was the place where they could play awaiting the late start of school, during the long *fatour* (breakfast break), often longer than one and a half hours, and sometimes



Picture 2 Kassala State, Mastoura village: Ogba Bin Nafi School for boys

after school hours. Though the school yards were without exception large open spaces and often without a lot of trees to find shade it was the place where children were socializing. During these 'free' periods' children stood in the shade of the classrooms, walked around in the yard, pushed and pulled each other (especially boys) like most children of that age do. So going to school also meant a daily event where you meet friends; school was not only a place where you go for schooling but also an important place for socializing, for friendly rivalry and of course for having fun.

Social composition: The group of friends they are socializing with is one factor, although not the main factor, affecting the choice of children to leave school. Children do not wish to be left alone in school without their friends. A number of children mentioned that one of the reasons for leaving school was because their friend dropped out. Repetition, especially in one of the higher grades or failing the Grade 7 school exam, and thereafter to repeat a class without their friends was mentioned several times as a reason for dropping out. In other cases, the peer culture had a positive effect on staying in school. At the same time, social factors may keep children from returning to school even when the situation that forced them to drop out (e.g. the illness of the mother, the need to accompany the parents when travelling, or the temporary worsening of the financial situation) changed for the better.

Interest in schooling: It is clear that, with one exception (vignette 20), all the children liked to go to school. They liked the environment, loved their teachers for the most part, and took the corporal punishment mostly for granted. Though the learning was limited mainly to Arabic, mathematics, and the Quran, there was the perception that it was important to become literate and that school was important for getting a better job or even to become a better human being.

Dropping out due to incident: A substantial number of children that dropped out of the higher grades were good or very good students, and ranked among the best students in the class. Due to reasons related to poverty and income, a sudden shortage of family income, illness, the need to support to parents, or working during the agricultural season, they left school. Some of these factors are structural and other factors were temporary or passing. Although most children regretted dropping out and although the next year there was a better crop so more family income, the illness was cured, or the agricultural season was over, still the children did not return to school despite the improved circumstances. These children got used to a new and different life, to new responsibilities and/or status (support to family), or maybe they lost interest in school because there was an alternative which they preferred.

Weak academic performance: A substantial number of students dropped out because of weak academic performance. Sometimes this was the result of high absenteeism but more often due to certain learning limitations of the child. None of the schools visited had made provisions for special support to students with learning problems. It seemed that there is a total lack of awareness, understanding, skills and knowledge about the special requirements for teaching 'slow learners' among headteachers and teachers. At none of the schools with a surplus of teachers were these teachers used, for example, to reduce the student numbers especially in the larger lower grade classes in order to pay more attention to the reinforcement of the literacy skills of the students. Students with learning limitations are the most disadvantaged by this lack of special support.

4.1.2 Parental awareness and other parental factors

Awareness about importance of education: Most parents interviewed were illiterate and never had the experience of going to school. Therefore their perception about what children learn in school was limited. Some fathers said that this was also a reason for avoiding discussion of real issues related to the schooling of their children. They covered their ignorance by avoiding talking about school. This may have resulted in a rather narrow understanding and appreciation of education. Most parents sent their children to school because they saw the school as a means to facilitate employment. Few parents mentioned other attainment targets related to specific knowledge, understanding and skills by the end of primary school. However, despite all laudable reasons why education is important for many parents, the short-term objective to use the hands of their children to support the family at home or to earn money is more important than the longer term investment in the schooling of their children.

Parental perception of education: Most parents have a traditional view of the outcomes of education. Their ideas are very much based on their experience in society and or of their own school time. Often school is seen as a place where young children go, a place where you can become literate etc. but also as a place where you can park your children when you do not need them. Parents feel that a school certificate is only important for boys to enable them to get jobs but often it does not have priority over (financially) supporting the family by cattle herding or other agricultural activities, or, for girls, helping the mother at home. Nomads withdraw their children from schools to accompany them during the wet season and farmers tell their children to assist them during the agricultural season, irrespective of the lost learning opportunities.

4.1.3 Fostering, guidance and support

Parental support: No significant difference was found between the (financial) parental support of people of different tribes. From the interviews it became clear that fewer girls than boys enter school, but when in school no significant difference was found between the support of parents to the education of their sons and to the education of their daughters. For many parents the support of their child's education is limited to the paying of 'contribution' and some other school-related costs. Teachers were often not very satisfied with the parental support provided. Few parents talk with their children about school, are interested in the child's school career, or encourage the child when needed. This was confirmed by the interviews with parents – all claimed they were committed to the education of their child but they never mentioned that special efforts were made to prevent their child from dropping out.

Parental skills to support their children: From the interviews it became clear that most parents lacked the skills and knowledge to provide the necessary social and emotional support to their children. Most of them lacked the understanding that there is more parental support needed for a child to successfully graduate from school, and that it is important for parents to listen, to encourage, to show interest, to support, or to challenge, their child.²⁵

²⁵ Literate fathers more often had a function, a paid job, as compared to the illiterate fathers who were mostly worked as daily labourers or as seasonal labourers on the land.

Teacher skills for communicating with parents on child performance and on dropout-related issues: Except for incidental meetings with parents on student performance, there is in general no professional interaction between teachers and parents. Though schools were of the opinion that the contact with parents was satisfactory and sufficient this remains a rather unexplored area. The teacher training curriculum does not have a syllabus on communication with parents on children's behaviour and performance, let alone on the phenomenon of dropping out in general or, more specifically, on guidance and support to parents related to the dropping out of their children.

4.1.4 Early marriage, teenage pregnancy and over-aged students

Marriage at early age: In the past, early marriage was a main factor in girls' dropping out, but it seems that over the past ten to twenty years this has changed. Though gradually the age for marrying became higher, this does not mean that early marriage no longer exists. Among certain tribes and depending on the financial situation of the family, it is still common that girls marry at the age of 15 or 16 years and sometimes even at a younger age. For example, for Hausa girls there is no set age for marrying – some marry when they are 15, some marry when they are 30. It depends on opportunities and on money. In general boys are allowed to finish their school before they marry in their early twenties, but some boys still marry when they are very young. In the villages of all states, it still happens that girls in Grades 6- 8 leave school to marry. When a teacher realizes that parents have made plans for their daughter to marry, it is too late to intervene and even when they hear the news before a final decision is made, there is little room for discussion. No reference was made to unwanted teenage pregnancy, but in the case of early marriage young girls often become mothers at a very young age.

Over-aged students: The school allows the girls to stay in school up to the age of 17, however it had never happened that a girl of this age was still in primary school. So contrary to boys, over-age is seldom a reason for girls to drop out. However over-age may have contributed to the dropping out of one girl (vignette 17).

4.1.5 Verbal, physical abuse and road harassment of children at school and in the community

There was no mention that verbal, or physical abuse of children at school had been a main reason for dropping out. Correction at school varied from advice and counselling to condemnation and corporal punishment. During the fieldwork, the issue of corporal punishment was mentioned neither by students nor by parents as a reason for school dropout. Children were punished for not completing homework or class work, for being noisy in classroom, for not giving proper attention to teachers, or for coming to school late. Other reasons were: not being able to answer the questions teachers asked, misbehaving, e.g. quarrelling in the classroom, and being absent without permission. Corporal punishment took place at almost all schools, but the incidence varied a lot. The way and the frequency of the punishment depended on the teacher. One girl stated that she was frequently harassed when walking to school and that this contributed to her dropping out from school (Vignette 17).

4.1.6 Children's absence from school

Absence prior to dropping out varied considerably. Some children stated that they were never absent, while some children's absence increased considerably prior to their dropping out. Absenteeism associated with personal factors, such as illness and family visits normally did not affect the dropping out of the child. A substantial number of girls and boys were frequently absent because they had to support their mother with the household chores or their father with his work. First, this was only after school hours but due to increased workload, (maybe due to the growth of the family) girls were also told to stay home during school hours. Then the family got used to the additional income or support, and at the same time the children started to realise their responsibility to support their parents. When they finally dropped out of school, it was often a joint decision. It was also noticed that few schools analyze their absenteeism records and contact parents when their child is absent for some days.

4.1.7 Ethnicity

Ethnic diversity : The ethnic diversity in the three states visited was large. Many tribes had their own language and cultural characteristics. The main tribes in Kassala State are the Hadandawa, the Shukria, Hausa, Rashaida and Beniaamir. In the Blue Nile State are found the Hamaj, the Bernu, the Fallata, Hausa, Kamateer and many other tribes. In South Kordofan there are more than 100 tribes, but the dominant groups are the Nuba tribes, as well as Hawazma Arabs, West African Falata, Bargo and Barno tribes. The sample size of the schools visited and children interviewed is too small for drawing general conclusions but some comments can be made. The different cultural patterns of tribes have an effect on the value of education. For instance, the data of schools visited show a high dropout rate at schools which are mainly populated by children of the Beniaamir tribe (Kassala State), children of the Kamateer tribe (Blue Nile State) and children of the Hawazma and Misseiriya nomads in South Kordofan State. Schools with the lowest dropout rate are mainly populated by children of the Hadandawa tribe in Kassala State and children of the Hausa tribe in Blue Nile State. So one may conclude that the different cultural backgrounds and subsequent values of certain tribes affect their support to education of their children.

Language: Some villages visited had many people who did not speak Arabic. They speak their own (tribal) language at home, but the lingua franca or bridge language at the market and with traders is (Sudanese) Arabic. As a result young children cannot speak Arabic when they enter school. Often the teacher of Grade 1 does not speak the tribal language and since the textbooks are written in Arabic the communication between teachers and students is often constrained and the comprehension of the schoolbooks by students is limited. In general this is more the case for girls than for boys. This may be explained by the fact that boys are more free to move around in the village at a young age and therefore have more possibilities to pick up Arabic from other people. So many non-Arabic-speaking children fall behind at school right from the first day and as a result their literacy skills remain weak. When after a number of years they are still not able to read and write Arabic they have a high chance of becoming less motivated for going to school which may result in dropping-out. It should be noted that the possibility of using the local language of the learner in the education system is not debated at any level currently.

4.2 Economic demand side barriers

4.2.1 Poverty

The majority of the parents interviewed during the field investigation were poor. Most fathers tilled the land, or worked as daily labourers, street vendors or had a job as an unskilled labourer in government service. Only a few Hausa women and mothers had paid work. These parents have an income that mostly does not exceed 600 SDG a month. Within this income group there are many parents who can only contribute the bare minimum of the direct school cost. As many studies show, poverty is a key factor explaining the incidence of dropout.

Inability to pay ‘contribution’: The inability of households to pay ‘contribution’ and other costs related to education in combination with the opportunity cost are major factors for children to drop out. However, from the interviews it appeared that only in a few cases was this the determining factor. ‘Contributions’ are not obligatory and poor parents can ask the school management to be exempted, but parents never made an appeal for this. Parents seldom inform the school officially that their children will no longer attend school.

Initially, very poor parents also send their children to school, but at a certain moment – and this is often in upper primary, when physically stronger – children drop out because parents need them at home and they increasingly feel the responsibility to support their parents. Thus, the balance between being motivated to go to school or leaving school to support parents tips towards leaving school. The child may be able to read or write but has no prospects to continue the education, or the child can still not read and write so this is time to do something perceived to be more useful. When the child realises that he or she is an asset for the parents and that at the same time schooling does not bring advantages for his or her future life s/he decides to drop out. And when s/he takes the decision to leave school, parents do not send their child back to school.

Working after school hours: Most of the children interviewed mentioned that they frequently had to assist their parents. Boys often mentioned that they had to collect water or firewood, mostly prior to going to school, and girls regularly had to help their mother with the daily house hold chores – cooking, cleaning, looking after siblings etc. These activities take place before, but mostly after school, during the weekends and during the holidays. They also supported their families, especially boys, by looking after the animals and by working at the farms during the rainy season.

Part-time work: It seems that after Grade 5 boys become increasingly aware of the possibilities to earn money. From the interviews, the picture emerges that this awareness is fuelled by the family or by peer pressure, as well as by a growing realization of their maturing and the responsibility to support the family. Boys then start to move around with their friends in the market areas, picking up small jobs and getting experience with earning money to supplement the income of the family. They first start with a little job at the weekends or during the school holidays, then they start working after school hours, then they sometimes skip classes, and finally they stay away from school permanently. This often happened when the motivation to go to school diminished.

Family size and affordability of schooling: One might have expected that the ranking in the family was a factor contributing to dropout. The oldest son or daughter in the family or children that are among the oldest children of a large family are the

first to be asked to stay home. At the same time, the school career of the younger children of large families may benefit from the support of their older brothers and sisters. However, from the overview of family characteristics one cannot conclude that the ranking of children in the family is of significant importance to the schooling of the child.²⁶

4.2.2 Direct costs of schooling

Most students were very satisfied with the (economic) support of their parents to their schooling. Besides the provision of suitable shelter and sufficient nutrition and health care if needed, the parents were mostly able to pay for the daily breakfast (2 to 3 SDG), the monthly 'contribution' (ranging from 2 to 10 SDG), for the stationery required and sometimes for the textbooks.



Picture 3 Kassala State, Mastoura village: buying breakfast at Ogba Bin Nafi School for boys

Breakfast, food support/ school feeding: Almost all children eat their breakfast at the school compound. Some children indicated that their parents sometimes did not have money for buying breakfast, however whenever there was no breakfast money this was seldom a problem: they were helped by one of their friends. At different schools visited, the existence of a school feeding program to strengthen the retention of poor students was mentioned. This program, supported by government and donors, stopped in 2013. One of the headmasters mentioned that the SMoE and WFP were planning to resume school feeding in 2014, which was deferred to 2015. According to the SMoE Annual Report 2014, the overall dropout rate was 5.5% (boys 5.2%/girls 5.8%) in 2013 and 3% (boys 2.9%/girls 3.1%) in 2014, which does not support the assumption that school feeding was a successful strategy to reduce the dropout rate.

'Contribution' and other costs: The government does not ask for 'contribution'. It is the PTA who can take the initiative to collect 'contribution' which may range from 2 to 10 SDG per child per month. Parents who have more children enrolled at school may pay the same fee for each child. 'Contributions' are not mandatory, and the amount depends on school policy. If a family does not have the financial means to pay the 'contribution' they can in principle request the headteacher to be exempted from paying it. However, this is not always understood by poor parents. In addition there is social pressure from the community on parents to pay the set contribution. The 'contributions' are regularly collected by the teachers from the parents at school. This moment is also used by parents to discuss issues with the teacher. One can therefore conclude that the raising of 'contribution' is not necessarily a reason for the dropping out.

²⁶ See Annex 1

4.2.3 Opportunity costs of schooling for the family

Another factor to consider is the opportunity costs or the benefits for a family when a child works rather than going to school. The large majority of the children who dropped out stated that they themselves took the decision to do so and that the parents sanctioned this. It did not become clear to what extent the parents pushed the child to look for a job and how far the child made the decision independently.

Children that are supporting parents: Many parents want their children to support them as soon as they are (physically) ready to do so. The fathers request their sons and sometimes also their daughters to help them with herding or during the agricultural season, and the mothers want the girls to stay home to help them and give them company. By the time children are twelve years old, a substantial number support their parents on a regular basis. In addition, boys and girls often work after school hours to earn some money for the family or to support their mother respectively. From the interviews it became clear that a substantial number of children dropped out of school to work. Mostly this happens with children who were already working after school hours. So one may conclude that children who are working part-time and or after school hours may have a higher risk for dropping out of school. From the interviews with children who dropped out from Grades 6, 7 and 8, a picture emerges that these children are getting used to a life without school, a life in the 'world of adults' or the 'life of work'. They feel the responsibility to work, but they may also see the advantages of this new world. When they realize that for all kind of reasons they will never be able to pursue a long school career, they start considering working permanently. For them and their parents, the school was the place to become literate and there was little to learn beyond this. See also 3.2 Enjoying the curriculum.

There were cases where children, boys and girls, dropped out after one of the parents became seriously sick for a prolonged period or after they died. It was not always clear if the lack of family income was the main reason for their dropping out and if there were no alternatives: grandparents, uncles etc. But all (5) children who dropped out for family reasons felt thereafter the responsibility to support the family income (boys) or to support the family (girls) with doing the household chores.

4.2.4 Household migration and other economic /agricultural factors

Nomads: Nomads still constitute a considerable portion of the population in the Eastern and Southern parts of the Sudan. The nomadic life, moving with their herds, is an obstacle for their children to enroll in village schools. Several years ago the government, supported by donors, established mobile schools, made from local materials, to provide basic education for the children of the nomads. After successful completion of the first four years of primary school, children can continue their education in complementary basic schools with boarding facilities.

Seasonal migration: A substantial number of children interviewed, especially boys, were asked to herd sheep or goats during the rainy season (from July till October). As a result they were absent from school in the middle of the school year. In addition there were some children, both boys and girls, who had to support their father during the agricultural season to work on the land. Since it is not accepted for most tribes to let girls stay with a relative or neighbors in the village without their family, some girls interviewed had to accompany their family when they went with their animals to the grazing land or to prepare marriages of relatives. As a result the girls were absent

from school for a long time. In all cases the headteacher allowed them to re-enroll. However, for some girls the long absence had a negative effect on their performance and contributed in the long run to their dropping out. They were not able to catch up and then left school permanently.

4.3 Supply side barriers and bottlenecks

4.3.1 Distance to School

Almost all children interviewed were living close to the school, not more than ten minutes walking distance away – the schools visited were all situated within the boundaries of the village. Almost all the children indicated that they walked to school together with their younger siblings or with their friends. For the three students interviewed who lived far away from school the distance to school was not a reason for dropping out.

4.3.2 School infrastructure

Most schools can be portrayed as follows: a sandy place with some trees and with two or more blocks of classrooms. In the classroom, the number of benches is limited and so are school books. During the classroom observations no learning and teaching aids or supplementary reading materials were identified. When asked: '*did you like your school and classroom?*', the large majority of the children interviewed stated that they liked their classroom very much. Most parents were also satisfied with the quality of the classrooms and the school. One can therefore only conclude that both parents and children had little or no exposure to quality education. If parents had been aware of higher quality education and school infrastructure, they and their children may have been less motivated to attend these schools. This conclusion matches with the opinion of some of the educated parents, able to compare the different standards, who were less positive or not satisfied with the quality of education.

School buildings: Most buildings were relatively new and made of bricks. Some of the school buildings were plastered and provided with nice and colourful murals, others looked less attractive and rather rudimentary. Since they looked more permanent than most houses of the village, the school buildings were mostly appreciated by students and parents. There was some but not a substantial difference between the quality, the size and infrastructure of the schools visited. Most schools had eight classrooms, a room for the headmaster and one for the teachers. The classes were always situated around an usually large courtyard. The average teacher-student ratio differed from school to school with more students in the lower grades as compared to the higher grades.

Gender: None of the girls interviewed in co-ed school or enrolled in a boys' school mentioned that this was a reason for dropping out.²⁷ In one village a new boys' school was constructed five years ago. When the construction of the school was finished the entire school population, boys and girls, moved to the new building. It was only last year that the village school was split. The boys stayed in the new school and the girls went to the old, renovated school. This does not show a very keen need and interest of parents for a separate girls' school. Despite this, teachers

²⁷ Some girls' schools only ran classes to Grade 5. Thereafter the girls entered the local boys' school in Grade 6 to finish their education.

and parents often explain the high dropout rate of girls by the fact that parents did feel the need for a separate school for girls.

Basic water and sanitation facilities: Few schools had sufficient functioning sanitation facilities. In a few cases the toilets were there but could not be used due to lack of doors, water or technical problems. This situation was however seldom raised by staff and PTA as an issue. The absence of (functioning) toilets, especially for girls, was often solved by using the facility of one of the neighbouring houses. None of the girls mentioned that this was a reason for dropping out. Most schools that did not have access to water used water containers from which children could take water.

4.3.3 Quality of learning

Almost all the children and their parents were satisfied with the quality of education. The children liked their teachers. During the interview however it was noticed that it was very difficult for the children, and equally for the parents even if educated, to substantiate this. So it may be that due to the lack of comparison students (and their parents) see the quality of teaching at their school as standard and therefore consider the teaching to be good.

Limited Learning: Six students mentioned that the learning in the school was very boring. None of the students interviewed mentioned using other books, except for the textbooks. The only access to the world of information for the students was therefore the textbook. The number of textbooks was limited; it varied from 1 book for 2 or 3 students. The large majority of the schools only received the textbooks of the key subjects (Arabic, religion, mathematics and English). Also the number of pages of the textbooks and the content of the books were limited. Given the time and the language limitation, it was not possible to examine the text books, but a glance at the English books showed that the books did not encourage active learning. The teachers did not have teacher guides. The learning activities in the class were therefore limited to reading, writing, chanting and listening.

A considerable number of children interviewed were good students and among the best students in their grade, but despite their brightness they dropped out. It is not clear to what extent the lack of intellectual challenge for good students affected their interest in schooling and ultimately contributed to their dropping out.

The curriculum: The curriculum includes five core areas: Religion, Language (English and Arabic), mathematics, Man and his Environment and Applied Arts. However the main emphasis is on the first two areas (22 periods of 40 minutes a week) and less on the other subjects including mathematics and science-related subjects (11 periods). This corresponds with the weighting of the different subjects in the exams with most emphasis on the first two core areas. The majority of the students interviewed showed an interest in Religious Studies, English, Arabic and mathematics. Few students (3) mentioned an interest in science, Social Studies, Music, or PE. On the other hand, many students expressed interest in these subjects, especially in PE and arts, but these subjects were very seldom mentioned as their favourite subjects.²⁸ This may indicate that in most schools, most or all of the time is spent on Religious Studies, English, Arabic and mathematics. It may very well be that at many schools the students were not taught science, Social Studies, Arts and PE, even though they are subjects that motivate many students to go to school.

²⁸ In most classes applied arts, physical education and health science were on the weekly time table.

4.3.4 Facilities and teaching and learning materials

Facilities: All classes had a blackboard. Except for a plastic globe which was shown once, there was no mention or observation of any other teaching or learning materials. Few classes have electric wiring but none of them was connected to the mains. The number of benches was often limited and in some schools five children had to squeeze on one bench. Quite often it was mentioned by students that this constrained their work (writing) and their attention during the classes.

Teaching and learning aids: Besides the blackboards and benches, most classes were empty. Almost all classes of the schools visited were quite clean, but looked unattractive, only having a few posters and or charts. Some schools did have a few teaching and learning aids, but if so they were locked in the room of the headmaster and not in the classrooms. Therefore most rooms did not look like a school class for young children. Again, this is the norm for many schools in Sudan. Except for one student, this is not a reason for children to drop out but for sure the presence and use of teaching and learning materials could increase the learning performance and the motivation of children to remain in school. It was learned that the monthly 'contributions' are especially meant to support teachers and are not used for financing teaching and or learning aids.

Facilities and teacher motivation: According to some teachers it was not only the remoteness of the school but also the school environment and the lack of means to teach that discouraged them. Some of the teachers, especially those who earlier worked at schools that were better equipped, wished to be transferred at the earliest. According to a headmistress, this and the fact that teachers are frequently transferred to other schools do not help retention.

4.3.5 Teachers, quality supply, allocation and deployment

Almost all students liked their teacher. Though very nice, it was often followed later on and without hesitation by mentioning how often and when the teachers beat them. This may be explained by the status of the teacher – he or she is almost by definition a good and successful person who must therefore be respected. The teachers were seldom praised for their active way of teaching, the way they decorated the class, their pedagogical skills, the way they engaged the class in the learning process, etc. One may conclude that their teacher became the norm, possibly due to the lack of any different frame of reference. Five students (vignettes 6, 9, 20 and 29) mentioned that the teacher, the teaching practices and lack of school infrastructure were main reasons for dropping out.

Quality of teaching : Mostly, the students liked the teaching of their teacher, but there were also students who mentioned the teachers' limitations in explaining content or referred indirectly to poor quality teaching and pedagogy. It was observed that schools started late, that the breakfast breaks in the school often exceeded the fixed duration and that the schools ended before the official school day ended, thus reducing the effective teaching time considerably. These are signs of poor quality teaching and of weak school management. Despite the fact that the majority of the teachers were trained, the quality of teaching was limited as demonstrated by strict use of textbooks, very limited enrichment and little focus on active learning. From brief classroom observation it was learned that many teachers do not encourage or involve students in their lesson. This situation is partly explained by the lack of exposure to active teaching during their own education and the low quality and added value of in-service training.

Learning outcomes: It is a general practice that the untrained teachers teach in the lower grades where quality is key for acquiring literacy skills. These are also the classes with a high teacher-student ratio. It is obvious that children in these classes are getting less or in some cases no attention, learning constraints are not noticed, and the social relationship with the teacher is limited if any. In short, untrained teachers and overcrowded classes have a very negative effect on learning and subsequently on the timely acquirement of literacy skills; this is not addressed. From the interviews it was clear that a substantial number of students dropped out in Grade 6 without being able to read and write well. This may also have been the reason for their dropout since a substantial number of students dropped out when they feared to fail the end-of-year exam or after having failed the end of the year exam in Grade 6 or 7. More research is required to find out to what extent the low quality of education, in particular the long period needed to acquire literacy skills, is a major reason why parents do not value education and a determining factor for dropout.

Teacher-student ratio			
GRADE	# of Children	Teachers	
1	75	1	Average teacher: student ration = 1 : 53
2	42	1	
3	43	1	
4	25	11	Average teacher : student ration = 1 : 9
5	25		
6	20		
7	20		
8	5		
	255	14	



Picture 4 Kassala State, urban Square 21: crowded classroom in Suweiba Basic School for Girls

Teacher-student ratios: The comparison of the data of schools visited shows that the deployment of teachers is uneven. In some schools the teacher-student ratio was as low as 1: 10 while in others it was 1: 35 (same state). Though it was frequently mentioned, the school data collected did not show a significant difference between the deployment at rural and urban schools. Due to the dropout of students in all grades, in the lower classes there were considerably more students as compared to the higher grades. One class visited had more than 100 girls. Half of them were squeezed on benches, with the others sitting on the footrests of the benches, in the corridor and beneath the blackboard.^{29 30}

Teacher utilization at school: The distribution of teachers across schools is uneven. A few schools had a shortage of teachers but other schools had too many teachers. As indicated in the above box, the use of these teachers was very inefficient. The common formula is as follows: three teachers teach in Grades 1, 2 and 3, and the remaining teachers are used to teach in Grades 4 to 8. The surplus of teachers was never used to create smaller classes, especially in the first two grades of primary school.

Teachers teaching in the villages: Many teachers, especially those teaching in suburban localities do not live in the locality of the school. At the end of the school day, they immediately leave school to go home. Most teachers who teach in the villages stay from Sunday morning to Thursday afternoon in the village. The teachers stay at a special boarding house for teachers often provided by the community and if not available the community lodges them. The community prepares food etc. for the teacher, which is often paid for by the monthly 'contribution'. From the interviews, there are some indications that teachers who live permanently in the village or, in town, in the same locality as the school, are more committed to the children than the teachers who commute.

4.3.6 School management

All the headteachers interviewed claimed that they love their profession, that they care about their school and that they feel it was their responsibility to ensure the effective operation of the school, by strictly applying the administrative rules and regulations. This included especially the maintenance of set school records, the organization of regular tests and the required exams and the management of the school premises. Notwithstanding the stated commitment of all heads of schools, some schools do better than others. This is demonstrated among other things by the quality and update of school records and the maintenance and attractiveness of school premises, including the gardens, and not forgetting school interventions to support retention resulting in fewer dropouts.

School interventions that support retention: A substantial number of headteachers and teachers indicated that when children no longer come to school, as a rule the school contacts the parents. Some teachers informed parents after a few days about the unauthorized absence of their child or they contacted the parents to discuss the absence. Some went to visit the family at home after one month of absenteeism to discuss the current situation with parents or with the student. However, none of the schools had a clear policy or a scenario with steps to follow, let alone collecting information on dropout, or analyzing the reasons for it, that might

²⁹ In Grade 1 of the school in Sabdaret, Kassala State, 77 students were enrolled. In Badoas, Blue Nile State, 87 students were enrolled in Grade 1, and in the first Grade in Tilo in South Kordofan there were 104 students.

³⁰ The school in Sabdarat had retained almost 75 % of its students of Grade 1 in Grade 8.

be used in a kind of 'school improvement plan'. None of the PTAs was involved in addressing the issue of dropout at school.

Community support to education: Every school has a PTA (Parent Teachers Association) whose role it is to assist the school management and act as a bridge between the school and the community. The PTA is there for solving problems that are faced by the school. The role of the PTA in reducing dropout is negligible. Though recently the law was changed to include female members, the PTAs visited consisted only of men. The members of the PTA are supposed to accompany and support the headteacher when tackling issues or solving problems with the SMoE. The PTA approves the monthly school fee.

Failure to pass the Grade 7 exam: There are indications that there is a relationship between the commitment of headteachers to run the school effectively and the number of dropouts. At schools with clearly defined rules and regulations e.g. schools that focused on the 7th and 8th Grade examinations, and with a strategy to curb absenteeism among students and teachers, the incidence of absenteeism was limited. The clear norm at these schools is to stay in school and graduate from school, which may have a positive effect on the motivation of students. At schools with a high dropout rate and a large majority of students leaving the school prematurely, dropping out becomes the norm and effects the motivation of students.

Loss of motivation due to failure of exam: The exams of Grades 7 and 8 are set by the SMoE of each state, so the exams vary from state to state. Due to the government policy to discourage repeating classes during the first four grades, few children had the experience of repeating a class before Grade 5. By the time they reach Grade 5 the academic level varies a lot among students. To ensure that most students entering Grade 8 will have a reasonable chance to pass the final exam, a state exam is organized at the end of Grade 7. This exam is the first exam which tests the students' performance seriously and as a result the weaker students, often students that never had to repeat a class before, fail. This happened with many students interviewed and they mentioned their unwillingness to repeat a class as a main reason for dropping out.

Alternative for students that failed: The exam at the end of Grade 7 is graded by the teachers of the school. Many students fail this exam. There are indications that the school management uses the instrument for ensuring that only the good students can pass. This to ensure a 100% or close to 100% pass rate of students that sit for the Grade 8 exam. This practice takes place especially in urban and semi-urban areas. The introduction of the examination in Grade 7 was reported to be the result of competition between schools and communities, at the expense students who fail to pass Grade 7, and has contributed to the number of dropouts.

Overall the vignettes indicate that a positive and well managed school environment with trained teachers, basic teaching and learning facilities and sport and co-curricular activities will have a very positive effect on the retention of children and may very well motivate and encourage children to beat the factors that force them to leave school.

5 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In spite of the specific nature of the individual life histories recorded in the vignettes, it is nevertheless possible to derive some generic conclusions about the causes of high dropout.

There is usually no one single cause for dropping out of primary school. The death of a mother, a serious accident of a brother/sister, parents' divorce, or long illness of the child – these were often the reported deciding factors for dropping out. However, the decision was often the result of a long process and of weighing of benefits of going to school against the advantages of staying home or looking for work (opportunity costs). The study found that poverty, and even acute poverty, though frequently named as a main factor, was never a factor that stood alone. It had also not prevented the same parents from enrolling children in school.

From the different vignettes it becomes clear that no generalizations regarding decisive factors for dropout can be made. The child's varying perceptions and feelings (about their family, their teachers, their friends, what they enjoyed doing, etc), appear to be a key factor. This has rarely been identified -- the child has been seen, by default, as the passive 'victim' of poverty and other disadvantages. In fact, the child's own perceptions on these disadvantages and on life in general is shown to be highly relevant to the decision to stay in school or not. In the material presented, it was mostly the child who decided to drop out of school.

Some dropout children recognized the value of education (sometimes retrospectively, after dropping out), but had to assess competing priorities. They appeared to be largely unsupported in the decision-making processes. There is no doubt, instance, that changes in school management and other circumstances could have made a difference in their decision to drop out.

At the same time many children did not clearly recognize or had not experienced the value of education as such. In weighing the benefits of staying in school and the advantages of staying at home or looking for work, a number of factors related to the quality of education play a role. The main benefit of the school as reportedly perceived by children is that it is a place to socialize and meet friends. For parents, school is often a place where children may become literate and are looked after. In a context where schools tend to provide limited learning (only a few main subjects, limited number of school hours, materials etc.), children's learning outcomes, actual or potential, are not often seen as a strong driving factor for staying in school,

with many children dropping out even before becoming literate. On top of this in the rural contexts examined, there do not appear to be clear advantages to being literate. As it takes a long time for children to become literate and special efforts to remain literate, parents' interest to keep their children in school also gets undermined. Against this background the balance can easily tip towards seeing more advantages in helping their mother at home, supporting their father with his work or looking for work.

The study revealed that a number of factors that have been stated in the literature as principal factors causing children to drop out, such as parental pressure, distance to schools, inadequate (toilet) facilities, overcrowded classrooms, teacher absenteeism and, in the case of girls, school safety on the way to school, were seldom mentioned as the main reason for dropping out.

To decrease the high number of dropouts will require a comprehensive effort at all levels to provide better value and at least a minimum of literacy and social and other useful context-specific skills each learning year. This will need additional resource mobilization (teachers, PTAs, local leaders), both at state level as well as locally, and the necessary government structures to support and control the provision of education of at least a minimum quality.

6 PROVISIONAL ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC MEASURES

6.1 State level

- To develop a specific policy to identify better, and at an early stage, children who are at risk of dropping out.
- To develop a single database of enrolled children as an instrument to identify children who are at risk for dropping out at an early stage.
- To develop a simple manual for teachers with factual information and suggestions that can support teachers in convincing children, and their parents, to remain in school.
- To review the curricula of the teacher training courses with a view to ensure that knowledge and skills on matters or issues related to the dropout of young children are included.
- To develop state policy for allowing schools to adjust the school calendar within set margins according to the needs of the community.
- To review the mandate of the PTAs to include their pro-active involvement in the retention of students.
- To develop policy for schools to ensure the improvement of the relationship between school and parents e.g. by organizing regular parents teacher meetings, parent days and co-curricular activities.

6.2 School level

- To strengthen the knowledge and skills of headteachers and teachers to enable them to better guide parents in coaching and supporting the schooling of their children.
- To increase the transparency about the purposes and actual use of the 'contribution'.
- To provide clear information to parents about the conditions which can exempt parents from paying 'contribution'.

- To inform about the importance and provide coaching as needed to students in grade 7 to ensure a greater proportion passes the Grade 7 examination prior to entering Grade 8.
- Especially at schools with a low teacher-student ratio, to use the teachers more effectively, e.g. by reducing the class size of the lower grades to accelerate acquisition of literacy skills and by introducing remedial teaching to better support the weak students of Grades 6, 7 and 8, and so to better ensure the maximum pass rate for all 7th and 8th Grade examinations.
- To develop, in close collaboration with the PTAs, clear guidelines and criteria for improving the school's support to children of very poor parents.
- To progressively eliminate corporal punishment by providing guidance and skills to teachers for better understanding and managing learner behaviour within the school context (inclusion in TT curriculum, in-service training, on-line messages etc.).
- To increase the motivation of students (boys and girls) and the subsequent retention of students by ensuring the organization of PE lessons in line with the curriculum.
- To increase the motivation of students by organizing co-curricular activities in and around the school.

6.3 Parent level

- To further strengthen the participation of PTA members and parents in general in the education of their children by involving them in implementing a school development plan with doable and no-cost targets.
- To develop 'Prevention programmes' to be organized by PTA members, in order to reduce the number of children dropping out of school. The programmes should include skills to organize programmes for parents to increase their awareness and to improve their support to the education of their child.
- To use a part of the 'contribution' for realising qualitative improvements e.g. by purchasing teaching aids, learning materials, supplementary reading materials, library books and materials for PE and co-curricular activities.

6.4 Student level

- To further strengthen the relationship between the students and the school and, at the same time, further develop social and practical skills by giving them responsibilities for the upkeep of the school and its environment e.g. to clean the blackboard, the classroom, the school yard, to collect water and by developing and maintaining a school garden.

7 ANNEXES

7.1 Annex 1: Overview of reasons for dropping out

<i>Kassala State: Overview of reasons for dropping out</i>								
	Hadalia				Eshukria			
	Vignette 1	Vignette 2	Vignette 3	Vignette 4	Vignette 5	Vignette 6	Vignette 7	Vignette 8
Name	Abas	Ahmed	Fidda	Nada	Samina	Seloua	Mariyam	Huda
Gender	Boy	Boy	Girl	Girl	Girl	Girl	Girl	Girl
Age	19	23	14	14	16	13	13	15
Age dropping out	16	19	13	12	14	13	10	12
Grade dropping out	Grade 6	Grade 8	Grade 6	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 6	Grade 6
Mother literate	No	No	No	No	No	literate	literate	primary
Father literate	No	No	No	No	No	literate	literate	primary
Education brothers and sisters								
Income	poor	poor			poor			
Main reason for dropping out	Wanted to work	No money for exam	Frequent moving of parents	Poverty	Limited support (mother)	Lack of facilities and classroom environment	Prolonged illness	Illness mother
Other reasons	School environment. Lack of parental support	Did not value certificate	No financial reasons	Limited understanding Arabic	School friends left school			Friends left Weak performance
Level	Good student	Good student	Good student	Not so good	Very good	2nd in Grade 6	Very good student	Average
Who took decision	Boy	Boy	Parents moved	Mother	Girl	Girl	circumstances	Girl
Ranking in family	youngest	Oldest	1/3	3/10	13/16	1/3	1/4	1/3

	<i>Sebdaret</i>				<i>Square 21 in urban Kassala</i>		<i>Mastura, suburb of Kassala</i>	
	Vignette 9	Vignette 10	Vignette 11	Vignette12	Vignette 13	Vignette 14	Vignette 15	Vignette 16
Name	Issa	Osama	Yacoub	Najam	Jamila	Amirah	Bakr	Khalid
Gender	Boy	Boy	Boy	Girl	Girl	Girl	Boy	Boy
Age	16	15	14	16	13	15	13	14
Age dropping out	13	13	10	15	10	14	10	12
Grade dropping out	Grade 7	Grade 6	Grade 6	7	End of Grade 7	7	6	5
Mother literate	No	Quran school	No	Quran school	Primary	Quran school (Dead)	No	No
Father literate	No	Quran school	No	Quran school	Grade 5	Quran school Dead	No	No
Education brothers and sisters								
Income	Poor	poor	poor	poor	poor	Very poor	Not very poor	
Main reason for dropping out	To support family	Did not like school	Bad harvest	Fail to pass grade 7 exam	Fail to pass grade 7 exam	Failed to pass grade 7 exam	Being literate was sufficient	Repetition Weak performance
Other reasons		Repetition Lack of mental support					He liked to work Lack of parental support	Lack of motivation
Performance in school	25/70	average	10/45	20/60		average	good	Weak
Who took decision	Boy	Boy	Boy	Girl		Girl	Father	Boy
Rank in family	12/17	4/6	Oldest	Youngest		2/5	2/7	2/2

<i>Mastura Vignette 17</i>	
Name	Fatma
Gender	Girl
Age	20
Age dropping out	17
Grade dropping out	Grade 8
Mother literate	No
Father literate	No
Education brothers and sisters	
Income	Not very poor
Main reason for dropping out	Temp shortage of money
Other reasons	Too old
Performance in school	good
Who took decision	Girl
Rank in family	3/5

<i>Blue Nile State: Overview of reasons for dropping out</i>							
	Badoas			Tayba Al Bililab village			
	Vignette 18	Vignette 19	Vignette 20	Vignette 21	Vignette 22	Vignette 23	Vignette 24
Name	Noor	Fatima	Adil	Haider	Mohamed	Qudira	Abdel
Gender	Girl	Girl	Boy	Boy	Boy	Girl	Boy
Age	17	17	15	17	14	15	20
Age dropping out	16	16	13	15	13	15	14 and 18
Grade dropping out	Grade 8	Grade 8	Grade7	Grade 7	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 6 and Grade8
Mother literate	Yes	Grade 8	No	No	No	Yes	No
Father literate	Yes	Grade 6 dead	No	No	No	No	No
Education brother and sister	1 @ HS, 1xPS	1@U, 1Q HS, 2PS	1@HS	1 @HS, 1 x PS	No one graduated from PS	2 @ HS	No one graduated from PS
Income	Poor	Mother midwife	Poor	Guard/farmer	Small farmer	Small farmer Daily worker	Small farmer and butcher
Main reason for dropping out	Difficult to pass exam	Failed school exam	Did not like school	Missed exam due to illness	Lack of parental support	Not possible to sit for exam in village. No boarding facilities at sec school. All girls dropped out	Lack of fin support
Other reasons	Illness father Over aged	Missed fiends Weak performance Over aged	Liked to be outside with the men	Lacked motivation Lack of parental support To support parents	Lacked motivation Educ. not valued		Pressure to leave Family did not value educ.
Level in school	Good	Weak	Very good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Who took decision	Girl	Girl	Boy	Boy	Boy	Parents	Boy
Rank in family	1/5	7/7	8/10	5/8	7/7	3/7	7/7

	<i>Essawra, urban Ad Damazin</i>			<i>Goni, rural village</i>	
	Vignette 25	Vignette 26	Vignette 27	Vignette 28	Vignette 29
Name	Sharif	Asif	Alia	Suleiman	Asad
Gender	Boy	Boy	Girl	Boy	Boy
Age	16	16	14	17	21
Age dropping out	15	13	13	17	16
Grade dropping out	Grade 8	Grade 6	Grade 7	7	6
Mother literate	No	Grade 6	Not	Not	Quran school
Father literate	Yes	Grade 3	Literate	Literate	Literate
Education brothers and sisters	1 @ U, 2 @PS	6 @ PS	3 @ PS	1 @PS	1 @HS
Income	Not very poor: driver minibus	Soldier	Taxi driver and 2 fam. to support	Framer and trading crops	Not very poor: Tailor,
Main reason for dropping out	Found a well paid job	To support his family	Illness of mother	Weak performance	Angry at teacher
Other reasons	Got used to work No financial reasons Lost interest in school	Got used to work		Support study brother Over aged	Over aged
Level in school	Initially very good	Quite good	Quite good	Rather weak	Good
Who took decision	Boy	Boy after pressure	Girl	Boy	Boy
Rank in family	2/5	1/8	2/5	2/3	6/6

South Kordofan State: Overview of reasons for dropping out							
	Al Toba			Dameek		Keiga	
	Vignette 30	Vignette 31	Vignette 32	Vignette 33	Vignette 34	Vignette 35	Vignette 36
Name	Hassan	Faten	Khaltoum	Abdallahi	Amal	Khadija	Dina
Gender	Boy	Girl	Girl	Boy	Girl	Girl	Girl
Age	19	11	14	15	15	16	15
Age dropping out	17	10	11	11	13	15	15
Grade dropping out	Grade 7	Grade 4	Grade 4	Grade 4	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 5
Mother literate	No	Yes/grade 4	No	No	No	No	Yes/ grade 3
Father literate	No	Dead	No	Yes/ grade 2	No	No	No
Income	Poor farmer	Poor/handicapped	Farmer/deals in cattle	Farmer	Farmer/deals with cattle	Mother casual worker	Farmer
Main reason for dropping out	To support parents	Lack of fin. support	To support parents	To support parents	To support parents	Poverty	To support parents
Other reasons	Weak academic performance	Poverty Weak academic performance	No	Lack of family support Poverty	Over aged		Lack of fin. support (could pay contribution)
Level	Good student	Not so good/ repeated twice	Good student	Good	Not so good	Good	Rather weak
Who took decision	Boy	Girl	Girl	Father	Father/ Girl consented	Mother + Girl	Girl
Ranking in family	4/4	4/7	4/10	Oldest	5 th born	4/7	1/8

	<i>Al Kweik (Koya)</i>		<i>Murta</i>		<i>Tillo</i>
	Vignette 37	Vignette 38	Vignette 39	Vignette 40	Vignette 41
Name	Yassir	Anwar	Said	Mohamed	Ilham
Gender	Boy	Boy	Boy	Boy	Girl
Age	13	10	15	14	15
Age dropping out	13	10	14	13	12
Grade dropping out	Grade 6	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 4	Grade 4
Mother literate	No	No	No	No	No
Father literate	No	No	Dead	No	Dead
Brother literate					
Income	Casual work	Grazing	poor	Casual work	Tea maker
Main reason for dropping out	To support family	To support family	Lack of fin. support (orphan)	Lack of fin. support -	To support parents
Other reasons	Lack of family support to educ	Help parents	To support family	Poverty	Poverty
Level in school	good	Good	good	average	Good
Who took decision	Father	Father	Boy	Parents	Mother
Rank in family	3/8	1/8	5/5	2/14	1/4

7.2 Annex 2: Research instruments

IA. Structured questionnaire Head teacher

There is no need to translate the text below in italics

At the start of the school visit each drop out selected will be given a number. So if 3 children have been invited to come we will refer to them as child # 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Some answers do correspond with these numbers.

This questionnaire has to be filled in by Head Teacher prior to the short interview to collect generic information about the school.

The questionnaire will be handed out upon arrival. It is expected that the filling in of the questionnaire will take 15 minutes

The questionnaire will be in English and in Arabic

1.	Name town/village?		
2.	Name of the school?		
3.	Number of teachers?		
4.	How many teachers are certified?		
5.	How many teachers come from the village?		
6.	Number of classes?		
7.	Number of students?		
8.	Number of students enrolled by gender		
	Class	Boys	Girls
	Class one		
	Class two		
	Class three		
	Class four		
	Class five		
	Class six		

	Class seven		
	Class eight		
9.	What is the number of grade 8 students that graduated from school year 2013-2014?	... male	... female
10.	What is the number of grade 8 students that graduated from school year 2013-2014 that entered secondary school?		
11.	What is the average walking distance of your students to school?		
12.	What is the distance from the school to the nearest secondary school? km	
13.	What are the characteristics of the village/town?(# of people, housing situation, roads, main sources of income, provisions, etc.)		
	<i>Answer question 13:</i>		

I B Semi-structured questionnaire Head teacher

(There is no need to translate the text in italics)

The semi structured questionnaire is to collect information from the head teacher about the reasons for dropping out and especially about the dropping out of the 2 to 4 drop out students that will be interviewed during the day. This to triangulate different information sources.

Questions will be asked by the interviewer

At the start of the school visit each drop out selected will be given a number. So if 3 children have been invited to come we will refer to them as child # 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Some answers do correspond with these numbers.

The interview will start by checking the answers of the structured questionnaire

The questionnaire will be in English and in Arabic

1.	<p>What are the most important reasons for children (up to ten years) at your school for dropping out? Explain</p> <p><i>(Reasons should be ticked off in the appropriate box and be followed by an explanation)</i></p> <p><i>One could probe using the factors mentioned below. Be sure however that it is the respondent who answers the question, e.g. by asking: "How do you know that this as a reason for..."</i></p>
	Over age attendance
	Child labour
	Poverty, including opportunity cost
	Lack of awareness by parents about importance education
	Repetition of students
	Poor motivation of students
	(cognitive) Limitations of child to academically perform
	Walking distance to school
	Other factors, namely:

2.	<p>What are the most important reasons for children (over ten years of age) at your school for dropping out? Please explain</p> <p><i>(Reasons given should be ticked off in the first column and be followed by an explanation)</i></p> <p><i>One could probe using the factors mentioned below</i></p>
	Over age attendance
	Child labour
	Poverty, including opportunity cost
	Lack of awareness by parents about importance education
	Lack of system at school level to follow-up on absenteeism and drop out
	Poor motivation of students
	(cognitive) Limitations of child to academically perform
	Walking distance to school
	Other factors, namely:
3.	<p>Are you aware about the specific reasons why the children did drop out? and if so, what were the main reasons for each of the children who will be interviewed today to drop out.</p> <p><i>If possible one answer for each drop out.</i></p>
	1.
	2.
	3.

	4.
4.	<p>Are there reasons within the school (system) that may have a negative effect on the drop outs? (If no reasons are given one can probe the following) Studies show different within school factors like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor quality of educational provisions (textbooks and learning materials) ▪ Poor quality of educational provisions (school and class environment) ▪ Poor quality of teaching ▪ Teacher absenteeism ▪ Corporal punishment ▪ Lack of system at school level to follow-up on absenteeism and drop out <p><i>If the head teacher does not mention any reason one could ask: do you think that xxxx is contributing to the drop out of children? If yes How do you know that this is a contributing factor?</i></p>
Answer question 4:	
5.	<p>Has there been a follow up from the school side after the children dropped out? If yes what has been done?</p> <p><i>If possible one answer for each drop out.</i></p>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
6.	<p>Can you describe parents of the children that dropped out? What are important characteristics (e.g. regarding poverty status, type of economic activities, need of girls/ boys children to help parents, attitudes towards)education etc.)</p> <p><i>If possible one answer for each drop out.</i></p>
1.	
2.	

3.

4.

II A. Structured questionnaire for the 3-4 students that dropped out

(There is no need to translate the text in italics)

The structured questionnaire (II A) is meant to collect generic information about the background of children that dropped out in a quick way. At the start of the school visit each drop out selected will be given a number. So if 3 children have been invited to come we will refer to them as child # 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Some answers do correspond with these numbers.

The structured questionnaire has to be filled in a quiet room and will be guided by one of the consultants. It will take approx. 15 minutes.

Questionnaire will be in English and in Arabic

1.	Number of interviewee	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
2.	Name of the town/village?				
3.	Name of the school?				
4.	Age? years			
5.	Gender?	Girl		Boy	
6.	In which class did you drop out of school?				
7.	When, how long ago, did you drop out of school?				
8.	Did your father go to school? If yes, how many years did your father go to school?	YES		NO	
	 years			
9.	Did your mother go to school? If yes, how many years did your mother go to school?	YES		NO	
	 years			
10.	Do you have brothers and sisters?	YES		NO	
	If yes, how many brothers and how many sisters?	... brother(s)		... sister(s)	
11.	What is your rank in the family? (e.g. oldest child, fourth child, youngest child)				

II B. Semi structured questionnaire for the 3-4 students at each school visited that dropped out

(There is no need to translate the text in italics)

The semi structured questionnaire is meant to collect specific information about the more specific reasons for children to drop out.

At the start of the school visit each drop out selected will be given a number. So if 3 children have been invited to come we will refer to them as child # 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Some answers do correspond with these numbers.

Both questionnaires II A and IIB) have to be clipped together immediately after the interview.

It is expected that the interview takes 20 minutes..

The open questionnaire will be in English and in Arabic

1.	Name of the town/village?		
2.	Name of the school?		
3.	Number	(A)	(B) (C) (D)
4.	Staying with one or both of parents	YES	NO
If not, why (are they both alive?) and where are you staying?			
5.	School career of older brothers and sisters (<i>did they finish primary school (grade 8)/drop out/ why drop out/etc.</i>)		
Answer question 5:			
6.	Do you think that the primary school certificate is important? Why?		
Answer question 6:			
7.	Class repetition	YES	NO

If yes, why/ how many times, etc.			
8.	Did you like going to school?	YES	NO
What did you like?			
What did you dislike?			
9.	Did you like your class?	YES	NO
What did you like about your class?			
What did you dislike about your class?			
10.	What was the most interesting of the learning at school: <i>(subjects / books / home work/teaching/etc)</i>		
Answer 10:			
11.	Did you have school friends?	YES	NO
If yes elaborate: <i>(one or more than one/ doing what - playing/ meeting after school/ making homework together etc)</i>			
If no elaborate: <i>(distance/did not like class mates/no time/etc.)</i>			
12.	Did you have negative experiences while going to school: <i>(bullying/fighting/ teasing/etc.)</i>	YES	NO

If yes, which and how often did this happen?			
13.	Did you like your teacher?	YES	NO
Why?			
14.	Did you often have difficulties with understanding the learning?	YES	NO
If yes what kind of difficulties?			
15.	Did you like walking to school?	YES	NO
16.	Did you often have to stay home to help your parents? If yes, how often?	YES	NO
	Once a week		
	Once a month		
	Seldom		
17.	What was or were the main reasons for dropping out from school? <i>if no clear answers are given the following reasons could be probed</i>		
	Answer question 17:		
	Too old for sitting with young children. (Why/ what did you feel/ etc)		
	I had to help my parents (work at home or elsewhere. (what work/was this necessary/did you like helping, etc.)		
	Parent support: (attention/ interest/mental support/opportunity cost= which cost/etc.)		
	Parent support: (interest in education/ how/ If not why?)		

	Motivation: (Did not like school because I did not learn a lot. Poor quality of educational provisions (school and class environment)		
	Teacher absenteeism: Did not like school because the often the teacher did not come to school?		
	School expectation: Were you disappointed in what you learned at school		
	Did you have books for all subjects	YES	NO
	If no, for which subjects?		
	School career: (repetition/good student/boring/etc.)		
	Malnutrition:(# of meals a day / periods of food shortage/ etc.)		
	(cognitive) Limitations of child to academically perform		
	School facilities (<i>toilets/teaching/learning aids, etc.</i>)		
	Walking distance to school		
18.	Who made the decision to drop out and stay at home?		
	<i>Answer question 18:</i>		
	If parents decided. (<i>Did you contest/plea this decision to drop out from school/how, etc.</i>)	YES	NO
	If yes, why?		
	If parents did not decide who decided and why?		
19.	Do you regret at this stage that you dropped out from school?	YES	NO
	Why?		
20.	What are you doing now?		
	<i>Answer question 20</i>		
21.	What would it take for you to return to school?		
	<i>Answer question 21</i>		

22.	What are your dreams for the future?
<i>Answer question 22</i>	

II I. Semi-structured questionnaire Teacher (class 6 to 8)

(There is no need to translate the text in italics)

Questionnaire to collect information about the village, general back ground of parents and the particular reasons for dropping out by the selected students. (30 minutes).

Questionnaire will be in English and in Arabic

1.	What name town/village?				
2.	What is the name of the school?				
3.	Are you certified?	YES	NO		
4.	Are you living in the village?	YES	NO		
5.	Do you like being a teacher?				
	Why?				
6.	Do you know the background of children that dropped out? (family situation/Income situation/ living conditions/etc.)	YES	NO		
7.	Has there been a follow up by your side after the children dropped out and if so what action was taken? <i>If possible one answer for each drop out.</i>				
	1.				
	2.				
	3.				
4.					
8.	What were according to you the reasons of the selected children, those who dropped out, for dropping out?	1	2	3	4
	<i>This question has to be asked for every child that has been selected for the interview. Checks should be made in the applicable boxes</i>				

	Over age attendance				
	Child labour				
	Poverty, including opportunity cost				
	Lack of awareness by parents about importance education				
	Poor quality of educational provisions (school and class environment)				
	Poor quality of educational provisions (textbooks and learning materials)				
	Poor quality of teaching				
	Teacher absenteeism				
	Repetition of students				
	Lack of system to follow-up on absenteeism and drop out				
	Poor motivation of students				
	(cognitive) Limitations of child to academically perform				
	Walking distance to school				
9.	Do you pay special attention to the issue of drop outs?	YES	NO		
	Why?				
10.	How and when do you reward children?				
	<i>Answer question 10:</i>				
11.	How and when do you punish children?				
	<i>Answer question 11:</i>				

IV. Semi structured questionnaire for the parents of the students at each school visited that dropped out

(There is no need to translate the text in italics)

The semi structured questionnaire is meant to collect specific information about the more specific reasons of the parents to withdraw the child from school

The questionnaires of the parents do follow the same number of that of their child. A, B, C and D. The questionnaires with answers have to be clipped together immediately after the interview with the questionnaires of their children.

It is expected that the interview of the parents will take 15 minutes.

The open questionnaire will be in English and in Arabic

1.	Name of the town/village?		
2.	Name of the school?		
3.	Parent of student number	(1)	(2)
		(3)	(4)
4.	If you compare your family with other families in the village do you than consider your family as being : (<i>To be ticket off</i>)		
	Very poor	Poor	Somewhat rich
			Rich
Can you substantiate this?			
5	Did you go to/attend school?	YES	NO
If yes, in which class did you leave school?			
	If yes, did you like going to school?	YES	NO
If no, did you regret that you did not go to school and if yes why?			
6.	Do you think that education/ primary school certificate is important? Why?		
Answer question 6:			

7.	What are doing for a living? /How do generate resources?		
<i>Answer question 7:</i>			
8.	Did you have contact with the school: head teacher/ teacher?	YES	NO
Why? (If yes topics to be discussed)			
9.	Did you support your child when he or she went to school?	YES	NO
If yes in which way?			
10.	Were you satisfied about the quality of education at the school?	YES	NO
Please elaborate your answer.			
11.	Did you sometimes ask your child to stay at home to help you? If yes, how often?	YES	NO
	Once a week		
	Once a month		
	Seldom		
12.	What was or were the main reasons for your child to drop out from school? <i>if no clear answers are given the following reasons could be probed:</i>		
	Too old for sitting with young children. (<i>Why/ what did you feel/ etc</i>)		
	There was a need to support parents (work at home or elsewhere. (what work/was this necessary/did you like helping, etc.)		
	Parent support: (<i>attention/ interest/mental support/opportunity cost= which cost/etc.</i>)		
	Motivation: (<i>Child did not like school because I did not learn a lot. Poor quality of educational provisions (school and class environment)</i>)		
	Teacher absenteeism: Did not like school because the often the teacher did not come to school?		
	School expectation: Disappointed iabout quality of education		
	Lack of books and other materials		
	School career: (<i>repetition/good student/boring/etc.</i>)		
	Malnutrition:(<i># of meals a day / periods of food shortage/ etc.</i>)		

	(cognitive) Limitations of child to academically perform		
	Limited school facilities (<i>toilets/teaching/learning aids, etc.</i>)		
	Walking distance to school		
13.	Who made the decision to drop out and stay at home? (you, your child, others)		
	<i>Answer question 13:</i>		
	If parents made decision. Did your child contest your decision?	YES	NO
	If yes how, etc.		
13.	Do you regret at this stage that your child dropped out from school?	YES	NO
	Why?		
14.	Is there a chance that the child will return to school?	YES	NO
	If yes, under which conditions?		

DRAFT OUTLINE OF VIGNETTE

- Particulars about the village
- Particulars of the child: age, gender, time of dropping out, class
- Particulars of family: parents, siblings, poverty
- Educational background parents, brothers and sisters
- Reasons that encouraged the child to go to school: friends at school, being away from home, sympathetic teacher, interesting teaching, interesting books, opportunity for playing, etc.
- Reasons that discouraged the child to go to school: attitude other students, attitude teacher, lack of good learning environment, boring, corporal punishment, etc.
- Perceived ideas about importance going to school and importance of education (child and parents)
- Main reasons for dropping out: workload at home, limited learning taking place, poverty, no support of parents, negative attitude of teacher, no learning taking place, etc.
- Support from parents for education (child and parents perception and reality)
- Support from school to retention (encouragement teacher, relationship parents, policy, etc)

7.3 Annex 3: Terms of reference

Introduction

The Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) in Sudan addresses the challenge of children who drop out of school, in five states: Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan. It is financed by the European Union, through interventions by SOFRECO (Paris), Save the Children (Sweden) and UNICEF. Six research studies form part of the service contract of SOFRECO, which is responsible for their implementation.

Background

There has been increased participation in general education in Sudan since the peace agreements in 2005, with an average annual enrolment growth rate in primary education of around 6 per cent since 2005 across northern Sudan – an impressive quantitative achievement. However, there is still substantial student dropout at the primary level: only 54 per cent of those entering Grade 1 are still in school in Grade 8, indicating a high wastage rate through Grades 1 through 7. This is recognised as a major challenge that is not yet being seriously and sufficiently addressed.

There are massive disparities, with the range of the Gross Enrolment Rate varying enormously between Sudanese states for overall primary school participation. Location, vulnerability and gender affect access to schooling; disadvantaged groups are significantly under-represented; urban children are 17 per cent more likely than are rural children to be at school; boys are 8 per cent more likely to be participating than are girls.

The quality of learning is typically reported as unsatisfactory with low levels of literacy and numeracy: the five target states tend to perform more poorly than does the rest of Sudan. Possible causes include widespread malnutrition (food insecurity), poor school environment, inadequate instructional hours, and lack of textbooks. Teachers tend to have limited educational qualifications and in many cases no explicit teacher training; they apply traditional pedagogies, have low morale and receive ineffective supervision and leadership; their deployment is skewed towards urban areas.

Scope of the study

The six studies planned as part of PERP will give an opportunity to understand in more depth how and why children drop out of school or are unable to access schooling. Dropout is a complex and multidimensional problem, and six studies give a chance to examine the issue from a range of perspectives. The insights that the studies provide will serve as input into planning, training and the management of schools and the education system. More immediately, the results will provide a stronger basis for the implementation of the PERP through SCS and UNICEF.

This study **Why children drop out?** has the objective of developing a better and more in-depth understanding of the multiple factors which cause a child to drop out of school. To do so, the study will examine the life histories and circumstances of a number of individual primary-age children, both boys and girls, in different localities with regard to all the factors that led to dropout. It is in the life of the individual child that the relative importance of different factors can be examined

and that the connections between these factors can be observed. Based on semi-structured interviews with children, their parents and siblings, community leaders, and teachers/school administrators, questions such as the following will be explored – the list is not exhaustive:

- How long was the child in school? What are they doing now?
- Was it their decision or their parents' to drop out of school?
- What personal and family circumstances may have contributed to dropping out?
- What factors relating to their experience of school may have played a role – distance to travel, teacher behaviour, bullying or peer behaviour, poor quality teaching, etc?
- What is the child's feeling about dropping out? What would it take for the child to return to school?
- What are the attitudes of the child's parents, siblings, his/her teacher and headteacher, or other community member?

The expert will develop the research instruments to address these and other dimensions of dropout.

The study will take place in three states: Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Kassala.

Methodology

The expert will develop the detailed methodology and any necessary data collection instruments, in consultation with the national expert and the SOFRECO team leader.

An ethnographic approach should be used to describe and analyse each individual case, with multiple perspectives enabling triangulation of the phenomenon.

As a guideline, the life histories of 40-45 children may be collected, across three states. Data will be based on interviews with the child her/himself, the child's parents, siblings, her/his teacher and headteacher, or other community member who knows the child. Children in different contexts will be interviewed: rural, urban, peri-urban, settled, nomadic, among others.

The expert will develop interview guidelines for each category of interviewees, and conduct the interview in Sudanese Arabic with the assistance of the national expert as necessary. Where the child's first language is other than Sudanese Arabic, every effort will be made to use that language in order to allow free expression by the child.

Travel to the states is dependent on obtaining the necessary travel permit.

Organization of the research

The research will be completed in three phases, as follows:

Phase 1: preparation (home-based and in Sudan)

The research will be completed in three phases, as follows:

Phase 1: preparation (home-based and in Sudan)

- Development of the methodology and research instruments
- Consultation and guidance from a distance to engage the national expert in methodology development and finalization of the research instruments for the

Sudanese context. Methodology and research instruments should be provided to the national expert no later than 8 days prior arrival in Khartoum for translation in Arabic and consultation of the FMoE.

- One day validating the research methodology with the FMoE and finalizing research instruments. Request for a travel permit in the States.
- One day of orientation with the national expert in Khartoum immediately prior to fieldwork

Phase 2: fieldwork (in Sudan)

- Field investigation in various locations in the three states: Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Kassala; the national expert may participate in the same locations or independently at other locations in the states.

Phase 3: analysis and writing (home-based)

- Analysis of the findings of the fieldwork
- Drafting of the study
- Submission of the draft to SOFRECO for comment
- Amendment and finalization of the study based on comments received

Relationships and reporting

The expert will carry out the study under the supervision of the SOFRECO Team Leader and the Project Director. S/he will further

- Collaborate closely with a national colleague in carrying out the study, from finalization of the research instruments to the editing of the final study. This relationship will be one of mutual support, as well as mentoring in the processes of the research.
- Collaborate with and be supported by the relevant PERP State Coordinators and, as possible, with the implementing agency in each state (SCS or UNICEF).

Deliverables

The deliverables are as follows:

- A vignette of each child's life history in relation to their dropping out of school – it is estimated that each vignette will be 1 to 2 pages in length. Each child will be identified by locality, age and gender, but not by name.
- A concise analytical summary presenting the patterns of factors causing dropout, drawn from the life histories. This summary should not exceed 8 pages.

The international expert will write the deliverables in English, and the national expert will be responsible for producing Arabic versions.

The draft deliverables will be submitted in English to the SOFRECO Team Leader and Project Director for possible comment before production of the final version.

Requirements

The international expert will be selected according to the following requirements:

- A masters-level degree or higher in education or the social sciences
- At least ten years of general professional experience
- At least five years of experience in educational research or projects

- Attested knowledge of retention and dropout issues in education at primary level, preferred
- Experience in the design and use of ethnographic research methods
- At least two experiences of research which involves interviewing children, preferred
- Excellent writing skills in English
- Arabic competence preferred

Schedule and timing

The research study will take 28 days, distributed as follows:

- 2 days: methodology and instrument preparation, home-based. The instruments and preparation must be sent to the national expert for translation at least 8 days prior arrival in Khartoum
- 2 days: validation of the instruments with the FMoE, finalization of instruments, one-day orientation in Khartoum, and obtaining travel permit.
- 18 days: fieldwork in Sudan in three states
- 5 days: writing the draft deliverables
- 1 day: amendment/final editing of the deliverables, after comment by SOFRECO.

The 28 days of research should take place between 15 December 2014 and 1 March 2015.

If need be for any security and/or logistical reason workload can be executed by two different national experts.

A provision of 5 additional working days may be granted upon approval from the EUD in case of logistical and/or security issues occurring during field investigation.

III. Study 2 : Factors affecting the education and Retention of girls in Primary Education in the Red Sea State

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was facilitated by a number of institutions and individuals whose engagement and continued support enabled the research to be successfully concluded.

The research team wish to express their sincere gratitude to:

- The Federal Ministry of Education of Sudan, and in particular the PERP Focal Point Mr Mohamed Ahmed Abdallah, for their technical input and support in obtaining the necessary permissions for this research;
- The HAC in Khartoum and Red Sea State who granted all necessary permissions for field work.
- The State Ministry of Education of Red Sea State for their interest and participation in the technical discussions and constructively in the field work through on-site arrangement of the group work.
- Ms Hélène Bessières, PERP Project Director at SOFRECO, for her flexibility and for effectively facilitating the administrative aspects of the research;
- Dr Clinton Robinson, PERP Team Leader, for his technical inputs into the research process and quality control of the outputs.
- The involved community members, children, families, PTAs and local leaders, whose experiences and perceptions shared to allow education to be of relevance and benefit to their children and the communities of Sudan.

Research Team:

Dr. Kathleen Fincham, International Expert

Fatima Abdel Aziz Ibrahim, National Expert

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PERP	Primary Education and Retention Programme
SAC	State Advisory Committee
SCS	Save the Children, Sweden
SMoE	Sudan Ministry of Education
SPLA	Sudan Popular Liberalization Army
WID	Women in Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Using a qualitative research methodology and focus group interviews as the primary research method, this study explores the factors affecting the education and retention of girls in Red Sea State, Sudan, with a focus on the three communities of Port Sudan (urban), Hayya (rural) and Tokar (rural remote).

The findings of the study indicate that there are home, community and school-based factors which are influencing girls' decisions to stay in school or drop out. Moreover, parents and teachers have a particularly strong influence over girls' retention in school either by directly or indirectly influencing the girls' decisions to remain in school, or in the case of parents (and particularly fathers), making these decisions on behalf of the girls.

In terms of home and community-based factors affecting girls' dropout, the most significant are the presence of both parents in the home, the parents' level of education and their active support of and involvement in their daughters' education (particularly for fathers). Although poverty is a factor affecting parents' decisions to withdraw their children from school, it is attitudes in the family relating to gender roles and responsibilities, as well as familial and community beliefs and practices around child marriage, that determine if the particular children withdrawn from school will be girls.

In terms of school-based factors, girls generally do not make decisions about staying in school based on infrastructure issues (school buildings, water and electricity supplies, the availability of food), nor do they put much emphasis on the presence or absence of specific facilities and services for girls in schools (toilets for girls, provision of 'period' supplies). Rather the content of education, the quality of teaching and their achievement and progression in school are the most significant factors influencing their decisions to stay in school. For parents (particularly those that are uneducated), it is beliefs about the relevance of education to prepare their children for their future 'roles' in society (boys as future 'breadwinners', girls as future 'wives and mothers') which influence their decisions to keep them in school. Moreover, these beliefs about gender roles are reproduced in the school through the formal curriculum, which is then mediated by teachers who hold different expectations for students based on gender. Gender bias reproduced in the home and through schools is significant in shaping the educational experiences and future aspirations of girls.

Girls who drop out of school in Red Sea State generally end up in fulltime domestic work either at home or in the homes of others as domestic workers (in contrast to boys, who generally end up in paid employment). Although many girls express a desire to return to school, most say that they have no strategy for doing so, nor do they have anyone to support them in this endeavour.

As the causes of girls' dropout from school are related to deep structural and cultural issues, recommendations proposed to increase girls' retention in school and to facilitate girls' re-entry into school after they have dropped out are transformative approaches that require long-term and sustained commitment from educational policymakers and planners, parents, teachers and the girls themselves. These include increased and sustained investment in education (particularly teachers), provision of re-entry mechanisms for girls who have dropped out, community education and training and improvement of school/community relations.

