

# **Education in Southern Sudan: War, Status and challenges of achieving Education For All Goals \***

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## **1. Introduction:**

The role of education has progressively been recognised in the international development lexicon not only because of its pivotal role in improving the well-being of households and individuals but also the positive externalities that it generates for society as a whole. There is overwhelming and convincing empirical evidence that consistently indicates the positive impact of education on improving the well-being and reducing poverty and vulnerability of the poor households in the rural and urban settings. Interestingly, the role of education has also been recognised in the discourse on the causation of civil wars. Some empirical evidence shows that civil wars are concentrated in countries with little education and importantly a country with higher percentage of its youth in schools reduces considerably its risk of conflict (Collier, 2000). This finding has undoubtedly underpinned the important externalities generated by education and particularly in Africa where civil wars have become pronounced and endemic.

Despite the apparent recognition of the positive role of education in human development, improving access to education has been elusive across the globe particularly in the developing countries and specifically Sub-Sahara Africa. Equally the 'right' to education that has recently been invoked in the lexicon of many development actors concerned with improving access to education is far from being realised and it remains a rhetoric rather than tangible reality. This status and challenges of reaching universal primary education in the countries affected by conflicts are enormous and precipitous. This poses the real challenge and the need to understand the context within which the 'right' to education can be made real through enabling substantive policies and strategies in the war affected countries.



The purpose of this paper is to **assess the status of primary education and to sketch the scale and the nature of challenges** to achieve the declared goals of Education for All (EFA) in southern Sudan. In order to assess the education challenges in southern Sudan, the paper reviews the context and status of education in section 2. The role of international assistance in helping to achieve the EFA goals is assessed in section 3. Section 4 then reviews and critiques the current education policy and strategies adopted by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) as a *de facto* government in southern Sudan. The paper then concludes in section 5 with some suggestions for the right to education to become 'real' in the midst of civil war and post-conflict Southern Sudan.

## 2. Structural Political Vulnerability and Exclusion:

Tragically, since its independence in 1956, Sudan has been at war with itself and about 37 of the past 47 years have been wasted in two major civil wars (1955-72, 1982-present). The current status of education can not be isolated from a long history of political vulnerability and exclusion that has been experienced by the people of southern Sudan and largely explains the recurrent of civil wars in Sudan. In most case education system has been a key tool used by the northern ruling elite for perpetuating socio-economic and political marginalisation of the majority rural communities and southern Sudanese in particular. In fact current Sudan was once a centre of a flourishing indigenous civilisation heralded by highly recognised kingdoms such as the Nubia, Kush and Funj, which are widely known as the 'black sultanate'. The ancient Sudan civilisation pre-dates Pharaonic Egypt and the rise of Christianity and Islam (Deng, 1995). Christianity reached Sudan in the age of Emperor Justinian and Christian kingdoms in Nubia flourished and survived for seven hundred years until the 14<sup>th</sup> century when it gave way to gradual Islamisation and Arabisation through immigrants from the Arab world. Such rich and glorious ancient Sudan civilisations hardly feature in the education curriculum and syllabus and are at best consigned by leading northern Sudanese historians to a footnote in Sudan's history, because they were assumed to be a pagan patrimony which was erased by Islam (Khalid, 1990). Besides re-writing and erasing the Sudanese indigenous history, the culture and tradition of the indigenous Sudanese have never been imparted in education policy since the dawn of Sudan independence in 1956 but instead they have become its immediate causalities. Even prior to the Sudan independence, the southern Sudan greatly suffered from the British colonial legacies in terms of socio-economic exclusion and marginalisation.



## 2.1 British Colonial Legacy: Southern Policy

The contemporary Sudan came into being during this period of Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898-1955) with two-tier separate administrative arrangements for the north and south. Despite its success in ending slave raids, the British colonial rule exerted considerable efforts to modernise the economy and infrastructure in the north, while it entrusted Christian missionaries to provide moral guidance that was perceived to be more needed in the south than economic development (Lesch, 1998). In order to protect the south from Islamic influence and to seal it off from northern dominance and slave raids, the British colonial authorities adopted a policy known as 'Southern Policy' that was articulated through the Closed District Order in 1922. This policy assisted the British to formalise a 'language policy' that allowed vernacular languages to be taught in primary schools and English was designated the official language, while Arabic was excluded from schools and government offices in southern Sudan. These British policies towards the south gradually won the confidence of the people in the south to the level that the British were less seen as imperialist intruders, as these policies developed a sense of identity based on indigenous culture and Christian cultural norms. Although these policies did not lead to their contemplated desired outcome of linking southern Sudan with East Africa, they have largely influenced the contemporary southern identity that borrowed a great deal from Christianity and Western values, contrary to that of the north.

The real problem with these British policies was that they did not foster economic and social development in the south and thereby widened the already substantial gap with the north. The limited number of missionary schools did not meet the education needs in the south and as late as the 1940s, government schools in the south included few elementary schools, two intermediate schools, one teacher training centre, one commercial school, one senior secondary school (Deng, 1995:86). The British officials blocked government and private development efforts in the south, arguing that the indigenous population had no desire to improve their economic welfare (Lesch, 1998:32). Under pressure from Egypt and northern Sudanese elite, the British rule changed their policy abruptly and drastically in 1945, from separation of the south to ultimate unity of Sudan, and recognised the need to accelerate economic and educational development in the south to catch up with the north (Deng, 1995:88). As the British brokered independence of Sudan with the northern elites, the south overwhelmingly felt betrayed as they not only handed over the south to the new northern colonial power but also were too late to effect the acceleration of socio-economic development in the south. In the process of the British handing over the south to northern troops, a violent resistance and mutiny by southern troops erupted in



1955, which sparked civil discontent and fanned first civil war in the south that lasted 17 years until it was resolved in 1972.

