



Concept Note

Strengthening Evidence-based Planning to Ensure Timely, Comprehensive and Effective Provision of Educational Services in the Republic of South Sudan

Ministry of General Education and Instruction

Juba

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1. Country Context Overview

South Sudan gained its independence from the Sudan in July 2011 after over two decades of fighting successive governments in Khartoum. It descended into another conflict barely after celebrating its second independence anniversary. The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) has significantly reduced the violence involving the parties to the conflict. However, the existence of armed opposition outside the framework of the Agreement and the rising inter-communal and inter-sectional violence fueled by proliferation of arms in the hands of civilians and triggered by competitions for scarce resources threatens the prospects of political stability in the country. Besides, the country is expected to hold general elections at the end of the transitional period in 2023, but the slow pace of the implementation of the Agreement, with some critical provisions of the Agreement relating to conduct of free and fair elections still to be implemented, present another potential challenge to the citizens' hope for sustainable peace, stability, economic recovery, and social development, including in the field of education.

It is worth arguing that the pace at which the Agreement is being implemented may lead to any of the following scenarios. On the positive side, pressure will be mounted on the peace parties to expedite implementation of the provisions most critical to the conduct of free and fair elections in 2023 and the elections proceed and usher in a government of the people's choice. On the negative side, the transitional period ends without adequate preparation and conduct of free and fair elections, prompting extension of the transitional period to the annoyance of some political actors and hence tension with possible involvement of armed actors leading to further chaos and violence. In addition, pursuance of elections without the necessary conducive environment to doing so would result in contentions with possible negative consequences on the prospects of peace and political stability in the country. In both negative scenarios, education in South Sudan would continue to be delivered in a humanitarian- response context. On the other hand, the positive scenario would call for reconstruction-development-peace nexus approach, which the development partners have been emphasizing and would hope to continue embracing. Such an approach suits South Sudan's desire to establish a partnership compact with its education development partners.

Demographically, South Sudan is endowed with a young population. Over 70% of the estimated 12 million people¹ in South Sudan is under the age of 30 years. This means significant investment in their development if the country is to reap demographic dividends. This includes investment in education and training. With only about 12 million people in the country, South Sudan is the least densely populated country in Eastern Africa with a population density estimated at 20 people per square kilometre². According to the United Nation's Population Fund (UNFPA, 2017), South Sudan has the second highest annual population growth in the East African Community sub-region, with a 3.2% annual population growth rate (just behind Uganda with 3.3%). Since 2010, the population of South Sudan has increased significantly with projections putting the country' population at 17.2 million people by 2030³. Currently,

¹ United Nations Population Division, 2016.

² Population Pyramid. (2017). Population data for South Sudan. Retrieved from: [tps://www.populationpyramid.net/population-density/south-sudan/2017/](https://www.populationpyramid.net/population-density/south-sudan/2017/)

³ UNESCO. (2011). Building a better future: Education for an independent South Sudan. Education for All Global Monitoring Report Policy Paper. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/building-betterfuture-education-independent-south-sudan>.

children of school going age make a significant proportion of the growing population with children between grade 1 and grade 8 making up to 21% (2.6 million) and those between grade 9 and 12 making 9% (1.1 million) of the population by 2016⁴ according to the UN Population Department. Proportions of segments of the population above 30 years old tend to reduce sharply with the 30-34-year-olds constituting 3.1%, the 45-49-year-olds 3.1%, and only less than 1% of the of the population is 65 and above years old⁵. The fast annual population growth rate and the proportion of young people in the population both carry implications for decision making. Lack of significant investment in all aspects of development of children and youth increases the dependency ratio thereby entrancing the already existing dependency syndrome.