Kathleen FINCHAM

Lead Researcher

1 CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

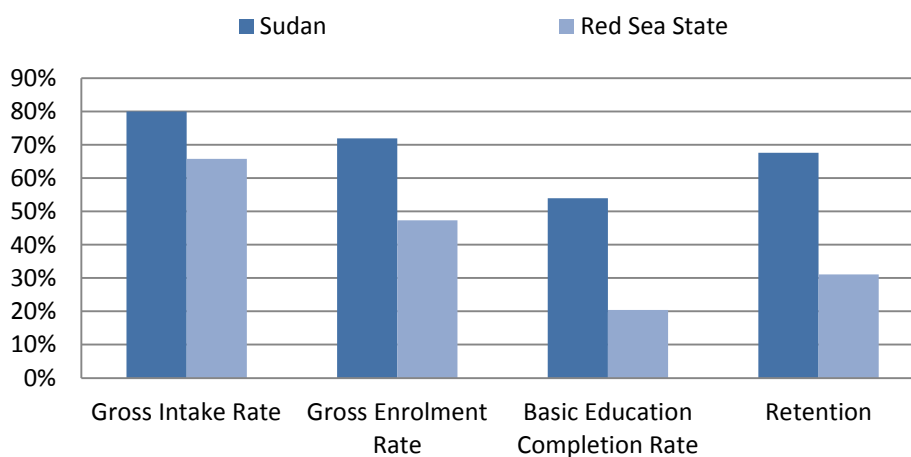
The European Union-funded Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) in Sudan attempts to address the challenge of children dropping out of school in five states: Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan. Technical assistance is provided by SOFRECO (Paris), and the programme is implemented by Save the Children, Sweden (SCS) and UNICEF. Six research studies form part of the service contract of SOFRECO, which is responsible for their implementation. The section below provides background context for the PERP, as well as a rationale for this study on ‘Factors Affecting Girls’ Education and Retention in Schools in Red Sea State’.

Background

Since the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), which resulted in the South Sudan separation referendum, there has been increased participation in general education in Sudan, with an average annual enrolment growth rate in primary education of around 6%. However, there is still substantial student dropout at the primary level: only 54% of those entering Grade 1 are still in school in Grade 8, indicating a high wastage rate through Grades 1 through 7. Moreover, there are massive disparities, with Basic Education completion statistics varying enormously between Sudanese states (see Table 1 below). In addition, location, vulnerability and gender affect access to schooling: disadvantaged groups are significantly under-represented, urban children are 17% more likely than rural children to be at school, and boys are 8% more likely to be participating than girls (World Bank 2012, 2010 school census).

Table 3

Basic Education Completion Statistics



Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) strategy paper, 2012

Within the Sudanese context, education retention and completion are major challenges that have not been seriously and sufficiently addressed. In order to understand in more depth how and why children drop out of primary school in Sudan, six studies were planned as part of the PERP in the five states with the lowest Basic Education completion rates: Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan. Dropout

is a complex and multidimensional problem, and the six studies are intended to provide an opportunity to examine the issue from a range of perspectives. The foci of these studies include: 'Why children drop out? – individual case studies and patterns' (study no. 1); 'Factors affecting the education and retention of girls in Red Sea State' (study no. 2); 'Quality of the teaching/learning process and of classroom practice' (study no. 3); 'Community engagement and governance in education' (study no. 4); 'The role and value of education – community perceptions' (study no. 5); and 'Improving management for better retention at state level' (study no. 6). The insights that the studies provide will feed into education planning, training and the management of schools and the education system. More immediately, the results will provide a stronger basis for the implementation of the PERP through SCS and UNICEF.

This (second) study focuses on 'Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls in Red Sea State' with the aim of reaching a deeper and more detailed understanding of the challenges and difficulties that girls face in accessing schooling, staying in school and completing the primary cycle (grades 1-8). The topic of the study was identified during the PERP programme design phase and was formally approved by the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) held in Khartoum on 24 August 2014. As the PERP implementing agencies (UNICEF and SCS) were gathering quantitative data in the target localities (baseline studies, EMIS) as well as other project data (rapid survey), it was suggested that the six studies undertaken should complement this effort through a qualitative approach. A series of consultations with all PERP stakeholders at Federal and State level were then undertaken to define the scope of each study. The Terms of Reference for the 6 studies drafted by the PERP Team Leader and Programme Adviser were finalized in December 2014 according to the priorities expressed by the SMoE.

2 GIRLS' DROPOUT – WIDER EDUCATIONAL DEBATES

This study is situated within wider educational debates around access to education for all within the context of developing countries. The section below discusses the general trends and debates related to girls' education and retention in schools with particular reference to sub-Saharan Africa.

2.1 General trends and dropout

Since the Dakar Framework for Action was adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000, the Education for All (EFA) movement has been a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. In some ways, the world has made significant progress toward the achievement of the six EFA goals, with 50 million more children enrolled in school today than in 1999. However, globally, the percentage of children dropping out before they have completed a full cycle of primary education has hardly changed since 1999. In some regions, the percentage of children reaching the last grade has actually worsened, as it has in sub-Saharan Africa with only 54% of children reaching the last grade in 2004 compared with 58% in 1999 (UNESCO 2015). Contributing to the problem is that dropout has often been neglected within research and policy agendas.

Dropout is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that occurs after children have already achieved access to school. A major issue in many developing countries, the problem of dropout is often obscured by emphasis placed by governments and international agencies on initial access to school. Moreover, the phenomenon of dropout is often invisible in national and regional education statistics. This is because statistical data, such as gross enrolment ratios (GERs) and net enrolment ratios (NERs), are insensitive to changes in enrolment status over short periods of time. Thus, while school drop is a serious problem that is extremely widespread in developing countries, it is often hidden from view and overlooked within research and policy agendas. While there is a range of literature which addresses the subject of dropout, few studies focus on 'dropout' as a central theme. More frequently, dropout is embedded within studies focusing on access more generally. Another challenge is that dropout tends to be viewed as an event, rather than a process. As a result, factors

contributing to the final push from school are often isolated out and made prominent. Few studies focus on the complex processes and the push/pull factors within households, schools and communities which factor into dropout. Moreover, the quantitative emphasis of many studies means that the personal stories of children who have dropped out, parents and teachers are often neglected (Hunt 2008).

Dropout varies between and within countries and occurs more frequently in certain age ranges and grades (depending on the educational structure and patterns of participation in that country). However, certain broad trends have been identified. Using national data from 13 sub-Saharan African countries to compare patterns of enrolment over time, research by the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) at the University of Sussex has revealed the following general patterns of educational exclusion due to dropout:

- Most children out of school have dropped out rather than never enrolled.
- Increased enrolment rates are often accompanied by increased dropout and a greater number of over-age children who are more likely to drop out.
- Children nominally enrolled but learning little face 'silent exclusion' and are at risk of dropping out.
- Dropout is linked to both demand-side and supply-side factors. **Supply-side problems (i.e.: insufficient number of schools, too few qualified teachers, poor quality learning environment) remain a serious constraint to achieving access to basic education for all. On the other hand, demand-side problems (i.e.: rising opportunity costs, lack of perceived relevance of education, early marriage) are growing in importance as enrolment rates increase and basic education is extended to include higher grades.**
- Expanding access to secondary schooling is critical to achieving universal access to primary schools. Unless transition rates to lower secondary are high, demand to complete primary schooling will soften (CREATE 2014).

2.2 Gender and dropout

Dropout varies within countries, and previous research has shown that differences in school completion are often most stark between children from urban and rural areas, between children from the poorest and richest wealth quintiles and between children with educated or uneducated mothers (Colclough et al 2000).

Dropout rates are also highly sensitive to gender. In low income countries, gender disparities in enrolment are commonly at the expense of girls, with only 20% of these countries achieving gender parity in primary education, 10% in lower secondary education and 8% in upper secondary education. Moreover, three-quarters of the countries farthest from achieving gender parity within education are in sub-Saharan Africa. The gender disparity in education in developing countries described above is in marked contrast to the situation in middle and high income countries where 2% of upper income countries have a gender disparity at the expense of boys in primary education, 23% in lower secondary education and 62% in upper secondary education (UNESCO 2014).

The fact that gender disparities within education are not globally consistent indicates that biological differences between males and females do not account for differences in educational access, achievement and outcomes. Rather, educational resources, opportunities and power are unevenly distributed between males and females as a

result of notions of gender (the socially constructed roles, attributes, activities and responsibilities connected to being male or female in a given society) and unequal gender relations. Gender does not produce categories of people in particular ways. Rather, it intersects with other forms of social exclusion, such as race, class, ethnicity, disability, and so on, to construct new forms of social exclusion. In this way, girls from low income groups within ethnic minority communities (simultaneously bearing exclusions of gender, ethnicity and class) are often the most marginalised and excluded from education (March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay 1999).

Attempts by governments, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs to address the 'girls' dropout problem' have traditionally been grounded within Women in Development (WID) frameworks. Framed through economic 'efficiency' arguments, WID approaches generally focus on the benefits of girls' education for others in terms of faster economic growth, more productive agriculture, smaller and better educated families and reduced infant and child mortality ('if you educate a girl, you educate a whole nation') (Aikman and Unterhalter 2005). From a WID perspective, the goal is to expand education for girls and women through an equal allocation of resources and a focus on *gender parity* (counting the number of girls as compared with the number of boys). In practice, this might entail providing an equal number of places in school for boys and girls, providing them with equal resources, such as learning materials and school toilets, and providing 'equal' opportunity for male and female candidates to enter Teaching Training Colleges.

However, the WID focus on *gender parity* obscures deeply embedded structures of power and exclusion, such as discriminatory laws, customs, practices and institutional processes which undermine opportunities and outcomes for girls in education. For example, WID interventions, such as abolishing school fees and providing food in return for school attendance, typically do not raise questions about the gendered curriculum, the gendered practices of teachers, the gendered nature of school management practices or the gendered structures of power in society. Moreover, WID policies to address gender parity, such as by providing equal school places for boys and girls, often obscure the unequal conditions under which girls participate in schooling as a result of the social and cultural expectations on them to perform all domestic labour and childcare within the home. As the social expectations upon girls often limit their opportunities to rest adequately, enjoy leisure time and keep up with their schoolwork, they often experience disadvantage in terms of educational opportunities and academic performance in relation to boys.

Similarly, seemingly 'gender neutral' education policies and processes can actually end up disadvantaging girls and women (Leach 2003). For example, assumptions that male and female teachers interact with Teacher Education structures on equal terms fail to take into account the different positions, needs and experiences of men and women within society. This obscures the particular problems that female teachers may have at deployment or in relation to their career advancement (i.e.: postings to rural areas, separation from husbands, sexual harassment, marital responsibilities, childbirth and maternity leave). As male and female teachers are assumed to be the same and enter the teaching profession on equal terms within a WID framework, they are treated the same and there is no affirmative action to equalize conditions between them (Mulugeta 2012).

The examples above illustrate the problems with focusing on *gender equality* ('sameness') without also considering issues of *gender equity* (fair and just outcomes) in order to address imbalances between males and females. *Gender equity* involves

moving beyond a mere 'counting of girls in school' to an analysis of the complex processes entailed in the reproduction and transmission of gendered identities and unequal gender relations within the family, the labour market, the community and the state (including education) (Kabeer and Subrahmanian 1996). A focus on equity within education can help both girls and boys to develop their freedoms to choose lives that they have reason to value (Sen 1999). Conversely, simply adding girls and women to existing education systems and structures without addressing issues of gender equity is, at best, likely to only result in short-term (and often superficial) benefits for a particular group of girls (Aikman and Unterhalter 2005).

3 METHODOLOGY

The section below provides a rationale for the research design and sampling strategy for the study. Challenges faced in conducting the research are also discussed.

3.1 Research design

In order to determine the factors affecting girls' access to education and retention in primary schools (grades 1-8) in Red Sea State, empirical research was conducted by one international expert, Ms Kathleen Fincham, and one local expert, Ms Fatima Abdelaziz, in 3 locations (Port Sudan, Hayya and Tokar) over a period of 10 days between March 27 and April 8, 2015.

Initial Research Questions for the study included the following:

- Why do girls not stay in school or not attend at all?
- If they are not in school, what are girls of primary age doing?
- What are the factors in their families and communities that contribute to girls dropping out?
- What factors in and around the learning environment may also play a role?
- How do girls themselves see dropout and schooling?
- What factors or changes would make it possible for girls to stay in school?

These research questions were drafted by the PERP team leader and approved through stakeholder consultations.

In order to understand how and why girls drop out of school in Red Sea State, a qualitative research design was proposed. A qualitative approach was deemed to be suitable for this study because it allowed the researcher to capture and interpret people's views and experiences, recognize complexity, uncover hidden voices and perspectives and produce an in-depth account based on respondents' understandings. Relying on a logic that is inductive, exploratory and theory-building, a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to capture unique features that may otherwise have been lost in large-scale quantitative data collection. As many previous studies on dropout have been conducted through a quantitative methodology (household surveys, large scale questionnaires, statistical/econometric approaches), adopting a qualitative approach for this study addressed a gap in the literature by providing the personal

perspectives of girls who have dropped out, as well as those of key stakeholders, such as parents and teachers (Hunt 2008).

Consistent with a qualitative research methodology, research methods for the study included documentary analysis (state, national, international levels), informal observations recorded in a fieldwork diary and focus groups conducted with girls in school, girls not in school, boys not in school, mothers, fathers, teachers and head teachers.

Interviews were chosen as the primary research method because they allowed participants to discuss their interpretations of the world around them and to express how they regarded situations from their own point of view. As such, interviews yielded rich insights into the biographies, experiences, opinions, values, attitudes and aspirations of respondents. Through interviews, the researcher's direct interaction with the participants allowed for greater depth than would have been possible with other methods of data collection, such as questionnaires, because it was possible to probe, encourage people to expand on their answers and cross-check information. The social nature of interviews also meant that respondents often became more involved in the research process and, hence, more motivated to participate.

In order to capture as many respondent viewpoints as possible within the limited timeframe of the fieldwork, focus groups were selected as the primary research method for the study. Focus groups provided the researchers with a useful orientation to the lives and educational experiences of girls in Red Sea State and helped to reveal shared cultural knowledge beyond the knowledge of any single individual. The group dynamics inherent in focus group interviews enabled the researchers to acquire insight into normative social relations and cultural behaviour within the research context. Moreover, focus group interviews were also generally less intimidating than individual interviews for participants (especially young people), which encouraged respondents to discuss sensitive topics more freely in groups than they may have alone with a stranger.

Research instruments were drafted by the international expert before the start of the study, vetted by the SOFRECO Project Team Leader and finalized through consultations with officials at the Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE) through a validation workshop (see Appendix). The national expert translated all interview schedules into Arabic before the commencement of the fieldwork. At the start of each focus group, Bio-sheets (used to collect personal data) were distributed to each participant to complete with help from the research assistant/ translator (see Appendix).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic coding and discourse analysis to enable the researcher to note patterns, count the frequency of occurrence, make interpretations and develop tentative theories, relating the findings of the study to previous literature and research. From this, a general narrative description of the educational experiences of girls in Red Sea State was produced.

A general limitation of qualitative research is that findings of this study will not necessarily be generalizable to other contexts and populations.

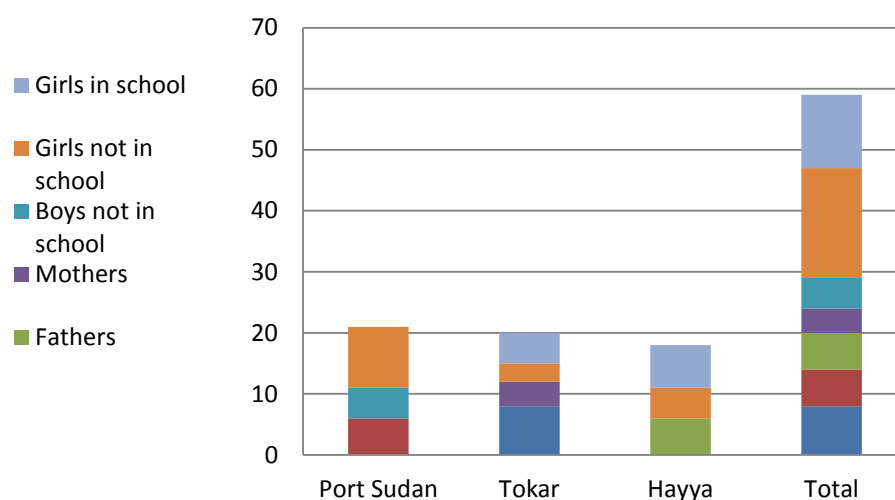
3.2 Sampling

The SMOE in consultation with the PERP State Advisory Committee (SAC) selected 3 locations in Red Sea State to conduct the study. These locations, selected because they have the highest rates of school dropout and repetition, represent an urban location (Port Sudan), a rural location (Hayya) and a remote rural location (Tokar). Located on the Red Sea, Port Sudan, with a population of approximately 500,000 people, is Sudan's main port city and is home to approximately 60% of the state's population. Hayya is a town of about 218,557 people that is a junction station on the mainline of the Sudan railway network. Tokar is a town of approximately 40,000 people, which is located 160 km south of Port Sudan.

Over the course of 10 days, 11 focus groups (3-8 participants each) were held (4 in Port Sudan, 3 in Hayya and 4 in Tokar) with a total of 59 participants. 18 girls not in school (aged 10-19) were interviewed to determine their reasons for dropping out of school before completing the primary cycle of education. Interviews with 12 girls in school (aged 10-15) were conducted to provide a kind of 'control group' to ascertain the factors that prevented some girls from remaining in school and others from dropping out. 5 boys (aged 20-23) were also interviewed to determine which factors resulting in dropout had a specifically gendered dimension disadvantaging girls. In order to capture the views of stakeholders within the education process, 10 parents (4 mothers and 6 fathers), 6 teachers and 8 head teachers were also interviewed. The number of focus groups conducted depended on the time available in each field site, and the number of respondents interviewed in each category was determined by their availability. The interview statistics are summed up in Table 2, below.

Table 4

Interviews by category and location



In order to conform with local traditions, focus groups were conducted in single-sex groups by the female international and local experts in English (teachers), Arabic (girls in school, girls not in school, boys not in school, parents, head teachers) and, where necessary, the local language of Beja (girls not in school in Port Sudan and Hayya). When required, translation was conducted with the interview questions first being read in English and then translated into either Arabic or Beja. Interviews conducted in Arabic

were done through the assistance of the local expert. Interviews conducted in Beja were done through the assistance of two local research assistants (one male and one female). Where possible, interviews were recorded and later transcribed in English.

3.3 Challenges in executing the research

A number of bureaucratic and logistical issues arose during the planning and execution of the research that added layers of complexity to the research process and limited what was possible to achieve within the allotted timeframe.

First, semi-structured interviews were specifically selected for the purposes of this research study, as they provide great advantage in allowing local, individual and marginalized viewpoints to emerge more readily than are possible with structured interviews. The advantage of using a flexible interview schedule is that respondents can decide what is important and create the categories for the interview, directing the conversation towards issues of interest or concern to them. This enables the emergence of unexpected or unanticipated answers, which can challenge the researchers' preconceptions and suggest unthought-of relationships or hypotheses. However, due to the requirement that all research questions had to be vetted through the FMoE through a validation workshop at the national level, this flexibility was largely lost, and the interview process became far more rigid than originally intended.

It should be noted that the research process, particularly the fieldwork duration, was subject to the obtaining of national and local authorizations. These were granted at both levels, although the period of fieldwork was less than had initially been requested.

In terms of access to participants, access to girls out of school proved to be challenging in all three localities, as these girls were often sequestered in the home and many were unknown to education officials. This was particularly the case for girls who had dropped out of school at a very young age or had never enrolled in school. Access to fathers also proved to be challenging, as they were often unable to commit their time and attention for the duration of the interview and were often called away mid-interview to attend to personal matters.

The section below discusses the main findings of the study.

4 FINDINGS

As discussed in section 2, dropout is a complex phenomenon involving both push and pull factors within households, schools and communities. Moreover, there are specific gender-related factors that can encourage dropout. This section will discuss the findings of the research on girls' education and retention in Red Sea State and provide insights into the processes of dropout, indicators of risk factors that can be used to predict dropout for girls and opportunities and mechanisms that may facilitate girls' re-entry into school after they have dropped out.

4.1 Home and community-based factors:

The findings of this study indicate that home and community-based factors are among the most significant in relation to girls dropping out of school in Red Sea State. The following home and community-based factors were the most noteworthy in determining girls' retention in school in each of the three localities.

4.1.1 Both parents living

Focus group interviews with girls in and out of school revealed that girls tended to be in school and remain in school if they lived with both of their parents. A stable home life seemed to provide the economic and social security that was conducive to helping girls to stay in school. Girls who came from families where the parents had divorced and remarried did not seem to indicate a higher risk for dropout if the father (or step-father) was present in the home.

On the other hand, a significant number of girls who had dropped out of school in all three localities came from families in which one parent had died or the parents had divorced and not remarried. In households where the mother had died, girls (particularly the oldest girl in the family) often became responsible for domestic work and childcare within the home. On the other hand, girls whose fathers had died were more likely to be married early or sent out to work as domestic workers in other people's homes in order to relieve the 'financial burden' on the family. In both cases, girls in these circumstances often dropped out of school.

4.1.2 Education of parents and their participation in their daughters' education

Nearly all girls who were regularly attending school had parents who were educated at least to secondary level. In many instances (particularly in Tokar), girls in school had mothers who had reached or completed tertiary education. Parents (mothers and fathers) who were educated tended to strongly believe in the value of education for girls (for the girl's benefit as well as for the benefit of the family). Moreover, these parents tended to be actively involved in their daughters' education, were able to help them with their schoolwork, were actively involved in Parent Teacher Associations and regularly participated in school meetings. Educated parents also tended to be more financially secure. As one teacher in Port Sudan explained, 'If the parents have a car and a good house, they are more involved in their daughter's education and visit the school'. In terms of providing girls with help with their schoolwork, the education of mothers seemed to be more important, as mothers were the ones who were most often present and available in the home for the girls to talk to. On the other hand, education of fathers seemed to be more important in terms of girls' retention in school, as they were the ones who made the financial decisions for the family, and they were the ones who made decisions in relation to their daughter's marriage.

In contrast to girls in school, the vast majority of girls out of school came from homes where their parents were not educated. Parents who were not educated often had a lower appreciation of the value of girls' education or tended to view education of girls solely in terms of how it could economically benefit the family. Uneducated parents often felt unable to help their daughters with their schoolwork once they advanced past the early grades. Moreover, due to their status as 'uneducated', these parents often lacked the confidence to approach and engage with the school because, as one uneducated mother stated, 'uneducated people are different from educated people'. Due to their lack of communication with the school, uneducated parents felt as if they didn't understand what was required of them to support their daughters' education. Fathers, in particular, seemed to play a very limited role in the education of girls who had dropped out. Many of these girls complained that their fathers had always been busy and away from home and that they were not available to help them with their schoolwork or to provide them with guidance on school-related matters. On the other hand, fathers often saw their roles in their daughters' education in very limited ways, such as being responsible to provide the material and financial resources for them to go to school (i.e. textbooks, clothes, pens, bags, uniforms and money for transportation to school).

4.1.3 Culture and tradition in relation to gender roles and responsibilities

Particularly important in determining whether or not girls would continue their education were attitudes in the family relating to gender roles and responsibilities. For example, parents (both mothers and fathers) who believed in the intellectual capabilities of girls to achieve academically tended to support their daughters' continued attendance in school. Moreover, parents who believed in the possibility of women working outside of the home tended to support their daughters' education. These parental views and expectations were often related to whether or not the parents themselves had been educated.

On the other hand, parents who did not believe in the intellectual capabilities of girls to achieve in school, or only believed that girls could excel in certain subjects, often did not feel that their daughters' education was worth the investment. Moreover, parents who believed strongly that 'a woman's place is in the home' and that her 'role' is to take care of the home and the family did not believe in education for girls or believed that education for girls should be limited to basic literacy, Qur'anic studies and domestic education (sewing, cooking) to enable girls to become better housewives and mothers. As these modest educational goals could be achieved within only a few years of schooling, some parents saw no reason to retain their daughters in school past their acquisition of these skills. Ironically, prescribed gender roles for girls sometimes encouraged parents to send their girls to school and to keep them there as long as possible due to limited employment prospects for girls due to cultural constraints. As one father explained, 'boys can find jobs anywhere (driver, bus conductor, shop keeper), but girls need an education to find a job'.

Prescribed gender roles and responsibilities for girls within the home (cooking, cleaning and taking care of younger siblings) were critical to decisions relating to girls' retention in school. While girls in school generally reported that their household duties were minimal (due to support from their mothers and older sisters), or restricted to contributions to the home made after school, girls who had dropped out of school often reported that they had been responsible for housework and child care both before and after school. This work often made them tired, gave them little time for rest or leisure activities and did not provide them with enough time or energy to adequately complete their schoolwork. For girls who were the oldest in the family, as well as girls in families where the mother had died, this domestic burden was increased. As one girl reported, 'I stopped going to school because my mother got pregnant and asked me to help her at home'. On the other hand, all girls (in school and out) indicated that their father and brothers took no part in domestic work or childcare. Rather, as girls, it was their 'responsibility' to perform these 'duties' in the home. Although boys were not expected to work in the home, boys out of school reported that they experienced pressure from their parents and from society to work outside the home to financially contribute to the family. This was particularly the case in Port Sudan where the availability of employment opportunities (for males) in the city made leaving school to enter paid work both possible and attractive for boys.

Another important issue related to gender was the concern expressed by (mainly uneducated) parents about the influence of schooling on girls' attitudes and aspirations. Fathers in particular often perceived education for girls as a threat to local cultural traditions and norms related to male authority. As one father explained, 'Girls may do bad things if they are educated, such as go out to work and meet males. Educated girls can challenge the authority of their father and refuse to get married. Girls who go to school become impolite and stand up for their rights and challenge their husbands'. As such, these fathers were hesitant to keep their daughters in school.

Fathers in particular complained about poverty being a major source of their unwillingness to continue to send their girls to school, as they believed that to educate girls was more expensive than to educate boys. However, through in-depth discussion it emerged that for fathers the cost of education of sons and daughters was actually the same. Rather, the perceived higher costs associated with sending girls to school were actually in relation to transportation costs for girls who they felt needed to be 'protected' from damage to their (and their family's) reputation by interacting with boys on the

street. In other words, cost differentials in educating boys and girls can be explained through culturally constructed notions of ‘honour and shame’, where females are made responsible to preserve the ‘honour’ of the family and community through regulating their dress, movements and behaviour (conditions which do not apply to boys). For parents, these cultural constructions relating to girls’ ‘honour’ tended to be articulated in rigid terms through particular interpretations of Islam (‘we are ruled by Islam’) and regulated through social pressure from the community. However, in contrast to the claims made by many fathers, the vast majority of girls indicated that they walked to school and so did not incur any additional costs for their parents.

4.1.4 Early marriage

Directly related to the prescribed gender roles and responsibilities discussed above, but deserving particular mention, is the issue of child marriage, which is pervasive in the communities studied in Red Sea State, marriages in some cases being arranged from birth. As family sizes in these communities are large and there is little family planning (‘we are ready to receive the number of children that come’), which intensifies economic hardship within the household, most fathers expressed a desire to marry off their children quickly. However, their particular choice to marry off their daughters (rather than their sons) shortly after they reached puberty was due to fears of them bringing shame on the family. Once a girl was married, she not only became the financial responsibility of her husband but her behaviour now reflected on him, rather than her father. As one father explained, ‘if someone proposes, we agree to be free from the responsibility (both financial and honour)’. Many girls expressed that they felt they had no choice but to accept proposals that came and to do their ‘duty’ and marry. As one girl stated, ‘marriage cannot be planned, it is *kismet*’. Early marriage has profound implications for education, and most of the girls out of school dropped out either because their husbands did not permit them to stay in school (‘my husband wants me to be a housewife’) or because they were now responsible for all the domestic work in the home and were engaged in pregnancy and/or childcare, which did not give them enough time or energy to continue their education. Although some girls indicated that there were special classes provided for girls who had become pregnant, most did not see attendance as a viable option for the reasons previously mentioned. Girls were generally not happy to have dropped out of school. As one girl stated, ‘My life is OK but being educated is better. Staying at home doesn’t benefit us. Domestic work is boring’. By contrast, interviews with girls in school revealed that none of them had yet married.³¹

4.2 School-based factors:

In addition to home and community-based factors, the findings of this study indicate that school-based factors are very significant in relation to girls dropping out of school in Red Sea State. The following school-based factors were the most significant in determining girls’ retention or dropout from school.

4.2.1 Quality of education and teaching

In general, all girls (both those in school and those who had dropped out) expressed satisfaction with their school environment in terms of infrastructure and facilities. Girls generally reported that their school was within walking distance (or in the case of Port Sudan, a short rickshaw ride away), had an adequate supply of water and electricity

³¹ This is not in fact universally the case ; the SMOE observed that a small number of married girls returned to school in Durdab and Gunub localities

(subject to power cuts) and separate toilets for girls. Moreover, food was available at or near almost all schools (either freely provided or available for purchase at subsidized rates). Most girls reported that they felt safe to walk to school alone or in groups (this was especially the case in the close-knit rural communities of Hayya and Tokar). As a result, none of these factors seemed to be significant in determining whether or not girls stayed in school.

Access to schooling for the girls of nomadic families presents a particular challenge. Their lifestyle means that the girls move with the families and so cannot access schooling in the usual way. Sudan has addressed this challenge by creating mobile schools in some areas, where teachers move with the nomadic communities, setting up classrooms at each point. While the system has developed an appropriate response which serves girls and boys equally, nomadic teaching/learning was not available in this area. Thus education for nomadic children was limited for families engaged in nomadic livelihoods in rural areas, such as Tokar.

Rather than questions of access, for the majority of girls, 'quality of education' was most important in influencing their decisions to remain in school or drop out, and they understood educational quality in terms of their experiences in school and their interaction with teachers, in particular.

Girls in school generally spoke about how they enjoyed learning and were satisfied with the quality of teaching. For the girls, a 'good teacher' was someone who could explain curriculum content clearly, was engaging in the classroom, freely gave of his/her time to students and administered fair punishments. Also important to the girls was the care teachers expressed towards them and the courtesy of teachers in their communications with students. As one girl in school said, 'I like going to school because our teacher loves us'. Most girls (in and out of school) expressed that they felt more comfortable having female teachers, because 'they understand us, and it is easier to communicate with them'.

On the other hand, girls not in school often spoke about how their experiences in school and their interactions with teachers had not been positive. Frequently mentioned was teachers' inability to explain curriculum content clearly, their inability to control the class and their frequent use of corporal punishment when students arrived late to school or were unable to complete their schoolwork. As one girl who had dropped out of school reported, 'I hated school because I was beaten by a specific teacher (hit in the face). I will not return to school until that teacher changes his behaviour'. Girls who had dropped out of school also reported that their teacher had often shouted at them and made them feel afraid, left them alone in the class for long periods of time and sometimes asked them to clean their houses, serve their visitors and retrieve things from the shop.

For their part, teachers widely reported that they felt demoralized and unmotivated due to the poor conditions of service, low salaries, low status of teachers in the community (especially in Port Sudan), lack of recognition for their work and lack of opportunities for promotion and advancement. As one teacher explained, 'In the past, there was a song about teachers and people wanted to marry a teacher, but now teachers are not well educated and they have poor salaries. I will not encourage my children to be teachers because they are poor and not respected in the community. Even if we work hard to get another degree, we are not recognised'. Several female teachers said that they had entered the teaching profession only because teaching was one of the few 'suitable

jobs for females' open to them in the community, as female teachers could work without having to travel away from home, which might be required of them in other professions.

As the number of schools for girls is small (particularly in Hayya and Tokar), and relatively few teachers are employed per subject, teachers explained how they were forced to teach unreasonably large classes (up to 100 students per class at primary level). Large classes forced the teachers to resort to using traditional teaching methods, like lecturing, which did not enable them to pay attention to individual student needs. Moreover, large class sizes meant that the teachers did not have the time or energy to provide extracurricular activities for the students. Classroom management was a recurring concern, and students often complained that excessive classroom noise and quarreling amongst the students both distracted them from learning and made the learning environment unpleasant. As a result of the complex classroom management issues related to large class sizes and teachers' limited training to deal with such issues, teachers reported that they often resorted to using corporal punishment to control the class. As one teacher explained, 'in the past, families asked us to hit their children, but now teachers cannot hit children by law. Students don't respect us if we don't hit them'.

As a result of the challenges they faced in teaching within the public education system, several teachers expressed a desire to move to employment within private schools, where salaries were higher and training and advancement opportunities were present. Other teachers expressed a desire to leave the teaching profession altogether. On the other hand, a number of teachers expressed that they received great intrinsic satisfaction from teaching. These teachers had a strong desire to improve their professional practice through in-service training (INSET) in creative teaching methodologies and the use of computers and information and communication technology (ICT) in the classroom. However, these training opportunities were generally not available to them.

4.2.2 Lack of student progression and academic failure

A significant factor in whether or not girls remained in school was related to their levels of academic success. Girls in school almost unanimously reported that they were doing well in most or all subjects and that they had not been asked to repeat any grade. Girls tended to like subjects in which they excelled and in which they felt they had a good teacher.

On the other hand, girls who had dropped out of school generally reported that they had been toward the bottom of the class in terms of achievement, had failed one or more subjects and then were not able to progress to the next grade. In some cases, girls had repeated grades several times. There were several reasons for this academic failure. In some instances, girls felt that the curriculum was too demanding, which was a particular issue for girls whose parents were uneducated and who did not have anyone to help them with their schoolwork. Although many girls (both in school and those who had dropped out) indicated that they had paid for evening classes from their teachers (a form of supplemental income for cash-strapped teachers), these classes did not seem to help students to avoid academic failure. As students began to fail, their confidence was shaken, and they began to dislike school.

Other students experienced failure as a result of ongoing and/or persistent absences from school. For some girls, these absences were related to an inability to get to school (as a result of disability, tiredness from excessive domestic work or ongoing illness) or

avoidance of going to school (as a result of loss of confidence, fear of the teacher or bullying from other students). As absences increased and accumulated, students started falling behind in their schoolwork, failing in exams and were unable to catch up. For these students, dropout took place over time and was gradual rather than a specific event. Because of the large classes they were faced with, teachers were often unaware of the warning signs of dropout or were unable to address them. As one teacher explained, 'I cannot pay attention to every student. I don't know when students are absent'. After a period of time had passed, girls out of school often felt that they couldn't return because of being overage ('I can't go back to primary school because of my age. I will feel shy, and I have no friends there anymore'.) Moreover, many of the girls who had dropped out indicated that they would like to return to school, but they had no strategy for doing so and they had no one to support them in this endeavour.

Another factor in school retention related to academic achievement was personal aspiration. Girls in school generally enjoyed education and valued it as a way to achieve their personal goals and dreams. In other words, they were intrinsically motivated to continue their education. On the other hand, girls out of school generally lacked intrinsic motivation and tended to view their education narrowly in terms of how it could benefit their families ('it will benefit my [future] children'). Also playing a role in student motivation were girls' expectations in relation to the outcomes of their education. When asked what they wanted to do in the future, virtually all girls (in school and out) said they wanted to be a teacher, doctor or engineer. While being a teacher was a reasonable goal for many girls, the high academic achievements required to enter the fields of medicine or engineering meant that these goals were unrealistic and unattainable for most students. With their limited knowledge of other potential careers open to them, many girls who were not high achieving academically simply gave up hope that their education would one day help them to participate in the labour market.

4.2.3 Gender bias within schools

Related to student achievement is the issue of gender bias in schools. Within schools in Red Sea State, girls and boys study the same subjects, follow the same curriculum and use the same textbooks. However, focus groups with teachers revealed that they have very different expectations for student behaviour and achievement based on gender. Teachers and head teachers generally believed that there were inherent differences between girls and boys in terms of characteristics ('girls are helpful, obedient and quiet') and in relation to academic ability ('boys are cleverer in science and math'). Moreover, these differences between males and females were understood to be innate from birth and 'given by Allah'. Thus, they were 'natural' and could not be changed.

These beliefs about the differences between boys and girls shaped teacher expectations of students ('girls are less gifted but are more motivated'), and influenced their assignment of roles, tasks and responsibilities for students ('boys should be class president because boys have courage and girls are afraid'; 'we assign girls to clean the classroom and fetch water'). Moreover, these beliefs also influenced teachers' views on suitable kinds of education for males and females ('technical and vocational education is better for boys so they will find a job sooner'; 'home economics and domestic education are better for girls so they will raise their children in a better way'). When asked their opinions on the best ways to encourage girls to stay in school, teachers often drew on their understandings of expected gender roles for males and females in society. As one teacher suggested, 'To keep girls in school, tell them they

will not marry a good man if they are not educated. Give them kitchen resources and sewing machines'. Moreover, interviews with girls revealed how constructions of gender transmitted through the curriculum (with its focus on the achievements of males in history and science), and mediated through teachers, was helping to influence girls in how they saw themselves. For example, one girl indicated that she was not doing well in math 'because I am a girl'. Thus, although boys and girls are studying the same curriculum in Red Sea State, it is unlikely they are receiving the same education.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The discussion above has highlighted the key factors which are affecting girls' education and retention in schools in the Red Sea State communities of Port Sudan, Hayya and Tokar. The findings indicate that there are home, community and school-based factors which are influencing girls' decisions to stay in school or drop out. Moreover, parents and teachers have a particularly strong influence over girls' retention in school either by directly or indirectly influencing the girls' decisions to stay in school, or in the case of parents (and especially fathers), making these decisions on behalf of the girls.

In terms of home and community-based factors affecting girls' dropout, the most significant are the presence of both parents in the home, the parent's level of education and their active support of and involvement in their daughters' education (particularly for fathers).

Poverty has frequently been identified in many different contexts as a major factor in the dropout of children from school, both boys and girls. In the communities visited for this study, most families would be considered relatively poor, but most of their children remained in school. The indirect costs of schooling and the opportunity costs of education may be a factor affecting parents' decisions to withdraw their children from school. However, it is attitudes in the family relating to gender roles and responsibilities, as well as familial and community beliefs and practices around child marriage, that determine if the particular children withdrawn from school will be girls.

In terms of school-based factors, girls generally do not make decisions about staying in school based on infrastructure issues (school buildings, water and electricity supplies, the availability of food), nor do they put much emphasis on the presence or absence of specific facilities and services for girls in schools (toilets for girls, provision of 'period' supplies). Rather the content of education, the quality of teaching and their achievement and progression in school are the most significant factors influencing their decisions to stay in school. For parents (particularly those that are uneducated), it is beliefs about the relevance of education to prepare their children for their future 'roles' in society (boys as future 'breadwinners', girls as future 'wives and mothers') which influence their decisions to keep them in school. Moreover, these beliefs about gender

roles are reproduced in the school through the formal curriculum, which is then mediated by teachers who hold different expectations for students based on gender. Gender bias reproduced in the home and through schools is significant in shaping the educational experiences and future aspirations of girls.

Girls who drop out of school in Red Sea State generally end up in fulltime domestic work either at home or in the homes of others as domestic workers (in contrast to boys, who generally end up in paid employment). Although many girls express a desire to return to school, most say that they have no strategy for doing so, nor do they have anyone to support them in this endeavour.

A key lesson learned from the qualitative approach to this research has been the importance of seeking the views of all stakeholders within the research process. The study clearly shows that perceptions of girls are often quite different from those of their parents and teachers in relation to their education. For example, although parents frequently believed that their daughters had chosen to drop out of school, it was actually push factors from within the home and the school that had encouraged girls to drop out.

Although focus groups generally worked well in this study, future studies on this issue (and others) could benefit from a more participatory methodology (such as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) or Action Research), which would help to reverse power differentials between 'researcher' and 'subject' and allow local people to participate in the research process as 'partners' and take ownership of outcomes.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Girls' right to education is protected under international law (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). However, despite this, girls do not enjoy equal access to education in Red Sea State, Sudan.

Based on the discussion and conclusions of this report, it is clear that the causes of girls' dropout from school in Red Sea State are related to deep structural (content and relevance of education, quality of teaching) and cultural issues (gender roles and relations). Therefore, there can be no 'quick fixes', and WID-type interventions (discussed in section 2) are unlikely to provide anything more than modest short-term gains which are unlikely to be sustainable in the long run or benefit more than a particular group of girls.

As a result, recommendations proposed to increase girls' retention in school and to facilitate girls' re-entry into school after they have dropped out are transformative approaches that require long-term and sustained commitment from educational policymakers and planners, parents, teachers and the girls themselves. These include increased and sustained investment in education (particularly teachers), provision of re-entry mechanisms for girls who have dropped out, community education and training and improvement of school/community relations:

Investment in education:

- Provide more schools for girls (especially in underserved rural areas)
- Train more teachers (especially female teachers)
- Reduce class sizes
- Train teachers in modern and creative teaching methodologies (including ICT)
- Train teachers in gender-sensitive and inclusive pedagogies
- Establish accountability mechanisms for teachers, and provide them with incentives to improve their performance
- Recognize teacher performance and achievement
- Conduct a gender analysis of the curriculum

Re-entry mechanisms:

- Provide re-entry programmes for overage girls with age-appropriate curriculum
- Provide childcare mechanisms so young mothers can re-enter school

Education and training:

- Sensitise parents and husbands to the importance and value of education for girls (beyond domestic education)
- Provide family planning education for parents
- Provide free remedial lessons and tutoring for students struggling in school
- Provide career counselling for both male and female students presenting them with a variety of realistic entry points into professional work
- Provide role models for girls in all fields (including science, technology and math)
- Work with local business leaders to develop apprenticeship programmes for girls in a variety of professional fields

School/community relations:

- Strengthen communications between schools and parents (especially with fathers)
- Strengthen Parent/Teacher Associations and make them more inclusive of uneducated parents
- Strengthen communications between schools and local business associations to make education more relevant
- Work with religious leaders to find entry points within Islam to challenge gender bias within schools and the community

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APPENDIX

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Research Bio-data – Girls in School

Name		
Age		
Hometown/ District		
Nationality		
Tribe		
Religion		
Home language		
Year of schooling		
Currently in school	Yes	No
Mother's job/ paid work		
Father's job/ paid work		
Number of years of schooling	Mother:	Father:
Number of siblings	Males: Ages:	Females: Ages:
Number of siblings in school	Males: Ages:	Females: Ages:
Birth order in the family (i.e. oldest, youngest, 3rd child, etc.)		

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Research Bio-data – Girls not in School

Name		
Age		
Hometown/ District		
Nationality		
Tribe		
Religion		
Home language		
Number of years of schooling completed		
Currently in school	Yes	No
Mother's job/ paid work		
Father's job/ paid work		
Number of years of schooling	Mother:	Father:
Number of siblings	Males: Ages:	Females: Ages:
Number of siblings in school	Males: Ages:	Females: Ages:
Birth order in the family (i.e. oldest, youngest, 3rd child, etc.)		

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Research Bio-data - Parents

Name		
Gender		
Age		
Hometown/ District		
Nationality		
Tribe		
Religion		
Home language		
Number of years of schooling completed		
Job/ paid work		
Number of children	Males:	Females:
Number of children in school	Males: Ages:	Females: Ages:
Number of children out of school	Males: Ages:	Females: Ages:

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Research Bio-data - Teachers

Name		
Gender		
Age		
Marital status		
Hometown/ District		
District of teaching service		
Nationality		
Tribe		
Religion		
Home language		
Highest level of education achieved		
Number of years of teaching experience		
Official teaching qualification	Yes	No

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Research Bio-data – Head Teachers

Name		
Gender		
Age		
Marital status		
Hometown/ District		
District of employment		
Nationality		
Tribe		
Religion		
Home language		
Highest level of education achieved		
Number of years of teaching experience		
Number of years of management experience		
Official teaching qualification	Yes	No

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Focus Group: Girls in School

- Tell me about your family. Who do you live with?
- What do you do before school? (cook, bathe siblings, etc.)
- How far is your school from your house? Describe your journey to school.
- Tell me about your school day. What is your daily schedule?
- What is your favourite subject in school? Why?
- What is your least favourite subject in school? Why?
- Describe your favourite teacher. What is he/ she like?
- Describe your least favourite teacher. What is he/ she like?
- What do you like about your school?
- What do you dislike about your school?
- How well do you do in school?
- If you need help with your school work, who helps you?
- What makes you feel uncomfortable at school? (hunger, no toilet, bullying, etc.)
- What do you do after school? (clubs, homework, paid work, childcare, etc.)
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What do you need to do to achieve your dream? Will schooling help you to achieve your dream? Explain.
- Do your parents/ people in your community approve of this dream? Why or why not?

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Focus Group: Girls not in School

- Tell me about your family. Who do you live with?
- How many years did you go to school?
- What did you do before you went to school? (cook, bathe siblings, etc.)
- How far was your school from your house? Describe your journey to school.
- What did you like about your school?
- What did you dislike about your school?
- Describe your favourite teacher. What was he/ she like?
- Describe your least favourite teacher. What was he/ she like?
- How well did you do in school?
- If you needed help with your school work, who helped you?
- What made you feel uncomfortable at school? (hunger, no toilet, bullying, etc.)
- What did you do after school? (clubs, homework, paid work, childcare, etc.)
- Why did you stop going to school?
- What do you do now? (paid work, take care of children, etc.) Do you like it? Why or why not?
- Would you like to go back to school? Why or why not?
- What would need to change for you to go back to school?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What do you need to do to achieve your dream? Will schooling help you to achieve your dream?
- Do your parents/ people in your community approve of this dream? Why or why not?

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Focus Group: Parents

- How many children do you have? (male and female) What are their ages?
- How many of your children are in school? (male and female) What year of schooling are they in?
- Are you happy with the education that your children are receiving in school? Explain.
- How do you participate in your children's education? (help them with school work, etc.)
- What contact do you have with your children's school?
- What do you like about your children's school?
- What do you dislike about your children's school?
- What worries you when your children go to school?
 - Sons?
 - Daughters?
- Have any of your children stopped going to school? Which one(s)?
- Why did they stop going to school?
- Have any of your children never been to school? Why not?
- How do you choose which of your children will go to school?
- Do you think education is important for your children? Why or why not?
 - Sons?
 - Daughters?
- What kind of education do you want your children to have? Why?
 - Sons?
 - Daughters?
- How many years of schooling do you want your children to have? Why?
 - Sons?
 - Daughters?
- What would need to change for you to send your children back to school?
- What do you require from the school to support your children's education?
- What expectations do you have for your children in terms of
 - household chores?
 - caregiving?

- income generation?

Are your expectations different for your sons and daughters?

- What dreams do you have for your children's future? (male and female)
- Do you know anyone who completed higher education? (university, technical college) How are they benefiting from their education?

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Focus Group: Teachers

- What level do you teach? What subjects?
- How many students do you have in your class? Is this manageable for you?
- Why did you decide to become a teacher?
- What do you like about being a teacher?
- What do you dislike about being a teacher?
- What status do teachers have in your society?
- Do you feel that you have been adequately trained to be a teacher? Explain in relation to your PRESET and INSET training.
- Do you feel that you are adequately supported as a teacher? (by your Head Teacher, SMoE, FMoGE) Explain.
- What are the biggest challenges you face as a teacher?
- Do you feel you are paid adequately? Do you have to take on other paid work?
- What interaction do you have with your students' parents?
- Who are the best students in your class?
- In your opinion, is there any difference in the abilities of boys and girls? (i.e. science and math, etc.) Explain.
- Do you have different expectations of boys and girls? (learning, behaviour, roles) Explain.
- Do you treat boys and girls differently? (attention, assignment of tasks, discipline, etc.) Explain.
- Who are more difficult to teach, boys or girls? Why?
- In what ways do school experiences favour boys or girls? (curriculum, teacher attitudes, school policy, etc.)
- In your experience, why do boys drop out of school?
- In your experience, why do girls drop out of school?

- What do you think can be done to keep children in school?
 - Girls?
 - Boys?
- What support do you need to be the best teacher you can be?
- What support do students need to be the best learners they can be? (out of class tutorials, extracurricular activities, etc.)
- What kind of education is important?
 - for boys?
 - for girls?
- How can education benefit students in their lives?
- What role can education play in society?

Factors Affecting the Education and Retention of Girls

Semi-structured Interview: Head Teachers

- Tell me about your job. What responsibilities do you have in your school?
- Why did you decide to become a Head Teacher?
- What do you like about being a Head Teacher?
- What do you dislike about being a Head Teacher?
- What status do Head Teachers have in your society?
- Do you feel that you were adequately trained to be a Head Teacher? Explain.
- Do you feel that you are adequately supported as a Head Teacher? (by SMOE, FMOGE) Explain.
- What are the biggest challenges you face as a Head Teacher?
- Do you feel you are paid adequately? Do you have to take on other paid work?
- As Head Teacher, what interaction do you have with parents?
- As Head Teacher, what interaction do you have with the community? (religious institutions, womens' organisations, etc.)
- In your opinion, is there any difference in the abilities of boys and girls? (i.e. science and math, etc.) Explain.
- Do you have different expectations of boys and girls? (learning, behaviour, roles) Explain.
- Do you treat boys and girls differently? (attention, assignment of tasks, discipline, etc.) Explain.
- Who are more difficult to teach, boys or girls? Why?
- In what ways do school experiences favour boys or girls? (curriculum, teacher attitudes, school policy, etc.)
- In your experience, why do boys drop out of school?
- In your experience, why do girls drop out of school?
- What do you do to influence parents to keep their children in school?

- What do you think can be done to keep children in school?
 - Girls?
 - Boys?
- What support do you need to be the best Head Teacher you can be?
- What support do students need to be the best learners they can be? (out of class tutorials, extracurricular activities, etc.)
- What type of education is important?
 - for boys?
 - for girls?
- How can education benefit students in their lives?
- What role can education play in society?

RESEARCH ITINERARY

March 2015

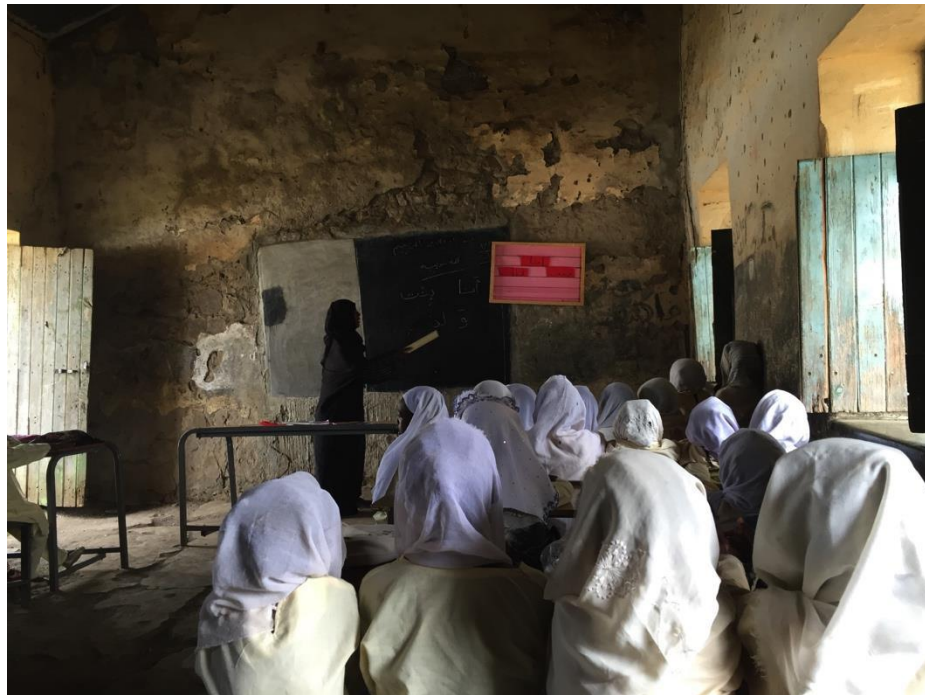
9	Mon	Britain	Drafting the research methodology and data collection instruments
10	Tue.	Britain	Drafting the research methodology and data collection instruments
11	Wed.	Britain	Drafting the research methodology and data collection instruments
12	Thu.		
13	Fri.		
14	Sat.		
15	Sun.		
16	Mon.		
17	Tue.		
18	Wed.		
19	Thu.		
20	Fri.		
21	Sat.		Travelling to Khartoum
22	Sun.	Khartoum	Preparation for SMOE validation workshop
23	Mon.	Khartoum	Orientation International/national experts
24	Tue.	Khartoum	Half day validation workshop, half day finalization of instruments
25	Wed.	Khartoum	Planning field investigation
26	Thu.	Khartoum	Planning field investigation
27	Fri.	Red Sea State	Travelling to Red Sea State
28	Sat.	Red Sea State	Briefing of State Coordinator and stakeholders
29	Sun.	Red Sea State	Focus group - Teachers - Port Sudan
30	Mon.	Red Sea State	Focus group - Girls not in school - Port Sudan
31	Tue.	Red Sea State	Focus group - Head Teachers - Tokar

April 2015

1	Wed.	Red Sea State	Focus groups - Parents, Girls in school, Girls not in school - Tokar
2	Thu.	Red Sea State	Data entry and analysis
3	Fri.	Red Sea State	
4	Sat.	Red Sea State	Focus groups - Parents, Girls not in school - Hayya
5	Sun.	Red Sea State	Data entry and analysis
6	Mon.	Red Sea State	Focus groups - Girls not in school - Hayya
7	Tue.	Red Sea State	Focus groups - Girls not in school, Boys not in school - Port Sudan
8	Wed.	Khartoum	Travelling to Khartoum

9	Thu.	Khartoum	Data entry and analysis
10	Fri.		Travelling to Britain
11	Sat.		
12	Sun.		
13	Mon.		
14	Tue.		
15	Wed.		
16	Thu.		
17	Fri.		
18	Sat.		
19	Sun.		
20	Mon.		
21	Tue.	Britain	Drafting deliverables, translating & coordinating with National Coordinator
22	Wed.	Britain	Drafting deliverables, translating & coordinating with National Coordinator
23	Thu.	Britain	Drafting deliverables, translating & coordinating with National Coordinator
24	Fri.		
25	Sat.		
26	Sun.		
27	Mon.	Britain	Drafting deliverables, translating & coordinating with National Coordinator
28	Tue.	Britain	Amendment/final editing after SOFRECO comments

IV. Study 3 : The Quality of the Teaching & Learning Process, Evidence from Basic Schools in El Gedaref and South Kordofan States



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Mr Richard Brook, External Researcher

Dr Hala Nur, National Researcher

Mr Atif Mahgoub, National Researcher

INTRODUCTION

This study is the third of a series of six that examine the complex and multidimensional problem of school dropout in the context of 5 states in Sudan. Each study has a particular perspective and focus. This study looks at the quality of teaching and learning in 10 sampled schools in two of the five states targeted by the European Union funded Primary Education Retention Programme.

National Context

There has been significant growth in provision and participation in basic education in Sudan over the last decade. Education spending has also been increasing in real terms but by 2012 was only some 2.7% of GDP. This is low by Sub-Saharan African standards and very low compared to lower middle income countries, an income range Sudan was approaching with receipts from oil revenues until 2011, when South Sudan separated from Sudan.

While the overall statistics indicate that only some 54% of children that enter basic schooling in Sudan complete the basic (primary) stage of 8 years, there is relatively little empirical data that illuminates why this is the case. Both recent Household and Baseline Education Surveys offer statistics that suggest the extent of the problem: schools, especially in rural areas failing to retain children to the end of the primary stage. Various state and locality surveys summarize the state of the school population, the infrastructure and the teaching force but the data is not yet detailed or targeted sufficiently to track individual children. This places significant limitations on the ability of schools, the Locality Education Offices and the respective State Ministries of Education to analyse the progress and repetition rates within schools.

Earlier in 2015 PERP Study 1 investigated the causes of drop out from the perspectives of 41 young people from Kassala, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states who had not completed their basic schooling. These provide moving case studies describing their personal experience, which reveal something of the complexity of the issue. Socio-economic constraints figure highly in all cases, but for some 15 informants the quality of schooling available is also a factor. Parental perceptions of the value of the education available is highly influential in determining both enrolment and staying in school. For girls prevailing socio-

cultural forces can be major impediments to starting school and completing a stage.

Although it is widely felt that the quality of education delivered in basic schools in Sudan is generally low, there is little direct evidence other than the crude Year 7 internal exam rates and Year 8 national Basic School Certificate pass rates. An international 2009 student learning assessment administered in Kassala, North Kordofan and River Nile states *“found that student learning outcomes were generally weak: the average male student in the sample answered only 35% of the mathematics questions correctly and 38% of the reading questions compared to 37% and 41%, respectively, for the average female student. Within the sample, girls on average performed significantly better than boys, which is consistent with findings from both developing and developed countries. Students among the richest 20% performed better on average than students in the middle 60%, who in turn performed better than students in the poorest 20%. From a regional perspective, students in the three states performed similarly to their counterparts in Morocco and Tunisia and somewhat better than students in Benin. However, it should be noted that students in northern Sudan were assessed in Grade 5 rather than in Grade 4, as was the case in Morocco and Tunisia, meaning that Sudanese students had the advantage of roughly one additional year of schooling.”*³²

This study seeks to provide qualitative information on what children and teachers are actually experiencing in schools.

Scope & Aim of the Study ³³

The aim of the study was to understand what factors relating to the quality of primary education may be related to causes of drop out or retention. It is clear that the processes of teaching and learning in the classroom can be factors that motivate children to learn and thus to continue to participate in education. On the other hand, there may be factors which discourage or alienate children from school and education. The practice of teaching and learning in the classroom is thus a critical dimension of understanding dropout and retention – one that is poorly understood and little analysed.

The study sought to explore the following questions

- Are there factors in the teaching/learning process that cause children to drop out?
- What approaches to teaching/learning do teachers use in the classrooms?
- What kind of current practices promote active participation of children in learning?
- What do children feel about their experience in the classroom?
- What improvements would teachers like to see? What training might they need to improve their practice?
- Are there ways in which mutual respect, motivation and desire to learn can be better promoted?

Two states: Gedaref and South Kordofan were selected for the field work by the PERP's SMoE participants.

³² The Status of the Education Section in Sudan, World Bank, 2012 p5.

³³ PERP Study 3 Terms of Reference

Quality

The quality of education experienced by children has been linked by a number of studies to high dropout and repetition rates and low progression ratios to higher levels of education³⁴. The balance of the available global evidence is based more on household perceptions of the quality of education available versus perceptions of opportunity costs of sending children to school, rather than the actual quality of education available. This short study focuses on the experience of children and teaching staff in schools ranging from state (provincial) capitals to rural contexts. The range covers examples of schools with relatively low dropout rates such as urban state and an urban private school to rural schools with average to higher than average dropout rates. There is a widely held perception that the urban schools are altogether better resourced and the study examined this by comparing data from both contexts at the school level.

34 Colclough, C., Rose, P. and Tembon, M. Gender inequalities in primary schooling: the roles of poverty and adverse cultural practice. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 20:5-27, cited in Hunt, F. (2008).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology consisted of a review of literature, the preparation and administration of open questionnaires for (a) small focus groups of teachers; (b) small focus groups of students; and (c) for the individual Headteacher of each school sampled. Closed school data forms and a closed teacher data form were also completed in each school. The external researcher, with inputs and advice from the national researchers, compiled this report. The external researcher is responsible for errors of interpretation and the selection of the provisional recommendations.

Key observational data was recorded through the observation of 25 lessons in 15 of the 16 schools visited in total over the two target States. The questionnaires and forms administered were reviewed at a validation workshop attended by representatives of the Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE) and the Study team in Khartoum prior to the fieldwork. Annex 2 lists the schools and their locations.

The Lesson Observations

During the lesson observations we looked at the physical state and context of the classroom, the available learning resources and the conduct of the lesson in terms of planning, classroom management, learning support, learning consolidation and development. Observers were asked to record activity (and passivity) levels of teachers and students, teacher attention to individuals or groups, any creativity used by the teachers to enhance the textbook material, whether the teachers adjusted their strategies for the lesson according to the subject, the purpose of the lesson, and the classroom atmosphere. Specific considerations included:

Planning

- Is there evidence of any planning for the lesson and is there a link with the subject syllabus?
- What materials are used in the lesson?

Classroom management

- Does the teacher give clear explanations and instructions?
- Does he/she check their instructions and explanations are understood?

- Does the teacher encourage/invite questions from the pupils?
- Does the teacher encourage the children to make contributions to the lesson from their own experience and observations?
- Is interaction between children encouraged or required e.g. through pair and/or groupwork?
- If the class is mixed are there differences in the way boys and girls are treated? What are they?
- Does the teacher know and use the students' names?
- Do more able children get exercises, material or activities to extend them?
- Who is working the most in the lesson, the teacher or the children?

Learning support

- Is the teacher responsive and flexible towards the needs of the children and the mood of the class?
- Does he or she monitor the children while they are doing individual work and provide additional support for less able children?

Learning consolidation/development

- Is there any checking by the teacher that the children have learned the topic?
- How the subject matter of the lesson is recorded by the students
- Whether there is evidence of a consistent and positive approach to marking of work by the teacher.
- What consolidation and follow up work is encouraged (e.g. homework).

The study team consisted of an external researcher and two national researchers. This core team finalized the study's five questionnaires following input from an FMoE team (listed in appendix 1) during a Validation workshop, held on 4 October 2015. In each state the researchers were assisted in data collection by two assistant researchers from the respective State Ministry of Education (SMoE).

The schools visited were selected by the PERP State Co-ordinators liaising with the Education Officers in the Localities visited. The research team asked to see a sample of schools ranging from urban to rural contexts on the basis that the level of resources in schools would be likely to vary most between these and because the PERP programme support has focused largely on rural schools. The schools visited were not, however, selected on the basis of assistance from the PERP programme given that study objectives were not evaluative of the PERP. In fact the study team was unaware which schools had received assistance under the PERP programme.

Owing to the time constraint (see below) the study team that visited Gedaref State opted to use the Saturday spent in that State visiting a private school in Gedaref Town, state schools being closed on Saturdays.

Constraints

During the validation workshop the study team was requested to replace the term "policy" in questions with "system" in the Arabic version of the questionnaires, a semantic distinction we chose not to contest. More substantively the team were advised to remove a question in the teacher focus group questionnaire that asked about their remuneration, as it was predicted that this would generate time-consuming litanies of complaints. At best this suggests awareness at the Federal level of possible inadequacies in the pay levels of primary school teachers.

Fieldwork time was limited to one working week, according to the duration of the external researcher's travel permit. The study team decided that there would be insufficient time to conduct individual interviews with teachers whose teaching was observed and so this questionnaire was not administered. This reduced some potential insight on the background to those lessons and their planning and implementation.

The core team were not able to conduct the fieldwork together in both targeted states as security restrictions in South Kordofan prevented the external researcher from travelling there. The team, therefore, split into two with the external and one national researcher travelling to El Gedaref State and the second national researcher travelling to South Kordofan.

Perhaps, understandably, the Locality Education Officers, encouraged the teams to visit the more established schools in their area. A compromise was agreed and both more established and relatively young rural schools were covered in the schools visited.

STATE CONTEXTS

Gedaref State is a large eastern state bordering Ethiopia. Its economy is predominantly agricultural with both small and large scale farming of sorghum and sesame. The state population was recorded as 1,827,181 with a primary school age population of 649,442 (322,615 boys and 316,827 girls)³⁵. There are 829 basic schools. Enrolment in basic education is at the country average and has been increasing steadily but school life expectancy is low. Approximately 5% of the enrolment is from nomadic and IDPs.

During a courtesy call on the Gedaref SMoE, the Director General of Education emphasized the state's policy of pursuing access to education for all, first. It was stated in this meeting that the quality of the education provided would only begin to be addressed after access for all had been achieved.

South Kordofan has an area of 158,355 square kilometres and an estimated population of 1,100,000. It encompasses the Nuba Hills and is one of Sudan's most ethnically diverse States. Owing to the suspension in 2011 of consultations agreed in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, the state has seen significant violence and displacement. South Kordofan was Sudan's only oil producing state and is, therefore, key to national revenue generation.

The education statistics for the state suggest a higher school life expectancy than the Sudan average, a higher gross enrolment ratio and a large growth in enrolment since 2003. Total school age population is 342,970 (169,485 boys and 173,485 girls) of which 175,432 (90,998 boys and 84,434 girls) are recorded as in school³⁶. The accuracy of statistics for the state is unknown owing to the conflict and areas of the state that are consequently inaccessible.

35 Gedaref, State Ministry of Education, November 2015.

36 South Kordofan, State Ministry of Education, 2015.

Schools visited and school abbreviations used in this report

School name	Locality	Abbreviation used
Al Asma Mixed	Ar Rahad, Gedaref State	AA
Ali Ibn Abi Talib Mixed	Ar Rahad, Gedaref State	AT
Ibn Jarah Mixed	El Mefaza, Gedaref State	IJ
Wad As Saboor Mixed	El Mefaza, Gedaref State	WS
Ibn Abbas Boys'	El Mefaza, Gedaref State	IA
Um Al Moonimeen Girls	El Mefaza, Gedaref State	UM
Deim Hamad Girls	Gedaref Town,	DH
Es Salaam Girls Private	Gedaref Town,	ES
Badr Elkubra Basic school for Boys	Kadugli Town, South Kordofan	BK
Elhumeiraa basic school for girls	Kadugli Town, South Kordofan	HM
Eldibaibat Basic school for girls	Ed Dibaibat Town, South Kordofan	DB
Elhajiz basic school for boys	El Hajiz village, South Kordofan	HJ



Figure 2 Grade 5 Um Al Moonimeen Girls Basic School, Al Mafaza

1 FINDINGS

1.1 Reasons Students Drop Out

The three informant groups were asked for their views on why students had dropped out from their school. Overall the reasons offered were fairly consistent in the variety and complexity of factors. They also reflect the reasons given in PERP Study 1 which interviewed a sample of young people that had dropped out in Kassala, Port Sudan and Blue Nile states. The reasons also reflect findings from other countries.

In this study direct reference to the quality of education and lack of learning progress as reasons for dropping out were only made by student informants from two of the rural schools in Gedaref with the lowest enrolments.

1.1.1 Student views on reasons peers drop out

Do you have any friends who dropped out of the school? Why did they stop schooling?

- Their economic situation, girls to get married early (AA).
- Yes, in the Hausa culture mothers make the children go out and earn money even if our fathers want us to study at school. Some have dropped out for this reason (AT).
- Yes, *not learning, not motivated* (IJ).
- Yes, *because they were not learning*, some wanted to make money herding cattle and some girls left to help their mothers (WS).
- Yes, some don't value education and think farming offers a better reward. Some are simply not motivated and are afraid of *corporal punishment*. Some, with physical impairments can't come to school (IA).
- Yes, when they reach Grade 7 they (girls) get married. Others are very poor. Girls who get married were older than the normal age for the class (UM).
- No (DH) & (HM).
- Yes, because of their economic condition (BK).
- Yes, because of marriage, economic conditions, lacking family support, parent's death and high school fees (DB).
- Yes, because of their economic condition, war, family moved to another town and work (HJ)

The repeated references to work and earning money are a particular feature of areas in rural Gedaref where paid seasonal farm labour is available and is an obvious annual draw.

1.1.2 Headteacher and Teacher views on reasons for dropout

Heads and teachers refer to many factors beyond the immediate control of the schools. The one factor under the control of educational policy makers is the school calendar, which was recently adjusted in Gedaref with the result that sesame harvest season is now during term time. We could not measure the impact of this but it was repeatedly raised as the source of student absences and a factor in dropping out in that state.

The only teachers to mention in school factors were in Badr El Kubra Boys' school who referred to an unattractive school environment, the lack of outdoor activities and corporal punishment and El Humeiraa Girls' school who referred to the the lack of school meals and outdoor activities.

Poverty and economic necessity, security concerns (in South Kordofan), family problems such as divorce and polygamy, lack of family support, child/early marriage are all reported. Poverty and lack of family support and early marriage are mentioned most frequently.

1.2 Learning Attainment

The study did not seek to measure the learning attainment levels as such and since schools do not maintain data on individual learning and progression rates the study focused on lesson observations and the views of teachers and students. However, the year 7 internal exams marks and year 8 Basic school certificate exam passes are recorded by the schools. The Teacher focus group interviews did, therefore, include two questions about the target grades by which students are expected to be able to a) write their names and b) know the multiplication tables. This was then informally checked during the student focus interviews.

The Grade by which teachers expect their students to be able to write their own name varies: *Grade 4 (IJ); Grade 2 (WS); Grade 1-3 (IA); Grade 1-4 (UM); Depends on if a child has been to pre-school but usually from Grade Grade 1-2 (DH); In pre-school (ES); Grade 1 and Grade Grade 2 (BK); Grade 1 and Grade Grade 3 (HM); Grade 1 (DB)*. The range of answers probably reflects actual experience rather than an explicitly targeted learning outcome. A sheet of paper was circulated amongst the participants in each student focus group for them to record their names. The results roughly corroborated the Grade Grade 3 target.

The expected grades for knowledge of the multiplication tables were only slightly higher at an average of Grade Grade 3. Only Ibn Al Jarah Mixed School (IJ) teachers gave an expectation as high as Grade Grade 5. This was informally checked with the student focus group participants and the correlation was weaker. In fact several Grade 8 students struggled to give the multiplying values for single digit numbers suggested by the interviewer. This suggests that there is no explicit target year for the multiplication tables to be learnt and reflects the learning assessment findings.