## 2.2 Post-Independence Sudan: Exclusive Education Paradigm

By the time Sudan gained its independence in 1956, the south was sluggishly behind the north in terms of economic and social development. Not to the surprise of most southerners, the successive post-independence central governments and the ruling northern elite adopted education system to construct a united Sudan with Arabo-Islamism as the sole determinant for national unity (Khalid, 1990). The ruling northern elite saw the religious and cultural diversity of Sudan as a threat to unity and strove to eliminate it through education system as such diversity was perceived as tantamount to racio-cultural hegemony.

Since independence the missionary schools in the south were seized by the central government and Arabic language replaced English as the medium of education (Oduho and Deng, 1963). The socio-economic disparity that was scandalously created by lack of development and education in the south during British rule had naturally widened sharply between the north and south during the first four years of independence as shown in Table 2.1. It is clear that the disparity between north and south in the level of access to education at all levels was staggering with the south accessing negligible share compared with the size of its population. Interestingly, while the share of children in the south in the primary education facilities was less than 8 per cent, the share of girls in the south was almost zero compared with that of girls in the north that was 20 per cent of all primary school streams.



**Table 2.1: British Colonial Legacy: Level of Access to education by 1960**

Level of Education Total	Number of Education Facilities (streams, schools and universities)		
	North	South	
Intermediate Streams (Boys)	194 (91%)	20 (9%)	214
Intermediate Streams (Girls)	55 (98%)	1 (2%)	56
Secondary School Streams (Boys)	49 (96)	2 (4%)	51
Secondary School Streams (Girls)	14 (100%)	0 (0%)	14
Commercial Secondary Schools	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	3
Technical Secondary Schools	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	3
Universities	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	4
Khartoum University students	1,156 (95%)	60 (5%)	1,216
Population Census in 1956 (000)	7,480 (72%)	2,783 (28%)	10,263

Source: Oduho and Deng (1963)

### 2.3 Inter-War and Peace Period (1972-82): Deepening Inequalities

Even during the brief period of relative peace (1972-82) after the peace agreement that granted self-government to southern Sudan in 1972, the long-standing inequalities between north and south worsened further (Deng, 2002a). The south, ravaged by 17 years of civil war, failed to receive adequate resource transfer from central government, and the average realised budget for the southern regional government during this period barely covered 20 per cent of the planned budget (Deng, 2002c). As a result of inadequate resourcing, social and economic services particularly access to education deteriorated in the south relative to the north as shown by education statistics in Table 2.2.



**Table 2.2: Level of Access to education during inter-war period, 1972-83**

Level of Education Total	Number of Education Facilities and Population of Students		
	North	South	
Primary Pupils (in 000)	1,349 (90%)	143 (10%)	1,492
Primary Schools	5,343 (87%)	809 (13%)	6,152
Primary Teachers	39,188 (92%)	3,432 (8%)	42,620
Gross Enrolment Rat3	40%	12%	
Pupil Teacher Ratio	34	42	
Intermediate Schools	1,378 (93%)	96 (7%)	1,474
Secondary Schools	199 (93%)	15 (7%)	214
Universities Admissions in 1983	3,499 (99%)	29 (1%)	3,528
Population Percentage	72%	28%	100%

Source: Yongo-Bure (1993).

With population of 20 million during the inter-war period, the primary school enrolment rate was about 40 per cent in the north but less than 12 per cent in the south. Also while pupils teacher ratio was about 34 in the north, it was 42 in the south as calculated from Table2.2. In comparison to its size of population, the inequality in the level of access to education at all levels was significant and striking and clearly indicates that the central government did not exert effort to narrow such inequality between north and south during the brief period of relative peace. Besides this apparent inequality, the successive central governments reverted again to forge the Sudanese identity around Arab-Islamic paradigm with education system becoming an effective vehicle to implement such policy. These profound horizontal inequalities generated a sense of frustration and feeling of injustice and exclusion that eventually led people in the south to resort again to armed struggle in 1982 (Yongo-Bure, 1993). Garang (1987:21) argued that ‘under these circumstances the *marginal cost* of rebellion in the south became very small, zero or negative; that is, in the south it pays to rebel’.



### 3. International Assistance during Second Civil War: ‘Complex Emergency’

The experience of southern Sudan with humanitarian assistance is very recent and can be traced back to 1972 when some international development agencies started rehabilitation projects after the first civil war (Deng, 1999). Unlike the first civil war (1955-72) when half a million persons died partly because of the absence of humanitarian assistance, international attention was focused as early as three years after the outbreak of the second civil war in 1982. The 1988 famine in Bahr el Ghazal region in southern Sudan triggered collective efforts from media, NGOs, western governments and UN bodies to exert intensive pressure on the government of Sudan (GOS) to allow humanitarian assistance to reach the needy population in the rebels (Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM)) held areas. This international pressure culminated in the formation of UN/NGOs consortium known as Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) in 1989 as a tripartite agreement between the SPLM, the GOS and the UN that would ensure the flow of humanitarian assistance to the needy civilians wherever they are. Since its inception, OLS has been able to mobilise and attract considerable international assistance to the needy population in the war-torn south.