South Sudan economy has been hard hit by declines in both oil (with oil representing about 95% of exports) and non-oil sectors and several concurrent shocks including COVID-19, flash floods, locust invasion and higher sub-national conflict intensity. They have combined to give the country a dire economic outlook. This has resulted in but not limited to delayed payment of public servants' salaries, low levels of government-financed services delivery, high unemployment, high poverty rates, high levels of food insecurity, and heavy borrowing. According to the World Bank, South Sudan's poverty rate stood at 76.4% in 2016, which is one of the highest in the world. Regarding food security, the UN World Food Programme describes the situation in South Sudan as having reached the most extreme levels since independence in 2011. It estimates that 7.24 million people faced acute food insecurity between April and July 2021⁶. Overall, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, estimates that 8.3⁷ million of the estimated 12 million South Sudan population needed humanitarian assistance in 2021 with rising food insecurity being the primary driver of this situation. The above-mentioned socio-economic situation makes humanitarian and development assistance very critical for South Sudan. Such assistance contributes to building resilience, stabilizing the economy, and mitigating destructive coping strategies or "crisis strategies", which in the long run have their own shortcomings.

Since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), the country has seen some degree of economy recovery. The economic started to recover in 2018/19 where the GDP grew by 3.4% and continued throughout 2019/20 (when GDP growth was estimated at 13.2%). In 2020/21, South Sudan's economy was initially projected to grow very considerably (above 10%), but the COVID-19 pandemic led it to contract by 4.2% in FY20/21⁸. With global oil demand plummeting, the low price of oil led to a large decrease in exports and national revenue. This, added to deficit monetization by the government, led to a considerable depreciation of the South Sudanese Pound in the parallel market (from about 280 SSP per \$1 USD in March 2020 to about 600 SSP per \$1 USD in December 2020), as well as an inflation spike. For example, in December 2020 alone, prices increased by 58 per cent. In view of this context, since the second half of 2020 the government accelerated the implementation of economic reforms to increase efficiencies in the management of public finances, and to mobilize more non-oil revenue. While the implementation of the R-ARCSS gives hope for recovery from the challenges described above, it worth noting that this is done within the context of limited domestic income. The finite

⁴ UN Population Department, 2016.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ WFP South Sudan Situation Report # 297, published on 26 November 2021. Accessible at <http://www.wfp.org/countries/south-sudan>.

⁷ See South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021 available in pdf form on http://www.humanitarianresponse.inf/files/documents/files/south_sudan_2021_humanitarian_needs_overview or <http://reliefweb.int/organizations/ocha>. Published 26 January 2021.

⁸ IMF (2021). IMF Country Report No. 21/70.

nature of resources implies that increased investment in one sector translates to reduced investment in another. Though government has legally committed to investing at least 10% of the national budget on education, substantial investment in education to meet the regional and global benchmarks of at least 4-6% of national GDP and/or at least 15-20% of total public expenditure – translates almost equally to de-prioritization of other equally critical sectors. In this context, multi-stakeholder and bilateral partnerships with South Sudan would be critical for the implementation of the Education 2030 Agenda which plays a critical role in the achievement of the other SDG goals.

From 2018 to 2022 South Sudan implemented a transitional and developmental Education Sector Plan that prioritized addressing the country's challenges around access and equity in education, the quality of education provision and outcomes, improvements in the management of the education system to achieve quality and equity and increasing equitable access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET). However, this has taken place against a backdrop of political instability, a struggling economy, extreme poverty, food insecurity, internal displacements due to unprecedented floods, and staggering implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). As a result, there remains significant increase in the number of out of school children, from 2.2 million⁹ in 2018 to 2.8 in 2021¹⁰. With this latest figure of out of school children, it means over 70% of 6-18 years old are out of school, which puts their futures and the future of South Sudan at risk. The Government of South Sudan in partnership with the European Union and in collaboration with the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has put in place a Pastoralist Education Programme that responds to the unique socio-economic and cultural setting of the pastoralist communities. This tailored programme recognizes the existence of over 60% of the population of South Sudan in pastoralist setting, which means that a significant percentage of the out of school children live in cattle camps. This programme is designed to reach children, youth and adults in the pastoralist communities providing them with practical solutions to major challenges of providing education to pastoralists through the conventional school-based systems.