In the context of a focus on retention rates, the question arises whether the lack of explicit learning targets in schools might contribute indirectly to lowering student

and parental motivation. Where clear goals exist that are understood by teachers, students and parents, the rate of progress can be seen, marked and discussed. The means and rate of progress towards understood learning targets can become the focus of a dialogue between the school, the School Council and the Locality Education Office. For parents, such clear goals can offer a basis for interaction with the school and their child's teachers to which they are not automatically excluded by simply not knowing the details of the curriculum.

1.2.1 Basic Education Completion Rates

The year 8 pass rates for each school for the previous academic year were reported as:

School	Number Grade 8 Students in 2014/15	Basic School Certificate pass rate
Ibn Al Jarah Mixed School, El Mafaza, rural Gedaref	?	m 25%
Wad As Saboor Mixed School, El Mafaza, rural Gedaref	0	N/A
Ibn Al Abbas Boys, El Mafaza, semi-rural Gedaref	38	83%
Um Al Moonimeen Girls, El Mafaza, semi-rural Gedaref	55	97%
Deim Hamad Girls, Gedaref Town	65	100%
El Esalaam Girls Private School, Gedaref Town	?	100%
Al Asama Mixed School, Al Hawata, rural Gedaref	18m 9f	m 68% f 22%
Badr El Kubra Basic School for Boys, Kadugli Town	46	100%
El Humeiraa Basic School for Girls, Kadugli Town	48	100%
Ed Dibaibat (A) Basic School for Girls – S. Kordofan town	97	100%
El Hajiz Basic School for Boys – rural S. Kordofan	21	85%

Grade 8 student pass rates for students from town schools were somewhat better to much better than their rural counterparts at the Basic School Certificate, in the 2015 sitting. This confirms the impact of other key factors such as better textbook availability.

1.3 Instructional Time

It has been suggested that the relatively low learning outcomes found in the learning assessment conducted in 2009 in Kassala, North Kordofan and River Nile, could be partly attributable to inadequate instructional time. Low instructional times are the result of several factors ranging from the impact of national educational policy, teacher employment and deployment practice, teacher

absence, extreme weather, distance from home to school and the socio-cultural expectations of teachers and communities.

That basic schoolteachers in Sudan are required to be subject teachers from Grade 4 on has the undesirable consequence of increasing class sizes. Large class sizes were observed in this study in all the long established schools. Only the private school in Gedaref Town and schools in rural areas had smaller classes. In the rural schools the smaller classes resulted from a combination of limited catchment areas and local communities' reservations about the value of schooling³⁷ and the quality of education available.

The sampled schools have crude student to teacher ratios ranging from 14 to 56 with an overall average of 33. This is close to the national average ratio of 34 students per teacher. The range of respective average class sizes is 22 to 80 with an overall average of 51. The range of actual class sizes for each school is shown in brackets in the final column of the table below and offers the first Grade class size and the Grade 8 class size. The differences give a crude indication of the degree of drop out in these Gedaref schools and in three of the South Kordofan schools sampled. Compounding the high teacher to student ratios is the fact that senior teachers tend to teach fewer lessons per week than junior ones. Furthermore, we observed several instances of classes without a teacher. Covering lessons for absent teachers is obviously not feasible in small schools with insufficient teachers. However, it was observed that some lessons were unattended by teachers even if there were teachers in the school office at the time. We also observed two instances of classes being sent home from the breakfast break owing to the illness of their class teachers, resulting in them missing two lessons that day.

School	Number of teachers	Number of students	Students per teacher	Average Class size & (range)
Ibn Al Jarah Mixed School, El Mafaza, rural Gedaref	13	341	26	43 (68-15)
Wad As Saboor Mixed School, El Mafaza, rural Gedaref	7	131	18	22 (35-11 ³⁸)
Ibn Al Abbas Boys, El Mafaza, semi-rural Gedaref	14	538	38	67 (87-47)
Um Al Moonimeen Girls, El Mafaza, semi-rural Gedaref	16	487	30	60 (58-62)
Deim Hamad Girls, Gedaref Town	22	1250	56	N/A
El Esalaam Girls Private School, Gedaref Town	14	190	14	N/A
Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Al	6	322	54	40

³⁷ Seasonal agricultural labour opportunities were frequently cited in relation to the reasons for male student dropout in Gedaref.

³⁸ Grade 6 class size stated as Wad As Saboor Basic School has no Grade 7 or 8.

Hawata, rural Gedaref				(53-23)
Al Asama Mixed School, Al Hawata, rural Gedaref	12	231	25	34 (43-22)
Badr El Kubra Basic School for Boys, Kadugli Town	21	651	31	82 (75-68)
El Humeiraa Basic School for Girls, Kadugli Town	18	463	25	58 (42-71)
Ed Dibaibat (A) Basic School for Girls – S. Kordofan town	23	1067	46	71 (43-81)
El Hajiz Basic School for Boys – rural S. Kordofan	10	243	24	30 (35-20)

The range

of class sizes observed by the study team was 12 to 87. The low figure of 12 is from a Grade 2 class in the young rural school of Wad As Saboor Mixed Basic School (WS), where many of the classes are small in size as a result of weak management, poor infrastructure, and an ambivalent attitude from local parents. This particular class has no classroom, and sits on two benches under a tree. During the visit the class sat patiently through two lessons without a teacher.

The national average class size at 48 students is just lower than that from the schools sampled in this study at 51. Individual attention time teachers can give students in these contexts is limited and this was reflected in the lessons observed where very little individual attention was given to students beyond looking at their written work.

The official instruction time for basic schooling is 25 hours per week, but based on the number of teachers, students (nationally) receive an average of only 17 hours³⁹. This was reflected in the sampled schools where Headteachers were asked to record how many lessons each Grade received on normal days. The responses were fairly consistent. But significantly the youngest and least established rural schools in Gedaref teach up to two lessons a day fewer in Grades, 1, 2 than some of the urban schools.

School	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
IJ	4	4	5	5	6	6	7	8
WS	3	4	5	5	6	6		
IA	4	4	4	6	7	7	8	8
UM	4	4	5	6	6	7	8	8
DH	4	5	6	6	6	7	8	8
ES	5	5	6	7	7	7	8	8
BK	4	4	5	6	7	7	8	8
HM	4	5	5	6	7	7	8	8

³⁹ The Status of the Education Sector in Sudan, 2012.

DB	4	6	6	6	7	7	7	8
HJ	5	6	6	7	7	7	8	8

In fact the length of the lessons that were observed was often shorter than the stated 40 minutes. This was caused by poor timekeeping: teachers arriving late to lessons, and bells being rung to mark the end of lessons early. This further erosion of the instructional time leaves the clear conclusion that it is only feasible that the grades with 8 lessons a school day are receiving anything near the official instructional time. A number of factors compound the inadequacy of instructional time including teacher absenteeism, school closures due to strikes and weather conditions, the use of schools as polling stations, in-service teacher training during term time⁴⁰ and shorter school years than the official policy of 210 days.

1.4 Teaching Methods

Teaching methods and classroom life were assessed by the direct observation of complete lessons. These observations looked at teachers' social interactions with students in the classrooms as well as their pedagogic and didactic skills. It was found that most teachers were friendly and attentive to pupils, at least initially. In some cases, usually in Grade 1 classes, teachers would bend or crouch down to the students' level to make eye contact and would address at least some by name. In most of the lessons observed the teacher praised correct answers, although it is concerning that in a number of lessons observed the students received no praise at all. The picture that emerges from these multiple observations is one of teachers who begin by making an effort to be supportive and friendly but revert to being somewhat aloof and distant once the inevitable writing or copying phase of the lesson starts.

Child-centred methodologies include the overt *forms* of the methodology, such as the use of group teaching methods and the use of a range of teaching aids, and the *substance* of the methodology, which refers to the extent to which children are actively involved in constructing their own learning. The latter is very hard to record as an observer as it will depend on the actual problems that children are asked to solve and the way that they relate to content of a particular lesson. For this study, the use of open questions, questions that make students think about the information given, opportunities to talk about their own experiences and to ask their own questions were all taken as activities that are indicative of the *substance* of child-centred learning⁴¹.

In the majority of lessons observed, children spent more time listening to, or waiting for, the teacher than they spent doing things themselves. Group work was not used in any of the lessons seen. Most teachers directed questions to individual students during whole class teaching but in most of the lessons observed children only answered through chorusing. Whilst chorusing can be a useful method for motivating a class and helping them to memorise useful tools and facts (e.g. the alphabet, multiplications tables, new vocabulary), it only works for closed questions since it is important that all students give one answer. In all but one of the lessons observed, no open questions were asked, so opportunities

⁴⁰ The Status of the Education Sector in Sudan, 2015

⁴¹ Teacher Training Assessment for Northern States of Sudan, 2006-8

for pupils' to exercise independent thought were very limited. More concerning, in almost a half of lessons observed, teachers only asked questions that could be answered by students repeating what the teacher had just told them, indicating that in many lessons teachers are not encouraging their pupils to think about the new material taught and learners' higher cognitive functions are not being exercised.

What was clear from the observations was that, although many teachers have heard of child-centred teaching, and many feel that they are employing child-centred methodology, the locus of control of what is done in the lesson remains almost entirely with the teacher. The teacher acts as the main source of knowledge. The students' knowledge is only valued where it involves recall of information delivered by the teacher in that lesson or from previous lessons. Students are not asked to talk about their own experiences and ideas and in the majority of the lessons observed they were not given an opportunity to ask the teacher questions. There is also a lack of variety in the activities presented. Generally teachers use only a narrow range of activities (mainly whole class questioning, oral drilling and board work) and there is limited use of learning resources other than the black board.

Many teachers have quite strong presentational, explanatory and class management skills. They use a lot of questioning, but the questions tend to be closed and mainly rely on recall rather than on processing of new information. Teachers can organise quickly and make efficient use of rote learning. Some offer excellent boardwork models. However, such an approach demonstrates that the teacher plays the active role while the students are essentially passive, merely following instructions, copying and completing set exercises. They are not encouraged to co-operate in any way and are subject to the pace set by the teacher, which is too slow for some and too fast for others. Above all it is the limitation on what the students are required to do in such lessons that limits their experience to that of passive recipients rather than active participants, engaging in varieties of activities requiring them to explore and develop different skills at their own pace and when necessary with the co-operation of peers.

Instead, teacher explanation, demonstration (in Maths) and drilling in the form of rote repetition take up around half the lessons, leaving little time for students to work through exercises for themselves. Only a small proportion of the students, perhaps the most able 10%, are able to participate fully in the lessons, to contribute and to receive feedback from the teacher. Interaction or co-operation between the students during lessons is not currently being fostered or encouraged.

The teaching methods observed are, therefore, strongly didactic and invariably teacher-centred. The lessons observed were almost uniform in the use of a teacher-centred presentation and practice model. Most of the teaching is limited to covering the material in the textbooks. Teachers appear to rely on the available textbooks for all the material for their lessons. In only a tiny minority of lessons observed was the course book material used in ways that sought to involve the children. However, the minority of lessons observed which did base some activity on the course book material, indicate that even in such resource poor school environments more variety of methods can be employed. The principal restrictions

lie in the training received by teachers and their perceptions of how children learn and their motivations as teachers.

There is significant use of oral drilling and choral repetition led by teachers – rote learning – and the students observed were all accustomed to repeating in unison (chorusing) whatever the teacher models. In some of the classes observed such drills consumed as much as 20 minutes of the lesson time. Some of the limitations of excessive drilling are described in the observed lesson commentaries below.

Another aspect of teaching that struck the observers was the general approach to marking written exercises. Since virtually every lesson involves written consolidation, often in the form of exercises copied from the subject textbook or the blackboard, teachers spend significant proportions of the writing stage marking finished exercises. This marking frequently tends to take the form of a simple acknowledgement that something written was seen by the teacher, irrespective of its completeness or accuracy. No marking systems with codes or abbreviations to indicate different types of errors were seen. Furthermore peer marking or checking does not appear to be employed.

Almost all Headteachers and teachers interviewed stated that lessons are planned and that the teachers' lesson planning notebooks are reviewed – usually weekly – by the Headteacher. However, this lesson planning seems curiously divorced from the actual teaching observed. In only a very few cases was a lesson planning notebook referred to in class by the teacher. The lesson plans seen simply summarized the course book material that was to be covered and the learning objectives derived from the same. No description of what the students would actually be asked to do was offered. The planning that does take place and is recorded in the teachers' Lesson Planning notebooks links the textbook, where available, to the curriculum as covered in either the students' text book or the teachers' guide to that text book, where available. Planned learning outcomes are not stated.

1.5 Teacher Training

For teachers to teach effectively they need a thorough understanding of the content of the curriculum that they are entrusted to deliver, an appreciation of the ways in which children learn and a wide repertoire of skills for delivering the curriculum in ways that will bring about effective learning among their students. These skills can only be developed through experience and guided practice. It is important that 'training' should involve opportunities for teachers to develop new skills and techniques, and not just provide them with educational theory. Practice based training is essential.

Since the world in which teachers are preparing their students to live is constantly changing, teachers need to be able to update their skills and knowledge on a regular basis. Teachers need to be trained in new teaching methodologies and new curriculum areas.

The uniformity of approach to lessons and the consistency demonstrated in practices such as dividing the blackboard into sections indicate that the teachers observed have received some practical teacher training.

The data on each teacher in the school visited reveals that the majority have completed degree courses if the Sudan Open University Bachelor of Education

course is included. Around 30% have a diploma from the former Teacher Training Institutes while the educational attainment of some 20% is the Sudan Secondary School Certificate alone. However, the majority have participated in in-service teacher training courses, usually of a very short duration and with a particular subject focus.

The courses that the teachers themselves regarded most highly were a pre-service induction course and a class teacher course in the new curriculum but only 20-30% have attended these. We did observe that several English Teachers appeared to have attended some ELT courses and pocket boards were produced by a number of teachers in different schools. In fact the only observations of attempts at getting students to do pairwork were in English lessons, suggesting some exposure to more learner-centred strategies.

In Sudan, basic education teachers at Grade 4 and above are required to be subject teachers. This has an impact on teacher training and deployment and explains why some schools appear to have rather more teachers than would be required if grades 4-6 were taught by class teachers rather than subject teachers. The requirement for specific subject specialisation appears to be putting an additional strain on teacher deployment. It was observed that there is often a mismatch between the subjects in which the teachers had studied during undergraduate and in-service teacher training courses and their teaching subject in their school.

1.6 Teacher Motivation

Although, the FMoE staff predicted that teachers would be vociferous in their complaints about their remuneration levels this was not the case in the schools visited. The study asked Heads and teachers for their views on teacher remuneration and checked teacher turnover in each school for the previous and current years. Most teachers interviewed said they would like to be better paid. Of the 8 Heads that responded to the question on teacher remuneration 7 said it should increase.

Given the consistency of dissatisfaction expressed in their remuneration the actual turnover of teachers is surprisingly low and probably reflects the lack of alternative employment opportunities. In the 10 schools in Gedaref State studied there had only been one case of a teacher leaving in the previous 15 months. The South Kordofan schools had more turnover with one teacher leaving from each of two schools, two teachers leaving a Kadugli Town school and seven female teachers leaving Ed Dibaibat Girls' School. The Head of the private girls school in Gedaref expressed the view that teachers in her school would leave for teaching positions in government schools for security of employment and the associated social security entitlements.

The study also asked every teacher in every school whether they were local. This question was included to see if there is evidence that teachers posted to rural areas from other areas tend to have little commitment to the schools and their communities. The responses indicated that the vast majority of teachers in rural areas are in fact from those areas.

1.7 Managing Attendance

The schools manage attendance through a number of common strategies. All the schools reported maintaining a register for each class and in most the register is taken twice: during the first lesson of the day and after the breakfast break. In one school, Wad As Saboor in Gedaref, the register could not be found though this may be explained by the fact that the teachers' office had been severely damaged during recent high winds. Registers are completed by the class teacher and reviewed by supervisors or Headteachers. The necessity of taking the attendance after breakfast was mentioned in several schools – “or many students would not return.” In Ibn Al Muneer Basic school none of the students returned after breakfast suggesting that this is indeed an issue, in spite of the particular circumstances and attitudes of that school's community.

For cases of repeated absences Headteachers stated that they made contact with the parents after a period that varied from 2 – 5 days. The medium of contact cited ranges from telephone calls, letters, home visits or via the Sheikh al Hilla – the usual community leader. However, no documentation of contact with parents was seen and the question of the effectiveness of letters to illiterate parents was not addressed. The growing use of mobile phones clearly offers increasing opportunities for effective school parent contact for those with access to them.

1.7.1 Attendance Policy

The responses to the question about whether the schools have attendance policies all focused on the taking of registers. Only one Headteacher, in Ibn Abbas, mentioned a policy as such: where a child is absent for 3 days the parents are contacted. More attendance policies emerged in responses to how attendance is actually managed with 3 days absence triggering an attempt to contact the parents mentioned by two more Heads, 5 days by another and a vaguer “long absence” by one. One Head in South Kordofan stated that after inviting the parents to explain unjustified absence a student would be dismissed if the absence exceeded 10 days and remained unexplained.

There was only one response to the question asking if there was any difference in approach to dealing with unexplained absence and persistent lateness for male and female students. The Head of a girls school suggested that girls were followed up more closely.

1.7.2 Teacher Absence

It was somewhat surprising that 7 of the 10 Heads responded that their school maintained teacher registers, when the focus of the question was on student attendance. This supports the observation that teacher attendance is an issue, especially where management is weak or absent. Teacher attendance is critical and links between poor teacher attendance and higher dropout rates have been observed in other countries (Chaudhury et al, 2005). The Head of Es Salaam Girls Basic School, a private school, stated their teacher attendance policy: *Teachers are not allowed to leave the school during the teaching day unless sick. A medical form exists and the school follows the Ministry of Labour rules.* This presumably reflects the fact that in this case the school itself is the employer, rather than the local but physically separate Mahalyia. The close monitoring of staff was observed in the town schools in contrast to the rural ones:

At one school in El Mafaza, we arrived at 08:00 on a Tuesday morning and observed a whole school morning assembly run by the two teachers present. The school has 6 classes: years 1-6. The first lesson started at 08:20 and both teachers started teaching their classes. The remaining 4 classes had no teacher. Three of the unattended classes were in the classroom block and one class sat on two benches outside in the shade of a tree. At 08:45 two more teachers arrived and entered a classroom each. At 08:48 two boys from the still unattended class under the tree collected a portable blackboard from one of the schoolrooms to lean against their tree. At 08:55 the bell was rung to end the first lesson of the day. The class under the tree continued without a teacher for a further lesson. The absence of teachers at the start of the day and the lateness of those who did appear was explained as being the result of a lack of transport on market days.

Figure 3 Unattended Grade 2, Wad As Saboor Mixed Basic School, Gedaref



1.8 Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment still occurs in basic schools in Sudan in spite of the Federal Government's Child Act of 2010 which prohibits "cruel penalties" in school (article 29). The act does not explicitly prohibit corporal punishment so it is still a matter of interpretation. Individual states, such as Khartoum, have explicitly prohibited corporal punishment in schools since 2010. In Gedaref, the view was expressed by the teachers in Es Salaam School for Girls that corporal punishment was now limited to "four lashes". The study team did not observe any acts of corporal punishment during school visits, though the watchmen in Es Salaam School in Gedaref Town brandished a stick while monitoring students entering at the beginning of the school day, a familiar sight.

1.8.1 Headteacher Responses

The study questionnaires asked each group of informants in each school (Headteachers, teachers and students) how discipline was maintained and how lateness and misbehaviour were treated. Headteacher responses varied. None

mentioned corporal punishment as a means of maintaining discipline – discipline being seen as the responsibility of the class teacher. Headteachers see their role as monitoring and supervising the teachers and checking their record keeping. They claim to only intervene when there is persistent absence and then to liaise with parents.

Two of the Headteachers of boys schools in South Kordofan did state that students that are absent without justification or are persistently late are punished physically.

1.8.2 Teacher responses

Of the 10 teacher focus groups interviewed, 6 mentioned that discipline was maintained in class by beatings though none stated that this was the only method used. One group said that corporal punishment was not used in their (girls) school, though this was contradicted by the student focus group from that school. There was no discernible gender pattern: three of the seven schools in which the teachers stated that corporal punishment is used are girls' schools, two are boys' and two are mixed. Furthermore, in the mixed school no distinction was made between corporal punishment of boys and girls.

How do you maintain discipline in your classes?

- Through our character, warning and occasional *beatings* (IJ).
- No problems with discipline (WS).
- Students are obedient and teachers are respected (IA).
- The students do not have free time to misbehave and the teachers use their voice. There is no corporal punishment (UM).
- No discipline problems because there are no empty lessons. Teachers here are strong characters (DH).
- Class monitor, classes are not left without teachers for more than 5 minutes between lessons. *Corporal punishment* limited to 4 lashes by HT by law (ES).
- Good explaining, understanding of the subject, *beating* and teacher personality (BK)
- Informing them with conditions from the beginning, guidance, *corporal punishment*, more homework and refreshing activities (HM)
- Attracting them with good explanation and *alarming* them. (DB)
- Keep them busy, avoid empty lessons and *beating*. (HJ)

1.8.3 Student responses

Corporal punishment features significantly more frequently in the responses of the students to questions about what they enjoy and dislike in school, what they like and dislike about their teachers and how lateness and misbehaviour are treated. Their actual responses are given below. A comparison of references to the use of corporal punishment by the different groups of informants suggests it is seen as less significant by Heads, or a subject not to be openly discussed beyond the school community. Students, however, are more conscious of and open about its use on occasions for lateness, unexplained absences and misbehaviour:

What happens if you are late for school?

- Beaten. Attendance is taken by the class monitor and the class teacher signs the register after seeing it (AA).
- Beaten (AT).

- Beaten (IJ).
- Beaten (WS).
- First time a warning. After this beaten (IA).
- We receive a warning (UM).
- Stand outside, delayed entry to class. If repeated a letter is sent to the parents (DH).
- 3 lashes for arriving during assembly. Nothing if you arrive later (ES).
- Beating and cleaning the school. (BK)
- Beating and cleaning the school (sometimes the student misses the first lesson as a consequence) (HM)
- Beaten and warning by teachers (DB)
- Beaten (HJ).

What happens if a student misbehaves?

- Beaten (AA).
- Beaten (AT).
- Beaten (IJ).
- Beaten (WS).
- Instructed to stand outside the class and taken to the HT (IA).
- Warning, then call the parents (UM).
- They are sent to the Headteacher, letter to parents or suspended (DH). Beaten (ES).
- Beating, depriving from breaks and call the parents (BK).
- Corporal punishment (HM).
- Corporal punishment (DB).
- Beating and call the parents (HJ).

Corporal punishment was also mentioned as the aspect of school life most disliked by the students followed by the physical conditions and in some schools conflict between students. Teachers who do not use corporal punishment feature in two of the responses about favourite teachers and their lessons. Another suggested that a favoured teacher only uses corporal punishment to “help us learn”, presumably in contrast to the perception of its unjust use by other teachers.

Corporal punishment was mentioned in 7 of the 11 responses about aspects of the students' least liked teacher behaviour. However, this may have been under-reported as 3 of the student focus groups that did not mention corporal punishment in relation to their least liked teacher gave responses that suggest they were not comfortable offering negative examples of teachers' behaviour even though the interviews were held out of hearing of staff.

Thinking about your least favourite teacher – what did/do you dislike about learning with them?

- Nothing (AA).
- *Beatings* (AT).
- There is no teacher we don't like (IJ).
- *Beating without reasons*. Not even by our teacher (WS).
- *He beats us*, his voice is low and his lesson is boring (IA).
- Too loud a voice, becomes angry easily and *some beatings*. (UM).
- *Corporal punishment* if we come late (DH).

- *Beating*, always trying to keep us quiet, lacking comic sense and beating us hard like house beating (BK).
- We like all teachers (HM).
- Not explaining well and don't care with activities (DB).
- Not remembering students' names and *beating* (HJ).



Figure 4 Student Focus Group, Deim Hamad Girls Basic School, Gedaref Town

Corporal Punishment (CP) mentioned by informant groups:

Table 4 : Reference to corporal punishment, by school and by stakeholder group			
School Code	Head indicates use of CP in their school to maintain discipline/ punish lateness or absence	Teachers mention use of CP for maintaining discipline	Students mention CP used in their school
AA (mixed)			Yes
AT (mixed)			Yes
IJ (mixed)		Occasional beatings	Yes
WS (mixed)			Yes
IA (boys)			Yes
UM (girls)	It does not happen in this school		Yes
DH (girls)			Yes
ES (girls)		CP limited to 4 lashes	Yes
BK (boys)	Beaten for lateness after verbal warning	Beating	Yes
HM (girls)	Beaten for absence	Beating	Yes
DB (girls)		Alarming them	Yes
HJ (boys)		Beating	Yes

Corporal punishment is, therefore, a continuing feature of life in basic schools in Gedaref and South Kordofan states and the aspect most disliked by the students. Research in other countries suggests that “beatings and intimidation affect children’s motivation to attend school.” It can contribute to a gradual discouragement from attending. And “as a result of beatings and humiliation from teachers drop out is not uncommon...”⁴² The humiliation associated with beatings and its contribution to instances of dropout may be its most enduring impact.

1.9 Curriculum Factors

1.9.1 Syllabus coverage

Headteachers were asked how they dealt with classes that were in danger of failing to complete the prescribed syllabus and 9 out of 10 said they arranged for the class to receive additional lessons. Provision of additional teaching for Grade 8 students preparing to take the Basic school exam is a common practice nationally. It is less clear and the study did not establish whether additional instructional time was arranged for lower grades that would not finish the syllabus in one or more subjects.

The study time did not allow for a review of the syllabus coverage achieved by the schools but it is widely felt to be generally less than 80% nationally. The 195 schools in the 2009 learning assessment had an average coverage of 72% in mathematics and 75% in reading. Such averages will hide wide variations and it is almost certain that students in schools at the lower end of the range (40-59%) would never be able to catch up whatever additional classes the schools might arrange. Presumably students at rural schools who almost certainly experience greater teacher absenteeism are therefore at greater risk of falling behind and this appears to be reflected in the Basic School Certificate results.

1.9.2 The Curriculum – Teacher views

The teacher focus groups were asked for their views on the curriculum and course books they teach. They were also invited to recommend any changes and improvements they would like to see. Their responses were illuminating and the consistency with which some issues were raised suggests a significant coherence:

- The Quranic syllabus (for Grade 1) is too demanding. The new curriculum for Grade 1 refers to teaching aids which are not available (IJ)
- In the new syllabus – the Quran is too demanding and in the old syllabus Man and the Universe is too demanding (WS).
- The Quranic curriculum is too demanding for the children’s ability at the relevant ages. Our house and Our Clothes should be replaced by Geography (IA).
- The Quranic syllabus is too difficult for the younger grades. Science for Grade 5 is very complicated. (Information) Technology is not very useful in villages where we do not have access to computers. Also it is very complicated and we believe that the old Health and Nutrition syllabus was more useful to villages than the current one (UM).

⁴² Boyle et al (2002) Reaching the Poor: The ‘Costs’ of sending Children to School. DFID, quoted in Hunt (2008).

- All the teachers complain about Man and the Universe which should revert to the old Geography. Students are now ignorant of the basic geography of Sudan. Our House subject is out of date and includes items that are no longer in use. The Spine series (English) is not a good textbook series (DH).
- The curriculum links subjects across years and requires teachers to be aware of this – untrained teachers will fail to see the connections. For Christian Studies the curriculum is not well designed. Grade 2 students have long verses from the Bible while Grade 6 students have very short verses. For technology, they teach the software before the hardware. Also this IT subject is very difficult for rural teachers who have no exposure to computers. For Grade 4, in the Man and the Universe syllabus, the lesson about the skeleton is too detailed. In Islamic studies: recitation techniques are taught after they have learnt the Quran (ES).
- The curriculum is too demanding for children in this childhood stage, the syllabus includes items that are no longer in use, it is not suitable for the local environments and needs to be changed. (BK)
- The curriculum is integrated and links subjects across years in a way that affects the students negatively. Students are now ignorant of basic geographical information such as capitals of the countries. It is not suitable for the local environments. Man and the Universe and Maths in some grades are too demanding and complicated, some subjects require specialized teachers such as Science in our Life. The syllabus for Our House and Our Clothes does not respect gender variable particularly (HM)
- The current curriculum contains so many difficult subjects, it is too demanding and is not suitable for children in different childhood states. We suggest including subjects aimed at modifying children behaviour, adding elaboration to the Quran and separating grammar from the Arabic language. (DB)
- Not suitable for the children in different childhood states. Some subjects require laboratories. We suggest simplifying it and separate history and geography. (HJ)

It is beyond the scope of this study to assess the validity of these views though they offer a notable consistency suggesting real concerns. We did observe, that the nationally prescribed subject timetabling in basic schools places an emphasis on subjects that in other countries in the region are often combined: Islamic studies, practices and Quranic recitation. This raises the question whether there is sufficient instructional time for other core subjects such as Arabic and mathematics. The question arises: is the current curriculum in danger of prioritising the teaching of what to think rather than how to think and learn?

The student focus groups were asked which subjects they found most difficult. Maths figured highest in 7 out of 12 interviews, followed by English (3); the Contemporary Islamic World (3); Things around us (3); Science in our life (2); and examinations.

1.9.3 National Weekly Lesson Timetable

This is the national weekly lesson timetable⁴³, which serves as a general guide for schools.

⁴³ Dr Hala Nur personal communication.

Table 5 : National weekly subject distribution

Grade	First Cycle			Second Cycle			Third Cycle	
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
Quran	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Islamic Studies (Figh)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Arabic	8	8	9	9	9	9	9	9
Maths	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6
History	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 Islamic World	4 Contemporary World
Science	-	-	2	3	4	4	4	4
English	-	-	-	-	4	5	7	7
Applied & Expressive Art	1 Art	1 Art	1 Art	2 Our home	2 Our clothes	3 Our safety	3 Technology	4 Technology

Each lesson is timetabled to last for 40 minutes with a five minute break between lessons. A 45 minute to an hour-and-a- half break is taken in most schools for breakfast between the 3rd and 4th lessons. Applied and Expressive arts comprise fine arts, crafts and performing arts. No Art lessons were seen in any of the schools visited and owing to a lack of materials it is generally not taught.

1.9.4 Enrichment

Schools that make an effort to enrich the curriculum with input from people with particular occupations and expertise are in a distinct minority. 3 Headteachers said their school had received such visits. One reported rare lectures on drugs, diabetes, traffic and general health. A second reported a talk from the local police on drugs, and another presumably a health worker on family planning. The only instance of a skilled worker showing something of their occupation, was reported by a South Kordofan Head, whose school had hosted a tailor.

1.9.5 Extra curricula activities

Regular and ongoing extra-curricula activities are generally absent from life in these basic schools. Where they do occur they tend to be irregular or of a temporary nature⁴⁴. The conclusion that students are largely unaccustomed to school organised activities outside of the formal teaching was reinforced by the 6 student focus groups saying there were none at all and by 3 other groups offering the morning assemblies as the extra-curricula activity in their schools. School cleaning was mentioned by students at the girls' school in Kadugli as an extra curricula activity but not by any students at boys' schools.

Events held to mark the start and end of year occur in many schools and often involve sports competitions and cultural activities. That teachers in some schools are effectively under-employed suggests there is capacity for teacher organised activities to enrich their students' school life.

⁴⁴ The only school with a regular programme of extra curricula activities was the private school in Gedaref town, which reserves one day a week for them.



Figure 5 Extra-curricula activity, Es Salaam Girls' Gedaref Town

1.10 School Resources

1.10.1 Infrastructure

There was a significant range in the infrastructures of the 11 schools visited. A minority, in the state capitals, have permanent buildings with electricity and a piped supply of water. None of the schools, however, had adequate toilets or latrines and most of the rural schools have no toilet facilities at all.

Gedaref Schools

School	Total Students	Total Staff	Water Availability	Number Latrines(L)/WCs
Al Asma Mixed – Rahad	141	12	yes	0
Ali Ibn Abi Talib Mixed – Rahad			no	0
Ibn Al Muneir Mixed – Rahad	70	7	no	0
Ibn Jarah Mixed – Al Mafaza	341	13	yes	6 latrines
Wad As Saboor Mixed – Al Mafaza	132	7	no	0
Ibn Abbas Boys - Al Mafaza	538	14	yes	0
Um Al Moonimeen Girls – Al Mafaza	487	16	yes	3 staff latrines 3 student latrines
Deim Hamad Girls – Gedaref Town	1250	22	yes & water cooler	2 staff latrines 6 student latrines
Es Salaam Girls – Gedaref Town	190	14	Yes (piped supply)	2 student WCs 1 staff WC

South Kordofan Schools

School	Total Students	Total Staff	Water Availability	Number of Latrines(L)/WCs
Badr El Kubra Boys –	651	21	A hand pump but no means of	2 latrines

Kadugli Town			<i>storage</i>	
El Humeiraa Girls – Kadugli Town	463	18	<i>A hand pump but no means of storage</i>	<i>4 latrines (2 needing maintenance)</i>
El Dibaibat Girls – El Dibaibat Town	1067	23	<i>Bought daily from a water cart seller</i>	<i>3 latrines</i>
El Hajiz Boys – El Hajiz Village	243	10	<i>Bought daily from a water cart seller</i>	<i>1 latrine in poor conditon</i>

The breakfast break provides an opportunity for those students and teachers living close to the school to return home. However, the inadequacy of this key aspect of life can hardly improve motivation. Few of these schools are places that the students and staff can wish to spend longer in than they absolutely need to. For girls and female teachers the lack of any sanitary facilities must be especially demotivating.



Figure 6 Rakuba Classroom, Al Asama Mixed School, Al Hawata



Figure 7 Grade 5 Deim Hamad Girls' School, Gedaref Town

The drive to increase access to education has resulted in the expansion of existing schools and new schools being built, especially in rural areas. Several of the rural schools visited had new classroom blocks and at least one, Wad Es Saboor in Al Mafaza, had only been established in 2009. The new rural school buildings seen in Gedaref State were almost invariably constructed of the (presumably) cheap materials of a wooden framework covered in corrugated zinc sheeting. There seems to have been little consideration placed on the safety aspects of these school buildings. There are no protective edges on the lightweight corrugated zinc sheets in doorways or windows or on window shutters. As a result many if not all have exposed edges which are sometimes sharply jagged. The doorways tend to have raised thresholds, approximately 30cm high, of a wooden cross member covered in the sheeting, presumably to maintain some rigidity in the building frame. Where the zinc cladding on the thresholds have been trodden on the zinc has been forced out and torn, further exposing sharp edges and the risk of severe lacerations.



Figure 8 Corrugated School Block, Al Mafaza



Figure 9 Wind & Rain Damage to Wad As Saboor Mixed School, Al Mafaza.



Figure 10 Ibn Abbas Boys School, Al Mafaza, At the end of morning assembly students enter their recently refurbished classroom block.

1.10.2 Student views on school infrastructure

The students' views about changes that would improve their school are especially interesting. They reveal both obviously urgent areas for improvement and other concerns:

What would you like to see in the school that would make it better for you?

- A fence, trees, activities, electricity, fans, repair the school and reading books (AA).
- A fence and gate. Reading books, better classrooms, cleaner school, trees, bathroom and fans (AT).
- A fence, trees, the classrooms maintained and sports (IJ).

- Football, skipping ropes, water and a microphone and speaker (WS).
- More learning, sports, a clean environment, library, computer lab, copy books and pens, toilets and maintenance of the mosque (IA).
- Better classrooms, fans, library, trees, gate, metal windows and doors to prevent theft of chairs/benches (UM).
- Activities, a cleaner environment, a library, fewer students in classes and fewer thefts, no damaging best students copy books by less able (DH).
- Drawing and more extra curricula activities (ES).
- Cleaner, with trees and flowers, clean latrines and renewing the classrooms (BK)
- Cleaning the school, cultural activities, flowers, painting the school, connect the school to the water network and bringing clean drinking water pots. (HM)
- Fence, flowers, new classrooms, complete seating, water source and electricity. (DB)
- Fence, rehabilitate the classrooms and offices, establishing library, books, chalks, prayer place, flowers, trees, sport wear, playgrounds, electricity and latrines. (HJ)

To an outsider the importance of a fence to a school in a rural village may not be immediately obvious. However, the absence of some barrier was raised as a concern in every school without one. The need was explained for a variety of reasons – to keep livestock out, to prevent vehicles and people passing through the school, to keep the students focused on their lessons rather than any such distractions and to keep the students safe and under supervision. That every dwelling in the communities visited has some form of fencing reflects an understandable need for privacy in a context where domestic life is mostly outdoors.

The existence of a fence or wall does not of itself solve all the concerns – in Um Al Moonimeen Girls' School, a cow wandered in through the (broken) gates and was observed to drink from the school's zias (earthenware drinking water pots). Its familiarity with the school was clear from its direct route from the gate to a patch of grass and then to the water. Furthermore, in Deim Hamad Girls' School in Gedaref a man with an evident psychological illness entered the school grounds several times during the study team's visit and wandered freely among the students.

1.10.3 Availability of Learning Aids

In response to the question of availability of learning aids Headteachers said their schools had:

- Posters and other teaching aids (*not seen*), very few Teacher Guides (IJ).
- Nothing (WS).
- Teacher guides bought by the school. There are no extra books for the students (IA).
- Teacher guides bought by the school and rarely from the local education office.
- Nothing available for students (UM).
- Teacher Guides, some teaching aids (fixed and mobile) (DH).
- CDs for English, model lessons in DVDs, an audio system, extra curriculum books (ES).
- Posters , geometric tools, chalk and blackboards (BK)

- Posters, pocket boards, chalk and blackboards and illustration drawings (HM)
- Posters and pictures (DB)
- Maps, posters and pictures(HJ)

Some posters were observed in urban schools but not in rural schools.



Figure 11 Murals at Deim Hamad Girls' School, Gedaref Town



Figure 12 Grade 1 Arabic Coursebook

When teachers were asked about their access to teacher guides they reported a range of availability. Teachers in 3 rural schools in Gedaref said they had none at all in their schools while three more groups reported that teacher guides were available, but for only some subjects. Three teacher groups mentioned that they found the teacher guides, where available, very helpful. In Um Al Moonimeen Girls School the teachers said that for some subjects they had to borrow a copy of a textbook from a student to enable them teach their lessons. A minority of rural families with resources and access buy some textbooks in the market and this appears to have been the only source of books in the rural schools visited in Gedaref.

The teachers' estimation of the ratio of students per course book was unspecific but suggests a pattern of better availability for years 1 and 2 and lower ratios or better availability of school texts in general in urban areas. The exception to this was the one rural school in South Kordofan, El Hajiz Boys school, which reported an almost 1:1 ratio for years 1 and 2.

1.10.4 Learning aids and material availability – Student view

The student focus group answers were consistent with those of the teachers in this area. Apart from blackboards, chalk, textbooks for some, the occasional wall chart, multiplication table charts and picture posters the schools do not have learning materials and aids. Students do not appear to regularly use local materials such as dried beans, date stones or pebbles as counting aids.

When asked what students read, apart from course books, the South Kordofan government school students offered several examples:

- Magazines and English books (BK)
- Stories in the vacations (HM)
- English books, cooking books, stories and magazines. (DB)
- Books and lyrics (HJ)

Gedaref state students were unanimous in stating that they had no access to reading materials of any kind. When asked whether teachers encouraged them to read materials other than the course books, 7 of the 10 focus groups said they did not and the remaining 3 said that while the teachers did encourage them to read, nothing was available.

1.11 Role of the School Council

Headteachers reported widely varying levels of support by School or Parent Councils. One Head reported that their School Council was not active and at the other extreme a Head said the school could not function without the School Council's input. Cited School Council roles include maintenance of the school structures, providing seating, buying chalk, contributing to the transportation and feeding of teachers, solving financial problems, improving the school environment, building some classrooms, erecting a school's fence, securing the school, financial running of the school, providing or funding the daily purchase of drinking water. Funding additional lessons was mentioned by two Heads as was provision of breakfasts for the teachers.

The role of the School Council in collecting parental contributions was not openly stated though payment of contributions was mentioned in other contexts suggesting it is an important PTA role. This is inevitable in a system where fees are not formally payable, but without these contributions the schools would not function.

Breakfast is not provided for any students in these schools. This is surprising in the sense that free school meals are one of the most effective means of supporting children from poor backgrounds and a proven means of reaching and keeping the children from the poorest families in school in other countries. Given the scale of need this is undoubtedly a major challenge but one which will need to be considered if retention rates are to rise and be sustained.

1.12 Support from the State Ministry of Education

Apart from the payment of salaries, the range of support from the SMOEs reported by Headteachers is inconsistent. Most mention textbooks, seating, chalk and copybooks.

Chalk and exercise books were the only resources observed in every class visited. The ratio of students to textbooks ranged from 1:1 in urban classrooms to 20:1 in rural ones. The supply of some unspecific teaching aids was mentioned by only three of the 10 Heads. UNICEF and NGOs have provided training and materials in several schools in collaboration with the SMOEs.

1.13 Language Factors

A large number of local languages are spoken as mother tongues in Sudan with Arabic being the official language and lingua franca. It is internationally recognised that education systems that cater for or accommodate the child's home language in the early years tend to have better outcomes than school systems which insist on use of the official language from the start. This study sought to ascertain whether language might be a factor in quality concerns for students at risk of dropping out, given the variety of ethnic groups and the national policy of Arabic as the language of instruction. Headteachers were asked to list the ethnic groups represented in their schools and their replies reflect something of the diversity in these states:

Gedaref:

- Beni Amer, Asharaf, Funj, Zaghawa, Rufayeen, Qawasma, Kinana (IJ).
- Rufayeen and Hausa are the local tribes (WS).
- Fellata, Zerma, Tama, Messalit, Bergu and Beni Amer (IA).
- Qawasma, Hilaleen, Nuba, Hausa, Rufayeen, Beni Amer, Fellata (UM).

South Kordofan:

- Nuba, Arab (Baggara) and Fallata (BK)
- Nuba, Arab, Baggara, Fallata and Southern Sudanese (BK)
- Nuba, Fallata, Missairia, Kinana, Musabbaat, Zaghawa, Bidairia,
- Jawamaa and Hamar(DB)
- Nuba, Bargo, Hawama, Hamar and Southern Sudanese (HJ)

The student focus group participants were asked to state their home languages and these were all given as Arabic apart from the students from Al Asma and Ali Ibn Abi Talib mixed schools in Ar Rahad, Gedaref. The Al Asma students offered Arabic, Beni Amer and Hausa and the Ali Ibn Talib students all gave Hausa. In fact the interview with the Ali Ibn Talib students had to be conducted in Hausa as the students struggled with Arabic.

Curiously all students interviewed in South Kordofan, one of the most linguistically diverse regions, gave Arabic as their home language. This was later explained by the national researcher as reflecting the fact that a *“high proportion of the population [of Kadugli] are from other parts of Sudan and also from Arab tribes from South Kordofan. The Arabic language is also the language in the markets, government places and the schools, so families use Arabic at home to ensure that their children will not face any language barriers there.*

“For El Goaz locality the Arabs are the majority and non-Arabic speakers are minorities so they did the same in speaking Arabic at home to ensure that their children will speak Arabic fluently to protect them from facing a language barrier”.

Having a different home language from Arabic puts students at a disadvantage, especially when this is not accommodated in the initial stages of basic schooling. This disadvantage is reflected in the performance of the schools visited around Al Hawata and Al Mafaza in Gedaref State. Several references were made to a language impediment and the comprehension by students of Arabic instructions was not always immediate in several of the lessons observed. Teachers at the two schools whose catchment communities were predominantly Hausa both cited comprehension difficulties.



Figure 13 Deim Hamad Girls, Gedaref. A highly regarded state school with consequently high enrolment



Figure 14 Wad As Saboor Girls School. Photo Hala Nur

2 LESSON OBSERVATIONS

This section presents a record of the stages and actions in each lesson observed, followed by a commentary on each by the respective researcher. The aim is to provide a window into the learning process observed and what children actually experience in a sample of lessons from each school. The subjects observed were deliberately limited to Arabic, mathematics and English in order to enable identification of any consistent approaches in these subjects across schools and the two states.

It should be noted that the order of these observation records is presented in the order they were made. The first two are from Es Salaam private girls school in Gedaref and the following four are from Deim Hamad Girls's School also in Gedaref Town. The subsequent records are from semi urban to rural areas of Gedaref. The chief differences between the town schools and those in rural areas are in their sizes, the ratios of students to textbooks, the availability of ceiling fans and lighting and the permanent school buildings. The subsequent section contains the lesson observation records from South Kordofan.

2.1 Gedaref Lesson Observations

2.1.1 Grade 3 English: Es Salaam Girls' Basic School, Gedaref Town

19 Girls sit at individual desks in a fairly small classroom with a large window opening (no glass), a working fan and strip lighting. There is a teacher's table and fixed blackboard in good condition. Each student has a metal desk and chair. Each desk has a metal basket below the desktop for bags and books. The classroom is almost full but is not crowded.

At 08:07 the teacher (male) greets the students warmly and they respond in unison. The teacher writes the date on the blackboard in English: "*Subject (English)*", and divides the board with vertical lines and then draws horizontal lines underneath title on the left-hand section. Referring to the previous lesson: the teacher says in English "the verb *can* is used to express about ability". Then he offers an Arabic translation. He asks "*Can you fly?*". Some students shake their heads.

08:10 Teacher states: “*Our lesson today is about Possessives*”. He then gets the students to repeat “*possessives*” x 2. Teacher then models “*This is my pen*”. Drills this sentence 3 times, the students repeat in chorus. On the board the teacher writes: *my, his, her, your* and explains these possessive pronouns in Arabic, then drills them each several times. He then repeats this with *your*. Then he picks an object from a front desk object and states “*That is your bag/pencil*”.



Figure 15 Grade 3 English Lesson, Gedaref Town

The teacher then drills “*possessives*” several times, the students respond in chorus then the teacher gives an explanation in Arabic of the meaning/grammar point of using *s* and an apostrophe.

He then writes: *It's* on bb and explains again the use of the apostrophe. He uses the right hand side of board for an example: *It's Mona's bag*.

08:17 Teacher holds up a pen and explains again. Then he elicits: *It's Ali's pen*. Teacher mispronounces target language. Teaches ellipsis (*It's*) but pronounces “*It is*”.

08:23 Teacher says “*Only in the singular case*” and explains this in Arabic.

08:24 “*Get out your copy books*”. Students do so while the teacher writes out sample sentences of the target language on the blackboard from a grammar book: **Round Up English**. The students do not have copies of this text/grammar reference. They begin to copy the sample sentences with the possessive pronouns from the board. They appear to be used to the procedure.

08:37 The teacher states “*now we are about to finish the lesson, let us sing Stop the War and Live in Peace*”. The students sing in English.

08:39 the teacher leaves to ring the school bell but returns promptly to the check the copying which the students are keen to show him.

08:40 The lesson finishes.

Observer comments

This teacher has a pleasant and friendly manner and is supportive and encouraging. The children are enthusiastic and keen to answer whenever they can. There is no evidence that the lesson was planned. The teacher has relied on a grammar themed textbook for the material for this lesson and no context was established. The direction and staging of the lesson appeared to follow an ingrained formula: ask a question from a previous lesson (revision), present some new material or target language (presentation), model and lead pronunciation of the target language (drilling), ask a few questions using or focusing on the target language (checking), instruct the students to copy the examples of the target language on the blackboard (consolidation). The students are obviously familiar with the lesson procedure. However, in just over 30 minutes of class time, they have not utilised the target language in any free sense, and they have not had any opportunity or necessity to communicate with anyone other than the teacher. For the most part, the students have been passive observers rather than active participants. The teacher has been much more active than the students during the lesson.

2.1.2 Grade 1 Arabic Lesson: Es Salaam Girls School, Gedaref Town

21 girls sit at dual desks in a classroom in a school converted from a large two storey residential house. The classroom floor is tiled and there is a working fan and strip lighting. The classroom is spacious for the number of students. There is a fixed blackboard and a pocket board for flash cards. The blackboard is divided into two with English lexis on the left and the right allocated for Arabic letters and numbers.

The students are learning Arabic letters and the focus of this lesson is the letter “ra”. At 8:47 the teacher neatly writes “ra” on the blackboard and leads the children in drilling the sound “ra” followed by “rajul” (man) which employs the target letter in the initial position. The students are extremely keen and repeat the sound and word loudly, led by the teacher 3-6 times. Next the teacher demonstrates the movement for writing “ra” by air writing with her back to the class. The students stand and repeat the movement several times and drill the sound several times as they write. Teacher asks for a volunteer to write the target letter on the blackboard – all the students appear desperate to do so. Three students, selected in turn, move to the front and draw the letter form.

At 8:54 the teacher points at the three letter forms on the blackboard and elicits the position of the diacritics: dhamma, fatah and kasra (long vowel forms) of the target letter. She adds the diacritics as the students offer them and then drills the three sounds. Since the students are already familiar with these diacritics and their impact on the letter sounds the teacher moves onto explain and draw on the blackboard the initial, medial and final letter forms. She then drills the letters in their various positional forms and with different diacritics. The students have to look at the letter the teacher points to and articulate the correct vowel sound.

At 8:56 the teacher instructs the students to get out their Arabic coursebooks and complete a written activity which requires them to practice forming the target form repeatedly. Each student has the coursebook. Some students take their books to the teacher for marking earlier work. Previous letter form practice pages have been attentively filled out. The students work diligently at writing today’s target letter forms and the teacher moves around the class helping. She has a

supportive manner and gives help to some students with the hand position and demonstrates in their coursebooks, sitting next to them when they need additional help. An eraser is passed around the room so that students can practice the forms again if their first attempt is a little messy and the teacher erases some for additional practice for students who finish quickly. She keeps control of the class – telling excited and fidgety girls to sit back down. At 9:24 the teacher register is brought in and is signed by the class teacher. The lesson finishes.



Figure 16 Grade 1 Arabic letter formation

Observer comments

This was a positive lesson by an obviously experienced Grade 1 teacher. She involves the students in verbal, physical (air writing), reading and writing activities. A good, calm and confident manner in a physically good environment: spacious classroom, sufficient furniture and lighting, with an easily manageable number of eager students who all have the necessary materials to participate in and learn from the lesson. With every student having their own copy of course book they should be making good progress in learning initial Arabic literacy with this teacher.

2.1.3 Grade 8 English: Deim Hamad Girls Basic School, Gedaref Town

62 girls seated at individual desks and chairs in 12 rows with two at either sides of the classroom and a central line of 4 desks. The large classroom is almost full and has windows with shutters on both sides. The walls appear to be freshly painted and the floor is a smooth concrete screed. There is ample fluorescent strip lighting and two fans are working though not especially effective. There is a large fixed blackboard in good condition and two wall posters.

The lesson begins at 08:12 with the teacher asking in English “What do you need to travel to America?” Individual students offer “*money, plane passport, visa and health certificate*”. The teacher writes *passport, visa and health certificate*, in a clear script, on the left hand side of the blackboard, which she has divided into

three sections with vertical lines. Next the teacher drills the pronunciation of these three words, students repeats chorally.

The teacher then writes up Unit 4 (6) at the top of the left hand section of the blackboard and states “If you want to travel outside you need a health certificate.” “Now please look at your book, page 97”. She writes the page number on the blackboard. Most of the students have the coursebook and quickly find the page which is from a unit on travel. The page presents a form for personal details to be filled in as if completing a visa application. The teacher leads the class through the form asking questions such as “What is your nationality?” “What is your address?”

Next the teacher hands out photocopies of an actual visa application form for the United Arab Emirates. She instructs the students to fill in the form with their personal details. Then she asks them where they would like to travel to and elicits a few responses. “You have 10 minutes” (to complete the form).

From 08:20 to 08:27 the Teacher monitors and helps the students complete the forms, which they work on quietly. The teacher then asks “Who is going to tell us about your form?” 6-8 students put their hands up and the teacher selects one and asks the questions for each piece of information. Once completed she says “Thank you, clap her”. This is repeated four times, each time the teacher asks the questions to elicit the personal information on the student’s form.

At 08:32 the teacher instructs the class to look at page 98 of their books. “You have a table – make new sentences from this table. You have 5 minutes”. “For example” and on the blackboard she writes: *If I travel to Egypt I shall see the pyramids*. There is some murmuring in the class while the students work. The teachers monitors and helps individuals and pairs make sentences.

08:36 Students volunteer sentences they construct with the vocabulary offered in the coursebook. The teacher then drills a series of the similar sentences and the students repeat chorally e.g. “If you travel to China she will see the Great Wall of China”.

Finally, the teacher instructs the students to write sentences of this nature from task in their course books into their exercise books. The teacher monitors them while they complete the exercise and marks completed books as they are handed to her. Students work quietly. At 08:45 the lesson ends.

Observer comments

There were several very positive elements to this lesson. The teacher is confident enough to conduct the whole lesson in English and has an effective classroom management style and excellent handwriting on the blackboard. She has supplemented the material in the course book with real material from outside, thus exposing the students to another source and style of relevant language. She monitors and assists her students while they are working individually and they seem eager to learn with her and do the work they are asked to do.

Although the lesson had many positive aspects, the excellent materials provided by the teacher were not exploited as fully as they might have been and the students were not as actively engaged as they could have been. For instance some useful listening and speaking practice could have been provided by getting the students to interview each other, in pairs, as a visa or immigration official

might do. This would provide each student with the opportunity to use the target language and practice forming questions themselves. The material was available but the focus of the lesson was very much on the teacher. The style is teacher-centred yet it would not have required much to get the students to work in pairs and shift some of the lesson towards making the students more active with the teachers role shifting to setting up the activity and then being limited to monitoring and supporting and ensuring that each pair has swapped roles and performed both functions.

2.1.4 Grade 4 English: Deim Hamad Basic School for Girls, Gedaref Town

This is a crowded classroom with 73 girls seated at benches. There are two fans, fluorescent strip lighting and a fixed blackboard in good condition. 5 posters decorate the walls.

08:58 the teacher starts the lesson by cleaning the blackboard and writes the date while the children wait quietly. Teacher turns to the class and models the target language for the lesson “*What have you got?*” “*I have got a book.*”

She then elicits the vocabulary – a pencil, a ruler, a pen, a rubber – from the students by holding up each item and repeating the question. Next she holds up a flash card with the word “*What?*” and drills the word. The students repeat the word after the teacher who repeats it several times. This is repeated with the flashcards for – Have – you – got. Teacher then drills and the students repeat the spelling for each word.

On the blackboard the teacher writes: *I have got a Pen* and then drills “*I have got a desk.*” “*Now ask your neighbour*”

09:05 Teacher gets two students to go to the front of the class and practice the dialogue. This is repeated two times with further pairs. The stage finishes with the teacher thanking the students and calling for silence. She then draws horizontal lines on the blackboard. She turns to the class and again states “*I have got a book.*” “*Look here*” - “*have*” spells and drills the spelling. Next she introduces the weak form: *I’ve*. She models the pronunciation but as “*av*” and drills it repeatedly with the students responding chorally. Then drills “*We*” and then “*We ‘ave got a bus*” repeatedly.

This procedure is repeated with “*They*” with the full sentence: “*They ‘ave got a car*”

“*Now take out your book (Spine 1) and look at page 15. Page 15. Numbers 16-20 Then we have the structure: What have you got?*”

09:17 Teacher drills several sentences from the book. “*All of you: I have got a pen*” etc. Then she copies the four sentences from the book onto the blackboard. The activity is to copy the sentences into the exercise books. However, they are not able to start this as their exercise books were taken in a previous English lesson for marking and have not returned with the teacher.

One student is sent to collect the students’ books from the staff room. The exercise books are then handed out by class monitors. This takes quite a while, since the books have to be matched to their owners. Some students work away while others do not.

09:31 two students leave to collect water. The lesson ends.

Observer comments

This lesson was a little chaotic and some of the practice of target language for learning was without context. The teacher did endeavour to get some pairs of students to practice asking and answering using the target structure but only as models at the front of the class. Out of a class of 73 students only 8 did this controlled oral practice and then only one short phrase each. So four asked the question and four responded. The roles were not reversed so the 8 did not get practice in both questioning and answering. The rest of the class, 65 students, only participated by repeating the teacher's modelled sentences and copying down some sentences from their course book or the blackboard. In fact the bulk of the lesson consisted of choral drilling and there was no check that the target structure was understood.

The teacher appears to have had some ELT training but is not confident enough to organise controlled oral practice which involves all the students for at least part of the time, thinking about the structure and choosing the vocabulary to use. When she did require some pair work with selected students at the front of the class she did not demonstrate the activity but simply instructed the pairs in what they should say.

Although the classroom is in quite a good physical state it is very crowded and this must impact on the teacher's sense that whole class drilling is a key technique, as a classroom management tool as much as a teaching tool. Unfortunately, since its effectiveness as a learning strategy is limited its over use is likely to have a negative impact on the students' motivation and learning.

2.1.5 Grade 8 Maths: Deim Hamad Girls Basic School, Gedaref Town

59 students seated at individual desks and chairs in 3 rows in a crowded classroom with 2 ceiling fans, electric fluorescent lighting, 5 windows. A permanent blackboard in good condition and 3 posters are the only visual aids/decoration in the room. The posters are a written summary of Arabic grammar, a diagram showing the respective effect of ocular concave and convex lenses and a coloured chart of the solar system. 5 windows as well as the door let in natural light.

11:25 The teacher starts the lesson by dividing up the blackboard into 4 sections by drawing vertical lines. Starting on the right hand sections she writes an arithmetical problem and asks for the answer using choral responses. She uses coloured chalk to distinguish the problem from the answer. Next she copies a new problem from the course book and works it through with explanations on the black board, asking the students for input and answers for each step.

11:30 the teacher writes 4 new equations on the right hand section of the blackboard for the students to solve. The teacher's writing and speech are clear and she is enthusiastic and energetic in explaining and encouraging the students while they work.

11:35 The teacher writes a new problem but this time asks for verbal answers. This pattern is repeated. Then the teacher asks if there are any questions and if

the students are sure they have understood. Some respond positively, most do not respond.

11:40 “Get out your books and do exercise on page 23.” The teacher monitors the students while they work and responds to questions and helps those who appear to be struggling. She checks the exercise books as the students finish.

Observer comments

A lesson displaying the predominant teaching pattern: start with revision of something from an earlier lesson, presentation of a new function/feature, practice of that new manipulation followed by written consolidation and marking. There are several positive features to this lesson, a dynamic manner, clear board work, using coloured chalk to highlight different parts of the equations and a supportive manner. The monitoring was a little passive and there was no attempt to cater for differing abilities with, for example, more work to extend the abler students. However, if this limiting to one task for the whole class is principally because teachers prefer to complete the marking of the written exercises in the lesson rather than afterwards then the students are probably not being extended as far as they might.

2.1.6 Grade 2 Arabic: Deim Hamad Girls Basic School, Gedaref Town

87 girls squeezed into a classroom on the second floor of a rundown block. The girls sit at desks on benches probably designed for two but some of which have to accommodate 4. There are two fans which are not working (it is approximately 38°C outside and over 40°C in the classroom). Natural light comes from 8 windows – 4 on either side of the classroom and the doorway at the front. There is a fixed blackboard in good condition and a moveable blackboard leaning against the fixed one. A cloth pocket board hangs from the left-hand side of the permanent blackboard. There are no other visual aids and no decoration. There is a teacher’s table.

12:10 The lesson starts with the singing of an Arabic alphabet song led by the teacher initially, but completed by the students. Both blackboards have writing and arithmetic from previous lessons on the right and left hand sections, which the teacher ignores while she writes 4 items of vocabulary in the central section. She leads the students in drilling the vocabulary. The objective of the lesson is the definite article (Al) and the initial position and form the letter “lam” (l) takes with different words. The teacher asks the students to read the word and repeats this several times. The teacher asks for volunteers to go to the front and form the definite article on the blackboard. The students are very keen to answer verbally and demonstrate their writing on the blackboard. After several have done so the teacher instructs the class to get out their exercise books and copy the words. She monitors the students while they work.

Observer comments

The classroom crowding and heat make this an extremely difficult environment in which to teach and learn. It is the last lesson of the day for this class and they are restless and uncomfortable. However, they are still very keen to please the teacher who is clearly experienced and supportive. The lesson itself was highly teacher- centred and the students were not engaged in providing any of the

vocabulary or contributing to establishing a context. Their role was entirely passive and reactive.

2.1.7 Grade 1 Arabic: Ibn Abbas Boys Basic School, El Mafaza, Gedaref State

47 students seated in 10 rows with a wide central aisle. The boys sit on metal benches with 2 to 4 per bench. Most of the rows have metal desks but 6 rows do not. A single desk, at the front, serves for teachers to rest their materials on. The classroom block has recently been refurbished and is freshly painted in a light colour. A fixed blackboard in pristine condition is the only visual aid on the walls. There are two electric fans and fluorescent strip lighting which is not working during this lesson. 3 windows with shutters on either side of the classroom and the doorway provide natural light. In spite of the newness of the block, after just a week's use, the concrete classroom floor is rough and broken in places suggesting an inadequate cement to sand mix.

08:22 Teacher asks 1 student to recite a short poem which he does with enthusiasm. Meanwhile the teacher cleans the blackboard and divides it into 3 sections on the right-hand section he draws 6 horizontal lines. He then turns to the class and instructs the students next to the windows to open them to allow in more light. Teacher then holds up a cloth slot board and places a card with the word "walad" (boy) into a slot. He elicits the word and drills the class. He then models and drills the initial sound "wa". He repeats the procedure with two more words: "laban" (milk) and "dajaja" (chicken). The teacher elicits the initial sounds again for each word while pointing at the flash cards. The teacher is lively and encouraging towards the students. He reverts to drilling "walad" several times.

The teacher writes on the blackboard the first letters of each word. He then elicits the sounds and drills them again. He then selects a small student, calls him to the front of the class and lifts him up so all can see him to elicit the letter sounds. Next the teacher demonstrates writing the full word "walad" three times on one of the previously drawn horizontal lines on the blackboard.

08:25 Teacher invites volunteers to the front to write the word in the left-hand (unlined) section of the blackboard. The first volunteer does it neatly. The second needs help with forming the letter "lam" high enough. Virtually all the students appear very eager to volunteer. The teacher picks volunteers from various areas of the class until 5 have had a go. He is very encouraging and supportive of their letter formations.

After the fifth volunteer has written the word the teacher asks for silence, writes the same word in the right hand section, asks the students to read it, writes it a third time. Each letter is formed in a different colour of chalk.

08:40 The teacher instructs the boys to leave the class as he drills the word "walad". Outside and well, away from the classroom block in an open area of ground, he instructs the class to form a large circle separated by outstretched arms. He then leads them in different exercises in time to chants for each letter "wa-la-da".

08:43 Still outside the teacher introduces a chasing game in which one student has to pursue another by weaving in and out of the circle. Next he instructs the students to stretch out their arms and drills letter sounds in time to movements he

makes and they repeat. Teacher then sits on the ground, student follow. Teacher rises and steps outside the circle and leads some stretching exercises, followed by asking individual students to perform a movement for the rest to copy.

08:47 Students return to class in a line chanting “walad” in time to teacher prompts. Back in the class the teacher points to the word on the blackboard and asks what this word is – students reply.

08:48 The teacher instructs students to get out their exercise books. He moves around the room helping students to find a page to write on and advises them not to use razor blades to sharpen pencils (a common practice in schools in Sudan) because of the risk of cuts. Also they should not dirty the floor with shavings but put them outside.

Students without desks copy the word with their exercise books perched either directly on their knees or on their school bags resting on their knees.

The teacher darts around helping the students with their letter formation and expresses words of encouragement and praise such as “Beautiful, oh my goodness”. Some boys are writing the wrong way around but the teacher spots this and puts them right. He congratulates them when they’ve finished. At 08:58 he leads the students in a song and this marks the end of the lesson.

Observer comments

A lesson with many positive features. The teacher is dynamic, supportive and aware of the need for variety and physical movement amongst students of this age. He is confident enough to take the class outside to break up the lesson and give the students some physical activity while practising the letter sounds. There was a lot of reliance on drilling and air writing might have been used to help with the letter formation but generally this teacher demonstrated many excellent qualities and appears well liked by the students.



Figure 17 Grade 1 Arabic, Ibn Abbas Boys' School, Al Mafaza, Gedaref. A dynamic teacher varying the pace of the lesson.

2.1.8 Grade 5 English: Ibn Abbas Boys Basic School, El Mafaza, Gedaref State

This is a very crowded class of 70+ students in one of the school's two newly refurbished blocks. 5 students sit on each bench which is designed to accommodate just 3. A single desk, at the front, serves for teachers to rest their materials on. The classroom block has recently been refurbished and is freshly painted in a light colour. A fixed blackboard in pristine condition is the only visual aid on the walls. There are two electric fans and fluorescent strip lighting which is not working during this lesson. 3 windows with shutters on either side of the classroom and the doorway provide natural light. In spite of the newness of the block, after just a week's use, the concrete classroom floor is rough and broken in places suggesting an inadequate cement-sand mix. There is approximately 1 English coursebook for every 4 or 5 students.

09:12 The teacher (female) divides the blackboard up into 3 sections with vertical lines and writes the date. Next she instructs the students to read the letters A-Q in English though there is nothing to read from. The students chant the letters to a tune. The teacher then holds up a flash card with the capital letter "L" on it (but upside down) and asks if the letter is "capital or small". She repeats with this with a card with the letter N and n both of which are the wrong way around from the students' perspective. This is repeated with the letter O. Next she holds up cards with lower case p and q and asks "which is capital?"

09:17 On the blackboard the teacher writes a lower case q and a capital Q. She asks what they are and leads the students in collective chanting of "small q" "capital Q". Some students at the back of the class chat amongst themselves. The teacher looks through the course book and writes the lower case "r r r r r r r r" on the blackboard, elicits the sound and leads the students in chanting the sound.

09:20 Teacher points to individuals to pronounce the letter r. She goes through all the rows of the class. T: "Shut your mouth" to student chatting at the back. "Stand up, all of you. Small r" They repeat "small r". Next the teacher leads the students in air writing the formation of lower case r and then horizontally above the desk. The motion is perhaps a little more squiggly than required. Meanwhile there is quite a lot of chatting in the background.

T "All of you!" and points to small r on blackboard. Next she writes the capital form R R R R and drills the whole class in saying "capital R". She then goes along the rows again "one after one" so that each student repeats the phrase.

Next she instructs the students to all stand up. This instruction requires repeating and the teacher points at individuals with a board ruler. Next she leads them in a song. "I will teach you – ABC....XYZ".

09:27 "Get out your books." Students begin to copy the lower and upper case forms of R from the blackboards but there has not been a clear instruction do so and some do not. The teacher gets angry with those who are just sitting and not writing.

Owing to the lack of sufficient desk space some students write with their exercise books resting on their knees, others even move to sit on the floor. The teacher moves around marking the exercise books. By 09:40 the teacher is still marking while those who have finished copying the letters have nothing to do. The teacher

sits down and gestures to students who are standing to hand in their books for marking and to sit. There is considerable chatting going on and the teacher returns to marking.

Observer comments

This was a rather chaotic lesson with little evidence of planning. This resulted in a rather limited learning experience for the students. The execution of the lesson and presentation of visual aids was somewhat careless with some easily avoidable errors – such as holding letter cards upside down – and poor classroom management, leaving the students with nothing to do at stages. This exacerbated a general sense of a lack of control by the teacher. There was a great deal of reliance on repetitive drilling to the absence of any activity, which would have required the students to think and use recognition skills.

With some 20 minutes of the lesson focused on a single letter form the students are not stretched sufficiently. Such lack of ambition and activity contributes to the evident boredom and chatter amongst the students. The students' exercise books had been consistently marked but as they only seem to write letters once a week there is relatively little work as yet. At this rate it would take 26 lessons to cover the English alphabet – a very slow rate of progression indeed.

2.1.9 Grade 1 Arabic: Um Al Moonimeen Girls' School, El Mafaza, Gedaref

50 students in a very rundown classroom. Although the classroom is spacious, the inadequate furniture results in 6 girls sharing a bench meant for perhaps 3. There is a well maintained permanent blackboard but the rest of the classroom is in a very poor state with broken window shutters, dirty brown walls with large areas of surface plaster missing and a roughly pitted concrete floor. Apart from the natural light from the windows and doorway there is no lighting and, as the walls are dark especially in the large areas where the plaster has fallen away, the room is rather dim. There are no visual aids other than the blackboard. The teacher brings a cloth pocket board to class and some self-made flash cards.

11:50 Teacher (female) holds up a flash card with the word “ana” (I). She asks what the word is and then repeats with three more words each on flash cards. She places the three words in the slot board and asks the students to volunteer to read them. As volunteers do so they each receive applause from the rest of the students. The teacher is very encouraging.

Next the teacher points to the word “ana”, models it and drills the students to repeat it several times. She then moves on to the word “bint” (girl) and repeats the procedure. Then she calls a student to the front and asks the class what the girl is. They respond “bint”. Teacher spells aloud the word “bint” and the students repeat.

