Republic of South Sudan

Ministry of General Education and Instruction

General Education Sector Plan 2023-2027

November 2023

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALP ....Accelerated Learning Programme
AA ....Administrative Areas
AFDB ....African Development Bank
AES ....Alternative Education System
AEC ....Annual Education Census
ASC ....Annual School Census
BALP ....Basic Adult Literacy Programme
BRMSI ....Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Indicators
CSOs ....Civil Society Organizations
CGS ....Community-Based Girls Schools
CBT ....Competence-Based Training
CBC ....Competency-Based Curriculum
CPD ....Continuous Professional Development
CECs ....County Education Centres
CETMC ....County Education Transfer Monitoring Committees
DPC ....Department for Partner Coordination
DQAS ....Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards
DRR ....Disaster Risk Reduction
EGMA ....Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA ....Early Grade Reading Assessment
ECE ....Early Childhood Education
ECW ....Education Cannot Wait
EC ....Education Census
EDoG ....Education Donor Group
EMIS ....Education Management Information System
ESPIG ....Education Sector Program Implementation Grant
ETMC ....Education Transfer Monitoring Committees
ESA ....Education Sector Analysis
GDP ....Gross Domestic Product
GEA ....General Education Act
GEAR ....General Education Annual Review
GESP ....General Education Sector Plan
GESS ....Girl's Education South Sudan
GPE ....Global Partnership for Education
GoSS ....Government of South Sudan
GER ....Gross Enrolment Rates
ICT ....Information and Communication Technology
IEC ....Intensive English Course
INEE ....Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IDP ....Internally Displaced Persons
IMF ....International Monetary Fund
INGO ....International Non-Governmental Organizations
IPC ....Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
KPI ....Key Performance Indicators
LEG ....Local Education Group
MIS ....Management Information System

MHPSS ....Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MEF ....Ministry of Environment and Forestry
MoFP ....Ministry of Finance and Planning
MoPS ....Ministry of Public Service
MHADM ....Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management
MoGEI ....Ministry of General Education and Instruction
M&E ....Monitoring and Evaluation
NCDC ....National Curriculum Development Centre
NEF ....National Education Forum
NEC ....National Examination Council
NFLC ....National Foreign Language Centre
NNGO ....National Non-Governmental Organizations
NTACC ....National TVET Ad-hoc Coordination Committee
NGO ....Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA ....United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR ....Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OOS ....Out-of-School
OOSC ....Out-of-School Children
PEP ....Pastoralist Education Programme
PDC ....Programme Development and Coordination
PETS ....Public Expenditure Tracking Survey
PFM ....Public Finance Management
PTR... Pupil Teacher Ratios
R-ARCSS ....Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
SMoE ....State Ministry of Education
SMoF ....State Ministry of Finance
SMoE ....State Ministry of Education
SSNQA ....South Sudan National Qualification Authority
SSNTQF ....South Sudan National Technical Qualification Framework
SSSAMS ....South Sudan Schools' Attendance Monitoring System
SSP ....South Sudanese Pound
SETMC ....State Education Transfer Monitoring Committees
STEM ....Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
STR ....Student-Textbook Ratios
TTIs ....Teacher Training Institutes
TDMS ....Teachers Development Management Service
TVET ....Technical and Vocational Education Training
TWG ....Technical Working Groups
TNLA ....Transitional National Legislative Assembly Parliament
UNDP ....United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF ....United Nations Children's Fund
UN ....United Nations
UNESCO ....United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USD ....United States Dollar
USAID ....United States Agency for International Development
WASH ....Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP ....World Food Programme

Executive Summary

This plan has been developed through a consultative process drawing participation from the MoGEI; State Ministries of Education (SMoE); as well as local and international development partners. It covers the Development and the Country Risk Contexts; Trends from the Education Sector Analysis; Education Policy issues, goals, and objectives, Strategic interventions, and activities; Cost of Implementation of GESP and Financing; and GESP Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

The current development context of South Sudan comprising the geographic, socio-demographic and macroeconomic environments has been heavily shaped by its history including years of conflict, elevated levels of inflation and vulnerabilities to climate related shocks. Despite endowment with a diverse ecology which includes grasslands, wetlands, and rainforests, the agriculture sector accounts for less than 15% of the total Gross Domestic Product. Administratively, South Sudan functions under a decentralized governance system, with responsibilities divided between the national, state, and local levels after adoption of the interim constitution of 2011. States, exercise power over social welfare, including administering state pensions, state civil service, and pre-school, primary and secondary education while both national and state governments are responsible for tertiary education and scientific research. However, South Sudan's political system is in transition and remains fragile. This is attributed to the country risks related to climate change shocks such as drought, flooding and conflicts amid weak capacity to mitigate the effects of disasters and conflicts, including on education.

The Socio-demographic outlook shows that the population of South Sudan was projected to reach 12.4 million by 2022 from 8.4 million in 2008. The population faces pressure from various patterns of migration, including external migration, internal displacement, and the return of previously displaced populations. By 2018, 63% among those aged 15 to 24 years were literate. Other challenges comprise Early marriage, high poverty rates, limited access to sanitation services, severe food insecurity, and the need of humanitarian assistance for millions. In terms of macro-economic outlook, South Sudan's economy benefits from petroleum reserves. The GDP in 2021 showed signs of a rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic with further growth in 2022 and 2023. While the public administration and infrastructure development dominate intersectoral spending patterns, the government is spending less on social services such as education and health. These challenges have had a significant impact on the on the education policy framework and general education.

The education system in South Sudan is guided by a series of laws and policy documents that have been adopted since independence. Supreme of all laws and policies is the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011 which guarantees education as a right of every citizen and that it is compulsory and free of charge at the primary level. The General Education Act 2012 (GEA) defines the guiding principles, goals for the education system, and provides the general framework for its efficient functioning. The National Inclusive Education Policy 2020 defines strategic elements for guaranteeing access to education and creating an enabling environment for all people. The South Sudan Development Strategy 2021–2024 identifies education as a key component of Cluster 3 on services (social development)

which prioritizes the following key interventions regarding education (i) national capacity assessment and surveys, (ii) infrastructure and equipment, and (iii) teachers' education and training curricula.

The GESP identifies access to and equity in education as a key challenge in general education in South Sudan. In the period 2015 to 2021, the total number of schools increased at all levels of formal education reaching 5,784 in 2021, 73% of which provide primary education, 18% pre-primary and 9% secondary. However, the relative weight of government schools is seen to have decreased across all levels in the same period with the great decreases seen at the secondary level. Additionally, South Sudan GERs is below average. The overall primary retention rate stood at 22% in 2021 while dropout reported at 47%, 31%, and 38% in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education respectively. Notably, about 94% of all children from three to five years old are out of school. It is also noted that South Sudanese skills development system is largely supply-driven rather than based on the skills needs of the private sector.

Another key challenge is the quality of education and management of resources. The capacity of Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) remains inadequate to address the need for teachers in general education with only three operational public TTIs. There is also an acute shortage of qualified teachers in general education in addition to short supply of learning materials across all levels of general education and AES. Further, TVET centres do not provide job counselling and orientation services to students and that coupled with the lack of dialogue and partnership with private sector actors undermines the very objectives of skills training all levels of governance. Other documented challenges in the TVET system include insufficient TVET trainer remuneration, poor systems of pre-service and in-service training, poor infrastructure endowment of TVET centres, and insufficient focus of TVET's offer on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) disciplines.

Finally, education financing and governance is acknowledged as another key challenge in education in South Sudan. Despite growing government allocations to education in recent years reaching 17% of total government expenditure in 2021/22, education expenditure as a proportion of total government expenditure still low and stood at 5% or less than 1% of GDP. Almost all expenditure by MoGEI in recent years has been dedicated to recurrent spending with development expenditure representing only 7% of total expenditure. Civil servants including teachers and education administrators are severely underpaid. Besides expenditure on salaries, the majority (58%) of MoGEI recurrent expenditure was allocated to operating transfers, and MoGEI's school feeding activities feeding allowances (28%). While Primary education received the bulk (84% of recurrent expenditure) of funding in 2021/22, TTIs and TVET received the smallest (less than 1% proportion of expenditure). Despite the policy change in which SMoEs became the direct recipient of funds from MoGEI, accountability for these transfers is hampered by the weak capacity of financial systems. Additionally, transfers to states and counties are allocated according to the number of counties and the number of schools, rather than the number of learners or according to areas of greatest need. Although development partners contribute to education through the provision of off-budget financing with interventions such as the GESS programme, the existence of many direct and indirect payments that are expected from parents of children at fee-free primary education is another key issue related to the challenge of education financing and governance. Specific to governance, out of the

total 219 TVET centres mapped out in South Sudan, only 62 centres (28%) were functional in 2021 with an overall constant decline in student enrolment.

The General Education Sector Plan (GESP) 2023-2027 presents a set of policy priorities and associated interventions responding to the identified issues and challenges through the Education Sector Analysis (ESA). The GESP identifies ten (10) policy goals with objectives it aims to achieve across the three domains of policy issues. Under the access to and equity in education, the GESP aims at Increased access to equitable and safe education at all levels of general education, including TVET as well as Increased retention of learners in primary and secondary cycles. On the issues of quality of education and management of resources, the GESP aims at Improved quality and retention of the teaching workforce; Enhanced curriculum development and implementation, including strengthening the assessment system; Streamlined and strengthened assessment system; Improved teaching and learning environment as well as the physical and psychological wellbeing of learners, teachers, and school staff; and Improved labour market relevance of TVET. Finally, to address the issues of education financing and governance, the GESP targets Increased domestic public financing to education; Improved planning and effective coordination practices; and strengthened and unify TVET system governance. These policy goals are to be achieved through various strategic interventions.

The GESP identifies specific strategic interventions it seeks to pursue to achieve the goals across the three education policy domains. On access to and equity in education, the GESP seeks to Improve the enrolment capacity across all education levels and community mobilization and awareness on gender equity and inclusion of all children; and strengthen the resilience of the system for continuous learning during crises. On quality of education and management of resources, the GESP seeks to Enhance the framework and environment for management of teachers including Recruiting additional teachers across all educational levels and their capacity development; Complete the development of curriculum materials; Upgrade and strengthen the four National Centres (NCDC, TDMS, NFLC, NEC) including National examination and Assessment systems; and Promote policies that make the school environment conducive for learning and TVET linkages with the labour market. Finally, on education financing and governance, the GESP pursues to Strengthen financial cooperation and coordination of all education stakeholders including public fiscal management systems; Enhancing M&E capacity of the MoGEI at national, state and county levels; and improve the policy and regulatory landscape of TVET including assessment and certification. The strategic interventions have been costed over the plan period of five years beginning 2023-2027.

The cost of implementing the General Education Sector plan is composed of two facets; the costs associated with the new activities, as well as the costs of running, and expanding the existing system. Considering both facets, the 2023-2027 GESP is projected to cost around SSP 701.1 billion over the five-year period. This is made up of SSP 505.4 billion in recurrent costs, and SSP 195.7 billion in capital costs. In terms of financing the GESP, there is an anticipated SSP 664.5 billion that is likely to be available to the education sector, including SSP 277.1 billion from the government and SSP 387.4 billion from development partners and donors. The expected funding gap is estimated to be SSP 36,639 billion.

Lastly, the GESP implementation framework borrows from the revised General Education Coordination Framework which aims to streamline education activities in the country along the GESP. The framework is composed of three levels. The Policy Direction and Safeguard, which is responsible for high-level policy development, backstopping, and monitoring; the Technical and Strategy, which is responsible for implementation and accountability; and finally, the Clusters, which are responsible for specific implementation tasks under the three GESP programme areas. The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the GESP will be conducted through both continuous monitoring activities as well as periodic evaluations. The GESP identifies the data sources for all output and strategic outcome indicators.

1. Introduction

1.1 Development Context

The current development context of South Sudan has been heavily shaped by its history, including years of conflict and elevated levels of inflation, as well as its geography, which is vulnerable to environmental shocks. While stability in terms of national level conflict was brought to the country in 2018, continued sub-national conflict and the political legacies of previous violence continue to affect governance. Moreover, South Sudan faces a multitude of demographic pressures arising from a fast-growing population, internal displacement, the influx of refugees, and the return of refugees from neighbouring countries. In terms of its economy, South Sudan has faced extreme levels of inflation and currency devaluation in recent years, stalling economic growth in the country. The education system is subsequently affected by these contextual factors.

1.1.1 Geography and administration

South Sudan is endowed with a diverse ecology, which includes grasslands, wetlands, and rainforests with its climate characterized by a wet and dry season. This diversity creates positive conditions for agricultural and animal rearing practices with 95% of the South Sudanese population relying on farming, herding, or fishing as their main sources of income (OCHA, 2022). Much of this sector remains subsistence-based, meaning that, despite the substantial proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, the sector accounts for less than 15% of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (UNDP, 2021).

The way of life and main source of income for many rural South Sudanese is under-threat because of climate change. In 2019, South Sudan was one of the ten countries globally most affected by climate change according to the Global Climate Risk Index (Eckstein, 2021). These negative effects have intensified in recent years, with flooding reportedly affected over one million people in 36 counties across the country in 2022 (OCHA, 2022). Flooding has compounded an already dire humanitarian situation in the country, waterlogging large areas of arable land, washing away crops, contaminating water sources, and forcing the migration of hundreds of thousands of people (UNICEF, 2021). Flooding is considered a driver of sub-national conflict as pastoralists and cattle-herders are left to compete for the increasingly smaller tracts of usable land (UNICEF, 2021).

1.1.2 Politico-institutional context

South Sudan functions under a decentralized governance system, with responsibilities divided between the national, state, and local levels. This system was adopted in the interim constitution of 2011 with aims 'to accommodate the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious and racial diversity of the South Sudanese people, promote political pluralism and maintain peace' (GoSS, 2011). The key responsibilities of the central government include the maintenance of peace and security, reconstruction and development, and the promotion of good governance. The central government exercises power over critical aspects that include national defence and security, foreign affairs, and the judiciary (GoSS, 2011). States, on the other hand, exercise power over social welfare, including administering state pensions, state civil service, and

pre-school, primary and secondary education (GoSS,2011). Both national and state governments are responsible for tertiary education and scientific research (GoSS, 2011).

More than ten years since independence, the country has experienced two prolonged periods of violence, with the most recent conflict occurring from 2016 −2018, resulting in an estimated 380,000 deaths (OCHA, 2020). The conflict officially ended in 2018 with the signing of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The implementation of the R-ARCSS began in 2020 with the return to the 10-state model, including the appointment of state governors. This was followed by the establishment of the revitalized transitional government of national unity (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Another major milestone in R-ACASS implementation was achieved in 2022 when the first batch of former rebel rights was integrated into the unified national command. Despite this progress, it was agreed in August 2022 that it would be impossible to fully implement the deal by the February 2023 deadline and the President, along with four other political groups, agreed to the extension of the agreement by a period of 24 months (International Crisis Group, 2022). The extension included a detailed implementation roadmap for the two-year period, culminating in the organization of the country's first elections which are scheduled to take place in 2024 (UN Security Council, 2023).

While the R-ACASS has ended much national conflict, political unrest, inter-communal, and localized conflict continue to fuel violence at the sub-national level. The year 2022 saw intensification of these types of violence, leading to the displacement of more than 300,000 people, with more than 80% civilian deaths being attributed to sub-national violence and the activities of community-based militias in the same year. Sub-national conflict takes various forms, which include armed clashes, killings, sexual violence, abductions, the destruction of property, and cattle raiding (OCHA, 2021). The drivers of this conflict are multiple and deeply interconnected and include environmental shocks such as flooding that is seen, among other impacts, to drive forced migration. This movement of populations can change the ethnic composition of areas, leading to localized inter-ethnic conflict (OHCHR, 2022).

As a country recovering from a prolonged period of violence and conflict, South Sudan's political system is in transition and remains fragile. Given that the current number of states was only established in 2020, and governors appointed in the same year, state-level administrative functions remain nascent, and institution-building is ongoing. County and Payam-level structures, particularly, have limited administrative capacity, skilled personnel, and inadequate resources. It is therefore difficult for decisions made at the central level to trickle down (BTI, 2022). The peace established in 2018 and associated demarcation of internal boundaries, are already having positive effects in providing the stability necessary to strengthen a decentralized administrative structure (BTI, 2022).

1.1.3 Demographic context

In 2008, the population of South Sudan was enumerated at 8.4 million, with 2022 projections placing this figure at 12.4 million and representing an increase of almost six million inhabitants or 69% in 14 years. The population growth rate averaged 2.9% between 2015 and 2023. This overall population growth has been paralleled by the growth in the school-age population, which expanded by over one million between 2016

and 2022. In 2022 nearly half (49%) of the population was under the age of 14, with a median age of 18 years. The youth of the country is further reflected in its dependency ratio of over 100%, indicating the important levels of pressure such a young population exerts on the resources being produced by the working population. This demographic pressure indicates the need for the education system to expand to meet the needs of its growing young population.

South Sudan's population faces pressure from various patterns of migration, including external migration, internal displacement, and the return of previously displaced populations. New internal displacements have intensified in recent years, with more than 550,000 of the 2 million internally displaced persons in the past four years having been displaced in 2021 alone (OCHA, 2021). Of the total OCHA projected population of 12.4 million in 2022, 2.2 million were internally displaced or 18%, of which over 537,000 lived in displacement sites (OCHA, 2022). Since 2018, over 600,000 refugees have returned from abroad, while 2.3 million continue to reside in neighbouring countries (OCHA, 2022). Additionally, South Sudan is also host to more than 337,000 refugees, mostly from the Republic of Sudan (OCHA, 2022).