In pursuit of improvements in the quality of education, the Ministry of General Education and Instruction exerted tremendous efforts to keep some Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) operational to keep training teachers despite the difficulties created by the conflict that erupted in 2013. At the same time, a significant number of teachers have been oriented to implement the new curriculum. The new curriculum reflects a departure from knowledge-base to competency-base. Despite these efforts, the quality of teachers remains a major challenge generally affecting the quality of education in the country including learning outcomes. Majority of teachers are still without formal training (unqualified). Only 12,183 of the 53,523 (65,000) have formal training, which translate to 22.7%¹¹. This indicates that South Sudan's challenge in relation to quality of education is not only how to operationalize all the TTIs and the County Education Centres (CECs) and enroll more students in the Colleges of Education in the universities, but also how to provide incentives for teachers to remain in the classrooms, and/or return from exile and rejoin the teaching force. This is because the problem of inadequate number of qualified teachers in the classrooms is compounded by multiple factors, including displacement of some teachers to refugee camps in the neighbouring countries, the erosion of value of salaries to about one-third of their 2007 value (about 5%),

⁹ UNESCO (2018). *Global Initiative on Out of School Children: South Sudan Country Study*.

¹⁰ UNICEF (2021). *Education in South Sudan Briefing Note July – September 2021*. Accessible at <http://www.unicef.org/southsudan/documents/education-briefing-note>.

¹¹ Ministry of General Education and Instruction (2019). *National Education Statistical Booklet*.

and the difficulties in meeting payment of legislated allowances due to the lack of budget funds. The mass exodus of qualified teachers from the profession is largely due to the latter two factors. It is therefore critical that efforts and resources are mobilized from both the government and multi-stakeholders and bilateral partners in the spirit of *leave no one behind* to enhance teacher capacity and retain qualified teachers in the classrooms to provide quality teaching for the learners to achieve desirable learning outcomes. South Sudan has received massive support from partners to provide and improve conditions of learning spaces, provide educational materials (textbooks and other supplies), incentives to keep teachers in the classrooms, mitigate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on children's long-term learning, reopen schools and keep them safely functioning, etcetera. However, this comes amidst challenges, which include but are not limited to inherited state of poor infrastructural development and harsh environmental conditions that render some communities either hard to reach or inaccessible in some seasons, the political crisis that started in 2013 that caused massive displacement either internally or to refugee camps in the neighbouring countries, and the hard economic conditions facing the country.

While some progress in the participation of girls in education and training has been made, female learners remain under-represented (more particularly at post-primary level) and this is due to myriad of factors among them including early/teenage marriage, poverty affecting the ability of families to meet the school requirements for their children, cultural barriers that deny the girl child equal right to education as the boy child, lack of schools/complete schools in some parts of the country, and many more. The participation in the Grade 12 national examinations where male candidates represented 66% and female only 34% does not only tell of the gender disparities in enrolment, but also the challenges South Sudan faces to retain girls in school as they advance towards transitioning to post-primary level and along the way towards completion of secondary. While government has put in place concrete measures that can be built on in the pursuit for equitable and safe access to inclusive quality education for all children, youth, and adults, increasing equitable and safe access to education for all at all levels very much require concerted efforts by all partners in the South Sudan education system – including the government, the humanitarian and development assistance community, and the private sector. There is increasing indication of South Sudan moving towards meeting the legally established threshold of budget allocation to education (at least 10%) despite the unrelenting economic difficulties. In the fiscal year 2018/19, South Sudan allocated 9.4% (which is 1.4% of GDP) of the national budget to education, but because resources are finite, in the 2019/20 fiscal education received only 5.5%, which is understandable as building infrastructure is not only a competing priority but expensive to handle. The infrastructure sector saw an increase from 3.4% to 55.0%, which prompted consequent reduction in other areas, such as accountability, public administration, and security. This inevitable reduction of funding of education undoubtedly impacts the capacity of the education sector to address its priorities issues – access to teaching and learning resources, salaries of teachers, establishment of conducive learning spaces and facilities, learners' welfare, and execution of all necessary reforms in the education system. With the economic reforms instituted by the Transitional Government of National Unity formed in line with the R-ARCSS, government has indicated an allocation of 17% to education in the FY 2021/22.

2. Rationale

The Education system in South Sudan strives in a context of political instability and humanitarian and economic crises to meet the national goals it is meant to achieve, which are spelled out in the Education Act, 2012, the General Education Policy 2017-2027, and the South Sudan Vision 2040. Despite these protracted and overlapping emergencies and vulnerabilities, South Sudan remains committed to

developing a stronger education system that will become the pillar of sustainable peace, stability, and development. The General Education Strategic Plan 2017-2022 reflects such ambition, recognition of the increasingly fragile environment and thus the need to work toward a sufficiently resilient education system. Risk analyses play a pivotal role in developing a crisis-sensitive education sector plan.