The huge amounts of humanitarian assistance it provides and coupled with the weak SPLM local civil administration, OLS became within a short period of time the *de facto* government in the SPLM-controlled areas in the south as it assumed the traditional role of government in providing social services (Deng, 1999:68). The increased dominance of OLS in assuming the role of traditional government has been conditioned by ‘neutrality’ and ‘relief rather than development’ discourse in the context of ‘complex emergency’. The end result is that the indigenous and local structures in the south have been supplanted by an exclusive parallel and unaccountable system established by the international agencies (Duffield, 1993:132).

#### 3.1 Tracking access to primary education during civil war:

The education system in the south has suffered during ‘complex emergency’ as it has been considered developmental and the limited efforts exerted by international NGOs to address education needs were poorly co-ordinated with no policy guidance until recently when SPLM produced its education policy in 2002. The OLS emergency education programme in southern Sudan started in 1993 to support community initiatives to rebuild southern Sudan’s education system (UNICEF/OLS, 2002). Despite limited resources and absence of education policy guidance and central organisation authority in the 1990s, the local communities



with support from the local authorities and NGOs have managed to open their own primary schools across southern Sudan. The comparative education statistics are presented in Table 3.1 to track access to education during the second civil war.

**Table 3.1: Tracking EFA Goals in Southern Sudan during civil war, 1999/2000**

**Some EFA**

<b>Goal Indicators</b>	<b>North (GOS)*</b>	<b>South (SPLM)**</b>	<b>Minimum Level*</b>
<b>1. Universal Primary Education:</b>			
• Gross Enrolment Rate (%)	55.0	30.0	80.0
<b>2. Adult Literacy:</b>			
• Adult Literacy Rate (%)	57.7	33.0	70.0
<b>3. Gender Equality:</b>			
• Gender Parity Index	0.82	0.36	0.90

Source: \* UNESCO (2002), \*\* UNICEF/OLS (2002a, 2002b, 2000 )

It is clear from Table 3.1 that while northern Sudan under the government of Sudan is far from realising any of the three minimum levels and subsequently at serious risk of not achieving any of the three EFA goals (UNESCO, 2002:95), the situation in southern Sudan is even worse and precarious. The status of education in southern Sudan is sluggishly behind not only in relation to the status of education in northern Sudan but it is extremely far away in meeting the minimum levels of the three EFA goals.

While the deteriorating status of education in the war-torn southern Sudan is convincingly understandable, the appalling condition of education in northern Sudan is less self-explanatory particularly after the extraction of oil from southern Sudan. The oil export rose from virtual insignificance in the mid-1990s to US\$275.9 million in 1999, and then quadrupled to reach US\$1.24 billion in 2000 and moved Sudan from a chronic trade deficit to a position of surplus with an overall growth rate of 5%. Despite such economic recovery, the standard of living





of average northern Sudanese has been, paradoxically, deteriorating (ICG, 2002, IMF, 2000; EIU, 2001). Specifically, the unemployment rate has remained steady at around 30% and investment in human and physical capital is low with incidence of poverty ever increasing (IMF, 2000). While a commensurate increase in military spending is neatly matched with oil exports and used to explain the deteriorating economic conditions (Deng and Morrison, 2001; Christian Aid, 2001; Gagnon and Ryle, 2001), corruption and ‘rentier state’ are real hidden explanatory factors since the oil started to flow (ICG, 2002).

The status of education in southern Sudan during the current civil war will be better understood against the background of structural political vulnerability and exclusion as discussed earlier. Specifically, the education statistics in 1999/2000 for the universal primary education during the second civil war are compared with the education statistics during war periods as shown in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Comparing Level of Access to Primary Education in southern Sudan**

Primary Education (War Periods)	Number of Education Facilities and Population of Students	
	1980-1* (pre-war)	1999/2000**
Primary Pupils	143,000	318,000
Primary Schools	809	1,500
Pupil Teacher Ratio	41.7	33.1
Primary School Age (in 000) <sup>1</sup>	1,153	1,060
Gross Enrolment Rate (%)	12%	30%

Source: \*Yongo-Bure (1993), \*\*UNICEF/OLS (2002)

It is interesting to observe that the level of access to primary education has paradoxically increased considerably and even doubled during the current civil war compared to the level before the eruption of the second civil war as shown in

<sup>1</sup> The population of children of school age in 1980-1 is calculated from the population estimates (Sudan Statistics Department) and population size of southern Sudan (28 per cent) and the size of the primary school age population (20 per cent).



Table 3.2. However, this impressive increase in the level of access to primary education during civil war in southern Sudan should be taken with caution as the quality of such primary education is crucially important to provide a nuanced understanding.

### **3.2 Quality of Education during civil war:**

Although assessing the quality education is not easy, I will use the framework provided by UNESCO (2002:81) to highlight some aspects related to contextual and input factors with hope to provide better understanding of the quality education in southern Sudan. This analysis of the education quality is primary based on synthesis of the findings of various and relevant surveys carried out in southern Sudan.