This procedure is repeated with the word “walad” (boy) which she removes from the pocket board and the word is drilled repeatedly. Next the teacher places the flash card back in the board and then removes it, apparently undecided what she will ask the students to do. She then asks for volunteers to read the words. The students clamour eagerly to be selected and each one who does read is applauded.

12:00 The teacher instructs the students to get out the course book and find page 47. Only 2 of the 50 students have the book. The teacher helps the groups around those with the books to find the page and they read the same three words. Next she asks them to make a new word from the letters in the three words they have been reading. One volunteers “balad” and the class claps her. The teacher then reverts to drilling “ana”, “bint” and “walad” again.

“Get out your exercise books and write down these words!” The teacher monitors but takes a while to realise one student at the back is not doing anything. When asked why, the student says she does not have a pen. This is not resolved and the student does not do the exercise.

The teacher moves around the room marking the exercise books though not all the students are doing the exercise and she does not follow this up. The lesson ends at 12:20.

Observer comments

This lesson did not appear to have a clear learning objective and the teacher relied heavily on choral drilling. As a revision lesson it was unambitious – the students were only asked to work on three items of vocabulary. There was no differentiation between ability groups and the less able and unprepared received no effective support.

One girl does not do the written work because she does not have a pen and no attempt is made to resolve this during the lesson. If this is common practice, a form of internal exclusion may be occurring which may ultimately contribute to actual exclusion and drop out.

2.1.10 Grade 5 English: Um Al Moonimeen Girls School, Al Mafaza, Gedaref

60 students crowded into three lines of benches and desks with four students each. Two narrow aisles down the sides of the central line of desks, a table for the teacher and a fixed blackboard. A moveable smaller blackboard leans against the fixed one and the teacher brings a pocket board to the lesson. The classroom is in poor condition with broken wooden window shutters, and a broken pitted concrete floor.

12:25 Students sing “Once I caught a fish alive” with enthusiasm, almost deafeningly. Teacher then holds up a flash card with a lower case letter v and asks “What’s this?” The students reply “v” and the teacher repeats with the letters w and x in turn. The students respond in unison and clap.



Figure 18 Grade 5 English, Al Moonimeen Girls Basic School, Al Mafaza

12:28 Teacher writes date on the portable blackboard which had previously been prepared with horizontal lines and the title: Classroom Objects English.

She then holds up a pencil and models “This is a pencil”. All of you say – a pencil” Students repeat. Next the teacher holds up a flash card with the word “a pencil” and places the card in the slot board to the left of the blackboard. She then writes the same word on the blackboard in good clear joined up handwriting. She then re-drills the class “It’s a pencil” with the weak form “It’s”. This procedure is repeated with the word book: “This is a book” drills the whole class then individuals and then back to the whole class.

This is then repeated with the word “pen”. Rather than elicit the words the teacher just states them. At 12:34 she adds the word pen to the list on the blackboard and redrills all of the words. She calls on some students by name.

The teacher points at the door and drills “a door”. This is repeated with “a ruler”. “What’s this?” Next she invites 2 students (in English) to the front of the class “I want one to ask and the other to answer”. The selected pair perform this drill twice with “What’s this?” “It’s a ruler/pen”. Only 1 pair get to practice this drill.

“Now take out your exercise books and write the words three times!” The students do not follow this instruction immediately as the instruction is in English.

12:41 Girls work quietly. The teacher watches from the front of the class but does not monitor them while they are writing.

12:44 The teacher checks one girl’s work. Owing to the crowded conditions perhaps 50% of the students write with their exercise books placed on top of their school bags, while some others do this on their knees.

12:47 Teacher starts to mark books and help students. Students who have finished remain quietly seated, those whose work has not been seen queue up to hand their work to the teacher.

12:54 The lesson finishes and the teacher collects the pocket board and flash cards and leaves.

Observer comments

A very teacher-centred lesson using the tried and trusted formula of presentation-practice-written consolidation. Although this teacher has received some training in making materials the way they were used in the lesson was largely redundant given that there is a blackboard on to which the words could be and were written. A more effective use of flash cards would have been having them with drawings of objects so that the learners have to think of the word for the object, although in the case of this lesson – the real objects were in any case available. Secondly, it is striking that the vocabulary for the lesson, which was clearly not new to the class, was presented by the teacher rather than elicited. A significant proportion of the lesson consisted of teacher led drilling. The one stage where two students were asked to perform the question and answer drill at the front of the class was not exploited to give all the students the opportunity to practice the drill.

Most of the instructions were given in English suggesting the teacher has been trained to only use English. The teacher used the students' names but did not monitor and help them with their writing.

The classroom environment is poor, the light too dim and the furniture insufficient forcing the students to crowd together and thus impeding their ability to write.

2.1.11 Grade 1 Maths: Wad As Saboor Mixed School, rural Al Mafaza, Gedaref

This class is held outside in the shade (at 08:20) of one of the school's corrugated zinc blocks. The only furniture is a plastic chair used for the teacher's materials. As this is the first lesson of the day the teacher arranges the 14 girls in one row to sit at the front and the 23 boys to sit immediately behind, all on the ground facing the gable end of the school block against which a mobile blackboard is leant. The teacher starts writing on the blackboard, some children stand up and most of them become distracted by a passing vehicle and people – as there is no fence obscuring their view. The teacher turns to the class and instructs them to sit down again. She asks "who can count to 10?" Several students raise their hands and she picks a boy who counts aloud with the teacher. Next she asks them to count backwards from 10 – 1 and 10 children volunteer.



Figure 19 Grade 1 Maths, Wad As Saboor, Al Mafaza

Teacher turns to the board and reads the title of the lesson “Counting forwards and Counting backwards” She asks the students to repeat the title collectively and then individually – most students get individual practice and the teacher helps with the pronunciation.

Next she asks the class to count together. She uses arm movements to show the range and then writes the numbers 1- 10 out using different colours of chalk to help distinguish the numbers. She asks the students to read the numbers – while they do so she walks around monitoring them and helping distracted ones to focus on reading from the blackboard.

08:35 “Get out your Maths exercise books”. One boy says “I haven’t got one”. “You haven’t got one or you haven’t brought it?” He thinks about this and admits he has left it at home. The teacher gives him some paper. As these students are very young she spends some time organising them and helping them to get out the correct exercise book. Then they search for their pencils. 4 students have no pencils, the teacher sharpens pencils for several students, instructs the students to copy the numbers from the blackboard.

Next she goes into the school block and returns with a handful of new pencils which she hands out to those that do not have them. She monitors them while they are copying. She sits down on the ground next to several students who need help holding their pencils and forming the number shapes. She checks others around her and makes encouraging comments. After some minutes students begin to hand their completed copying to the teacher for marking and she looks over the numbers and finishes off or improves some numbers that are unclear.

08:55 the lesson ends with the ringing of the school bell.

Observer comments

This teacher has an excellent manner with these very young students. She is calm and supportive and willing to sit on the ground next to each child to help them form their written numbers.

The lesson takes the normal format of revision-presentation-practice-written consolidation. The physical context is poor and the students are easily distracted by passing vehicles and people walking near and between the two classroom blocks. However, as first year students in a small class with an attentive and caring teacher the constraints on learning are perhaps mainly the physical context and the lack of course books for practising and perfecting letter shape formations. The slower progress being made by these students compared to the year 1 students in Gedaref Town, where each student has a handwriting book, is striking.

2.1.12 Grade 5 English: Wad As Saboor Mixed School, rural Al Mafaza, Gedaref

6 girls and 7 boys seated on metal benches at metal desks in a small classroom in this corrugated zinc school block. A small blackboard in good condition is fixed to the wooden frame of the building. There are no other visual aids. As the number of children is low there is sufficient space for a teachers table at the front.

09:05 The teacher (male) writes: *Date and subject (English)*, on the blackboard which has neat and regular spaced groups of four pre-drawn horizontal lines in place. The lesson for these students in their first year of studying English is on the formation of the letter M in upper and lower case. The teacher says (in English) “We want to know about the letter M”. He then draws in capital M while commenting “up down, up down”. He repeats this until a line of capital Ms is neatly completed. Then in a louder tone he says “also” and the students chant “also” in what appears to be their automatic response to the teacher’s raised voice. He then draws a lower case m and comments “begin with down and end with down” and repeats this until there is also a line of lower case m.



Figure 20 Grade 5 English, Wad As Saboor Mixed, Al Mafaza

“We use capital M at the beginning of the word “and he writes: *Mohammed*. He then writes underneath: *Ahmed*

Below this he writes the word: *meet*

“Who can write in the board?” 1 girl volunteers and moves to the board and forms the capital. A second volunteer does not manage it quite so well and so a third is called. Meanwhile the other students watch this procedure quietly.

09:15 Teacher drills: “Say M”. Students chant “M”. The teacher models: “The sounds of M – Ma, Mu, Mi” Students repeat.

“The letter M” - students repeat

“The sound M” – students repeat.

“The letter M” students repeat.

09:15 “Take out your exercise books,” The students do not follow this instruction until it is given in Arabic. They are instructed to write the letter M repeatedly over an entire page though it is not made clear if they should be forming lower or upper case letters or both. The students are used to the activity and begin to work away. The neighbouring class, which has no teacher during this lesson is making a considerable noise so the Teacher from this class goes next door, after instructing his own class to “Keep silent”, to instruct them to be quiet.

09:20 Teacher starts to re-write the title of the lesson on the board but realises he has made a mistake and rubs it out with his fingers. He writes:

Small letter of m and big letter. Meanwhile the students continue to work quietly at their letter formation. Teacher stands at the front but does not monitor their progress.

Teacher verbally comments that English is written left to right in contrast to Arabic’s right to left but no examples are offered. As students finish their letters they take their exercise book to the teacher for marking. They do not fill in the page but do complete a few lines. There is no evidence of homework.

One student has a copy of the course book (Spine 1). The teacher has one and says he has the Teacher’s guide too.

Observer comments

This lesson followed the normal staging model. Interestingly, the lesson was conducted in English. The teacher was calm and formed the letters very neatly. However, when offering the class some examples of words using the target letter in its upper and lower case forms he did not ask the students to read the words but simply presented them. More practice in the letter formation movements could have been provided – e.g. air writing. The lack of textbooks for the students is a significant constraint on their progress. There is no homework.

2.1.13 Grade 2 Arabic: Ibn Al Jarah Mixed School, rural Al Mafaza, Gedaref

The class is in a corrugated zinc block of two classrooms separated by a teachers’ office. There are 18 girls in 5 rows on the left of the classroom and 17 boys in 4 rows on the right. A wide central aisle or space separates the two. A portable blackboard propped on a bench leans against the front gable wall of the classroom. The blackboard has a hole in its lower third.

11:15 The teacher (female) holds a glass of cola and asks when the children might expect sweet drinks like this. She elicits Ramadan. On the blackboard is a short poem: “Ya Ramadan” which she reads line by line and the students repeat in chorus. The script is carefully written in blue chalk with stars to highlight the pauses/line ends. The date, subject and lesson title are at the top of the board in a beige coloured chalk.

The noise from a neighbouring class is very intrusive at this point. It is very hot and only 11:20.

The teacher is in control, uses a board ruler to point out the words as she reads. She relies mainly on 1 girl in the back to read individually. The boys are altogether less involved.

Students are instructed to stand and repeat and clap in time to the rhythm of the poem.



Figure 21 Grade 2 Arabic, Ibn Al Jarah Mixed School, Al Mafaza, Gedaref

Individuals selected by the teacher read the poem – it is very difficult to hear them owing the noise from the neighbouring class.

The class clap after each individual reading. It is not clear if they are reading or reciting.

The teacher is supportive and uses the students’ names but she tends to supply the lines without giving the students sufficient time to read them. The students are instructed to learn the poem by the following day. There is a lot of teacher explanation.

11:35 “All stand!” “Repeat!” The teacher re-reads the poem eight times with the students repeating each line in chorus. The lesson ends.

Observer Comments

An unusual lesson. One of the few seen in which a real object is brought in to help set up a context – Ramadan. But nothing more is made of it and the students’ role is limited to repeating the lines of the poem without necessarily reading. Even with

the very limited resources available and the difficult physical conditions (heat and noise) more could be made of the students' own knowledge and experience. The practice might have been varied and extended simply by rubbing out some of the words and getting the students to supply the missing parts.

2.1.14 Grade 5 English: Ibn Al Jarah Mixed School, rural Al Mafaza, Gedaref

15 girls seated in 3 rows on the left side of the classroom and 6 boys in 1 row on the right. The classroom is at one end of a corrugated zinc block. Natural lighting from 3 windows on either side and the doorway. A large blackboard in good condition at the front is the only visual aid available. The teacher (female) starts the lesson with some questions about the subjects from the previous English lesson. She asks in English "Where does Peter live? Where does Karar live?" A few students raise their hands. The teacher indicates who can answer.

The teacher divides the blackboard in equal sections with two vertical lines. In the left-hand section she then writes English at the top and "Karrar's room" and "cupboard". She then drills the student in the pronunciation of "cupboard" three times then draws a picture to illustrate a cupboard. "This is my cupboard. I put my clothes in the cupboard".

Teacher then re-drills the word "cupboard" two more times and the students repeat in unison. She then explains the word "bed" in English and drills the students to pronounce the word. Then she draws a bed.

Next she drills the word "see", the students repeat. The teacher explains "I can see", "We can see with our eyes". She opens her copy of the course book and says "For example this is a picture. What can you see in this picture?" 1 girl volunteers "a ball". However, the majority of the students do not appear to understand the question: "What can you see?" though they do follow "What's this?"

11:55 "Get your books out". There are 1-2 copies of SPINE per bench. While they are arranging themselves the teacher draws a clock face on the blackboard. She then says "There is a clock on the wall. There is a radio on a table. The ball is under the bed". "Where is the ball?" Teacher answers herself. Then points with the ruler – "under the table". She tries to get them to understand the position.

Next she starts a drill: "What can you see?" The answer: "I can see

"Where is the ball?" "Under the table."

"Where is the radio?" "On the table."

12:05 "Get your exercise books out. Write the words on the wall. Then write exercise 4." The students do not follow these instructions and so teacher re-explains them. They proceed to write but take a long time – 20 minutes to write out 4 sentences. The teacher monitors from the front and maintains control of the students but does not offer help. 12:25 the teacher leaves the class.

Observer comments

This lesson followed the normal staging model. However, there were some notable problems with comprehension. The teacher used English throughout the lesson, presumably having received some ELT training which has stipulated the

use of English. However, the use of only English at the cost of comprehension is clearly problematic – a more effective approach would be to give instructions in English, check they are understood and if not re-explain, using Arabic (or local lingua franca) if necessary. Dogmatic insistence on teacher use of English as a problem was further illustrated by the fact that none of the students understood what they were being asked to do in the written exercise. This asked them to complete four sentences about items that can be seen in a picture. The first sentence requires the student to supply one word for an object they can see in the picture: *I can see a* The second sentence requires the students to complete the same sentence with different item from the same picture and also the verb: *I can also.....* For the third sentence the student is required to complete the sentence from: *I can* Without exception the students failed to understand the task and simply copied the text as presented in the coursebook. The teacher marked several of the exercises as correct suggesting that she was not reading the work but merely acknowledging sight of it.

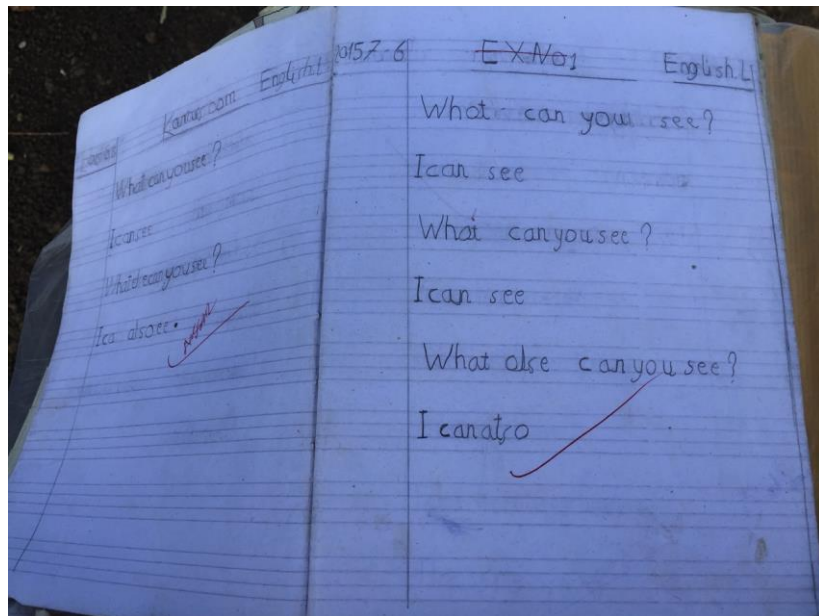


Figure 22 Unfinished work marked as correct, Ibn Al Jarah Mixed School, Al Mafaza

2.1.15 Grade 6 English: Al Asama Mixed School, rural Al Hawata, Gedaref

17 girls on the right and 10 boys on the left-hand side sit at metal desks in a wooden lap boarded classroom in a poor state of repair. The class is not crowded. A large blackboard in a reasonable state is the only visual aid. This class is at the end of the classroom block. The wall separating it from its neighbouring class is only about 2.5 metres high and then open to the pitched roof. There is, therefore, no effective barrier to sound between classes.

The teacher starts the lesson by dividing the blackboard into sections with vertical lines. In one section she writes a list of 8 animals from the SPINE 2 textbook. When the list is complete she turns to the class and asks “What is this?” She then models the answer “This is lion”, (without an indefinite article). Then she indicates that the students are to repeat and she begins drilling them in the question and

answer and occasionally the spelling of the animal names. The list of animals is repeated several times.

Once the teacher led drilling has been repeated for some 5 minutes the teacher instructs the students to take the question and answering as pairs A and B. She instructs two students to stand and student A to ask: “What is this?” Two pairs do the drill, consecutively. The teacher asks the volunteers to ask each other but then asks them to read the list of words from the board. They chant them again in unison.

10:43 “Get out your books”. The students are instructed to copy the vocabulary from the blackboard. As they complete the list they hand their exercise books to the teacher who ticks them acknowledging they have been seen.

Observer comments

Apart from the unfortunate error of drilling a short sentence without an indefinite article this lesson relied heavily on oral drilling. The lesson was conducted in English and followed the familiar format of presentation-oral practice- written consolidation. Pairwork was used but not extended to the whole class. The lesson was, therefore, highly teacher-centred with students being passive responders.



Figure 23 Grade 1, Wad As Saboor Mixed, Al Mafaza. Photo: Hala Nur

2.2 South Kordofan Lesson Observations

2.2.1 Grade 7 English: Badr El Kubra Boys, Kadugli Town, S. Kordofan

74 boys, crowded into a classroom with roughly four students per desk space and in which students at the back have a restricted view. The room has two ceiling fans, a blackboard in very good condition and 3 wall posters including the weekly timetable.

The teacher (female) starts the lesson with questions from the previous lesson and spends around 5 minutes on this. She smiles and maintains a quick rhythm in the class. The students respond enthusiastically. The teacher names and verbally models parts of the body and different types of furniture and the students repeat the vocabulary chorally. The teacher uses a variety of tones and writes the vocabulary they are practising on the blackboard.

While many of the children raise their hands to participate the teacher selects students to answer from the front rows only.

15 minutes into the lesson the teacher reads from the textbook (Spine 3) to which the students listen. When she feels that the students do not understand she uses Arabic to translate and ensure they follow. Next she asks the students to look in the books and name the parts of the body and the pieces of furniture in the pictures. Again she concentrates on the children in the front rows. There is approximately one textbook for every four students.

Next she instructs the students to take their exercise books out and write down the vocabulary. This stage takes around 5 minutes. Finally, she divides the class into three groups and asks questions of each group as a competition between the groups. The students enjoy the competitive aspect.

Observer comments

The teacher does not involve all the students and some towards the back were not attentive. She asked questions without repetition to aid comprehension and she was satisfied with the answers from students in the front row who can easily hear her.

No teaching aids other than the blackboard and the course book were used and the lesson was set without a context.

2.2.2 Grade 8 English: El Humeiraa School for Girls, Kadugli, S. Kordofan

74 girls are crowded into the classroom in 5 rows of 3 columns. There are 2 ceiling fans and 5 windows and a blackboard in good condition. A few illustrative posters on the wall. For this English lesson there are 3-4 students per textbook seen.

The teacher (female) starts the lesson by reading aloud a passage about historical characters from the textbook. She gives the reading appropriate expression. She then writes the new vocabulary from the passage on the blackboard. This section takes 10 minutes.

Next the teacher instructs the students to read the passage and volunteers raise their hands. She selects from among the students but appears to concentrate on

particular students. She corrects individual students by repeating the whole sentence without identifying the specific mistake or giving them an opportunity to correct themselves. This stage takes some 7 minutes.

The teacher begins to rephrase selected sentences from the passage. This stage takes 7 minutes.

Next the teacher instructs the students to take out their exercise books and copy the sentences for the remaining 10 minutes of the lesson.

Observer comments

No teaching aids were used except the blackboard and the textbook. The teacher's manner was very serious and there was no sense of fun to the lesson. There was no encouragement for the students that did not raise their hands who did not, therefore, participate. When the students were to read from the books the teacher tried to distribute the available books among the students. One of the 15 desks had no book and the teacher did not try to solve this problem, although she had already taken some books from desks where the students had more than one book and distributed them to other desks where there was no book. She forgot to give a book to one desk who could not, therefore, follow the reading.

2.2.3 Grade 1 Arabic: Ed Dibaibat Girls School, El Goaz Town, S. Kordofan

60 girls crowd into this classroom which is extremely short of furniture: 7-8 girls per desk place. The floor of the classroom is uneven, there is no electricity but the blackboard is in good condition. There are a few illustrative wall posters and some teaching aids from local materials. The teacher (female) starts the lesson with spelling practice by reading out words, writing them on the board and breaking them down to separate the individual letters. She presents a warm and supportive manner and varies her tone of voice to encourage these very young students.

After 10 minutes the students are instructed to look at the textbook and break down words into their constituent letters. Students raise their hands to offer answers and the teacher selects volunteers from around the classroom. It is not clear if all the students are looking at the same page of the textbook and the teacher does not check this. This stage takes approximately 13 minutes.

Next the students' exercise books are handed out and this takes some time as there are so many. Once they have their own book they start to write the words from the blackboard. The teacher passes among the students while they are writing.

Observer comments

The teacher calls the students by their names and, though tall, she kneels to keep eye contact with them. On occasions she talks to the whole class without ensuring that all of them are attentive. The children were not comfortable in their seating and the teacher did not take notice of this factor and its effects on their understanding and writing. She corrects mistakes without offering the students the opportunity to correct themselves.

2.2.4 Grade 6 Maths: El Hajiz School for Boys, El Goaz Town, S. Kordofan

36 boys in a classroom with insufficient furniture and an uneven floor. 4 students per desk space. There is a blackboard in good condition and it appears that there are 6-7 students per textbook.

The teacher (female) starts the lesson with a 5 minute revision of material from the previous maths lesson. She writes problems on the board and invites students to volunteer to answer. They do so and she accepts answers from around the room using the students' names.

Next the teacher introduces the subject of this lesson, numerical groups and explains them. She elaborates rapidly without repetition and does not check the students follow. She writes examples on the blackboard in good clear writing using different colours of chalk to highlight elements of the groups.

After 13 minutes the teacher starts asking the students to verbally give answers to examples she writes on the board. She selects from those offering to answer from around the room. Following this she instructs the students to take out their exercise books and to copy and answer exercises she writes on the board. They do so. While they are writing the teacher remains at the front of the classroom and does not monitor the students while they copy and work.

Observer comments

The teacher calls students by their names. The subject of the lesson was explained once without any repetition or revision. Although the children appeared not to understand many things she was explaining she did not check their understanding. The teacher did not pass among the students while they were writing

As the lesson was about mathematical groups it would have been possible to do some games to help the children understand them but no games were used.

3 SUMMARY OF TWO RURAL GEDAREF SCHOOLS

3.1 Ibn Al Muneer Mixed Basic School, Al Hawata, Al Rahad, Gedaref

We arrived at the school⁴⁵ at 11:35 and stayed for 45 minutes. There were no children present and the Headteacher predicted they were unlikely to return from the breakfast break. His prediction proved accurate. This school summary is, therefore, based on a physical description of the school and a discussion with the teachers who were present. It is included because the school context and the teachers provided some interesting insights into a non-Arabic mother tongue community's presumed language handicap and an example of socio-economic factors concerning teacher deployment.

Ibn Al Muneer school is situated just outside the village of Ali Wad Muneer a few kilometres outside Al Hawata. The village is large and reputedly densely populated and ethnically uniform. It occupies land allocated by the local government to a community of Hausa migrants from West Africa. Many Hausas in Sudan are second or third generation from Hausa settlers who moved to Sudan for the employment opportunities in the large agricultural schemes and from Haj pilgrims who chose or could not find the means or chose not to return to their countries of origin west of Sudan

The school consists of a corrugated zinc block of two classrooms separated by a teacher room. There are two further rakuba⁴⁶ classrooms nearby. The classrooms have metal benches and desks provided by UNICEF. The back of one classroom was strewn with broken furniture and the County Education Officer stated that much of the metal furniture supplied is not durable. The blackboards are all portable as the classrooms cannot be secured so they are stored in the lockable teachers room when not in use. The teachers room consists of some 4 desks, and

⁴⁵ This school was selected by the Al Hawata Education Officer as an example of the challenges faced in extending education to all in this locality.

⁴⁶ Shelter made of natural materials.

a cupboard. On one wall a school timetable was hanging. Coloured and white chalk were available.

Although Ali Wad Muneer village is heavily populated only 30 students regularly attend the school according to the Locality Education Officer. There is however, a Khalwa in the village. In the government school there are 6 classes operating this term, one each in years 2-7. At the beginning of the year 96 students registered but the teachers stated that only 70 attend regularly. In fact on the day of our visit only 28 had attended until the breakfast break: 7 in year 1; 4 each of years 2 & 3; 5 in year 4; 6 in year 6; and 2 in year 7. In spite of these low numbers the school has 7 female teachers and 1 male Headteacher, all appointed and paid by the local education office. The Education Officer felt that the school could be run with just two teachers though whether there are teachers with the skills and resources to teach multi Grade classes was not explored. The presence of 7 teachers was explained by the Education Officer as follows: being female teachers they would not be permitted by their families from working at any greater distance than daily commuting would allow. Since there is no reliable or affordable transport to more distant schools they were deployed to this school, which might in time require more teachers.

The Headteacher said that the low number of students enrolled is the result of lack of parental interest in schooling in this Hausa community. This was ascribed by the teachers, who are not themselves, Hausa, as the consequence of a combination of the low valuing of education and the linguistic limitation caused by only an estimated 1% of the community being able to understand Arabic. The low value or possibly suspicion with which many in the Ali Wad Mooneer village community regard formal education is reflected in the low support for the PTA which apparently has to bring tools and materials for the school from outside the area – none being voluntarily provided by the community.

Curiously, the school only records numbers of attendees and not the names. Students who do return after the breakfast break are all assigned to one classroom – the numbers being so low. This may reinforce the low interest of the catchment community in the school Owing to ongoing data collection in a well-attended school in a neighbouring village we were not able to administer the school data, Headteacher and Teacher focus group forms in this school. However, the short visit provided an insight into the linguistic impact experienced by a non-Arabic speaking community and the impact of the prevailing socio-cultural norms on the deployment of female teachers.



Figure 24 Ibn Al Muneer Mixed Basic School, Al Hawata, Gedaref. No students after the breakfast break.

3.2 Al Asama Basic Mixed School, Al Hawata, Al Rahad, Gedaref

This rural school occupies a rectangular plot on the outskirts of Al Asama New Village, which lies a few kilometres outside Al Hawata town. At the time of our visit towards the end of the rainy season the school was surrounded on two sides by fields of sorghum. The entrance to the school is opposite an open area of ground. One boundary of the school is against the fences of some of the village’s compounds. The local community and catchment area for the school is multi-ethnic.

Although the school is mixed the enrolment figures reflect the fact that it is not likely to remain so for many more years – a girls school has been established in the vicinity and has enrolled girls from Years 1-3 so far. This accords with the wishes of the parents in the catchment community.

Al Asama Basic Mixed School Enrolment

Years	2014/15	2015/16
Grade 1	34 boys 0 girls	43 boys 0 girls
Grade 2	22 boys 0 girls	30 boys 0 girls
Grade 3	28 boys 0 girls	31 boys 0 girls
Grade 4	19 boys 30 girls	25 boys 0 girls
Grade 5	11 boys 25 girls	18 boys 30 girls
Grade 6	10 boys 20 girls	10 boys 22 girls
Grade 7	8 boys 21 girls	11boys 22 girls
Grade 8	18 boys 9 girls	11boys 19 girls

3.2.1 Views from Al Asama Basic Mixed School Students

Three boys and three girls from year 8 shared their experiences of the school. Their home languages range from Beni Amer, Hausa to Arabic. There are several more languages spoken in the school community. Positive aspects of the school include studying and learning and for the boys playing football outside. However, football is no longer possible since the football disintegrated. Negative aspects of school life are fighting between students outside the school and inside the school when there is no teacher in class. Physical punishment occurs and is the most disliked aspect of the school. It is used to discipline misbehaviour and for lateness.



Figure 25: Grade 1 Al Asama Mixed School, Al Hawata Photo: Hala Nur

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study has looked at the quality of the teaching and learning process through 21 lesson observations and information provided by the Heads, teachers and students in the 11 schools visited. Several in-school factors are contributing to high rates of children dropping out before completing the basic stage of education in Sudan. The school environments seen, range from reasonable but highly crowded to schools short of classrooms and with no sanitation whatsoever. The majority have highly inadequate facilities.

The teaching observed has been conducted by teachers who for the most part know their students names and make some effort to be friendly. Such positive aspects are, however, let down by the profoundly teacher-centred approach they use which results in schooling that is inefficient, monotonous and sufficiently demotivating for some to discontinue.

Student informants made an explicit link between low learning attainments as a causal factor in incidents of dropout among their peers. Socio-cultural factors, especially the marriage of girls who have not completed basic education, and the low valuing of schooling by some communities, both for its own sake and as a route to poverty alleviation, are also contributing to low retention rates.

4.1 School Management factors

All the schools visited maintain registers for students and most also maintain them for teachers. Head and teacher absences were observed in rural schools which suggests this may be a significant factor, as regularly unattended classes will further impact on learning attainment. For student attendance, no follow up of absent students is documented and so the implementation of the widely stated practice of contacting parents could not be verified. Most Headteachers refer to their individual practice in following up absences when asked about attendance policy. This suggests that state level policy is poorly recognised with the result that practice varies from school to school and may not be implemented at all in some. An explicit policy, documented follow-up in conjunction with student tracking through an Education Management Information System is required to improve this aspect of retention management.

Although not an explicit focus of the study, the issue of inadequate instructional time was raised by our observation that several lessons were shorter than the allotted time and that breakfast were often longer. This compounds findings in other studies which suggest that overall instructional time is significantly less than the national policy of a school year of 210 days and 25 hours a week of contact time.

4.2 Classroom factors

For the most part the students' involvement in school life is limited to their time in classrooms where they are required to chorus answers to closed questions and directly reproduce material presented by the teacher. The experience, knowledge and interests that children bring to their classrooms are ignored in most of their lessons. In virtually all the lessons observed, teachers relied on a model of teaching that elevates classroom control above encouraging inquiry, independence and self-confidence in children.

Such teaching appears to be based on the premise that learning is achieved through listening, waiting, chorusing answers, copying, and reproducing. Classroom activities that foster learning through discovery, questioning, curiosity, self-expression, creativity and communication skills are strikingly absent in the current model. Class project work, which requires the active involvement of students through investigative, discovery and creative activities and requires a range of individual and co-operative activity was also absent from all lessons observed. As a result there are strictly limited opportunities for students to exercise their higher cognitive skills. This has a detrimental effect on children's learning. This teacher-centred model relies on the passive co-operation of students rather than their active engagement in activities that require them to exercise and develop those cognitive skills.

Instances of teachers attempting to initiate activities were seen in a few classrooms. These suggest that there is awareness of the limitations of the current model of teaching. The failure of these positive signs of activities is caused by a lack of confidence and training in their preparation and use, compounded by the lack of material for the preparation of supplementary learning aids.

Further, many of the teachers observed display caring characters and some could be excellent models for their peers. They simply lack the practical experience of how to set up activities that are child-centred and how child-centred methods can be used effectively in large, under-resourced classrooms to enable them to cover the syllabus.

The absence of classroom practices that promote the active participation of students in these states is due to a lack of training and institutional support. Initiatives by UNICEF and national and international NGOs to equip teachers with the skills and confidence to employ child-centred approaches have not yet been effective. Where not embraced by the national and state level education authorities, the expansion of their use in making schools more child friendly will continue to be constrained.

4.3 School enrichment

Curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular activities are generally absent from these schools, with virtually all formal learning taking place in the classrooms. The prevailing attitude of school teachers appears to be that they are employed to teach lessons and the organising of extra-curricular activities is not their responsibility. Small initiatives which could dramatically improve school life, be it in sports or culture, are not taken.

Where active, the School Councils appear to be focused entirely on the core functioning of the schools. Even simple opportunities for enrichment of school life through, for example, the raising or allocation of community contributions towards the purchase of balls or invitations to local people with particular occupations to describe them to students and answer their questions, are entirely absent.

4.4 Corporal Punishment

A significant discrepancy was observed between Headteacher, teacher and student responses to the study's enquiries about the consequences of unexplained absences, lateness and misbehaviour. Student responses were virtually unanimous in referring to corporal punishment being a feature of their schools. Teachers and Headteacher references to corporal punishment were far fewer. This suggests that corporal punishment is prevalent and its use does not appear to be regulated by school policy or regulatory enforcement. The schools, which should be places of safety, stimulation, personal development, wonder and enjoyment in learning, are instead, sources of fear, boredom and discomfort. Students are afraid of those teachers who resort to corporal punishment and cases of its use, which were plainly abusive, were mentioned. Student references to conflict between students require further research with students. Bullying may also be significant and a further disincentive for students affected to remain at school, especially if it is not recognised as an issue by the schools.

Improving the quality of basic education will, therefore, require significant investment in school infrastructure, management training and support of Headteachers. Alongside this support and awareness raising of School Council members and teachers will be vital. Above all, a significant effort to increase the continuing professional development opportunities for teachers through in-service training is critical, if teachers are to deliver an improving quality education that prepares children for today's world and motivates them to learn and stay in school,

5 PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Federal Level

- No sustainable improvement in the quality of basic education provision can be achieved without continued and sustained increase in national spending on education. Until the Federal Government invests in education at a rate similar to that of other Sub-Saharan countries the overall quality of education delivered will continue to be low.
- National policy on the length of the school year and the level of instructional time children in each Grade should receive to be reviewed and any revisions clearly communicated as minimum standards.
- The national basic level curriculum should be reviewed to identify imbalances in subject loading in line with international primary level standards. Knowledge targets and learning skills should be articulated in the curriculum as clear goals.
- The policy of subject specialisation from Grade 4 should be reviewed as it is contributing to small schools requiring more teachers than the student numbers justify. The consequent under-employment of teachers is inefficient and results in an unjustified focus on subject knowledge rather than learning skills and abilities.
- Textbooks should be revised to include expected learning outcomes for each year. Learning outcomes should be articulated to include the necessary skills needed to achieve them. This will assist teachers in preparing activities for children that require them to use and develop their higher cognitive skills.
- Teaching guides should be revised to include more practical suggestions on classroom activities that teachers can use to help students use and develop their cognitive skills through such activities that involve discovery, investigating and interacting.
- The Child Act of 2010 should be revised to explicitly prohibit the use of corporal punishment in schools.
- Provision of free or heavily subsidized breakfasts for children from the poorest families should be rolled out as the economy grows. It can be one of the most effective means of reaching the poorest and keeping them in school.

5.2 State Level

- The SMOEs should develop an awareness that prioritising access to education to the exclusion of quality considerations has similar consequences to only providing education for an elite and generally urban minority.
- The SMOEs need to recognise the importance of and prioritise support for regular in-service training opportunities for teachers.
- The SMOEs should explicitly seek to promote and support teacher training that demonstrates practical classroom learning activities for teachers to use and develop in their own teaching.
 - The SMOEs should ensure that teachers are trained to be aware of different learning styles and how varied learning activities can help students with differing abilities and learning styles.
- The EMIS needs to be rolled out as soon as possible so that every child in school can be tracked and the data used to identify weaknesses at Mahalyia and school levels.
 - The Education Offices need to fully engage with the EMIS and be trained to analyse the data and identify action points.
 - The Education Offices need to use the EMIS to identify and provide targeted support for schools that are underperforming.
- State level legislators should enact legislation to specifically prohibit the use of corporal punishment in schools.

5.3 Mahalyia Level

- Dynamic teachers should to be identified from the existing force of teachers for further training and support as model teachers.
- Minimum levels for textbook distribution should be established with a minimum target of every teacher having the teacher guide and a coursebook for each subject taught.
 - Every school should also have at least one copy of the curriculum.
- Every Headteacher should receive some in-service management training.
- Teacher deployment to schools should be based on the needs of the school.
 - Female teachers deployed away from their home area require additional support to enable them to either commute reliably or transfer with immediate family members.
 - Attention needs to be paid to the frequent misalignment of subject specialisation to teachers' educational backgrounds.

5.4 School Level

- Use of corporal punishment should be discontinued even before legislation is enacted prohibiting its use.
- The EMIS needs to be rolled out as soon as possible so that every child in school can be tracked and the data used to identify individuals who are not progressing as expected.

- Headteachers should manage teachers using explicit and agreed standards in terms of punctuality, lesson preparation, teaching approaches, marking systems, frequency of homework and extra-curricular support they should engage in.
- Headteachers or their deputies should conduct lesson observations of each teacher each term and provide pedagogical support and advice.
- Classroom allocation should be made more flexible so that unused classrooms, for instance after Grade 1 students have left, should be made available to classes without classrooms or to split especially large classes.
- Teachers' lesson plans should include as a minimum the expected outcomes and a description of the activities they will engage the students in to achieve those outcomes.
- Weekly homework should be introduced in Grade 2 and gradually increased. By year 4 students should be learning and revising 8-10 items of Arabic vocabulary a week and receive mathematical practice exercises.
- Each school should have an explicit marking practice, which provides more feedback on the type of error than the current practice of simple acknowledgement that the student's writing has been seen by the teacher
- Teachers need to develop their awareness that the methodology they currently use is highly teacher-centred. As a result they are more active in their lessons than their students. Much of students' work is currently repetitive and dull. Students are not engaged or involved in the lessons and feel that the lessons are very similar. The development of their cognitive skills is not being fostered.
- Drilling vocabulary, pronunciation and facts, can be useful if, once modelled by the teacher, the target language or fact is practiced by students offering responses appropriate to the context. Repetitive chanting without any thinking needed by the students is much less effective as a learning tool.
- Learning targets for each lesson should be more ambitious. For spelling targets for year 3 and above should be 8-10 items of Arabic vocabulary per week. A weekly target of 6-8 items of English vocabulary should be the ambition for vocabulary lessons from year 5. To achieve this vocabulary lists should be written on the blackboard, copied, checked and tested a week later. Lessons should include activities that require the students to use and explore what they are learning. As the learning of times tables by the end of year 3 is not being achieved special attention needs to be given to providing students with varied exercises and activities, including homework exercise, to help them achieve this straightforward goal.
- Every school should have some extra-curricular activity to enrich the experience of children while at school and one or more teachers should have explicit responsibility for this.
 - Teachers with the lowest teaching loads should be assigned other responsibilities such as materials development, team teaching, enabling large classes to be split and extra-curricular activities.
 - Schools should actively encourage input from people in the community with specific occupations and specialist knowledge to talk to classes at appropriate times in the curriculum. Such visits should be planned and class teachers always be present to assist speakers and for child protection reasons. Schools should recognise the value and make use of the range of contacts they have through their linkages to the community.

- The daily sweeping of classrooms should be organised possibly by roster or a system of class monitors. A roster should be fixed to the wall of each class so that it can be seen and checked by all.
- Latrines require regular attention and each school should have a policy on how they are to be kept clean, perhaps on a school wide roster. The supervision of this should be the responsibility of the Headteacher or a named teacher.

5.5 Community Level

- Engagement between the Education Office of the Mahalyia and the community should stress the importance of community support for schooling, without which the quality of education is likely to be low.
- School Councils should receive awareness training on the range of roles and inputs they can provide and to initiate or improve an ongoing interaction with their school.
- School Councils should organise more community working parties with the aim of ensuring that each school has as a minimum a pit latrine for every 60 students with separate ones for males and females in mixed schools

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7 ANNEXES

7.1 Annex 1: Validation Workshop Participants

Participants in the Federal Ministry of Education and PERP Study 3 Validation Workshop held on 4th October 2015

Mohammed Ahmed Abdalla	Planning Department FMoE
Ali Osman Gangal	Training Department FMoE
Elmutasim Abdalla	Training Department FMoE
Afaf Ahmed Ali	Monitoring & Evaluation FMoE
Ayat Babiker Ahmed	Planning Department FMoE
Hala Salih	National Consultant
Richard Brook	External Consultant
Atif Mahgoub	National Consultant
Fatima Abdel Aziz	PERP Project Liaison Officer

7.2 Annex 2: Schools Visited

<i>Date</i>	<i>School & Location</i>
Saturday 17 th October	Es Salaam Girls' Basic School, Gedaref Town
Saturday 17 th October	Es Salaam Boys' Basic School, Gedaref Town
Sunday 18 th October	Deim Hamad Girls' Basic School, Gedaref Town
Monday 19 th October	Ibn Abbas Boys' Basic School, El Mafaza
Monday 19 th October	Umm Al Moomineen Basic School for Girls, El Mafaza
Tuesday 20 th October	Wad As Sabor Mixed Basic School, El Mafaza (rural)
Tuesday 20 th October	Ibn Al Jarah Mixed School, El Mafaza (rural)
Wednesday 21 st October	Ali Ibn Abi Talib Mixed School, Balo Village (El Hawata, rural)
Wednesday 21 st October	Al Asama Mixed School, Al Asama New Village (Rahad, rural)
Wednesday 21 st October	Ali Wad Moneir Mixed Basic School, (rural Ar Rahad)
Monday 9 th November	Badr El Kubra Basic School for Boys (Kadugli Town)

Tuesday 10 th November	El Humeiraa Basic School for Girls (Kadugli Town)
Wednesday 11 th November	El Dibaibat Basic School for Girls (El Dibaibat Town)
Thursday 12 th November	El Hajiz Basic School for Boys (El Hajiz, rural)

Student Focus Groups

School	Locality	Number & Gender	Grade	Code	Date of interview
Al Asma	Ar Rahad	3 m 3 f	8	AA	21/10/15
Ali Ibn Abi Talib	Ar Rahad	3 m 3 f	6	AT	21/10/15
Ibn Jarah Mixed	El Mefaza	4 m 4 f	8	IJ	20/10/15
Wad As Saboor Mixed	El Mefaza	3 m 3 f	4	WS	20/10/15
Ibn Abbas Boys	El Mefaza	5m	6	IA	19/10/15
Um Al Moonimeen Girls	El Mefaza	4 f	7	UM	19/10/15
Deim Hamad Girls	Gedaref Town	5 f	5	DH	18/10/15
Es Salaam Girls Private	Gedaref Town	6 f	3	ES	17/10/15
Badr Elkubra Basic school for Boys	Kadugly Town	M	6	BK	9/11/2015
Elhumeiraa basic school for girls	Kadugly Town	F	4	HM	10/11/2015
Eldibaibat Basic school for girls	Eddibaibat Town	F	7	DB	11/11/2015
Elhajiz basic school for boys	Elhajiz village	M	8	HJ	12/11/2015

7.3 Annex 3: Headteacher Bio Data Summary Table

School	HT Gender	Age	Home Community	Home Language	Education Level Completed	Years Teaching	Years Management	Management Training
Ibn al Jarah Mixed	M	41	El Mafaza	Arabic	BEdn History & Geography, Gezira	20	1st	
Wad As Saboor Mixed	M	35	El Mafaza	Arabic	SSC	11	6	None
Ibn Abbas Boys	M	53	El Mafaza	Arabic	SSC	27	11	Short Course 2005
Um Al Moonimeen Girls	F	54	El Mafaza	Arabic	SSC	31	4	1 Course
Deim Hamid Girls	M	60	Gedaref	Arabic	TTC Diploma	40	33	Yes
Al Aslaam Girls Private	F	67	Gedaref	Arabic	TTC Diploma	42	?	Supervisor's TT Course, Leadership Course
Badr Elkubra	M	51	Kadugly	Arabic	Bsc. Biology and animal production	31	7	Short Courses
Elhumeiraa	F	56	Kadugly	Arabic	Secondary school	32	8	Short Course
Eldibaibat	F	55	Elgoaz	Arabic	Bsc Education	28	4	Short Course
Elhajiz	M	45	Delleng	Arabic	Secondary School Certificate	20	1	Short Courses
Average		52				28	8.2	8/10

7.4 Annex 4: Physical Conditions and Learning aids in observed classes

Urban Private school classes observed – Physical summary

Context	Year & subject	Stds' present G/B	Stds per desk/ bench	Classroom condition	Black-board condition	Other visual / learning aids	Students per textbook
Urban-Private	Year 3 English	19 Girls	1:1	Good (Lighting & fans) Natural light	Very good	None	1:1
Urban-Private	Year 1 Arabic	21 Girls	2:2	Good (Lighting & fans)	Very good	A portable bb with Arabic alphabet and initial, medial, final forms	1:1
Urban-Private	Year 4 Maths	15 Girls	2:2	Reasonable (lighting & fans) but noise from next class very high	Very good	4 wall charts	1:1
Urban-Private	Year 6 English	31 Boys	1:1	Poor, crowded & dark	Good	1 wall chart	1:1
Urban-Private	Year 8 Maths	35 Girls	1:1	Reasonable (lighting & fans but noise from next classes very high)	Good	3 photo-copies of pictures. Teacher uses a board ruler as a pointer	None used

Urban State school lessons observed – Physical summary

Context	Year & Subject	Stds' present G/B	Stds per desk/ bench	Classroom condition	Black-board condition	Other visual / learning aids	Students per textbook
Urban-State School	Year 8 English	62 Girls	1:1	Reasonable, 2 ceiling fans, electric lighting	Good	Some wall posters	2:1
Urban-State School	Year 5 English	73 Girls	2:1	Extremely crowded, 2 Fans, 4 windows	Good	5 wall posters	3:1
Urban-State School	Year 8 Maths	59 Girls	1:1	Reasonable, 2 ceiling fans, 5 windows	Good	3 wall posters, coloured chalk	2:1
Urban-State School	Year 2 Arabic	87 Girls	5:2	Very crowded, 2 ceiling fans not working, 8 windows	Good	none	None used

Rural & semi-rural state schools in Al Mafaza & Al Hawata

Context	Year & Subject	Stds' present G/B	Stds per desk space	Classroom condition	Black-board condition	Other visual / learning aids	Students per textbook
Semi-rural Boys	Year 1 Arabic	47 Boys	2:2	Very good (recently refurbished)	Very good	None	None used
Semi-rural Boys	Year 5 English	70 Boys	5:2	Very crowded (classroom recently refurbished)	Very good	None	5:1
Semi-rural Girls	Year 1 Arabic	50 Girls	6:3	Very poor, broken floor, doors and window shutters	Fair	A slot board	25:1
Semi-rural Girls	Year 5 English	72 Girls	4:2	Very crowded. Classroom: poor, broken floor, doors and window shutters	Fair	A slot board	None used
Rural Mixed	Year 1 Maths	14 Girls 23 Boys	37:0	No classroom. Lesson outside in shade of classroom block	Poor: portable, No stand: on the ground, leaning against building	None	None used
Rural Mixed	Year 5 English	6 Girls 7 Boys	2:2	Poor, a corrugated zinc shed.	Reasonable but small	None	13:1
Rural Mixed	Year 2 Arabic	7 Girls 5 Boys	12:0	No classroom. Class in shade of tree	Poor: portable, on the ground, leaning against a tree	None	6:1
Rural Mixed	Year 1 Arabic	18 Girls 17 Boys	3:2	Poor a corrugated zinc shed. Next class noise v high.	Poor, a small portable board with a hole in lower 3rd	None	None used
Rural Mxed	Year 5 English	15 Girls 6 Boys	5:2	Poor a corrugated zinc shed.	Fair but square	None	4:1
Rural mixed	Year 6 English	17 Girls 10 Boys	4:3	poor, wooden barn offering little shelter	Fair but square	None	2:1

Urban & Semi-Urban Schools South Kordofan

Context	Year & Subject	Stds' present G/B	Stds per desk space	Classroom condition	Black-board condition	Other visual / learning aids	Students per textbook
Urban	Year 7 English	74 boys	4:1	Crowded with 2 ceiling fans. Restricted view for stds at the back	V. Good	3 wall posters, containing anthem, weekly timetable & illustration	4:1
Urban	Year 8 English	74 girls	4/3:1	Crowded, 2 fans, 5 windows.	Good	A few illustrative wall posters	4/3:1
Semi-urban	Year 1 Arabic	60 girls	7-8:1	Insufficient furniture, uneven floor, no electricity	Good	A few illustrative wall posters. Some teaching aids from local materials	1:1
Urban	Year 6 Maths	36 boys	4:1	Not crowded but insufficient furniture. Uneven floor, no electricity	Good	None	6-7:1

7.5 Annex 5: Research Instruments

7.5.1 Focus Group Discussion Questions for Students

PRIMARY EDUCATION RETENTION PROGRAMME - SUDAN

STUDY 3:

Quality of the teaching/learning process and of classroom practice

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

The interview should be conducted out of hearing of the school's teachers and headteacher.

School name	
Mahalyia	
Date	October 2015
Number of children present	

Step 1 – Introduce yourself and hand out a sheet of paper for each participant to record their name and age and year and hand on. Ask them to put the sequential numbers before their names. 1.2.3.... Keep an eye on this while facilitating the discussion and look out for inability to do this. Please keep the sheet with the names for the study record.

Step 2 - Briefly explain that you are researching the reasons that some children do not complete primary schooling? You are going to ask series of questions to help us understand the experience of children in this school and that they are invited to respond. There are incorrect answers so different experiences and views are welcome.

- What language do you speak at home? (note them)
- What do you enjoy in school?
- What do you not enjoy about this school?
- What is the most difficult thing/subject?
- Who helps you with learning difficult things
- What do you think would make learning the more difficult things easier?
- What learning aids do you have in this school (including wall charts, books, globes etc)

- Please think about your favourite teacher – what makes/made them your favourite – personality, way of teaching, supportive?
- What do you like about your favourite teacher's lessons? Is there a particular activity you enjoy – which?
- Does your teacher know and use the names of all the students in your class?
- Are your lessons varied or do you think they are very similar? What learning games and activities do you enjoy?
- Thinking about your least favourite teacher – what did/do you dislike about learning with them?
- When is your homework and classwork marked? What help do you get from the teacher when you get something wrong?

Homework (omit 15-17 if no homework is given)

- How often do you get homework? When and where do you do the homework and who helps you? Who enjoys homework?
- How does the homework help you learn new things?
- What would make doing your homework easier?
- Thinking about the writing you do in this school. What things do you have to write? Are you asked by your teachers to just copy or are you asked to also compose or write freely sometimes? Please give examples.
- What contact do your parents/guardian's have with the school? Parents come to the school and ask about their levels and there is contact.
- What do you read apart from your coursebooks? Can you get other things to read – what?
- Do the teachers encourage and help you to read other material than your coursebooks?
- By what year are you expected to know your multiplication tables? What help do you get to learn them?
- If this is a mixed school are boys and girls treated differently? (in class and outside)? Examples?
- What other activities can you participate in at this school? (sport, art, music etc).
- What happens if you are late for school?
- What happens if a student misbehaves?

- What would you like to see in the school that would make it better you?
- Do you have any friends/colleagues who dropped out of the school? Why did they stop schooling?
- Thank you for answering all my questions! Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Names

7.5.2 Teacher Focus Group Discussion Questions

PRIMARY EDUCATION RETENTION PROGRAMME - SUDAN

STUDY 3:

Quality of the teaching/learning process and of classroom practice

TEACHER FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is there a school attendance policy – what is it?
- What is your responsibility as teachers with regard to attendance?
- If a child is missing school persistently or having other problems what do you do?
- Thinking about children that have dropped out, what do think their reasons were?
- (For mixed schools) Is there any difference in approach for boys and girls with attendance problems?
- What contact do you have with the parents of the children you teach? How useful do you think this contact is or could be where there is no contact?
- How do you monitor your students learning? How do you assess students' learning?
- By what Grade do you expect the students to know a) how to write their names b) their multiplication tables?
- What pre-service and in-service teacher training opportunities have you had?
- If you have had pre-service or in-service teacher training, how did the training prepare you for what you experience in the classroom now?

- Was anything important missing from your training?
- How many lessons do teachers teach? What do you do in (any) free periods?
- What do you think of the syllabus and course materials you use? Are there any changes you think would improve them?
- How do you plan your lessons? What record do you keep of lesson plans?
- What learning activities or learning games do you use in your teaching?
- Do you have access to teacher guides for each subject? How useful are these for your teaching?
- Please estimate the ratio of students per course books in this school (subject and grades).
- Are there sufficient learning materials for your teaching? Are any important materials missing? What are they?
- What other resources would you like to see in the school that would improve your teaching and the learning experience for the students?
- Do you have any students with special needs (e.g physical disability) in your classes? What help do you give or get for them to attend and learn?
- How do you maintain discipline in your classes?
- Does the school invite/receive visitors to talk to classes about their occupations or specialist knowledge (e.g. Nurse, Doctor, Imam, Business people, Mechanic, Driver, Tailor etc)? Examples please?
- Any extra curricular activities in the school?
- What improvements would you like to see in other resources; e.g physical state of school, toilets, availability of water.

Finally, what would you like students to feel about their experience at this school? X teachers attended?

7.5.3 Headteacher Questionnaire

PRIMARY EDUCATION RETENTION PROGRAMME - SUDAN

STUDY 3:

Quality of the teaching/learning process and of classroom practice

HEADTEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1 Bio-data

Name	
Gender	
Age	
Marital status	
Home community	
Employment community	
Home language	
Education level completed: Year (subject and awarding body if post secondary school)	
Years of teaching experience	
Teacher training courses: Title, date and awarding body	
School Management training	
Years of management experience	
Date of interview	

Section 2

- Is there a school attendance policy – what is it?
- How do you manage attendance, who has what responsibilities between yourself and the teachers?
- If a child is missing school persistently what do you do?
- If a child is persistently late or having other problems what do you do?
- How are cases of unexplained absences, or persistent lateness or other problems treated for boys and girls? Is there any difference in approach?
- What documentation of follow up for unexplained absences, and persistent lateness is kept?

- If you suspect a child is in danger of dropping out what action would you like to be able to take if you had the resources?
- What is the school policy/attitude towards including and supporting children with special needs (e.g. physical impairment/challenging behaviour)?
- What role does the PTA have in helping the school? How does the PTA help in a) running the school? b) helping the quality of education provided?
- What support does the school get from the SMOE?
- How is discipline maintained in the school?
- How does the school monitor the effectiveness of a) teaching b) learning?
- How do you supervise the teachers?
- Are the teachers expected to learn and use the names of all the children in their classes?
- Is there a target year for children to know the multiplication tables? How is this monitored?
- For children that do not learn the tables by the target year, what support, if any, is given?
- What approaches/methods of teaching do you expect to see used in the classroom?
- What support do you give to less experienced and untrained teachers?
- What in-service training opportunities have the teachers in the school had access to?
- How many lessons are there in the normal school day for students? Grade 1: Grade 2: Grade 3: Grade 4: Grade 5: Grade 6: Grade7: Grade 8:
- What are teachers expected to do during free periods?
- If a particular class is in danger of not finishing the prescribed course in a subject what procedure do you follow?
- Is there a homework policy/system for any of the year groups in the school? If so what is it?
- Is there a school work/homework marking policy? What is it?

- Apart from course books what other learning aids are available to the teachers and students?
- Can the students access any reading materials other than coursebooks?
- Do all the students have access to coursebooks? Please estimate the ratio of students per coursebook.
- What variety of roles and activities do you expect teachers to demonstrate in their teaching?
- Do you conduct lesson observations? If so what do you look for? How do you give feedback?
- What help do you provide the teachers in planning their lessons?
- What help do you expect parents to give their children in attending and learning? Do you meet parents at all to discuss their children's learning, attendance, behaviour?
- Thinking about your experience of schooling and teaching, has education changed in terms of mutual respect, teacher and learner motivation and desire to learn?
- What improvements would you like to see in: the training of teachers; the conditions of service for teachers learning resources available in the school; other resources; e.g physical state of school, toilets, water.
- Having answered all these questions have you any further thoughts on how the motivation of children at risk of dropping out in primary schools can be improved?
- Finally, what would you like the children of this school to feel about their experience here?
- Are there extra-curricula/educational activities in this school? What are they?
- Is there a social worker at the school? If so what support do they give?

7.5.4 5:4 School & Teacher Data Forms

PRIMARY EDUCATION RETENTION PROGRAMME - SUDAN

STUDY 3:

Quality of the teaching/learning process and of classroom practice

School & Teacher Data Forms

School Name & Mahalyia	
Age of School	
# Total enrolment - Boys/Girls ⁴⁷	Male: Female:
Enrolment age range Boys/Girls	Male: Female:
#Year 6 ⁴⁸ retention rate Boys/Girls	Male: Female:
#Year 7 retention rate Boys/Girls	Male: Female:
#Year 8 progression rate Boys/Girls	Male: Female:
#Year 8 exam pass rate for last year	Male: Female:
#Teachers	Male: Female:
#Teachers who left school from last academic year	Male: Female:
Any support staff? Numbers & roles	
Active PTA?	Yes: No: Does not exist:
#PTA members and gender	Male: Female:
Local community language(s)	

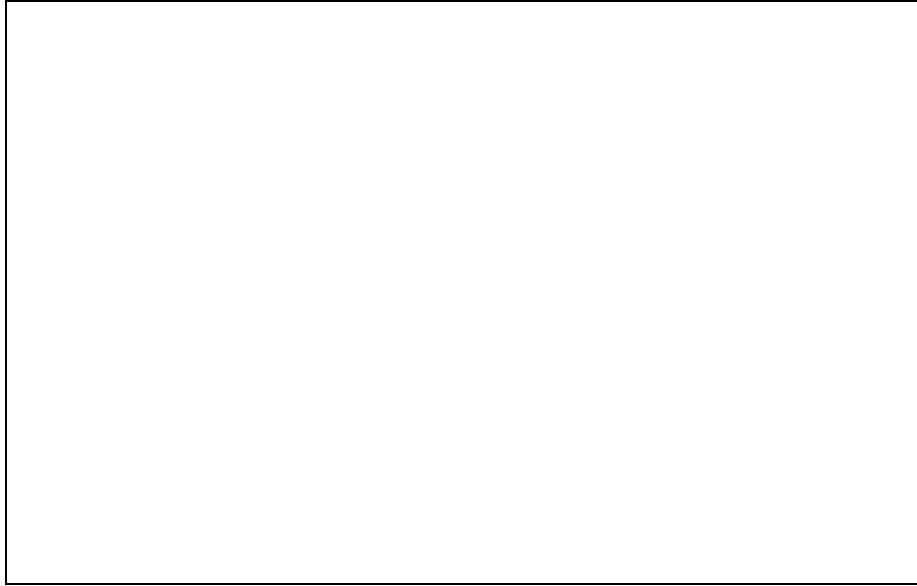
School Site & Physical Facilities

Number of classes and building material	
Summary of conditions	
Teacher/Headteacher rooms ? Number etc Kitchens etc.	
Water availability (describe)	
No. Latrines & conditions	
Fencing?	

⁴⁷ Breakdown all pupil & teacher data by gender

⁴⁸ number students retained from previous year excluding repeaters

Sketch/Plan of school:



Teacher Data Form

Teacher Number ⁴⁹ & Years of teaching service	Gender & Age	Local or from another area?	Subject(s) taught and years	Total no. of lessons taught a week	Use of free periods (Admin, lesson other planning schools)	Level of Education completed e.g. SSSC, BA. (if graduate please state subject)	Teacher Training (Please give details: pre-service, in-service, duration, provider,	No additional lessons teaching (private etc) per week
1 Years								
2 Years								
3 Years								
4 Years								
5 Years								
6 Years								
7 Years								

⁴⁹ Assign each teacher a number and complete the row of information about each teacher.

8								
Years								
9								
Years								
10								
Years								
11								
Years								

Students

Years	2014/15	2015/16
Grade 1		
Grade 2		
Grade 3		
Grade 4		
Grade 5		
Grade 6		
Grade 7		
Grade 8		

7.5.5

Lesson Observation Record Form

PRIMARY EDUCATION RETENTION PROGRAMME – SUDAN

STUDY 3: Quality of the teaching/learning process and of classroom practice

Lesson Observation Record

Use this form for each lesson observed and refer to the research guidelines for the areas of enquiry, observation checklist.

Context:

Date	
School	
Mahalyia & State	
Teacher	
Subject & Grade	
Numbers present (Boys/Girls)	Boys: Girls:
Children per bench/desk.	
Physical description & plan of classroom & classroom capacity.	
Any visual or other learning aids?	
Condition of blackboard	
Estimated ratio of course books per student present for this lesson.	

The Lesson:

Use the time column to indicate when each stage or lesson activity starts. Record all teacher and student actions and interactions. Use the Observer notes column for recording your comments (e.g. T warm and helpful, T seems to focus on able student and ignore others, Ps appear to misunderstand instructions, does the teacher accommodate individual differences).

Time	Lesson steps & actions (by who?), boardwork	Observer notes

7.6 Annex 6 : Terms of Reference

Primary Education Retention Programme ~ Sudan

Research Study: Quality of the teaching/learning process and of classroom practice

Terms of Reference: international expert

1. Introduction

The Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) in Sudan addresses the challenge of children who drop out of school, in five states: Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan. It is financed by the European Union, through interventions by SOFRECO (Paris), Save the Children (Sweden) and UNICEF. Six research studies form part of the service contract of SOFRECO, which is responsible for their implementation.

2. Background

There has been increased participation in general education in Sudan since the peace agreements in 2005, with an average annual enrolment growth rate in primary education of around 6 per cent since 2005 across northern Sudan – an impressive quantitative achievement. However, there is still substantial student dropout at the primary level: only 54 per cent of those entering Grade 1 are still in school in Grade 8, indicating a high wastage rate through Grades 1 through 7. This is recognised as a major challenge that is not yet being seriously and sufficiently addressed.

There are massive disparities, with the range of the Gross Enrolment Rate varying enormously between Sudanese states for overall primary school participation. Location, vulnerability and gender affect access to schooling; disadvantaged groups are significantly under-represented; urban children are 17 per cent more likely than are rural children to be at school; boys are 8 per cent more likely to be participating than are girls.

The quality of learning is typically reported as unsatisfactory with low levels of literacy and numeracy: the five target states tend to perform more poorly than does the rest of Sudan. Possible causes include widespread malnutrition (food insecurity), poor school environment, inadequate instructional hours, and lack of textbooks. Teachers tend to have limited educational qualifications and in many cases no explicit teacher training; they apply traditional pedagogies, have low morale and receive ineffective supervision and leadership; their deployment is skewed towards urban areas.

3. Scope of the study

The six studies planned as part of PERP will give an excellent opportunity to understand in more depth how and why children drop out of school or are unable to access schooling. Dropout is a complex and multidimensional problem, and six studies give a chance to examine the issue from a range of perspectives. The insights that the studies provide will serve as input into planning, training and the management of schools and the education system. More immediately, the results will provide a stronger basis for the implementation of the PERP through SCS and UNICEF.

The aim of the study on the **Quality of the teaching/learning process and of classroom practice** is to understand what factors relating to the quality of primary education may be related to causes of children's dropout or retention. It is clear that the processes of teaching and learning in the classroom can be factors that motivate children to learn and thus to continue to participate in education. On the other hand, there may be factors which discourage or alienate children from school and education. The practice of teaching and learning in the classroom is thus a critical dimension of understanding dropout and retention – one that is poorly understood and little analysed. It is also a difficult area to research, owing the effect that any classroom observer has on practice, thus making it hard to collect data on habitual practice in the classroom.

The study will explore the following questions, among others:

- Are there factors in the teaching/learning process that cause children (girls, boys) to drop out?
- What approaches to teaching/learning do teachers use in the classroom?
- What kind of current practices promote active participation of children in learning?
- What do children feel about their experience in the classroom?
- What improvements would teachers like to see? What training might they need to improve their practice?
- Are there ways in which mutual respect, motivation and desire to learn can be better promoted?

The expert will develop the research instruments to address these and other dimensions of classroom practice in relation to dropout and retention.

4. Methodology

The expert will develop the detailed methodology and any necessary data collection instruments, in consultation with the national expert and the SOFRECO team leader.

The research will be conducted through classroom observation and interview. Observation should take place in at least 20 different classrooms, over at least eight schools – located in two states, in different contexts (urban, rural, small classes, large classes, ...). Permissions will be sought from headteachers and teachers to observe at least two hours of classroom practice in each case (the usual patterns of teachers and learners are likely to emerge over this period, despite the effect of the observer in the classroom). In addition, the study will include interviews with children, teachers and headteachers from the same schools/classes in order to obtain their perspectives on quality (trends, constraints) and on pedagogical processes.

The expert will develop guidelines for classroom observation and for each category of interviewees, and conduct interviews in Sudanese Arabic with the assistance of the national expert as necessary. For children, where the child's first language is other than Sudanese Arabic, every effort will be made to use that language in order to allow free expression by the child.

The study will take place in South Kordofan and Gedaref states. Travel to the states is dependent on obtaining the necessary travel permit.

5. Organization of the research

The research will be completed in three phases, as follows:

Phase 1: preparation (home-based and in Sudan)

- Development of the methodology and research instruments
- Consultation and guidance from a distance to engage the national expert in methodology development and finalization of the research instruments for the Sudanese context
- One day of orientation with the national expert in Khartoum immediately prior to fieldwork

Phase 2: fieldwork (in Sudan)

- Field investigation in various locations in South Kordofan and Gedaref States; the national expert may participate in the same locations or independently at other locations in the states.

Phase 3: analysis and writing (home-based)

- Analysis of the findings of the fieldwork
- Drafting of the study
- Submission of the draft to SOFRECO for comment
- Amendment and finalization of the study based on comments received

6. Relationships and reporting

The expert will carry out the study under the supervision of the SOFRECO Team Leader and the Project Director. S/he will further

- Collaborate closely with a national colleague in carrying out the study, from finalization of the research instruments to the editing of the final study. This relationship will be one of mutual support, as well as mentoring in the processes of the research.
- Collaborate with and be supported by the relevant PERP State Coordinator(s) and, as possible, with the implementing agency in each state (SCS or UNICEF).

7. Deliverables

The deliverable will be a study describing and analyzing the data collected on the quality of the teaching/learning process and of classroom practice, with final recommendations, based on conclusions from the data, on how to improve

classroom practice for greater retention of children in school. It is expected that the study will not exceed 30 pages.

The international expert will write the study in English, and the national expert will be responsible for producing an Arabic version.

The draft deliverables will be submitted in English to the SOFRECO Team Leader and Project Director for possible comment before production of the final version

7. Requirements

- A masters-level degree or higher in education or the social sciences
- At least ten years of general professional experience
- At least seven years of educational experience as a researcher, teacher or other capacity
- Attested knowledge of pedagogical issues
- Participation in at least two studies relating to pedagogy and classroom practice
- Excellent writing skills in English
- Arabic competence an advantage

8. Schedule and timing

The research study will take 24 days, distributed as follows:

- 2 days: methodology and instrument preparation, home-based
- 3 days: finalization of instruments, one-day orientation with national expert, and obtaining travel permit, in Khartoum
- 12 days: fieldwork in two states
- 6 days: writing the draft deliverables
- 1 day: amendment/final editing of the deliverables, after comment by SOFRECO.

The 24 days of research should take place between 15 January and 31 March 2015.

V. Study 4 : community engagement in Education

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BERP	Basic Education Recovery Project
EC	Education Council
ECP	Education Council Policy
EU	European Union
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
PERP	Primary Education Retention Program
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SDG	Sudanese Pound
SDP	School development Plan
SMoE	State Ministry of Education
ToR	Terms of Reference

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- Dr Clinton Robinson, PERP Team Leader, for his technical input into the research process and quality control of the outputs;
- All headteachers of the schools visited for facilitating and hosting the research team and all Education Council members and other community members interviewed for their time but especially for their opinions and perceptions with regard to community engagements in community, the subject of this study.

Research Team

Dr Geert EDELENBOSCH, International Expert and Lead Researcher

Dr Mohamed Nur, National Expert and Researcher

INTRODUCTION

The Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) in Sudan addresses the challenge of the high dropout rate of children in five states: Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan. The programme is financed by the European Union and implemented through interventions by SOFRECO (Paris), Save the Children (Sweden) and UNICEF. Six research studies on promoting the retention of children in school and reducing dropout form part of the service contract of SOFRECO, which is responsible for their implementation. This report is the fourth research study and pertains to **Community engagement in education**, especially its engagement with respect to retention of children and reduction of the drop-out rate.