An education strategic plan plays a pivotal role and is a pressing requirement in the development of a country and its education and training system. A strategic plan should serve as an effective management tool as it guides activities of the country to meet objectives that have been defined in collaboration across departments and with partners. In other words, a strategic plan is very important to help the Government to achieve its objectives without wasting resources. Moreover, it helps managers to better adapt to emergent changes in the development landscape. In the current context, the Education Sector Plan (ESP) serves as a tool for South Sudan to implement its national, regional, and international commitments. At the national level, the forthcoming ESP will serve as a tool to implement the General Education Policy 2017-2027, the General Education Act, 2012, the national constitution, and the South Sudan Vision 2040. Pillar one of the South Sudan Vision 2040 envisions an educated and peaceful South Sudan. Such a vision is to be realized through pursuing a set of goals laid out in the General Education Act, the General Education Policy, and the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan. These include, among others, the eradication of illiteracy, improving employability of young people and adults and promoting lifelong learning for all citizens; providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all citizens to redress the past inequalities in education provision; achieving equity and promoting gender equality and the advancement of the status of women; and contributing to personal development of each learner and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation.

South Sudan's current Education Sector Plan is due to expire this year (2022). Therefore, it is important that efforts are exerted to prepare an ESP based on realities of the current situation in the country and lessons learned from the implementation of the current ESP. As a first step in preparing the new ESP, an Education Sector Analysis (ESA) will be developed in order to highlight lessons learned during the implementation of the previous ESP. The ESA will also include an analysis of the progress made towards the goals of the previous ESP and highlight challenges to its implementation. To draw lessons from the implementation of the current ESP requires that stakeholders carry out a review of the sector performance. The ESA will provide valuable and comprehensive analysis of the prevailing education context to enable stakeholders understand the status of challenges and performances of the education sector in South Sudan. Taking off from the ESA of 2016, the proposed ESA will therefore enable the Ministry of General Education and Instruction to conduct a sector-wide analysis of the education sector with more focus on general education. However, as the analysis will be based on a system-wide themed approach focusing on political, humanitarian, social, demographic, and micro-economic contexts, schooling pattern indicators, cost and financing of education, and quality and management of education, the ESA will pay attention to convergence issues between general education, higher education, and the examination secretariat. In that regard, the ESA will present a synopsis of the full education sector challenges and performance, and this will enable the government of South Sudan to develop an evidence-based ESP. It is worth noting that education has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the proposed ESA will also bring new elements into the ESA particularly by identifying enabling factors for learning in the context of COVID-19.

The ESP will not be the only outcome of this proposed project. The project also aims to strengthen the capacities of the MOGEI staff so that they can engage and lead the ESA and ESP development processes in the future. This will be achieved through employing a participatory approach to the ESP development

process. For instance, relevant education stakeholders will be engaged during the project to help the MOGEI to obtain necessary information from and perspectives of different actors in the field of education and to foster its partnerships with development partners. Participants in the ESP development process will also benefit from in-depth capacity building activities organised during the project. These may include engagement in calculating indicators, defining objectives, and identifying programmatic priorities, for example.

The MOGEI, in collaboration with partners, will organize general education annual review, a practice which forms an integral part for the monitoring and evaluation strategy of the MOGEI. However, once a successor ESP is in place, there is need to conduct general system review with a purpose to generate information on enabling factors for its successful implementation and do any necessary adjustments to mitigate challenges. While education policy reviews have been instrumental for countries in embarking upon education reforms, the increasingly uncertain national (political, humanitarian, social, demographic, macro-economic) context requires a more systemic perspective to bring about fundamental changes to transform the education and learning system to meet the evolving challenges of the country. With the support of UNESCO, South Sudan will pilot Education System Review (ESR) to analyse systemic levers of education: legal and policy dimension; planning and financing dimension; data and system management dimension; and system alignment dimension. The benefit of the education system review lies in the fact that it pays greater attention to emerging issues that do not affect the delivery of education but calls for rethinking the packaging of education and how education can be delivered to play its role in mitigating such emerging issues and contribute to the 2030 Sustainable development Agenda. For example, education has been affected by the global health crisis and the menace of climate change. Accordingly, the pilot education system review will draw lessons from the impact of the health crisis on education services and increased recognition of the roles of education in tackling the climate change. The proposed ESR will focus on the entire education system to understand the extent to which it ensures SDG4 (ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all). Special attention will be also given to the cross-cutting themes such as resilience of the education system, digital transformation in education, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED), and futures of education.