#### **3.2.1 Contextual Factors: School Age Population and National Guidance**

The conditions within which the primary education is being implemented are extremely difficult particularly in the context of civil war. Besides the fact that communities in 'war zone' are exposed to increased insecurity and frequent displacement, the conduct of civil war poses increasing demand for human resource particularly, the primary school age male population. For example Bahr el Ghazal region has been the epicentre of counterinsurgency warfare and average household had been displaced more than three times in the 1990s (Deng, 2002). UNICEF/OLS (1999:141) estimated about 39,000 children under 18 years of age have been conscripted into the army over the past 15 years in southern Sudan and similar number abducted by the government-led militias for forced labour or slavery. The situation of conscription of children into the national army is even worse in northern Sudan. This increased demand and pressure on the most active male age group resulted in drastic demographic changes as a sharp decrease in the number of males compared with females in the age group 20-39 years has been observed in southern Sudan (UNICEF/OLS, 2002b:9).

Besides insecurity and demographic changes, the primary education system has been run, as discussed earlier, with no or weak central organisation authority to provide national goals, policy and standards for education, curricular guidelines and education system management. Most of the schools opened in southern Sudan were initiated by the communities and supported in uncoordinated way by NGOs with their own specific priorities. Besides poor co-ordination of education efforts in southern Sudan, the education services for southern Sudanese refugees in the



neighbouring countries and even in the internally displaced camps tend to be better and poorly co-ordinated with education programmes for the resident population. This disparity and poor co-ordination have not only debilitated the education efforts among resident population but have made resident population to seek education in the neighbouring countries and internally displaced camps. Besides lack of national guidance and poor co-ordination, the education system is poorly linked to other sectors such as health and agriculture. The international agencies with exception of limited number of agencies opted not to support and facilitate creation of a conducive education policy environment and they instead preferred to work single-handedly under the pretext of supporting the community-based education initiatives. Also the donors communities have different perspectives to education in conflict areas, while USAID supports education in southern Sudan other donors took a rather lukewarm stand towards education.

### 3.2.2 Conditions of Schools:

Most schools opened during the current civil war in southern Sudan are 'bush schools' with outdoor classrooms and only 12 per cent of the classrooms are permanent buildings made of bricks or concrete (UNICEF/OLS, 2002a:2). In other words the number of schools with concrete buildings was only less than 200 schools compared with 800 primary schools that were permanent buildings during pre-war periods. This clearly shows the considerable destruction inflicted on schools facilities and structure during the current civil war.

The curriculum context and school syllabus are not standardised across all primary schools opened in southern Sudan. The school syllabus of the neighbouring countries such as Uganda and Kenya are also adopted in southern Sudan. Despite SPLM has managed to introduce in 1998 its own school syllabus to all schools in southern Sudan, only 54 per cent of schools use the new syllabus, while the rest use either Kenyan or Ugandan syllabus (UNICEF/OLS, 2002:3). Besides variation in syllabus used across schools in southern Sudan, there is acute shortage of textbooks and the current baseline assessment shows that only 13 per cent of the total school requirements of the four core textbooks were met in 1999. It was found that about half of the primary pupils have no textbooks while only 30 per cent having at most two textbooks (UNICEF/SRRA, 2002). Children with no textbooks carry a high risk of not attending school. Undoubtedly the new syllabus developed by the SPLM, despite its limited coverage, is relatively more inclusive as it recognises the diversity in southern Sudan as valuable resource in enriching syllabus compared to the syllabus that is based only on Arab-Islamic paradigm in northern Sudan.



Most of primary school teachers in southern Sudan are poorly trained with only 7 per cent received college training and the rest either received some in-service training (48 per cent) or untrained completely (45 per cent) (UNICEF/OLS, 2002:4). The female teachers constitute only 7 per cent of all the teachers. Besides acute shortage of trained teachers, they are poorly equipped with teaching facilities and teacher's guides books. Only two-thirds of the total teacher's guides requirements of the four core subjects were satisfied in 1999. Despite the school baseline assessment report shows that 79 per cent of teachers perform satisfactory their duties because of their high level of commitment, they are working in rather extreme conditions as lack or inadequate incentives or salaries forces them to embark on farming or look for other employment opportunities.

Most primary schools across southern Sudan do not have basic and essential facilities and services for creating a conducive environment for learning. While about 70 and 46 per cent of the primary schools in southern Sudan do not respectively have latrines and source of safe drinking water such a borehole or a well, about 57 per cent of schools do not have health facilities nearby (UNICEF/OLS, 2000a).

### 3.2.3 Student Conditions:

Despite the impressive increase in the level of access to primary education in southern Sudan as shown in Table 3.2, there is about 70 per cent of primary school age population who did not enrol in school in the 1999 particularly among females (55 per cent) (UNICEF/OLS, 2000:80). Alarming, among those primary pupils who were enrolled in all primary schools, 10.3 per cent did not attend classes for more than 3 days a week and that suggests a significant 'drop out' of pupils particularly among male pupils (57 per cent). Understanding the factors and conditions that limit children participating in primary education are crucially important.