1.1.4   Sociocultural context

In 2016 about 43% of the population of South Sudan aged 15 years and above were literate, rising later to 63% among those aged 15 to 24 years (World Bank, 2018). Literacy was higher among urban and male populations, with the highest rate of 82% in urban areas among individuals aged 15 to 24 years. The greatest difference between those aged 15 years and older and those in the 15–24 years age group is observed among females at 30%, which indicates that young women have significantly more opportunities to access education than their predecessors.

Early marriage is widespread in the country, with 2010 estimates citing that 52% of South Sudanese girls between the ages of 15 and 18 years were married, with some marrying as young as 12 (Ministry of Health, 2010). This contributes to the high adolescent birth rate observed in the country, with one-third of women aged 15–19 years already having begun childbearing as at 2018 (World Health Organization, 2019). Early marriage and childbearing contribute to girls' dropout from school, which in turn contributes to overall lower levels of education as reflected in literacy rates above.

South Sudan is amid a humanitarian crisis, with an estimated 8.9 million people out of a population of 12.4 million in 2022 needing humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2022). Living conditions have deteriorated, with the proportion of the population living in poverty increasing from 51% in 2009 to 82% in 2017. Poverty rates are higher among rural households at 85% compared to 65% in urban areas, with rates among IDPs even higher at 91%. Elevated levels of poverty are mirrored in low levels of access to key infrastructure at the household level. In 2016, 67% of the population was reported to have access to improved water sources, ranging from 64% in rural areas to 76% in urban. Access to sanitation facilities is seen to be more limited, with only 7% of those in the poorest wealth quintile and 12% of those living in rural areas having access to these facilities. Furthermore, 61% of the population practices open defecation, reaching 88% among the poorest wealth quintiles, which increases exposure to risks of communicable diseases.

Another dimension of the humanitarian context is food insecurity. Between October and November 2022, a total of 6.6 million people faced severe food insecurity driven by external pressures, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the crisis in Ukraine which have increased the cost of staple cereals, as well as internal violence which displaces populations from agricultural lands and limits consistent access to food sources. Additionally, flooding in recent years has decreased the total cereal production in the country, limiting the supply of food internally. High food insecurity has contributed to high levels of malnutrition, with an estimated 1.4 million children under the age of five expected to suffer from malnutrition between July 2022 and June 2023 (IPC, 2022b).

1.1.5   Macroeconomic context

South Sudan's economy benefits from having one of the largest reserves of petroleum in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, this increases the country's economic vulnerability, as it renders it heavily dependent on the international price of oil. The extremes of this vulnerability were seen in recent years with the drop in oil prices during the COVID-19 pandemic leading to a contraction of the country's economy, while the 2022 war in Ukraine and the associated increase in the price of oil is expected to have positive effects on economic recovery. The GDP in 2021 showed signs of a rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic with further growth in 2022 and 2023.

Total government expenditure reached over 700 billion SSP in 2021/22, a 50% increase from the previous year. Most of the expenditure (62%) was allocated to the use of goods and services, followed by 22% for salaries, and 11% for transfers and grants. In addition to regular expenditure, the GoSS also engages in mandatory expenditures related to oil extraction including transfers to oil-producing states and communities and transfers to the nationally owned oil company. As part of the Petroleum Revenue Management Act and the Transitional Financing Agreement signed with Sudan in 2012, South Sudan is committed to pay part of its oil revenues to the Government of Sudan. The sum of these mandatory transfers totalled more than 47% of gross oil-revenue in 2021/22. There is, however, hope as the mandatory lump-sum payment to Sudan expired in the 2021/22 fiscal year, opening a significant fiscal space (World Bank, 2022b) that could be channelled to other social services. In terms of intersectoral spending, public administration and infrastructure development dominate spending patterns, with the government spending less on social services such as education and health. Health represented less than 1% of expenditure in 2021/2022 and spending on the education sector has stagnated between 5-6% of total expenditure in the last three fiscal years.

1.2   Country Risk Context

South Sudan is frequently affected by conflict and disasters, a situation expected to worsen as extreme weather events are becoming the norm rather than the exception (OCHA, 2022a). According to the Global Climate Risk Index (Eckstein, 2021), South Sudan was one of the ten countries in the world most affected by the impacts of extreme weather events in 2019. If no action is taken, existing vulnerabilities could be exacerbated and the country's coping capacities weakened. Children and youth in South Sudan are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change; not only their education but also their health and protection are threatened by extreme weather events (UNICEF, 2021c).

1.2.1 Main climate change stressors in the country

South Sudan is expected to experience increased temperature, increased incidence of drought, increased unpredictability of seasonal rains, as well as increased intensity of rainfall events (USAID, 2016, 2019), and heavy flooding. Regarding the latter, in the last four years, South Sudan has experienced more frequent and intense flooding. Unity, Jonglei, and Upper Nile states are frequently and severely affected by this event. In 2021, 80% of the total number of people affected by floods in South Sudan lived in these states (OCHA, 2021). Flooding has compounded an already dire humanitarian situation in the country, waterlogging large areas of arable land, washing away crops, contaminating water sources, and forcing the migration of hundreds of thousands of people (UNICEF, 2021). Furthermore, floods have also led to food insecurity and conflict. According to the International Crisis Group, (2023, para. 20), 'rising waters have sent pastoralists fleeing south, where their presence has increased tensions and contributed to *violence in the Equatoria region*'. As for drought, weather conditions in recent years in Western and Central Equatoria states have been the driest on record since 1981, especially in the counties located on the border between these two states. This situation is likely to have a negative impact on crop production and, therefore, on food security (WFP, 2022a).

1.2.2 Impacts of conflict and disasters on education

Most schools in South Sudan are in areas prone to conflict-, drought- and floods. Weak infrastructure, coupled with a lack of disaster risk-reduction measures and contingency plans, often forces schools to close for days or even months, negatively impacting children's learning. In particular, the unprecedented floods of the last four years have severely damaged school infrastructure. In 2022, 893 schools were affected by floods (as of October 2022), 'a 20% increase of the number of schools affected by flooding in 2021, disrupting the education of some 381,495 children' (OCHA, 2022e, p. 21). In some cases, even if schools are not destroyed or damaged, children cannot go to their schools because they are occupied by people who have been forced to leave their homes (OCHA, 2022f). In 2021, 17 schools were used as temporary shelters (OCHA, 2022d).

Conflicts and disasters also have the potential to impact children's education indirectly, but measuring these effects is more complex and less developed. South Sudan's dependency on rain-fed agriculture, in addition to existing prominent levels of poverty and food insecurity coupled with a lack of effective climate change adaptation strategies and risk reduction measures makes the country vulnerable to climate-related environmental changes. As families' main source of income is significantly impacted, long-term investments such as those made in education may be cut first (PASEC, 2017). In the short term, this situation will push affected families to look for other sources of income, including migrating. Food insecurity has also led South Sudanese households to adopt other negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage, child labour, and recruitment into armed groups or gangs, thus affecting school enrolment and attendance (OCHA, 2022e).

1.2.3 South Sudan's capacity to mitigate the effects of disasters and conflicts on education.

Disaster risk management efforts in South Sudan have focused on disaster response and early recovery.

However, the emergency response has been minimal and insufficient compared to the needs (OCHA, 2022c). These needs are expected to increase if long-term responses that address the root causes of the education system's vulnerability to climate change are not implemented. In terms of data, much of the information available in South Sudan focuses on response and recovery and less on prevention preparedness, and mitigation, thus increasing the barriers to implementing effective crisis-sensitive educational planning.

Lack of inter-ministerial coordination is also increasing the barriers to implementing effective Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation strategies. There appears to be a lack of coordination between MoGEI and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF), as well as the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MoHADM). The former is the main agency responsible for addressing the challenges of climate change in the medium and long term. Although early warning systems are in place to identify a hazard three months in advance and regular meetings are also held to address the impacts of these identified hazards, MoGEI is not part of these discussions, among other things, because there is no focal person or unit within MoGEI responsible for DRR and climate change.

Regarding individual capacities, education has the power to encourage necessary changes in attitudes, practices, and behaviours at institutional, community, and individual levels. Additionally, education has the potential to develop values and enable actions to transition society towards a sustainable future. However, climate change education is only included in the primary school curriculum and there is a lack of training (in-service - pre-service training) and teaching materials on DRR and climate change issues.

1.3   Rationale for the GESP and Methodology in the preparation

The 2023-2027 General Education Sector Plan (GESP) presents a set of policy priorities and associated interventions responding to the issues and challenges identified in the Education Sector Analysis (ESA). These interventions will seek to consolidate the little gains the sector has made over the years and set the state for future transformation. The plan proposes interventions based on the country's development and risk context as well as the dire expansion needs of the sector to accommodate the millions of children who are out of school. Having reflected on the developmental challenges in South Sudan, the plan offers an opportunity for all stakeholders within government at the central and decentralized levels as well as outside government, especially development partners to have a pooled approach in implementing the identified priorities.

This plan has been developed through a consultative process as outlined in Figure 1 below, drawing participation from the MoGEI; State Ministries of Education (SMoE); as well as local and international development partners. The policy priorities, the objectives, the strategies, and interventions identified during the consultative process were found to be the most appropriate response to the issues and challenges established during analysis of the general education sector. The interventions underwent a series of reviews and validation with officials who will be responsible for implementation. The plan has also gotten support from various stakeholders within general education, including local and international development partners, some of whom were constantly represented in the national technical team.

Figure 1: Iterative Process of Education Sector Planning

Figure 1: Iterative Process of Education Sector Planning
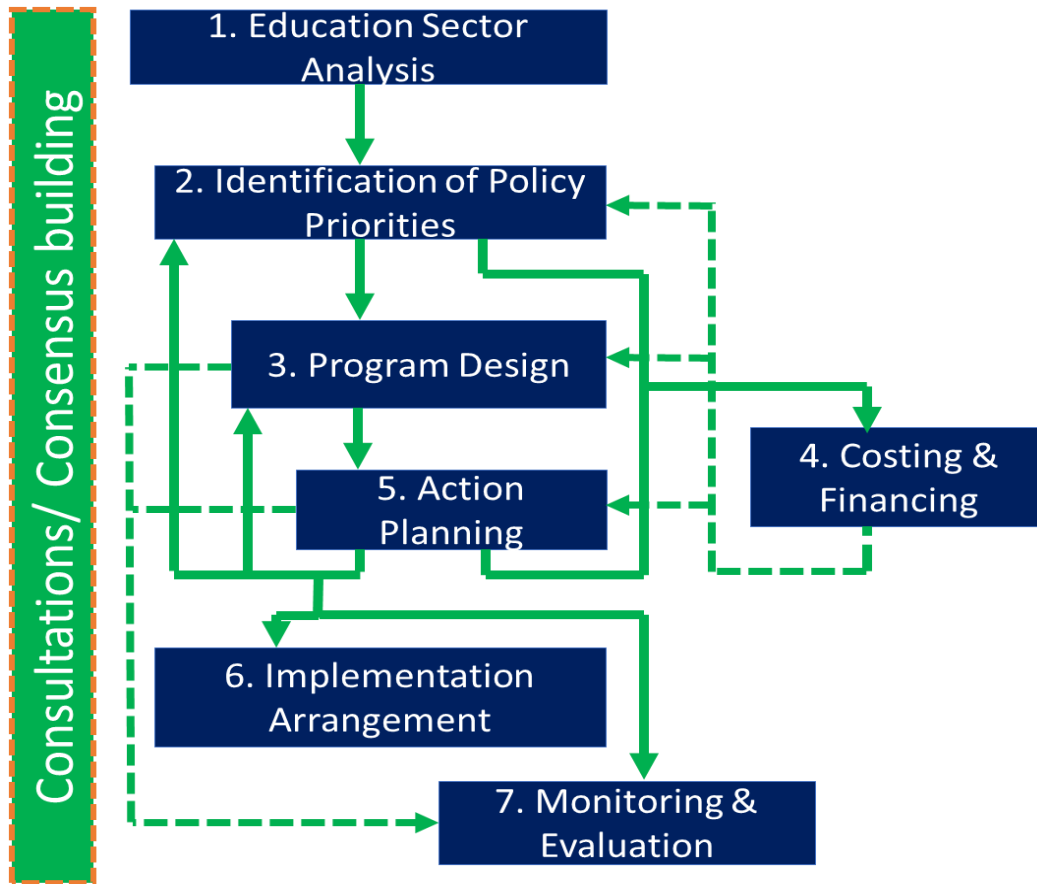
2. Context and Situation of the General Education Sector

2.1 Education policy framework

The education system in South Sudan is guided by a series of laws and policy documents that have been adopted since independence. Supreme of all laws and policies is the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011, which states that education is a right of every citizen and that it is compulsory and free of charge at the primary level. In addition, the Constitution provides that all levels of government shall promote education without discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, gender or disability and other individual characteristics (Republic of South Sudan, 2011)

The General Education Act 2012 (GEA) defines the guiding principles, goals for the education system, and provides the general framework for its efficient functioning. The Act incorporates twelve guiding principles, such as free and compulsory primary education to all citizens without discrimination, that education shall promote gender equity throughout its various levels and alternative ways of learning, and that education shall foster development through integration, peace, self-reliance, patriotism, respect for other cultures (National Legislative Assembly, 2012). On more cross-cutting issues, the National Inclusive Education Policy 2020 defines strategic elements for guaranteeing access to education and creating an enabling environment for *all* people.

The policy framework in the country is outlined in the national development strategies and policies. For instance, in the South Sudan Development Strategy 2021–2024, education is a key component of Cluster 3 on services (social development), whose goal is to 'increase support to the social sector for human capital development and protect the vulnerable population, to leave no one behind.' The 2021–24 national development strategy prioritizes the following key interventions regarding education (i) national capacity assessment and surveys, (ii) infrastructure and equipment, and (iii) teachers' education and training curricula.

2.2 Structure of the general education system

The general education system comprises formal and non-formal education. Each is further divided into various levels of education or programmes, addressing different target groups and educational challenges, with all levels sharing the common objective of fulfilling the commitment of access to education and instruction to the eligible population. The MoGEI and state ministries of education are responsible for delivering and managing the education system.

2.2.1 Formal education

The formal education system functions under a two-eight-four system: two years of pre-primary, eight years of primary, and four for secondary. Upon completion, students are expected to have knowledge and a series of skills that allow them to continue to higher education, and most importantly, access opportunities for their development.

The first step in the ladder is preschool or pre-primary education, whose objective is to provide instruction to develop children's school readiness for primary. According to the Constitution and the GEA, pre-primary education targets children aged three to five years for a total of two years. This notwithstanding, the Education Census (EC) has included three levels of learning implemented in past data collection processes that are, baby class, middle class, and top class. After completing pre-primary, children are expected to progress to primary education. However, finishing pre-school is not a requirement for enrolling in primary school.

Primary education constitutes the basic cycle of formal education and according to the GEA 2012, covers eight years from P1 to P8, targeting children aged 6 to 13. By the end of the primary cycle, students write the Primary 8 Leaving Examination, which allows them to earn a certificate necessary to enrol in secondary education level.

The last level of formal education within general education is secondary, which targets students aged 14 to 17 years old. Formal secondary education is delivered in two categories of institutions: academic schools and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) centres. After completing the four years of instruction (from S1 to S4), students sit the Unified South Sudan Secondary School Certificate examination, which allows them to proceed to post-secondary education.

Table 1 Summary of the components of the formal education system in South Sudan

Level of education	Target population	Years of instruction	Condition for completion
Pre-school (pre-primary, early childhood education, and others)	three to five aged population	Two	
Primary education	six to 13 aged population	Eight	Primary 8 Leaving Certificate examination
Secondary education	14 to 17 aged population	Four	Unified South Sudan Secondary School Certificate examination

Source: Author's elaboration from the General Education Act 2021 and the Constitution 2011.

2.2.2   Non-formal education

Non-formal education consists of the Alternative Education System (AES), which provides flexible education programmes to various population groups that cannot access the formal education system because of conflict, natural hazards, lack of formal schools, poverty, and other constraints. AES addresses diverse challenges of providing education to out-of-school children and youth, overaged children in primary schools and illiterate adults, as well as providing opportunities for pastoralist communities (MoEST, 2013). According to MoGEI, programmes offered through this system are free of tuition fees; learning materials are provided free of cost to learners; and learners are not required to wear uniform.

After the formalization of the AES in 2002, it has expanded the range of programmes it offers to provide multiple pathways towards creating a literate and educated society. According to the Directorate of the AES, there are five streams currently offered, targeting the school-age population, illiterate adults, pastoralist communities, and current teachers. The current programmes are:

a) **The Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP):** The ALP condenses eight years of formal primary education into four years and targets children and youth aged 12 to 18 years who either dropped out from lower primary classes or never accessed education as well as youth aged 18 to 30 who were part of the armed forces.

b) **The Community-Based Girls Schools (CGS):** Targets girls aged eight to 12 in villages without schools. Additionally, boys can access CGS centres, but their proportion should not be higher than 40% of the enrolment. It condenses the first four years of formal primary into three years.

c) **The Basic Adult Literacy Programme (BALP):** Targets the population aged 18 and above that lacks opportunities for literacy and numeracy because of conflict and socio-economic barriers. In four years, learners shall develop literacy skills and learn basic livelihood activities.

d) **The Pastoralist Education Programme (PEP):** Targets primary-age children in pastoralist communities and provides mobile primary education. In this programme, teachers travel with the community.

e) **Intensive English Course (IEC):** Addresses the needs of the population lacking proficiency in the English language. The target group includes youths and adults who have not had the opportunity to learn English and teachers and government officials who wish to learn or enhance their knowledge of the language. It comprises three short courses that aim to enhance English skills to open opportunities for beneficiaries of the programme to integrate into society.