3. Scope of the Work

The project will involve four major activities namely:

1. To conduct a comprehensive analysis of the education sector (focusing on the political, humanitarian, social, demographic, and macro-economic contexts impacting education, the prevailing schooling patterns with a focus on equity and internal efficiency, cost and financing of the systems, and quality and management issues) and produce a report of the findings. While the usual General Education Annual Review (GEAR) will be conducted separately, it will contribute valuable information to regarding the implementation of the current General Education Strategic Plan 2017-2022. Such

information will be in form of lessons drawn from its implementation and the implementation of at least thirty of commitments during the GEAR of April 2021¹².

2. Develop new ESP using the findings from the ESA and lessons drawn from the GEAR 2022.
3. Conduct a Joint System Review of the education Sector to measure progress towards the 2030 Education Agenda and respond to emerging issues that on the one hand impact education and on the other require contributions of the education system to mitigate them.
4. Conduct tailored capacity building activities with an aim to enable the South Sudan education system to become self-reliant in the preparation of future Education Policy Reviews (EPRs), Education Systems Reviews (ESRs), Education Sector Analyses (ESA) and Education Sector Plans (ESPs). With specific reference to ESP, these capacity building efforts may cover areas such as carrying out context analysis, analysis of existing policies, analysis of cost and finance, analysis of the education system performance, analysis of the education system capacity, collection and analysis of data, identification of appropriate responses to the issues raised by the ESA, translating policy priorities into key strategies and precise targets to measure the sector performance, determining human and financial requirements, carrying out cost simulations, and determining funding gaps among others.

4. Methodological Approach

Education Sector Analysis

The ESA will be conducted by the MOGEI with support of international institution and the education partners in the country. The team will provide a description of the up-to-date situation of the education system, based on the most recent data and indicators, and provide an analysis of successes and shortcomings, and difficulties encountered. The core tasks to be covered in this exercise will include analyses of socio-economic context, existing education policies, education cost and finance, education system performance, and system capacity in all sub-sectors (from ECCE to post-secondary as well as continuing education). Data from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) in the MOGEI, the National Bureau of Statistics, the South Sudan Education Cluster, the Protection Cluster, the Refugee Education Management Information System (REMIS), the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) will be consolidated and analysed and will serve as the basis of the Education Sector Analysis. The outputs of this exercise will be a report that provides resources that can help anyone

¹² During the Gear of April 2021, the national Minister of General Education, the Deputy Minister, the ten State Ministers of Education and the Ministers of Education in the three Administrative areas committed and pledged to guarantee that education in South Sudan is free and compulsory; assure that schools in South Sudan including those in hard to reach areas reopen safely; ensure that pregnant and nursing learners have access to education in all schools; permit and promote registration of learners living with disabilities in schools of their choice; improve quality of education for all learners, especially out of school children, learners with disabilities and functional difficulties, refugees, returnees, and internally displaced; introduce state coordination mechanisms to facilitate coordination, cooperation, and monitoring the implementation of national programmes such as improved teachers' salaries and incentives, capitation grants, and cash transfers; implement the National Girls Education Strategy, the National School Inspection Framework, the National Teacher Training Strategy, the National Adult Literacy Policy, the national TVET Policy, The National TVET Qualification Framework and the TVET Quality Assurance Framework; support and monitor implementation of programmes within the Alternative Education Systems (AES); support and monitor continuation of distant education programmes; establish TVET centres and new TVET courses to improve skills and opportunities for youth; supervise the conduct and delivery of national examinations; appeal to the national government to increase the budget allocation to general education to more than 10% of the national budget and commit at least 45% of the education budget to basic education; appeal to the national government to regularly and timely pay salaries of personnel in the general education sector, capitation and operational grants; and advocate for improvement of pay and conditions of service of teachers at all levels among other commitments and pledges.