Easy access to school is the single most important factor affecting enrolment rates in southern Sudan. It was found that about 75 per cent of the primary pupils travel for at least 30 minutes before they reach their school and half of these children take more than an hour (UNICEF/SRRA, 2002). In fact the survey shows that children who take over 30 minutes travelling to school are more at risk of not attending school than those who take less than 30 minutes. Another factor impeding enrolment is disability and impairment. About 10 per cent of primary school age population had some form of disability or impairment and it was found



that children with disabilities have almost three times the risk of not being enrolled in school compared to non-disabled children (UNICEF/SRRA, 2002:15).

Besides the contextual factors and conditions of schools as discussed earlier, lack of school fees, domestic chores, productive work, lack of clothes and lack of food have been identified as additional factors for school drop-out. More than half of the households perceived lack of school fees as the reason for children dropping out of school, while about 27 and 22 per cent of household consider respectively farming and insecurity as reasons for children dropping out. While school dropping out of female pupils was largely attributed to domestic chores, the main reason for school dropping out of male pupils was considered to be productive work and lack of clothes (UNICEF/OLS, 2000:87). In relation to domestic chores and productive work such as farming, lack of food has been cited as one of the reasons for school dropping out. In fact only 8.7 per cent of the children who were attending school were getting meals at school, while the overwhelming majority of pupils in southern Sudan do not get meals at their schools.

### 3.2.4 Household/Community Conditions:

The conditions of household and community in general do play pivotal role in determining not only access to education but also to ensure quality education for the children. As pointed out earlier, most primary schools opened across southern Sudan were initiated, managed and maintained by the local communities. The key role played by the local communities in the education system in southern Sudan indicates their positive attitude towards education. The long history of deprivation and denial of accessing basic services particularly education lends southern Sudan to be described as '*a nation thirsty for education and learning*'.

The education baseline survey report clearly shows that almost every primary school in southern Sudan has a community or parents' group involved in its management. Besides building schools, the local communities maintain these schools, cover part of teachers' salaries or incentives and pay school fees for their children. These responsibilities undertaken by the communities to ensure education for their children show that they are extremely overwhelmed as they are equally pressed by other survival and livelihood priorities that might not make their support to education tenable and sustainable.

Despite the appalling conditions of schools and students as discussed earlier, about 48 per cent of households are satisfied with the level of teaching and only 11 per cent considered the teaching services as poor (UNICEF/SRRA, 2002).



Also the low adult literacy rate (33 per cent) as shown in Table 3.1 has a profound effect on the enrolment rates. It was found that a child from a household headed by someone educated has twice the chance of attending school compared to a child from a household headed by someone with no education.

The community environment for survival, growth and development is equally important in determining the quality of education. The factors related to the environment of the community have bearing on providing understanding of the low enrolment and high school dropping out. Only 26 per cent of households in southern Sudan have access to safe clean water and further compounded by they long distances that need to be travelled and the time needed to collect safe water (UNICEF/OLS, 2002:109). This clearly explains the high demand for the school age female children to help their families in domestic chores particularly collection of water.

Besides limited access to safe drinking water, there is increasing incidence of food or consumption poverty in southern Sudan. Since the eruption of the current civil war, southern Sudan had two major famines in 1988 and 1998 that claimed excess famine mortality of more than 300,000 lives (Deng, 2002). Even after massive humanitarian intervention in 1998, the incidence of consumption poverty persists, as 7 per cent of children under-5 years of age were found malnourished in 1999 in southern Sudan (UNICEF/OLS, 2000:71). In 2002 it was estimated that almost about 80 percent (5.3 million persons) of the entire population in southern Sudan face food shortages and need relief assistance in 2003 (FAO/WFP, 2002; Deng, 2003). This increasing incidence of food poverty explains the pressure on school age male population to help their parents in farming and cultivation. Underlying this consumption poverty and food insecurity is the apparent erosion of assets base of the communities in southern Sudan as result of civil war and counterinsurgency warfare. Deng (2002) shows how the initially non-poor households had become more vulnerable to counterinsurgency warfare than poor households and they equally experienced higher excess famine mortality during famine in Bahr el Ghazal region in 1998.

#### **4. SPLM Education Policy and Strategies: A step towards inclusiveness**

This section only reviews the declared policy intentions of the SPLM, as *de facto* government in southern Sudan, in relation to the Education For All (EFA) goals rather than tracking the implementation of its education policy and strategies. The SPLM started, despite its formation in 1983, to be engaged effectively in economic governance dialogue and education system with civil population after



its first national convention in 1994. One of the main resolutions of the SPLM national convention underlines self-reliance as the main objective of education system during civil war. The outcome of this dialogue was a series of policy measures that have been articulated in 1999 in one of the SPLM key documents – *Peace Through Development*. This new emphasis on peace through development and good economic governance in the midst of civil war has necessitated various SPLM sectoral departments to initiate further dialogue with civil population to come up with appropriate sectoral policies. This culminated in the production of the *SPLM Health Policy* (1999) and the *SPLM Education Policy* (2002) documents, which clearly spell out the mission, national goals, guiding principles and implementation strategies. This education policy will be reviewed and compared with the three quantitative EFA goals as shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Comparing the SPLM Education Goals with the EFA Goals**

<b>Quantitative EFA Goals* Goals**</b>	<b>SPLM Education Policy</b>
<b><u>1. Universal Primary Education:</u></b>	
...ensuring that by 2015 all children....have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality....	Education shall be the right of every child regardless of ethnicity, culture, gender, religion and socio-economic status.
<b><u>2. Adult Literacy:</u></b>	
...achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.	Education shall be accessible to any citizen of the New Sudan.
<b><u>3. Gender Equality:</u></b>	
...eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education and placed on girls' education in order	Emphasis shall be



education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education. to achieve equality in education.  
education by 2015,....