2.2.3   Technical vocational education and training

Currently, TVET is delivered through four modes: formal, non-formal, informal, and the recently established Mobile TVET for pastoral communities. Formal TVET is school-based, and is managed by MoGEI, which oversees the functioning of six government-owned TVET secondary schools currently operational in the country. Non-formal TVET takes place outside the formal education system, has a shorter duration than formal TVET, and is not certified. Typically, it involves forms of skills development such as internships, short-term skills training by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), on-the-job training in enterprises, and other forms of work-based, hands-on learning with or without classroom-based components. Informal TVET involves on-the-job skills acquisition in formal sector employment or through traditional apprenticeship schemes in the informal sector of the economy. Informal TVET targets primary school dropouts or those who cannot afford secondary school fees. It lacks a curriculum, a certification system, and a mechanism to recognize prior learning experiences.

2.3   Key issues and challenges in general education

2.3.1   Access to and equity in education

In a context characterized by conflict, natural disasters, a high and growing school-age population and socio-economic vulnerability, the education system in South Sudan faces substantial challenges in providing access to education. These include closure of schools due to a history of conflict and ongoing natural hazards, a large out-of-school population and overall low levels of enrolment, particularly at the secondary level.

2.3.1.1   Enrolment and system capacity

From 2015 to 2021, the total number of schools increased at all levels of formal education, reaching 5,784 in 2021, 73% of which provide primary education, while 18% provide pre-primary and 9% secondary. The largest expansion was observed at the secondary level with an accumulated growth of 72% in this period, compared to the lowest in pre-primary which grew by 9% in the same period. In the non-formal system, the number of AES centres was seen to decrease by one-third from 1,156 in 2015 to 397 in 2021. Furthermore, there remains a considerable proportion of closed or non-operational schools across the country. According to the 2021 EC, an average of 12% of pre-primary, 19% of primary, 17% of secondary schools and 24% of AES centres closed. Conflict and disasters were the main reasons for the closure of over 30% of non-operational schools in 2021 and were associated with the other reasons identified, such as 'no learners' and 'no teachers.'

Public institutions are the dominant form of institutional ownership at all levels of formal education with the enrolments therein representing 63% of primary schools, 35% of secondary, and 28% of pre-primary. Community schools are the largest provider of non-public education in pre-primary and primary, representing 26% and 22% of all schools respectively, while private schools dominate in secondary, representing 26% of all schools. Public centres represented 58% of all alternative education centres, with the ALP dominating the alternative offer programme being taught in 85% of all centres in 2021. Despite the dominance of public provision, the relative weight of government schools is seen to have decreased across all levels between 2015 and 2021, with the great decreases seen at the secondary level wherein public schools represented 51% of all schools in 2015, compared to 35% in 2021.

Total enrolment in formal education reached over 2.2 million in 2021, of which 86% of students were in primary education, 7.7% in pre-primary, and 6.7% in secondary. When excluding Greater Upper Nile states and Administrative Areas (AA), secondary education had the largest gains in enrolment, with total enrolment doubling from 2015 to 2021. Increases in pre-primary and primary enrolment were also both significant, growing by 39% and 42% respectively over the same period.

Despite the growth in the number of schools and enrolment levels, enrolment rates demonstrate that expansion has not kept abreast of population growth. The Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) for all sub-sectors grew only slightly from 2015 to 2021, increasing from 10% to 12% in pre-primary, 57% to 59% in primary and 7% to 12% in secondary. Furthermore, when comparing these GERs to the other medium-intensity

conflict countries according to the World Bank's classification in 2021, South Sudan GERs is below average and depicts the second lowest GER for primary and secondary education. In non-formal education, decreases in the total number of AES schools saw enrolment decline, with total enrolment in 2021 40% lower than in 2015.

States most-affected by conflict and natural disasters, as measured in the Disaster-Fragility Index, have lower-levels of enrolment than lesser-affected states. For example, Jonglei and Unity states were observed to have the two lowest GERs in secondary education at 3%, while also possessing high disaster-fragility indexes. Furthermore, states with the lowest GERs are also observed to be those with the largest proportion of closed schools namely, Unity, Jonglei, and Greater Upper Nile. Disparities in educational access in terms of gender are also observed, with the difference most acute in secondary where the GER was observed at 13% for males and 10% for females, representing a difference of 10% and a GPI of 0.82. Gender disparities are also present in the AES system, although to a lesser extent than in the formal system.

2.3.1.2 *Retention and dropout*

Universal access to primary education remains a challenge for South Sudan with access to P1 observed at 85% in 2021. In addition, primary retention is low with access dropping to 59% in P4 and 19% in P8. The overall primary retention rate stood at 22% in 2021, meaning that less than a quarter of the learners who start primary education finish the cycle. The transition from primary to secondary was observed at 85% and secondary completion at 54%. This suggests that the greatest concern in terms of retention and dropout is at the primary level, with the highest levels of attrition observed intra-cycle rather than inter-cycle. Gender inequities are further observed in retention and dropout patterns, with the primary intake rate for girls 12 percentage points less than boys. This trend continues until P5 where female access rates surpass males, thereby shifting the trend. It is possible this change is related to the implementation of cash-transfers to girls under the Girl's Education South Sudan (GESS) project, which begin in P5.

When comparing the trends for the years 2015 to 2021, access to P1 has decreased by 11 percentage points since 2015, depicting a deterioration in access to the first year of primary. However, the 2021 profile depicts better retention of students between grades, with completion rates in both primary and secondary improving. This suggests that more students are accessing the first years of primary, with access to P6 seen to increase from 31% in 2015 to 50% in 2021, despite the decrease in the initial access rate to P1. This suggests that while retention in the first years of primary has been improved, work remains to be done in ensuring that all students have access to primary education, and that they are able to complete this cycle.

Repetition is relatively low in the country with an average share of repeaters 3% and 1% in primary and secondary respectively, with repetition observed to be higher for females in both levels. Repetition is seen to decrease throughout the primary cycle, beginning at 4% in P1 and decreasing to 2% in P8. The reverse trend is observed in secondary where the share of repeaters is seen to rise slightly within the cycle.

The inability to pay fees was most cited as the main reason for dropping out of school, representing 47%, 31%, and 38% of dropouts in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, respectively. This is despite the governmental commitment to the provision of fee-free education and evidences the continued practice of fee-charging in school, whether for direct costs such as tuition or in-direct costs such as transportation or uniforms. Long distance to schools was the second most reported reason, cited by 13% of the dropout cases in pre-primary and 16% in primary and 5% in secondary. Early marriage or pregnancy was cited by 13% and 11% of girls in secondary, respectively. When considering reasons for female drop out, 40% of girls who dropped out in secondary cited the reason either being early pregnancy or marriage.

The average number of years of education that a child in South Sudan is expected to receive is 4.9, compared to the ideal 12 years of schooling from primary to secondary that a child should receive, with observable differences between gender and state. As observed in enrolment, the states with the lowest school-life expectancy have the highest exposure and vulnerability to hazards and socio-economic disadvantage and the lowest system capacity. In terms of gender, males are expected to receive 5.0 years of education compared to 4.6 for females. However, these differences are relatively more profound in Jonglei and Lakes states with the school life expectancy for girls in Jonglei sitting at 2.2 years.

2.3.1.3   *Out-of-school children*

There are approximately 1.3 million children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school representing 94% of all children from three to five years old. Additionally, over 2 million of children aged 6-13 are Out-of-School (OOS), when combined with over half a million Out-of-School Children (OOSC) aged 14-17, raise a total of 2.55 million OOSC, representing 59% of the population from 6 to 17 years. About 53% of the OOSC are in Jonglei, Eastern Equatoria and Upper Nile. Furthermore, the largest exclusions in primary are in Eastern Equatoria, Unity, and Jonglei, where 83%, 82%, and 81% of 6- to 13-year-old children are out of school, respectively. Finally, the 2020 Report on National OOSC Catchment Mapping in South Sudan reported that orphaned children constitute the largest number of OOSC, followed by girls facing child and early marriages. Children in pastoralist communities in South Sudan also face challenges in accessing educational opportunities with MoGEI estimates putting the OOS population amongst pastoralist communities at 56% in 2020.

2.3.2   Quality of education and management of resources

A child born in South Sudan today is only 31% as productive in adulthood, according to the Human Capital Index, whose three base indicators are drawn from education. Out of a possible twelve years of education, the average schooling years in the country is under five years, which is reduced to less than three years when considering the amount of learning taking place during this period. Factors affecting learning, including the level of preparedness of learners: availability and appropriateness of school inputs; the qualification and motivation of teachers; and the organization of school resources, are all weak, hence the low human capital index.

2.3.2.1 Availability of curriculum for formal and non-formal education

The quality of education in South Sudan is guided by the General Education Law, periodic education sector plans, the competence-based curriculum framework, and a host of operational tools, all of which aim at the restoration of peace in the country through education. The government remains committed to ensuring that the fulfilment of the fundamental right to education for the people of South Sudan remains supreme. The curriculum framework also responds to the independence vision of influencing socio-economic development in the country and puts the identity of the citizens at its core, with the hope that the curriculum can foster 'Peace and prosperity, growth and development, harmony and justice through an education firmly rooted in the rich culture and heritage, which can develop the children and youth into true citizens of the world'.

2.3.2.2 Capacity and qualification of teachers

Despite the positive intentions to drive quality education in the country, the first challenge is the limited capacity of the sector to train teachers. The capacity of Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) remains inadequate to address the need for teachers in general education, with only three operational public TTIs, and most of the states and administrative areas not having any. The operational TTIs enrolled around 1,160 teachers and teacher trainees, the majority of whom were enrolled on in-service programmes – good for refresher training, but not adequate for the teacher shortage rife in the country. Moreover, teacher trainees go through a host of challenges before they can qualify for teaching, and these include the limited government input in financing teacher training, a widespread dropout from pre-service training observed due to insecurity, and long distances to TTIs.

There is an acute shortage of qualified teachers in general education, which is considered to affect the quality of instruction in classrooms. Against national teaching practice entry requirements, more than 80% of teachers in pre-primary, 70% in primary, less than half of teachers in secondary, and nearly 75% in alternative education meet the requirements. Moreover, only 11% of teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE), 8% in primary, and 10% in the AES have short-cycle tertiary education training. Apart from a lack of qualified teachers, the general education system suffers an acute shortage of teachers, which is evident from the high PTR, averaging 90:1 in ECE, 93:1 in primary, 25:1 in secondary and 69:1 in AES. The system has had to turn to volunteer teachers to address this challenge, and up to one-third of teachers in general education are volunteers. There is also a shortage of inspectors, which means that the largely unqualified teachers can hardly get external support to improve their teaching.

2.3.2.3 Resources supporting learning.

Apart from teachers, learning materials are in short supply, which compounds the learning challenges in general education while learning in general education takes place in crowded classrooms. According to the 2021 Annual Schools Census (ASC), the pupil-textbook ratio in primary is 8:1 in English and Mathematics, and 9:1 in Science and Social Studies, which are both significantly above the 1:1 standard recommended by the policy. In secondary, there are better Student-Textbook Ratios (STR) compared to primary schools. There are 80 learners per teacher in public pre-primary schools; 126 in public primary; 45

in public secondary; and 55 in public AES, which makes classrooms difficult to manage and compromises instruction. In addition, one-third of schools do not have access to water, and only a handful of schools have access to a source of energy (electricity).

2.3.3 Education financing and governance

Governmental commitments to financing education in South Sudan have grown in recent years. However, with the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of education falling on the decentralized structures, the trickle-down of this funding to the school level remains a challenge.

2.3.3.1 Public spending on education

Government allocations to education have grown in recent years, reaching 17% of total government expenditure in 2021/22. However, low levels of budget execution are also observed with less than half the allocated education budgeted expended in the past four fiscal years. As a result, education expenditure as a proportion of total government expenditure stood at 5% in 2021/22 or less than 1% of GDP, with both figures well below internationally recommended standards of 15-20% and 2-4% respectively. When compared with countries similarly affected by conflict, South Sudan further has second lowest levels of education expenditure both in terms of GDP and total government expenditure. Furthermore, of the limited expenditures reaching the education sector, more than half (62%) was expended in the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, with general education (composed of MoGEI and the National Examination Council (NEC)) only receiving 38%.

Total expenditure by MoGEI has maintained a steady upwards trend over the past seven fiscal years in current prices. However, despite this positive trend, elevated levels of inflation have led to an overall decrease in education expenditure as reflected in constant prices. Education expenditure has been unable to catch up with inflation, particularly the extremely important levels observed from 2015 to 2017. Decreases in the actual value of funding allocated to education are particularly concerning given the high proportion of out-of-school children observed in the country and the consistent demographic pressures.

Almost all expenditure by MoGEI in recent years has been dedicated to recurrent spending, with development expenditure representing 7% of total expenditure in 2021/22. Within recurrent expenditure, wages and salaries dominate spending patterns, representing 75% of total expenditure in 2021/22, compared to 9% allocated to grants and transfers, including capitation grants and operational transfers, and 9% allocated to goods and services. Basic and secondary education has remained the dominant Directorate of MoGEI expenditure since 2015, with this directorate receiving 96% of all MoGEI spending in 2021/22.

Civil servants in South Sudan, including education staff such as teachers and administrators, are severely underpaid according to the current salary scale. While efforts have been made to increase salaries, particularly in the last three years, they have been unable to match up with soaring inflation meaning that salaries have decreased in current prices. For example, an average secondary teacher salary decreased from 5.4 times GDP/capita in 2011, to 0.5 times in 2021. Besides expenditure on salaries, the majority

(58%) of MoGEI recurrent expenditure was allocated to operating transfers, followed by 28% on feeding allowances covering MoGEI's school feeding activities. As there were no capitation grants or teachers' incentives paid in 2021/22, all transfers were either for salaries or operations. Within these two categories, 89% of expenditure was allocated to salary transfers, while 11% was allocated to operations.

Primary education received the bulk of funding in 2021/22, representing 84% of recurrent expenditure, with this reflecting a similar proportion to that observed in 2013/14. TTIs and TVET received the smallest proportion of expenditure, both receiving less than 1% in 2021/22. Estimations indicate that pre-primary education has the lowest unit expenditure amongst sub-sectors at less than 6 thousand South Sudanese Pounds (SSP) per student. Conversely, TTIs and TVET have the highest, with costs six and seven times higher than those in primary, respectively. Comparing per student expenditure from the 2013/14 ESA to 2021/22 in 2021 constant prices shows that spending has decreased across most levels, with only pre-primary increasing significantly. This parallels the overall decrease in financing in constant prices observed at a global level. In comparison to other sub-Saharan African countries, including those similarly affected by conflict, South Sudan exhibits the lowest levels of per student expenditure as a proportion of GDP per capita at 3%.

2.3.3.2 *Decentralized education expenditure*

The financing system in education in South Sudan functions under a decentralized system by which funds are transferred to states and administrative areas to be used for the implementation of educational activities, including the payment of teachers' salaries. Before January 2022, transfers in education were sent from the national Ministry of Finance to MoGEI, who then transferred the funds to the State Ministries of Finance (SMoF) who then sent this on to the SMoEs. However, this cascading system proved ineffective and inefficient, with the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) finding that SMoEs frequently reported receiving less funds than what was due to them in transfers from the SMoFs (GoSS, 2022). For example, according to MoGEI financial documents, while operating transfers were paid to all states and administrative areas in 2020/21, only five confirmed receiving these transfers from their relevant SMoF in the same fiscal year, and none reported receiving the amount allocated by MoGEI in full (GoSS, 2022). To address this issue was revised in 2021, ensuring direct transfers from MoGEI to SMoEs, thereby bypassing SMoFs.

Following this policy change, SMoEs became the direct recipient of funds from MoGEI, who are then responsible for the distribution of the allocated amounts to the county level. However, accountability for these transfers is hampered by the weak capacity of financial systems in South Sudan, particularly in terms of access to banks. For example, the PETS 2021 found that only 20% of county education departments have bank accounts. As a result, transfers usually happen in person, with representatives from the states or cash transfer agents travelling to the counties to distribute salaries and funds for operational costs. A similar process is observed at the county level, with Payam education officers travelling to county offices to collect salaries before finally delivering them to schools in person. When cash-transfer agents are paid, their fee is often deducted from the payment being transferred meaning that staff, including teachers, receive less than what they are due. Furthermore, given the fact that internal movements are often constrained in South Sudan whether because of natural disaster and conflict renders the current system of physical payment unreliable.

In 2021/22, 82% of MoGEI expenditure was executed at the decentralized levels in the form of transfers. Of this, 75% was allocated to the county level, while 6% was allocated to the state level. Within allocations to states and counties, the largest share is concentrated in salary expenditure, representing 90% at the county level and 99% at the state level in 2021/22. Little is expended to support the functioning of schools and decentralized offices, with only 2% of expenditure in 2021/22 earmarked to cover operational costs at SMoEs and no government allocations made for the operational costs at the school level.

Transfers to states and counties are allocated according to the number of counties and the number of schools, rather than the number of learners or according to areas of greatest need. As a result, the total amount received per student fluctuated across states and administrative areas, ranging from a low of 3,143 SSP per student in Greater Pibor to a high of 13,861 in Central Equatoria in 2021/22. Execution was also a challenge at the state and county level, with an average execution rate of 86–87% for county transfers and 84% for state transfers observed in 2021/22.