Policies to improve school attendance and reduce dropout are critical if Universal Primary Education (UPE) is to be achieved. According to recent evidence⁵⁰ more children are entering primary school in Sudan than ever before, but dropout rates are high. Low completion rates of primary school (Basic Schools) indicate a high wastage through Grades 1 through 7. On average 54 per cent of those entering Grade 1 are still in school in Grade 8, although the percentage varies substantially between and within urban and rural areas, and from school to school.

As a result of the drop out and non-completion of primary school many children are leaving schooling in Sudan without acquiring the most basic skills. Their brief schooling experience frequently consists of limited learning opportunities in overcrowded classrooms, especially in the lower grades, and with insufficient learning materials. Failure to complete the basic cycle of primary school, Grades 1 to 8, not only limits the future opportunities of these children but also represents a significant drain on the limited resources that Sudan spends on the provision of primary education.

The six studies will provide a chance to better examine the problem and obtain information on stakeholders' perspectives and insights that will serve as input into planning, training and the management of schools and the education system as a whole. This research study, on **community engagement in education**, is to better understand the role of the wider community, in which the school is located, in promoting the retention of children in school and reducing dropout. Research in a

⁵⁰ See Annex 1: Terms of Reference (ToR)

variety of contexts has shown that the engagement of community members in the life and governance of a school can significantly improve performance and morale. Where the school becomes a focus of community life, with a commitment to provide quality learning opportunities for the community's children, the morale of administrative staff and teachers is known to show improvement, with more consistent presence by teachers and higher motivation and subsequently better performance on the part of children.

The study was carried out between October and December 2015, with fieldwork in Kassala State and Gedaref State taking place from 3rd November to 3rd December 2015. The research methodology and instruments were validated during a workshop on the 9th of November at the start of the fieldwork which was attended by staff of the Sudanese Federal Ministry of Education, the research team and representatives of the PERP project.⁵¹

The report starts with a short chapter introducing the "*Research Approach and Methodology*" and is followed by Chapter Two describing the *Policy framework supporting community engagement at schools*. The actual findings from the fieldwork are described in Chapter Three: *From policy to practice: existing engagement and functioning of communities' Education Councils* unfolding the different areas of engagement and practices of community support. This chapter is followed by Chapter Four: "*Main issues affecting implementation of policy*". Chapter Five gives an overview of the *main findings and conclusions*. The last chapter, Chapter Six gives a number of possible *recommendations* for improving the functioning of the school based Education Councils.

⁵¹ See Annex 2: List of people met

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research questions

The eight main research questions as mentioned in the ToR are:

1	What kinds of governance structures exist for community engagement in schools?
2	In what areas does the community engage?
3	How can community engagement be increased?
4	What kinds of structures would work best?
5	What roles should the community have with regard to education?
6	What role does the community play in encouraging families to send their children to school?
7	How can accountability to the community be strengthened?
8	What kind of support can communities give to vulnerable children and their families?

These questions steered the list of more specific questions taken up in research instruments, such as semi-structured questionnaires.⁵²

Methodology

Based on the above research questions a methodology and research instruments and associated record sheets were developed to address the questions and other dimensions of the study. The methodology consisted of:

- interviews (group discussions) with staff of Ministry of State Education
- focus group discussions with members of the education council
- Interviews with community leaders (imam, village/community leader, etc.)
- interviews with Headteachers
- interviews with parents

In addition and where opportunities arose other community informants were interviewed.

Prior to the start of the field study information was collected on the existing national and the state school policy with regard to governance structures and support to

⁵² See Annex 3: Research Instruments

communities, for promoting the enrolment and retention of children in school and reducing dropout of primary school students (*research question one*) and information on context characteristics of the communities visited.

Information was collected mostly by using semi-structured questionnaires and checklists. For the purpose of this study the two researchers accompanied by a translator visited, during a two weeks period twelve communities, four rural, four semi rural and four urban communities. The selection of the communities was done by the State government and in close collaboration with the PERP state coordinators of Kassala and Gedaref, taking into account the research team request to select a good mix of communities with positive experience of effective community school support and communities with less experience of effective school support.

The following activities took place in each of the selected communities.⁵³

- Collection of information and data on the communities visited
- Focus group discussions with the members of the education council, the number of members varied from 5 to 14.
- Interview with headteacher
- Site visits to schools to observe the school environment and inputs of the Education Council and study council records: minutes of meetings, resources and expense, attendance records, etc.
- Depending on their availability interviews were hold with:
 - Community leaders such as imams, tribal elders etc.
 - Mothers of students

The interview questions and observations focused on six main topics derived from the research questions:

1. Community engagement policy and arrangements
2. Actual and desired community engagement and specific contributions
3. Community engagement by thematic area - driving and undermining factors
4. Existing support to students and specifically to vulnerable students, specific attention to girls
5. Future perspectives, including networking with other organizations, schools , linkages with SMOE
6. Resources available at community level as compared to required resources (including human capacity, financial)

The above mentioned topics were approached from different directions: (i) the specific context, (ii) the reality of community engagement on the ground and (iii) the constraints and possible solutions

Research Instruments

To facilitate the interviews different questionnaires with mostly semi open questions structured around a set of carefully predetermined topics and an observation sheet

The main topics of these questionnaires were related to the community support to the school on:

- School management
- School development
- Governance
- Networking and Linkages
- Resources
- Support to students

⁵³ See Annex 7: Overview communities visited

were developed for the main stakeholder target groups.

A questionnaire in support of the interview of staff of the SMOE was developed to better understand the government's policy on community support to education and more in particular to basic (primary) schools, their understanding of their role, responsibility and support to Education councils and their involvement on the ground.

The remaining four questionnaires had semi open questions and were meant to facilitate especially the understanding by the Education Council members and the head teacher and if available other members of the community like parents and religious leaders, of the role of the community to support education, the actual support and the potential support of the community to basic schools.

Constraints

The main constraint was a delay of four days in the start of the field work as it took close to two weeks to obtain a travel permit for the International consultant. Except for this unforeseen delay there were no further delays.

1 POLICY FRAMEWORK SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

1.1 Administrative Structures

The State Ministries of Education (SMoE) are responsible for planning and implementing national education policies and strategies at state level, including developing financing plans and budgets from State Government finances. In addition, SMoEs are required to coordinate the work of Directorates of Education at the locality level. They have the overall responsibility for secondary education, facilities planning and construction, textbook procurement and distribution, and the certification of private schools. The State Councils for Planning Education advise the SMoE on implementation at the state level.

Directorates of Education at Locality level are responsible for managing pre-school and basic education, including the management of the annual state budget allocations. They administer teacher salary payments, teacher recruitment and the procurement of school furniture and equipment. Local Education Councils work with local communities in mobilizing support for school operations, however the Education Councils at locality level have not started to function yet.

Administrative Units are, in theory, responsible for providing technical support to schools (e.g. development planning, performance monitoring and inspection/supervision services), together with broad community governance/accountability responsibilities. In several of the localities visited, there were no Administration Units; in other localities visited it was reported that they played only minor technical roles in relation to the basic schools or as one member stated: "The Administrated Units are only existing on paper".

1.2 From PTA to Education Council

In 1992 the government of Sudan approved the so-called Parent Teacher Association (PTA) regulation which aimed at strengthening the relation between school, families and society and defined the rights and duties of the PTA. After the reorganization of

the country in 1994 into 26 states (wilayaat) each state became responsible for the execution of the functions of the education system. The Federal Ministry of Education remained responsible for (i) educational research, (ii) curriculum development, (iii) monitoring of the quality of instruction and learning and (iv) for the coordination between the states.

Thereafter several changes were introduced. A major development was the Education Act (2001) which specifies the functions of the federal and the state ministries of education.⁵⁴ The Act embodies a free and compulsory primary education policy and makes it mandatory for government and private schools to implement the national curriculum. The Education Act is aiming at achieving more equity, at improving the status of teachers within an all-graduate teaching force, and encourages the community to contribute to the expansion of education through private schools.⁵⁵

The Education Policy of both Kassala Gedaref SMOE, states that the Education Council is composed of parents, teachers and school friends. This definition derived from (article 28, education planning act of 2003). This indicates that the PTA regulation is incorporated in the Education Council.

The "Regulation for Education Councils" was developed by the Federal Ministry of Education and was enacted in 2013. This national policy document describes the existing concept of community participation that is organized around education councils, previously called PTAs. According to the new law, the Educational Councils function at three levels:

- School level council.
- Locality level council.
- State level council.

The members of the education council should be elected at the start of school year by the general assembly which is formed from the student's parents. The other responsibilities of the general assemble are:

- Election of the chairperson (annually)
- Discuss and endorse the main policies of Education Council
- Discuss and endorse the previous year reports of Education Council work
- Discuss and endorse the previous year financial accounts and reports of Education Council
- Set the amount of parents contributions for school development taking into consideration the social and economic status of parents

The members of the locality council should be elected by the schools councils where by the members of the state council should be elected by the localities councils.

All schools have established an Education Council. However, at Locality and at State level, official Education Councils have not been established yet. At the SMOE in Gedaref it was mentioned that the Education Council at locality levels will be established in December 2015. Thereafter a state level Education Council will be established.

⁵⁴ Education Council Policy of Kassala SMOE, issued in 2010 and the Education Council Policy of Gedaref issued in 2003 by SMOE

⁵⁵ The development of the 'new' curriculum, which is especially emphasizing cultural relevance and holistic development is currently piloted.

1.3 Aims and responsibilities of the Education Council at school level

The overall aim of the Education Council is to strengthen the role of communities in the education sector and create a school environment that is conducive for children to receive a good education.

The more specific tasks of the Education council are to:

- Approve and endorse of the school's projects within the school's annual plan;
- Communication, coordination and monitoring plus fund raising;
- Activate and sponsoring the annual education day;
- Approve the school's annual budget; and to
- Produce and inform the financial decision regarding the administration and financing of the council.

As compared to the previous PTA's the main responsibilities of the education council at school level have expanded from school supervision, maintenance of schools and housing of teachers to providing greater support in the following areas:

- provision of building material for construction;
- rehabilitation and/or maintaining classrooms;
- provision of housing for teachers; and
- fundraising for provision of school supplies and for supporting teachers.

The education council at school level consists of 13 members, ten members to represent the parents and three members, two teachers and the head teachers, to represent the school. The head teacher is the secretary of the council. Officially the council should meet once every two months and if there is an urgent issue the chairperson will call for extra ordinary meeting.

The education policy of Kassala State is more specific. The main objectives of the Kassala State policy are to support :

- the education of a generation which is strong, loyal, and committed to its religion and responsive to his country;
- the education of children on the basis of its religious beliefs, values, and help them to obtain deeply rooted religious, social, and behavioural personality;
- the mobilization of public and community support, effort and resources to further develop the education sector
- the children needs and preferences and do all the possible to meet them by providing opportunities for children to express their skills, capabilities, experiences and knowledge; and
- the strengthening of the cooperative and collaborative relations between the community and school, and push it towards guaranteeing the feeling of faith and responsibility and public interests priorities



No specific reference is made to the responsibility of the council and/or the wider community in relation to enrolment/retention of students or in relation to their responsibilities in relation to absenteeism and drop-outs of students. The same applies to the absence of specific responsibilities and/or task of the school council and the wider community to support to girls' education.

In general the existing policy provides a framework for the work of the education council, including the regulations. The policy however does not provide guidelines for the practical implementation of the policy at school level.

1.4 Implementation of the School Development Plan

In addition to the financing of the operational cost of the school the school education council is responsible for the financing of the School Development Plan (SDP). At the start of the school year the education council, in close collaboration with the head teacher(s) of the school, has to develop a SDP. Thereafter and during the school year the council has to support the school with the implementation of the school development plan. Most schools have developed such a school development plan however councils reported to have difficulties to implement the SDP. The main challenge is to finance the implementation of the development plans.

The policy related to the mobilization of funds is not clear or at least quite ambiguous. On the one hand the school is not allowed to solicit for money from the parents, however on the other hand the school has to solve its own (financial) problems. So education is free and for all but in practice parents are requested by the Education Council to finance the needs of the school. The SMoE facilitates the schools by supporting them with teacher salaries and textbooks but there are no means provided to finance the operational cost like the cost for water (donkey carts, electricity, funds for maintenance are very limited let alone the financing of new classrooms). As has been explained in the above the locality is directly linked to schools but their involvement at school level is limited.⁵⁶

The Education Council has the possibility to approach parents for financing the implementation of the SDP and when unexpected needs are arising. They mostly do this by asking them for a monthly contribution to cover the school costs for maintenance, school supplies and teacher support. This has led to a controversy at certain schools where parents refer to the policy of free education and refuse to pay a contribution to the Education Council. This situation has manifested itself in large differences in the generation of resources by the councils whereas some communities refuse to pay and other communities are able to collect considerable monthly resources for covering the cost of the developmental and other school cost.

Most education council lack the ability but especially the experience to generate resources. For most councils the collection of parent contribution is the only strategy to generate resources to cover for the operational and development cost of the school. A considerable number of parents were reported not to have the means to contribute to the council. As a result the money collected by most councils is very limited. Only few councils manage to generate "sufficient" resources for contributing to the educational development of the school. Study findings indicate that this depends not

⁵⁶ The net starting salary for the basic education teacher varies from 850 SDG, starting salary of a qualified teacher to 1800 SDG of a senior teacher

only on the financial situation of the parents but also on the resourcefulness of the head teacher and the council. The variation of parents contribution and other support turns out to be a main challenge.

2 FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: EXISTING ENGAGEMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF COMMUNITIES' EDUCATION COUNCILS

The findings presented in this chapter are based on a field visit to twelve communities where focus group discussions were organized with members of Education Councils making use of a semi-structured questionnaire that was prepared in advance in consultation with the concerned authorities. The semi-structured questionnaires allowed the



participants to answer questions thoughtfully in their own words and add explanations' to their answers during the interviews. The information obtained from the focus groups discussions was supplemented and to a certain extent cross-checked through interviews of head teachers for all the schools visited. In addition to this information-gathering, mothers, religious and village leaders were interviewed. In all cases semi-open questionnaires were used. Based on the information collected in the twelve communities the following findings on practices and issues in the engagement and functioning of communities' Education Councils arises.

2.1 General functioning of Education Councils

A first finding is varying and overall limited attendance of the Education Council members at monthly council meetings. The attendance of council member at the

official council meetings varies considerably and so does the reported motivation of council members.

Participation of the Education Council members: all headteachers interviewed mentioned that they, as secretary of the council, organized the monthly council meetings. In all cases the headteacher writes the agenda of the meeting, mostly in collaboration and dialogue with the chairperson of the council. In addition to the monthly meetings the chair of the council and the headteacher frequently meet at school to discuss small matters if needed. In addition to this it is reported common practice at most schools to organize ad-hoc meetings for the "core members" of the council during school hours. An unforeseen council meeting is usually initiated by the headteacher and seldom at the request of the chair or one of the members. The official council meetings are always organized after school hours in the late afternoon and before sunset.

The number of members of an Education Council of the schools visited varies from 7 to 24 members. At three schools the attendance was very satisfactory with a large majority of the members participating. At other schools the participation was limited to 7-8 and sometimes to only 5 people. In two cases the council never met as a council. Instead ad-hoc meetings were organized by the headteacher with 2 active members.

The work of the councils was reported to be mostly done by a few active parents. The absence of council members during meetings was reported as undermining the organization of activities as the bulk of the work is shouldered by only a few people. A number of reasons were given for the limited attendance of certain councils: (i) members have been proposed by other community members are not motivated, (ii) members do work (and partially live) outside the community, (iii) members have limited skills to contribute. Sometimes the members of the council financially support the work of the council, however this practice is not possible for all members and may lead to their absence.

Sometimes the members of the council do not have children enrolled at school, they are "friends" of the school – community leaders or members of established families or parents of children who graduated from the school. They sometimes provide additional support to the school from their own means. It is not possible for all members of the council to support the school financially. It was reported that some members were proposed by other members in the Education Council reportedly. Due to group pressure it is difficult for them to refuse, however some feel their membership as a burden. They are or feel restricted in their contribution, are not very motivated and try to escape from the demanding responsibility. At the same time there are also members who fully accept their responsibility and who are very committed to work for education development.

From studying the school performance records made during the field trips it was noted that the participation level of council members is the largest at schools with high performance e.g. high retention and a high pass rate at Grade 8 exams. It seems that well organized schools are more successful and that parents are more motivated to support successful schools.

2.2 Engagement of communities in mobilizing resources

Communities' Education Councils are to supplement funding of the government at Federal and state level by generating resources from parents, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other national or international agencies and private sector or individuals.

From the interviews it became clear that in the 12 schools visited in Kassala and Gedaref State, the Federal Government is responsible for the curriculum, the development of textbook and inspection. The State Government through the Ministry of Education at State level (SMoE) recruits and pays the teachers, distributes the textbooks and provides, sometimes and incidentally, other support to schools. In addition, the SMoE administration at locality level provides subsidy in cash and sometimes in kind.

Support by parents: with the exception of one school, all Education Council request parents to make a monthly contribution. The amount of money councils are asking varies from SDG 1 to 10 a month. One council asked for an annual contribution which could be paid in instalments if needed. All councils have introduced a policy to support parents with many children enrolled at school. Parents only had to pay for the first two children. All councils also have a policy to exempt very poor parents from paying the school contribution. The number of children that were exempted due to poverty varied considerably from school to school. In one school visited only five children were exempted, while in another school more than 100 children were exempted. Council members reported that "It was not difficult for the council to identify needy cases since in the community everybody knows each other and for a very long time. It was difficult to keep things secret".

If parents failed to pay the contribution they were given a reminder through their children. If parents thereafter failed to pay at the end of the month there was nothing the school could do. They were just hoping to receive the school contribution for the next month.

Most schools asked the parents to pay an admission fee for the enrolment of students in Grade 1. This was a one-time contribution, which varied from 100 to 200 SDG per child. Like the parent contribution, children of very poor parents, including orphans, were exempted from paying the fee.⁵⁷

Support by charity organizations, private sector and individuals: There are a number of institutions and (national) charity organizations that support schools on an annual basis for the enrolment of vulnerable children. Most schools were supported by the Zakat Chamber. At the start of the school year the council submits the request to the Chamber for the support of vulnerable children and within weeks the Chamber visits the school to confirm the need. Within weeks they provide school uniforms and/or school bags with basic school supplies.

Some councils did successfully approach small business men in the city centre for a specific reason, e.g. to contribute to the boundary wall or an additional classroom.

In addition to international donors' support especially for school construction and school renovation, there are a few reported large private companies like banks,

⁵⁷ The way the parent contributions are used is explained below

industries and other companies that provide support to individual schools. They have what is called “corporate social responsibility” departments. Those departments are tasked with reinvesting a small part of the company’s profits in social projects to support local communities. However none of the schools visited managed to receive funding from these private companies. The councils concerned mentioned that this was especially due to their limited skills and in particular the skill to write a proposal and to document the request.

Most schools had experiences with the support by individuals from the community in various ways: poor children were sometimes supported with school uniforms or school supplies, others received food, children were allowed to use the toilet of the "neighbours" and sometimes a discount was given on the cost for school (teacher) supplies and maintenance activities if not provided for free. This support was often provided at the initiative of the community member.

Support in kind: Besides the parents’ contribution in cash the school was supported by individual parents in kind. The support in kind varied considerably. Some parents provided the school with a sack of *durra*, others donated the use of the milk of one cow to be used by the teachers or supported the education of a poor child with school supplies or accommodated teachers during the week. In addition and although not widespread, there were fathers who provided daily labor during the construction of a boundary wall or helped cleaning the school compound or mothers who supported the teachers with the surveillance of students during the break. A few cases were reported that the council organized an event to generate resources or to jointly work on the school compound, e.g. a semi permanent boundary wall on the development of a small garden. Though many examples were given by the headteacher about the support given by (individual) parents in kind, this was not always registered by the council or teachers as support. As a result the support provided by individuals in kind was not always adequately acknowledged by the school and council. As many rural communities were reported to barely have cash, opportunities for support in kind may be underutilized.

2.3 Good practices of resource mobilization by Education Councils:

During the field visits and meetings with the staff of the State Ministry of Education in Kassala and El Gedaref various examples of resource mobilization were given:

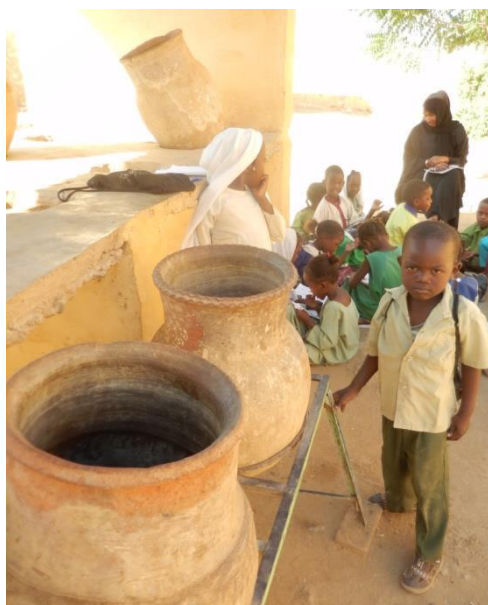
Resource mobilization within the community

- Donations by graduates of the school e.g. when the council approached a graduate student who is now a medical doctor in one of the Gulf States or a graduate who is now a businessman;
- Special donations at the request of the council from community members/parents in kind to support certain needs, e. g., the donation of plants, first aid kit, metal sheets;
- Small donations by parents in cash to finance certain events and/or celebrations;
- Donations in kind collected during a ceremony after the harvest season;

- The rent of shops constructed by the council on the premises of the school (up to 1250 SDG a month); and
- Small donations in kind e.g. the use of the milk of one cow or a bag of durra to be used for the breakfast of the teachers instead of parent contribution.

Resource mobilization outside the community

- Annual support of uniforms by the local Zakat Chamber;
- Donations by small businesses in the city centre;
- Friendship relation with similar school in another country e.g. the School of the Blind in Gedaref with a Dutch school in Eindhoven and a school in one of the Gulf states;
- Friendship relation with a foundation or society in another country, e.g. the relation of the Amersfoort school with the Rotary Club in Amersfoort, Netherlands; and
- Donations by banks, industries and other companies.



2.4 Engagement of communities in support of school operation and development

The support of the Education Councils was found to vary depending upon the extent to which the councils were prepared to take up responsibility and their resourcefulness but overall concentrated on support for the running of the school and its physical infrastructure and to a lesser extent for the more qualitative development of the school.

Support to the operation of the school: From the interviews with the members of the school councils it became clear that most councils have a few active members who visit the school almost daily. Overall however, the skills of the members of the Education Councils to help conceptualize and plan an effective school development plan, and their ability to handle finance, budgeting and implementation tend to be limited. Hence the Education Council members generally perceive their main responsibility and task to be to collect the parents' contributions.

The monthly parent contribution was mainly used for covering the daily operational cost, the basic cost for electricity, if available, the cost of water (most schools do not have (enough) access to water), for the basic school supplies and for paying the cost of the teacher breakfast. The mobilization of additional resources such as for covering the monthly salary of volunteer teachers⁵⁸ (100 to 150 SDG) for more sophisticated teaching and learning aids and for improvement, rehabilitation, or construction of additional school buildings like classrooms or fencing was limited. In many cases they were involved in securing the petty cash to pay for it. In few cases the council supported the headteacher with solving administrative issues such as contacting the SMoE to inquire about the arrival of textbooks..

⁵⁸ Volunteer teachers are young unemployed teachers who wish to gain experience.

Support to enrolment of vulnerable children: To increase the enrolment of all children the government developed a policy to make primary school free of charge. So parents do not have to pay school fees for enrolling their children. Instead most Education Councils ask the parents for a contribution to pay for the running cost of the school. This contribution is not compulsory. Parents of all children are approached to pay the contribution. However and without exception all schools visited had a special policy in support of the enrolment of vulnerable children. To facilitate the enrolment of children from very poor parents and orphans, mostly children without a father, these children were exempted from paying the parent contribution and from paying an administrative entrance fee when admitted to Grade 1. In addition most schools had established a working relation with the Zakat Chamber to supply the most needy children with school uniforms. A few schools supported the very poor children with basic school supplies funded by various means. These efforts were reported to have had a positive effect on the prevention of dropout from school.

Support to maintenance: The council for most schools takes responsibility for minor repairs like improving closure of doors and windows, minor leakages of roofs, painting the blackboards and the repair of school furniture or other maintenance jobs that do not require high technical expertise. A few schools have managed to motivate a (young) member within the community they can contact when maintenance needs have arisen.

Support to rehabilitation: The government does not provide sufficient funds to undertake required major maintenance of schools. In the two states visited there were two projects active with the rehabilitation of schools, compound and fences or boundary walls.⁵⁹ Some schools visited had benefited from these projects. However when asked, none of the Education Councils was involved in the project implementation by the contractor and the use of labour from the community was very limited.

Support to construction: Except for one school, which had the highest dropout rate, the number of children was excessive. Classes with more than 80 children were rather the rule. The highest number of children were enrolled in Grades 1 and 2, in the critical early grades of schooling. This partly explains the dropping out of children as from Grade 2. The problem of overcrowded classrooms was acknowledged by the members of the council as one of the main problems of the schools. The construction of a new classroom topped the list of many SDP activities, however due to the high cost and the limited funds of the school council, this was not possible from community resources. At some schools visited during the field trips new classrooms were recently constructed with the support of school grants of the WB funded BERP project or in the past by another international donor.

Though every community has a substantial number of skilled and semi-skilled laborers who work in the construction sector, it had not been possible for councils to motivate these community members to support the school with their free labour. They had no time to undertake such a large project. Possibly explained by the focus of donors on permanent structures, there is little interest in creating semi-permanent structures.

One school, the school of the case study, did not want to wait for donor support in light of the very eminent situation in Grade 1,. They organized fund-raising for the development of a classroom made of local materials. The headteacher and the members of the council found that in support of the quality of education it was more

⁵⁹ The rehabilitation of the schools was supported by World Bank and UNICEF.

important to split the very large Grade 1 class into two smaller classes, one with a permanent class room and one in a classroom made of local materials. They hoped that later the school would be extended with permanent classrooms. Their focus was and remained on quality of education.

Organization of events: A few days before the start of the school year most schools supported by the Education Council organize a "School enrolment campaign" to alert the parents that the school year will start and that new students can be enrolled. The event is mostly organized jointly by the Education Council and the teachers by putting up posters and banners at markets and other public places, such as mosques and, when available, at community centers alerting the public about the importance of enrolling all children in a timely manner. In addition most schools organize a public event and/or a ceremony for welcoming the newly enrolled children at the beginning of the school year. This event sometimes takes place at the same time as the general assembly of parents.

The Educational Council Regulation requires Educational Councils to organize a general assembly at least once a year. The general assembly normally starts with a report on the activities of the previous year and a presentation of the plan for the new school year, the so-called School Development Plan (SDP). This plan is based upon the earlier identified needs of the school. In general, the SDP consists of an operational plan for the day-to-day maintenance of the school and a separate project development plan for supporting school projects that require major funding. According to the policy, these plans are to be presented by the council to the community, discussed and approved during the general assembly at the beginning of the year. This ensures that the Educational Council and the community both agree on the plan. In addition to this plan some Education Councils sometimes support the financing of certain activities organized by so-called school societies.⁶⁰

Further contact with parents: Further contacts are limited. For example Education Councils do not organize "contact meetings" with the parents to discuss the implementation of the school development plans, or financial or unforeseen issues.

At the request of the headteacher or other teachers, members of the council are sometimes asked to visit the parents of children that are increasingly absent or who fail to come to school on time due to other engagements like fetching water, attending other forms of education and house chores, prior to the start of the basic school. With a view to avoiding a very formal approach, the father of the child is often approached by a member of the council when the opportunity arises, e. g. after visiting the mosque or in the market area.

Several Education Councils organize school visits for parents and other community members to discuss or to explain matters when need arises. This is a very successful strategy for establishing trust between the Education Council and the community, and for ensuring transparency in the management of community donations. This transparency creates more trust between the Education Council and the community and encourages parents and other community members to continue supporting the school.

⁶⁰ Every school has established a number of societies that organize co-curricular activities for students. There are societies for (i) Health, (ii) Sport, (iii) Religion, (iv) Culture, (v) Environment and Hygiene, (vi) Science and (vii) Housekeeping. Every society operates under the responsibility of teachers. Some schools have many and very active societies, other schools have few and less active societies.

2.5 Engagement of communities in support of Educational Performance

From the meetings with the Education Councils it became clear that all councils are concerned about the quality of education. During meetings they share their concerns with the headteachers and sometimes they recommend no-cost or low-cost changes; however the actual support to educational performance is limited due to lack of resources.

Support to teacher performance: At some schools it was mentioned that the education council, at the request of parents, discussed the performance of certain teachers with the headteachers, who technically monitors the performance of the school staff. Thereafter the matter was addressed satisfactorily. It was also reported that councils express interest in putting the most skilled and well experienced teachers in Grade 8. This measure is expected to help to better prepare the students for their final exam. The council of the Wad El-Koubier Basic School for girls requested the headteacher to provide additional classes in English Language from Grade 4 and beyond. Other examples of engagement of councils with the teacher performance are (i) intervention in cases of transfer of teachers at a critical time during the calendar year, (ii) the appointment of a certain headteacher at the school in Gedaref State at the request of parents and the Education Council, (iii) critical comments when teachers of one school married each other. The expected positive aspect of the latter is stability of school staff, but the council thought there was also a risk when private events prevented them from travelling to school. The role of the Council in monitoring the teacher's presence is limited because the Education Council does not mention this responsibility and it is not permitted to go beyond this mandate. It is felt that the monitoring of the teacher's performance is highly technical and one of the administrative responsibilities of the headteacher. However when an issue related to teacher's performance arises the Council may respond in such case by discussing the matter with the head teacher with the request to intervene if need arises.

Support to teachers and voluntary teachers: Some councils reported to have contributed to the improved seating (chair and desk) of the teacher to facilitate their work; other councils had contributed more to teachers through a small transport allowance or through renovating the old teachers' dormitory to temporarily host teachers who during the rainy season cannot commute daily from home to school (Kassala State). In addition most councils supported the teachers with a daily breakfast or when this was financially not possible, with tea and coffee.

Support to student's performance: One of the communities took the initiative to raise awareness among parents and the local community about the importance of continuing education after basic school through encouraging and supporting all students whom managed to succeed in the Grade 8 exam. At the request of the council, another school in Gedaref State was divided in two semi-autonomous schools: one school headed by a headteacher for Grades 1 to 4 and one school for Grades 5-8 headed by another headteacher. Both schools had their own building but were sharing the large compound. This way it was possible for the each school to better focus on the different educational requirements of the two groups of students, e.g. on the attention of the school to student needs, their specific needs and interest during the closing ceremonies and the improved monitoring of results.

Large classes are known not only to be difficult for teachers to manage but also to lead to the adoption of less effective methods of teaching, and limited individual attention and guidance of students. Although most headteachers interviewed confirmed the effect of large classes especially on the learning of younger children, schools with a surplus of teachers did not make an effort to split the school into two shifts: one in the morning for the young children and one in the afternoon for the eldest children or in the use of two teachers for the lower grades.

Support to learning and play materials: In general the Education Councils paid little attention to the improvement of learning and play materials. Only few councils reported to have managed to mobilize parents for supporting the school with the development of learning and play materials, or for ensuring a safe and clean school environment. Whereas the school yards offered enough space for putting up sport and/or play facilities, only a few schools developed a nice school garden and/or had a swing.

Most schools reported that their support to development and/or purchase of learning materials was limited to the purchase of display paper for the development of charts by the teachers. None of the schools had a library for children. This was considered important but for lack of funds it did not appear on the SDP. Playing was taken care of by one of the societies responsible for organizing co-curricular activities. One school in Gedaref State had employed a specialized teacher for supervising and taking care of co-curricular activities to support the interest of students to become creative. As a result the entire school population was involved in one or more of the many theater, dance, music and other activities which has not only motivated the entire school community significantly but which also had motivated neighboring community schools to follow these activities sessions. For the SMOE, this school is now treated as a kind of model school which results in many visitors.

Some schools did have sports equipment which was distributed by the administration of the locality, however it did not become clear what the policy of the locality was on this. In addition to support provided by the locality, PERP through UNICEF has provided footballs, sports outfits, nets, and skipping ropes to the schools involved in the PERP project.

2.6 Engagements of communities in support of access, enrolment and retention.

Absenteeism and retention

The incidence of children who came too late, did not return to school after the breakfast break, or were unauthorizedly absent varied between the schools visited. In some very poorly equipped schools the absenteeism rate was very high and, according to the council and the headteacher, this was due to the lack of interest of the community in education. Observed poor management practices were also likely to explain this low performance. At one school visited In Gedaref State absenteeism was not an issue. At this school it was reported that there had never

Good follow up action by member council related to school attendance

At the request of the headteacher, a member of the Education Council was asked to check the reason for the long absence of a certain student. The member went to the house of the family of the boy and discussed the matter with them. They told him that the student went every morning to school and when they checked his exercise books they observed that they were up-to-date. This was very strange because the teacher confirmed again that he did no longer attend the class. The member returned to the boy's house and then they discovered that the exercises were never marked by the teacher and found out that the boy copied all exercises from his friend's exercise books after school was finished.

been an incident of unauthorized absenteeism. All children loved to go to school and their parents supported the children to go to school. Although some children had to walk for a long time – some had to walk more than 30 minutes to reach school – they came on time, and a considerable number of students stayed on the school compound after school was finished. This was explained and confirmed during the school visit by the high level of motivation of children which was the result of the child-friendly approach of the teachers and excellent academic results.⁶¹

Strategies for reducing absenteeism: Most schools had a strategy for curbing absenteeism. At every school visited, the teacher recorded daily the students that were absent. If the school identified a pattern for absenteeism the parents were contacted by the teachers through a note requesting them to come to school. Some schools had developed a record with mobile telephone numbers and parents were contacted by mobile. All HT's mentioned that when teachers failed to contact parents or when the absenteeism continued, an active member of the council was asked to contact the parents, mostly the father. This was confirmed by the members of the council who indicated that there are ample opportunities for them to meet the father (mosque, market, along the road). It was observed that a successful implementation of a strategy to limit absenteeism to the acceptable minimum entirely depends on the systematic and consequent implementation of the strategy. Some HT's were on top of the problem by having a specific notebook to keep track of those students who were frequently absent, came too late, left school too early or did not come to school for 10 days. In such cases, parents were contacted. This systematic approach had a positive impact on the overall attendance, however it did not entirely solve the problem of unauthorized absenteeism and subsequent dropout. In a few schools absenteeism remained a major problem. It was difficult to assess if this was a result of the lack of awareness among parents about the importance of education or if this was the result of weak school leadership and subsequently the weak follow-up by teachers and members of the Education Council to discuss attendance-related issues with parents.

⁶¹ See Annex 6: Case study

Timely intervention: As has been stated by different studies, the best way to deal with absenteeism is the timely intervention by the school community: teachers and members of the Education Council. This strategy is found to have a direct and positive effect on the incidence of absenteeism and the subsequent dropping out of a student. It was often mentioned by the headteacher that prevention is more effective than visiting parents after the child dropped out. From the field studies it became clear that it is important for teachers to know the community. In the rural areas where the teachers often do not live in the village and commute, this is not always possible and as a result it is more difficult to contact parents. At these schools it is even more important for the school, headteacher and teachers, to collaborate very closely with members of the Education Council and to partially delegate the task to reduce absenteeism and dropout to the members of the council. At one school a special meeting was organized by council members for the teachers to share with them the background of the children. This was a good strategy for more effectively utilizing the knowledge and experience of the council about the locally accepted practices and relations to better understand the possible background of absenteeism.

Specific attention to the education of girls: Some headteachers reported that harmful traditional practices such as early marriage were still practiced in the communities. Over the past ten years the incidence of early marriage however was reduced considerably.

Although the teachers are aware of the negative effects on girls' health and well-being, they rarely discuss these matters with the parents. Efforts were made in the past to discuss such matters with parents but this was done on an ad hoc basis and without a clear strategy. The negative relation of early marriage and the school career of girls was discussed with the members of the Education Council but this did not result in a clear strategy or protocol on what to do when girls drop out due to early age marriage. It was said that when a rumour arises that a certain girl was going to marry, it was often too late to intervene. This is more likely to happen if the teachers do not live in the community. This main issue was however not addressed by the Education Council. Despite the sensitivity of the subject within certain activities the council could take the



The awareness among teachers let alone the wider community about the harmful practices of child marriages are limited and offers room for improvement. The school views the practice in light of the early drop out of girls and much less in the light of the devastating consequences for a girl's health. There is still little known about the consequences of the initiation of sexual activity at an age when girl's bodies are still developing and when they know little about their sexual and reproductive health. In addition young girls are physically or emotionally not ready to give birth, and therefore child brides face higher risk of death in childbirth and are particularly vulnerable to pregnancy-related injuries.

responsibility for increasing of the awareness about the different risks associated with child marriage.

At around 11 a.m. all schools do have a long (breakfast) break. Some children buy their breakfast from one of the women at the school compound, others take their breakfast from home and a large group goes home to eat breakfast. At certain schools it has become practice that children and especially girls do not return to school after breakfast. Some of the children living far away from school do not wish to come back, other children are asked by their mothers to support them with doing the household chorus or to look after the younger siblings. In the weakest school visited this became an accepted practice: the school closed after the breakfast. This shows that there may be a relationship between the limited quality of the education and the lack of interest of the students (and parents). The weak functioning headteacher did not bring this habit under the attention of the Education Council and with that institutionalized the early daily closure of the school.

3 ISSUES AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

3.1 Issues related to election and membership of Education Council

None of the members of the Education Council met either had or knew the Education Council policy. This contributed to a limited understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Council.

All Education Councils met have, as indicated in the Education Council Policy, an inclusive membership that at all instances comprised the headteacher, functioning as secretary of the council, two teachers, and parents. In a few cases some members were other community members. Mostly these members were elders of ex students who continued to be members of the council. In a few councils religious leaders and/or other leaders were represented in the council but in all cases the majority of the members were parents.

The number of members per council varied considerably from 7 to 24 members. Five councils had more than the 13 members prescribed by the policy. This was done to satisfy the different groups within the community. The members on both boys and girls schools were predominantly male. Mostly the members were the parents of children attending the school, sometimes they were the parents of graduate students and in a few cases interested community members.

Limited representation of females: Most Education Councils interviewed exclusively consisted of male members. Two councils visited had respectively 2 and 4 female members. When asked, the headteachers mentioned that these female members were more active than the male members. The female members frequently came to school and were willing to help the headteacher with her work or were doing surveillance at the school compound.

One of the six girls schools visited had a women's council which was elected because the earlier Education Council consisting of only men did not function. The headteacher (female) then decided to organize a women's council because as she said "mothers do give much more interest in the education of their daughters than fathers do". This

was not only supported by the frequent visit of mothers but also by the members' involvement in school affairs and their better contact with their children.

Election of new members Education Council is limited: According to the SMOE, the parents have to elect a new Education Council during the assembly at the beginning of the school year. From the interviews, it became clear that it was not easy to attract parents to stand as candidates for the public office of the Education Council. The number of parents that are interested to join the council is limited and to elect the required number it often happens that a group of community members propose a candidate without his consent. This way many members are not very enthusiastic or motivated to be a member and this may have a negative effect on their active participation. Despite this, most members continue their membership in the next school year since the membership also gives them a kind of a status making it difficult for a council to replace the non-active members. The most common practice at the schools visited was therefore that non-active members step only down when the others also do so. As a result the work of most councils depends upon a limited number of active and motivated parents.

At one school, the school which was selected for the case study, it was standard that all members stepped down at the assembly. The active members were urged by the headteacher to continue their membership. The non-active members were thanked for their participation and new members were proposed. Also in light of the "impartiality" of the headteacher the role of an active chair in this election process is therefore eminent. If people are not active in the council the school often gets stuck with them for at least 3 years.

Within one community there was a serious problem between a group of elders, once the fathers of students, and the group of younger people who now have children attending the school. Initially the "elder parents" functioned well within the council and achieved a number of important activities. After their children left school, they felt indispensable and continued to lead the council. However, it was explained that due to their lack of involvement in school matters, and the fact that their children were no longer enrolled, they were less motivated and the functioning of the council became less. This has resulted in a situation in which the young parents feel that they are not represented in the council. The "younger parents" believe that the existing council is not active enough and moreover they think that the council cannot account for the budget and its expenditures. This picture is aggravated by the situation that the council keeps the money generated in its own "account". This situation has created mistrust between a large group of parents and the council and subsequently has had a negative effect on the amount of money collected by the council.

The selection of active council members was reported to be key to making progress with the implementation of the SDP.

3.2 Issues related to preparedness, motivation and interest of council members

The existence of a policy for parents to participate in the Education Council of the basic (primary) school does not mean that parents are automatically interested and willing to participate in the council and that there is a high level of participation by council members and parents. From the interviews with the headteachers and the



This classroom lacked desks, was very dirty and did not have any teaching aids, charts on the wall etc. The class could not be locked and was therefore accessible to goats and donkeys.

members of school councils, the picture appears that most parents do not think they have a role to play in school governance. Some believe that it is not their responsibility to support schools but mostly they felt that they had little experience and skills to contribute.

The members of the Education Council are neither generally trained nor practically oriented with respect to policy rules, regulations and responsibilities of the council.

Limited knowledge about the policy: The council members, including the headteacher, had little information about the mandate provided through the policy. Council members depended entirely on the orientation and information received from the headteacher. From the interviews with members of the Education Council (EC) at school level and with the headteachers, it became clear that half of the headteachers had a copy of the Education Council policy. The few headteachers who were recently appointed lacked experience and were poorly acquainted with Education Council Policy (ECP). Almost all council members did not have access to the policy document and therefore lacked the specific information about their tasks. What they knew they got from the headteacher.

Most members felt that the inability to have access to the Education Council policy makes it difficult for them to get a clear picture of their responsibilities, including their relationship to the head of the school but also the possibilities to generate resources. Although they would appreciate receiving a copy of the policy, they also felt that additional orientation or training was needed.

At only one school, the school with the highest success rate and the most supportive school environment, the members had a copy of the document of the Federal Education Policy. Mostly the headteacher shared with the new members his or her knowledge and experience about the objectives, the rights, responsibilities and tasks of the ECP with the members of the council.

Lack of practical guidelines in support of effective implementation of policy: In addition to the policy document the schools did not have any supporting documents with additional information, practical suggestions or with lessons learned etc. for effective implementation of the Education Council policy. No materials have been developed by the authorities or by others to orient new members of the council. The orientation of new members is limited to the information provided by the headteacher and the experience of the ex or incumbent council members.

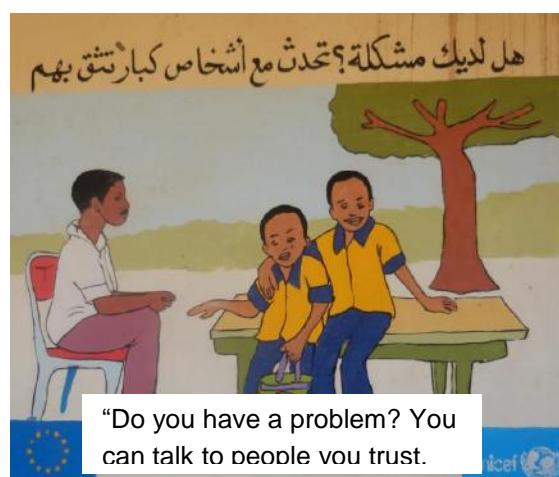
Limited training of members on Education Council policy: One headteacher was specifically trained by the government on the content and the implementation of the

policy. Three headteachers and some members of the councils have been trained through the efforts of the PERP and BERP projects. Both actions have a training component focusing on the functioning of Education Councils in selected areas.⁶² A few members were trained in the past by NGOs involved in community projects⁶³. However, these training efforts were always limited to a few people in selected schools involved in projects. One may assume that the vast majority of the members of the Education Councils in schools in Kassala and El Gedaref states are not trained in implementing the policy effectively. Even those members who have been involved in a training and/or orientation in ECP felt that their ability to function satisfactorily was still limited. Also, and at best, two to three members were trained. Sometimes these were the key players of the council: the Chairperson, the secretary (HT) and the finance person, but not always. The feedback after the training by those trained to the untrained members had been limited thus making the training less effective. From the meetings with the various players within the school communities it became clear that there was a dire need for information but especially for practical skills to further maximize the community support for education.

3.3 Issues related to limited resources and resource management

Limited resources: Local

communities and parents in the communities visited are increasingly playing a role in educational finance especially with regard to operational cost for electricity, water, teacher support (breakfast and/or transport), for extra-curricular activities and for the support to voluntary teachers. In addition they make efforts to support the maintenance, rehabilitation and school



construction. Except for one school, the case study school, where the headteacher indicated that if the school needed funds for school development the money was not an issue, all schools complained heavily about the lack of funds for implementing the school development plan or in general for improving the quality of education. The headteacher and the members of the council indicated that the lack of funds to implement projects is the greatest challenge for the Educational Councils. Raising funds from parents is not easy. Parents often refer to the Education Act which indicates that education is free. Some councils supported by the Headteacher have

⁶² The development objective of these actions are respectively for the Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP), supported by the EU, to reduce disparities between and within states, especially for girls, by targeting localities with the Lowest Gross Enrolment Rate indicators and for the Basic Education Recovery Project (BERP), supported by Global Partnership for Education (GPE), to improve the learning environment in targeted areas; to increase the availability of textbooks; and to strengthen education planning and management mechanisms.

⁶³ Few members of the PTA and later the Education Council were trained in "Management of Community Work", (Teacher Training Institute), Education Council Policy (Teacher Training Institute), "Leadership" (Talawait NGO), School Grants (Talawait NGO) and School Management & Community Work (Canadian NGO).

discussed this matter during one of the educational assemblies, but were not successful in convincing parents that due to the limited or lack of support by the government it is important for parents to support schools. However, the Educational Councils, responsible for the further educational development including the extension of the number of classrooms and the rehabilitation of schools, cannot do anything without funds. So on the one hand the school population is expanding rapidly, requiring investments to deal with the needs and on the other hand the schools lack the support to extend the number of classes. This has led to a very high number of students in the standard classroom.

Inability to support school development: With the exception of one school, no council was able to successfully implement their SDP due to the lack of resources. There are various reasons for the existing situation. On the one hand, one can state that the resources to support education within all communities are limited⁶⁴. At the same time most councils still have not managed to develop a strong relationship between the community and the school. This is especially due to their inability to explain the responsibilities of the community towards the school to the parents and wider community, to inform the community about the actual achievements of the council, to show the community how the parents' contribution and other sources generated were spent, and to involve the wider community in the school development process. A very major reason for the inability of the Education Council to support educational development is their limited understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the lack of skills, including fundraising skills, to implement the SDP in a transparent way.

From the interviews, it became clear that there is a need to sensitize the entire community – the members of the Education Council and parents – about the need to support the learning of their children beyond the basic school contributions. Overall the involvement of the council members, the parents and the wider community in education is still limited, and good practice findings indicate that more, and more effective community involvement is possible. There is need for a more comprehensive strategic model for concrete policy implementation regarding the diverse aspects of support to education by the wider community.

3.4 Issues related to limited contacts with wider community

Limited support by parents: As mentioned before, financial support of parents to the school or more specifically to the implementation of the SDP is limited. Parents who can afford it contribute in cash and to a lesser extent in kind to the council. However their contribution is limited, the parental contribution never exceeds more than 50% of the parents and the support in labour to the development of the school is even more limited. From the focus group discussions it became clear that Education Councils do not have specific strategies for improving the mobilization of parents' resources and especially their contribution or support in labour. The contact between councils is non-existent and their general lack of exposure to the experiences of other councils on how to generate resources makes it difficult to motivate parents to shoulder projects such as major construction activities. This signifies that the school and Education

⁶⁴ School communities in the centre of the main cities and communities in flourishing irrigated and rain-fed agricultural areas do in general have more resources for supporting education.

Councils view parents more as passive receptors (or providers) rather than as active agents in improving the quality of learning.

Limited contact between council and parents : As described earlier, the contact between the members of the council and their supporting parents is limited. Most but not all councils share information about plans at meetings with the parents during the school year. Financial information is seldom shared with parents. Due to the limited and irregular information about the implementation of plans, parents do not always have a well-informed idea of the scope of work of the council. They expect a lot and see that only few plans materialize during the school year.

Most parents see the implementation of the SDP as the responsibility of the council. Parents often believe that the members are representing them and that the members, in addition to the governance-related work, also have to do the development-related work like the development of the school yard or the rehabilitation of the school buildings. The practice of most councils to only consult the parents after decisions are made does not contribute to a strong commitment of parents to support the implementation of the plans. In short, the involvement of most parents in supporting the work of the Education Councils is generally limited to their monthly contribution. Improved communication may not only contribute to a better understanding of their work, but may also strengthen the parental commitment to the further development of the school.

Lack of clarity about the role of parents: Officially it is the responsibility of the outgoing Education Council to organize an assembly for all parents at the beginning of the school year. During the assembly the new council is elected. In addition most councils organize a "mid-term assembly" and an end-of-year assembly. The assembly at the end of the year often coincides with the graduation ceremony. In addition some schools, supported by one of the school societies, organize certain sports and/or other events that can be visited by parents.⁶⁵ The role of the parents in the "Education Council Policy" is not very clear and as the policy neither ascribes nor fulfils parental roles, there is no agreement as to what these roles should be.

This situation may be partly explained by the poor experience of most people with community-based development or other decision-making forums in combination with limited communication and the lack of information-sharing between the Education Council and the wider community, including parents. It is important to change this situation since an increased participation of parents and other community members may have a positive effect on the legitimacy of the council within the overall community.

Limited contact between school and parents: From the interviews with the headteachers it was derived that the contact between headteacher and parents usually is limited to the discussion of problems related to the performance of their child(ren). The role of headteachers in encouraging teaching staff to establish good relationships with parents is limited. Most schools do not have a clear protocol for engaging parents. The headteacher – but mostly the teacher – talks with parents if there is a problem with the child. Based on their responses, headteachers' support for parental participation seems to be restricted to summoning parents to discuss problems of attendance and children's poor performance or to resolve conflicts rather

⁶⁵ Every school has a number of societies of students that, under the supervision of one of the teachers, are responsible for the organization of co-curricular activities. There are societies for (i) Health, (ii) Sport, (iii) Religion, (iv) Culture, (v) Environment and Hygiene, (vi) Science and (vii) Housekeeping.

than encouraging wider parental participation for the improvement of a conducive educational climate. The general belief is that the school is the property of the government and not a community good worth the support including the protection of the community. This type of attitude and behaviour is discouraging and limits the parental engagement. As a result, though parental participation is welcomed, the actual space for genuine collaboration between parents, communities and the teachers is limited. The space is even more limited when the teachers and the headteachers are not from the community and commute daily from home to the school.

Limited contacts between council and religious leaders: The participation of religious leaders is often complementary in schools and depends upon the personal relationship between the headteacher and/or the chair of the council and the local imam. Some schools have asked the imam to give advice and explain to the community members the importance of basic education, and specifically the importance of girls' education. It was also reported that imams had provided support to the child enrolment campaign on the day prior to the start of the school year, or allowed the students to make use of the water facility of the Mosque facility. In some schools the imam participates, being a parent or not, as a member in the Education Council.

3.5 Issues related to enrolment, absenteeism and retention

The situation with regard to enrolment, absenteeism, retention and subsequent dropout varied substantially from school to school. Children of very poor families often look for possibilities to earn some money for the family. In urban areas there are possibilities for children to have a part-time job, in rural areas there are more opportunities for seasonal work, but both situations contribute to absenteeism and the decision to drop-out.⁶⁶

Direct cost of education: The cost of education, both monetary and non-monetary is a burden for many very poor families and remains a barrier to the successful completion of primary school. These barriers include the direct cost of schooling like the regular school contributions, the cost of school uniforms and the cost of school supplies, as well as the indirect costs for accessing education. This means that children of very poor families or orphans are more vulnerable and less likely to be enrolled at school. The cost for schooling still remains a major factor for enrolment of all children.

Lack of awareness parents prevents children to enroll: Despite the efforts made, not all school-age children are enrolled at school. According to the interviewees, this was especially due to lack of awareness among parents about the importance of primary schooling. Despite attention given to the enrolment of all children, none of the communities knew how many children from the community were not enrolled at school. At a few schools visited the enrolment was a non-issue, all children in the community were enrolled in school. The headteacher said s/he was sure about this.

⁶⁶ See Research Study 1: Why do children drop out of school? Voices from the grassroots, April 2015

Lack of access and awareness prevents children with disabilities to go to school: Most children with disabilities, and especially those with mental and severe physical disabilities, are not enrolled in basic schools. It was stated that most of these children in the urban areas and all those living in the rural areas were not enrolled in school. The general opinion of those met was that the lack of access to special education was the main reason that these children stay at home.

Sudan lacks proper accommodation and trained teachers to teach children with disabilities. Except for a few schools for the blind and schools for the deaf in the large cities, such children have no access to specialized schools. When asked the Ministry of Education admitted that there was no policy to support the access of children with disabilities from rural areas to school in the urban areas. It seemed that this area of special education and/or inclusive education was a rather unexplored area. None of the schools visited paid specific attention to the enrolment of children with disabilities. The access of these children to primary education was never on the agenda of the Education Council.

While talking with the headteachers it was mentioned several times that people in Sudan often view disability as a curse or punishment by divine powers. It was also mentioned that as a result of these views (i) families are often embarrassed by disability, and keep their children with disabilities at home, (ii) poverty within the families is further aggravated the lack of support of the children with disabilities in the families: the needs of 'healthy' children were prioritized, (iii) the care facilities for children with disabilities was limited. All of these challenges make accessing the situation in the community difficult. It was also mentioned that due to the general thought that all children with disabilities are incapable of learning it was difficult to include them in the regular classes. The main issue for not stimulating the enrolment of children with disabilities is therefore the lack of information about the large differences between children with disabilities and the lack of awareness about the potential of many children with disabilities at community but also at school level.

As a result most of the children with disabilities in Sudan are not educated thus reducing their chance of work considerably: a ticket for life as the poorest of the poor.

3.6 Issues related to transparency and accountability

The inability for members of the Education Council to access policy documents related to education and to the functioning of the Education Council in particular makes it difficult for the members to know, monitor and measure the exact level of transparency and accountability required for the optimal functioning of the councils. Financial accountability is stated very clearly in the policy i.e.



- (i) any education council needs to have a bank account and/ or financial committee (ii) withdrawal from this account can only be made upon the signing of any two of the three key players of the council (the chairperson, the headteacher, and the treasurer, (iii) the financial transactions should be registered, documented, verified and audited

according to the Government financial account rules, laws, and regulations and (iv) the Councils assets and resources are public property where all Government financial account rules, laws, and regulations should be strictly applied whenever a violation case arises – however, the reality is often different. So despite the clear financial guidelines in the policy paper there are numerous issues as a result of the inability of the council to follow the financial rules. A good start for improving the transparency and subsequent accountability is to disseminate the policy document to all members of Education Council.

Lack of information system for providing feedback to the community: According to various principles in the literature, the access to information is a prerequisite for active participation of a school community as members of the school council or parents. In addition, it was found that dissemination of financial information reduces resource leakage. However, none of the schools visited had paid attention to the development of a transparent information system.⁶⁷ As a result of the lack of information, there is quite some distrust among parents about the work of the councils and especially about the expenditures made by the Education Council. To a great extent this is explained by the limited information about the different resources generated by the council. Often parents thought that the actual amount generated by the council was much higher than the amount collected and that the council did not spend all resources for the benefit of the school.

To avoid misunderstandings, the financial information must be complete so as to make it possible for members of the Education Councils but also for parents to oversee the finances. Another prerequisite is the timely and consistent presentation of the information. It then has to be available in ways that allow people to understand it and use it. The easiest way to make the information more accessible to the community is to put it on one of the notice boards on the school premises.

In practice the money generated by the councils is mostly managed by the headteacher, and few councils questioned this. This may be explained by the lack of pre-existing public interest in financial information which is according to some members normal practice, and the limited knowledge and limited skills of the average council member in managing finances. So although the Education Council regulations foresee the sharing of information at all levels, the reality is that none of the schools had a system in place to provide financial information to all members and to parents when needed, and to explain what the information means.

Lack of transparency within the Education Council: By virtue of their role as secretary of the council, the headteacher is the pivot within the school. The headteacher receives all information first and is therefore often the most powerful player in schools. Headteachers often solely take the decision for bringing issues onto the agenda and for not putting issues on the agenda. The relationship between the headteacher and the members of the Education Council is therefore key for the functioning of the council. Since most Education Councils lack skills and ability to handle finance and for budgeting, the headteacher often deals with the financial matters of the council: the headteacher keeps the money and the headteacher

⁶⁷ A system for maintaining contact between the council and parents. A system that informs the community adequately about school the planning of events, developments of the school plans, the financing of the plans and the expenditures made.

approves the spending of the money. In light of the very small budgets available, this is a very practical solution but it does not contribute to the transparency of the expenditures made.

Limited accountability: Over the past years, social funds have become an important instrument for some donors to transfer their funds directly to the communities they intend to support. Social funds consider community participation to be important both for the identification of priority areas as well as for carrying out programmes. The apparent high demand for education projects is attributed to the introduction of the 2001 Education Act of Free Primary Education, as a result of which the number of children attending school increased dramatically and, therefore, meant that more classrooms were required. In addition, since Education Councils were already established in most schools, these provide a structure from which this funding could be applied. The WB and GPE support the construction of classrooms, the EU, through Save the Children and UNICEF, supports the rehabilitation of school buildings, and UNICEF supports the construction of semi-permanent school buildings, made of locally available materials. Headteachers still play an important role in creating awareness within the communities about the possibilities for funding from social funds as they are better informed than the community members about the existing possibilities.

4 MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Education Council policy offers a clear general policy framework for community support to education however in practice opportunities for community support are underutilized.

The Education Council policy was however introduced without orientation and/or training for those responsible for implementing the policy.

Many members of the Education Councils lack required knowledge and/or skills and need guidance for developing a concrete vision on how to achieve the educational goals of the community. This is evidenced by School Development Plans that lack clear objectives and realistic strategies on how to implement the objectives

Parents are generally reported not to feel responsible for supporting the members of the Education Council with the implementation of interventions aiming at improving the learning performance of their children. This is partly explained by the free education policy and partly by lack of information sharing, orientation and training.

Against this background the actual support practices fall short of policy ambition and opportunities: contribution, scope, etc.

The developmental focus of the SDP is mostly on the improvement and/or extension of the number of classrooms and less on the improvement of the learning performance.

The efforts of the Education Councils to meet and/or to communicate their annual results to the community are limited which further undermines development and implementation of the education plans.

More specifically in brief:

Findings related to the Education Council Policy:

- None of the members of the Education Council met had access to the Education Council policy document. This contributed to a limited understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Council;
- The Education Council policy does not make a specific reference to enrolment, retention and dropout related issues;

- The Education Council Policy does not provide guidelines for implementation; and
- The procedures for the election of new Education Councils members are often not followed which was reported to undermine the functioning of the Councils.

Findings related to the functioning of the Education Council:

- The functioning of Education Councils differs and depends mainly on the experience and skills of the council with school governance, on the readiness of the community to support the work of the council, on the work of a few active members and the role of the headteacher;
- Half of the members of the Education Council members do not actively participate in the council.
- The involvement of women in councils was limited to two councils but they had had a positive effect on the functioning of the council.
- The training of the members Education Council in community work had been very limited, most of them lack sufficient information and skills to implement the responsibilities of the council effectively;
- The lack of guidance for handing over the responsibilities to new councils is not supportive to the long-term planning of developmental activities at basic schools;
- In general the council monitors the school compound well, but the monitoring of the school compound is limited to the maintenance of school building with little attention to the cleanliness of toilets, the garden and the school yards; and
- None of the Education Councils of schools rehabilitated by efforts of PERP, BERP, or other local, National or international Agencies, had been actively involved in the implementation of the rehabilitation process.

Findings related to the accountability and transparency of the Education Councils:

- Most Education Councils do not communicate, report and disseminate timely relevant information to parents and the wider community thus ensuring the necessary transparency required for sufficient community support;
- Most Education Councils have weak accountability mechanisms to monitor the financial expenditures made. This may have a negative effect on the trust given by the community and thus may have a negative effects on the (financial) support of the community; and
- Parents do not have access to information on the budgets and expenditures of the Education Council which leads sometimes to mistrust and a lack of interest in the work of the councils.

Findings to the ability of the Education Councils to implement School Development Plans:

- The focus of the School Development Plans is on construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of the school premises;
- Education Councils have limited skills to generate additional resources beyond the parent contribution and in support of the implementation of the School Development Plan.
- The parent-teacher relationships and the motivation of members are reportedly more developed and collaborative in schools with high achievement scores than in schools with low total student achievement scores; and
- Education Councils of large schools and in communities with less poor people have better opportunities to generate additional resources for school improvement.

Findings on enrolment, absenteeism and dropouts

- The schools with good student performance, in urban and rural areas, have fewer or no problems with enrolment and absenteeism;
- All Education Councils provide support to vulnerable children, especially to children of very poor parents or orphans;
- Education Councils pay little or no attention the access of children with disabilities to school and as a result they often sit idle at home and are denied access.
- Education Councils of schools with high absenteeism and a subsequent high dropout rate do not have a clear and specific policy to prevent and/or to reduce the dropout rate;
- Some organizations and many individual community members support the schooling of children, e.g. by facilitating toilet visits and water to students, bringing food and clothing. These good practices are poorly recognized by the school and the council.

Findings on relationship of Education Council with school and community

- The common practice that the headteachers prepare the agenda for the council meeting does not encourage the ownership of the council for taking initiatives and for solving school affairs;
- The interaction and cooperation between the council and the community is in general reported to be perceived as positive, however the decision making, (financial) planning, and communication with the community is not up to the level required to further engage the community;
- Most headteachers reported to consider the main responsibility of the council to be to generate resources for funding recurrent and development costs of the school rather than ensuring that all children have access to good quality education; and
- The role of other community leaders, including the religious leaders, has been limited and seems underutilized.

5 FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for increasing community engagement

- To widely disseminate the Education Council policy (Government);
- To create awareness within the community about the importance of having mothers represented in Education Councils and active in school, especially for basic schools for girls;
- To involve councils in the planning and implementation of school renovation and/or construction prior to the start of the project (Donors);
- To organize special events, e.g. at the end of the year especially to thank all NGOs and individuals for their support to the school (Council);

Recommendations for improving preparedness, motivation and interest of council members

- To improve the election process of council members (Education Council) by:
 - organizing a meeting for aspirant members of the education council prior to the council election about the role, responsibilities and challenges of the work of the council;
 - developing profiles for specific positions and for ordinary members of education council to facilitate the election of the most suitable candidates;
 - limiting the term of members to the period that their children are enrolled at school; and excluding members that fail to come to the council meetings for a certain number of times
- To include in the curriculum of teacher training a comprehensive module on community and parent involvement in education (universities/SMoE);
- To develop a Certificate in Community and Parent Involvement offered through distance education to improve the functioning of community leaders and teachers in the education councils (SMoE supported by donors).
- To develop a user-friendly guide for new members of Education Council, including a module for orienting new members (SMoE, supported by donors);
- To train the core members of councils (SMoE, supported by donors);
- To make the Chairperson of the education council responsible for the preparation of the council meetings, including the establishment of the agenda, and in close consultation and collaboration with the secretary, the headteacher (Council); and

- The headteacher has to accept the wider scope of responsibilities of the education council and accept the Council as an additional strength to achieve the educational targets.

Recommendations for improving school performance

- To orient and train the members of the Education Council to be able to provide better support to the student performance of all students (SMoE supported by donors);
- To develop a specific chapter on improving student performance in the annual School Development Plan;
- To make the students responsible for cleaning of the school yard and the classes (Education Council)
- To create more awareness among the entire school community, teachers, parents and children about the importance that children can visit a clean toilet when required

Recommendations for increasing resources for school development and resource management

- To reorient parents and wider community on the need for parents support to school development in cash and in kind (Education Council);
- To provide financial support to schools that take into account the social economic background of the community (SMoE);
- To train and inform Education Councils about the various possibilities to generate resources beyond the parent contribution (SMoE, supported by donors); and
- To develop a booklet with good practices on resource mobilization for schools and councils (SMoE, supported by Education Council).

Recommendations for increasing enrolment, reducing absenteeism and improving retention

- To clarify that the role and the responsibility of the education council is community-wide, rather than school-focused so to include all children in school;
- To organize open discussions around policy, expectations and perceived parental roles among all stakeholders, including government (SMoE);
- To further elaborate or add a specific paragraph about the responsibility of the community towards enrolment, retention and dropouts, in the context of promoting education for all children of the community (SMoE, supported by donors);
- To create a school-specific strategy detailing responsibilities and coordination for reducing absenteeism and subsequent drop out (Education Council);
- To make the reports by teachers on absenteeism and potential dropouts a regular item of the agenda of the education council (Education Council);
- To hand over more responsibilities to the Education Council in support of increased access of all children to quality education (Headteacher);
- To develop and include a strategy in every school plan to maximize the inclusion of children with disabilities in basic school (Education Council) including:
 - the creation of awareness at school and in the wider community about the importance to include children with disabilities in school where possible
 - to facilitate the access of children with physical disabilities in school
 - to pay attention to the early detection of children with minor disabilities (hearing, eyesight),

- To play a more active role in the prevention of early marriages by raising awareness among communities about the health and other risks of early marriage for the young mother (Education Council).

Recommendations for strengthening accountability and transparency

- To strengthen the financial management and budgeting skills of concerned council members (SMoE supported by donors);
- To ensure the proper functioning of the prescribed Financial Committee (SMoE and headteacher)
- To ensure timely and transparent information on budgets and expenditures to the community (Education Council)

The curriculum for training for improved effectiveness of council members could include skills on:

- Problem analysis skills as a starting point to be able to determine, prioritize and develop solutions for existing problems;
- (Proposal) writing skills to be able to draft SDP or to approach potential donors ;
- Financial management and budgeting skills to ensure timely and transparent budget allocations as well as financial management;
- Communication, reporting and dissemination of information skills with the parents and wider community to ensure the necessary transparency;
- Developing and implementing feasible strategies to generate resources;
- Skills to develop no-cost or low-cost learning and play materials;
- Skills for identifying and solving technical problems in and around the school compound;
- Skills for encouraging and maintaining participation of parents in the schools;
- Skills for disseminating the information and skills acquired during a training to better brief and orient other council members

and information on:

- Child rights, including Child Centred Community Development as a rights-based approach;
- Clear and simple standards of ethics; and
- Rules and procedures regarding staff, procurement policies and audit requirements, financial management, supervision and evaluation

6 ANNEXES

6.1 Annex 1: Terms of reference

Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) Sudan

Research Study: **Community engagement in education**

Introduction

The Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) in Sudan addresses the challenge of children who drop out of school, in five states: Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan. It is financed by the European Union, through interventions by SOFRECO (Paris), Save the Children (Sweden) and UNICEF. Six research studies form part of the service contract of SOFRECO, which is responsible for their implementation.

Background

There has been increased participation in general education in Sudan since the peace agreements in 2005, with an average annual enrolment growth rate in primary education of around 6 per cent since 2005 across northern Sudan – an impressive quantitative achievement. However, there is still substantial student dropout at the primary level: only 54 per cent of those entering Grade 1 are still in school in Grade 8, indicating a high wastage rate through Grades 1 through 7. This is recognised as a major challenge that is not yet being seriously and sufficiently addressed.

There are massive disparities, with the range of the Gross Enrolment Rate varying enormously between Sudanese states for overall primary school participation. Location, vulnerability and gender affect access to schooling; disadvantaged groups are significantly under-represented; urban children are 17 per cent more likely than are rural children to be at school; boys are 8 per cent more likely to be participating than are girls.

The quality of learning is typically reported as unsatisfactory with low levels of literacy and numeracy: the five target states tend to perform more poorly than does the rest of Sudan. Possible causes include widespread malnutrition (food insecurity), poor school environment, inadequate instructional hours, and lack of textbooks. Teachers tend to

have limited educational qualifications and in many cases no explicit teacher training; they apply traditional pedagogies, have low morale and receive ineffective supervision and leadership; their deployment is skewed towards urban areas.

Scope of the study

The six studies planned as part of PERP will give an excellent opportunity to understand in more depth how and why children drop out of school or are unable to access schooling. Dropout is a complex and multidimensional problem, and six studies give a chance to examine the issue from a range of perspectives. The insights that the studies provide will serve as input into planning, training and the management of schools and the education system. More immediately, the results will provide a stronger basis for the implementation of the PERP through SCS and UNICEF.

The aim of the study Community engagement in education is to understand the role of the wider community, in which the school is located, in promoting the retention of children in school and reducing dropout. Research in a variety of contexts has shown that the engagement of community members in the life and governance of a school can significantly improve performance and morale. Where the school becomes a focus of community life, with a commitment to provide quality learning opportunities for the community's children, the morale of administrative staff and teachers often shows improvement, with more consistent presence by teachers and higher motivation on the part of children.