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Source: \*UNESCO (2002), \*\* SPLM (2002)

It is apparent from Table 4.1 that the SPLM Education Policy has explicitly provided provision for the EFA goals particularly the qualitative goals. Importantly, the policy has made education as a 'right' to be 'accessed' by any citizen with emphasis on 'girls' education' to achieve 'equality' in education. These policy intentions of the SPLM will be reviewed in the context of free education, citizens' rights, and uniformity.

#### 4.1 Is the right to education free?

The Education Policy as shown in Table 4.1 has run short of making right to education free or compulsory as well as not making any time-frame commitment by which primary education shall be accessed by all children. Also the good policy intention of making education a 'right' has not been made a legally binding right through a legislative enactment. In fact it has been made clearly in the policy (SPLM, 2002:5) that:

“The civil authority (SPLM) shall devote at least 10% of social service tax (paid by civil population) to education. The communities shall contribute at least 50% of resources necessary to provide basic education and vocational training’.

While it is understandable the difficulties faced by the SPLM in balancing between the pressing priority of waging war and the urgent need for providing basic services to the communities under its control, it is crucially important that SPLM to review its current education policy and to make the right to primary education freely accessible during war and compulsory in the post-conflict periods. One of the surveys, as discussed earlier, has clearly indicated that more than 53% of households in southern Sudan imputed reasons for low participation in primary education and high school dropping out to the lack of schools fees. This indirectly shows that the most disadvantaged groups such as the poor households, female-headed households, households headed by widows and people with disabilities have been excluded in the current primary education programme in southern Sudan. This finding makes a strong case for the SPLM and international agencies to make education free through emergency education programme.





## 4.2 Whose agenda?

There is a consistent pattern in developing countries of the 'ruling elite' adopting paternalistic approach in setting priorities for the communities. Southern Sudan is not an exception as memories of Jonglei canal project are vivid when some southern ruling elites publicly stated that 'people do not necessarily know what is best for them...and if we have to drive our people to paradise with sticks, we will do so for their good..' (Deng, 2002b). The experience of humanitarian assistance in southern Sudan during the current civil war has also shown how community participation in the NGOs programmes has been circumscribed to 'duties' rather than 'rights' (SRRA, 1999). The challenge for 'citizens' rights' to become real in the context of civil war is arduously difficult as the effective community participation in setting their own priorities is likely to be pacified and masked in the name of liberation struggle.

The policy process of compulsory and free education in many countries tends to frame citizen presence within education system in terms of 'duties' rather than 'rights', without necessarily invoking any of the attendant ideas of citizenship and accountability (Subrahmanian, 2002:74). As SPLM has made extensive consultation with communities and other stakeholders in the process of formulating its education policy, the policy recognises the role of education in promoting unity in diversity and empowering people by grounding education in the local culture, traditions and environment including the use of mother tongue in formal education (SPLM, 2002:3).

While the recognition of cultural diversity and context specificity of education system has been a considerable shift and improvement compared to previous education system that was grounded on mono-ethno-religious paradigm, the 'citizens' rights' are poorly articulated and recognised. The education authority (SPLM) has been entrusted by the policy to supervise the implementation of education policy in consultation with other stakeholders and to set and determine areas of priorities, while communities are to provide the necessary resources (SPLM, 2002:6-7). This shows that the SPLM education policy suffers from failure to recognise 'citizens' rights' as communities are seen as provider of resources with no mechanisms for making the education authorities accountable to the people or creating space for communities to air out their voices.

The reliance on bureaucratic structures such as liberation councils or parents teachers association as mechanisms for community participation in education has been found less effective in eliciting the views of parents on what education



content and delivery should be but they have been instead used by bureaucrats to exhort citizens to fulfil their ‘duties’ towards education (Subrahmanian, 2002:79). As the communities in southern Sudan have taken their own initiative to support education in the midst of civil war, the SPLM is to recognise such a role and to make the ‘citizens’ as centre of its education systems by building alternative spaces and reordering the traditional relationship between civil authority, teachers, citizens and the disadvantaged groups.

### 4.3 Should school calendar be uniform?

There is growing evidence that consistently indicates the important role played by the socio-economic environment particularly, economic and livelihood vulnerability of households and communities, in ways people access education or excluded from education system. The pattern of pastoralist livelihoods provides a convincing example of how the children of such communities could easily be excluded by education system that is not sensitive to contextual variations and tailored to local conditions (Kratli, 2001). Subrahmanian (2002) argues in the case of India how economic vulnerability and social discrimination shape patterns of education disadvantage and exclusion of some social groups. Southern Sudan is well endowed with communities with diverse livelihoods patterns ranging from pure agriculturists, pure fishing communities, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists. Failure to recognise this important variation in livelihood patterns, the education policy that is narrowly conceived will be of little relevance to these communities and would suffer from inadequate contextualisation.