2.3.3.3   *Private and Household Expenditure*

The PETS report gathered data regarding costs associated with educational attendance in public institutions from head teachers. The results demonstrate that despite the commitment to fee-free primary education as outlined in the constitution, there are still many direct and indirect payments that are expected from parents of children at this level. At the primary level, basic school supplies were the costliest element at United States Dollars (USD) 76 per student per year, while school fees averaged at USD 52 and exam fees at USD 16. Average school fees are more than 2.5 times higher at the secondary level at USD 140. Considering this in the context of the 2021 GDP/capita of USD 738, total costs for primary education access represent a fifth of GDP per capita, while secondary costs represented 36%. Given that the average family size in South Sudan is between five and six children, this highlights the impossible decisions families must make in choosing which of their children, if any, they are financially capable to enrol in school.

Alongside households, development partners contribute to education through the provision of off-budget financing. While attempts were made to gather this information from relevant partners in South Sudan, the GESS programme, which is the largest intervention in the country in terms of financing and scope, provides an idea as to the volume of financing being channel into education. For example, over 400,000 girls were supported with cash transfers in 2021, for a total value of over 2.5 billion SSP. This represents almost 20% of total MoGEI expenditure in 2021/22 at 13 billion SSP, evidencing the substantial levels of support that development partners provide outside of the government system in supporting the functioning of the education system in South Sudan.

2.3.4   Technical vocational education and training and linkages with the labour market

In South Sudan, TVET and skills development have been gaining ground as a national priority in the complex state-building process that ensued post-2011. Domestic political will, coupled with heightened international donor assistance, has led to support interventions aimed at improving the governance and functioning of the TVET system.

2.3.4.1 Key challenges for the TVET system

System fragmentation is one of the key system challenges. Over 30-line ministries offer skills development and TVET-related opportunities in their domains of focus. That, coupled with the lack of an overarching regulatory and legislative framework and the absence of a dedicated governing body, has led to a disjointed TVET offer across states in South Sudan. In practice, each ministry offering vocational training does so according to its own training policies and pedagogical standards. At the central level, fragmentation also manifests itself in terms of national TVET policies. There are currently three parallel TVET policies in place that set out different processes for key functions such as curriculum development and assessment. The absence of an entity steering and managing the TVET system makes it difficult to perform these and other key system functions to transition towards a demand-led model.

The uncontrolled proliferation of testing and certification standards even within the same trade weakens the status and the portability of diplomas issued by the formal TVET system. In addition to outdated pedagogy and disjointed certification systems, TVET is unable to connect with the world of work through work-based learning schemes and other employment-enabling activities such as orientation and placement services at the school level. Apprenticeships happen mainly on an informal basis, without any connection to the formal education and training system. These elements may have a negative impact on the quality and relevance of TVET training, making TVET less appealing for job seekers, and consequently fuelling a generally poor public perception of TVET.

TVET System financing is another burning issue exacerbated by current fragmentation. Effective TVET systems rest on diverse sources of funding, including most notably the private sector. In South Sudan, TVET is delivered with scarce funding from the government to formal TVET through state transfers and NGO and donor funding in the context of specific projects. Other documented challenges in South Sudan include insufficient TVET trainer remuneration, poor systems of pre-service and in-service training, poor infrastructure endowment of TVET centres, and insufficient focus of TVET's offer on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) disciplines. Turning these challenges into opportunities for system improvement requires not only strong domestic leadership but external intervention through donor support programmes. These can help governments to better define and articulate their strategic priorities and provide funding and technical assistance in key areas such as infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum development, and so forth.

2.3.4.2 TVET system functioning and performance.

In terms of MoGEI-related provision, for formal and non-formal TVET, a total of 21 operational schools is reported in 2021 in the EC report, six of which are governmental (formal) and the majority (15) non-governmental, representing the non-formal provision. The African Development Bank (AFDB) mapping, with a much broader scope given its focus on TVET provision from all line ministries, has found a total of 219 TVET centres, 49 (22%) of which are government-owned (formal) and 170 (78%) belonging to non-formal provision. However, only 62 centres (28%) out of the 219 were operational. The 2022 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report notes that there are 88 TVET

institutions in the country, of which 48 are public, seven private, and 33 non-formal and run by NGOs or faith-based organizations. Out of this set of 88 TVET institutions, the majority (60) are operational, with a little over a third (28) being non-operational at present.

Overall student enrolment is on a constant decline, having decreased by 66% between 2016 and 2021. This declining trend is difficult to explain when measured against the mild decrease in the overall number of schools (a three-unit decrease from 2016 to 2021). Since TVET is traditionally one of the education cycles with the widest gender gaps in terms of access, it is unsurprising to note that in 2021 across formal and non-formal TVET in MoGEI centres, only 26% of the student population were girls. In addition, education census data illustrate marked patterns of gender disparities in areas and trades that are considered typically masculine or feminine. Another important equity dimension to gauge whether a skills training system provides equal opportunities to all learners is that of disability. Existing data indicate that there are 28 learners with disabilities across formal and non-formal TVET (slightly more than 1% of the TVET student population). This strikingly small number could potentially be explained by under-reporting of disability by surveyed education staff due to social stigma, major flaws in the identification of students with disability, or an actual pattern of systematic exclusion of students with any form of disability from TVET.

Adequately trained and well-paid instructors are the backbone of a well-functioning TVET system. Yet, data on the number of teachers, their level of training, and their working conditions are scarce in the country. Pre-service and in-service training systems are under or undeveloped. No TTIS for TVET are active in South Sudan. The absence of a dedicated training college means that in practice, TVET instructors do not receive dedicated pedagogical training, which makes them ill-equipped to transfer their knowledge and skills to trainees. Sound facilities with adequate infrastructure and equipment for skills training are essential to the effective delivery of TVET. This is yet another area where data are scarce, with the little evidence available pointing to major deficiencies in infrastructure and to a strong need for future investments in essential infrastructure and facilities.

Overall, the South Sudanese TVET system is at an embryonic stage of development due to the impact of conflict and pre-existing challenges. While the Unified National TVET Policy may strengthen overall system governance and overcome fragmentation, improvements on the normative front will need to be matched by the provision of adequate resources through targeted investments. Planning to allocate more resources to the system appears to be a key priority to make TVET a vehicle for greater youth employment and improved livelihoods across the country at a key juncture.

2.3.4.3   *External effectiveness of TVET*

Broadly, conflict and instability highly have affected South Sudan's economy and labour market over the last decade. The combined impact of war, natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted labour markets, increasing vulnerability and hardship among South Sudanese. Youth and women are the two main disadvantaged groups in terms of labour market integration. The South Sudanese labour market is highly informal, which is not a surprising phenomenon given the current state of the economy. While

the founding objective of the skills development system is to respond to labour demand, decision-makers should embrace the fact that under the current economic situation, demand for skilled labour is limited.

Population projections put the figure of labour market entrants in the next few years at 80,000 on an annual basis, which bears major implications for planning for TVET system expansion. In addition, the potential return of displaced South Sudanese – a total pool of refugees estimated at 2.3 million – currently in neighbouring countries could create extra demand for skills training.

The scarcity of evidence on the ability of the TVET system to provide job-relevant skills calls for stronger efforts in raising the information base in this domain to inform future policies. Yet, available evidence seems to highlight that the South Sudanese skills development system is largely supply-driven rather than based on the skills needs of the private sector. TVET centres do not provide job counselling and orientation services to students. That, coupled with the lack of dialogue and partnership with private sector actors, undermines the very objectives of skills training at the central and state level. A change of paradigm in the governance, management, and delivery of TVET to steer training towards emerging skills needs is imperative to strengthen its external effectiveness.

The National Unified TVET Policy can give a strong impetus to system renewal and lead the way for the much-needed expansion of the provision of formal, non-formal, and informal skills training opportunities to meet growing demand. However, to sustain this momentum, large-scale investments from the government and external partners are essential. Failure to earmark substantial amounts of public resources and to use available donor project funds for these purposes will jeopardize recent efforts to revamp the South Sudanese TVET system and, ultimately, undermine youth employability in the medium and long run.

3. Policy issues, goals, objectives, and strategies

This section outlines a set of policy issues derived from the analysis of the education sector, which have been prioritized for targeted interventions. Accompanying these issues are policy objectives and specific goals, complemented by strategies designed to facilitate their attainment. The identified policy issues encompass (a) Widespread and persistent issues surrounding inadequate access to education across all levels of general education, including TVET, and the presence of significant disparities in access and opportunities. (b) Noteworthy challenge pertaining to the retention of students within the general education system, indicating a need for interventions to enhance learner engagement and commitment. (c) Inadequacy of qualified teaching workforce, emphasizing the importance of strengthening the quality and qualifications of educators. (d) The incomplete development and implementation of curricula, necessitating a review and enhancement of curriculum frameworks. (e) The presence of unfavourable conditions within the teaching and learning environment, affecting the experiences of both learners and educators. (f) Concerns related to the external efficiency of TVET in relation to labour market demands, highlighting the need for alignment between vocational training and employment opportunities. (g) The existence of disparities in domestic financing for education, coupled with issues of inequity, emphasizing the importance of fair and adequate funding mechanisms. (h) Ineffectiveness in planning and coordination practices within the education sector, necessitating more streamlined and strategic approaches. (i) A frail system of governance in the realm of TVET, signalling a requirement for reforms and strengthened governance structures. To address these multifaceted issues, the strategic targets and associated strategies have been clustered within three thematic areas: (i) **Access and Equity in Education**: Strategies focusing on expanding access to education while addressing disparities in opportunities. (ii) **Quality of Education and Resource Management**: Initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of education and the efficient management of educational resources. (iii) **Governance and Financing of Education**: Efforts to bolster governance structures and financial mechanisms within the education sector. These strategies are elaborated in the subsequent sections, with a view to address the identified policy concerns and work toward the overarching goals of improving the education system.

3.1 Access to and equity in education

Insufficient access to education is a pressing issue, as revealed by the 2022 ESA and other pertinent reports. These sources indicate that approximately 60% of the school-aged population remains without access to education. This problem is further exacerbated by the dual threats of natural disasters and conflicts, which disproportionately affect the most vulnerable regions, consequently resulting in the lowest enrolment rates across all education levels. Furthermore, the 2022 ESA highlights disparities in enrolment among disadvantaged groups, with female students facing barriers to accessing early primary education. Moreover, the representation of children with disabilities within the education system is notably low. Additionally, children in pastoralist communities, orphans, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and returnees encounter significant obstacles in accessing the education system. Considering these challenges, the GESP is committed to expanding educational access, encompassing pre-primary, primary, secondary, and alternative education. The GESP aims to ensure equitable and crisis-resilient access by

augmenting the availability of educational institutions, fostering community appreciation for education, and providing essential support to marginalized groups. This strategic approach reflects a commitment to addressing the multifaceted barriers to education access and fostering a more inclusive and resilient education system.

Table 2 Policy Issue: Low and inequitable access to education

Policy Issue: Low and inequitable access to education at all levels of general education, including TVET	
Policy Goal 1: Increase access to equitable and safe education at all levels of general education, including TVET	
Policy Objective	**Strategies**
Increase the pre-primary gross enrolment ratio to 17% by 2027. Increase the gross enrolment rate in primary from 60% to 64%. Increase the secondary gross intake ratio to 30% by 2027. Increase enrolment in AES from 683 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2021 to 2,000 in 2027. Increase number of TVET students from 207 per 100,000 inhabitants to 548 by 2027 Increase enrolment of children with disabilities to 2.4% of all students by 2026 Increase Gender Parity Index in general education (to 1 in pre-primary, primary, and secondary, and 0.7 in TVET) by 2027 Local stakeholders have improved knowledge on the value of equitable and resilient education	1.1. Improve the enrolment capacity of pre-primary education across the country. 1.2. Increase the supply of primary schools. 1.3. Enhance the enrolment capacity of government secondary schools. 1.4. Expand the offer of the Alternative Education System 1.5. Expand access to TVET especially in underserved areas. 1.6. Improve access to equitable education. 1.7. Expand mobilization activities at the community level to provide access to education for all school-aged children. 1.8. Increase awareness of the importance of education, especially among families with children with disabilities 1.9. Intensify publicity and community engagement to improve the image of TVET

School-aged children encounter persistent obstacles when accessing and staying in school. The ESA, 2022 underscored significant challenges concerning educational retention and dropout rates, notably evident within the primary cycle, where only a 22% completion rate was observed. These retention patterns further highlight disparities based on gender and geographical location. To address these concerns, the strategies set forth aim to alleviate barriers associated with dropout rates, including those stemming from disaster-related risks and financial constraints. Simultaneously, the strategies prioritize targeted support

for disadvantaged groups, such as girls and learners with disabilities, to facilitate their continued participation in the educational system.

Table 3 Policy Issue: Low retention of learners in general education

Policy Issue: Low retention of learners in general education	
Policy Goal 2: Increase retention of learners in primary and secondary cycles	
Policy Objective	Strategies
Increase retention rate (22% to 42% and 54% to 57% in primary and secondary respectively) by 2027.	1.1. Ensure that prioritized government primary schools have full cycles. 1.2. Strengthen the resilience of the system for continuous learning during crises. 1.3. Reduce indirect costs of education.

3.2 Quality of education and management of resources

The quality of education in South Sudan has faced scrutiny, particularly due to the low learning outcomes and limited effectiveness in facilitating successful transitions to the labour market. Contributing to these issues are several key factors, including an insufficient quantity of educators within the system, along with concerns regarding the qualifications of those currently teaching. Moreover, the lack of motivation among teachers has a detrimental impact on their overall service delivery further exacerbating the problem. Addressing the challenge of low learning outcomes necessitates a holistic approach that begins with enhancing the welfare and working conditions of educators. The strategies outlined below are instrumental in initiating this vital transformation.

Table 4 Policy Issue: Inadequate qualified teaching workforce

Policy issue: Inadequate qualified teaching workforce	
Policy Goal 3: Improve the quality and retention of the teaching workforce	
Objectives	Strategies
Increase teacher retention by 90% of the current qualified teaching workforce by 2027. Increase the rate of qualified teachers to 100% at all levels of education by 2027.	3.1. Enhance the framework and environment for the management of teachers. 3.2. Motivate the teaching workforce, focusing on teacher wellbeing, gender equity, and risk-affected areas. 3.3. Expand the in-service and preservice teacher training program, including on DRR and climate change issues. 3.4. Recruit additional teachers, giving special consideration to qualified volunteers

The education sector has recently introduced curriculum frameworks for both formal and non-formal general education. However, the effective implementation of these frameworks has encountered obstacles due to the absence of essential curriculum support materials. Additionally, considering the

nation's susceptibility to various shocks, the integration of contemporary subjects such as climate change into curricula and accompanying support materials is regarded as imperative. To facilitate the comprehensive adoption of the curriculum, the proposed plan seeks to establish essential curriculum implementation support structures and develop the requisite materials, addressing these critical needs for a more effective education system.

Table 5 Policy Issue: Incomplete curriculum development and implementation

Policy issue: Incomplete curriculum development and implementation	
Policy goal 4: Enhance curriculum development and implementation, including strengthening the assessment system	
Objectives	**Strategies**
Curriculum is fully developed and implemented by 2027.	4.1. Complete the development of curriculum materials such as missing subjects and inclusive education material. 4.2. Ensure provision of appropriate teaching and learning resources 4.3. Upgrade and strengthen the four National Centres (NCDC, TDMS, NFLC, NEC) to support curriculum development and improvement

The efficacy of a curriculum is evident through comprehensive feedback mechanisms that allow stakeholders to assess its effectiveness in fulfilling its intended objectives. An essential component of this evaluation process is assessment, which plays a pivotal role in determining whether a curriculum is meeting its intended objectives. Notably, despite the curriculum's shift towards a competency-based approach, the assessment framework still predominantly adheres to an objective-oriented paradigm, resulting in a notable misalignment between the curriculum itself and its assessment methods. Consequently, the proposed plan seeks to rectify this discontinuity by implementing a series of strategic measures aimed at enhancing the synchronization between curriculum delivery and assessment processes.

Table 6 Policy Issue: Misaligned and fragmented assessment system

Policy issue: Misaligned and fragmented assessment system	
Policy goal 5: Streamline and strengthen the assessment system	
Objectives	**Strategies**
Establish a comprehensive curriculum support and assessment system by 2027	5.1. Set up a comprehensive institutional inspection system. 5.2. Expand the national examination and assessment systems

In addition to addressing teacher and curriculum-related issues, the ESA has underscored a critical concern pertaining to the inadequate learning environment prevalent in most schools. This issue is primarily attributable to the absence or damage of essential school infrastructure, including Water, Sanitation, and

Hygiene (WASH) facilities. These challenges have arisen due to a protracted period of conflict within the country, recurring natural disasters such as floods, and longstanding neglect in addressing infrastructural requirements. Moreover, there is a growing recognition of the imperative to prioritize the mental health and overall well-being of both students and staff within the educational context. As such, efforts to address these multifaceted challenges are integral to fostering a conducive and supportive learning environment.

Table 7 Policy Issue: Unconducive teaching and learning environment for learners, teachers, and school staff

Policy issue: Unconducive teaching and learning environment for learners, teachers, and school staff	
Policy goal 6: Improve teaching and learning environment as well as the physical and psychological wellbeing of learners, teachers, and school staff	
Objectives	**Strategies**
Increase the number of schools meeting the basic requirements and minimum standards indicators by 50% in 2027. Increase the number of schools that systematically provide emotional and mental well-being support for students, teachers, and school staff	6.1. Promote policies that make the school environment conducive for learning. 6.2. Provide support for minimum school requirements. 6.3. Collaborate with key partners to systematically provide emotional and mental well-being support for all students, teachers, and school staff in crisis-affected areas

Quality issues observed in basic and secondary education extend to the TVET sector, with inadequate numbers of qualified instructors and insufficient facilities for instructor training. The ESA 2022 also highlighted the absence of a unified curriculum, with only the level one competency-based curriculum, out of an envisioned eight, currently in development. Furthermore, the sector faces a deficit in crucial data, notably on labour market demands, which is essential for aligning TVET programs effectively. These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive reforms in TVET to enhance its quality and relevance in meeting labour market requirements.