understand the general country context (demographic, social development, micro-economic performance and outlook and external funding), the schooling patterns including analyses of equity and internal efficiency (repetition, dropout, etc.), the cost and financing situation, the quality of education outlook, and the management of education capacity, the performances of the priority indicators and gaps. The exercise will involve review of relevant documents, collection and analysis of data, consultations with stakeholders including but not limited to the local education group (LEG), the development partners, and practitioners such as teachers and researchers in the field of education. Some countries treat the TVET sub-sector separately when conducting ESA. This is because a TVET analysis will include elements such as labour market patterns. In the case of South Sudan, the Ministry of General Education and Instruction is entrusted with the responsibility of managing both general education and formal TVET. This ESA will include TVET and will reflect the government position on TVET¹³.

The Ministry of General Education and Instruction is already in discussion with the UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) to provide technical guidance and inputs in the process. IIEP supported the MOGEI in the ESA of 2016 and the development of the General Education Strategic Plan 2017-2022. The UNESCO Office in Juba will play a critical role in coordinating the engagement of IIEP in both the ESA and ESP development.

Education Sector Plan

The development of the new ESP will be grounded on the ESA and the lessons learned from the joint sector review. The MOGEI will constitute a Steering Committee to oversee the entire process and it will be supported by sub-sector working groups. The process will benefit from the sub-sectoral expertise of the members of the Sub-sector Working Groups. The MOGEI, under leadership of the Undersecretary supported by the Director General for Budgeting and Planning will be responsible for identifying and mobilizing stakeholders for the consultations that will constitute part of the process of the ESP development.

The process of the ESP development will be entirely participatory. At the planning stage, there will be a policy dialogue conducted with the key stakeholders. This dialogue will lead to building consensus on the vision and approaches, principles, and values that will inform the Education Sector Plan. The benefits of this participatory process include allow the political leaders, the education development partners, and technical experts brought in to support the process to find a balance between ambitions and constraints. It will also facilitate awareness raising on the process and gaining ownership and by extension, the commitment of the education stakeholders.

Key selected ministries will be involved in the process – participating as members of the Steering Committee as well as in discussions at thematic working groups (TWGs) level. Diversity in the consultations (for example urban versus rural people, and groups suffering from disasters, such as flash

¹³ As a response to the challenge of high youth unemployment rate, which is partially caused by the high dropout rate of learners in schools which denies them the necessary employable skills, the government position (reference to the General Education Policy 2017-2027) is to promote entrepreneurship by, among others, re-introducing and expanding Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) all over the country.

floods, as well as those in hard-to-reach areas) will be ensured. The involvement of these actors will be through consultations during the plan preparation process and through structured discussions on drafts of the plan document.

The local education group (currently dubbed as School Reopening Working Group), chaired by the Ministry of General Education and bringing together the key education donors and some SDG4 co-conveners (mainly UNESCO, UNICEF and UNHCR) will be a valuable policy dialogue forum with the government. As members of the LEG are expected to support (under the auspices of partnership compact) the implementation of the ESP this policy dialogue within the LEG will ensure mutual accountability between government and its development partners. The LEG will lend support to the appraisal process of the ESP before it is presented to an independent expert to appraise it and subsequent endorsement by the Council of Ministers.

As per GPE requirements, the project will ensure that the draft ESP meets expected quality standards through the three milestones in the development process of the ESP. The ESP will benefit from comments from the development partners throughout the development of the ESP. The MOGEI department of Partners Coordination will take the lead in mobilizing the partners and receiving their comments. The LEG as well as the GPE Secretariat will also provide comments. Finally, and after considering the comments of the development partners, the LEG and GPE Secretariat, an independent assessment will be conducted. The Grant Agent will hire an expert who will be selected from certified reviewers from a roster of experts, in consultation with MOGEI and the LEG members. The expert will prepare an appraisal report with clear recommendations on key areas of improvement in the final draft of the provisional ESP. The appraisal report will be reviewed and discussed by MOGEI and the LEG members in a special National Education Forum meeting to agree on improvements required prior to endorsement. The GPE Secretariat will also review the appraisal report. Areas of improvement will be addressed by before the provisional ESP can be endorsed by the Council of Ministers and thereafter submitted to the GPE Secretariat.