While the SPLM education policy has recognised the cultural diversity by making the mother tongue of the child to be the medium of instruction during the first three years of formal primary education, it has failed to recognise the diversity in livelihood patterns across communities in southern Sudan. In fact the cultural diversity is one aspect of the challenge of inclusion and exclusion in the education, other aspects such as diverse livelihood and insecure livelihoods that exerts pressure on children’s work and labour have important bearing on access to education. Specifically, the education policy makes it explicit that:

‘The school calendar shall be uniform and all pupils shall sit for examinations at the same time’. (SPLM, 2002:5).

Such policy statement will undoubtedly make the ‘right to education’ less meaningful in the context of communities whose livelihood strategies are conditioned by precarious risks that avail opportunities and threats to the rural



livelihoods in southern Sudan. The education policy that is tailored to local conditions should be sensitive to these rural livelihood opportunities and threats.

## 5. Conclusion:

The paper has shown the overwhelming challenges of reaching education for all goals in the war affected southern Sudan but it also sketches and provides window of opportunities for laying foundation for meeting EFA goals. As rightly argued by Sommers (2002), war makes the case for providing educational responses to the needs of children and youth at risk of civil war more than any other circumstance as their education is a vital protection measure from child soldiering. Despite the daunting status of education in the war affected southern Sudan, the communities have initiated with their own community-based education with their own resources with impressive results that paradoxically surpassed those in the pre-war periods. This impressive experience of communities efforts in southern Sudan to initiate their own local education responses with support from local authorities and international agencies makes a compelling case to support emergency education programme and to make primary education easily accessible to all areas affected by war.

Given the current peace negotiations between the government of Sudan and the rebels (Sudan People's Liberation Movement) to find a sustainable peace in the country, there are two possible scenarios within which emergency education for war-affected population could be strengthened and supported. These two scenarios are either the current civil war continues or peace agreement signed and new phase of post-war reconstruction starts in southern Sudan. These two phases present and pose different challenges and strategies for supporting emergency education of the war-affected population in southern Sudan.

### 5.1 Education in the midst of Civil War:

Much current thinking emphasises that war is not always a senseless phenomenon and it is less about social breakdown than the creation of new forms of political and economic relations at local, national and international levels (Duffield, 2000, Keen, 2000). In Sudan as discussed earlier, the education system during pre-war periods contributed to the marginalization and exclusion of southern Sudanese and that largely contributed to the causation of the current civil war. The current civil war provides opportunities for changing the political and economic relations including the education system in Sudan so as to achieve sustainable peace not



only between north and south but also within various communities in southern Sudan. Access to education besides being a fundamental ‘right’, it is also an effective tool of promoting global values of humanity and citizenship not only in peacetime but more importantly during civil wars.

### **Education Policy and Strategy:**

One key and main challenge to meeting EFA targets in the midst of civil war in southern Sudan is for the SPLM to make its new education policy and strategies widely acceptable by all the stakeholders and civil society in particular. This policy has undoubtedly supplanted the old exclusive education policy that contributed to the causation of the recurrent conflicts in Sudan. By recognising the cultural and religious diversity as resource rather than a liability, the new education policy has provided a new inclusive national identity and space for various communities to reflect their values and cultures. Despite these salient features, there is need for the new education policy to be reviewed and to be more tailored to the livelihood conditions and to reorder the traditional relationships in education systems by creating new spaces and forums for a real partnership and mutual accountability between SPLM and citizens. Also for this new policy to be accepted by other stakeholders particularly the international agencies, the SPLM must be seen committed to education by availing part of its meagre resources to support education particularly the salaries for the teachers.

### **International Assistance:**

Besides widely accepted education policy, more commitment and investment in education by international agencies are crucially important for laying foundation and steps for reaching EFA goals during civil war. Despite the overwhelming justification in emergency education literature that education during civil war is a right for all children and a need that must be met, such argument to use Sommers (2002:24) words ‘has tugged more at the heartstrings than the purse strings of major international donors’. In southern Sudan, USAID has taken initiative of supporting basic education, while other international donors are stuck with a view that education is a luxury in emergencies and not a humanitarian requirement (Sinclair, 2001:9). The declared goals of reaching education to all children where ever they and under any conditions, make education a collective responsibility and calls for concerted efforts and actions even in situations where international actors do not normally work (Sommers, 2002).



## **Working Directly with SPLM:**

Usually in civil war, the sovereignty of the state is contested and it should not be allowed to restrict reaching education to children in the war zones. Even when international agencies attempt to initiate education in the war zones, they should not only stick with community-based education as such system emerged as a *de facto* situation resulting from either weak government or rebels movement. In a situation where governments or rebels have shown political commitment towards achieving education for all goals, the international agencies should explore possible and effective means of engaging with such governments or rebels movements particularly their civilian education authorities or ministries. Sommers (2002) argues that international actors should not wait for crises to end but they should work with education ministries, even with governments whose actions are considered distasteful and reprehensible, to grapple with education in crisis situations on preparedness concerns and planning for post-war situations.

Given the fact that SPLM education authority has shown political will and commitment towards reaching education for all goals, the international agencies involved in education in southern Sudan should work directly with it. This will certainly improve co-ordination of education systems as well as joining education efforts towards meeting education for all goals and preparing for post-conflict education challenges. Besides working with the SPLM education authority, the international agencies should also support the relevant local NGOs through active and collaborative capacity building arrangements particularly with international NGOs with emergency education experience.