Table 8 Policy Issue: Low external efficiency of TVET in relation to the labour market

Policy Issue: Low external efficiency of TVET in relation to the labour market	
Policy Goal 7: Improved labour market relevance of TVET	
Policy Objective	**Strategy**
Increase employment rate for TVET graduates to 70% by 2027	7.1. Increase the capacity of TVET trainers. 7.2. Promote the development and roll-out of CBT curricula in key employment-generating trades in cooperation with the private sector. 7.3. Improve TVET linkages with the labour market

3.3 Education financing and governance

The ESA has brought to light a significant issue: inadequate public financing in the education sector, notably in general education. In the fiscal year 2021/22, a mere 5% of the total expenditure was allocated

to education, and only 2% when exclusively considering general education. This inadequacy stems from consistently low budget execution rates, with education budget execution failing to surpass 50% in recent years. Addressing this challenge is paramount for expanding the education system's capacity to accommodate a substantial number of out-of-school children while upholding educational quality. Achieving this necessitates several actions, including advocating for a larger share of the total budget allocation, both for education overall and specifically for general education, enhancing communication with key stakeholders responsible for fund disbursement, and bolstering financial transparency practices. These measures are essential to ensure the availability of adequate resources for educational development and improvement.

Table 9 Policy Issue: Low and inequitable domestic financing to education

Policy Issue: Low and inequitable domestic financing to education	
Policy Goal 8: Increased domestic public financing to education	
Policy Objective	Strategy
Increase the proportion of government recurrent expenditure allocated to education to 20% by 2026. Increase execution of general education budget to 100% by 2027	8.1. Strengthen cooperation between education and legislative structures of the Government. 8.2. Review the funding structures for general education. 8.3. Strengthen cooperation and coordination between MOGEI, MoF and Public Service 8.4. Strengthen financial accountability structures and public fiscal management systems

The decentralized nature of educational administration in South Sudan emphasizes the need for effective coordination and robust communication. Unfortunately, the ESA 2022 underscored a significant disconnection between central and decentralized levels, leading to uneven policy application across the nation. Moreover, the planning process, including crucial financial planning, hinges on the availability of high-quality data. The ESA 2022 also highlighted issues concerning data quality, notably within the annual school census, alongside a dearth of comprehensive monitoring data. To foster collaborative efforts within the sector, operating under a unified mandate, the GESP is committed to bolstering both capacities and structures. This enhancement aims to facilitate improved communication, planning, coordination, and monitoring, thereby addressing the systemic challenges identified by the ESA.

Table 10 Policy Issue: Ineffective planning and coordination practices

Policy Issue: Ineffective planning and coordination practices	
Policy Goal 9: Improve planning and effective coordination practices	
Policy Objective	Strategy
A robust and functional planning and M&E system in place by 2027	9.1. Enhance the capacity of Ministry(s) in data analysis and crisis-sensitive planning.

	9.2.	Improve monitoring and evaluation of schools, sector policies and plans including disaster risk reduction.
Education coordination framework fully operational by 2027	9.3.	Expand and strengthen national and sub-national research and statistical capacities.
	9.4.	Enhance the capacity of the Ministry(s) in communication and coordination.
	9.5.	Strengthen internal governance and communication structures

The efficacy of TVET governance faces significant challenges due to the fragmented nature of the system, characterized by the involvement of multiple line ministries and a lack of effective communication among them. However, recent initiatives, such as the establishment of the TVET ad hoc Working Committee chaired by MoGEI and the formulation of a unified TVET policy, have taken notable steps towards system unification. These developments lay the groundwork for a cohesive expansion of TVET under GESP. To further enhance unified TVET governance, plans include the creation of a TVET Authority responsible for system and qualification regulation, the formulation of comprehensive guidelines for equal opportunity and prior learning, and the establishment of standardized bodies and regulations to oversee the sector. These measures aim to bring about a more coordinated and effective TVET framework in South Sudan.

Table 11 Policy Issue: Weak and fragmented TVET system governance

Policy Issue: Weak and fragmented TVET system governance		
Policy Goal 10: Strengthen and unify TVET system governance		
Policy Objective	**Strategy**	
Unified National TVET Policy implemented	10.1.	Improve the policy and regulatory landscape of TVET including assessment and certification

4. Strategic interventions and activities

This section delineates the pivotal interventions that serve as the practical embodiment of the strategies delineated in the preceding section. It provides a comprehensive overview of the interventions' breadth and depth, while also specifying the responsible party for their execution, whether at the central government or state level. Furthermore, where feasible, this section offers insights into the geographical scope of implementation and identifies the specific beneficiaries slated to benefit from these interventions.

4.1 Access to and equity in education

4.1.1 Policy Goal 1: Increase access to equitable and safer education at all levels of general education, including TVET.

4.1.1.1 Strategy 1.1: Improve the enrolment capacity of pre-primary education across the country.

The offer of pre-primary education in South Sudan is currently limited, as indicated by the ESA 2022, which reports a GER of only 11% at the national level. Despite ongoing efforts to enhance pre-primary education by incorporating dedicated classrooms within primary institutions, a significant shortfall remains evident, with more than 50% of primary schools lacking pre-primary facilities in 2021. In response, this strategic plan aims to redress this shortfall by embarking on the construction of approximately 510 dedicated pre-primary semi-permanent classrooms within existing primary schools. Emphasis will be placed on prioritizing counties with particularly low pre-primary GERs, thereby fostering greater equity in access on a national[1] scale. Furthermore, as part of this initiative, all 116 new primary schools planned for construction during the plan period will incorporate two dedicated pre-primary classrooms, marking a pivotal step towards expanding and improving early childhood education throughout the country. This approach underscores the country's commitment to addressing the existing deficiencies and ensuring broader access to quality pre-primary education.

Table 12 Strategy 1.1: Improve the enrolment capacity of pre-primary education across the country.

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Construct 510 pre-primary classrooms in government primary schools in underserved counties	Pre-primary Gross Enrolment Ratio	12%	17%

4.1.1.2 Strategy 1.2: Increase the supply of primary schools.

In the ESA 2022, primary education exhibited relatively high enrolment rates, yet the pace of progress has stagnated over time, revealing significant regional disparities. This plan will confront these challenges by implementing targeted initiatives and policies aimed at bolstering primary school accessibility in regions facing pronounced disadvantages, particularly those vulnerable to conflict and natural disasters, such as Unity, Eastern Equatoria, Upper Nile, and Jonglei states. These interventions will additionally prioritize the

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[1] According to the results of the ESA, counties in Jonglei, Unity, Warrap, and Northern Bahr el Ghazal depicted the greatest lack of pre-primary supply.

incorporation of climate-responsive construction standards to ensure that all new schools are hazard-resilient, thereby enhancing the sustainability and safety of the education infrastructure.

Reviewing and updating construction standards and guidelines for schools is a critical precursor to any construction activities. This endeavour will be undertaken in collaboration with a qualified consultant and will involve comprehensive review workshops with national staff. The revised standards will encompass climate-resilient construction methods and materials, with particular emphasis on addressing vulnerabilities in high-risk areas and ensuring the provision of facilities catering to children with disabilities. The standards will provide guidance for permanent and semi-permanent structures, building on the improved designs under the current Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG). This will be particularly important given that 10% of the schools will be permanent while the balance will be delivered as semi-permanent structures. Based on data from the enhanced annual school census, which includes geolocation data, establishment of primary schools will be in regions currently lacking adequate coverage from public educational institutions. These newly constructed primary schools will adhere to the revised standards, ensuring resilience against flooding and climatic challenges. Areas prone to flooding will be prioritized in the construction of permanent schools. Each primary school will have a dedicated classroom for each grade, as well as pre-primary classrooms. Additionally, these facilities will be equipped with gender-specific latrine blocks, inclusive amenities for individuals with disabilities, solar electricity infrastructure, and reliable access to clean drinking water. This approach aligns with the sector's commitment to providing robust, inclusive, and climate-resilient educational environments.

Table 13 Strategy 1.2: Increase the supply of primary schools.

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Review and update the construction standards and guidelines of primary schools	Primary Gross Enrolment Rate	60%	63%
Construct and equip 116 climate-resilient primary schools in underserved states and AAs			

4.1.1.3   Strategy 1.3: Enhance the enrolment capacity of government secondary schools.

The availability of secondary schools in South Sudan is severely limited, with only 501 secondary schools documented as of 2021, of which 35% are public institutions. This glaring scarcity has been identified as a significant impediment to secondary education access, characterized by a GER of only 12% as observed in the ESA 2022. This plan undertakes to alleviate these supply-side challenges, particularly concerning public secondary schools and will construct 135 new secondary schools, with a particular focus on areas currently underserved by educational facilities. Like in the case of new primary schools, 10% of the new secondary schools will be permanent, while the balance of 90% will be semi-permanent. One of the key aspects of this initiative is the establishment of construction standards and guidelines tailored specifically to the unique needs of secondary education. These guidelines will include a range of essential considerations, from structural integrity to climate resilience, and inclusivity for individuals with disabilities. The plan encompasses comprehensive provisions, including teacher accommodation facilities, utilization of climate-resilient materials and construction practices, and the incorporation of gender-specific and

accessible amenities. Under the guidance of these newly developed standards, secondary schools will be erected and equipped, with a priority placed on addressing the needs of underserved communities and counties that currently lack access to secondary education.

The new secondary schools will adhere to these standards, ensuring the provision of at least one classroom per grade level, gender-specific and accessible latrine blocks, the integration of solar electricity systems, and the availability of safe drinking water. This approach seeks to transform the secondary education landscape, fostering accessibility, inclusivity, and the provision of quality education to previously marginalized areas and communities.

Table 14 Strategy 1.3: Enhance the enrolment capacity of government secondary schools

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Develop the construction standards and guidelines for secondary schools	Secondary Gross Intake Rate	16%	30%
Construct and furnish 135 secondary school in counties where one does not currently exist			

4.1.1.4   Strategy 1.4: Expand the offer of the Alternative Education System

The AES holds significant relevance in the country, primarily owing to its substantial population of pastoralist and fishing communities, which constitute a sizeable portion of out-of-school children. Furthermore, the AES serves as a vital avenue for extending learning opportunities to various vulnerable populations who may be unable to partake in the formal education system or require skill enhancement, notably in areas like the English language. Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed a decline in the availability of AES centres, as per the findings of the ESA 2022, with fewer operational centres in 2021 compared to 2018. This decline underscores the pressing need for sustained efforts to bolster and expand the AES to ensure continued access to education for these marginalized communities.

The AES programs are characterized by their inherent adaptability, with a primary focus on reaching populations for whom traditional formal education is not conducive, such as pastoralist and fishing communities. The GESP will enhance alternative education opportunities for these communities through the establishment of semi-permanent alternative education centres. These centres will be strategically situated in proximity to fishing communities, within areas that are not susceptible to flooding, ensuring accessibility for populations with limited mobility. In the case of transhumance pastoralist communities, centres will be strategically located in seasonally relevant areas, facilitating access for three to four months in accordance with seasonal grazing patterns. The construction of these centres will adhere to the established strategy for pastoralist and fishing communities, implementing a condensed curriculum to accommodate the constrained time available to children and teenagers in these communities, given the demands of household labour.

In addition to semi-permanent centres, the plan will introduce mobile (PEP centres within pastoralist communities. These centres will cater to school-aged children with irregular movement patterns. Provisions, including tents, teachers' kits, and learning materials, will be supplied. Additionally, three

facilitators per center will receive orientation and stipends, ensuring effective implementation and access to education for this unique demographic.

Moreover, the AES initiatives with a school-based focus, such as the ALP and the IEC, will undergo substantial expansion, encompassing a broader range of schools. This expansion will be facilitated through the provision of qualified instructors and the necessary teaching and learning materials. Notably, the prioritization of the Intensive English Course will play a pivotal role in aiding the reintegration of a significant influx of returnees from Sudan, many of whom currently lack proficiency in the English language. These programs will serve as a crucial foundation for their language development, ensuring their readiness for integration into the formal education system. Furthermore, ALPs will extend their support to internally displaced individuals who may have experienced disruptions in their education due to migration, thus fostering their educational continuity and opportunities for future success.

Table 15 Strategy 1.4: Expand the offer of the Alternative Education System

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Build 10 semi-permanent centres for trans-humane pastoralist and fishing communities.	Number of AES students/100,000 inhabitants	683	2,000
Establish 25 mobile pastoralist education program centres in pastoralist communities			
Establish 722 AES programmes in existing primary schools			

4.1.1.5 Strategy 1.5: Expand access to TVET, especially in underserved areas.

The ESA findings underscore the pressing need for an enhanced TVET landscape. Presently, TVET is characterized by low access and fragmentation among various providers. Notably, just two operational TVET centres under MoGEI were identified in the country. In response, the plan aims to bolster TVET accessibility and availability through the construction of 11 additional TVET institutions, strategically located across Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile, Western Equatoria, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Eastern Equatoria, Warrap, and Lakes States, as well as Greater Pibor, Abyei, and Ruweng Administrative Areas. These new facilities will accommodate trainees with disabilities, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity. Furthermore, the plan embraces climate-resilient construction methodologies and embeds universal design principles to ensure long-term sustainability. Additionally, disaster risk reduction contingency plans will be a pivotal component of each centre's development, reinforcing the sector's commitment to creating a robust and adaptable TVET infrastructure that aligns with evolving needs and challenges.

In addition to the physical infrastructure development, the plan includes provisions for the establishment of an e-learning platform for TVET with the aim of expanding access to training opportunities, particularly for individuals who may face geographical constraints in reaching physical training institutions. The endeavour involves the development and implementation of an online platform, complete with a dedicated server and application infrastructure, all centrally managed by the MoGEI. The platform will have diverse modules with distinct user privileges, catering to both learners and instructors. Instructors will play a pivotal role in content development and maintaining quality standards through moderation.

Additionally, the sector plans to deploy twenty-five mobile TVET units strategically across all ten states and three administrative areas, following a comprehensive county assessment to ensure precise targeting and effectiveness in delivering trade-based training services to pastoralist and fishing communities. This approach underscores the commitment to enhancing access, flexibility, and the quality of TVET programs across the region.

Table 16 Strategy 1.5: Expand access to TVET, especially in underserved areas.

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Construct 11 TVET schools and centres through construction and embedding universal design principles	Number of TVET students/100,000 inhabitants	207	548
Establish an e-learning platform for TVET			
Establish 25 mobile TVET Units for pastoralist and Fishing camp/communities			

4.1.1.6   Strategy 1.6: Improve access to equitable education.

Ensuring equitable expansion of educational opportunities is pivotal for South Sudan to honour its commitment to Education for All. The ESA 2022 underscored significant disparities in access to education, notably affecting disadvantaged groups, including girls and children with disabilities, alongside pronounced regional inequalities. This plan will address these challenges through affirmative action policies, the provision of assistive devices, and the amplification of cash-transfer initiatives for learners, thereby mitigating gender- and disability-based barriers to educational access.

The ESA 2022 highlighted significant gender parity challenges, notably in the Greater Upper Nile States, encompassing Jonglei, Lakes, Unity, and Warrap. In response to these regional disparities, a comprehensive study will be conducted within the plan implementation period to establish region-specific factors perpetuating gender inequality within the education system. The outcomes of this study will support the formulation of a gender affirmative action policy, with a particular focus on addressing gender disparities starting from the first year of primary education, where these inequalities are most pronounced.

Obstacles to educational access for disadvantaged groups extend beyond supply-side challenges and encompass demand-side issues rooted in community perceptions, particularly regarding the education of girls and learners with disabilities. To address these complexities, this plan will engage community leaders through Girls Education Conferences at the state and administrative levels, fostering collaboration among state and county representatives alongside community leaders. These conferences will serve as forums for government education officials to collaboratively devise strategies to overcome existing barriers to girls' education, while enlisting the support of influential community leaders to advocate for equity. Furthermore, students with disabilities will receive tailored learning aids and assistive devices based on their specific disability type and individual needs, promoting inclusive and accessible education for all.

The ESA 2022 highlights a concerning underrepresentation of women and individuals with disabilities in TVET, thereby limiting their access to associated employment opportunities. To address this disparity, this plan aims to bridge the gap between advantaged and marginalized groups by implementing a series of incentives, including scholarships, start-up grants, and childcare services, all designed to facilitate the enrolment of marginalized groups, including women and mothers, in TVET programs.

The plan aims to extend educational opportunities by granting 3,380 scholarships to female individuals and individuals with disabilities, facilitating their access to TVET programs across the country. These scholarships will cover expenses both direct, such as fees, and indirect, covering materials and transportation required for TVET participation. Furthermore, the plan includes provisions of start-up grants, designed to empower female and disabled TVET students in establishing their desired ventures upon program completion. This start-up package will include essential tools, microfinance grants and/or loans, and microfinance training, to foster entrepreneurship within these demographics. Additionally, female TVET students with children will receive enhanced support through the establishment of childcare facilities in three TVET centres in specific target states—Central Equatoria, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Upper Nile. This pilot program aims to evaluate the effectiveness of offering childcare services as an incentive for female enrolment, with these facilities equipped with suitable play-based materials and staffed by trained caregivers.