The study will explore the following questions, among others;

- What kinds of governance structures exist for community engagement in schools who does what in which state?
- In what areas does the community engage: for example, management of infrastructure, monitoring teacher presence and performance, selection of teachers, or monitoring school budgets?
- How can community engagement be increased?. What kinds of structures would work best?
- What roles should the community have with regard to education? How can accountability to the community be strengthened?
- What role does the community play in encouraging families to send their children to school?
- What kind of support can communities give to vulnerable children and their families?

The expert will develop the research instruments to address these and other dimensions of the theme.

Methodology

The expert will develop the detailed methodology and any necessary data collection instruments, in consultation with the national expert and the SOFRECO team leader.

Interviews or focus groups with relevant stakeholders at community level will provide the bulk of the data for this study. Stakeholders will include at least the following: head teachers, teachers, parents, recognised community leaders (traditional, religious, administrative). Using carefully designed schedules for semi-structured interviews and/or focus group discussions will enable a triangulation of data from multiple perspectives.

It is envisaged that visits will be made to at least eight different communities across two states to conduct fieldwork, logistics permitting.

In addition, the study will include data from interviews with state-level education personnel to ascertain their experience and assessment of community engagement with schools under their jurisdiction.

The expert will develop interview or focus group guidelines for each category of interviewees, and conduct the interviews in Sudanese Arabic with the assistance of the national expert as necessary.

The study will take place in two states, Kassala and Gedaref. Travel to the states is dependent on obtaining the necessary travel permit.

Organization of the research

The research will be completed in three phases, as follows:

Phase 1: preparation (home-based and in Sudan)

- Development of the methodology and research instruments
- Consultation and guidance from a distance to engage the national expert in methodology development and finalization of the research instruments for the Sudanese context
- One day of orientation with the national expert in Khartoum immediately prior to fieldwork

Phase 2: fieldwork (in Sudan)

- Field investigation in various locations in Kassala and Gedaref States; the national expert may participate in the same locations or independently at other locations in the states.

Phase 3: analysis and writing (home-based)

- Analysis of the findings of the fieldwork
- Drafting of the study
- Submission of the drafts to SOFRECO for comment
- Amendment and finalization of the study based on comments received

Relationships and reporting

The expert will carry out the study under the supervision of the SOFRECO Team Leader and the Project Director. S/he will further

- Collaborate closely with a national colleague in carrying out the study, from finalization of the research instruments to the editing of the final study. This relationship will be one of mutual support, as well as mentoring in the processes of the research.
- Collaborate with and be supported by the relevant PERP State Coordinator(s) and, as possible, with the implementing agency in each state (SCS or UNICEF).

Deliverables

The deliverable will be a study describing and analyzing the data collected on community engagement in education, with final recommendations, based on conclusions from the data, on how community engagement could be a positive factor in better promoting retention of children in school. It is expected that the study will not exceed 30 pages.

The international expert will write the study in English, and the national expert will be responsible for producing an Arabic version.

The draft deliverables will be submitted in English to the SOFRECO Team Leader and Project Director for possible comment before production of the final version.

Requirements

- A masters-level degree or higher in education or the social sciences
- At least ten years of general professional experience
- At least seven years of experience in educational research or education projects
- Participation in at least two community-based studies relating to education or social development
- Knowledge of governance issues in education an advantage
- Excellent writing skills in English
- Arabic competence preferred

Schedule and timing

The research study will take 25 days, distributed as follows:

- 3 days: methodology and instrument preparation, home-based
- 4 days: finalization of instruments, one-day orientation with national expert, and obtaining travel permit
- 12 days: fieldwork in two states
- 5 days: writing the draft deliverables
- 1 day: amendment/final editing of the deliverables, after comment by SOFRECO.

The 25 days of research should take place between 15 January and 31 March 2015.

6.2 Annex 2: List of People met

FMoE in Khartoum:

Ibtisam SbahElzien Ibraheem	Federal Ministry of Education
Naima Elgzoli AbdIhmeed	Federal Ministry of Education
Mohamed AbdImajeed	Federal Ministry of Education
Tahani Ibrahim Mohamed	Federal Ministry of Education
Yassin Ahmed Khilil	Federal Ministry of Education
Mohammed Ahmed Abdalla	Federal Ministry of Education
Afaf Ahmed Ali	Federal Ministry of Education
Islah Ahmed Yassin	Federal Ministry of Education
Ayat Babikir Ahmed	Federal Ministry of Education
Rabab Osman Said	PERP assistant
Fatima Abdelaziz	PERP coordinator

SMoE Kassala State

Abdelbasit Yasin Abdeen	DG, SMoE
Hassan Mohamed Elamin	Deputy Director, Basic Education Directorate, SMoE
Salih Suliman	PERP Coordinator
Mohi Edleen Aljali	Director, Basic Education Directorate, SMoE
Ishraga	Director, Education Planning Directorate, SMoE
Elhussein Mohamed Elhussein	Assistant Director, Basic Education Directorate, SMoE
Siddig Haj Gailei	Director, Basic Education Directorate, North Delta Locality
Musataf Mahamoud	Inspector, Basic Education Directorate, North Delta Locality

SMoE Gedaref State

His Excellency, Idries Nur	State Minister of Education
Hasaballa Eltayeb Hassaballa	DG, State Ministry of Education
Hamid Hussein Abyad	Gedaref, SMoE Coordinator, SOFRECO
Khalid Musa	DG, Office
Osman Hamad Mubashar	Director, Basic Education Directorate, SMoE
Mahamoud Hamid Almosaad	Director, Education Directorate
Salih Ali Ibrahim Hamid	Director, Inspection Directorate, SMoE
Elsayed Elhussein Bukhari	Lead ,Education Inspector, SMoE
Taj elsir Elamin	Director, Nomad Education Directorate

[Thoaiba Basic School for Girls - Banat Janoub \(South\) - Square \(21\) – Kassala Locality](#)

Hanan Fadl Elsid	Women Council Parent
Mawad Madrey	Women Council Parent
Elham Khalid	Women Council Parent
Samah Ali Salim	Women Council Parent
Eiman Mohamed Elhassan	Women Council Parent
Talha Ismael Saihan	Education Council, Finance Secretary + Imam + Popular Committee
Elghali Sulieman Abdalla	Education Council + Popular Committee
Ali Hussein Hassan Hussein	Education Council
Ahmed Abdalla Ahmed	Education Council
Adam Osman Hassan	Education Council
Zakaia Ali Abdalla	Education Council
Yousif Mohamed Noor Suleman	Education Council + Imam

[Amersfoort Basic School for Boys - Banat Janoub \(South\) - Square \(21\) – Kassala Locality](#)

Talha Ismael Saihan	Education Council, Finance Secretary
Sohair Hussein Abd elTam	Women Council
Hassan Sadig Adam	Education Council, Chairperson
Khidir Abd elRahim Salih Idries	Education Council,
Elsir Awad Abashar	Education Council,
Amna Ibrahim Osman	Parent
Nora Zaroog	Parent
Hawa Yagoub	Parent

[Hadalia Basic School for Boys](#) [Hadalia – North Delta Locality](#)

Mohamed Elamin Musa Terrik	Education Council + Omda
Mahamoud O'nour Mohamed	Education Council, Chair Person
Mohamed Mahamoud Terrik	Education Council
Mohamed Mahamoud Hamid	Education Council
Ali Ahmed O'shaik	Education Council
Alhassan Mohamed Elamin	Education Council
Ahmed Mohamed Tahir	Education Council
Mohamed Fekki Mohamed	Education Council
Adam Mohamed Hussein	Education Council
Mohamed Mahamoud Ahmed	Education Council
Elamin Hamid Abu Mohamed	Education Council

Mohamed Adam Idries	Education Council
Mohamed Ahmed Adam	Education Council
Egbal Ali Sherrif	Women Council
Amani Omer Mohamed	Women Council
Jemmae Yassin Hassan	Women Council, Chair Person
Hibba Ahmed Mustafa	Women Council

Wad Shariefiy – Rural Kassala Locality Wad Shariefiy (A) Basic School for Boys

Shoaib Aballal Mohamed Idries	Education Council + Khalwa
Modather Mahamoud Hussein	Education Council
Osman Mohamed Osman	Education Council, Chair Person
Nagwa Gaffar Osman	Education Council + Popular Committee Person
Gasim Musa	Education Council

Wad Shariefiy – Rural Kassala Locality Wad Shariefiy (B) Basic School for Girls

Mohamed Enazeer Abbaker	Education Council
Mohamed Adam Maaz Ibrahim	Education Council
Mahmoud Ali Mukhtar	Education Council, Chair Person
Yousif Babo Mustafa	Education Council
Hanan Adam Karrar	Parent
Waffa Nusa Adam Musa	Parent
Amna Ahmed Tahir	Parent
Rahma Ali Saeed	Parent
Ebtisam Noueldin Ali	Parent
Amona Yousif Abbaker	Parent
Saeeda Ahmed Adam	Parent
Nagwa Hassan Abdalla	Parent
Leila Omer Mohamed Musa	Parent
Mahasin Mohmed Osman	Parent
Halima Showey Mohamed	Parent
Amna Tahir Idries	Parent
Haliem Ismael	Parent

Hassan Siddig Basic School for Boys (Grade 1-4) – October Area – Gedaref Locality

Deim Bakur Basic School for Boys (Grade 5-8) – October Area – Gedaref Locality

Khalil Mohamed Abbaker	Director, Basic Education Directorate
Bashir Mohamed Abbaker	Education Council
Abd Erahamn Nooh	Youth Committee
Jamal Mohamed Abbaker	Journalist
Mohamed Abbaker Abdalla	Education Supervisor (Leader)
Mohamed Salih Badamassi	Education Council
Alnoor Zakaria Hassan	Education Council
Salah Mohamed Abbaker	Youth Committee
Eisa Ali Abdalla	Education Council
Gaffar Zakaria Mohamed	Education Council
Ahmed Sulieman Musa	Popular Committee
Osman Mohamed Abbaker	Youth Committee
Ahmed Abd El Rahman	Youth Committee
Ahmed Mahamoud Adam	Teacher
Abdelrahim Abbaker Mustafa	Teacher
Yassin Adam Omer Osman	Teacher

Wad Alkobair Basic School for Girls – Wad Alkobair Area, Gedaref Locality

Salih Ali Ibrahim Hamid	Education Council, Chair Person
Abdelmoeiz Alagab Alzubair	Education Council
Ahmed Mohamed Ali Mohagir	Education Council, Finance Secretary
Bodoor Abdalla Elhussein	Education Council, Secretary
Elamin Hassan Ahmed	Education Council
Hassan Fadlalmula	Education Council

Bin Abbas Basic School for Boys – Almafaza Area, Almafaza Locality

Najeeb Mohamed Al Ammas	Director, Basic Education Directorate, Almafaza Locality
Almuttaz Ibrahim Al Abbas	Education Council, Chair Person
Khalid Abdalla Hamad Alabbas	Head Teacher (Secretary, Education Council)
Taha Hassan Abdalla Taha	Education Council + Popular Committee
Abdalla Osman Ibrahim Alabbas	Education Council
Mutwakil Yousif Zakaria	Education Council
Sayed Ali Omerain	Education Council
Ahmed Eldaw Alagab	Education Council
Yousif Hassan Mustafa	Education Council + (Imam)

Khalid Bin Alwaleed Basic School for Boys – Alkhtmia Area, Almafaza Locality

Abdalla Abdelghadir Abbas	Education Council, Chair Person
Asmaa Mohamed Tajelsir	Head Teacher, Secretary, Education Council
Ahmed Mohamed Elfekki	Education Council
Awadalla Mohamed Elkhalifa	Education Council
Abdelateef Ahmed Elsheikh	Education Council
Abdelhalim Ahmed Alammas	Education Council + (Imam)
Mohamed Tajelsir	Education Council
Mawada Hassan Mohamed Ali	Education Council

Abdalla Bin Rawahaa Basic School for Boys – Hai Elmaidan Area, Alhawata Locality

Elfatih Eltayeb Mohamed	Education Council, Chair Person
Abuzaid Adam Mohamed	Head Teacher (Secretary, Education Council)
Adil Mustafa Zain Eldein	Education Council + SRC
Abdalziz Abdalla Mohamed	Education Council
Fawzi Ibrahim Hassan	Education Council + Popular Committee
Yassin Aballa Abu Bakker	Education Council
Gasim Elsid Bashir Mohamed	Education Council + Popular Committee
Abdalla Hassan Elbashir	Education Council + Popular Committee
Haidar Bushra	Education Council , Pharmacist

Al-Mothana Bin Amro Basic (Mixed) School – Wad Alshaer Area, Alhawata Locality

Ahmed Abdelghadir Adam	Education Council
Mutasim Abdalla Ali	Head Teacher, Secretary, Education Council)
Anas Rabih Elbashir	Education Council
Abdelkhalig Mohamed	Education Council
Abdelrahaman Hassan	Education Council
Abdelrahaman Ibrahim	Education Council
Fathelrahman Eltayeb	Education Council + Imam
Abbas Balla Fadlemula	Education Council
Mohamed Mahamoud	Education Council + Popular Committee

6.3 Annex 3: Research Instruments

Semi open Questionnaire #1

(for collecting information from SMoE on establishment and functioning school council and community engagement policy)

Guidelines for facilitators

Name State

When was the school council policy established in Kassala State / El Gedaref State?

When was the school council policy established in Kassala State / El Gedaref State?

Is the policy State specific? YES NO

If yes, what is/are the differences with the policy of other states?

1. What are the main tasks/responsibilities of the school council?

1.

2.

3.

4.

2. Does the policy specify a specific task that refers to the responsibility of the school council and/or the wider community in relation to enrolment/retention of students? YES NO

If yes how is/are these task(s) formulated ?

Can you give examples of good practises ?

3. Does the policy specify task(s) that refer(s) to the responsibility of the school council and/or the wider community in relation to dropout of students?? YES NO

If yes how is/are these task(s) formulated ?

Can you give examples of good practises ?

4. Does Does the policy specify task(s) that refer(s) to the responsibility of the school council and/or the wider community to support to girl's education ? YES NO

If yes how is/are these task(s) formulated ?

Can you give examples of good practises ?

5. Is there a specific task that refers to support to quality improvement?	?
YES NO	
If yes how is/are these task(s) formulated ?	
Can you give examples of good practises ?	

6. Does the policy specify the collaboration with the wider community, stipulate the possibility for collaboration with the local imam, other community leaders?	?
YES NO	
If yes how is/are these task(s) formulated ?	
Can you give examples of good practises ?	

7. Please rank the different areas of possible support by PTA's listed below in order of importance (1 is the most important)	
management of infrastructure (construction, rehabilitation, maintenance)	
support to teacher performance (selection of teachers, monitoring of presence and performance)	
support to student's performance	
monitoring of school budgets	
support to access, enrolment and retention	
support to vulnerable children	
monitoring of financial reporting to communities	
organizing co-curricular activities	
Other, namely	

8. Please Please rank the different areas of possible support by village leaders listed below in order of importance (1 is the most important)	
management of infrastructure (construction, rehabilitation, maintenance)	
support to teacher performance (selection of teachers, monitoring of presence and performance)	
support to student's performance	
monitoring of school budgets	
support to access, enrolment and retention	
support to vulnerable children	
monitoring of financial reporting to communities	
organizing co-curricular activities	
Other, namely	

9. Does the policy foresee the opening of a bank account by the school council (mandatory/arrangements for accountability/inspection, etc.)

? YES NO

Can you give examples of good practises ?

10. Does the policy offer opportunities for fundraising

YES NO

?

Can you give examples of good practises ?

11. What are the selection and election criteria (e.g. education level, having children in the school) for school council members?

YES NO

How are the elections arranged?

Can you give examples of good practises?

12 What does the policy state about membership (min/max number, number

YES NO

Can you give examples of good practises?

Semi open Questionnaire #2

(for collecting information from members Education Council (school level) on establishment and functioning school council and community engagement policy)

Guidelines for facilitators

Name State		
When was the school council policy established in Kassala State / El Gedaref State?		
Is the policy State specific?	YES	NO
If yes, what is/are the differences with the policy of other states?		

1. Do all members have a copy of the education council policy?	YES	NO
Are the roles and responsibilities of the education council policy clear to all of you?	YES	NO
Which role is the easiest to full fill and why?		
Which role is the most difficult to full fill and why?		
Are there other parts of the policy that are not clear to you?	YES	NO
Which areas should be clarified? possible solutions/alternatives, whether in their view the council could take such action		

2. Have you been trained /coached prior entering or during your membership in the council?	YES	NO
If yes, in which areas members were trained?		

3. How often a year the council meets?
What is the participation level of the members?
Who initiates the meeting?
How is the meeting organized? (Who sets the agenda/minutes, follow up?)
What were the topics of the last two agenda's?

4. Does the education council collect school fees?	YES	NO
If yes, what are the criteria for setting the amount of the parent contribution? (policy, practise?)		
If yes, how is the parent contribution collected?		
If yes, how is the annual budget determined (process, who makes budget)?		
If yes, how were the school fees spend over past 2 years ?		
If yes, are you happy with the way the budget is made and with the budget items?		
If yes, who is making the payments?		
If yes, how is the budget monitored, including payments to teachers?		
If not, why does the council not collect fees?		
Does the council generate other sources?	YES	NO

If yes, from where? (MoSE/other government sources/private sector/community, other resources)
If yes, how did they manage?
Constraints and possible solutions
If not, why not?

5. How does the council relate with its constituency, the parents and the children? (regular meetings, in addition incidental meetings, visits to certain families)	
Do all members participate satisfactory (actively and responsibly)?	YES NO
If not, why not?	
Possible solutions?	
How is the relationship between the council and the Head teacher?	
Are there conflicting roles?	
How is the relationship between the council and the village leader(s)?	
Possible solutions for strengthening/improving relationship?	
How is the relationship between the council and the Imam(s)?	
Did the council ever contact the imam on certain issues related to education. If yes on which topic(s)	
Possible solutions for strengthening/improving relationship?	
Does being a member of the school board sometimes lead to conflicting roles within community?	

6. Are the members of the council a good representation of the (entire) community, including the landless and the poor?		YES	NO
If yes, how did the council manage to get a good representation?			
If not, why did the council not succeed?			
Possible solutions for better engaging parents in their children's learning			
Does the council have contact with all parents?	YES	NO	
If yes, how? If not, why not?			

7. Is there any mentioning in the policy on the role and/or responsibilities of the education council towards enrolment and retention issues.		YES	NO
If yes, does this help, does it give guidance, give suggestions to the council to respond to these issues?			
Does the council pay attention to the enrolment of first grade students, particularly girls	YES	NO	
If yes, how? If no, why not?			
Does the council give special support/attention/ incentives to the enrolment of vulnerable children (poor, disabled, orphans)?	YES	NO	
If yes, how? If no, why not?			
Does the council know or keep track of the completion rate/success rates?	YES	NO	
If yes, how? If no, why not?			
Does the education council organize annually enrolment campaign?	YES	NO	
If yes, what is the experience? If not, why does the council not organize such a campaign?			

For mixed schools: Does the council monitor equal numbers of boys' and girls'		
Does the council pay special support/attention to the enrolment of vulnerable children/ incentives?		
YES NO		
If yes, how does the council address this? (is money spent?)		
If not, why not?		
Is there any mentioning in the policy on the role and/or the responsibilities of the education council on dropout issues?	YES	NO
If yes, how does the council address the issues related to the dropout of students?		
If yes, does the council pay specific attention to the dropout of girls?		
If not, why not?		
Does the education council know or keep track of dropout rates?	YES	NO
If yes, how does the council keep track?		
If not, why does the council not address this?		

8. Did the council give support to infrastructural development and maintenance, e.g. classroom, toilet facilities, boundary walls, access to clean water, fans, etc. ?	YES	NO
If yes, what kind of support?		
If not, why not?		
Did he council give support to qualitative development: e.g. provision of teaching and/or learning resources like charts, maps, library books, reference books for teachers and students, etc.?	YES	NO
If yes, what kind of support?		
If not, why not?		
Does the council monitors teacher presence and performance?	YES	NO
If yes, how is it monitoring the teacher's presence and performance?		
If not, why not?		
Does the education council manage the school infrastructure (classrooms/water and toilet facilities/school compound)?	YES	NO
If yes, how is this organized? If not, why not?		
Does the council provide support to co-curricular activities	YES	NO
If yes, what kind of support?		
If not, why not?		
Do parents/community members have any part in giving input into curriculum/content?	YES	NO
Do you have suggestions for content (change)?		
Are parents actively involved/ participate in delivering curriculum?		

Please rank the different areas of possible support by Education councils listed below in order of importance (1 is the most important)	
management of infrastructure (construction, rehabilitation, maintenance)	
support to teacher performance (selection of teachers, monitoring of presence and performance)	

support to student's performance	
monitoring of school budgets	
support to access, enrolment and retention	
support to vulnerable children	
monitoring of financial reporting to communities	
organizing co-curricular activities	
Other, namely	

Please cross out the different areas of possible support which could be done now by education council	
management of infrastructure (construction, rehabilitation, maintenance)	
support to teacher performance (selection of teachers, monitoring of presence and performance)	
support to student's performance	
monitoring of school budgets	
support to access, enrolment and retention	
support to vulnerable children	
monitoring of financial reporting to communities	
organizing co-curricular activities	
Other, namely	

9. Earlier studies show that the perception of parents about what children learn in school is limited. What can be done by the education council to improve the parental involvement?

What can be done by the education council to strengthen the overall community involvement with the school?

Why did you become a member of the education council?

Semi open Questionnaire #3

(for collecting information from Imam and other community leaders)

Guideline for facilitators

Name community	
Date	

1. Do you sometimes visit the school? (all leaders)	YES	NO
If yes , why do you visit the school?		
If yes, how often do you visit the school?		
If not, why don't you visit school?		

2. Do you know the school community well? (all leaders)	YES	NO	
If yes, do you know the Head teacher well? YES NO			
If yes, what do discuss with the head master?			
If yes, do you know the community well? Do you know the teachers/students/parents of students			
	None	Some	Most or all
Teachers			
Students			
Parents of the students			

3 What are according to you the main issues/problems of the school? (all leaders)

4. Do you have a relationship with the education council?	YES	NO
If yes, what kind of relationship? (conflicting roles)		
If yes, are you satisfied about the functioning of the education council? YES NO		
Explain your answer (constraints, issues, issues solved)		
If yes, how do you rate the relation of the council with the community, the parents and the children? (regular meetings, incidental meetings, visits to certain families, etc.)		
Are you satisfied about the management of the school infrastructure by the education council? (classrooms/water and toilet facilities/school compound? (all leaders) YES NO		
Explain your answer		

5. Are the members of the council a good representation of the (entire) community, including the landless and the poor? YES NO

Explain your answer

6. Do you know the education council policy? (all leaders) YES NO

If yes , are the roles and responsibilities of education council policy clear to you?	YES	NO
Do you think you can play a role in the school?		
7. What other community organisations give support to the school?		
How do they do this?		
What other community organizations give support to poor families and their children's schooling?		

8. Do you sometimes talk about education in the mosque? (imam only)	YES	NO
If yes, what do you say about education?		

9. Do you sometimes refer to the primary school in the mosque? (imam only)	YES	NO
If yes, in which respect?		
Do you think that the mosque could play a bigger role in the schooling of children?	YES	NO
If yes, how?		

10. Please rank the different areas of possible support by village leaders listed below in order of importance (1 is the most important)	
management of infrastructure (construction, rehabilitation, maintenance)	
support to teacher performance (selection of teachers, monitoring of presence and performance)	
support to student's performance	
monitoring of school budgets	
support to access, enrolment and retention	
support to vulnerable children	
monitoring of financial reporting to communities	
organizing co-curricular activities	
Other, namely	
11. Do you have suggestions for improving the overall school outcomes?	
ensure the maximum enrolment of first grade students, particularly girls	
provide special support to the enrolment of vulnerable children (poor, disabled, orphans) (attention/incentives/etc)	
improve the results/learning outcomes of the children?	
reduce teacher and student absenteeism	
reduce dropout rates	
improve the school infrastructure	
improve engaging parents in their children's learning	
improve perception of parents about what children learn in school?	

Semi open Questionnaire #4

(for collecting information from Head teachers)

Guideline for facilitators

Name community	
Date	

1. Do you have a copy of the education council policy?	YES	NO
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2. Are the roles and responsibilities of education council policy clear to you?	YES	NO
Which role is the easiest to fulfil and why?		
Which role is the most difficult for them to fulfil and why?		

3. Have you been trained /coached prior or during your participation in the council?	YES	NO
If yes, by whom?		
If yes, were you satisfied about the inputs?		

4. How many times a year does the council meet? (regular meetings, incidental meetings)		
Who initiates the meeting?		
How is the meeting organized?		
How do you rate the relation of the council with the community, the parents and the children? (visits to certain families?)		
Does the council have contact with all parents?	YES	NO
If yes, how? If not, why not?		

5. Do all members participate satisfactory (actively and responsibly)?	YES	NO
If not, why not (due to illiteracy, awareness, lack of interest?)		
Possible solutions?		
How is your relationship with the council?		
Are there conflicting roles?		

6. How is the relationship between the council and village leaders?	
Good/satisfactory/ not good/no relationship	
Possible solutions for strengthening/improving relationship?	

7. How is the relationship between the council and the Imam(s)?	
Good/satisfactory/ not good/no relationship	

Did the council ever contact the imam on certain issues related to education?	YES	NO
If yes on which topic(s)		
Possible solutions for strengthening/improving relationship?		
Are there serious conflicts between groups in the community that is affecting the management of the school?	YES	NO
If yes, about which issues?		

8. Are the members of the council a good representation of the (entire) community, including the landless and the poor?	YES	NO
If yes, how did the council manage?		
If not, why did the council not succeed?		
Possible solutions for better engaging parents in their children's learning		

9. Does the education council collect school fees?	YES	NO
If yes,		
What are the criteria for fixing parent contribution? (policy, practise?)		
How is the parent contribution collected ?		
How are the school fees spent?		
Who is making the payments?		
Who is monitoring the budget, including any payments to teachers?		
How was the money spent over past 2 years?		
If not, why does the council not collect fees?		

10. Does the council generate other sources?	YES	NO
If yes, from where? (SM0E/other government sources/private sector/other community resources)		
How did they manage?		
Constraints and possible solutions		
If not, why not?		

11. Does the school pay attention to the enrolment of first grade students, particularly girls?	YES	NO
If yes, how (support council)?		
If not, why not?		

12. Does the school give special support/attention/ incentives to the enrolment of vulnerable children (poor, disabled, orphans)?	YES	NO
If yes, how (actively supported by education council)?		
If not, why not?		

13. Does the school know or keep track of the completion rate/success rates?	YES	NO
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If yes, how (support by council?)
If no, why not?

14. Does the education council organize annually enrolment campaign?	YES	NO
If yes, what is the experience?		
If not, why does the education/council not organize such a campaign?		
For mixed schools: Does the council monitor equal numbers of boys' and girls' ?		

15. Does the council pay special support/attention to the enrolment of vulnerable children/incentives?	YES	NO
If yes, how (support by council/is money spent?)		
If not, why not?		

16. Does the education council know or keep track of dropout rates?	YES	NO
If yes, how does the council keep track?		
If not, why does the council not address this?		

17. Did the council give support to infrastructural development and maintenance? (e.g. classroom, toilet facilities, boundary walls, access to clean water, fans, etc.)	YES	NO
If yes, what kind of support?		
If not, why not?		

18. Does the education council manage the school infrastructure? (classrooms/water and toilet facilities/school compound)	YES	NO
If yes, how is this organized? If not, why not?		

19. Did the council give support to qualitative development? (provision of teaching and/or learning resources like charts, maps, library books, reference books for teachers and students, etc.)	YES	NO
If yes, what kind of support?		
If not, why not?		

20. Does the council monitors teacher presence and performance?	YES	NO
If yes, what kind of support?		
If not, why not?		

21. Does the council provide support to co-curricular activities?	YES	NO
If yes, what kind of support?		
If not, why not?		

22. Do parents/community members have any part in giving input into curriculum/content YES NO

Are there suggestions for content?

Are parents actively involved/ participate in delivering curriculum?

23. Please rank the different areas of possible support by PTA's listed below in order of importance (1 is the most important)

management of infrastructure (construction, rehabilitation, maintenance)	
support to teacher performance (selection of teachers, monitoring of presence and performance)	
support to student's performance	
monitoring of school budgets	
support to access, enrolment and retention	
support to vulnerable children	
monitoring of financial reporting to communities	
Organizing co-curricular activities	
Other, namely	

24. Please rank the different areas of possible support by village leaders listed below in order of importance (1 is the most important)

management of infrastructure (construction, rehabilitation, maintenance)	
support to teacher performance (selection of teachers, monitoring of presence and performance)	
support to student's performance	
monitoring of school budgets	
support to access, enrolment and retention	
support to vulnerable children	
monitoring of financial reporting to communities	
organizing co-curricular activities	
Other, namely	

25. What can be done by the education council to improve the limited involvement of parents with education, to make them more interested?

Semi open Questionnaire #5

(for collecting information from parents)

Guideline for facilitators

Name community	
Date	

1. Do you think that the education council has a role with regard to: (explain your answer)
Management water and toilet facilities
Management of school compound
Management of classrooms
Monitoring of teacher presence
Monitoring of student absenteeism
Which responsibility has your priority?

2. Are you satisfied with the management of the school? Explain your answer
Management water and toilet facilities?
Management of school compound?
Management of classrooms?
Monitoring of teacher presence?
Monitoring of student absenteeism?

3. Do you think that the education council has a role with regard to: (explain your answer)
Development or improvement of water and toilet facilities
Development or improvement of school compound
Construction or improvement of classrooms
Construction or improvement of boundary walls (if applicable)
Provision of the teaching and/or learning resources
Other developments?
Which role has your priority?

4. Do you think the education council or community should be more involved in monitoring the enrolment of students	YES	NO
Explain your answer (In what ways?)		
Do you think the education council or community should be more involved in monitoring the retention of students	YES	NO
Explain your answer (In what ways?)		

Do you think the education council or community should be more involved in decreasing the dropout rate?	YES	NO
Explain your answer (In what ways?)		

5. Did member of education council ever visit you to discuss matters related to education or to ask your opinion?				YES	NO
If yes, on which matter?					
Are you interested in functioning of the Education council?				YES	NO
Explain your answer (Would you like to be a member? If so, why?)					
Did you ever attend the education council meetings?				YES	NO
Explain your answer					
How do you evaluate the relationship between the council and the parents?					
Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No relationship		
Do you have suggestions for strengthening/improving relationship between parents and the council and vice versa.?				YES	NO
Explain your answer					
To your knowledge, did the council ever contact the imam on certain issues related to education?				YES	NO
If yes on which topic(s)					
Do you think that the parents contribution is well spent by the education council?				YES	NO
Explain your answer					

6.4 Annex 4: Itinerary Lead Researcher and Researcher

<i>Itinerary Lead Researcher</i>			
October	Preparation, including collection data (Form One)	Place	3 prep days
Monday 2 November	Flight Istanbul-Khartoum		
Tuesday 3 November	Briefing at PERP Office. Finalization of instruments, registration for travel permit	Khartoum	Prep days for field # 1
Wednesday 4 November	Briefing of Researcher and review of instruments, obtaining travel permit	Khartoum	Prep days for field # 2
Thursday 5 November	Review of instruments	Khartoum	Prep days for field # 3
Friday 6 November	Weekend	Khartoum	
Saturday 7 November	Weekend	Khartoum	
Sunday 8 November	Preparation for validation workshop and obtaining travel permit	Khartoum	Prep days for field # 4
Monday 9 November	Validation workshop and obtaining travel permit	Khartoum	Prep days for field # 5
Tuesday 10 November	Development of recoding sheets and obtaining travel permit, working on annexes	Khartoum	Prep days for field # 6
Wednesday 11 November	Development of recording sheets and obtaining travel permit. Meeting at PERP Office	Khartoum	Prep days for field # 7
Thursday 12 November	Development of recording sheets and obtaining travel permit. Meeting at PERP Office	Khartoum	
Friday 13 November	Weekend	Khartoum	Weekend
Saturday 14 November	Weekend	Khartoum	Weekend
Sunday 15 November	Preparation and obtaining travel permit	Khartoum	Prep days for field # 8
Monday 16 November	Preparation and obtaining travel permit. Travel to Kassala	Khartoum	Prep days for field # 9
Tuesday 17 November	Introduction and meeting at SMoE in Kassala city Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Thoaiba Basic School for Girls (community 1) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day # 1
Wednesday 18 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in AMERSFOORT Basic School for Boys (community 2) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day # 2
Thursday 19 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Hadalia Basic School for Boys (community 3) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day # 3
Friday 20 November	Weekend	Kassala	Weekend
Saturday 21 November	Weekend	Kassala	Weekend

Sunday 22 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Alshemaa Basic (Model) for Girls (community 4) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day # 5
Monday 23 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Wad Sharifiy (A) Basic School for Boys (community 5) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day # 6
Tuesday 24 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Wad Sharifiy (B) Basic School for Girls (community 6) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day # 7
Wednesday 25 November	Travel to Gedaref , Meeting with SMoE in Gedaref city. Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Hassan Siddg Basic School for Boys (Grade 1-4) + Deim Bakur Basic School for Boys (Grade 5-8) (community 1) in Gedaref State	Gedaref	Field day # 8
Thursday 26 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Wad Alkobair Basic School for Girls (community 2) in Gedaref State travel to Khartoum	Gedaref	Field day # 9
Friday 27 November	Travel to Amsterdam	Khartoum	Weekend
30 November to 3 December	Daily review and feedback of records of record sheets Researcher and writing draft deliverables	Home	1 working day
3 December to 14 December	Writing draft deliveries and amendments and review	Home	4 working days

Itinerary Researcher			
October	Preparation, including translation, and data collection	Place	5 working days
Monday 9 November	Briefing by Lead researcher and Validation workshop	Khartoum	Prep day for field (1 working day)
Monday 16 November	Travel to Kassala	Khartoum	
Tuesday 17 November	Meeting at SMoE in Kassala city. Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Thoaiba Basic School for Girls (community 1) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day #1
Wednesday 18 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in AMERSFOORT Basic School for Boys (community 2) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day #2
Thursday 19 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Hadalia Basic School for Boys (community 3) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day #3
Sunday 22 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Alshemaa Basic (Model) for Girls (community 4) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day #4
Monday 23 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Wad Sharifiy (A) Basic School for Boys (community 5) in Kassala State	Kassala	Field day #5
Tuesday 24 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Wad Sharifiy (B) Basic School for Girls (community 6) in Kassala State and travel to Gedaref	Kassala	Field day #6
Wednesday 25 November	Travel to Gedaref and introduction. Meeting with SMoE in Gedaref city. Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Hassan Siddg Basic School for Boys (Grade 1-4) + Deim Bakur Basic School for Boys (Grade 5-8) (community 1) in Gedaref State	Gedaref	Field day #7
Thursday 26 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Wad Alkobair Basic	Gedaref	Field day #8

	School for Girls (community 2) in Gedaref State		
Friday 27 November	Weekend	Gedaref	
Saturday 28 November	Weekend	Gedaref	
Sunday 29 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Bin Abbas Basic School for Boys (community 3) in Gedaref State and forward daily notes to Lead Researcher for review	Gedaref	Field day #9
Monday 30 November	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Khalid Bin Alwaleed Basic School for Boys (community 4) in Gedaref State and forward daily notes to Lead Researcher for review	Gedaref	Field day #10
Tuesday 1 December	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Abdalla Bin Rawahaa Basic School for Boys (community 5) in Gedaref State and forward daily notes to Lead Researcher for review	Gedaref	Field day #11
Wednesday 2 December	Interviews, discussions & group discussions in Al-Mothana Bin Amro Basic (Mixed) School (community 6) in Gedaref State and forward daily notes to Lead Researcher for review	Gedaref	Field day #12
Thursday 3 December	Travel to Khartoum	Khartoum	
6 December to 14 December	Support and review the writing of draft deliveries by Lead Researcher. Translation as necessary	Khartoum	5 working day

6.5 Annex 5: List of references

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6.6 Annex 6

Case study Wad El-Koubier Basic School for girls located in Gedaref town, Gedaref State



Introduction

Take initiatives: After the new school was constructed without a fence, a school community initiative emerged to lobby for a fence. It was decided to convince the State Governor, SMOE in a ceremony to fence the school. Prior to the ceremony the school was fenced with the support of all students. Every student brought a stone and put it along the fence line. Thereafter the stones were painted white. During the ceremony the students requested the guests to give their comment, but when the Governor arrived, they asked him for a decision, he replied “admirably” and within a week the school fencing started..

The school

The Wad El-Koubier Basic School is located at the entrance of the Gedaref city from the West, not far away from the main highway Khartoum - Kassala - Port Sudan. The school was constructed about ten years ago replacing the old school which was made of local materials on a large compound which is surrounded by a mainly metal framed, partially open fence. The school building is constructed in a U shape and accommodates besides the eight classrooms, a large room for teachers and one room for the head teacher. The school has 11 teachers, 2 volunteer teachers and 583 students, all are girls. This means that the average class has more than 70 students. The enrolment is increasing each year. Recently it was decided to split the large Grade 1 class into two classes of each 45 students. A classroom made of local materials is therefore under construction. In addition the school has four toilets for the students.

The entire front of the building is surrounded by a veranda. Around the relatively small school yard there is a path which separates the veranda from the playground. On the playground are several trees. To accommodate the increasing number of students more trees have been planted at the side of the school. The intimate setting of the school yard is the place where every morning an assembly is organized. In addition to the administrative announcements the assembly offers the possibility for one of the many societies to present one of their activities. Near the fence are the toilet facilities which are maintained by the students.

Students

Most parents are able to pay the school contribution, however there are 48 so-called orphan children who do not have a father and more than 100 children are from extremely poor families. The school community also has a number of wealthy families. The large majority of the parents are literate, some are well educated and are working as skilled laborers, and a few fathers work in one of the Gulf Countries.

Teachers

All teachers are now very motivated and participate in different committees or have other assigned responsibilities. Except for a small token of 50 SDG and breakfast paid by the Service Committee to the teachers who are involved in the implementation of the camp to prepare eight grade students for the exams the teachers are not getting any allowance. The breakfast of the teachers is partially subsidized by the council (2000 SDG a year) and the remaining cost is paid by the teachers. Most teachers live in the neighbourhood and therefore, except for 2 teachers who are living far away, no transportation allowance is paid..

Training

The head teacher attended a ToT training course on Education Council and followed a short course on Leadership. Some members of the council attended a Capacity Building Workshop on Education Councils organized by UNICEF.

The Education Council

The Education Council has 21 members – four of them including the chairperson are teachers. Two of the teachers are parents of students but they teach elsewhere. In addition to the female teachers and the head teacher the council has four mothers as members. The most active members of the council are the teachers and the mothers. The four mothers have established a group of 16 mothers who operate under the name: "Friends of the School". This group organizes three events annually. The financing of these events, which on average cost 4-500 SDG, is also organized by the mothers' group.

The council meets in their full capacity three times a year. To become more effective the council has divided itself into three committees:

1. The Service Committee, responsible for the overall running of the school. They ensure the delivery of water, electricity, school supplies, etc.
2. The Financial Committee is responsible for the budgeting and the resource mobilization. They collect the parents' contribution. The money collected is given to the headteacher who deposits the money on the school account. One person of the Financial Committee is responsible for the checking of the expenditures made by the HT and the bank account.
3. The Academic Committee is responsible for supporting improvement in the quality of education and in student performance, e. g. by construction of the additional classrooms or by initiating English for Grade 4. The additional lessons do not require money because the English teacher does not ask for additional salary.

Each group working independently, organising their own meetings, preparing the agenda and writing the minutes. . The headteacher participates in these committees if required.

Sources of income

The school has different sources of income:

1. Parents' contribution: The parents have to pay a contribution to the council for the first and the second child, so if a family has more than two children in school they only pay for two children. The contribution is 30 SDG for every student per year. This can be paid in instalments. Orphans (48) and very poor (100) are exempted. As a result about 250 children are exempted to pay their contribution. It is estimated that the council is bale to collect the contribution for about 335 children which is about 10.000 SDG's a year.

2. Collection of enrolment fees (Financial Committee) of the newly enrolled students which is 200 SDG per child. Vulnerable children are exempted. As result the FC is able to collect about SDG 10.000 per year.

One school friend helps the school with the maintenance (in-kind) of the school seating. This school really appreciates this and acknowledged this community contribution by providing honorary membership of the welder in the education council.

3. Rent of two cafeterias generates respectively 300 and 600 SDG per month for 12 months = about 9600 SDG per year.

4. Renting out of a donkey cart for 125 SDG per month for 12 months = 1500 SDG per year.

The Locality does not contribute anything. In addition and if needed a special request is made by letter to certain rich parents to finance unforeseen or certain high costs.

Annual income of the council	
1. Parent contribution	10.000 SDG
2. Entrance fee	10.000 SDG
3. Rent cafeterias	9.600 SDG
4. Rent donkey cart	1500 SDG
Total	31.100 SDG

Annual expenditures

All money collected goes into the bank account. The money is used to pay the utility costs like the electricity bill and water. The amount of water required depends on the season and therefore changes from week to week. Two teachers are made responsible for obtaining the water. In addition money is spent on teaching materials, school supplies, hygiene like soap and brooms, for maintenance and developmental costs like the fence (last year, and the construction of a semi-permanent classroom.

Focus on academic performance

Since 2010 the pass rate of the grade eight students has increased from 62% 100%. The school does not leave students behind in Grade 7. All children from Grade 7 pass to Grade 8. Last year 64 students passed the exam and all of them were admitted to secondary school.



As early as Grade 4, the school begins to identify weaker students. At that level, girls who do not perform very well receive remedial lessons after school time. The school provides some school supplies and an afternoon rest-room plus a free meal at the end of the normal school day (lunch) for both teachers and students who continue learning in these additional classes after the school day.

To prepare the eighth grade students optimally for the basic certificate exam, the school organizes at the end of the academic year a kind of school camp for all Grade 8 students. The students come to school at 7.00 a.m. and work till 6 p.m. to prepare for the exams. To avoid their being overworked, the academic subjects are alternated with co-curricular activities. There is singing, dancing, and lunch. All this is paid for and organized by the school and financed by the resources generated by the Education Council.

Issues related to enrolments, retention and dropout

The school enrolls all children from the neighborhood. The success of the school has resulted in an increased enrolment which has subsequently led to overcrowded classrooms. Despite this, the daily absence of students is very low, and the parents all account for the absence of their child. The school has no dropout problem. The HT explains this by the interest of parents and children in quality education. "If a school provides good quality education, the enrolment, retention and dropout issues are solved".

Support to vulnerable children

As indicated earlier, there more than 100 children who are exempted from paying their school fees due to poverty. In addition, there are 48 orphans enrolled in the school. Furthermore, the school facilitates the provision of school uniforms. One teacher keeps track of parents who cannot afford uniforms or other necessities. She is the contact person with the Zakat Chamber and with the SMOE. Every year the Zakat chamber provides 100 school uniforms, and also bags. Earlier the Chamber paid for a school radio. The fact that the school obtains support for all needed children is explained by the HT in that trust has been built up with the concerned authorities, and not by special relations.

Support to co-curricular activities

The school community expressed their interest in improving the school environment. Their strategy was to use co-curricular activities, the development of various student skills in support of the beautification of the school and the school environment. A specialized teacher was appointed to look after these initiatives. After initiating and implementing all kinds of activities in the field of school improvement e.g. the establishment of a nice school garden, inter murals, attractive classrooms (charts, teaching aids, etc.) but also the organization of co-curricular activities, e.g. dancing and singing, the school became very attractive for the students. This worked as an important motivation for parents to further support the school development and for other parents living in neighbouring areas to send their children to this school (even from private school). As a result the student: teacher ratio in the classes became very high.

The school organizes many co-curricular activities like cultural events, sports, singing, poems, dancing, declamation ... etc. This is what the children like, and this is why they come to school. School gives them much joy. Seven teachers are responsible for organizing and leading the societies: (i) Health, (ii) Sports, (iii) Religion, (iv) Culture, (v) Environment and Hygiene, (vi) Science and (vii) Housekeeping (cooking classes and tailoring). The cultural society organizes an activity every morning prior to the start of the school .

The involvement of the council is limited to the financial support if at all needed. However, as stated earlier the women's group organizes three events a year.

The change

In many schools the members of the education council are not active. In 2010 when the government appointed the HT, this was also the case at the Wad El-Koubier Basic School. The council was not functioning. The council seldom met, few activities were organized by the council. As a result there was a high level of mistrust within the community. The HT

therefore tried to identify educated and honest people. Thereafter the HT called for a general assembly and organized new elections to ensure the election of active members. This was possible since the HT comes from the neighbouring community, so she knows the area well. During the assembly she introduced herself with the



words: I am new and have no past experience. She wanted to become HT because her only interest was the education of children. She also informed the meeting that there were no hidden topics on her agenda. She announced that a bank account will be opened and that in future all payments will be executed through bank transactions. To check the implementation of honest payments a person was appointed to check the financial statements because as she said: "If parents do not trust, they do not pay". The trust is now so high that parents who can afford it are willing to pay blindly for unforeseen or investment costs. According to the HT "the key is honesty and transparency. It is important to show the parents what you did with the money". And she added "The children are the best communicators. When new materials or furniture are purchased or when other developments have taken place, they are the first to inform the parents. Children reflect the changes immediately".

Main factors that have contributed to the absence of absenteeism and drop outs at the school.

- Children love to go to school
- No corporal punishment
- High success rate
- There are many co-curricular activities
- Seriousness of teachers: teachers come on time
- A nice and clean school yard
- Every classroom has basics: benches for all students and fans
- Clean toilets.

These key factors were achieved by:

- A devoted, committed and determined head teacher
- A team of teachers who enjoy children and are interested in teaching
- A motivated and hard-working Education Council
- A interested and supportive community including parents

- Trust and accountability
- Delegation of responsibilities

Certain particular conditions pertained to make this school function the way it does: being situated close to the State Ministry of Education and having a few rich families who have supported the school. For sure this has had a positive effect on the development of the school. However, when asked if the student health check at the start of year by the SMOE was also taking place in schools situated in the rural areas, the HT said: "If the school was far away from the Ministry, we would have had to form a committee whose task it was to invite the health workers and find resources for their transport."

6.7 Annex 7: Communities visited

<i>The 12 communities visited:</i>	
Rural community #1	Hadalia Area, a homogeneous community (similar tribal background) situated at about 2 hours away from Kassala town
Rural community #2	Wagar Area, a heterogeneous community situated at about 2 hours away from Kassala town
Rural community #3	Wad Shariefiy Area, a homogeneous community situated at about 1 hour away from Kassala town
Rural community #4	Wad Shariefiy Area, a heterogeneous community situated at about 1 hour away from Kassala town
Urban community #1	Banat Area - Square (21), a homogeneous community in Kassala town
Urban community #2	Banat Area - Square (22), a heterogeneous community in Kassala town
Rural community #5	Alkhtmia Area, a homogeneous community (similar tribal background) situated at about 2 hours away from Gedaref town
Rural community #6	Almafaza Area, a heterogeneous community situated at about 2 hours away from Gedaref town
Rural community #7	Wad Alshaer Area, a homogeneous community situated at about 1 hour away from Gedaref town
Rural community #8	Hai Elmaidan Area, a heterogeneous community situated at about 1 hour away from Gedaref town
Urban community #3	Deim Bakur (October Area), a homogeneous community in Gedaref town
Urban community #4	Wad Alkobaeir Area, a heterogeneous community in Gedaref town

	<i>Name community</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Number of members present</i>
Community # 1	Banat Janoub (South) - Square (21) –Kassala Locality: Thoaiba Basic School for Girls	17/11/2015	8
Community # 2	Banat Janoub (South) - Square (21) –Kassala Locality: AMERSFOORT Basic School for Boys	18/11/2015	9
Community # 3	Hadalia – North Delta Locality: Hadalia Basic School for Boys	19/11/2015	14
Community # 4	Wagar – North Delta Locality: Alshemaa Basic School (Model) for Girls	22/11/2015	5
Community # 5	Wad Shariefiy – Locality: Rural Kassala Wad Shariefiy: (A) Basic School for Boys	23/11/2015	6
Community # 6	Wad Shariefiy – Locality: Rural Kassala Wad Shariefiy (B) Basic School for Girls	24/11/2015	18
Community # 7	October Area – Gedaref Locality Hassan Siddg Basic School for Boys (Grade 1-4) + Deim Bakur Basic School for Boys (Grade 5-8)	25/11/2015	18
Community # 8	Wad Alkobaeir Area – Gedaref Locality Wad Alkobaeir Basic School for Girls	26/11/2015	6
Community # 9	Almafaza Area - Almafaza Locality Bin Abbas Basic School for Boys	29/11/2015	9
Community # 10	Alkhtmia Area - Almafaza Locality	30/11/2015	8

	Khalid Bin Alwaleed Basic School for Boys		
Community # 11	Hai Elmaidan Area - Alhawata Locality Abdalla Bin Rawahaa Basic School for Boys	1/12/2015	9
Community # 12	Wad Alshaer Area, Alhawata Locality Al-Mothana Bin Amro Basic (Mixed) School	2/12/2015	9

VI. study 5 : The role and value of education – perceptions of parents and community members

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AT	Assistance technique
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission
IGA	Income Generating Activities
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans
IT	Information Technology
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PERP	Primary Education and Retention Programme
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SAC	State Advisory Committee
SCS	Save the Children, Sweden
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) in Sudan addresses the challenge of children who drop out of school, in five states: Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan. It is financed by the European Union, through interventions by SOFRECO (Paris), Save the Children Sweden (SCS) and UNICEF. Six research studies have been conducted with the aim to define causes behind the high number of out-of-school-children (OOSC).

This study was carried out in two states: Red Sea State and Blue Nile State. The data collection took place in six locations in both states. The aim of this study on the role and value of education was to understand in what ways and how far attitudes towards education may have an effect on dropout and retention of children in schooling.

The data collection made use of three methods:

- Desk review
- Semi-structured interviews, and
- Participatory Impact Assessment

The data were provided by 42 groups of 3-5 participants, in total 142 participants in Red Sea State, and 39 groups with 170 participants in Blue Nile State. The groups represented teachers, PTAs and different representatives from the respective communities.

The key findings show that all types of stakeholders, inclusive of parents with children out-of-school, overall appreciate the current academic education, but find that it cannot stand alone. To be community-relevant there is need for a combination of academic, religious, technical and life skills education. This could as well be offered as adult education.

The community members noted that the current school system is has little attraction and relevance as there is substantial shortage of books, furniture, sufficiently educated teachers together with unsatisfactory work conditions for the teachers. Finally, the school environment is not found to be adequately supportive of learning.

The findings in the two states showed no significant gender bias.

With reference to the findings and reading of other studies the key recommendations are:

- Capacity development of systems and structures, knowledge and skills and systems and equipment be expanded. This may be based on a focused needs assessment;
- Establishment/support of productive schools, which combine academics with practical and life skill subjects. This would make give academic subjects relevance and would help schools and families in generating local income;
- Involvement of community members in school development through thematic PTA sub-committees;
- Equal distribution of funds for education;
- Sufficient provision of basic materials, furniture and classrooms;
- Realisation that OOSC may engage in criminal activities, which are adverse to the interests of nation;
- Strengthening of teacher education to be more diverse and efficient applying modern training methods and offer training at state level to avoid long disruptions of the education.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background for the study

The Primary Education Retention Programme (PERP) in Sudan addresses the challenge of children who drop out of school, in five states: Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan. It is financed by the European Union, through interventions by SOFRECO (Paris), Save the Children Sweden (SCS) and UNICEF. Six research studies have been conducted with the aim to define causes behind the high number of out-of-school-children (OOSC).

1.2 Context of the study

The signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) put an end to a historical civil war in Sudan and resulted in the country's division: South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan (2011). While the cessation was expected to bring peace and stability, there are still many challenges threatening the future prospects of the two countries. For the Republic of Sudan, the war in Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Abyei, and as yet unresolved borders disputes have been negatively impacting the country's stability and development. The economic crisis due to the loss of 75 per cent of oil revenue, coupled with the global economic crisis and the Arab Spring, has narrowed the chances of bringing positive change to the living conditions of 34 million Sudanese.

At the administrative level, Sudan is adopting a system of fiscal decentralization aimed at empowering sub-national governments. This system takes into consideration the wide regional disparities and mitigates the root causes of conflict. The education sector in the country is, therefore, shaped and affected by these major political and administrative changes.⁶⁸ The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for planning, training, curricula, evaluation and foreign relations. Primary responsibility for basic education lies with localities, which have very limited financial resources to effectively carry out their responsibilities. All other aspects of the educational process have been delegated to the states, which also participate in federal functions through their representation in the National Council of General Education.

Sudan has committed itself to all international declarations, including providing the basic right of education to all of its citizens. It is among the signatories of the MDGs

⁶⁸ UNICEF Report: Out of School Children, 2014

as well as the EFA goals, and has taken several policy and programme initiatives to achieve these international goals. More recently Sudan has committed to aligning national strategic objectives with the internationally agreed sustainable development goals. Specific laws and acts have been adopted to regulate and promote basic education in Sudan, including the Basic Education School Regulation of 1992, National Centre for Curricula and Educational Research Act of 1996, The General Education Planning Act of 2000, and Parent-Teacher Associations Regulation of 1992. By virtue of the Council of Ministers Resolution No. 1799 of 1990, pre-school has become an integral part of the formal education system.

The 2001 Education Act stipulates that every Sudanese child has the right to basic education. The five-year Strategic Plans for 2007-2011 and 2012-2016 give support to this law by providing policies and strategies for achieving the right to education.

The Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) from 2012 prioritizes education as a key factor in addressing the root causes of poverty and tribal conflict. The paper emphasizes that failing to provide greater access to and enhanced quality of education could delay the reform of the country's economy. Education is deemed as critical for sustained growth and increased labour productivity.

Finally, UNICEF's study on Out-of-School Children 2014, found that the data for OOSC for the two states, Red Sea state and Blue Nile State, selected for study 5 are as below. The findings are indicated in percentages.

Table 5 – Rate of OOSC In the two states

	<i>BOYS</i>	<i>GIRLS</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
Red Sea State	33.8	24.3	29.4
Blue Nile State	46.3	47.2	47.2

The figures illustrate that around one-third of all children are out-of-school. With due respect for gender/cultural factors the table also shows that there is no predominant gender bias with regard to non-attendance for children between 6-13 years of age, which was the age-group covered by this study. The substantially higher OOSC rate in Blue Nile State partly reflects the situation of conflict.

2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH OF THE STUDY

2.1 Purpose of the study

The six studies planned as part of PERP aim at giving a significant opportunity to understand in-depth how and why children drop out of school or are unable to access schooling. Dropout is a complex and multidimensional problem, and the six studies give a chance to examine the issue from a range of perspectives. The insights that the studies provide intend to serve as input into planning, training and the management of schools and the education system. More immediately, the results will provide a stronger basis for the implementation of the PERP through Save the Children Sweden and UNICEF.

2.2 Scope and focus of the study

The aim of this study on the role and value of education – perceptions of parents and community members - was to understand in what ways and how far attitudes towards education may have an effect on dropout and retention of children in schooling. The value that parents put on their children's education is a critical factor in motivating the child to make the most of school and to maximise learning. Further, the value of education in the eyes of the wider community can be an important factor in giving status to the school, to teachers and to quality learning in general. Another aspect is the role that education is perceived to play in the lives of individuals and families – accessing further opportunities for learning, gaining employment, achieving new socio-economic status, or taking on new roles in the community.

This study included investigations in twelve locations, six in Blue Nile and Red Sea States respectively. In Blue Nile State in particular, there is a wide diversity of ethnic groups, some of whom appear to place little value on schooling and formal education. In both states, the reasons for attitudes such as these have not yet been investigated. The study should therefore seek to elucidate these attitudes, exploring the following questions, among others:

- What are the views of parents' and other community members regarding education and schooling? Why do they not send their children to school?
- What attitudes do stakeholders demonstrate towards the school curriculum, the teachers, school conditions and other aspects of formal education?

- How relevant is education in school felt to be to the life and values of the community?
- What are the views on what education leads to in terms of further opportunities and livelihoods? What do people hope for from education, and what they can actually achieve through it in their current circumstances and context?
- In what ways could schooling be more relevant to community values and aspirations?
- How far are local language and culture taken into account in schooling? Could they be integrated as both a means (language of instruction) and content (local knowledge) of schooling?
- How could local people play a greater role in organising and managing the education of children?

2.3 Methods and tools

The data collection comprised:

- Desk review
- Semi-structured interviews
- Participatory impact assessment (PIA)

Overall the study tries to define the variety of components (i.e. cultural, social, economic and security-related), which play a key role for the out-of-school status. With this as the overarching frame for and understanding of the study environment, this study captures education challenges as perceived by various groups of community members allowing them to propose changes they view as critical for making education relevant in their respective locations.

2.3.1 Desk review

The international expert reviewed existing data on the out-of-school situation in Sudan. This included familiarization with national policies, legislation and strategies, and review of other studies and evaluations on out-of-school children.

The review determined the focus of the questions included in the semi-structured interviews.

2.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to assess whether individual leaders, be it head teachers or local leaders, have different views and focus than the community at large. The interviews were conducted one-to-one to allow for sufficient details.

The interviews were guided by a template indicating areas of specific interest for this study. The template for the head teachers was different from that used for the local leader interview and the community member sessions since their background and vision may differ from those of the community:

Table 6 – Questionnaire for head teachers

<i>school education attribution towards better adult lives</i>	<i>defined quality</i>	<i>school education shortcomings in building better lives</i>	<i>defined shortcomings in building better lives</i>	<i>proposed changes</i>
a)				

b)				
Etc.				

The approach was the same for the local leaders, but the questions were similar to those posed to the community groups. The questions used in the individual interviews of local leaders were as follows:

Table 7 – Questionnaire for local leaders

<i>which education is relevant for children and young people to have satisfactory adult lives?</i>	<i>what makes this education/subject relevant?</i>	<i>how will this skill/knowledge help the child live a satisfactory adult life?</i>	<i>proposed improvements of the education in the mentioned subject</i>
Etc.			

There were additional questions for the local leaders, who also defined the aspirations which he and his community⁶⁹ have for their children. Further, which behaviour, skills, knowledge, and attitude should they possess, and what should the family, social and professional life of the children be like? However, the individual interviews with head teachers and local leaders proved difficult to conduct; as a result, the data did not form a consistent validation source and were left out of this analysis.

The answers were noted and entered into the template *after* the interview, typically the same evening. Where several local leaders gave the same answers the number of same answers was indicated in brackets behind the answer. This provides a one-glance view of community perception of strengths and weaknesses of the current education system in the visited locations⁷⁰.

2.3.3 Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA)

PIA provides a picture of the teacher, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), parental and local community perception of education and of which changes are required to make education relevant and attractive.

In PIA different groups of stakeholders aimed to form focus groups of five members each. Each group worked independently and discussed identical, open questions in their respective forums without presence of staff, consultant or other stakeholders. The groups gave their individual perception of and experience with the local basic education at large. One group member in each group acted as group secretary. The scorings, which are noted, are those that the entire group could agree on.

The composition of school representatives aimed at being the following:

- One group of 3-5 female teachers
- One group of 3-5 male teachers
- One group of 5 school committee members.

The composition of community representatives aimed at being as below:

⁶⁹ All leaders were men – both those participating in the individual interviews and those forming a PIA group

⁷⁰ All findings presented in annex 3A-3D⁷⁰

- One group of 5 mothers with children in school
- One group of 5 mothers with children out of school
- One group of 5 fathers with children in school
- One group of 5 fathers with children out of school
- One group of local traders
- One group of local leaders (supplementary to the interview with one local leader)

Not all locations managed to recruit five members for all groups. However, the exercise went as planned with the number of community members present.

This method enables comparison of answers partly across different communities, and partly across different groupings (e.g. mothers/fathers, parents/community leader), across same groupings (mothers at each of the 12 sites, local leaders at each of the 12 sites), and finally an analysis of the total prioritised scorings at one site compared with total prioritised scorings at another site. This study makes primarily use of the latter.

2.4 Distribution of data providers

The data collection took place in six locations in respectively Red Sea State and Blue Nile State. The locations were selected to be representative for the out-of-school situation which means selection of more, distant rural locations than city/town locations. In each state, locations with major OOSC problems were selected.

The data were provided by a total of 81 groups and 312 participants. The distribution on the two states was as below:

Table 8 – Distribution of totals of data providers

	RED SEAT STATE	BLUE NILE STATE
NO. OF GROUPS	42	39
NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	142	170

The groups of data providers were distributed as below:

Table 9 – Distribution of groups of data providers

TYPE OF STAKEHOLDERS	RED SEA STATE		BLUE NILE STATE	
	No. of Groups	No. of participants	No. of Groups	No. of participants
Local Leaders	3	9	2	5
Fathers with children out of school	6	21	3	15
Fathers with children in school	5	19	5	27
Mothers with children out of school	6	28	6	30
Mothers with children in school	6	10	7	41
Female teachers	5	29	6	27
Male teachers	4	16	2	6

Traders	4	10	3	9
School Committee	3	10	5	10
TOTAL	42	142	39	170

The above shows that the average group size in Red Sea State was 3.4 participants per group, while the average number of participants per group in Blue Nile State was 4.4. This is a significant difference which may arise from the lesser attendance in education – and thus higher dissatisfaction with the current education system.

2.5 Data validation

With some similar questions in both the PIA and the interview it is possible to compare findings from the three types of data collection, respectively desk studies, semi-structured interviews and PIAs.

As explained in chapter 2.3.3 the use of PIA provides a number of data comparisons and angles to the data analysis.

2.6 Study challenges

The study was conducted without major challenges apart from the availability of head teachers and local leaders for individual interviews. Since the interviews were few and very different in character and outcome, the data cannot serve as validation of the information given by the community members.

The idea was to assess whether head teachers and individual local leaders would have different perceptions of the relevance of the current education and would give different reasons for the high rate of out-of-school children. Without interviews with both head teacher and local leader for each of the 12 sites, such comparison cannot be made and as a result these data have been left out.

Other unplanned interviews with relevant authorities have to some extent replaced the above interviews by adding a perspective on the major scorings. The use of these data is referred to when used in the analysis of the findings.

1 STUDY FINDINGS

The findings from all three types of data sources are used to highlight the eight questions listed in the TORs. The eight TOR questions form the headlines of the main findings, while additional findings are treated in separate, subsequent sections.

All answers to the study questions are based on the findings emphasizing on the detailed results presented in annex 3.

2.7 Views of parents' and other community members regarding education and schooling resulting in low/no school attendance

In the PIA forms one column was allocated to suggest changes, which implicitly provides a picture of reasons for not sending children to school. There was no provision for describing perceived challenges. The two states suggested many and diverse changes, but the significantly highest scoring changes are the following⁷¹:

Table 10 – Reasons for low school attendance

EDUCATION CHALLENGES	READ SEA STATE No. of scores	BLUE NILE STATE No. of scores
More and qualified teachers	11	23
Books and visual aids	11	18
Improved learning environment	-	16
Provision of food and water	11	-

The scorings on education challenges were multiple and diverse in both states as indicated in annexes 3A and 3B. The higher scores in Blue Nile State show that the many responses of Blue Nile communities are concentrated on fewer education challenges, which results in higher scores for each of three highest scoring challenges in Blue Nile State. The two states both highlight “more and qualified teachers” and “books and visual aids” as issues which need serious attention, while each state has a different third score. This shows that although having similar views, the two states do also present differences which need individual attention.

⁷¹ All scores are found in annex 3A and 3B.

The major emphasis is on teacher qualifications, which tallies well with the major dropout seen after class 5. The latter indicates that some teachers may not be sufficiently qualified for satisfactory teaching in the upper primary classes. Further, it may relate to the use of academic and hardly practical teaching methods, and also to the level of teacher knowledge within the taught subjects. indicate

The second score, more books and visual aids, directly relates to relevance of attending education since learning without books is ineffective. Interestingly, parents mentioned visual aids, seemingly acknowledging that intellectual learning has to be supported by seeing how the knowledge works in reality, e.g. weighing one, three and five kilos of stone to feel the differences in the weight.

Blue Nile state emphasised the learning environment which, apart from cleanliness and a green environment, also included enough and completed class rooms. The groups mentioned that teaching environmental improvements could enable children to contribute towards environmental improvements in their homes as well.

Red Sea State mentioned food and water as factors of importance for school attendance. This could indicate a need for some direct and immediate benefits of schooling or a need for securing the basic needs of the children, if withdrawing them from child labour at home or elsewhere and thus making them contribute to covering their own basic needs .This attention to coverage of basic needs also showed in other preferences presented in section 3.2.

The similarity in the low rating of the current academic education in the two very different states is striking and suggests the need for changes in academic education and school management at both national and state levels, while the extra-curricular needs are significantly different.

2.8 Stakeholder attitude towards the school curriculum, the teachers, school conditions and other aspects of formal education

The questionnaires asked community opinions on what school education should comprise to be relevant in the respective communities.

Initially the templates were developed to capture more traditional school subjects in terms of language (currently Arabic), mathematics and religion, but this proved insufficient. At all 12 sites a picture came up showing a need for a four-tier curriculum, which may reflect the situation of poverty and thereby a major need for subjects which can help the children, their families and the community improve livelihood and life quality – the latter with reference to the preferences concerning religious and life skills education.

The need for a four-tier education system shows in the following⁷²:

Table 11 – Attitude towards curriculum

PREFERRED CURRICULUM SUBJECTS	RED SEA STATE No. of scores ⁷³	BLUE NILE STATE No. of scores
Academic education	46	35
Religious education	41	46

⁷² Detailed and full scorings are found in annex 3.

⁷³ The groups could give more than one score, which explains why the scores are more than the number of groups

Technical training	42	22
Life skills education	18	13

Despite having a high rate of OOSC in Blue Nile State, the communities here clearly indicate a need for academic and religious education – in other words an indirect appreciation of the current curriculum, which handles both. Religious education was mentioned repeatedly and with many details, and so it has been recorded separately here. Since academic subjects and religion are already offered in primary education, it may be a question of changing the content and approach in the religious education and maybe offering more lessons. The separation of the scores and of the proposed changes in implementation of the subject (Annex 3B and 3B) aims to provide a clearer picture of which changes may make education more attractive.

The general positive attitude towards academic and religious education, and thereby towards the subjects currently offered means that the reasons for keeping children out of school or causing dropout do not lie in the subjects offered, but (i) in the insufficiency of academic skills in providing a living in the rural areas, and (ii) in management of education and schools at state and national levels. This is illustrated in table 3.3 below

Red Sea State gives priority to academic education, but in combination with religious and technical *training*. The latter should not be confused with technical education, which leads to certification in professional skills.

Both Red Sea and Blue Nile States emphasise religious education, showing that the current allocation of lessons and way of conducting the education is insufficient to serve the local needs. Several scores mentioned religious education of women, a place to pray in school and enough Koran books as some of the proposed changes.

Red Sea State especially felt a need for combining academic education with technical skills in terms of simple vocational training in e.g. mechanics, construction, agriculture, livestock, sewing and similar which could partly help maintaining the schools and homes and help both school and households with Income Generating Activities (IGAs).

The technical training should be seen as basic knowledge and skills, and not as replacement of the vocational training institutions. On the contrary, this signals a critical need for modern, locally, nationally and internationally relevant vocational education institutions.

Life skills education was at first mentioned randomly. When the research team responded to the first scorings and introduced the definition of life skills education to the subsequent groups both teachers and parents found it of relevance. The scorings became more precise and included healthy environment, health and nutrition, housekeeping, hygiene, family planning and with reference to the community definition of desired student competences, it would as well be relevant to teach voluntarism, how to act as peer educator and basic development planning.

In brief, the present curriculum is not viewed by the communities as sufficient to cover community needs which require skills exceeding purely academic skills.

Further, the proposed combination of education areas would facilitate the earlier expressed need for “visual aids”, since many of the technical and life skills subjects need academic skills such a reading mechanical instructions, calculating number of seedlings for the school compound or the type and number of diverse building materials for latrines, inclusive of the pricing of the construction. Apart from

depending on academic skills, life skills education provides a strong opportunity to demonstrate the usefulness of academic skills to students and parents.

With regard to “school conditions and other aspects of education” the participants described the changes that are required to make schooling relevant and thus attractive.

On “school conditions and other aspects” they score the following⁷⁴:

Table 12 - Community attitude towards school conditions and others

<i>RED SEA STATE</i>	<i>No. of scores</i>	<i>BLUE NILE STATE</i>	<i>No. of scores</i>
Teachers need continuous training	11	Provide books and educational materials	18
Provide food and water	11	Improve school and learning environment	16
Need teachers who originate from the area	11	More qualified teachers	13
Create diversity of education activities	8	Need teacher training	10
Split boys and girls	5	Additional activities	3
Provision of suitable school environment	4	Education relevant for community development	4
Curriculum should consider morals and values of the people	3	Improved teacher housing	3
Adopt practical education	3	Provision of school uniforms	3
Improve language syllabus	3	-	-
Education relevant for community development	3	-	-

The scorings show both what does not work satisfactorily and the changes requested to have a fully functional and community-relevant schooling.

The scorings in Blue Nile State are more highly differentiated with less diversity.