## **Free Education and School Feeding:**

One important challenge that will put southern Sudan on track towards achieving EFA objectives during the current civil war is the need for political decision with support from international agencies to make primary education free. The findings of various surveys have convincingly shown that lack of school fees is the leading factor for low enrolment and high school dropping out. Also the apparent deterioration of food security situation and livelihoods in southern Sudan that resulted in high incidence of consumption poverty and poverty in general makes a compelling case for a comprehensive primary school feeding particularly in the areas most affected by civil war.



## **Flexible School Calendar and Support of Health and Food Security:**

The various surveys have consistently shown the deteriorating livelihood conditions of the communities particularly poor access to drinking water and food insecurity that have exerted increasing pressure on and demand for labour of the primary school age population and that contributed to low enrolment and high school dropping out. Making school calendar flexible will allow children to complete their work and still attend the school. It is crucially important the school timings must be set by the local community rather than the SPLM education authority so as to allow all children to attend school. Another important intervention is the support of health, water and food security programmes that will have a profound positive effect on school participation.

## **Pre-school and Girls Education:**

While there is enough policy rhetoric about girls education, it is important to practically address the factors related to the demand for girls labour. While various surveys have generally shown the high girls participation in domestic chores, the most pressing demand for girls' labour is caring for their younger siblings as well as orphans, neighbours and other young children. This demand for caring for younger siblings and children has considerably increased during civil war as adults and particularly women have become more engaged in livelihood activities than during pre-war periods (Deng, 2003). Support of pre-school education for young children will undoubtedly stabilise children, provide them with structure and most importantly frees up time for their parents and guardians to address other concerns (Sommers, 2002:21). Introduction and supporting of simple community-based kindergarten and pre-school activities could be effective ways of ensuring girls' enrolment and retention in school (Sinclair, 2001:33).

## **The Primacy of Teachers:**

Despite the pivotal role of teacher in education system is a common fact, such a role is more important during civil war than during peacetime. In a situation of civil war as clearly shown by the status of education in southern Sudan where school curricula, materials, equipment, and supplies are inadequate or not available, the trained teachers if available would be able to keep schools running (Sommers, 2002). This makes a convincing case of the primacy of teachers in education system during civil war and programmes such as teacher training, provision of regular teacher salaries and creation of conducive teaching environment and conditions should be top priorities in emergency education



programme. The SPLM is also expected besides contributing towards provision of regular teacher salaries to provide protection and exemption of teachers from any military obligations.

## **5.2 Education during the early Post-war Periods:**

There is a high hope particularly among the international community that the current peace negotiations on the Sudan civil war will lead to a comprehensive peace agreement between the government of Sudan and the rebels movement (SPLM) by the end of this year. Although the line between peace and war is so faint as talking peace may mean war if not adequately addressed, southern Sudan, if peace agreement is signed, will have an interim period of six years within which it will exercise the right of self-determination to either remain in a united Sudan or to secede. During this interim period of six years there will be enormous challenges and pressing priorities to prepare people of southern Sudan for sustainable peace and to exercise their political right of self-determination. On the top of these challenges is the repatriation and resettlement of approximately 4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 420,000 refugees in the neighbouring countries (Brian, 2003). Besides the resettlement of IDPs and refugees, there will be mounting needs for the provision of basic social services such as health, education and water for the resident population and the returnees (IDPs and refugees). The type and quality of education system during the interim period of six years will certainly play crucial role in preparing people of southern Sudan for sustainable peace as well as reaching education for all objectives.

### **Free and Compulsory Primary Education:**

During the early stage of post-war reconstruction in southern Sudan, the future regional government should put the agenda of education into the new constitutional development for Sudan or the future state of southern Sudan. In particular, there is need of enacting the fundamental right to education and to make primary education for all children under the age of 14 years free and compulsory. Besides legalisation and enactment of the fundamental right to education, such rights must be made justiciable.

### **The Primacy of Education:**

Given the massive proceeds from the oil exports, it is opportune time that investment in infrastructure and human capital should be the primary preoccupation of the early post-war reconstruction. Despite the fact that other sectors will be competing for the resources, education should undoubtedly take



the primacy. The future government of southern Sudan should not only make policy commitment towards achieving EFA goals, but also to make operational the policy rhetoric of free and compulsory primary education by devoting a higher share of its national resources particularly proceeds from oil export to public primary education. In India for example the government made a commitment of allocating 6% of gross domestic product (GDP) for education programme (Subrahmanian, 2002:76). It was found that the countries that performed well towards reaching EFA goals devoted a higher share (1.7% of GDP) of their national resources to public primary education and spend about 12% of per capita GDP per public primary student (UNESCO, 2002:136-7).

### **Alternate Education and Adult Literacy:**

Given the current high level of youth and child soldiering and combatants in the rebels army (Sudan People's Liberation Army) that may not be sustained and will be demobilised during peacetime, the education system and curricula should be designed to address and respond to their education needs. In particular, there will be need to invest in vocational training, adult education, life skills, civic education, peace education, accelerated curriculum for children not in the formal system and special education in cattle and fishing camps (SPLM, 2002:14).

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\* This paper was prepared for UNESCO EFA Monitoring Report, May, 2003

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