Table 17 Strategy 1.6: Improve access to equitable education.

Activities	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Elaborate a study in Greater Upper Nile state on gender inequality	Primary Gender Parity Index	0.93	1
Conduct the Girl Education Conferences at the state level with community leaders regarding barriers to girls' education and their solutions	Secondary Gender Parity Index	0.82	1
Provide assistive learning devices for learnings with disabilities	TVET Gender Parity Index	0.21	0.7
Provide scholarships to encourage female and people with disabilities participation in TVET (focus on STEM).			
Provide start-up grants to support females and people with disabilities enrolled in TVET.	Proportion of students with disabilities as per the total student population in in pre-school, primary, secondary	1.2%	2.4%
Establish childcare support facility for TVET Female trainees targeting three states (Pilot).			

4.1.1.7 Strategy 1.7: Expand mobilization activities at the community level to provide access to education for all school-aged children.

The consultations regarding the GESP have revealed a persistent obstacle to educational access: a lack of understanding amongst communities on their role in guaranteeing access to education in terms of security of people and building community-based centres. To address this challenge, the government, as part of the GESP initiative, will actively engage and mobilize communities using diverse advocacy strategies aimed at enhancing awareness, fostering positive perceptions, and garnering stronger community backing for education. Furthermore, the government will leverage its authority to promote a shared responsibility framework concerning access to both formal and non-formal education. This will involve encouraging and assisting communities in establishing supplementary community institutions, thus promoting a more inclusive and comprehensive educational landscape.

Advocacy within communities will be executed through a diverse array of strategies, foremost among them being face-to-face community meetings. These gatherings will be arranged under the guidance of state-led education officials who will travel to specific regions, using local schools or community facilities as venues. During these meetings, the officials will actively disseminate information regarding the intrinsic value and advantages of education, while also elucidating the various available avenues for access. The primary objective of these meetings is to galvanize communities to take the initiative in establishing their own community schools, thus supplementing the government's ongoing expansion endeavours. The plan will conduct a total of 20 community meetings annually, thoughtfully distributed across various states and administrative regions. Some of these meetings will be strategically timed to coincide with the celebration of national and international educational milestones, such as International Literacy Day, National Girl's Education Day, and the International Day for People with Disabilities.

These in-person meetings will be supported by advocacy and awareness campaigns drawing on media strategies including the use of social media, printing of relevant materials in newspapers, airing of talk-shows, jingles, and dramas on the radio, as well as street announcements containing messages regarding the value and benefits of education. The encouragement of communities to construct community schools will be accompanied by the commitment from the government to provide teaching and learning materials to community schools, thereby decreasing the necessary financial inputs from communities, and acting as further encouragement.

Efforts will involve extensive awareness campaigns focused on disaster risk reduction and climate change, underpinned by materials tailored for a non-technical audience, thoughtfully developed by a local consultant. The multi-tiered campaigns will commence with the comprehensive training of state and local-level officials by national staff, ensuring that they possess the requisite knowledge and competencies to conducting community-level meetings. Additionally, a pivotal stakeholder meeting at the state level will convene, bringing together pertinent education stakeholders from the capital to impart knowledge on climate change and its implications for education. This initiative aims to raise awareness and garner support for addressing the challenges posed by climate change. Climate change and DRR messages will be disseminated at the grassroots level through five community meetings per state, spearheaded by the

previously trained state and local officials, with active involvement of community leaders and education stakeholders. These in-person endeavours will be complemented by an integrated media strategy, with a strategic focus on conveying messages concerning DRR and climate change.

Table 18 Strategy 1.7: Expand mobilization activities at the community level to provide access to education for all school-aged children.

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Conduct mass advocacy and awareness campaigns on the importance of education	Number of new functional resilient community schools established across all sub-sectors	0	865
Conduct community awareness meetings regarding the value and benefits of education, and their role in establishing community schools			
Develop advocacy and awareness campaigns on Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) and climate change			
Implement advocacy and awareness campaigns on Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) and climate change			
Provide learning materials to community-based schools across all sub-sectors			

4.1.1.8 Strategy 1.8: Increase awareness on gender equity and inclusion of children disabilities in education.

Awareness campaigns will be initiated to promote gender equity and address critical issues such as early marriage, gender roles, stereotypes, and the inclusion of children with disabilities in South Sudanese education system. These campaigns, targeting all states during the GESP implementation period, will consist of state-level education stakeholder meetings, extensive media outreach through live talk shows, street announcements, jingles, radio dramas, newspaper publications, and social media posts. Additionally, each state will host five community meetings, targeting community members, leaders, education stakeholders, to disseminate the message of gender and disability inclusion in education. These initiatives reflect a commitment to challenging prevailing prejudices and fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

In addition to enhancing community awareness, the plan will enhance the capabilities of local and state education stakeholders, empowering them to champion gender equity and inclusivity for children with disabilities within their respective regions. These comprehensive training will also encompass a critical component—raising awareness about the recently formulated Inclusive Education Policy. This equips stakeholders with the requisite knowledge to effectively implement the policy within the mainstream education system. The training initiatives will encompass workshops conducted at both the state and county levels. State-level workshops will be overseen by national experts, while state staff, having undergone their own training, will facilitate county-level workshops. The target audience comprises state and county-level education ministry personnel, local partners, and school leaders. These vital training

sessions will be conducted systematically, with one held in each state and administrative area throughout the plan's duration, thereby fostering sustainable change and progress.

Table 19 Strategy 1.8: Increase awareness on gender equity and inclusion of children disabilities in education

Activities	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Implement awareness campaigns on gender equity and inclusion of children with disabilities in education	Gender Parity Index in primary	0.93	1
	Gender Parity Index in secondary	0.82	1
	Gender Parity Index in TVET	0.21	0.7
Train local and state stakeholders on their role to promote gender equity and inclusion of children with disabilities including on the Inclusive Education Policy	Proportion of students with disabilities as per the total student population in pre-school, primary, secondary	1.2%	2.4%

4.1.1.9   Strategy 1.9: Intensify publicity and community engagement to improve the image of TVET.

The participation rates in TVET in South Sudan is currently low, primarily due to a limited understanding and appreciation of the sub-sector within the population. To address this issue, it is essential to not only enhance the capacity of TVET centres but also actively engage local communities to encourage enrolment in both newly established and existing centres. The plan proposes to conduct nationwide, and state-specific campaigns aimed at promoting employment opportunities provided by TVET programs. These campaigns will employ a combination of in-person and distance-based strategies, including community meetings and radio broadcasts. The target audience comprises unemployed or undereducated youth and the industry itself, with the goal of showcasing the diverse training and vocational offers available. Annual community meetings will be held in all states and administrative areas, supplemented by quarterly national radio broadcasts featuring live talk shows and radio dramas conveying the significance of TVET programs. Moreover, the sector plans to use radio platforms to disseminate messages on youth empowerment, including valuable information on microfinance and job prospects for TVET graduates and youth at large. These campaigns will leverage increased collaboration with development partners and the private sector, as envisioned in the governance priority program, to identify relevant opportunities for youth.

In addition to the campaigns, the plan advocates for hosting annual exhibitions in Juba, showcasing products, equipment, and tools locally crafted by TVET students and institutions. This centralized exhibition aims to bolster local community confidence in South Sudan's TVET offer, underscore program relevance, and inspire young individuals to view TVET as a valuable avenue for acquiring essential skills tailored to the labour market.

Table 20 Strategy 1.9: Intensify publicity and community engagement to improve the image of TVET

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Conduct annual national and state campaigns to improve the public image of TVET	Number of TVET students per 100,000 inhabitants	207	548

Develop and disseminate youth empowerment activities			
Organise annual exhibitions displaying TVET products			

4.1.2 Policy Goal 2: Increase retention of learners in primary and secondary cycles

4.1.2.1 Strategy 2.1 Ensure that prioritized government primary schools have full cycles.

The ESA 2022 found that over 60% of primary schools were incomplete, failing to provide all eight required grade levels. This deficiency potentially contributes to high dropout rates, especially after the sixth grade, with 25% of primary schools lacking seventh and eighth-grade classes. To address this issue, the GESP will focus on constructing classrooms in these incomplete primary schools. 10% of these classrooms will be permanent and will be delivered in areas prone to flooding. The balance of classrooms (2,970) will be delivered in semi-permanent model. The additional classrooms will enhance student retention within the primary education system by enabling learners to complete their respective grade cycles within a single institution, thereby ensuring a more seamless educational experience.

Table 21 Strategy 2.1: Ensure that prioritized government primary schools have full cycles.

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Construct 3,303 classrooms in primary schools	Proportion of government primary schools with full cycles	30%	96%

4.1.2.2 Strategy 2.2: Strengthen the resilience of the system for continuous learning during crises.

The risk analysis within the ESA 2022 identified diverse risk factors in South Sudan, spanning natural hazards and conflict. Notably, the Greater Upper Nile region exhibited both elevated risk levels and pronounced dropout rates, indicative of a correlation between vulnerable areas and educational retention challenges. To establish a resilient education system, the GESP will prioritize risk adaptation. This will include developing and implementing contingency plans, deploying alternative distance learning approaches, and conducting focused research to enhance support in high-risk regions, ensuring educational continuity during crises.

The South Sudanese education system currently lacks comprehensive contingency plans to guide responses in the event of emergencies. The formulation of these contingency plans is essential to provide schools and sub-national administrations with clear protocols for addressing various hazards, thus mitigating their impact on students' uninterrupted access to education. These plans will be developed through collaborative workshops conducted at both the state and national levels, facilitated by external consultants. They will include strategies to minimize the use of schools for temporary shelter, including military purposes, the implementation of school drills to ensure students are well-prepared to respond to immediate threats, and the identification of suitable locations for temporary learning facilities. Furthermore, these plans will be tailored to address locally specific hazards, prioritizing gender, and disability inclusivity to acknowledge the varying vulnerabilities of distinct population groups. Additionally, these plans will draw upon the South Sudan Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, subject to

periodic updates to align with the evolving national context, particularly in response to the escalating challenges posed by climate change.

Contingency plans be developed, at the national, state, and school levels, all through participatory workshops. School-specific planning will be achieved through cluster training sessions, under the guidance of tutors from county education centres, focusing on head teachers as key stakeholders. These sessions will include training of head teachers, emphasizing the significance of contingency plans in the context of disaster prevention, preparedness, and response, drawing insights from comparable county scenarios. Subsequently, head teachers will bear the responsibility of executing these plans within their respective schools and facilitating knowledge dissemination among their teaching staff.

In addition to the development of contingency plans, state and local stakeholders will also be trained in the implementation of the South Sudanese Education in Emergencies strategy to ensure this is integrated into educational programming nationally. This training will be conducted by national staff at the state level including officials from the counties and will occur once throughout the plan period. This will raise awareness of the fundamental principles of the South Sudanese Education in Emergencies policy and the South Sudan Education Cluster Strategy to ensure officials are better equipped to respond to crises as they emerge and engage in crisis-prevention activities.

Flooding, conflict, and other natural hazards that are prevalent in South Sudan often leave schools inaccessible for prolonged periods, therefore making in-classroom learning impossible. To ensure that students do not lose valuable learning time and fall behind in their studies, different distance learning programs will be developed and implemented during the plan period that will allow students to continue learning from the safety of their homes in times of crises. The first of these will be radio programming, which was already trailed during the period of school closures because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The materials developed during this time will be built upon to cover the entire primary and secondary curriculums. The development process will be supported by teachers who will be responsible for reviewing and updating the scripts developed for their specialized subjects for the COVID-19 continued learning program. This review and updating process will be also supported by a local consultant. Scripts will subsequently be edited and approved before being recorded for broadcast.

Lessons will subsequently be broadcast over the two major radio stations in South Sudan and their implementation will be supported by a national-level monitoring. In this way, distance learning programs will not only support students who are temporarily out of school due to emergencies but will support the wider population of out-of-school children as well. In addition to radio learning, take-home learning packages for primary and secondary will also be developed. These packages can be distributed when news of an impending disaster is communicated through the newly established early warning communication chain (see governance priority programme), to ensure that students are able to continue learning at home and do not put themselves in danger by trying to access school.

The risk analysis conducted within the framework of the ESA 2022 brought to light a notable misalignment between the prevailing school calendar and the recurring patterns of seasonal flooding. Specifically, the

months of July to September, when educational activities are in full swing, consistently witness severe flooding, whereas the floodwaters tend to recede in November and December, coinciding with school holidays. In response to this observation, the plan will support a study to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of realigning the school calendar to better harmonize with these seasonal realities. This study will entail the engagement of an external consultant and the gathering of pertinent data from flood-prone regions, ultimately culminating in recommendations for potential calendar adjustments.

Table 22 Strategy 2.2: Strengthen the resilience of the system for continuous learning during crises

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Develop contingency plans at the national and sub-national levels based on local hazards	Proportion of crisis-closed schools implementing continuous learning programmes	N/A	100%
Review and update the South Sudan Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies (INEE) to the current context of South Sudan.			
Train state and local stakeholders in the South Sudanese Education in Emergency Strategy			
Review the distance learning through radio programs			
Develop and provide home learning packages to complement radio learning during emergencies			
Implement the distance learning through radio programs			
Conduct a study to assess the appropriateness of the academic calendar to cope with climate hazards.			

4.1.2.3   Strategy 2.3: Reduce indirect cost of education for families.

As per the 2021 education census data, the predominant cause of student attrition persists as the inability to meet educational fees across all educational tiers, despite the government's constitutional commitment to delivering fee-free primary education. This predicament is rooted in funding inadequacies observed at the school level, including the irregular disbursement of capitation grants and the prevalence of volunteer teachers, which often necessitate financial contributions from families for learning materials, school maintenance, teacher salaries, and school meal programs. The issue of non-salary payment and delayed payments systematically addressed within the quality program through the recruitment of additional teaching staff and salary adjustments for teachers. Under this strategy, the GESP will endeavour to remove financial barriers to educational accessibility through targeted interventions, such as direct cash transfers to marginalized groups, the expansion of school feeding program, and the provision of dignity kits to support girls' education. Provision of dignity kits to adolescent girls in primary and secondary schools will ensure that costs associated with the acquiring menstrual hygiene products are not a barrier to retention of female learners in school.

The GESS project presently facilitates cash transfers for girls starting from grade 5, and the ESA 2022 demonstrated the program's positive influence on female enrolment, notably in balancing access rates between males and females from grade 5 onward. The GESP proposes to continue this strategy, focusing on girls in grades 7-8 of primary and secondary 1-4. The program will also provide targeted support to vulnerable groups, such as children in flood- and conflict-affected regions, those hailing from socio-

economically disadvantaged households, children with disabilities, and former child soldiers, including those enrolled in community schools. The specific parameters governing these transfers, including eligibility criteria and transfer amounts will be defined through a comprehensive review of the existing project as envisioned within the framework of the efficiency priority program.

Table 23 Strategy 2.3: Reduce indirect cost of education for families

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Sustain the cash transfers for learners, focusing on disadvantaged girls, children with disabilities, and orphans.	Primary Retention Rate	22%	42%
Provide dignity kits to girls in upper-primary and secondary education	Secondary Retention Rate	54%	57%

4.2 Quality of education and management of resources

4.2.1 Policy Goal 3: Improve the quality and retention of the teaching workforce.

4.2.1.1 Strategy 3.1: Enhance the framework and environment for management of teachers.

The Government has initiated the development of a Teacher Education Policy, with the processes of compilation, finalization, and detailed elaboration of the implementation procedures still pending. This plan aims to expedite the finalization of the policy and its subsequent validation. MoGEI will appoint a 26-member team from the Teachers Development Management Service (TDMS) to oversee the finalization of the policy, closely monitor its implementation, particularly at the decentralized levels, and carry out evaluations. The policy evaluation will be conducted at the conclusion of the plan's implementation period, expected in 2027/28. The outcomes of this evaluation will provide valuable insights for future adjustments, if necessary, aimed at enhancing the quality of services provided to and by teachers.

To advance the professionalization of teaching, the plan will facilitate the creation of a comprehensive registration and licensing system for teachers. This initiative involves the recruitment of a technical assistant tasked with the development of the registration application, alongside securing crucial validations from key user departments. Furthermore, the plan will facilitate the engagement of key officials from MoGEI to oversee the initial registration of teachers, thus ensuring a seamless implementation. Additionally, as an integral part of this endeavour, provisions will be made for the procurement of essential computing infrastructure and printing equipment, crucial components that will underpin the effective establishment of the envisioned teacher registration system.

Table 24 Strategy 3.1: Enhance the framework and environment for management of teachers

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Finalize and disseminate the Teacher Education Policy	Teacher Retention Rate	TBD	90%
Evaluate the effective implementation of the Teacher Education Policy			
Establish a system for registration and licensing of teachers			

4.2.1.2 Strategy 3.2: Motivate the teaching workforce, focusing on teacher wellbeing, gender equity and risk-affected areas.

The MoGEI is actively engaged in dialogues with key stakeholders, including members of the parliamentary specialized committee on education, the national legislature, the Office of the President, and the Cabinet Affairs Committee, with the primary aim of enhancing the working conditions of teachers, with a particular focus on remuneration. At the heart of these discussions lies the proposal to raise teachers' salaries to a level equivalent to 3.5 times the GDP per capita, a globally recognized benchmark for nations with economic profiles like that of South Sudan. However, the plan incorporates a phased approach, allowing for a progressive increase in salaries, ultimately reaching a maximum of twice the GDP per capita across all educational levels by the end of the GESP implementation period.