Thematic Working Groups will be formed to provide inputs during the process. Participation in the TWGs will be based on expertise in particular thematic area such as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Alternative Education System (AES), Basic Education, Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE), quality of education, education management, cost, and financing, and so forth.

Joint Education System Review

In addition to the GEAR to be organized by the MOGEI with support from the current Education Sector Programme Implementation Grant to South Sudan (ESPIG), the allocation under this SCG will include Joint System Review of the Education sector. This is different from the traditional Education Policy Review (or the GEAR in the case of South Sudan) in that it analyses the development of education in the country with a systems approach, from preschool to higher education and beyond with a lifelong learning perspective. This new approach to understanding the capacity to deliver the 2030 Education Agenda and response to emerging crises, draws lessons from the impact of the health crisis on education services and increased recognition of the roles of education in tackling the climate change. While focus is on the country's education system for achieving SDG4 (ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) special attention is given to cross-cutting themes such as resilience of the education system, digital transformation in education, Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education, and the Futures of Education. The ESR will be conducted under the leadership of the Government of South Sudan with full participation of a national team comprising

of expert in specific areas of the education system. The review and the recommendations will be drawn up by the members of this team with technical support of UNESCO experts drawn from different relevant UNESCO entities. Potential UNESCO entities to provide technical support may include:

- UNESCO Head Quarters in Paris and Regional Bureaux (particularly its Sections respectively in charge of education thematic priorities in South Sudan
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), which is the official and authentic source of internationally comparable data on education, science, culture, and communication
- UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE) in Geneva, which is the specialized institute focusing on the development and enhancement of curricula and education content
- UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris, which holds international expertise for the planning and management of education and training systems
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg, which is a think tank for promoting lifelong learning policies and practices with a focus on adult training and literacy and non-formal education and sustainable development within the framework of various initiatives, such as learning cities and the organization of inter-governmental conferences for adult education
- UNESCO International Institute for Information Technologies (IITE), which specializes in the field of ICTs in education.

The entire process is a time-consuming exercise as in the context of South Sudan consultations and field visits may be constrained by logistical and other challenges. As South Sudan has already expressed interest in conducting an ESR with support from the GPE SCG, this process will begin with an inception mission by international experts from the above-mentioned UNESCO entities and formation of national expert group (NEG). Once formed, the NEG will develop a self-assessment report. Other activities include a UNESCO team mission and consultation, drafting of the ESR, articulation of the ESR recommendations and the roadmap (by the national expert group and the UNESCO expert team), consultations with key stakeholders and validation of the ESR, and finally, launch and dissemination of the ESR report.

5. Gender Lens

South Sudan's National Gender Policy (2012) aims to advance gender equality in all facets of life, and South Sudan is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration (1995), and the African Union's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on The Rights of Women in Africa (2003). Despite these international commitments, South Sudan has the lowest proportion of female learners enrolled in primary school and transitioning to secondary school, and the second lowest proportion of female students in secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa (UIS, 2018). Efforts have been made through the implementation of the current ESP where the challenges in each priority area of the MOGEI are addressed through specific mitigation measures. The Girls Education South Sudan (GESS) is one of the flagship programmes of the MOGEI aimed at addressing the challenges around girl child education. There are other initiatives that also try to address gender issues in education such as provision of comfort facilities in schools for girls who reached adolescent age and above, the provision of health kits, sensitization programmes, the "Back to Learning" initiative, etc.

These ongoing gender measures will be reviewed as part of the ESA process and information drawn from this review will be used to ensure that the ESP is based on the principle of inclusivity, equity, and uses human-rights approach to addressing the gender challenge in the country. In this regard, the ESA will include a mapping of barriers or factors that hinder girls' and women's participation in education,

retention, completion, and engagement in the teaching profession. The information will then be used in the ESP development process to design gender-responsive and gender-sensitive interventions.

ZERO DRAFT FOR INTERNAL REVIEW ONLY