The need for changes listed above explains why communities do not regard education as fully relevant and attractive. The challenges are plenty and are all largely relevant for quality and meaningful learning.

The two states have similar scores emphasising the need for (continuous) teacher training, improved school environment, but also differences. Red Sea State suggests food and water provision to exempt children from child labour or other IGAs to provide food in the family. The School Feeding Program Head of Office in Red Sea State informed that school attendance dropped from 7000 children to 1000 children in one of the Red Sea locations when the school feeding programme stopped. It seems as if there may be a higher correlation between food supply and the out-of-school rate than hitherto anticipated.

Further, provision of water may not relate solely to the food aspect, but may also be viewed as a necessity for a clean school environment.

In both states “Other aspects” suggest several curriculum changes among others to have education which is relevant for community development, which includes

⁷⁴ These are the higher scorings only. The full scores are found in annex 3A and 3B.

practical and moral education. Red Sea State also mentions splitting of boys and girls, which seems not to be an issue at all in Blue Nile State.

Blue Nile State stresses the need for better work conditions for teachers. This tallies well with UNICEF’s observations⁷⁵ that “teachers’ remuneration is fairly low, to the extent that they hardly meet their daily needs. In focus group discussions, teachers revealed that due to the low pay they are forced to engage in other income-generating activities. As a consequence, the time devoted to lesson planning and assignment grading is not sufficient to ensure high-quality learning outcomes.”

The community perception and ability to engage in education also shows in several complaints from the higher levels in the education system that parents do not pay the expected costs for running of the school. Accepting that poor parents may be little motivated to contribute towards less than fully relevant and often low quality schooling systems, the community suggestion that practical and life skills training be introduced – also for adults - may be one way to help this situation.

If the education system could help parents generate income and live healthier lives – the latter reducing costs – it could be possible and relevant for parents to contribute towards the running costs of the school. If further providing them with true influence on the content of part of the education and on school development, school administration, children, parents and the community at large may hugely benefit.

To conclude, the discontent with the current education concerns (i) teacher qualifications; (ii) school and learning environment; (iii) curriculum which does not meet the needs of the communities, and (iv) a realisation that the reason for not having enough and good teachers could partly be ascribed to the apparently unsatisfactory work conditions for teachers.

With regard to low attendance due to conflicts, experience from other countries experiencing conflict shows that safe transportation to school to some degree determines school attendance. Moreover, education in areas of conflict often offer special child protecting education and other services helping children and their families to cope with the challenges arising from a conflict situation.

2.9 Relevance of current education in school for the life and values of the community

The two preceding sections show a significant discrepancy between the current curriculum and the expressed needs for education in the 12 communities.

The defined needs show that academic education is appreciated, but cannot stand alone in rural Sudan. Religious, technical and life skills education should complement the academic subjects to create individuals who can contribute professionally/ technically to improved family and community lives.

The proposed increased emphasis on religious education, including religious education of girls and women, indicates that the current curriculum does not fully match community values, while the request for technical and life skills education rather indicates that the current school education far from matches the general life needs of the communities.

The participants defined not only the relevance of the current education, but also of the proposed new areas of education. At present only academic and religious

⁷⁵ UNICEF: Sudan – Country report on Out-of-School Children, 2014

education is offered. Table 3.4 shows which skills and attitudes the proposed subjects add to the present exclusively academic education.

With reference to participant preferences and the table below it should be noted that a rurally relevant curriculum may reduce urbanisation and contribute towards valuable developments in rural Sudan.

Table 13 - Relevance of current education for the life and values of the community

AREA OF EDUCATION	RED SEA STATE	No. of scores	BLUE NILE STATE	No. of scores
ACADEMIC	Provides relevant skills and knowledge applicable in adult life/ work life	16	Gives employment opportunities	23
	Gives job opportunities	10	Provides relevant skills and knowledge applicable in adult life	8
	Gives socially required values and skills	10	Can improve & develop community	4
RELIGIOUS	Builds good character and morals (truthful)	22	Knowledgeable and well educated	16
	They will go to Paradise	8	Moral and well behaved	8
	Live a religiously based life	5	Set good example for community	7
	Better able to get jobs	5	-	-
TECHNICAL	Relevant skills providing income opportunities and better lives	22	Helps them acquire professional skills which can provide better lives	29
	Will become adults with self-confidence	4	Become useful members of community	3
LIFE SKILLS	Can solve problems, protect from risks	7	Keeps the family, the house and the community healthy	13
	Provide useful skills	6	Income-generating/self-saving	3
	Independence	5	-	-

Overall the highest-scoring community aspiration with regard to education is consistently considerably higher compared to the next-ranked aspiration. Only one score (Red Sea, Life Skills) deviates from this pattern. All education areas are expected to increase job/income opportunities or reduce private living costs (re: life skills).

Academic skills rate high, a result which should be viewed in the context of the proposed changes (section 3.1) which are the preconditions for academic education to deliver as expected.

Religious skills are as well seen to heighten morality and implicitly increase job/income opportunities.

Technical education in community-relevant subject fields can help prepare and maybe create an interest in education at large among less academic children (and

parents), since technical – and later vocational - skills can only be practised if possessing certain level of skills in mathematics, reading, writing and Arabic.

The community members suggested that there could as well be adult classes in technical skills combined with literacy training.

The proposed extended curriculum adding technical and life skills confirms that poverty negatively affects school attendance. The situation of rural poverty also explains why income-generating school subjects are of great importance together with a wider scope of adult education enabling parents, among others, to pay school costs and feed their children.

Religious and life skills education are expected to provide personally and family-relevant skills and to some extent community-relevant skills, for example peace building/problem solving. The religious values can to some extent be lived through the life skills, as religious values and for example peace building and community assistance have the same underlying values.

Under religious education Red Sea State suggests the following innovative changes: add to/extend curriculum, establish link between the environment and the religious education and make sports a part of religious education. With such widening of the curriculum and opening towards child, youth and community interests, religious education can come to play a critical role in teaching youth and parents conflict prevention as part of the moral teaching and, if including sports, let rivalling clans be players in the same teams and thus indirectly build understanding and common interests. This would, indeed, mean practising religious values.

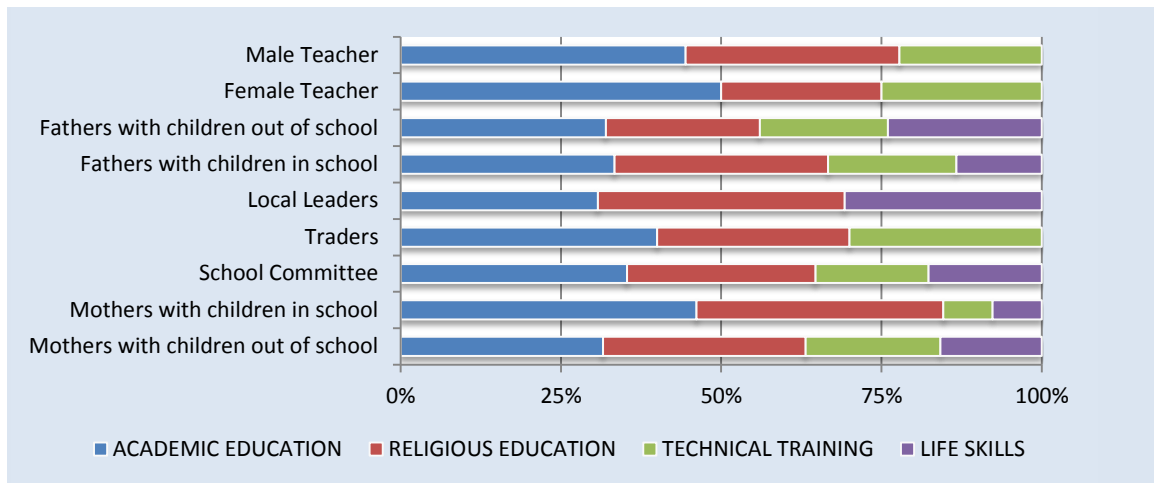
The scores show that academic education cannot stand alone, but needs a wider framework within which the academic knowledge and skills and be practised, both technically and in human relations.

To conclude, the table shows that the participants acknowledge academic education and the value of it. However, academic education alone is not viewed as sufficient for development of all community relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes, which explains the well substantiated additional areas of education.

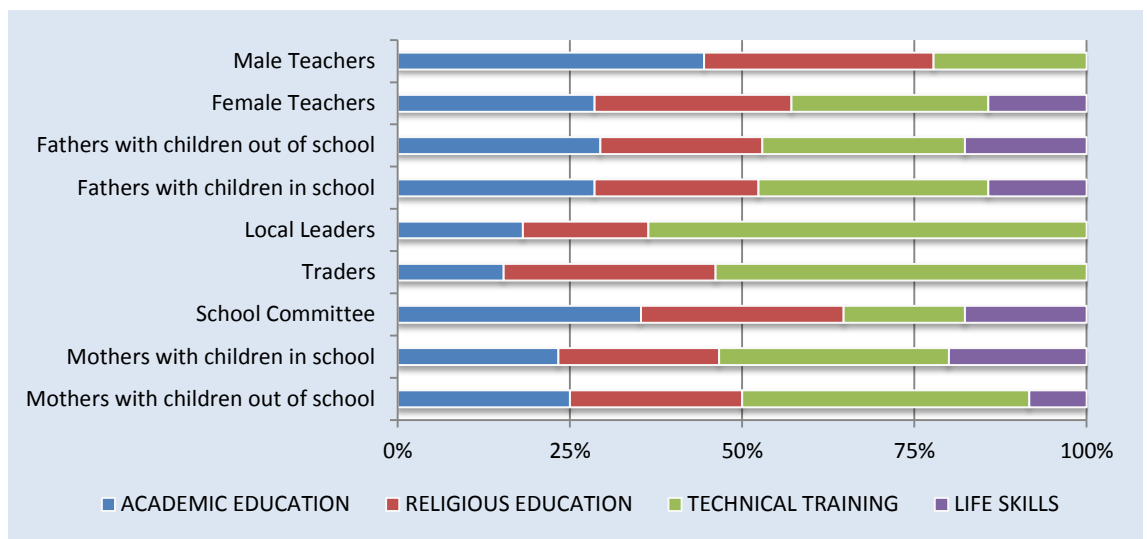
The distribution of education preferences varies depending on which type of group is consulted, as illustrated below. The scorings in the two states vary considerably, so both sets of scorings are shown below.

The graphs are calculated in percentages by counting the total number of scores of each group of participants and calculating the weighting of respectively academic, religious, technical and life skills education against the total score given.

Graph 1 - Red Sea State preferences



Graph 2 - Blue Nile State preferences



The graphs clearly show what has been discussed in earlier in this report namely that additional education (other than academic) scores over 50% in all but one group of participants. Noticeably the one group scoring academic education with 51% is a group of teachers, which illustrates their little understanding of the local needs for education.

Academic education has relatively high preference in both states, although significantly higher in Red Sea State. Surprisingly, academic education also scores relatively high among fathers and mothers with children out of school in both states. This shows that they appreciate academic education on the conditions mentioned in section 3.2., namely that teachers are adequate in number and qualified, teaching materials are available and the school environment is clean and green.

The scores on *religious education* are considerable although with some variations both within the state and across the two states. Across the states local leaders, traders and female teachers in both states give less priority to religious education than to other subject areas. In Red Sea State, traders and male and female teachers are the groups giving lowest preference to religious education, while in Blue Nile State fathers with children out-of-school, local leaders and male teachers give lowest priority. Apart from female teachers in Red Sea State, all other groups giving low preference to religious education are men.

This study does not, and was not meant to, explain the reasons for difference in religious emphasis. It is clear, though, that accepting the geographical environment of the two states, the closeness of Red Sea State to Egypt and the Arabian peninsula, and the closeness of Blue Nile State to South Sudan, which has both Christian and Arab beliefs, may influence the emphasis on religion. Further, the situation of conflict may also generate a need for practical education rather than religious.

In practice, it may be more a matter of adjusting the religious education in the schools to meet the community need for girls' education in religion, places to pray and more Koran books.

The scores on *technical training* differ considerably among the two states, with Blue Nile State giving far more preference to this type of education. In Red Sea State the local leaders give no preference to this at all, while in Blue Nile State 6 out of the 9 community groupings score technical training higher than any other type of education. This includes female teachers.

Such comparison indicates that education may seem more relevant locally, if curricula are designed with different weighting in different states.

Life skills education is given little preference by traders and male teachers in both states and by local leaders in Blue Nile State. However, local leaders in Red Sea state give high priority to life skills and no priority to technical training.

When participants understood what life skills education can contain, they were generally very positive and proposed very relevant subjects under this area of education. The proposed subjects relate mainly to healthy and safe lives - both individually, in families and in the community.

The two graphs confirm that (i) the current academic education per se is appreciated, but needs far better support and management, and (ii) the need for additional areas of education. The different preferences in the two states may indicate a need for state-relevant curricula. To offer locally relevant subjects, a similar study should be conducted in all remaining states adding the contextual aspects, which will enable a cause-effect/preference analysis as addition to the questions/aspects discussed in this study. These could include direct complementary social and cultural questions such as: How does the situation of war influence the preferences indicated in this study? How does your nomadic life influence the preferences indicated in this study? Or a more open approach could be chosen for example: Which social, cultural and environmental aspects have made you give the above preferences? This should, of course, be rephrased for field purposes.

Additionally, a wider curriculum, which could be designed to be locally relevant, may positively affect the gender and cultural factors currently reducing attendance reflected in the community suggesting girl/female-relevant subjects as well.

2.10 Community views on what education leads to in terms of further opportunities and livelihoods

The positive community attitude towards academic education as a pathway to job/income opportunities can be viewed by holding possible scores of Red Sea State's 42 groups and Blue Nile State's 39 groups against the given scores shown in the below table.

Table 14 – Perspective of education

<i>Area of education</i>	<i>Red sea state</i>	<i>No. Of group scores</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Blue Nile state</i>	<i>No. Of Group Scores</i>	<i>%</i>
ACADEMIC	Gives job opportunities	10	24	Gives employment opportunities	23	59
	Provide relevant skills and knowledge applicable in adult life/work life	16	38	Provide relevant skills and knowledge applicable in adult life	8	21

Red Sea State's 42 groups gave only 10 positive scores (24%) to the relevance of the current education with regard to job opportunities, while Blue Nile State gave 23 scores (59%). The groups were allowed to give more than one score, if wanting to add different aspects of further opportunities and livelihood.

The two states give quite different views on the relevance of the current curriculum. In Red Sea State 24% of the groups are positive towards the current curriculum, while a much higher percentage in Blue Nile State, 59%, sees opportunities in the current curriculum although elsewhere in the group scorings suggesting extensive changes to make the education locally relevant. It is therefore assumed that the positive scores precondition the proposed changes. This is partly supported by the relatively low scores for relevant skills (21%), which is given high priority in graph 3.2. as an education area that needs to be included.

In both cases the scores show that academic education cannot provide the required educational formation of children, as respectively only 38% and 21% of the groups find that the current curriculum provides knowledge and skills relevant for an adult life in general.

2.11 Ways in which schooling could be more relevant to community values and aspirations

All groups were asked to explain which competences they wanted for their children and subsequently describe which aspirations they had for the private, professional and social life of their children. This allows for assessment of the linkage between (i) the desired child capabilities and (ii) the desired adult lives as defined by community members.

The prioritised capabilities were:

Table 15 – Preferred child capabilities

<i>Item</i>	<i>Red Sea state</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Blue Nile state</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>No of scores</i>		<i>No. Of scores</i>	
Values and morals	30	71	33	85
Practical useful skills	17	40	7	18
Literacy skills, knowledge and information	18	43	11	26
Leadership; time management; problem solving	14	33	-	-
Positive attitude towards others; developing the community	22	52	12	26
To live/network in an integrated international community	-		8	21

In both states, values and morals rank significantly higher than other competencies, while the earlier PIA emphasis on practical and live skills does not show here.

It is noteworthy that the community members in both states emphasise the ability to engage in community matters and leadership skills, while only Blue Nile State thinks beyond community needs and includes networking with the international community. It is assumed that due to the situation of conflict, Blue Nile State is used to international interaction and has realised the need for language, peace building and other skills.

The above data are compared with the life aspirations below.

The participants defined aspirations for their children. As they could give more than one score under each of three areas: professional, family and social life, the total score for each of these areas can be higher than the group numbers. This appears in Red Sea State where 42 groups gave 45 scores for the importance of children having a stable and successful professional life. Having indicated elsewhere that academic education alone cannot provide children with required skills and knowledge, these scores confirm the need for a revision of the current curriculum.

The total scores were as follows⁷⁶:

Table 16 – Community aspirations

<i>Item</i>	<i>Red Sea state No. Of scores</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Blue Nile state No. Of scores</i>	<i>%</i>
Secure employment; stable and successful professional life; respectable professional lives	45	107	25	69
Stable and strong family ties; value-based upbringing;	40	95	17	44
Strong social life; well integrated; active in community	25	60	21	54

Community members in both states gave highest priority to employment-related factors, which, for neither of the states, tallies with the prioritised capabilities in table 3.6, nor with PIA priorities⁷⁷.

Red Sea State gives prominence to employment and stable family lives, which are partly inter-dependent and implicitly supports the proposed additions to education, namely: religious, technical and life skill education. The wish to have the children engage in community development further adds to this, as it relates to moral responsibility, but also to life skills which could have subjects relating to leadership, development, environment, networking etc.

Blue Nile State gives slightly higher preference to social and community life than to family life, which could reflect the family situation in times of conflict. For some, the family has died or has fled, and only the community is left to support the remaining individuals.

For both states the mention of engagement in the community shows that the community aspirations for the children do not concern city jobs, but ordinary, relevant

⁷⁶ Only the highest scores are discussed here. The full scores are found in annex 3D.

⁷⁷ Full scorings are found in annex 3A and 3B.

skills with which they can contribute towards their own and their community's development.

The aspirations given above correspond well with the PIA scorings as both show a need for expanding curriculum to embrace a wider range of knowledge and skills with emphasis on the latter. It may therefore be concluded that the present education only partly delivers to the needs of the involved communities.

2.12 Relevance of integration of local language as both a means (language of instruction) and content (local knowledge) of schooling

There was no direct opportunity to score opinions and experiences on this topic. But scores were given under "Other aspects". Together with analysis of other data describing linguistic challenges, the following is concluded.

Only Red Sea State expressed a need for employing teachers who originate from the area. Blue Nile State may appreciate the same, but did not mention it as a matter of importance in this study.

Discussions with the Bilingual Centre at Red Sea University informed that other studies show that Arabic should, in the beginning, be taught as a second language, while using the local language for teaching. When using Arabic as the teaching language, a high number of children fails to understand the content of the subject which, in the long run, makes education irrelevant to this group of children and parents.

The use of local teachers using the local language, maybe in the first 1-2 classes, would allow for transfer of cultural knowledge and values as well. Arabic could be taught as a second language from class 1.

The purely academic approach to education with no practical use of the subject content makes it more difficult to acquire a new language. As proposed elsewhere, small practical exercises in mathematics and Arabic would help in understanding the meaning of the new language and would allow for use of a few words to instigate an action or reaction. It could be small instructions in writing or orally on what to do. Such instruction could be: go to the door or move one table ahead; it could be instructions in Arabic to new and simple children's games or how to prepare the planting holes for the seedlings for the school boundary planting - all depending on the level of learning. This approach would as well be relevant for adult learning.

2.13 Role of local people in organising and managing the education of children

This study illustrates the applicability and value of involving community members in designing education. The community participation was high to an extent where it was necessary at one site to establish an additional group of women with children out of school because of a presence far beyond the number of women that had been invited for the PIA exercise. In other places the participants appreciated being asked their opinions and given an opportunity to suggest changes. It was the first time ever they had been asked to suggest changes in governmental practices.

This indicates that the PTAs do not work as intended and that community involvement is appreciated and can add greatly to the quality of service delivery.

The proposed changes in curriculum will, if implemented, make community involvement the norm, not only for planning of the content of these new education areas, but also in acting as teachers in areas of competence, e.g. religious education, training in mechanics or construction, introduction to local medicinal plants hygiene and others. The study showed no current practice in systematic adult sharing of local knowledge. Involvement of community members in all aspects of education would allow for this important transfer of locally relevant knowledge and skills.

With regard to gender, the participation of women in the study was very good signifying that men may not hinder women from participating in discussions relating to improvements of the family and community lives.

2 LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter draws lessons from the findings in chapter 3.

Lessons from the findings seem to point to the following challenges:

- The current curriculum seems not fully relevant in the states visited as community members clearly indicate a need for life-relevant knowledge and skills in terms of additional religious education, technical training and life skills education.

As the present curriculum allows for state level top-up of lessons, it is suggested to review the balance and consider how additional subjects could be included without major changes. Assessing the preferences given by the communities in the two states in graphs 3.1 and 3.2, it is envisaged that a balance between current curriculum and new education areas could be around 65% focus on the current curriculum, maybe with a strengthening and development of religious education within the 65-70%, and 30-35% for technical training and life skills education.

- The massive dropout after class 5 indicates that teacher competencies reduce significantly at this stage of teaching. It could concern lack of sufficient subject-related knowledge. But it could also be a matter of knowing and being familiar with teaching methods which appeal more to older children. The proposed inclusion of practical exercises in academic teaching is one way to keep the interest of older students. It is widely known that less trained teachers feel more comfortable when in full control of the teaching, while child-centred teaching presupposes that children are actively participating in and responsible for their own learning.

A few examples of child-centred teaching: (i) Form groups of four in the class mixing very good, good and less good students letting the better students assist the less strong child(ren) in solving the tasks; (ii) Setting aside one lesson a week for individual learning allowing the less strong children to repeat what they have missed earlier e.g. repeating how to divide or read simpler texts to build reading competences. As a better part of the students can work independently in such lessons, there is more time for the teacher to assist the students, who need support.

- The school environment in terms of equipment (books, materials and furniture) and cleanliness is not suitable for effective and relevant learning;
- Some head teachers commented that the current education system is economically not accessible to poor people because of education costs for covering of school extensions or maintenance etc.;
- Due to poverty, children engage in IGAs instead of attending a not fully relevant education;
- Lack of school feeding in poor areas result in dramatic dropout rates in some locations;
- The inadequate EMIS practices make it difficult to determine education and management shortcomings and subsequently improve on locally well-specified challenges. Further, EMIS does not capture quality of (i) lessons taught, (ii) teacher education and application of taught teaching techniques, and (iii) school administration as a minimum. Further, EMIS does not capture the impact of education, for example (i) correspondence between percentage of children graduating with unemployment or poverty rate or (ii) new types of sustainable businesses established by graduates.
- Minimal community involvement in planning and implementation of education.
- The communities mentioned the need for stronger inclusion of the PTAs in school planning and management.
- With the proposed curriculum changes, there will be additional need for inclusion of community members as teachers.
- Further, the proposed curriculum changes reflect the value and priorities of the community. Emphasis is on job- and development-relevant knowledge and skills for use in employment and community development. The engagement in employment, family life and community development should be guided by moral principles, good behaviour and helpfulness as mentioned partly in the PIA scorings and partly in the aspirations.

The emphasis on the different education areas vary in the two states. But both states emphasize on the same needs for life-relevant learning.

- This study shows no significant gender bias neither with regard to female attendance in this study, nor in the comments and suggestions given, several of which emphasise girls and women, for example to provide religious education for these groups. But under technical training and life skills, several female-related subjects are suggested such as household, nutrition, sewing and much more. This would hardly have been mentioned if intending to marry girls off in an early age or barring wives from adult education.

In short, education – in terms of relevance of subjects offered, availability of school materials, availability of sufficiently qualified teachers, the unequal financial support of schools and the general learning environment – is found as highly inadequate by the visited communities.

This results in a negative/no/minimal relationship between school and the community.

The conclusion is that sufficient governmental support to all states is a precondition for establishing and running education with minimal quality, which can enable it to be viewed as relevant in the communities. The support should be more in areas with specific challenges, e.g. in areas of conflict and among nomads.

It was mentioned by HAC that large-scale non-attendance, not least in combination with poverty, may lead to engagement in general unrest, discontent with the

government, criminality, employment as child soldiers and recruitment by terrorist organisations. In other words, although education makes well-known contributions towards local and national development, non-attendance can have further effects than just an unsatisfactorily high number of uneducated adults, who may have difficulties contributing fruitfully towards the building of a nation and own lives.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in this chapter are founded on the conclusions made in the preceding chapter.

The changes, as proposed by the study participants, bear witness to a community desire to have access to life-long education opportunities for both teachers and the community. Overall the following was suggested:

- Creation of a relevant and attractive school(ing)
- The community members suggested that this could be achieved through establishment of a *productive* school mixing academics and practical education.
- All types of education should as well be offered to adults and OOSC each having different and relevant systems in which they are taught.
- By doing so the school will be a community gathering point with example gardens with nutritious crops, small workshops, tree planting, school cooking of nutritious meals based on example garden products; use of medicinal plants, new or improved agricultural productions, sustainable town/city businesses and much more. Such education will be locally relevant and both education and the school will therefore become attractive to the community.

For this to be achieved the education system needs some strengthening, along lines of the following recommendations (the order is not significant).

Overall structures

- There is a strong and immediate need to develop the capacity⁷⁸ of Federal and State Ministries of Education comprising organisational, institutional and human capacities in tandem with provision of necessary infrastructure and equipment.

This study was not designed to point at specific changes, but community scorings show weaknesses across the entire range of capacities.

- To engage in the changes in the most effective manner and with the aim to engage in changes with most impact, it is strongly recommended to build on the 2013 capacity assessment⁷⁹ in order to develop a full and focused capacity assessment across all levels of education. It must be envisaged that some changes in policies and strategies may be required after such an assessment.

⁷⁸ With reference to OECD/DAC definition of capacity

⁷⁹ PERP. 2013. Preliminary capacity needs assessment and preparation of capacity building plans for Blue Nile, Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea and South Kordofan states

- It would be relevant to make use of the current flexible curriculum having a national common core and the possibility of adding locally relevant subjects. With reference to graphs 3.1 and 3.2, which show that 16 out of the 18 types of participants make academic and religious education together score notably over 50% - with a significant portion to religious education, the national curriculum could designate for example 65% for the academic/religious part of the curriculum, while each state could add technical and life skills education and possible additional academic subjects as the remaining 35% of the curriculum.
- As mentioned earlier, learning can be combined, and reading and text analysis, which traditionally falls under academic skills, could be included in religious education, which would enable a higher emphasis on religion without losing training in traditional academic skills.
- As this study shows, the two states visited have some different expectations as to what education should deliver. There is for example much more emphasis on religion in Red Sea State, and more emphasis on technical training in Blue Nile State. To make education relevant the overall structures should be able to embrace this flexibility.
- To have effective and efficient use of the allocated resources it is critical to have a simple, but more informative EMIS, which includes elements of progress/changes and not only on status quo.
- An equal financial distribution system which does not favour city schools, but rather takes into account the challenges faced in the rural areas should strongly be considered. The rate of OOSC will not reduce if a majority of schools in Sudan are grossly lacking finances for such basic things as books and furniture. The possible disastrous consequences of high OOSC rate are continued destructive unrest, high criminality and popular passivity.
- A strengthening of the capacity of PTAs with regard to planning, management and networking skills is important for developing a sense of ownership and with it a genuine interest in education.
- The PTAs could be given some nationally uniform and relevant responsibilities, e.g. responsible for explaining the EMIS findings and suggesting improvements.
- If widening the curriculum there will be need for subject-related PTA sub-committees (Cf: Systemic changes).
- If widening the curriculum, there will need for engaging professionals (bricklayers, mechanics, high performing farmers and others) as contracted teachers. There needs to be a budget specifically for this, since 35% of the teaching will derive from this part.
- The criticism of teachers may partly be due to the difficulties of satisfying the learning needs of all children when having 40 or more students in one class. All educational studies show that it is essential to have manageable class sizes. It would therefore be of great support for reduction of OOSC rate to aim at having a maximum number of students per class, for example by year 2020.
- It is equally important to have equally distributed and sufficient funds for teaching materials and enough furnished classrooms.
- The teacher training content and system may need revision to embrace different types of teacher training with the aim to be more efficient.
- Employment of teachers with local language skills in younger classes.
- It may motivate teachers to perform better if parents conducted an annual evaluation of each teacher in their respective school and that such evaluation had consequences, positive or negative, for example the 10% of teachers scoring the lowest. Where teaching skills are wanting, these teachers may be the first ones to

attend teacher training in areas where they have shortcomings. Good conduct in combination with good student results could result in salary increments.

- State governments could initiate safe transportation to school in conflict prone areas, learning from UNICEF experiences in such areas.

Systemic changes

The study shows that the schools are currently not sufficiently attractive to the entire community resulting in low or no enrolment. The participants pointed to the need for the following changes:

- It was widely preferred to change schools into productive schools.

In towns and cities, focus can be on business development, management, accounting and on construction skills: bricklaying, carpentry, electrician, plumber and others, while the rural areas need locally relevant productions such as school gardens with new types of productions or production systems, school animal production – it could be small animals, fruit production with value adding etc. The additional 35% of the curriculum could also be used to offer extra education in IT, Arabic and English.

- The participant scores showed a great interest in more emphasis on religious education inclusive of religious education of girls/women and places to pray.

Since religious education already forms part of the curriculum it is more a matter of diversifying this current education and establishing prayer opportunities. In states with specific emphasis on religious education this could be offered as additional education under the 35% locally administered curriculum.

- Teacher education would benefit from being more diverse, enabling teachers to go for training for example each Monday for one or more months instead of leaving the classes without proper substitution for long.

The training could also be offered as on-the-job training with lecturers, or trainers, visiting a school for a week introducing new methods, for example how to include children with learning difficulties or how to apply academics in small real-life exercises.

- The involvement of communities in planning and running the school will provide a sense of ownership and will implicitly increase the interest in education and in the school. This could be done by a re-design of the PTAs, where part of the responsibilities is delegated to PTA headed committees involving parents and other relevant community members.

Such sub-committees could have one PTA head and maybe 8-10 community members with sufficiently wide local expertise and interests represented in each committee.⁸⁰

The committees could provide inputs to the planning and running of the school and could cover areas like: (i) academic and religious education; (ii) technical training; (iii) life skills education; (iv) development of the school; (v) maintenance of the school and (iv) networking – which could be with other schools, but also with business, trade and political communities.

- If widening the curriculum, the selection of teachers with professional background in mechanics, bricklaying, medicinal plants, fruit tree planting and value adding etc, could be made by the relevant committees to prevent nepotism.

⁸⁰ Further analysis and recommendations on school governance may be found in PERP Research Study 4: *Community engagement in education*

Changes in the schools

With such changes, whether in full or in part, the school will need to adapt in terms of establishing:

- Small-scale workshops for practical training.

Since technical *training* should never become technical *education*, there is only need for basically equipped workshops, which could be allocated space under a tree or simple shade.

If engaging in mechanics, it may be relevant to find a worn-out motorbike, buy basic tools and teach the students how to make the motorbike run again. After repair it can be sold and the income be used for further purchase of tools and maybe of other machines needing repair.

With regard to agriculture and health/nutrition, it could be possible in rural and semi-urban schools to establish a model garden with a mixture of new types of vegetables and fruit trees and let each child in class be responsible for one of the productions. This could be combined with small animal production. The teaching could be a mixture of theory and attending to the production. If relevant each child could bring home some fruits which could deliver seeds for a home production; or a young animal to start a home production. The surplus could be sold for some products after having added value, e.g. drying of sliced fruit or production of peanut butter or jam.

When needing new or more furniture in school, the technical training classes, either in their own school or in the neighbouring school, will be able to provide this equipment.

School uniforms, clothes for sale and alteration/maintenance of clothes can be delivered by the sewing classes and the local tailor acting as teacher.

All this is not seen as a competition to existing professionals, as most of it is work that would otherwise not be carried out. Instead such practical education improves the quality of people's lives and enables them to realise the value of education.

The same could be taught to community members under adult education. It could be combined with literacy training producing well-illustrated instructions with short, clear text and with mathematics calculating costs of establishment of a production, potential income etc.

- The school environment may benefit from regular cleaning (part of the life skills education); maintenance of buildings (as part of technical training); boundary planting of trees to have shade and windbreak (under life skills education); and cleaning of latrines (hygiene under life skills education) and much more. All practical life skills activities should be combined with theoretical education to make the students understand the risks of not cleaning latrines, the biological benefits of windbreak and shade etc.

Life skills subjects can be seasonal (e.g. agriculture, tree planting) and, for example, last 3 months to be followed by other subjects.

- Not all practical and life skills education is relevant at all age levels. The subjects offered should reflect the ability of the students and be age-relevant.
- With a change in curriculum, fencing is required to protect new trees, school gardens and workshops. With such changes in arrangements of the PTAs, with sub-committees and practical learning the community may develop goodwill towards finding ways to have fencing and other improvements because they are of benefit to everybody.

- Although not the highest ranking, community scores were also spread over sports, art, theatre and similar. Since staying healthy and creative fall under life skills such subjects could be offered under this education area.

Changes in teaching methods and teacher role⁸¹

Whether the curriculum is expanded or not the need for changes in teaching is well documented.

The following may need immediate attention:

- Diversification of teaching methods to include students with learning difficulties in some or all subjects; application of academic skills for practical purposes in the lessons to demonstrate the usefulness and relevance, and adding of practical exercises to academic education.

If sending one teacher for training in student-centred learning methods, this teacher can act as trainer for his/her colleagues upon return, thus speeding up the introduction of diverse methods while being cost-effective and avoiding disruption of the teaching.

- The need for teaching materials seems substantial. It should, however, be noted that to some extent it is possible as teacher to engage in production of simple teaching materials, e.g. pieces of paper with simple instructions in local language, Arabic and English for literacy and language teaching purposes. Further, development of instructive materials for practical training and life skills education and much more can be undertaken.
- Teachers can play an active role – together with the students - in developing and maintaining a supportive learning environment in terms of cleaning of class rooms at the end of the day or teaching children not to drop garbage, but put it in a container.

Cross-cutting

With the above recommendations it seems natural to include a wide range of partners in implementing some of the recommended changes. In addition to the existing PERP partners (UNICEF and SCS), further international partners may include the following:

- FAO has wide experience with teaching schools and/or parents how to produce nutritious food for school meals.
- WHO has wide experience with health and nutrition in school and at home.
- ILO is experienced in technical training across all levels and may be able to add value to the proposed changes.
- World Bank, UNDP and SIDA have strong experience with capacity development at institutional level supporting the design and roll-out of effective and efficient systems and structures.

Partner opportunities are many more, particularly at regional and national levels. The above simply serves as inspiration to think outside the current scope of partners. It is acknowledged that the World Bank and EU have had long-standing and strong commitments within education in Sudan.

⁸¹ Detailed analysis and recommendations on teaching/learning and pedagogy may be found in PERP Research Study 3: *The Quality of the Teaching & Learning Process*

4 ANNEXES

2.14 Annexe 1

LIST OF KEY LITERATURE

- IMF Country Report No. 13/318: Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2012)
- Sida & Norad: Sudan Country Case Study: Child Rights (2011)
- Ministry of General Education, Sudan: Interim Basic Education Strategy 2012-2014 (extended to 2017)
- UNDG: The role of MPTFs in strengthening the international response to protracted crises, (2014)
- UNHCR: Sudan Protection Sector Strategy (2013-14)
- UNICEF: Sudan Country Report on Out-of-School Children (2014)
- UNICEF: Annual Report 2013
- UNICEF: All Children in School by 2015. Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children (2014)
- UNICEF Situational Analysis: The State of Sudanese Children, 2011
- UNICEF: Humanitarian Situation report, June 2015
- UNICEF: Humanitarian Situation report, July 2015
- UNICEF: Humanitarian Situation report, August 2015
- World Bank: Interim Strategic Note, Sudan (FY 2014-2015)
- World Bank: Sudan Basic Education Recovery Project : P128644 - Implementation Status Results Report : Sequence 05, 2015

2.15 Annex 2

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

INTERVIEW FORMAT FOR HEAD TEACHERS

<i>SCHOOL EDUCATION ATTRIBUTION TOWARDS BETTER ADULT LIVES</i>	<i>DEFINED QUALITY</i>	<i>SCHOOL EDUCATION SHORT-COMINGS IN</i>	<i>DEFINED SHORT-COMINGS IN BUILDING BETTER LIVES</i>	<i>PROPOSED CHANGES</i>

INTERVIEW FORMAT FOR LOCAL LEADERS

<i>WHICH EDUCATION IS RELEVANT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE A SATISFACTORY ADULT LIFE? <i>Religious, life skills, school education (certain subjects) practical education.....</i></i>	<i>WHAT MAKES THIS EDUCATION/SUBJECT RELEVANT?</i>	<i>HOW WILL THIS SKILL/KNOWLEDGE HELP THE CHILD LIVE A SATISFACTORY ADULT LIFE?</i>	<i>PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS OF THE EDUCATION IN THE MENTIONED SUBJECT</i>

Which behaviour, skills, knowledge, and attitude should the children possess as adults?

a)
b)
c)
d)
e)
f)

What would you like their family life, social life and professional life to be like?

a)
b)
c)
d)
e)
f)

2.16 Annex 3

FINDINGS

In the text some findings were summarised wherefore the findings presented here have more details - some with lower scores

ANNEX 3A: PIA FINDINGS - RED SEA STATE

WHICH EDUCATION IS RELEVANT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE A SATISFACTORY ADULT LIFE? <i>Religious, life skills, school education (certain subjects) practical education.....</i>		WHAT MAKES THIS EDUCATION/SUBJECT RELEVANT?	HOW WILL THIS SKILL/KNOWLEDGE HELP THE CHILD LIVE A SATISFACTORY ADULT LIFE?	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS OF THE EDUCATION IN THE MENTIONED SUBJECT		
ACADEMIC EDUCATION						
	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS
School education (46) (IT, English Language, Arabic language)	School environment	(7)	Improve & develop community	(4)	Split boys and girls	(5)
	Language	(9)	Provide relevant skills and knowledge applicable in adult life/ work life	(16)	Teachers need continuous training	(11)
	Comprehensive	(2)			Focus on Literacy skills	(3)
	Well prepared syllabus	(4)	Certificates give job opportunities	(10)	Provide food and water	(11)
	Content	(15)	Children able to communicate widely/ mastery of different languages	(7)	School committees should be more involved in the school development	(1)
	Suitable special language	(5)	Help people think better/ organized thinking	(5)	Make boarding schools	(2)
	Suitable approaches	(3)	Given socially required values and skills	(10)	Spreading education in more geographical areas	(2)
	Accompanied activities	(7)	Gives life experience	(1)	Create diversity of education activities e.g. sports, creative subjects to be more attractive	(8)
	Labs	(1)	Gives self-esteem	(1)	Provision of suitable school environment	(4)
	Related to people and their lives	(1)	Urbanises children's lives	(1)	Syllabus should consider moral and values of the people	(4)
	Methodology	(3)	Make people clever and being socially able	(3)	Adapt practical education	
	Continued learning as adults	(1)	Main component of their identity	(1)	Education be relevant for	(2)
			Self - dependent	(5)		

					community development	
					Improve language syllabus	(3)
					Need teachers who originates from the area	(3)
					More visual aids, books and facilities etc that support the curricula	(11)
					De-congest classrooms	(1)
					Care for poor pupils	(1)
					Better teacher salaries	(1)
					Appropriate syllabus	(2)
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION						
Religious education (41)	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS
	Children knowledgeable about religious values, ethics	(5)	Gives important life skills	(3)	Provide food during religious training	(6)
	Content	(25)	Builds good character and morals (truthful)	(1)	Better pay for religious teachers	(3)
	Methodology	(4)	Positive image of a religious person	(22)	Provision of qualified teachers for religious education	(3)
	Language	(2)	Better able to get jobs	(4)	Building worship places inside schools	(2)
	Respecting each other's opinions and gender differences	(1)	Builds self-confidence	(5)	Education materials (Korans)	(4)
	Practise of religion	(1)	People will be socially responsible	(4)	To return to old syllabus	(1)
	Location	(1)	Keep them out of crime	(2)	Shorter verses of Koran more suitable	(1)
	Organization	(2)	They will go to Paradise (Day of Justice)	(1)	Capacity building of religious teachers	(1)
			Academic development in religion	(8)	More religious pre-schools	(2)
			Live a religiously based life	(4)	Classrooms for the religious education	(1)
				(5)	Religious camps	(1)
					Link between the environment and the religious education	(1)
					Age-based education	(1)
					More religious activities	(1)

					More awareness Have female Koran teachers to teach women	(3) (1)
TECHNICAL TRAINING						
Practical education (22) (Agriculture, trade, mechanic, carpenter, driving, construction, welding, sewing etc.) –	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS
	Gives relevant skills	(7)	Better economic situation as adult	(4)	Provide necessary equipment and machinery	(5)
	Attracts people to attend school and education	(4)	Prepares for adult life with relevant skills	(4)	Pioneers should be supported	(3)
	Syllabus attractive as it respects the value and traditions of people	(4)	Prevents laziness	(1)	More practical aspects and workshops supporting the theoretical learning	(6)
	Availability of materials	(1)	Income opportunities	(8)	Provision of teachers and teacher training	(2)
	Helps weaker students to perform in school	(1)	Will become adults with self-confidence	(4)	Budget for practical education	(1)
	Suitable location	(3)	Practical experience that contributes towards household economy	(1)	Need vocational schools	(1)
	Content	(4)	Protects them from poverty	(3)	Modernization of old professions	(1)
	Methodology	(2)	Children become innovative	(1)		
	Accompanied activities	(1)	Useful member of society	(1)		

<i>WHICH EDUCATION IS RELEVANT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE A STAISFACTORY ADULT LIFE</i> <i>Religious, life skills, school education (certain subjects) practical education.....</i>	<i>WHAT MAKES THIS EDUCATION/SUBJECT RELEVANT?</i>	<i>HOW WILL THIS SKILL/KNOWLEDGE HELP THE CHILD LIVE A SATISFACTORY ADULT LIFE?</i>	<i>PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS OF THE EDUCATION IN THE MENTIONED SUBJECT</i>			
LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION						
Life skills (18) (Family planning, hygiene, toilet cleaning, hand washing, personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, Adult Education)	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS
	Environment	(2)	Such education form the behaviour and attitude of the child	(1)	Consider social benefits of the community	(2)
	Content is attractive	(5)	Provides useful skills	(6)	Exchange visits	(1)
	Content relevant for the child and the community	(9)	Develop coping skill	(2)	More materials for practical training	(4)
	Accompanying activities relevant	(4)	Teaches children how to protect	(1)	Well-trained teachers	(2)
Pupils get hobbies						

	Methodology relevant	(1)	themselves from risks		Bring practical education	(1)
	Location	(3)	Learn problem solving	(3)	More subjects should be included	(1)
	Healthy children	(1)	Gives self-confidence	(1)	Should allow to learn from mistakes	(1)
		(1)	Enables informed decision-making	(1)	New literacy training for men and women	(1)
			Independence, don't have to rely on others	(5)	Direct support to make teachers and learning stable	(1)
			Make people productive and stable	(1)	Splitting boys and girls (basic education)	(1)
			Gives professional skills	(2)	Provision of amenities (water, electricity)	(2)
					More vocational schools	(1)
						(1)
						(1)

ANNEX 3B: PIA FINDINGS – BLUE NILE STATE

WHICH EDUCATION IS RELEVANT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO HAVE A SATISFACTORY ADULT LIFE <i>Religious, life skills, school education (certain subjects) practical education.....</i>	WHAT MAKES THIS EDUCATION/SUBJECT RELEVANT?		HOW WILL THIS SKILL/KNOWLEDGE HELP THE CHILD LIVE A SATISFACTORY ADULT LIFE?		PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS OF THE EDUCATION IN THE MENTIONED SUBJECT	
	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS
ACADEMIC EDUCATION School education (35) (IT, English Language, Arabic language)	School environment Language Content Location Methodology Approaches Syllabus adequate Additional activities	(22) (11) (10) (4) (10) (4) (2) (4)	Can get employment Improve & develop community Help people think better Given socially required values Provide relevant skills and knowledge applicable in adult life Develop mentally/brain Knowing rights and duties Improve data base system Improved English skills(reading, writing, speaking) Can become professionals Better communication skills	(23) (4) (1) (2) (8) (1) (1) (2) (1) (1) (2) (1) (1)	Need teacher training Additional activities Orientation workshops Provide books and educational media (e.g visual aids, furniture) Education relevant for community development Age related syllabus Improved school and learning environment More qualified teachers Provide boarding schools More care for poor pupils Need kindergartens Improved teacher housing Provision of school uniforms More focus on IT system More knowledge Provide teaching manual School Feeding Walled fence More foreign language teachers	(10) (3) (1) (18) (3) (1) (16) (13) (1) (1) (1) (3) (3) (3) (1) (1) (1) (2) (1)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION						
Religious education (46)	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS
	Methodology	(19)	Moral and well behaved	(3)	Need more books and materials	(11)
	Language	(15)	Set good example for community	(8)	Need religious schools	(12)
	Location	(6)	Knowledgeable and Well educated	(7)	Need qualified religious teachers	(18)
	Additional activities	(2)	More skills	(16)	Religious teacher training	(1)
	Content	(6)	Assist children think positively	(1)	Religious and cultural lecturing	(4)
	School environment	(10)	Religious community mobilizers	(2)	Add to curriculum	(1)
			Salaried employment	(1)	Increase teacher salary	(3)
			Can Raise religious awareness in the community	(2)	Need meals during the training	(3)
			How to assist the Sheikh	(2)	Link between the environment and the religious education	(1)
			Better support for the community and religious groups	(1)	Sports as part of religious education	
					Building Quran Khalawi	
TECHNICAL TRAINING						
Practical education (42) (Agriculture, trade, mechanic, carpenter, driving, construction, welding, sewing etc.)	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS
	Location, relevance and activities	(14)	Increase income opportunities of families	(21)	Provide training materials and facilities	(11)
	Additional activities	(16)	Can get technical jobs	(1)	Vocational training centres	(6)
	Content	(15)	Experience and knowledge	(5)	Land and tools for agricultural production	(2)
	Methodology	(18)	Financial security	(7)	Business education	(1)
	School environment	(3)	Help to build workshop and maintain equipment	(3)	Workshop and equipment required	(25)
	Parents learn too	(1)	Helps them acquire professional skills	(3)	Budget for practical education	(1)
	Approach	(1)	Children will be innovative and discover new things	(1)	Evening lessons	(1)
			Become useful member of the community	(3)	Provision of loan facilities	(1)
			Maintain their uniforms and family clothes	(3)	Provision of skilled teachers	(3)
				(1)	Provide practical training	(7)
					Improved marketing	(5)
						(2)

			Train others	(2)		
			Maintain vehicles in the area	(1)		
			Agricultural guiders	(2)		
				(2)		
LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION						
	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS	ITEMS	TOTALS
Life skills (13) (Family planning, hygiene, toilet cleaning, hand washing, personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, Adult Education)	School environment, Methodology and approach Make children healthy Location Language Additional activities	(3) (10) (1) (2) (1) (3)	Keeps yourself and your house healthy Gives skills and experience Healthy environment for children Reduce maternal mortality Cost-saving Building intellectual skills Better communication skills Increase income Improve family, and community health	(6) (2) (2) (1) (1) (1) (1) (2) (2)	Community awareness Training provided Make attractive and educative school environment Development of people Provided more clean equipment Awareness sessions Orientation sessions More qualified teachers Splitting of boys and girls (basic education) Provide training materials and equipment (speakers, books, furniture) Introduction of evening classes Protect family and community health	(2) (4) (2) (1) (3) (1) (2) (2) (1) (3) (1) (2)

ANNEX 3C: ATTITUDES AND ASPIRATIONS IN RED SEA STATE

Which behaviour, skills, knowledge, and attitude should the children possess as adults?

<i>ITEMS</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
Values and morals	(30)
Literacy skills, knowledge and information	(18)
Practical useful skills	(17)
Leadership: Time management, problem solving	(14)
Positive attitude towards others	(13)
Active participants in developing the community	(9)
Be able to educate others	(4)
Good conduct in the community	(4)
Good at communication and social interaction	(3)
Depending on themselves	(3)
Good example to others	(2)
Innovative in thinking and attitude	(1)

What would you like their family life, social life and professional life to be like?

<i>ITEMS</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
Stable and strong family ties	(38)
Respectable professional lives	(21)
Live good and healthy social life	(17)
Economically secure, work for the well-being of their future	(10)
Wealthy	(8)
Have skills to feed themselves and support the community	(6)
Collaborative	(5)
Make a good family in the community	(3)
Should care for their children	(2)

ANNEX 3D: ATTITUDES AND ASPIRATIONS IN BLUE NILE STATE

Which behaviour, skills, knowledge, and attitude should the children possess as adults?

<i>ITEMS</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
Values and morals	(33)
Active participants in the community	(12)
Literacy skills, knowledge and information	(11)
To live/ network in an integrated international community	(8)
Practical skills (IT)	(4)
Manufacturing skills	(3)
Healthy children	(3)
Self - dependent	(3)
Oratory	(2)
Good example to others	(2)
Life skills	(1)

What would you like their family life, social life and professional life to be like?

<i>ITEMS</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
Strong social life	(15)
Stable and strong family ties and active in community events	(14)
Secure employment	(13)
Stable and successful professional life	(10)
Value - based upbringing	(3)
Be well integrated in society	(3)
Have enough money	(2)

VII. STUDY 6

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AT	Assistance technique
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
EEF	East Education Fund
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EU	European Union
FMOE	Federal Ministry of Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GIR	Gross Intake Ratio
GPI	Gender Parity Index
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
PBR	Pupil/book ratio
PSC	Public Service Commission
PTR	Pupil/teacher ratio
SCS	Save the Children (Sweden)
SDG	Sudanese Pound
SMOE	State Ministry of Education
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund

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From this context the survey document has emerged as a result of a broad based partnership. Its content is derived from the expressed views of the interviewees in the targeted states. We hope that it will be a tool for increasing efficiency and for further collaboration in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating education priority programs.

Dr Ibrahim Eldassis – Senior Expert

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is on the research study on Improving Management for Better Retention which was organized and implemented by SOFRECO (Paris), with UNICEF and Save the Children (Sweden) (SCS) as partners, in support of the Sudan government in achieving its education development objectives while fulfilling its commitments in MDG's, EFA and other related international declarations and conventions in the area of education. The strategic area of intervention is to address the problems of high dropout rates and low retention observed in five targeted states of Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. It is financed by the European Union (EU).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Aims

The main aim of the research is to document current management structures and practices in education ministries at state level, analysing what works well and what works less well.

Objectives

- To assess the role of system of governance in the management of schools and enrolment in the five targeted states of Kassala, Gedaref, Red Sea, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.
- To examine the mechanisms and reporting processes to measure and document efficiency indicators focusing on dropout and retention.
- To study the effectiveness of the practices of monitoring, data collection and information transmission processes.
- To scrutinize the methods of communication at various levels of governance.
- To enquire into the structure of accountability at state and locality levels.
- To contribute to the improvement of the efficiency of basic education in the targeted states through the identification of areas that could lead to better management.
- To propose management strategies in which state ministries can be more proactive in preventing dropout and increasing retention.

Activities include travel to targeted states, five days field work interviewing ministers, DGs, supervisors, directors, deputy directors, headmasters and teachers in each targeted state, compiling and analyzing the data and reporting.

This study, on improving management for better retention, has applied a selective sampling method targeting senior and middle level officials at the Headquarters of five targeted states in Sudan (Red Sea, Kassala, Gedaref, Blue Nile and South Kordofan) as well as four basic education schools in each of these states.

Six semi-structured interviews were designed for Ministers, DGs, supervisors, school headmasters, teachers, and implementing agencies, besides guidelines for two focus discussion groups of senior administrators and their assistants. These instruments cover a wider range of issues in management procedures and practices. See the attached Annex for more details.

The findings reveal a considerable number of varied policy issues. Some of these policy issues, by way of example, have a negative impact on retention in the context of Sudan such as co-education. Management issues such as transfer and release of teachers during the calendar year, a school calendar that does not take into account the weather and climate conditions or the harvest season in some states. Others have their pros and cons like decentralization. The bright side is that of the considerable effort exerted by school administrators and supervisors to adjust and improve school performance. Detailed findings are in section four of this report.

2 INTRODUCTION

With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 that put an end to a devastating civil war that continued for more than two decades, the country has directed its efforts towards reconciliation, democratization, peace building, rehabilitation and reconstruction of what has been destroyed by the civil war. Education is, no doubt, a decisive factor in the realization of these aspirations and the materialization of this movement.

The focus on the achievement of Education for All goals since Jomtien in 1990 through to the Dakar Forum and MDGs in 2000 and up to the present has directed the emphasis of the international community and the national efforts towards increasing access to basic education.

It is well recognized that basic education is the prerequisite and the first step for shaping the future of the citizens, to equip them to live in an ever-changing world, to add value to the quality of their lives, and to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge for good citizenship.

The Sudan government has exerted considerable efforts to develop the basic education sub-sector in terms of access, quality and system strengthening. In spite of that, the weakness in internal efficiency is evident and documented.

This situation prompted the EU to provide financial support to improve the efficiency of the system. SOFRECO (Paris) was chosen to provide technical assistance to conduct a research study with a capacity development component titled, “**Improving management for better retention**”.

- **Section one** of this report provides a brief account of the socio-economic and education context of the five targeted states. The section describes the major characteristics of the population and provides an account of economic development in relation to social development. It also gives an account of the major indicators of education.
- **Section two** describes the survey methodology.
- **Section three** provides a summary of the research data description and analysis.
- **Section four** gives an account of the findings of the survey, summarizing the issues and problems highlighted in the preceding sections.
- **Section five** concludes with recommendations for future actions.

3 SECTION ONE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND EDUCATION CONTEXT

The five targeted states of Gedaref, Kassala, Red Sea, South Kordofan and Blue Nile have the following common features:

They are sparsely populated with a wider base of the population pyramid, predominantly rural, poverty stricken and with low rates of adult literacy.

The following table gives an overview of the context of the targeted states⁸²

State	Population characteristics	Economic activities	Education context ⁸³
Gedaref	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The population reached 1,348,378 in 2008 distributed in ten localities ▪ 69.8% of the population are rural dwellers ▪ 48% of the population are the age group (9-14) indicating a high dependency ratio ▪ 75% of the population are poor⁸⁴ ▪ 41% of them are illiterates 	80% of the population is engaged in the agricultural and pastoral sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GER=69.4% ▪ GIR=85.8% ▪ indicating a low retention rate ▪ PBR=3:1 ▪ GPI = 0.9 ▪ Poor school environment where the majority of schools are built of local materials with no latrines and no housing for teachers, coupled with shortage of teachers (a negative impact on efficiency and quality can be discerned) ▪ 52.0% untrained teachers
Red Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The population has reached 1,396,110 distributed in ten localities, six of them are rural localities ▪ The majority of rural population are poor ▪ 50% of them are illiterates 	The populations are engaged in agriculture, fishing, traditional mining and the pastoral sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GER=50.3% ▪ GIR=78.8% ▪ indicating a low retention rate ▪ PBR=3:1 ▪ GPI = 1.1 ▪ Poor school environment The availability of inputs only 50%⁸⁵ ▪ 35% untrained teachers

⁸² States strategic plans (2012-2016), 12/2013

⁸³ FMoE Statistics, 12/2013

⁸⁴ The five year plan (2012-2016), p.(9-11)

⁸⁵ Red Sea Five year Plan

South Kordofan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The population has reached 1,765,277 (2011 projections), distributed in sixteen localities, ▪ 79.3% of the population are rural dwellers ▪ 52.5% of the population are under 14 years indicating a high dependency ratio. ▪ poverty of the population is considered a factor in low retention ▪ 53.2% of them are illiterates⁸⁶ 	The population are engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GER=66.2% ▪ GIR=81.5% ▪ PBR=4:1 ▪ GPI = 0.8 ▪ 31.2% of untrained teachers ▪ Poor school environment where the 37.6% of schools are built of local materials with no latrines and only 14.9% of all the schools have boundary walls.
Kassala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The population reached 1,789,806 in 2008 distributed in eleven localities, in an area of 42285 KM² with a population density of 42 ▪ 43% of the population are under 15 indicating a high dependency ratio. ▪ The majority of the population are poor ▪ 43% of the active age group (15-45) are illiterates 	The majority of the population is engaged in the agricultural and pastoral sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GER=52.2% ▪ GIR=74.9%⁸⁷ ▪ PBR=4:1 ▪ PTR = 31:1 ▪ GPI = 0.9 ▪ 49.9% of untrained teachers
Blue Nile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The population reached 832,311 in 2008 distributed in six localities ▪ area of 385,000 km² ▪ 75% of the population are rural dwellers ▪ 56.4% of the population are below 18 ▪ Majority are poor ▪ 51% of them are illiterate⁸⁸ 	The majority of the populations are engaged in the agricultural and pastoral sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GER=64.4%⁸⁹ ▪ GIR=92.5% ▪ GPI =0.8 ▪ 76.3% untrained teachers

⁸⁶ South Kordofan, MoE, the five-year strategic plan (2012-2016), P.31

⁸⁷ FMoE, *Educational Statistics* (2011-2012), P. (26-28)

⁸⁸ Blue Nile State, MoE, the five-year strategic plan (2012-2016), P.31

⁸⁹ FMoE, op.cit. P. (26-28)

4 SECTION TWO

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The research method to obtain answers to the stated questions of the research was mainly qualitative for the following reasons:

- The targeted groups responsible for management processes were few in number, consisting of the senior officials at the HQ of the State Ministry of Education (SMoE) including, in each targeted state, ministers, DGs, directors and their assistants and four inspectors (supervisors). At school level, four headmasters and eight teachers from each state. The implementing agencies (UNICEF and SCS) were included. Guidelines for each category were developed.
- The qualitative research required that the researcher should be the essential person to collect data and information from its primary and secondary sources.
- The collected data were compiled, presented and analysed.
- The aim of this qualitative research is to provide in-depth and detailed description and analysis of the subject of the research, to come up with conclusions and recommendations.

Interviews and discussions were conducted in Arabic, with guidelines to facilitate the administering process. It was envisaged that individual interviews would allow for free expression of perceptions, whereas focus groups discussions would provide collective perspectives.

The research covered five states providing insight into contextual differences.

Secondary data and information were examined for relevant documentary evidence of management processes. This included: basic school regulation, school register, school calendar, student records and teacher profiles, tables of responsibility, reports, evaluations and minutes of meetings. Moreover, education policies and support documents related to the management of enrolment and retention of the primary school students were accessed.

The collected data and information from primary and secondary sources are analyzed and documented in this report.

The research information was collected mostly by the following tools:

- Semi-structured Interviews to enable face-to-face discussion with the interviewees and give them freedom to express their views in their own terms.
 - The interviewer was allowed to explain to the respondent what was confusing or not understood in the interview questions. This method proved to be reliable and the same group of questions was duplicated in each of the targeted states. The method enabled the examination of the level of understanding of respondents of the issue of the role of management in improving the internal efficiency of basic education.
 - The targeted groups included, in each state, the minister, the DG, directors, assistant directors and a supervisor, four basic school headmasters and eight teachers from four schools beside the implementing agencies (UNICEF and SCS).
- Focus group discussion
 - This in-depth open-ended group discussion was organized for two groups (directors and their deputies) at the HQ of the state ministries. This was to ensure enough homogeneity for openness and comfort. DGs were not included in the focus group to enable free speech among the members and the resulting cross-fertilization of ideas has enriched the research outcomes.
 - Well-defined topics that have a bearing on management processes and practices in relation to the internal efficiency of basic education formed the themes of the discussion. The facilitator gave free rein to the discussion to allow enough room for free thought and ideas. Brainstorming and idea generation techniques were applied.
 - The main topic of the discussion was the role of present practices and processes of management in enhancing internal efficiency in relation to issues such as decentralization, mechanisms of communication and flow of information upstream and downstream and vice versa as well as policies, regulations and circulars.

Research Tools

Six semi-structured interviews for ministers, DGs, basic school headmasters, supervisors (inspectors), teachers and implementing agencies (UNICEF & SCS):

- Questionnaires were developed to collect in-depth information from the targeted groups about:
 - The specific factors that may have negative impact on internal efficiency focusing on retention and dropout;
 - Management structures, processes and practices as pertaining to access and quality of education
 - The function of the system in relation to the provision of a learning environment that is conducive to quality teaching and learning.
 - Policies on various issues and norms on running the education system at various levels of management.
- The questionnaires for each group of interviewees are annexed to this report document (annex 1).

5 SECTION THREE SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH DATA: COMPILATION, DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This section aims to discuss a number of management issues that relate to dropout and retention in basic education. These issues include policies, decentralization, gender, equity in access, dropout and retention, data collection, communication, documentation, reporting, efficiency, team work, discipline, and the role and function of personnel.

5.1 Effectiveness of policies

In responding to the role of policies in improving the system, SMOE directors said:

- Policies are formulated at the federal level and do contribute to the quality of the system, but lack supporting references such as regulations, which have not been passed yet in some states, and detailed job descriptions for all administrative posts.

In this connection, the researcher is of the opinion that managers should be aware of the main functions of management i.e. planning, organizing (delegating to empower and give the necessary level of freedom to subordinates to create and carry out plans), forecasting, coordinating (creating team spirit and unity), commanding (having the authority to give orders), making decisions and taking responsibility, and controlling.⁹⁰

- DGs agreed that there is a regulation for the basic school administration, including the rules for admission, enrolment and transfer from one school to another, but not for the establishment of schools which is decided according to the number of pupils in the catchment area decided by the statistics department and reported to the DG for approval. However, some schools have been established without using

⁹⁰ <http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/henri-fayol.htm> accessed on 20/06/2015

education criteria, but just for political reasons or community pressure as pointed out by the professionals in a group discussion.

- There is a flaw in the establishment where educational standards, especially for the Schools of the East Education Fund (EEF) (this is a special fund for the development of the Eastern states, some of which is earmarked for the construction of schools), are not taken into consideration.
- One of the problems with the policies of decentralization is the interference of the local governor in the promotion and appointment of high-level education personnel, as one of the ministers put it.
- The above-mentioned contents of regulations are not known to the personnel or school headmasters.
- Regulations have not yet been passed by the legislative assembly in some states.
- Circulars have, to some extent, contributed to the functioning of the education system.
- The policy of school calendar does not cater for harvest seasons. This is a cause for absence that requires a change in policy.
- The policy of co-education is a main cause of dropout among girls in the upper grades of basic education. A minister pointed out that co-education is another social problem as it is not appropriate to the culture of our rural communities, so it is in our policy to abolish co-education.
- Practices do not always comply with the required number of teachers for the school as decided by the policy. Shortage of teaching staff was mentioned by DGs, and a minister proposed to be allowed to recruit teachers from the secondary school graduates who can work in their communities in the remote and rural areas, provided that the ministry ensures their professional development through the Open University program of distance learning to eventually obtain their graduate degree.
- No clear pro-poor policies in place.

5.2 Decentralization

Decentralization is defined as the transfer of decision-making authority closer to the beneficiary. This implies transferring powers to lower administrative levels of government (devolution). It entails transferring education responsibilities to states and localities (basic education to the locality level). It is adopted with the aim of increasing the efficiency in management and governance, especially at the basic level.⁹¹

Participants were of the opinion that decentralization can be an asset if the criteria for the establishment of a locality are strictly observed i.e. a reasonable number of population and the ability to get enough resources for providing social services. This is important because the locality should provide for basic education; if it is sparsely populated and has no sustainable source of income, then it will not be in a position to provide the kind of education that helps pupils to continue and succeed.

- It can improve the efficiency of the education provided that all the required inputs for its success are in place before being implemented.
- As a principle, decentralization is likely to achieve the educational objectives faster by bringing the service to the client and to bring about good results in the improvement of efficiency, provided that all the requirements of decentralization are satisfied i.e. delegate and capacitate. These are mainly the opinions of DGs.

⁹¹ N. McGinn and T. Welsh, Decentralization in Education, UNESCO 1999

- However, one of the ministers said that decentralization is a policy that they cannot have a say in, but it can be reviewed through studies.

Positive aspects

- The services are close to the client (Easy supervision)
- It is easy to monitor and follow up the service delivery.
- It is easy to provide education to needy areas.
- Expansion in the number of schools creating more posts for teachers.
- Emergence of new administrations.
- More popular mobilization.
- Facilitates data collection and flow of information.

Challenges

However, respondents enumerated quite a number of negative aspects and challenges of decentralization on issues of finance, capacity building and political impact on education decision as elaborated below:

Finance

Decentralization has increased the burden and financial costs to the state budget, especially education. The provision of education in sparsely populated areas is costly as there are a number of localities with lower populations especially in Red Sea, Gedaref and Kassala, bearing in mind that some localities already experience a shortage of finance. This situation has created a more acute shortage of finance as many localities cannot afford the cost of quality basic education. Their revenues can hardly cover their varied and competing expenses.

Capacity

The policy of decentralization has not taken into consideration the realities at state and local levels such as the inadequacy of trained professionals, coupled with a lack of experience and institutional capacity. It has also created a gap (a vacuum) as the exchange of experience of competent administrators from the centre and other regions of Sudan was lost, with a weakening of the attachment to the centre. In fact, deployment of teachers used to be carried out by the centre. Now a difficulty in transfer of teachers has been created. Some localities and even states suffer from a shortage of teachers in science subjects.

5.3 Political impact on education decisions

Participants pointed out a number of negative interventions in ministry decisions, such as the interference of local governors in the assignment of senior education posts and even in the transfer of teachers; others said that they also interfere, together with popular leaders, in the choice of new school sites without consideration of educational norms and procedures. Political interference occurs in filling higher posts such as the DG for education at the locality level, who should be chosen by the governor of the locality with full support of the governor of the state (*wali*).

In one of the states, minister of education is not a member of local governor's council where allocations of locality resources are decided upon, whereas all other ministers are members. The ministry, in one state, proposed an education support fund which proved to be very useful, but it has been stopped by the *wali* to the detriment of education development and settlement.

These practices are distortions in the application of decentralization created confusion and have affected decision-making at the local level.

5.4 Gender

Gender Mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

There is a clear indicator of gender equality, where approximately 70% of teaching plus some managerial positions in the ministry, localities and schools are occupied by women.

All the jobs are open to free competition, and most teachers and staff are women except in remote areas. In the case of promotion, women prefer the administrative supervisory jobs for their limited movement. For example, a job of director of basic education in Kadogly was offered to a woman, and refused.

At the state level

- Legally, there is no gender discrimination and women can assume any post. However, one out of 7 ministries in Kassala state cabinet is for women and there are few directors in the HQ of the ministry of education and no women at the level of DG at the locality level. There are a few more male heads than females at the school level.
- There is no overt gender discrimination on appointment to the higher administrative posts, but actually it is practiced as can be discerned from the following statements by (male) respondents about perceived problems of employing women:
- Absence of women teachers (40 days for delivery) and 45 days for marriage and one year for maternity with basic salary being paid.
- Women seem to be reluctant to assume a leading post with the exception of headmistress. Cultural traditions have deprived women from assuming some higher posts

5.5 Equity in access: challenges and measures taken

Equity in education is a measure of achievement, fairness, and opportunity in education. Educational equity is dependent on two factors, (1) **fairness** – factors specific to one's personal conditions should not interfere with the potential of academic success – and (2) **inclusion** – a comprehensive standard that applies to everyone in a certain education system.

The following are the main expressed challenges and measures taken by respondents to ensure equal access to all eligible children:

Challenges

Challenges vary between states from the security situation which poses the biggest challenge in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states to early marriage (9 years old) in Kassala state. In some areas, a weak interest of parents in education, especially the

education of girls, is a major problem (especially in Kassala state and South Kordofan), and also for some families who prefer their children to work in agriculture, grazing, traditional mining or getting married.

Another challenge in Gedaref state, is the inadequate number of schools due to the limited financial abilities of the localities whereas the provision of breakfast, school supplies and uniforms are important challenges in South Kordofan.

Measures

- The abolition of school fees is a declared policy.
- The national registration day (NRD) is another management practice aimed at increasing girls' attendance. This was initiated by the planning department to increase access for girls, but now it has become a National Registration Day for both boys and girls and celebrated nationwide.
- The attachment of a pre-school to each primary school is a presidency declaration.
- Some states have issued a local order obliging parents to send their children to school and others have created the initiative of feeding for learning.
- Other measures recounted by the participants include:
- Organization of awareness campaigns, building more schools in needy areas, improving the school environment and, taking into account that the school site is within reach of pupils.

5.6 Policies and procedures on dropout and retention

The following are the policies and measures taken by the different states:

- The implementation of the Food for Education (Red Sea state government). It has increased school registration but not attendance. Some pupils come on the distribution day and disappear. This policy needs to be reviewed to yield the desired results.
- In teacher training, how to deal with pupils, classroom management, and communication skills with the community besides competency in the curriculum content should form the core of the training content.
- Improvement of the school environment through school grants.
- School grants may not be enough; after all it is just a pilot project, a component of BERP.
- One DG has directed the educational planning department to conduct a study on dropout and retention.
- A minister said: "We presented these problems to the legislative assembly and we proposed the establishment of boarding facilities with full board feeding and housing for teachers. We proposed to be allowed to recruit teachers from the secondary school graduates who can work in their communities in the remote and rural areas. The ministry will ensure their professional development through the Open University program of distance learning to obtain their graduate degree eventually."