Furthermore, the plan acknowledges the diverse and often challenging environments in which teachers serve, recognizing varying degrees of risk exposure. In addition to the across-the-board salary adjustments, the strategy introduces targeted hardship allowances to incentivize teachers working in challenging areas. These hardship allowances may encompass provisions for accommodation and mobility benefits, with implementation proposed to commence in the fiscal year 2024/25. The plan outlines the establishment of a technical committee comprising representatives from MoGEI and State Ministries of Education, tasked with identifying specific regions within the country where teachers require special allowances and will provide recommendations regarding uniform or differentiated allowance rates based on the distinct characteristics of various states, counties, and Payams targeted by the initiative.

Recognizing the substantive numbers of unqualified teachers within the general education system and the limited capacity of National TTIs (NTTIs), the plan will support a revamp of the NTTIs, to initially deal with the issue of space. To ensure sustainable viability of these institutions, the plan advocates for the allocation of scholarships to pre-service teacher trainees, with a particular emphasis on fostering gender equity by reserving a minimum of one-fifth of the scholarships for female trainees. This strategic allocation aims to redress the existing gender imbalance among teachers within the general education sector, with the ultimate objective of enhancing the quality and equity of teachers from the training stage.

Table 25 Strategy 3.2: Motivate the teaching workforce, focusing on teacher wellbeing, gender equity and risk-affected areas

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Increase the average teacher salary to 2 times the GDP/capita	Teacher Retention Rate	TBD	90%
Provide hardship allowances to all teachers in at-risk or hard- to reach areas			
Provide scholarship opportunities to prospective teachers, especially female			

4.2.1.3 Strategy 3.3: Expand the pre-service teacher and in-service training program, including on DRR and climate change issues.

The provision of teachers in South Sudan is significantly constrained by the limited capacity of the existing NTTIs. Currently, only three NTTIs are operational, a stark insufficiency given the demands of the general education system, compounded by the vast geographical expanse of the country. To bolster the NTTIs' capacity, the proposed plan entails the establishment of eleven new NTTIs in states lacking this essential infrastructure. Given the extensive damage incurred by non-operational TTIs and cost considerations, the plan prioritizes new construction over rehabilitation efforts. To initiate this process, the MoGEI will assemble a technical working committee, comprised of representatives from the Directorate of Physical Infrastructure, Procurement, TDMS, and State authorities to identify suitable sites for NTTI construction, oversee the procurement process, contract allocation, and monitor the construction progress.

To ensure the effective operation of both the existing and newly established NTTIs, the plan will facilitate annual week-long external visits to countries within the region. These visits will enable representatives from each NTTI to gain insights and mentorship from their counterparts abroad. Furthermore, ongoing oversight and assessment of the institutions' performance will be conducted through a monitoring team comprising members from the Directorate of TDMS, Planning and Budget, Inspection and Supervision, NCDC, and existing universities. This team will submit comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) reports to various stakeholder forums such as the GEAR, cluster meetings, LEG, and partners coordination meetings and will serve as the basis for informed decision-making and continuous improvement in South Sudan's teacher training infrastructure.

In addition to expanding the capacity of NTTIs, the plan will enhance the capacity of County Education Centres (CECs), through construction of 10 additional centres in selected counties. These centres, together with those that have been constructed and/or rehabilitated are instrumental in in-service training and will be useful for the implementation of the competency-based curriculum. MoGEI will set up a technical team responsible for identification of counties to be prioritized for the new construction. The committee will also provide technical guidance on the elements expected in a new CECs. Alongside the new CECs, the plan will facilitate renovation works in fifty-nine (59) existing CECs.

The sector has been carrying out training for unqualified teachers towards an ambitious target of having all teachers qualified to teach. In keeping with this ambition, the plan will facilitate the training of 13,000 teachers across pre-primary, primary, secondary, and alternative education who the 2021 Annual Schools' Census identified as not being qualified. The plan will facilitate a national team to train seven tutors per county, who will in turn train the 13,000 teachers in their respective counties in a cascade fashion.

The strategic initiative extends beyond the qualification enhancement of underqualified teachers and will include Continuous Professional Development (CPD) among existing teaching staff through the Community Education Centres (CECs). This targeted approach aims to strengthen teachers' competencies in crucial areas, including proficiency in national languages, co-curricular activity facilitation, disaster risk reduction, climate change education, inclusive pedagogy, gender-sensitive teaching practices, and

proficiency in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Of particular significance is the emphasis on professional development to enable teachers to effectively deliver an intensive English language curriculum. This effort is essential to accommodate the growing number of returnees lacking English language proficiency. The CPD will ensure that trained teachers can support the returnees by assessing individual language levels, using multilingual resources, promoting immersion and contextual learning, offering small group instruction, encouraging cultural exchange, and adapting the curriculum as needed. Additionally, they will be support in providing regular assessment and feedback, emphasizing communication skills, practicing patience and empathy, and creating a nurturing environment that respects returnees' unique experiences and backgrounds, all while recognizing that language acquisition is a gradual process with varying individual progress.

Table 26 Strategy 3.3: Expand the pre-service teacher and in-service training program, including on DRR and climate change issues

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Construct 11 NTTIs in the states without, and one in each of the administrative areas, ensuring they are climate resilient	Share of qualified teachers in pre-primary schools	80%	100%
Rehabilitate 59 County Education Centres (CECs) in all counties	Share of qualified teachers in primary schools	68%	100%
Conduct external exchange learning visits for all the NTTIs			
Conduct M&E in all NTTIs	Share of qualified teachers in secondary schools	63%	100%
Conduct upgrading of unqualified teachers			
Provide Continuous Professional Development opportunities to serving teachers	Share of qualified teachers in AES	73%	100%

4.2.1.4   Strategy 3.4: Recruit additional teachers, giving special considerations to qualified volunteers.

As per the 2022 ESA, a significant shortage of qualified educators within the general education system poses substantial challenges to classroom instruction as seen in the elevated Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTRs), which currently stand at 90:1 in ECE, 93:1 in primary education, 25:1 in secondary education, and 69:1 in AES. To address this and to accommodate the anticipated influx of students across all education levels, as highlighted in the Access and Equity priority, the plan will support the recruitment of approximately 13,800 teachers over the coming five years. Special emphasis will be placed on the inclusion of qualified

volunteers in this recruitment process, and their deployment will be strategically executed in accordance with the outlined deployment plan. Notably, this initiative involves the recruitment of nearly 4,400 teachers to facilitate the delivery of non-formal education through the AES framework. With the involvement of State Authorities and the Ministry of Public Service (MoPS), the MoGEI will spearhead the recruitment, addressing prevailing gender imbalances and rectifying the uneven distribution of teachers across various counties.

Table 27 Strategy 3.4: Recruit additional teachers, giving special considerations to qualified volunteers

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Recruit 1,100 qualified teachers in pre-primary	Pupil Teacher Ratio in pre-primary	42:1	35:1
Recruit 10,300 qualified teachers in primary	Pupil Teacher Ratio in primary	42:1	42:1
Recruit 208 qualified teachers in secondary	Pupil Teacher Ratio in secondary	20:1	40:1
Facilitate 4,400 teachers to deliver learning in AES centres	Pupil Teacher Ratio in AES	29:1	30:1

4.2.2 Policy Goal 4. Enhance curriculum development and implementation, including strengthening the assessment system.

4.2.2.1 *Strategy 4.1: Complete the development of curriculum materials such as missing subjects and inclusive education material.*

The curriculum framework for both formal and non-formal education in the country emphasizes the imperative of crafting suitable educational resources to facilitate effective lesson delivery. This principle is executed through the National Learning and Teaching Materials Policy, which not only prescribes the language of instruction but is also emphatic about the use of national languages in foundational education. The general education sector has undertaken significant initiatives in developing materials and orthography for these national languages, coupled with teacher training programs designed to ensure the seamless integration of these languages into the curriculum. Through the Curriculum Foundation the plan will support the Directorate of National and Foreign Languages to expand the pool of materials by developing content for seven additional languages, thereby fostering diversity in the instructional materials used across the curriculum. This will entail the identification and support of five translators and writers for each national language, focusing on the pre-primary and lower primary levels (P1 – P3). These translators and writers will spearhead the writing and translation of textbooks, which, following validation, will be slated for printing and distribution to educational institutions. Given the time-intensive nature of developing and translating such resources, as evidenced in previous iterations, the current plan does not include a cost estimate for the printing and delivery of these specific materials. In parallel with this expansion of materials in national languages, the plan underscores the importance of reviewing existing curriculum materials across both formal and non-formal domains to highlight deficiencies and facilitate the development of relevant resources. This will include the development and/or finalization of ECE

materials and teacher guides, enhancing the overall quality and relevance of educational resources within the curriculum.

The current teacher training programs require essential updates to align with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) framework. This adjustment is imperative to ensure that graduates from the NTTIs are well-prepared to effectively deliver CBC. To achieve this, the plan will facilitate the Directorate of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and TDMS to develop or enhance pre-service and in-service academic subject syllabi. These revisions will align the training programs with the CBC standards, and additionally, incorporate specialized modules focused on special needs education, designed to equip prospective teachers with the skills needed to instruct students with disabilities. The upgrade process will entail iterative consultations involving stakeholders from NTTIs, universities, development partners, and members of NCDC and TDMS and will involve program development, followed by piloting and validation of the pre-service and in-service academic subjects.

Table 28 Strategy 4.1: Complete the development of curriculum materials such as missing subjects and inclusive education material

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Complete development and translation of textbook for seven national languages with writing system	Basic education curriculum and associated materials are fully developed	Curriculum is incomplete (missing national languages, AES textbooks and ECE materials)	Basic education curriculum and associated materials are fully developed
Complete development of subject textbook gaps for formal and AES			
Develop and print ECE materials and teachers' guides			
Complete the development of pre-service and in-service teacher training programs at certificate and diploma levels			

4.2.2.2 Strategy 4.2: Ensure full implementation of the curriculum.

Learning and teaching materials are in short supply in general education, which is a huge compromise on the implementation of the curriculum. For instance, the pupil-textbook ratio in primary school is 8:1 in English and Mathematics, and 9:1 in Science and Social Studies, which are both significantly above the 1:1 standard recommended by the learning and teaching materials policy. In secondary, although there are better STR compared to primary schools, the ratios are still high. The plan will focus on provision of textbooks to learners at all levels of general education and will target a textbook ratio of 2:1 in primary, secondary and AES. Across all the levels of education, children with disabilities will receive relevant disability specific reference materials on a ratio of 1:1. Due to the large volumes of books that will be involved, the plan proposes to have the books replenished every four years. This means that if the books are provided to schools in the 2024/25 fiscal year, the plan will only accommodate one-time provision during the lifetime of the plan. In addition to the textbooks, the plan will provide learner workbooks annually in all the core subjects at the ratio of 1:1. Moreover, the plan will also support the supply of teacher guides to teachers across general education in all the core subjects, with one teacher guide shared between two teachers.

The plan additionally proposes the reorientation of 15,000 qualified teachers who will not undergo upgrade. This reorientation process mirrors the approach taken in the training of unqualified teachers and will be facilitated through the CECs. A specialized national team will oversee the training of 560 CEC tutors, distributed across all eighty counties. These trained CEC tutors will subsequently take on the responsibility of imparting CBC orientation to the identified teachers who have yet to undergo this critical curriculum training.

The plan acknowledges that the learning, and Teaching Materials Policy and the National Language Guideline were developed before the CBC, and as such have notable misalignment. Alongside the gaps identified in the policy and the guidelines, the directorate of NCDC and National Foreign Language Centre (NFLC) have identified key issues in the implementation of the policy, which the plan will address during the implementation period. This includes the facilitation of review of the policy through workshops bringing together representatives from MoGEI, universities, and development partners to undertake the review. For cost purposes, these workshops will be conducted in Juba. Alongside the review of the policy, the plan will support the development of relevant guidelines., including printing of the two.

Table 29 Strategy 4.2: Ensure full implementation of the curriculum

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Supply teaching/learning materials public schools (including textbooks, workbooks, teachers guides and supplementary learning materials)	Pupil Workbook Ratio in pre-primary (core subjects)	N/A	1:1
	Proportion of public schools receiving workbooks for learners		
	Proportion of public schools receiving textbooks		
	Proportion of public schools receiving teachers guides		
Orient teachers on the new competency-based curriculum and new textbooks.	Pupil Textbook Ratio in primary (core subjects)	8:1	2:1
Review the South Sudan textbook policy and implementation guidelines for the National Languages	Pupil Textbook Ratio in secondary (core subjects)	2:1	2:1

4.2.2.3 Strategy 4.3: Upgrade and strengthen the four National Centres (NCDC, TDMS, NFLC, NEC).

The four directorates and institutions responsible for curriculum development and implementation, including the NCDC, the TTDMS, NFLC, and the NEC, currently face a critical infrastructure challenge. The absence of appropriate premises hampers the effective execution of their duties. To address this issue, the plan will facilitate the acquisition of suitable land and the construction of dedicated headquarters for these organizations. This initiative will involve collaborative efforts between MoGEI and relevant state and

administrative entities to identify optimal locations and manage the procurement process, including diligent oversight of construction activities. Additionally, the plan will extend its support to the renovation and equipping of the National and Foreign Languages Centre in Maridi, ensuring it can fulfil its mission effectively.

Table 30 Strategy 4.3: Upgrade and strengthen the four National Centres (NCDC, TDMS, NFLC, NEC)

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Construct and equip the Teacher Development and Management Secretariat	Basic education curriculum and associated materials are fully developed	Curriculum is incomplete (missing national languages, AES textbooks and ECE materials)	Basic education curriculum and associated materials are fully developed
Construct and equip the National Curriculum Development Centre			
Renovate and equip the National and Foreign Languages Center			
Construct and equip the National Examination Centre			

4.2.3 Policy Goal 5: Streamline and strengthen the assessment system.

4.2.3.1 Strategy 5.1: Set up a comprehensive institutional inspection and supervision system.

To evaluate the progress and challenges in quality education, the plan will facilitate the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards to conduct an annual action research initiative. This action research will be spearheaded by a team from the MoGEI with the support of a proficient technical research assistant. Furthermore, the plan will facilitate the procurement of necessary equipment essential for data collection, as well as the production of materials tailored for regions where technological accessibility remains limited. The outcomes of this diligent research will be widely disseminated and deliberated upon within a range of dialogue platforms supported by this plan, including the General Education Annual Review (GEAR) workshops. The plan proposes that ample time is earmarked during the GEAR week to ensure that quality assurance research occupies a central position within the dialogue. This strategic approach underscores the plan's commitment to placing the quality of education at the forefront of its overarching objectives.

Table 31 Strategy 5.1: Set up a comprehensive institutional inspection and supervision system

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Targets
Conduct research on quality assurance and educational effectiveness	Proportion of teachers practicing effective teaching practices	TBD	TBD
Support the roll out of nationwide institutional inspection and supervision			
Develop inspection framework and guidance for TTIs, TVET, CECs.	Learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy in lower primary	TBD	TBD
Train 3,334 inspectors and supervisors in inspection and supervision.			
Orient 6,287 headteachers in inspection & supervision	Learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy and upper primary	TBD	TBD

Digitalize the inspection & supervision data system	Learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy in secondary		
Conduct comparative study tour to relevant countries on quality of general education.		TBD	TBD

In addition to the nationally led research, the plan will support the procurement of equipment to facilitate the mobility of staff at the headquarters as well as inspectors and supervisors. This will include the purchase and distribution of two vehicles, 1,550 motorcycles targeting supervisors and inspectors and at the Payams, as well as three motorboats for areas that are easier to access by water. The plan will also support the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) to finalize and digitize and inspection framework and guidance for TTIs, TVET, CECs. To ensure effective adoption and implementation of the inspection framework, the plan will ensure the training of more than 3,000 inspectors and supervisors on school supervision. The inspectors and supervisors will in turn orient more than 6,000 school heads on school-based inspection and pedagogical support to teachers. To ensure that all the efforts and reforms in school inspection and pedagogical support are continuously improved, the plan will support study tours by inspectors from MoGEI and state representatives in countries that South Sudan looks up to. The focus of the visits will be for the DQAS to observe emerging knowledge and trends in inspection and how these could improve the management of teaching and learning in South Sudan.

4.2.3.2 Strategy 5.2: Expand the National examination and Assessment systems.

The NEC oversees the administration of examinations within the formal education systems in the South Sudan. In the context of the CBC, which has been extended to encompass the non-formal education sector, the council bears the responsibility for conducting CBC. It is worth noting that this assessment is recommended to adopt a formative approach, deviating from the traditional summative assessments typically conducted at the culmination of primary and secondary education levels. This shift towards formative assessment necessitates the formulation of a curriculum development policy, laying the groundwork for the incorporation of formative assessment practices. This policy will serve as a precursor to the development of a comprehensive formative assessment policy framework, supplemented by corresponding guidelines.

The plan will facilitate the development of these crucial policies, ensuring that assessments align seamlessly with the curriculum delivery and that continuous learning assessments contribute substantively to the eventual educational outcomes achieved by students upon completing an educational cycle. To facilitate formative assessments on a national scale, the plan will facilitate the establishment of a National Learning Outcomes Assessment System. This system will encompass periodic assessments conducted across various stages of the general education spectrum. These assessments will be carried out on all learners or selectively sampled to represent the country or specific regions.

Moreover, the plan will provide support to the NEC in undertaking Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) and Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), targeting specific grades to be identified during the

plan's implementation phase. These assessments will also extend to measuring teacher competencies, using similar evaluation tools as employed for students. This undertaking represents a pivotal step in piloting the transition towards the new assessment paradigm, ensuring its effectiveness and alignment with contemporary educational needs and standards.

