

CHILDREN AS CHANGE AGENTS FOR GENDER PARITY IN EDUCATION – EASTERN EQUATORIA, SOUTH SUDAN

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Sector: Education

CHALLENGE

An assessment conducted by the State Ministry of Education Science and



Technology in 2006 and 2008¹ showed that less than 30% of school age children are enrolled in schools throughout the Eastern Equatoria State of Southern Sudan. This low enrolment is attributed to cultural beliefs and traditions that do not favour education. Education indicators show less than 20% retention and progression rates in primary schooling, with girls the most disadvantaged. Girls

Education Movement was identified by the Government of South Sudan Ministry of Education Science and Technology as an initiative that could contribute to addressing the gender disparity emphasising girls' access to quality education. Girls' Education Movement is a child-centred, child-led grassroots and school-based movement. The approach is a tool for social mobilisation. Children through the programme are trained to reach out to the larger community including government authorities, traditional and religious leaders, political leaders, teachers, parents and general community to demand and advocate for equitable access to quality education.

CLIENTS



In 2007, UNICEF initiated the Girls Education Movement throughout Southern Sudan. In Eastern Equatoria, a number of development agencies were given funding to work with the State Ministry of Education Science and Technology to ensure roll-out of the Girls Education Movement. UNICEF quickly realised that the development agencies and the Ministry were unable to work together to achieve the intended goal

of the programme. UNICEF then approached SNV to use its capacity development approach to ensure the success of the programme roll-out. UNICEF gave SNV some initial funding to pilot the programme in one county and later gave an additional \$20,000 for the roll-out.

METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

SNV, working closely with UNICEF and two local community based organisations, employed a variety of innovative approaches to build local capacity for the implementation of the Girls Education Movement programme. **Multi-stakeholders and partners dialogue forums** were used to deliberate and understand factors influencing girl child education. Outcomes of these forums and

¹ UNICEF funded study on Socio Economic Barriers to Schooling in South Sudan

information gathered from communities enabled SNV and its partners to develop and refine a **trainer of trainers programme** which was used widely in the programme. **Training programmes for child advocates and teachers** were conducted in every county before **advocacy programmes** were initiated in communities.

SNV then developed a **peer-to-peer learning approach** to enhance rapid replication of the programme in other counties. SNV and its partners supported initial peer-to-peer learning event, and then **guided and mentored** the education officials to conduct follow-up events.

SNV's added Value:

SNV has contributed to the success of this programme in the following unique ways:

- By designing and introducing a peer-to-peer learning mechanism, SNV was able to increase the momentum of the programme beyond what would have been achieved. Guiding and convincing the teachers and education officials to take up the challenge of teaching each other, and becoming the engine of the programme was an innovation of its kind in this programme.
- Working through local community based organisations SNV was able to establish a linkage with communities, and identify key fears and concerns of the communities with regard to education of the girl child. This enabled SNV to design messages that are relevant to the community. This was a major step towards attaining acceptability of the advocacy programme in the communities.

OUTCOME

Following the pilot and roll-out of the programme, the following measurable results have been attained.

- The report on Education Management Information Systems² at the State level reveals considerable increase in enrolment and retention for both boys and girls since the introduction of the programme, especially in schools and communities where the programme has been implemented. In Kapoeta South County, enrolment has increased to **3376** pupils (2395 boys and 981 girls) in 2009 from **1444** pupils (1,134 boys and 307 girls) in 2008. In Kapoeta East County, enrolment in 2009 stands at **6090** pupils (3,799 boys, and 2,291 girls) from **6041** pupils (3,754 boys and 2,287 girls) in 2008. Kapoeta North recorded the highest leap in enrolment from **410** pupils (228 boys and 182 girls) in 2008 to the current **2938** pupils (1,695 boys and 2,938 girls) in 2009.
- A proactive peer-peer learning trend has emerged in which teachers and education officials from one county support their counterparts from other counties, through mentoring, guidance and even training. This peer-to-peer learning has enabled the roll-out of the programme to progress faster in Eastern Equatoria than in other states of Southern Sudan.
- Communities who hitherto had no interest of involvement in education have begun to participate in education development in their areas by contributing building materials, providing security for pupils in schools and giving other forms of donation to support school activities.
- The success of the program has created demand for replication. State Ministry of Education Science and Technology, has requested SNV to support the Directorate of Gender Equity and Social Change replicate the approaches in five more counties

² Education Management Information Systems report 2008

Challenges and Lessons:

Most Schools in Eastern Equatoria are still in lower primary (Primary 1-4). This means the highest level a child can reach is class 4. There are only a handful of schools with upper classes. This made Girls Education Movement training and establishment difficult as means for advocating for girls and boys to move higher classes. Also with few or no role models, it was difficult for the children to relate to what it means to attain and progress to upper primary school.

It has become apparent that access and retention of girls in schools is not only hindered by cultural beliefs and practices. There is limited or no attention paid to girls' individual strategic and practical needs while at school. Lack of role models and inappropriate sanitation facilities are the other critical factors that must be addressed for improved retention of girls in schools.

The pastoralist child, through the programme, has proven that it is possible to influence the decisions of their parents, opinion leaders, and government officers. This presents opportunity for empowering children to create positive change in other spheres of life such as health, hygiene and sanitation and even economic development

Way Forward

Beyond 2009, this programme will be **replicated in the remaining counties** throughout the State. SNV, working closely with the State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, will **consolidate and deepen the "good practices" realised** by existing clubs in Greater Kapoeta. Further dissemination of the Girls Education Movement concept and best practices will be undertaken in newly established schools. The Peer to Peer support and approach which has been key in the roll-out of the programme will be enhanced as a tool for enabling clients take active and greater roles in implementing and sustaining the programme.