5.7 Collection and communication of data

The collection and communication of data between the various levels of education administration are a key element of management.

In response to how data collection, communication, documentation and reporting of dropout and retention work among state ministry, local administration and schools participants mentioned the following:

- No smooth flow of information due to several difficulties including the lack of means of movement, rugged roads, poor communication networks and the lack of electricity supply in some areas of the states, in addition to inadequate and untrained staff.
- Official letters through the localities and circulars sent from H.Q. through localities to schools. In fact, communication relies heavily on phone and traditional communication especially in rural areas where mail or e-mail, where applicable, are employed and the phone is used for urgent matters.
- However, one state has a good database which enables it to produce annual statistics in time. This also facilitates the downstream and upstream flow of information and collection of data.
- There is no mechanism or effective system for monitoring, documenting and reporting processes on dropout and retention that are scientifically reliable (lack of sophisticated facilities for flow of information). This is due to the fact that EMIS is not yet fully functioning. The mechanisms are also not effective as EMIS is not functioning at the lower levels of administration and there is no easy and affordable database.
- Vertical and horizontal communication within the state and locality can also be facilitated by an administrative structure with clear functions and lines of communication of departments and administrative units (see Annex 2).

5.8 Improving efficiency

Efficiency is a level of performance that describes a process that uses the lowest amount of inputs to create the greatest amount of outputs. Efficiency relates to the use of all inputs in producing any given output, including personal time and energy. The internal efficiency indicators are calculated on the flow rates of promotion, dropout and completion. Building on the flow rates, the indicators of retention and completion can be obtained by using cohort analysis.⁹²

At state level

- The absence of proper strategic planning and budgeting which can be discerned from the data gaps in some, if not all, state strategic plans to measure essential indicators such as the percentage allocated to education in the state budget.
- Gaps in the curriculum, such as not drawing content from the local environment or fully meeting the educational needs of children. It is true that the curriculum is the responsibility of the Federal government. However, states can have a say on its relevance to their particular needs.
- The absence of dedicated and sufficient budgets to improve the educational environment. This is due to the fact that some states and localities do not have enough revenue to cater for competing services. Their budget needs to be supplemented by the centre.

At school level

- There is a shortage of teachers and some teachers are not trained and with low morale.

⁹² UNESCO, Education Policy and Strategies Series No. 13, 2006

- Some teachers bring their infants to school. Emergency absence of teachers and teachers who have been transferred to the school do not attend, indicating a weakness in the management of teachers. These are obvious factors that affect the quality as well as retention.
- Poor learning environment – shortage of school buildings, and existing ones not maintained (no school wall, furniture, drinking water, latrines etc...). The learning environment is negatively affected by the weak cooperation of parents with the school. The failure to raise funds to provide school meals for poor pupils is another factor.

Proposed solutions

In order to address the challenges of management in improving the efficiency of primary schooling, participants proposed the following solutions for the management to adopt and strategize to implement them

- In Training
 - Continuous training of cadres to keep up with new development in management.
 - Training of headmasters to acquire the necessary administrative skills (a behavioural change in practicing the administrative function is needed).
 - Activate the role of the school council through training.
- In Administration at higher levels
 - Provision of an attractive school environment, providing the necessary infrastructure, and the provision of teaching aids, a sufficient number of qualified teachers.
 - Provision of educational supervision system which is attractive and effective.
 - Punishment and reward of employees should be an established policy based on specific criteria.
 - To review management practices in the states and localities with respect to deployment of teachers and release for training during the course of the calendar year.
 - The State should support the administration in terms of decision-making and implementation by making the educational administration a profession by continuous training.
 - To distribute sufficient and comprehensive pupil records to schools.
 - Provision of school finance. Localities should not only provide for school buildings, textbooks and salaries but also provide funds for school funds for electricity, telephone, water, maintenance and school events.
 - To stop transfer of teachers during the calendar year and headmasters to be consulted.
 - To avoid political interference in transfer.
 - Issuing bulletins on the latest developments in educational curriculum.

At the school level

- In administration at school level
 - To work collectively at the school level and engage teachers in administrative tasks.
 - Cooperation and collaboration with the school director in performing the tasks that a teacher is in charge of.

- Cooperation based on the advice and freedom of opinion between the school director and teachers.
- A feeling that all teachers are one family, raising issues and participating in solving problems with due regard to the role of parents in the process.
- Replace punishment by rewards in a variety of forms and treat pupils in a paternal manner.

5.9 Efficacy of team work and collaboration

The majority of respondents, in all five states, said that they practice teamwork through the formation of committees from different departments for discussing an issue, or through the monthly meetings of the DG at the state level or the headmaster at the school level. It is also practiced when sending missions from the state to localities. Team work can be improved through training, practice, exchange of experience, use of information technology and spreading the culture of team work.

- Provide advanced training for capacity building in technical areas, networking and partnerships and provide the necessary needs and aids and activate social work.
- One DG said they practiced team work even outside the working hours when they used to meet early, before the official working hours, to informally cooperate in discussing and solving problems.

Accountability and transparency

- The survey addressed accountability and transparency with the state ministry and with communities.
- We resort to managerial procedures and apply the regulations for repeated mistakes.
- The DG's regular meetings, where all the senior officials and their subordinates attend, are a chance for officials to voice their opinions freely.
- Every official is accountable to his superior according to the rules and regulations.
- The process at the community level is regarded as traditional brokerage which is the most important way to address the problems and differences with the ministry. This is, to some extent, part of the official procedures where the community is involved to support or agree upon certain decisions interesting to them such as abolition of co-education or adjustment of school calendar.
- We engage the local communities in implementation of educational activities such as the community grants and through the national registration campaigns.

5.10 Managing education personnel

Selection for an administrative position, including headmasters, and challenges to fair and free recruitment and deployment processes are important management issues that affect the system in providing the right input for efficient, effective and quality learning. Fair recruitment and deployment criteria of employees that are based on clear criteria will improve efficiency and quality of the system and lead to the desired outputs and outcomes.

Selection Criteria

- Formation of a committee of experienced officials to nominate more than one person according to the criteria of qualifications that match the job description relevant to the administrative structure – no discrimination against women. CV and performance report are also taken into consideration.

- The choice should be from within the teachers who received a special training in relevant job-specific skills. Consideration is also given to his/her career in terms of discipline, the ability to communicate, and firmness and ability to make decisions.
- Moreover, to be a headmaster one must be a deputy first. See Box 1 below Headmaster's function

Criteria for choosing headmasters and teachers

Respondents provided the following criteria for the choice of headmasters and teachers:

- For headmasters
 - Experience, years of service, training, being a deputy head, performance reports, personal traits, good conduct and behaviour.
 - Sometimes these criteria are not strictly observed specially in hardship areas.
- For teachers
 - The teacher is chosen by the Public Service Commission (PSC) according to set criteria such as qualifications plus personal qualities, and clear pronunciation and success in answering the questions.
 - However, this method is not without its flaws and can give better results with the participation of stakeholders in the preparation of interview questions for selection. The choice should not be politically oriented.

5.11 Challenges of recruitment and deployment

- The continuous change in the names of ministries. This implies extra efforts and expenditure in changing all headings on files, entries of ministries and departments.
- The reluctance of women to assume a leading post with the exception of headmistress.
- The higher posts are at the disposal of the state and local governors.
- Lack of the required staff with special administrative skills.
- Linking the appointment of administrative functions to the seniority for the senior persons, if they have spent all their career on teaching, they may not have the required management skills
- Refusal of women to work in rural areas.

Box 1: Headmaster's main functions

- Supervising all school work giving directives in the daily morning assembly.
- Chairing of the school meetings: the first meeting at the beginning of the school year for discussing the annual plan and distributing time table and other tasks , monthly follow up meetings to discuss the results of the monthly examinations and to monitor plan implementation as scheduled and also to discuss problems emerging monthly, end of year meeting to discuss examination results, school stock of textbooks, shortage in staff and reporting to the locality, emergency meetings to respond to circulars from locality or to discuss an urgent issue.
- Monitoring the monthly results of the examination.
- Receiving the attendance from the controller.
- Supervising pupils, teachers and workers.
- Attending the monthly meeting at the locality.

- Submitting monthly and annual reports to the locality on the state of the school statistics including, among others statistics of absenteeism, dropouts and retention.
- Preparing the annual school budget and submitting it to the locality.
- Distributing administrative duties to teachers including daily supervision, timetable, morning assembly and school activities.
- As a resident supervisor, monitoring teachers' performance through reviewing of teacher's preparation notebooks and attending some lessons with them.
- Submitting sample lessons for teachers.
- Coordinating with teachers, school community, school friends and the school council (see Box (3) for its function as expressed by respondents).
- Teaching.
- Adopting an open door policy for all to present their problems and discuss it to reach a solution.
- Celebrating the school registration day.

The function of the supervisor

Supervisors play an important role as liaison agents between the higher administrative authorities at the state/ locality and the school. See Box 2 below on the function of the supervisor. Teachers acknowledged supervisors support in improving their performance.

Box 2: Function of a supervisor

- Promoting teachers' competence and improve pupils' performance.
- Supporting the headmaster in solving school problems.
- Working to improve school environment and define shortages in school learning environment.
- Reporting to the local education authorities.
- Training new recruits of teachers and participating in training courses.
- Deployment of teachers to schools according to the requirements of the curriculum.
- Following up the implementation of the school plan.
- Submitting final report to the ministry with a copy to the local governor.
- Following up reports on teachers for promotion.
- Participating in the examinations and classroom construction.
- Completion of teachers' profiles.
- Contributing to the organization of basic education final exam.

The function and role of the teacher in management

- Preparation of lessons and teaching (some subject and some class teachers), correction of exercise books and administration of monthly tests
- Responsible for one extracurricular activity and one of the school committees.
- Assist school management with the tasks entrusted to him/her (the morning assembly, supervising a classroom, communication with the community, and school discipline)
- Keeping school records that contain personal data and records of the pupil usually kept with the grade advisor including everything related to the pupil. These records

are useful in knowing the social, physical and academic status of the pupil and in doing so a teacher can be in a better position to improve school discipline.

- Working to provide an attractive environment for study and communicating with family (through visits or telephone).
- A school controller makes sure that teachers attend their classrooms and all periods are filled.
- Collecting attendance thrice a day and reporting cases of repeated absences to parents and call them to discuss the reasons for absences and work out the required course of action.
- Exchanging responsibility of school attendance once a week

School Council

The school council has a crucial role to play in improving school learning environment, performance, motivating teachers and pupils, liaising with parents and local authorities.

The higher level state management should give it the attention it deserves in selecting its members from the active, willing and prominent figures of the community, as well as arranging for training, meeting with them and involving them in matters relating to the school.

Box 3: Function of the school council as described by respondents

- Helps the school in solving social, financial and academic school problems.
- Contributes to school maintenance.
- Assists in the provision of services and meals for pupils and teachers
- Provides incentives for pupils and support to the examination centre.
- Gets in touch with parents to draw their attention to absence cases.
- Advises pupils to attend.
- Collects contributions from pupils but not obligatory.
- Decides on the admission contributions.
- Approaches the locality to cover the shortages.
- Liaises between school and parents.
- Contributes to the improvement of the school environment
- However, some respondents said that it is inactive and has never come to school

Management of schools

- Schools are managed by the DG at the locality level who is supported by chief technical and administrative supervisors who visit the schools twice or thrice a year.
- Each school has one headmaster and 2 deputy heads.
- The headmaster bears primary responsibility for the school administration and submits reports in the monthly meeting of headmasters at the locality level.

5.12 Measures to reduce dropout and improve retention

In a response to the following questions to the headmasters,

- “What are the reasons, from your point of view, which prevent children from continuing in school until the completion of the stage?”
- What measures do you take to reduce dropout and improve retention?”

Headmasters mentioned a number of reasons preventing children to continue in school until the completion of the stage (see annex 1) and proposed the following measures to reduce dropout and improve retention.

- Provision of extracurricular activities.
- Study cases of poor pupils and provide support accordingly.
- Reception of first year pupils. This is a celebrated school day where parents bring their children to school and schools exert efforts to make the school attractive to the newcomers.
- Awareness sessions for pupils and parents.
- Establishing continuous contact with parents.
- Engagement of local community in school activities.
- Provide teacher’s housing.
- Provide a friendly school environment that contributes to the motivation of teachers, attracts pupils and promotes efficiency – an environment that has adequate quality inputs such as quality buildings and a site that meets educational criteria, a fence (wall), drinking water and latrines, seating and textbooks, playgrounds, trained teachers and managers (good management of time on task). The complete school of 8 grades should have an adequate number of staff (12 teachers+2 deputies).
- Positive interaction between teachers and pupils in a humane atmosphere.

These measures should be included in the basic school regulation and the upper level management, at both state and locality levels. High-level management at state and locality levels should see to it that the regulation is in the hands of headmasters. The local level management should monitor the implementation of these measures through supervision, school councils and other innovative measures. The higher level management should provide the necessary financial and material support to put these measures in place.

[Reporting on dropout and retention](#)

Reporting is on an annual basis, from schools to localities. All school administrations are obliged to report annually to their respective localities.

The number of dropouts can only be counted by the end of the school year and the beginning of the new school year. This can be managed by the locality as the reporting from each school includes the number of pupils transferred to or from the school. In this way the locality should be in a position to determine exactly how many dropped out and those who have been transferred to other schools.

[Factors affecting the school calendar](#)

- Some states have a rural and an urban calendar, others stick to a unified school calendar and the duration of the school year is 176 days. This is controlled by a plan for the teaching of the curriculum within the number of the specified working days. Headmasters have to follow up and so do supervisors during their visits.
- Other factors include the rainy season, summer diseases, harvest season, early autumn.

[Maintenance of discipline](#)

Discipline in school can be considered as a double-edged weapon. If intolerance of a teacher to minor misbehaviour of pupils leads to suspension or corporal management then misbehaving pupils are likely to drop out altogether from school. The following responses of teachers to maintenance of discipline are positive in favour of retention especially in the classroom.

In schools

In response to a question to headmasters on how they maintain discipline in schools, they mentioned the following measures:

- Punctuality, making attendance of the morning assembly obligatory for teachers, taking attendance of pupils thrice a day, making sure that each teacher is in his classroom, assigning monitors for classrooms from among pupils, assigning a teacher every day for the task of discipline
- The common practice is that the headmaster assigns the responsibility of discipline to the deputy, the controller and the classroom guides and they report to him.

In the classroom

In response to a question to teachers on how they maintain discipline in the classroom, they mentioned the following measures:

- Knowing my students by name and to drawing the attention of anyone who tries to disturb during the course of the lesson. This seems to be difficult in crowded classes.
- Diversifying teaching methods.
- Adopting a participatory approach.
- Using rewards instead of punishment.
- Good treatment of pupils.
- Teaching in a way that keeps the attention of the pupils.
- Integrity of the teacher and self-respect supported by individual skills.
- Wisdom and firmness in addressing problems.

6 FINDINGS

From the data description of section three and secondary data, the survey has come up with the following major findings focusing on gaps and factors that hinder effective management.

6.1 At State Level

Administrative structures

A careful examination of the administrative structures at the state level⁹³ reveals a defect that may affect the efficiency of the performance in the educational process. In the administrative structure of the Ministry of Education in one state, departments of nomadic education and that of girls are under the direct supervision of the Director-General and so is the department of girls' education in another state. Given the magnitude of DGs responsibilities, it would be better to delegate the supervision of these departments to the Director of basic education to facilitate the communication process and addressing of problems.

In a third state, we noticed that there is an overlap of functions due to the fact that departments such as information and documentation and educational follow-up and coordination are under other directorates. These departments are at the core of the work of planning in the follow-up of plans and programs and reporting in a timely manner, as well as conducting studies and research.

Gender

- Legally, there is no gender discrimination as regards the assuming of administrative posts. However, there is an assumption that women do not prefer jobs that demand a lot of movement and continuous presence. This was spelt out by one of the DGs and evidenced by one minister who said that he had offered a post of DG to a woman at the locality level and she refused to accept it. Otherwise, the usual practice, in all states, is that vacant posts are declared and subject to free competition without discrimination.
- There seems to be a kernel of gender bias to occupy leadership positions at the state Ministry level.

⁹³ See Annex 2 for an administrative structure at state level

- However, the majority of women in the discussion group refused the assumption that women shy away from senior and demanding jobs that require a considerable amount of travel and movement as well as continuous presence.
- The assumption needs to be supported by evidence through research and not just by an individual case. The opinion of working women should also be taken into consideration.

Co-education is one of the reasons of dropouts for girls especially in the upper grades. **The negative community** perception, in some states, to girls' education represents an obstacle for retention.

In view of the high cost of having separate schools for boys and girls, co-education can be managed by a system of joint (shared) schools where there is one administration with separate classrooms for boys in an adjacent building.

The negative community perception of co-education needs synchronized efforts from different line ministries and the management of organized campaigns to create the necessary atmosphere to bring about the desired attitudinal change.

Transfer of teachers during the school year creates confusion and hampers the stability of the school, also intervention to release some teachers during the school year, affects school performance.

In all targeted states there is no licensed and certified regulation by virtue of which the vertical and horizontal functional relationships between departments can be regulated.

Training is not organized according to expressed need and there are no studies to determine the training gap in the field of management and administrative skills, and training decisions are imposed from above. Recently, PERP conducted an assessment of capacity building needs and targeted its program accordingly. This is a good example that the management of training can benefit from.

School calendar, in some states, does not take into account the weather, climate conditions and the harvest season when pupils help their families.

School fees, the so-called contributions, determined by school councils are one of the factors of dropout, and the ministry does not interfere to ensure that basic education is free and for all as stipulated in the Constitution.

The lack of State Ministry program of exchange of expertise and experiences among localities to benefit from the successes and lessons learned.

There is no state law that incriminates families who deprive their children of schooling. Such a law cannot be functional unless the state and locality provide for children from poor families to attend.

Delegation of responsibilities within state ministries occurs only in the case of absence and there are tasks to be implemented by departments and report on their performance. One can see the huge task of the DG from the administrative structure at the state levels. If all these functions remain in the hands of the DG, then it might have a negative impact on performance or, at least, a delay in delivery of services.

6.2 At the local level

Choice of school principals is not always in accordance with the agreed standards.

Staff working in departments of education at the localities need professional and administrative support to enable them to carry out their functions properly.

Traditional methods of information prevail and information technology is not fully utilized yet. The means of communication used for the exchange of educational information at the local level is traditional (Kassala and South Kordofan use the phone).

Level of community awareness of the importance of education at the local level is weak and this is reflected negatively in the follow-up of pupils' performance through the examination results and records.

Schools need more support from the government, community and the donors in terms of infrastructure and the requirement of school environment – buildings, teachers' housing furniture, teaching facilities and services (especially water), and funds for daily running of the school. These deficiencies have a negative impact on the desire of teachers and students alike and will reflect negatively on the efficiency of the school.

Management structure and job descriptions are not applied because they require a lot of resources which are unavailable. This may result in a lack of clarity of vertical and horizontal relationships where the control of the state on locality is very much weakened by the system of decentralization. This control is beneficial in appointment of suitable personnel at the locality and in fair recruitment, deployment, promotion and secondment of teachers based on educational criteria.

6.3 At school level

School records: The study has revealed that almost all of the schools have records for pupils, teachers and workers; but they are incomprehensive. There is no cumulative pupil's record about his family background (rich or poor and parents' jobs), or health status to supplement the available performance and attendance records. Teachers' profiles are incomplete to varying degrees between schools in terms of professional training.

Discipline: the varied opinions of respondents on how to deal with discipline reflect a high degree of intuition.

Evaluation of school performance is limited to the outcomes of the final grade, to the neglect of the results of promotion between grades. A considerable effort used to be exerted by school administrators to improve school performance by urging teachers to work extra hours with the final grade and soliciting support from the school community, council and school friends. Evaluation of quality of inputs and learning outcomes are factors of retention as they motivate and encourage both teachers and pupils to continue improving their performance.

Monitoring of performance by the concerned authorities and especially the school council and community is not as required.

Teachers' promotions are not based on confidential reports to measure performance, but on time-based entry system, which has damaged the level of the overall performance of teachers, created unfairness among teachers and weakened the regulatory and technical role of supervisors.

Moreover, teachers are not motivated financially and morally, thus weakening their desire to work in hardship areas and to promote the spirit of teamwork.

Frustration of teachers due to the pressures of living and low salaries makes them indifferent and resort to different methods to improve their incomes.

High cost of education for the poor and vulnerable families has a negative effect on retention.

The presence of all pupils of different ages and sizes in the same school leads to bullying and thus causes psychological and physical problems leading to dropout.

The weakness of the relationship between the school and families on the one hand, and the educational council and the school on the other hand, in some visited schools, reduces the opportunities of support and school improvement.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

At state level

Policies

- There is no good reason for the differences of administrative structures at state level; they should be homogeneous and designed with a view of facilitating the various aspects of the management process and in accordance with the specific job descriptions.
- Develop standards, specifications and job descriptions for those who hold administrative functions.
- In view of the fact that some headmasters and teachers have expressed their dissatisfaction with the function of the school council, it is recommended that the policy of appointing the council members should be reviewed so as to have active and dedicated council members who can contribute to the quality of the school and to develop criteria for the selection of members of the Educational Council.
- Apply the policy of shared schools instead of co-education to minimize the high cost, in terms of all kinds of resources, incurred by the abolition.
- Review school calendar to take account of the rainy and harvest season.
- Arrange for advocacy campaigns through all forms of media for the issuance of a state law obliging parents to allow their children to go to school and the necessary measures to reinforce the law.
- Appointment for higher posts should be transparent and on equal footing for both sex according to the set criteria.
- Organize the process of transfer of teachers so that it will take place only at the end of the school year except for a pressing need.
- Set high standards for the provision of school furniture and comply with those specifications at delivery.
- Reward teachers who work in hardship areas for specific periods by promotion and secondment or scholarship.

Reporting

- There are wide differences between states and localities in their practice in responding to the monthly and annual school reports on absenteeism and dropout – some higher administrations are prompt while others are oblivious. Therefore, it is recommended that the policies and regulations should consider this matter.

Capacity Building

- Develop a plan for training based on the needs of localities and schools and provide adequate budget for its implementation.
- Organize an annual program for the exchange of experiences between localities and presentation of the best initiatives in improving the quality of education in terms of access, quality and strengthening the system.

At the locality level

Capacity Building

- Discipline should be included in the training of both headmasters and teachers, especially in in-service training.
- Training for officials to use computers is an urgent need for better flow of information and communication between state, locality and schools.
- Organize campaigns to increase access, especially in localities with low participation rates and work to raise community awareness of the importance of education, especially among popular leaders.
- Comply with the agreed criteria for selecting school principals.
- Exert efforts to build the capacities of staff working at the local level through the computerization of the education information system.

Management of resources

- The appointment for the post of headmaster must satisfy the following criteria:
 - Satisfying the criteria of being a teacher.
 - Ranking from a classroom guide to a school controller to deputy head master.
 - Trained in school administration.
 - Good performance reports from the supervisors.
 - Priority for those who worked in hardship areas.
- The construction of schools, according to educational standards
- Provide schools with copies of administrative regulations and follow up their implementation through administrative and supervisory visits.
- Although provision of psychological counselling service for pupils and psychosocial support to vulnerable children is rarely practiced nowadays, it is strongly recommended. School counsellors should be recruited and trained
- Abide by the terms and conditions of establishing new schools and not succumb to the wishes of political or popular leaders.

Finance

- Assist schools to attract community and donor support.
- Seek to provide school uniforms and stationery for poor students by attracting popular and official support and donors working in the region.
- Provision of school meal to poor pupils.
- Schools should receive adequate support from the states and localities in terms of school buildings, water and latrines, furniture, learning materials and housing for teachers.
- Issue circulars that emphasize the exemption of poor students from any fees or contributions.
- Exemption from fees and other contributions especially the poor and the orphans.
- Motivate good teachers financially and morally.

- In view of the fact that schools receive inadequate support from the states and localities in terms of school buildings, furniture, learning materials and housing for teachers, as expressed by respondents, it is unlikely that the desired school environment will be realised unless the management at all levels explore new resources to support schools.
- Provision of such learning environment requires that management should be creative in ensuring the necessary funds and looking for new sources of finance and not just the government budgets or pupils' contribution.

At school level

Capacity Building

- It seems that much wastage as a result of high rates of dropout and low rates of retention can be attributed to the weak link between the school and its community and the absent role of the school council in this respect. It is absolutely necessary to strengthen this relationship by all means and redefine the function of the school council, and this should be part of in-service training for headmasters. School councils need to be capacitated.
- Conduct a workshop by the end of the school year to assess the performance and the exam results and another workshop before the beginning of the school year to plan and prepare for the new school year with a focus on addressing the shortcomings of last year, especially the urgent ones.

Management processes

- School records are incomprehensive. Therefore, each school should have comprehensive cumulative records for pupils, profiles for teachers and workers. This should be included in the basic school regulation and in the training of headmasters.
- Light the spirit of teamwork among the work force at the school level.
- Ensure conformity with the administrative regulations.
- Seek to mobilize the community resources to support the schools, for example by promoting the formation of a community-based voluntary body to raise funds to cover the cost of the education of the poor pupils.
- Exempt poor students from tuition fees whatsoever.
- It is important to report cases of dropouts to the local authorities.
- Raise funds to improve the school environment and make it attractive to pupils.
- Provision of extracurricular studies (sports - cultural - art - environmental).

8 CONCLUSIONS

This study has revealed many issues that are of utmost importance for the management system to consider. These issues include policies of decentralization, gender, school calendar, co-education, staffing of schools and setting criteria for appointment of teachers and administrative staff.

Decentralization

Decentralization has its pros and cons as expressed by participants. In order to build on the positive aspects, decentralization policy needs to be reviewed on an annual basis to address the challenges and negative aspects of its implementation as expressed by ministers and DGs, such as negative interventions in the ministry decisions, lack of institutional and financial capacities, lack of visibility in the practice of decentralization, and the loss of the exchange of experience of competent administrators from other regions of Sudan.

Flexibility

Policies should be flexible enough to allow a room for manoeuvre for the state and locality management to assess the situation for certain issues and act accordingly. In some areas pupils can hardly attend during the rainy and harvest seasons. To avoid this negative impact, management can assess the situation and decide on a suitable calendar without reducing the annual number of official working days. The admission policy should also be flexible to allow for the registration of over-age children, especially for nomads and in war-affected areas. Alternate intake policy should also be allowed in sparsely populated areas as well as co-education at lower grades.

The recruitment of successful secondary school graduates should be allowed in areas that suffer from acute shortage of teachers and in hard-to-reach areas, provided that those teachers are given the opportunity to develop their academic and professional careers at least to the graduate level.

Gender

Legally, there is no gender discrimination and women can assume any post. Females prefer the administrative supervisory jobs for their limited movement. These ministers' views were supported by the DGs but denied by women in the discussion groups. The reason for their lagging behind can also be attributed to the fact that girls' education

did not start at the same time as that of boys, beside the reluctance of women to occupy senior management posts.

This paradox can be tackled by high-level management at the state and locality levels to be proactive in identifying potential women who are capable, willing and committed to assume high level posts.

Accountability

- DGs believe that accountability can work through rules and regulations where every official is responsible to his/her superior according to the hierarchy of the administrative structure and every official is responsible for performing his/her duties according to the job description. This seems to be difficult in practice for the rules, regulations and job descriptions are not available to every official, and the administrative structure varies from state to another.
- It is absolutely necessary that rules and regulations and job specifications should be available and well understood by all employees. It is also important to harmonize the administrative structure to avoid overlap of duties.
- The traditional brokerage system seems to work well with the community and it should be employed wherever and whenever possible to supplement the official procedures.
- The process at the community level is regarded as traditional brokerage which is the most important way to address the problems and differences with the ministry.

Co-education

- The insistence on the abolition of co-education policy from the point of view of ministers and DGs is attributed to the fact that it is a social problem, as it is not appropriate to culture of rural communities. It is one of the main reasons for the high rates of dropout of girls and consequently low rates of retention especially at the upper grades.
- In fact the abolition of co-education is costly in terms of human, material and financial resources. The issue needs to be managed carefully through research to assess its feasibility in the context of Sudan. If it is inevitable, then it should be phased out gradually and consult stakeholders. It is no doubt useful in sparsely populated areas, and maybe some communities have no objection against it.

Managing personnel

- Participants mentioned issues that, if continued, would have a negative impact on the capacity and performance of the system. These issues include political interference in filling higher posts such as the DG for education at the locality level, to be chosen by the governor of the locality with full support of the governor of the state (wali). If this choice is not in accordance with the set educational criteria for filling the post, then the result will be doubtful.
- The system can only be managed to yield desired results and perform well if the appointment is based on the right profile, experience and academic and professional levels as stated clearly by the rules and regulations of the ministry. This also applies to the appointment of school councils from committed, dedicated and willing persons who will accept to be trained for this voluntary service.
- It is important to have annual plans for training and needs assessment for all employees at all levels with earmarked budget.

Cost and Financing

It goes without saying that education is a good investment in human capital both for individuals and for the whole society.

Rates of return are particularly high at the primary level, and especially in less developed countries.⁹⁴ This suggests that in most circumstances primary education deserves priority in the allocation of extra resources.

Decentralization policy, which assigns the responsibility of basic education to localities, has brought a number of challenges (on page 17 above) that must be addressed managerially at the state or locality levels.

It is good to have parents and communities making at least some contribution to schools in order to promote ownership and public interest in the work of their schools.

⁹⁴ Mark Bray, *The Costs and Financing of Education: Trends and Policy Implications*, P.22, 2002

9 ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

A - The honourable minister

- In the courtesy visit to the honourable minister, He or she will be briefed of the purpose of the research and will be approached with the following questions to solicit his/her opinion on them:
- What policies and procedures are in place to address the challenge of dropout and retention?
- How does Decentralization (from federal to state level) help improve the efficiency of the education system?
- What are the challenges of decentralization? What management challenges do you face as minister?
- How gender issues are perceived in employment and allocation of positions in the administrative structure?

B- Implementing Agencies

- The following question will also be posed to the implementing agencies UNICEF and Save the Children Sweden (SCS):
- How does Decentralization (from federal to state level) help improve the efficiency of the education system?
- What are the challenges of decentralization?
- How effective are the mechanisms, practices and reporting processes to document dropout and retention? And how can these processes be improved?
- What, in your opinion, are the challenges of management in improving the efficiency of primary schooling and how to address them?

C - Semi-structured Interview for DGs

- How does Decentralization (from federal to state level) help improve the efficiency of the education system?
- What measures have you taken to ensure access of all eligible children, Irrespective of gender, social background or location?
- How does communication among state ministry, local administration and schools work?
- What are the challenges from your perspective in getting all children to attend school?

- How do you assess data collection processes and flow of information from state down to schools through localities and administrative units and vice versa?
- In your opinion, how effective is teamwork and collaboration in the state ministry?
- How could it be improved?
- How do you tackle the issues of accountability and transparency (within the state ministry, with communities)?
- What are the criteria for selection for an administrative position?
- What are the main challenges to fair and free recruitment processes?
- What are the professional needs of the administrative officers?
- What are your responsibilities? Do you delegate some of your responsibilities to others? Which responsibilities? To whom?)
- How are schools managed in your State?
- What are the criteria for choosing a headmaster?
- What are the teachers' selection criteria?
- Is there a primary school regulation for governing the issues of monitoring, establishment of new schools, teachers and student's affairs?
- What are the rules for admission, enrolment and transfer from one school to another?
- Do you receive detailed regular reports from localities on dropout and retention?
- What action do you take when you receive such reports?
- What is your perception of an adequate learning environment?
- What are the factors that affect the commitment to the school calendar in your state?

D –Interview for Headmasters

- How have you been chosen to the position of headmaster?
- Could you tell us about your main duties as a headmaster?
- How do you run the school to ensure good internal administration and control?
- How do you report and communicate to higher administrative levels on dropout and retention?
- What support (other than financial support) do you receive from the State level?
- What further support do you need?
- Are there school records for staff and students and how useful are they in improving school performance?
- What measures do you take to reduce dropout and improve retention?
- What are the reasons, from your point of view, which prevent children to continue in school until the completion of the stage?
- How often are staff meetings to discuss various matters regarding planning the school performance and work?
- Do you have dialogue and regular meetings with parents to discuss issues of school improvement and how these events, in your opinion, are useful?
- Could you describe the function of the school council and how effective is it useful in improving efficiency and performance of the school?
- Do members of the community participate in and invited to school events?
- How do you monitor your staff?
- How do you maintain discipline in school?
- Do you allow free access to staff, pupils and workers to your office to approach you with requests and problems?
- What are management challenges that you face?
- How can management processes be improved at level of the state and the level of the school?

- What training courses you have received?

E – Interview for Teachers

- Could you tell us about your main duties as a teacher?
- How do you take part in running the school and how beneficial is your participation in improving school's efficiency and performance?
- How often do you monitor report and communicate cases of absenteeism and attendance?
- Do you keep records of your students and how useful are these records in improving school discipline?
- In your opinion, what measures do you think your school has to take to reduce dropout and improve retention?
- What are the reasons, from your point of view, which prevent children to continue in school until the completion of the stage?
- How beneficial are the meetings of school administration and the staff in planning the school performance and work?
- How do you assess the function of the educational council?
- Do you have dialogue and regular meetings with parents to discuss issues of school improvement and how these events, in your opinion, are useful?
- What strategy do you adopt to ensure the retention and successful completion of your pupils to the primary level of education?
- How do you assess the visits of supervisors with respect to your professional development and school performance?
- How do you maintain discipline in the classroom?
- How can you contribute to the creation of a friendly learning environment?
- How management processes can be improved at the school level?

F – Interview for Supervisor

- Could you tell us about your main tasks as a supervisor?
- How often you visit schools and what do you do in these visits apart from advice and support for teachers?
- Could you inform us of your role as a liaison agent between the higher administrative authorities at the state/ locality and the school?
- What direct or indirect role you play in school management?
- What kind of administrative work you do beside the pedagogical one?
- What is your advice to the school management to improve the school results and efficiency?
- What aspects of school functioning that you emphasize in your reports?
- What advice do you give to improve retention and reduce dropout?
- How do you report and give advice on matters that have direct effect on the quality of the school work?
- How could management processes at State level and at school level be improved?

G – Focus Group Discussions

The following themes will be the focus of the discussion for the focus group of SMoE Directors.

- How can we assess the pros and cons of decentralization?
- How effective is communication mechanisms for the flow of information upstream and downstream and vice versa in enhancing management for quality basic education

- How can management processes be improved at both state and school levels
- Discuss the following statements:
 - Policies are meant to improve the function of the education system.
 - Regulations and circulars help improve accountability leading to better functioning of the system.
 - All factors of dropout and retention can be attributed to shortages in management.

Guidance for the focus group of the professional staff at the SMOE – those who report to the Directors includes the following:

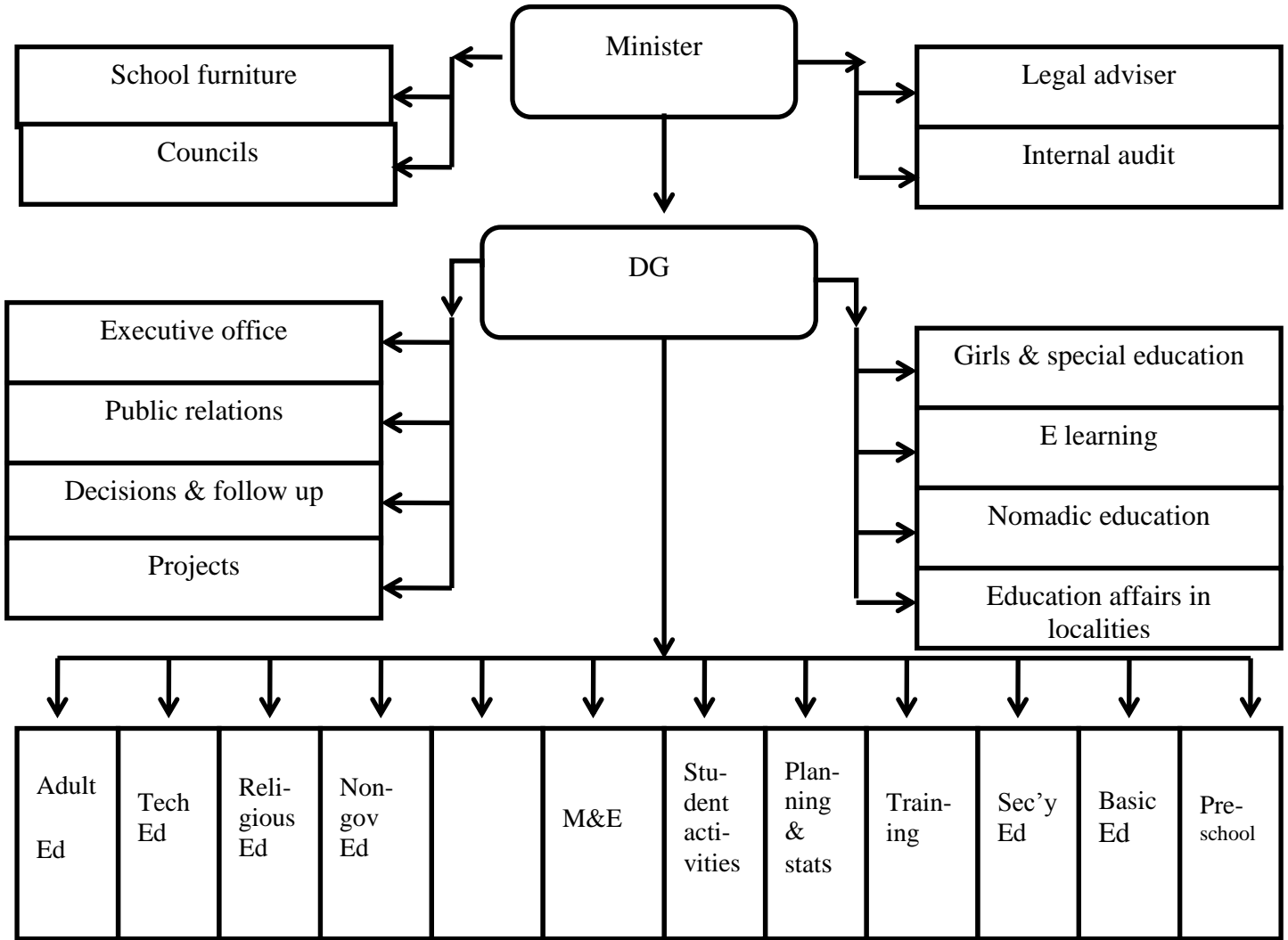
Discuss the following statements:

- Decentralization has greatly facilitated communication among state ministry, local administration and schools work. It has also improved monitoring, data collection and information transmission processes
- Gender mainstreaming ranks high in the agenda of recruitment of teachers and allocation to administrative positions. It is also important in enrolment procedures.
- Academic and professional qualifications, accountability and demonstration of leadership traits are among the criteria for selecting a school headmaster.
- The present mechanisms and practices of reporting processes to document dropout and retention are adequate.
- The present policies and procedures to address the challenge of dropout and retention are inadequate.

Reasons that prevent children to continue schooling:

- Illiteracy of parents.
- Living condition (poverty).
- Continued Absence of the father.
- Family problems (divorce).
- Poor school environment (no wall, electricity and/or water and/or latrines).
- Co-education.
- Absence during the harvest season.
- Orphanage, social traditions and early marriage.
- Negative Peer effect and difference in age between pupils (bullying).
- Family interference of taking their daughters out of school after grade 6.
- Shortage of teaching staff, incompetence of some and harsh treatment of others.
- Lack of academic and professional competence and creativity of the headmaster is another factor for dropping out.
- School site far from pupil's residence.

ANNEX 2: STATE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE



VIII. CONCLUSION

1 WHAT KIND OF CONCLUSIONS?

Each of the six research studies stands on its own merits, presenting an analysis of a specific aspect of dropout and its prevention, as well a range of recommendations derived from the findings. In this concluding section, the aim is to draw out common themes and present the broad messages of this research, taken as a whole. Although dropout occurs at all stages of education, these studies focused on primary education as the starting point for lifelong learning and the basis for developing human potential through education.

Beyond the content of the research, it is also important also to ask what use will be made of the studies and what their impact is in the broader debates, at national and international levels, surrounding the promotion of quality basic education and the efforts to ensure that all children enroll in primary school and continue until successfully completing the primary cycle.

2 WHAT DO THE SIX STUDIES ADD UP TO?

The studies contribute to an understanding of the dropout phenomenon, examined from a range of perspectives, but all utilising a common ethnographic approach in order to ask the fundamental question: **why** do children drop out of school? Finding elements of an answer to that question led to the next obvious question: **how** can we retain children in school? The six studies offer therefore three kinds of insight regarding:

- Innovation of approach
- Reasons for dropout
- Strategies for prevention

There follows a set of summary observations on the major areas examined and the gaps in the research.

2.1 Innovation of approach

Much is known about the level of school dropout in Sudan, and statistics have been collected for a number of years, and these surveys continue to improve in coverage and accuracy. This research complemented statistical surveys, adding further elements by adopting an approach which, in the context of Sudan, manifested three important and innovative components:

- **In-depth investigation and analysis** – the studies aimed to provide data on how dropout actually happens in the lives of children and families and what circumstances of community and school contribute to dropout. They further aimed to examine how the real processes of delivering and managing education work, including in the classroom, often referred to as the ‘black box’ of educational enterprise.

In this manner, these studies lead us away from simple slogans about dropout and easy assumptions about how it occurs. They challenge us to go deeper, to examine individual contexts, schools and lives to understand what dropout means and what the particular factors are that may, on the one hand, cause children to abandon their schooling prematurely and, on the other hand, increase the chances that they will stay in school, so that children acquire significant and relevant skills and begin to see their human potential unfold.

- **Confronting complexity** – all six studies plainly show that dropping out of school is a complex, multidimensional human problem and that, equally, no single solution will remedy the situation. The studies avoid simplistic analysis, demonstrating how factors are inter-related and how they are manifested differently in different lives, circumstances and contexts. In Sudan, this fine-grained analysis has not previously been undertaken, and the studies not only bring new data into the policy-making debate, but also strongly suggest that this kind of approach will bear fruit in achieving a deeper understanding of the challenge and a more nuanced search for solutions.
- **New voices** – the use of a qualitative approach and ethnographic method focused on the perceptions of the stakeholder groups involved in or affected by education. Among the range of stakeholders consulted were some groups whose voices are rarely heard and whose views are rarely represented. The studies have given voice to two particular groups often excluded from dialogue: children, to describe their own experiences and views, and parents, to offer their perceptions and attitudes on the value of education and the way in which it is delivered. The experience of including these voices shows how important it is to engage with all whose lives and networks have a direct stake in ensuring that children benefit to the maximum extent from their educational opportunities.

2.2 Reasons for dropout

The chief conclusion of the studies regarding the reasons why children drop out of school is that it results from a complex combination of multiple factors. These are of two kinds: first, factors relating to home, community, and the wider environment which keep children away from school – these are often called ‘pull factors’. Second, ‘push factors’ – those aspects of the way schooling is delivered which, for some children, make it difficult or impossible to stay in school. In any particular case, it may be push or pull factors that predominate in the decision to drop out, or most frequently a combination of both.

The six studies present a wide range of reasons for dropout, and they are not reproduced here. Rather, we identify here the reasons that are most salient across all the studies and which stakeholders stressed repeatedly; we also note the connections between the findings of the studies in this area.

Studies 1 and 2 both focus on analysing the **two fundamental dimensions** of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. This is a useful analytical tool to identify areas where there must be change to reduce dropout, but both studies clearly show that it is often a combination of both kinds of factors that lead to their dropping out, in varying proportions and including different aspects of each ‘side’ of the problem. This is part of the complexity of the dropout phenomenon and again emphasises the need to look closely at each case of dropout in their particular context, and to examine what happens outside of school as well as inside school.

The findings of Study 1 illustrate the scope of the **complexity of dropout** – it identified 16 socio-cultural and intellectual barriers to staying in school, 9 aspects of economic demand-side barriers, and 17 areas of obstacle and bottleneck regarding supply-side factors of schooling. This underlines clearly that there can be no simple or single solution to dropout. Most of the demand-side factors relate to circumstances and events which happen outside the school system – there is no easy or quick way to address these, but stronger links between the school and families/communities would build better bridges of awareness, mutual understanding and commitment to supporting vulnerable children. The large number of dimensions of dropout should not

lead to a retreat to well-worn conclusions about circumstances or hasty judgements about attitudes, but rather to a careful and sensitive approach to the life of each child. This can only take place where close cooperation exists between school and community, and where children's education is valued as a chief means of preparing the future of families and the wider society.

Poverty is often cited as the principal factor in dropout, in Sudan as elsewhere, and the studies give attention to its role and that of other economic factors (costs of schooling, opportunity cost, etc). However, the studies offer a more nuanced view, showing how poverty interacts with other circumstances and observing that in many communities the majority of families may be classified as 'poor', but many of them keep their children in school. Poverty is indeed a factor in dropout, but not on its own – other particular events or circumstances in a child's life lead to the decision to drop out, in many cases after a prolonged period of increasing absence from school.

The **nature of the learning process** in school is also identified as a major factor. Where a child, or their parents, perceives that effective learning is not taking place, the value of staying in school is questioned. Further, it may be that the benefits of schooling are not easily seen – for instance the value of being literate in rural areas may not be obvious. Study 3 examined the learning process by undertaking a uniquely detailed analysis of observed pedagogical practice. The findings of this study clearly show the impact of the current teacher-centered approaches to teaching, and notes that the 'model of teaching [...] elevates classroom control above encouraging inquiry independence and self-confidence in children' (p.75). Children linked the low learning achievement that often results from this kind of approach with the dropout of their peers – school is seen as boring and lacking in stimulus, with no opportunities to learn by discovery or 'exercise their higher cognitive skills' (ibid.). These findings are highly significant since it is in the classroom that the benefits of education are attained, and so it is there that some of the most important improvements can be made. Study 3 points out that the child-centered pedagogical approach that would remedy the situation is absent largely because of lack of training and institutional support – these concerns are further addressed in the next section.

The **differences in regional and ethnic contexts** emerged in particular through Studies 1, 2 and 5 and concerned for the most part the values and attitudes of communities towards education in general and the schooling of their male and female children in particular. Few differences were observed in terms of economic circumstances, on the demand side, or in the nature of educational delivery, on the supply side, with the exception of one urban school documented in Study 4. However, there is a need to undertake further detailed anthropologically oriented research in order to establish more clearly what the fundamental differences in social attitudes may be.

The research aimed to examine the **gender dimension** in terms of access to schooling and equitable treatment in the classroom and in the structure of the curriculum – Study 2 addressed these issues, finding that girls continue to be at a disadvantage and pointing out the social attitudes of parents, particularly fathers, exert a huge influence on those girls who drop out. A major reason for that is the way that girls are deemed to carry the honour of the family in a way that boys are not. Clearly, only a long-term change in the social construction of gender roles can lift this burden from girls and young women. Early marriage emerged as a cause of dropout in three studies (1, 2 and 4) – an issue that educational and administrative authorities in Sudan continue to address. A bias in favour of men was also revealed in the

governance of schools – only a tiny minority of the members of Education Councils (PTAs) are women (Study 4).

Who decides on dropping out? One of the most significant findings of the studies is the central role of the child herself/himself in making the decision to drop out of school. This may be a longer process of gradually staying away from school which leads eventually to dropping out completely, or it may be a sudden event or new circumstance which triggers dropout. However, parents also exert a big influence on their children's decision, either passively – by taking little interest in whether the child gains an education or not – or actively by pushing the child to take on more responsibility at home or become economically productive.

Study 2 shows that children and parents may differ as to the perception of who made the decision to drop out or what the major influence was. Girls are subject to the influence of parents and home, but their parents may believe that the main factor was the girl's own choice – perhaps a sign of lack of dialogue in the family. Thus perceptions of the reasons for dropout may differ, and a child may reflect parental influences in their decision (whether the parents are aware of their influence in this regard or not) or may act in spite of parental influence. The latter case is illustrated in Study 1 where at least one child hid his dropout from his parents, knowing their views would not support his decision. The narratives of this study show clearly that there is often a particular trigger in the life of the child or her/his family which causes her/him to stop going to school; this may be a death or illness in the family, the need to support the mother or father, the loss of income, or changing circumstances in the extended family. This trigger is felt most keenly by the child herself/himself, and these perceptions lead the child to drop out, believing, rightly or wrongly, that no other solution is possible.

The **management of education** is a critical factor, and Study 6 deals with the management issues at State level which may affect the functioning of schools and therefore also have an impact on dropout and retention. This research benefitted from a willingness on the part of education managers to speak openly about their challenges. The analysis revealed seven key areas: decentralization, flexibility, gender, accountability, co-education, personnel management, and costs and financing. Of these, the first – decentralization – is the framework within which education is managed in Sudan, with primary responsibility for organisation and delivery lying with each State. The study stresses the fundamental need to ensure clear and adequate devolution of responsibilities from centre to States, notes the advantages of interventions tailored to context, regrets the lack of exchange between different States and regions, and asks for an annual review of how well decentralization functions in practice.

In summary, the reasons for dropout are multiple, and in the end every child has their own story to tell – a unique combination of circumstances, events, experiences and perceptions which make staying in school difficult, unattractive, less than worthwhile, or simply impossible.

2.3 Strategies for retention

From the almost 200 recommendations made by the six studies, a number of key strategies can be identified. All the recommendations demand attention, and this section highlights the areas which emerge most consistently and most strongly and where improvements would make a major difference.

Improvement in learning outcomes will keep children in school and motivate parents to support them. From the point of view of the community, education needs to offer better value – enabling children to master a minimum set of cognitive skills, including literacy and numeracy, lifeskills such as communication, relating to others and self-expression, as well as practical skills relevant to the context and local environment. Some of the ways in which learning outcomes may be improved emerge from the issues presented below.

Issues of **pedagogy and classroom practice**, raised by Study 3, will be pivotal in improving retention. The current passive approach to learning, based on ‘listening, waiting, chorusing answers, copying and reproducing’ needs to shift to methods that stimulate discovery, questioning, curiosity, self-expression and creativity – thus providing a stimulating and challenging environment to children to learn. Increasing motivation in this way will lead to higher levels of attainment, and parents and the community will perceive the value of education more clearly. In order to move in this direction, it is urgent to offer in-service training to teachers on a regular basis and to ensure the support of headteachers in implementing child-centred pedagogies. The efforts of UNICEF and SCS in promoting these approaches have made a significant start in this area and need to be fully taken up by the State Ministries of Education. Continuing professional development through training, supportive supervision and self-assessment will enable teachers to improve their performance in the classroom, with resulting benefits for educational achievement.

The research, particularly Study 1, identifies a neglected area of schooling – the social relations that a child builds with her/his peers by going to school every day. This is a process of **socialisation** and building friendships which is important to children as they grow up. Thus, children stated that the need to repeat a grade often meant that they were no longer part of the same peer group, and many did not wish to continue schooling if they could not be with the friends they had made in earlier years. Education is always a socialising process, not merely a learning environment, and school authorities, and the education system more broadly, needs to take this aspect into account in addressing dropout and promoting retention.

An area that all the studies stress is that of **community support** for the school. The system of Education Councils (or PTAs) in Sudan is a key part of that and is examined by Study 4 in particular. This support is crucial in developing strategies for retention – it motivates the headteacher and the teachers, it encourages parents to take a greater interest in their children’s education, it opens up new sources and channels of locally relevant learning, and makes the school a central locus of collective development. However, Education Councils, and community support more generally, need broadening, with greater capacity and a wider brief for promoting education in the local context.

This implies a move away from seeing parents and community members as those who fill the financial gaps in the school budgetary needs, towards a collective commitment to facilitating and enriching the education of all the children in the community – the Education Council is a body that can address the wider question of ensuring that all children are in school, rather than focusing on the school as infrastructure. In promoting a community-wide vision of education, councils have the opportunity to develop the functions of the school as an integral resource having multiple connections with other aspects of life – health, food/agriculture/animal husbandry, culture, religion, income generation, trade, administration... and more. In addition, Education Councils need to focus more on the performance of the school,

not merely on the physical state of the classrooms, with attention to teacher and student presence/absence and to the results achieved.

Support for education in the home is also a factor in motivating children to stay in school. As is well known, the level of the parents' education is a key factor, and the encouragement of parents – particularly that of fathers to their daughters – can be decisive. We should however also note that less educated parents may support their children's schooling precisely because they wish a better life for their children than they were able to achieve for themselves – Studies 1 and 2 document these aspects.

The research (Studies 3 and 5 particularly) reveal areas where the **content of education** could be made more relevant and practical. The prevalence of the academic subjects should be adjusted so that the curriculum includes other types of skills. Parents and community members signalled their desire that children should acquire skills that enable them to make a living locally and to be responsible and productive members of the community. The results of Study 5 show that some level of technical skill training (pre-vocational) would make an important contribution their children's chances of finding productive work or employment after completion of schooling. One way to move in this direction would be to use local experts in trades and crafts as instructors in school; this would also strengthen links with the community, as Study 3 points out. Further strategies proposed in the studies include practically oriented extra-curricular activities, for example by the application of learning in cultivating a school garden or care for the environment.

Extra-curricular activities are conspicuously absent from education in Sudan, except in rare cases. The common view is that such activities are not the responsibility of teachers whose role is deemed to as begin and end in the classroom. However, it emerges clearly from the studies (1 and 3 particularly), that extra-curricular activities provide motivation to children by rounding out their education in a holistic manner, enabling the further development of qualities such as physical fitness and condition, teamwork and mutual cooperation, curiosity about the environment, care for the environment, application of classroom learning in the immediate context, a holistic approach to human development – personal and social. The example of a school given in Study 4 (Annex 6) shows that extra-curricular activities make schooling attractive to children and give them much enjoyment – going to school becomes something to look forward to. In this Gedaref school, extra-curricular activities include cultural events, singing, dancing and poems, in addition to seven 'societies', organised by teachers, in areas such as environment, science, culture and housekeeping. We should note that other factors, in particular community engagement and good school leadership, give strong support to the extra-curricular activities. It is also important to stress that the organisation of extra-curricular activities, once teachers are ready to be involved, will incur few, if any, extra costs.

Several studies observe that the physical environment of the school could be considerably improved if the students engage in **cleaning and beautifying** the compound. Cleaning classrooms and latrines regularly, and maintaining an attractive compound are not simply practical matters, but also have important implications as educational activities, enabling children to learn lessons about health and hygiene.

Gender roles – the studies show that increases in access for girls and opportunities for them to remain in school and continue to secondary education will depend on factors both inside and outside the education system. Inside the system, some communities express the need for separate schools for girls, and in the classroom teachers must be careful not to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes about what girls can achieve or what they can become. It seems, however, that the main

constraints lie outside the education system, in the wider society. While education can problematize and challenge the perceptions of gender roles which prevail in the community, the question of gender equity, and its implications for girls' education, must be tackled on multiple fronts and debated openly.

Early marriage for girls is an area that would benefit from such debate, as also the potential professions that women can aspire to. It is notable that there were different views on the part of women and men regarding their roles in educational management; Study 6 revealed that men perceived women to be reluctant to take up positions of responsibility, while women stated that they are ready and willing to take up higher-level posts if given the opportunity. If new opportunities are to open up for girls and women, change will come slowly. In that process, education is a key factor in developing the full contribution of women to their community and the country.

International research on girls' dropout frequently refers to the facilities that schools need in order to enable female students to feel at ease in the school environment – including infrastructure and sanitary facilities. It is significant therefore that Studies 1 and 2 show that these factors may not have the importance attributed to them: for girls it is more about content and quality, performance and progression than infrastructure (buildings, distance from school, water, electricity, food availability) or female-specific facilities (toilets and sanitary supplies). These dimensions remain important, but these studies make it clear that the quality of learning and the relevance of content are much more important in keeping children, particularly girls, in school.

Many actors are involved in education and the provision of schooling, and so it is no surprise that the studies stress the need for broad-based and collective action to stem dropout and promote retention. Study 2 calls for 'transformative approaches that require long-term and sustained commitment' from all the actors involved – improving one part of the system or engaging only one set of actors will not lead to significant and permanent change in keeping children in school. For example, improvements in teaching must hand in hand with better management and greater accountability to the community; or again, community engagement is hardly possible without clear policies and pro-active school leadership. Action for improving retention, and beyond that for successful learning and quality outcomes, must spring from a rounded and holistic vision of education as a societal commitment in which all stakeholders hold their part of responsibility.

2.4 Appraisal of major findings and gaps

2.4.1 Major findings

The overwhelming majority of insights, reasons, causes and recommendations do not concern the infrastructure or equipment of education – they concern the software: the quality of the pedagogy, the strength of the relationships, the nature of teamwork, the creativity of teachers, the perceptions of the community. This is in marked contrast to demands that are often made for investment in buildings and equipment, in the belief that having a well-built school improves education. While morale and even attendance may rise as a result of nicer facilities, there is no direct link between buildings and learning outcomes.

Thus, two things follow: first, in management, school/classroom, and community – the quality of the relationships (communication, transparency, respect, consultation, feedback, etc) that are essential to enable and support the successful functioning of a school (and the education system that it is part of) needs constant and priority attention. When the relationships work well, collective commitment rises and much

more becomes possible. Second, it may cost less than we imagine (it will cost something!) to make significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, since it is partly a matter of enabling people to use their training and capacities better. Priorities need to focus on software concerns.

In order to discover who the key stakeholders may be in taking responsibility for the change that the recommendations propose, Table 1 below shows the numbers of recommendations of each study in relation to the stakeholder group deemed to be responsible for implementing them.

Table 17 : Numbers of recommendations by study and stakeholder group

	National level	State	Locality	Community	School	Family / child
Study 1		7			9	4
Study 2		16		1	3	
Study 3	8	5	4	3	14	
Study 4	2	21			12	
Study 5	3	14		2	15	
Study 6		13	24		10	

A count of this nature is, of course, a rough and ready way to present these data. Even so, it is patently obvious that the State and the school are the two groups which can drive change. This reflects the fact that it is at State level that education is managed and practical policies of delivery implemented, as well as highlighting the critical importance of what happens on the ground at the school level. Although comments are often made about the need for change in community and family attitudes to education, the studies do not identify them as groups with primary responsibility for driving change.

A caveat: the studies did not directly address the national level – that remains to be addressed.

Table 2 (below) shows the major areas of educational improvement which the studies identified through the research. Each study addressed a different theme, and the recommendations could therefore have differed notably from each other, or shown little overlap. However, it is highly significant to see that many of the same areas were identified from different angles – an added benefit of the triangulation inherent in ethnographic method. As discussed above, the recommendations focus on the software of learning and educational delivery, rather than on infrastructure.

Table 18: Major areas of recommendation by study

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6
Gender equity / opportunities for girls	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Improved classroom pedagogy and teacher performance	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Relevant curriculum and content			✓		✓	
Stronger community engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stronger education council capacity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Extra-curricular activities and cleaning			✓		✓	
School as a community resource				✓	✓	
Clearer management processes			✓ school			✓ state, locality, school
Support for poorest families/children	✓					✓
Tracking dropout through fully functioning EMIS	✓		✓		✓	✓

Two areas emerged in all the studies: stronger community engagement, and its concomitant dimension of stronger capacity in education councils at school level. Three further areas – gender equity, improved pedagogy and a fully functioning EMIS to track dropout – were identified by the majority of the studies. We must bear in mind that research into other aspects of education may have identified other key areas. However, the agreement on priority concerns across the six studies, carried out by different teams and in different contexts, is striking and offers a conceptual basis for selecting areas of intervention in designing any future project.

2.4.2 Gaps

This research on dropout addressed six key areas, and the findings and recommendations point to relevant and significant ways forward in preventing dropout and promoting retention. However, the research manifests some gaps – areas which are suggested by the research but which were not pursued, or perhaps could not be pursued at this time. Three areas may be noted:

- **Support for vulnerable and at-risk children:** the narratives of individual children, the gender-relevant factors, the nature of the learning process – all these point to the fact that some children are left out or are not well served by the system. This includes girls, children with disabilities, those with learning difficulties or with disturbed backgrounds. For such children, the measures suggested by the recommendations will not be adequate; there will be a need for psycho-social support to the most vulnerable and those at risk of dropping out. This support may be envisaged at the family level in the community, or at the school level, or both. Enabling these children not only to gain access but to engage in a constructive learning process requires the skills of social welfare and the support of dedicated personnel.
- **Management processes at federal level:** as indicated above, the federal level was not directly addressed in this research, but it is highly relevant to strategies of retention. It is at this level that overall educational policy is debated and set and that educational management frameworks and structures are determined. The identification of decentralisation a pivotal feature by this research means that it must also be closely examined at federal level – decentralisation implies a centre!
- **Analysis of EMIS processes and procedures:** four of the six studies called for a fully functioning EMIS system, and this is currently under intensive development. To function well, the processes of data collection and treatment, as well as the procedures in place for the use of EMIS data must be well defined and appropriated at all levels. Only then can dropout be tracked in a consistent manner. Once the new system has been in place for two years, it will be essential to conduct an assessment of these processes and procedures, from school-level data collection to use by State and Federal ministries in policy development, planning and decision-making.

Broader areas for further research are presented in Section D below.

3 MAKING USE OF THE RESULTS

Research on such an important and life-changing topic as education cannot be undertaken for its own sake. The findings and recommendations of the six studies are both relevant and significant – how can best use be made of them in promoting retention?

3.1 What kind of use?

The studies will serve for the following purposes:

- **Policy debate:** in the fora where policies are debated regarding the future of education in the broader context of Sudanese socio-economic development, the studies will serve to pinpoint areas that need attention. This will enable the policy debate to avoid the pitfalls of generalisations about the needs of particular groups or the current shortcomings of the education system.
- **Input into planning and strategies:** after policy is set at a high level, education ministries, their staff and partners face the task of developing timed plans and feasible strategies. At that point, this research provides data to target strategies to address specific challenges and serves as a reminder of how complex an endeavour it is to give every child a quality education. As the studies make abundantly clear, consensus, cooperation and joint action among all relevant stakeholders is the only way to ensure that strategies will have the intended impact.
- **Fine-tuning communication:** communication is the lifeblood of cooperation, and the findings of the studies show that inclusive dialogue with feedback from all stakeholders is necessary so that understanding and therefore commitment are maximised.
- **New kinds of governance:** the strong emphasis of the studies on community support and effective school governance should lead to a new appraisal of how governance may be reinvigorated, including the active and consistent participation of parents and children in the process.

3.2 How to make use of the results?

What might be the processes of facilitating the full use of the studies in the ways outlined above? Discussions on dissemination, advocacy and promotion of action, such as plans and legislation, have been the subject of consultations with and among the State Coordinators of the PERP project, with the following proposals:

- Identify the target audiences and tailor advocacy to their role in promoting retention. Four main groups of stakeholders are in focus:
 - State Legislative Councils: for advocacy purposes to adopt supportive policies to students' retention in primary schools.
 - Larger public and targeted communities: for awareness-raising and supportive actions by parents and families to children's education and retention.
 - Education partners: including the staff of State Ministries of Education, education partners in international and national NGOs, UN agencies and civil society organizations operating in a particular context.
 - University students and the academic community, especially the Faculties of Education.

These same audiences may also be usefully engaged at federal level.

- Design appropriate communication and dissemination strategies, including public launches, workshops and seminars, radio drama, and awareness-raising events for legislators and education partners, with appropriate supporting materials, both written and web-based.
- Face-to-face follow-up and networking, enabling focused discussion of relevant findings and recommendations with key stakeholders and decision-makers.

While no communication or dissemination strategy is guaranteed to be successful, efforts to present and explain the results of the studies in relevant and targeted ways will maximise their impact on education in the longer term.

1 FURTHER RESEARCH

The six research studies in the context of PERP broke new ground and resulted in significant insights into the problem of dropout and the possible pathways to increase retention. However, other areas of research remain to be explored – areas which address challenges relevant to the dropout/retention debate, but which could identify yet further areas for improvements in the design and delivery of education in Sudan. The overall thrust of the studies should lead to investigating the following additional areas, which by no means constitute an exhaustive list:

- **Contexts:** Research on education in new geographical areas beyond the five States of these studies will be important in order to identify differences which impact the organisation and effectiveness of education; Sudan's regions are diverse, but currently there is little adaptation of educational delivery to particular contexts. Research in this area would identify whether such adaptation is necessary and, if so, what kinds of adaptation would be relevant.
- **Access:** Access to schooling is more than a matter of whether a school is available within a reasonable distance. Indeed, for some populations, such as nomadic groups, we may question whether a fixed school really offers equitable access. Access for other groups may depend more on the attitudes of local communities, for instance regarding access for girls, for the poorest and most vulnerable, for migrants, and for those with disabilities. Research is needed to give greater clarity in the challenges and possibilities of bringing education to these children.
- **Pedagogy:** This research opened up a window on pedagogical practice in Sudan's classrooms and presented systematic patterns of classroom practice. The next stage is to conduct research on arrangements for teacher training (of all kinds: pre-service, in-service), to examine content and training methods and to make recommendations on how to move strongly and consistently to the sustained use of child-centred pedagogies.
- **Values:** This research went a long way to understanding the views of communities and parents on the value and relevance of the curriculum as delivered. Beyond and below those insights lie cultural values about learning, human development and socialisation which remain to be explored. This would lead to rich insights about how schooling as currently delivered may be adapted to respond to fundamental cultural and social values in diverse contexts.

- **Languages:** A further feature of contexts and cultures in Sudan is the diversity of languages and the multilingual practices of communities. These practices have implications for the use of languages in education, as the language of instruction, as a second language or as additional languages. Sociolinguistic surveys in particular contexts will give an understanding of how people actually use the languages of their environment and for what purposes. On that basis, the use of local languages (mother tongues) in education – an educational principle recognised as critical in initial learning – could be addressed.

2 THE BIGGER PICTURE

The six research studies were necessarily limited in scope – geographically to five states and within each state to a few localities, thematically to the dropout phenomenon and promotion of retention, and in terms of timing by taking a snapshot at a certain moment. There is a much bigger picture – of education in the whole of Sudan, and of the professional world of education. This is not the place to attempt to characterise or describe this broader picture, but it is relevant to ask how far and in which ways the findings and recommendations of the six studies may contribute to the improvement of education in Sudan and connect with broader global agendas.

2.1 Contributing to directions in education in Sudan

The Government of Sudan laid out its educational goals and strategy in the Interim Basic Education Strategy, including a Sector Plan up to 2017. This strategy focuses on objectives to increase access and equity, improve the quality of learning, and strengthen the education system as a whole including planning and management. Clearly, the six studies on dropout feed into all these objectives, since they identify areas to improve retention with regard to equitable access, the quality of basic education and its management.

A chief contribution of the studies is to demonstrate that all the areas of education are linked and that no single intervention will improve retention by itself. This is a fundamental principle and it implies that plans for improvement – and more widely reform of the system – must take a broad and balanced approach, where interventions in one particular area, say teacher training, are complemented in other areas, for instance teaching materials, school leadership, community engagement, or management of the system. Not all interventions can be undertaken at once, but there must be a clear understanding that the results of one intervention may be limited until improvements occur also in other aspects of the system.

This leads to highlighting **a further contribution of the studies**. The findings and the many recommendations of the studies beg the question as to which interventions, among the many required, are the most critical. To put it another

way: which interventions are most likely to set the conditions for sustained and broader improvements in the long term? Which are the upstream interventions that will have the greatest impact on downstream measures to be undertaken later? It is crucial to ask these questions as it not only enables priorities to be set in a context of limited resources, but it also fosters a long-term strategic approach to improving the system as a whole. It is important to state that this question is not about the relative importance of different interventions – all are important – but about finding a way to maximise progressive impact on the long road to overall reform and strengthening of the system. We should further note that the findings shown in Table 2 above provide a starting point for such a dialogue, by giving some indication of which areas might take priority.

2.2 Connecting with global agendas

In September 2015, the 193 member countries of the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including Goal 4: to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.” Implementing the recommendations of the six studies will go a long way towards meeting this goal in the Sudanese context. The studies make a strong link between inclusive access and quality – the latter being one of the conditions for retaining children in school and enabling them eventually to “complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes”, as the first target of SDG 4 puts it.

In a broader perspective, this research points the way to achieving a deeper understanding of dropout, its causes and cures. Across the six studies, detailed analysis included the experiences and perceptions of the children themselves, as well as a consistent methodological focus on the local context – school (headteacher, teachers, education council) and community (parents and families, leaders, representatives). The results demonstrate clearly that strategies to keep children in school must take account of multiple factors and individual circumstances. Research of this kind was innovative in Sudan and it may serve as a methodological example for approaches to understanding dropout in other contexts.

2.3 Final note

In conclusion, the six studies by no means constitute a full and exhaustive analysis of the causes of dropout and the means of promoting retention. As stated earlier, further research will continue to deepen our knowledge of this phenomenon and give clues on how to prevent it in Sudan and beyond. The studies do, however, add significant new perspectives which are critical to designing policies for retention and the strengthening of education. By putting the child and her/his circumstances at the centre of this research, it emerges all too clearly that dropout is ultimately a tragic waste of youth and human potential, and that a quality education is above all a pivotal condition of personal and national development.