Since its inception, the examination council has successfully administered examinations in formal education stream, albeit amidst operational challenges that have garnered significant attention. To enhance the council's operational capabilities, the plan will allocate resources for equipment upgrades, including the establishment of an official council website. Additionally, investments will be made in acquiring multi-functional photocopiers to reduce reliance on external and foreign printing services, procuring desktop computers to support digitalization and automation initiatives, developing, and implementing an authentication tracking application for certifications, ensuring stable internet connectivity, and facilitating the provision of essential office supplies and materials. These strategic measures underscore the commitment to enhancing the council's efficiency and effectiveness in managing examinations and related functions.

Table 32 Strategy 5.2: Expand the National examination and Assessment systems

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Develop a National Curriculum Development Policy	Proportion of Schools undertaking formative assessment	0%	100%
Develop a National Assessment Policy and Guidelines			
Establish and development a National Learning Outcomes Assessment System			
Conduct EGMA and EGRA (including teacher knowledge competence)			
Equip the Examinations Secretariat with the required office equipment and tools, internet, and stationery (including the inclusive unit)			
Train 100 staff of the examination secretariat in examinations management processes			
Train 260 examiners, in examinations management processes			
Train teachers on classroom based and formative assessments			
Benchmark assessment practices against international and regional practices			

Alongside the establishment of a formative assessment framework and the creation of an operational system for its implementation, the plan will facilitate capacity development initiatives and systematic dissemination of formative assessment practices to educational institutions. To achieve these objectives, the plan will conduct training sessions for a total of 100 staff members from the examination secretariat, with a focus on enhancing their proficiency in examination management to drive operational efficiency. Additionally, 260 examiners will undergo specialized training in formative assessment techniques. This

cadre of trained personnel will subsequently cascade formative assessment methodologies to teachers at the grassroots level, ensuring consistent and standardized policy implementation throughout the country.

4.2.4   Policy Goal 6: Improve teaching and learning environment as well as the physical and psychological wellbeing of learners, teachers, and school staff.

4.2.4.1   Strategy 6.1: Promote policies that make the school environment conducive for learning.

The ESA 2022 underscored critical deficiencies within the educational landscape across the country. Teaching and learning environment across the various levels of education is in serious want. These challenges can, in part, be attributed to longstanding standards that have governed the sector for over a decade, necessitating adjustments to align with evolving patterns. The plan will support the revision of the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Indicators (BRMSIs), with a specific focus on accommodating critical issues such as climate change adaptation and enhancing school resilience, including disaster risk reduction measures within the standards framework. Upon validation, the revised BRMSI will be printed and disseminated to educational institutions nationwide.

Additionally, noteworthy progress has been made by the Directorate of Basic and Secondary Education in formulating a Teachers' Code of Conduct and will be moving to the next step of dissemination. The plan will capitalize on existing teacher training platforms, such as curriculum-focused training, teacher upgrading initiatives, or CPD programs, to ensure widespread dissemination of the Code of Conduct among teachers.

In response to the challenges encountered within the school feeding program, the MoGEI has initiated a home-grown school feeding program, which leverages community awareness and sensitization campaigns. This approach encourages schools to cultivate their own food by obtaining land from local communities, thus reducing dependence on external entities like the World Food Programme (WFP) for food supply. To further reinforce the adoption of this self-sustaining solution, the plan will support a nationwide awareness campaign across all States and Administrative Areas (AAs). The objective is to motivate schools to allocate resources and establish school garden programs, fostering self-reliance and sustainability in their food supply systems.

Table 33 Strategy 6.1: Promote policies that make the school environment conducive for learning

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Review the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards indicators (BRMSIs)	Proportion of schools meeting the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Indicators	TBD	TBD
Support and strengthen implementation of the Home-Grown School Feeding Program, paying special attention to the most at-risk locations			

4.2.4.2 Strategy 6.2: Provide support for minimum school requirements.

The Child-Friendly Environment Tool, developed through a collaborative effort between UNICEF and the MoGEI, serves as a valuable instrument for evaluating the learner-centric nature of schools, effectively gauging the overall conduciveness of the learning environment. Considering the findings highlighted in the ESA 2022 report, spanning areas such as school infrastructure, access to water, sanitation, electricity, and safety, the plan will support the assessment of schools through the Child-Friendly Environment Tool, to establish the degree of compliance across educational institutions. Furthermore, the plan will support the enhancement of facilities and amenities within identified schools. This includes making selected schools accessible and accommodating for both abled and disabled learners, ensuring that the physical infrastructure aligns with the participation needs of all students. Additionally, the plan facilitate dialogue with Education Management Information System (EMIS) unit to explore the integration of school child-friendliness assessments into the annual schools' census tools, thereby fostering sustainability in the assessment process.

Table 34 Strategy 6.2: Provide support for minimum school requirements

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Rehabilitate and construct water, sanitation and electricity facilities ensuring that they are climate resilient	Proportion of schools that have access to safe water for drinking	68%	77%
	Proportion of schools that have a reliable source of electricity	2%	31%
	Proportion of schools that have functional sanitation facilities	48%	77%

4.2.4.3 Strategy 6.3: Provide emotional and mental wellbeing support for students and staff and promote co-curricular activities for peaceful coexistence.

In partnership with the Ministry of Health, the plan will facilitate the development of comprehensive training materials and guidelines for the provision of assistance to learners and staff affected by mental health challenges and in need of psychosocial support. These guidelines will serve as a foundational resource for the plan's initiatives. The plan will also support the training of about thirty Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) cluster members, comprising two representatives from each state/administrative area and four from the MoGEI. These trained individuals will subsequently train an estimated 1,500 teachers on the essential aspects of mental health and psychosocial support. As part of a comprehensive strategy, the plan will incorporate mental health and psychosocial support into the curricula of NTTIs and CECs to ensure that teachers trained at these institutions will have the necessary competencies to effectively assist learners and staff experiencing mental health challenges.

Recognizing the pivotal role of co-curricular activities in fostering holistic development and well-being among both students and staff within educational institutions, the plan will champion the development of a comprehensive co-curricular policy. This will include review of the current Physical Education and Sports Policy, with the objective of producing a more robust policy framework. The envisaged policy is expected to provide clear directives regarding the establishment and effective functioning of school clubs, thereby affording students a platform to articulate their concerns not only within the educational context but also in their extracurricular lives.

Furthermore, the plan will extend support to schools through the provision of an inclusive assortment of sports equipment, including items such as sports balls, nets, athletics gear, and ECE kits, among others. In addition to the policy and equipment provisions, the initiative will facilitate the implementation of a one-time games circuit at the state level, national and regional level of school games. In a conflict context, games not only promote physical health, mental well-being, teamwork, discipline, and character development but also offers a vital platform for peaceful coexistence. By bringing together children and youth from diverse backgrounds and conflicting perspectives, sports encourage mutual understanding, tolerance, and conflict resolution skills, contributing to a more harmonious learning environment, which is the hallmark of the current curriculum for South Sudan.

Table 35 Strategy 6.3: Provide emotional and mental wellbeing support for students and staff and promote co-curricular activities for peaceful coexistence

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Train and orient teachers in mental health and primary and secondary psychosocial support services	Percentage of schools with effective Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GRM) in place	0%	100%
Develop a co-curricular policy including review of the physical education and sports, including guidelines for establishment of school clubs			
Supply recreational equipment to schools	Percentage of schools reporting reduced cases of school related violence	N/A	100%
Conduct school games competitions (State, national and regional levels)			

4.2.5   Policy goal 7: Improve labour market relevance of TVET.

4.2.5.1   *Strategy 7.1: Increase the capacity of TVET trainers.*

The 2022 ESA revealed critical deficiencies within the TVET system, most notably the acute shortage of qualified TVET trainers. This strategy will establish an enabling environment for the pre-service training of TVET instructors, thereby strengthening the human resources within the TVET ecosystem. It will also create opportunities for the upskilling of current tutors. A principal component of this strategy involves the establishment of a TVET trainers training center in Juba to provide pedagogical training courses and professional development opportunities for teachers and instructors in the TVET sector. The envisaged institution will be structured like a university, ensuring the effective execution of its pivotal role.

In tandem with the establishment of the TVET trainers training center, the plan will provide pre-service scholarships to 400 prospective instructors pursuing diploma and degree programs aligned with South Sudan's TVET offers. This will not only build capacity of the benefiting instructors but will also be instrumental in pioneering access to the TVET trainers center. During the initial phases of operationalization, the country may explore collaboration with neighbouring countries to engage external experts in the initial training processes. This collaborative approach will enrich the training programs and infuse diverse perspectives into the curriculum.

The plan also underscores the significance of continuous capacity development for TVET trainers. To this end, it will support the organization of regular workshops and seminars for the exchange of knowledge, with a focus on management, tracer studies, evaluations in TVET, TVET-specific planning, and technological advancements. Furthermore, the plan will facilitate annual internal knowledge exchange visits, enabling approximately 60 TVET instructors to engage with their counterparts in respective TVET colleges. Additionally, it will sponsor learning tours for 30 TVET managers and inspectors to countries renowned for their expertise in TVET, including Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, India, and Japan.

Underpinning these efforts is the commitment to strengthen the capacity of TVET human resources. The plan ambitiously aims to recruit nearly 2,200 TVET personnel, with a particular emphasis on inclusion by reserving quotas for female teachers and individuals with disabilities across various training sectors. This approach will address the critical deficiencies within the TVET system.

The 2022 ESA revealed several weaknesses in the TVET system, including the limited availability of TVET trainers, and for the existing trainers, a decent share is not qualified to the expected levels. This strategy will support the creation of an environment for the pre-service training of TVET trainers, expanding the human resources in the TVET ecosystem and providing opportunities for upgrading/upskilling existing tutors as outlined in the activities below.

Table 36 Strategy 7.1: Increase the capacity of TVET trainers

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Establish a National TVET Teacher Training Centre	Proportion of qualified TVET instructors (according to minimum requirements)	0%	100%
Provide pre-service scholarships to prospective TVET instructors			
Organise regular workshops and seminars for knowledge sharing.			
Organize external exchange visits for knowledge sharing in TVET systems			
Recruit 2,173 TVET trainers to match expansion of TVET			

4.2.5.2 Strategy 7.2: Promote the development and roll-out of CBT curricula in key employment-generating trades in cooperation with the private sector.

The sector has successfully concluded the development of the Competence-Based Training (CBT) curriculum for level 1, enabling trainees to engage in modularized training. As part of an overarching effort to enhance the TVET landscape in the country while promoting lifelong learning, GESP will facilitate the

development of levels 2 through 8 of the CBT curricula. Beyond trade-specific modules, the plan will prioritize the integration of disaster risk reduction approaches into the CBT curriculum, ensuring the sustainability of measures against challenges such as climate change and conflict. Furthermore, the plan will expand the TVET curriculum to include trades and sectors like environment, agriculture and food security, livestock and fisheries, wildlife and tourism, irrigation, water resources, and trade and industry. This will also encompass the training of 500 instructors from various TVET sectors in the implementation of the CBT framework. To ensure the effective implementation of the CBT curriculum, the plan will provide extensive support, including the provision of training tools, equipment, and diverse learning materials, encompassing both consumable and non-consumable items, to 17 designated TVET centres and schools distributed across the ten states and three administrative areas.

The TVET system in South Sudan has been marked by a notably weak transition from education to the work. It is evident that the system does not adequately prepare trainees for the available job opportunities, particularly for the country's youth. To address this issue, the plan proposes the implementation of structured apprenticeship programs, offering TVET graduates a well-defined path from school to work. Part of this initiative involves the development and dissemination of apprenticeship guidelines. The dissemination will entail publication and distribution of 5,000 copies of guidelines across all ten states and three administrative areas, including the engagement of the National TVET Ad-hoc Coordination Committee (NTACC) stakeholders. Additionally, the plan aims to enhance the quality of TVET by developing inspection guidelines and circulating 6,000 copies among various stakeholders in the TVET sector. Furthermore, the plan intends to provide training to 150 inspectors specialized in the evaluation of TVET training across diverse sectors.

Table 37 Strategy 7.2: Promote the development and roll-out of CBT curricula in key employment-generating trades in cooperation with the private sector

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Finalise development of the CBT curricula for levels 2-8 to accommodate lifeline learning	Proportion of TVET centres implementing the competency-based training curriculum	N/A	100%
Train 500 TVET instructors on the competency-based curriculum			
Provide capacity development and upskilling TVET instructors			
Provide training and learning materials, tools, equipment, and machineries to TVET centres			
Develop and disseminate apprenticeship and training guidelines			
Conduct quality assurance in TVET Centres			

4.2.5.3   Strategy 7.3: Improve TVET linkages with the labour market.

To ensure the alignment of TVET programs with the dynamic demands of the labour market, a comprehensive data-driven approach is imperative. This entails the generation of extensive data pertaining to the broader labour market landscape and the existing TVET programs within the system. To facilitate this, a robust solution will be implemented in the form of a national TVET Management Information System (TVET-MIS) seamlessly integrated into the Ministry of General Education and

Instruction's Education Management Information System (MoGEI EMIS). The TVET MIS will serve as the central hub for the systematic collection, collation, and analysis of all TVET-related data. Moreover, as part of this initiative, a statistician will be recruited at the national level. This expert will play a pivotal role in refining data collection instruments and collaborating closely with relevant authorities within the MoGEI to ensure the harmonization of TVET-MIS with the existing EMIS infrastructure used in basic and secondary education. Recognizing the significance of comprehensive labour market assessments for informed decision-making, the plan will further support a national annual labour market evaluation. This underscores a commitment to data-driven excellence, thereby fostering the enhancement of TVET program quality and labour market relevance.

Additionally, there is a notable absence of linkages between TVET centres and the labour market, particularly in terms of trainee and apprenticeship programs. To address this issue, the plan will train TVET center managers on resource mobilization and networking. The training will include motions in the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships with private centres to create training opportunities and facilitate shared facility usage. This training will be conducted at the state level twice within the plan's timeframe, thereby equipping managers with the capacity to forge and maintain partnerships within the private sector.

Table 38 Strategy 7.3: Improve TVET linkages with the labour market

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Establish a National TVET- MIS	Number of TVET annual reports being produced	0	5
Conduct labour market assessments			
Conduct TVET tracer studies and evaluation			
Build capacity of TVET Centre Managers on partnership building	Proportion of TVET centres with private sector partnerships	0%	85%

4.3 Education financing and governance

4.3.1 Policy Goal 8: Increase domestic public financing to education.

4.3.1.1 Strategy 8.1: Strengthen cooperation between education and legislative structures of the government.

MoGEI will not be able to achieve an increase in education financing alone. Rather, it will be necessary for it to engage actors outside the education sector, particularly bodies and policies that frame and influence government priorities. This includes the parliament, specifically the Parliamentary Committee on Education, state governors, the private sector, civil society, the vice-presidents and key laws and policies. MoGEI will utilize its position to advocate with these actors through the introduction of regular meetings between MoGEI and key actors, increasing lobbying and engagement activities, taking greater advantage

of opportunities to present financing challenges in the education sector and reconsidering the policies and laws that dictate financial commitments to education.

The Parliamentary Education Committee is made up of parliamentarians and serves as a key body for advocating the education agenda at the legislative level. Currently, there does not exist any institutionalized communication between the committee and MoGEI. The introduction of annual meetings between the two through the GESP will allow MoGEI to express any concerns related to both budget allocations during the budget preparation cycle, as well as the timely release of allocated funds. Emphasis during these conversations will be given to the release of chapter three funds (development expenditure) as well as EMIS funds as these have been deemed to be priorities for MoGEI, as well as areas which have previously seen exceptionally low budget execution. Meetings will be conducted annually and will involve the highest levels of MoGEI leadership, namely the Undersecretary, the Minister, and any other individuals deemed to be relevant for specific meetings.

As the Parliamentary Committee on Education is the predominant body for advocating the education agenda at the legislative level, it is pivotal that members are engaged with educational realities to be able to communicate needs to parliament most accurately. To strengthen this engagement, members of the committee will be involved in MoGEI monitoring activities such as project visits or emergency-needs assessments twice per-year throughout the plan period. The utility of engaging the parliamentary committee more closely in MoGEI activities was already tested during the ESA process during which committee members were involved in the report validation. This engagement led to the commitment of the committee to advocating for MoGEI at the parliamentary level and provided them with the appropriate knowledge and facts needed to do so.

Beyond parliament, achieving increased educational financing will necessitate engaging the highest levels of political power, including the Vice-Presidents, President, and Ministers. The GEAR is a key forum through which these officials are engaged in the evaluation of the education sector in the presentation of key statistics, as well as information regarding budget execution and funding gaps. The GEAR is particularly relevant for engaging the vice-president for services cluster under which education falls, who can carry influence with the president with regards to budget execution and allocation, and with whom MoGEI has otherwise limited contact. Conducting a GEAR will therefore provide an opportunity for information sharing with the Vice-President and subsequently the President, as well as other high-level political figures regarding the current state of the education sector and the associated need for sufficient financing. The national GEAR will be accompanied with an annual state-level GEAR which will provide an opportunity for state and administrative areas to also express their concerns regarding timely release of transfer funds.

While budget execution is controlled by the Ministry of Finance, the private sector, civil society, and development partners also have a key role to play in advocating for greater domestic financing to education and improved MoGEI budget execution. The plan intends to leverage the soft power of these organizations as well as prominent community leaders to put pressure on parliament to ensure that education is prioritized in both budget allocations and executions. MoGEI will be responsible for mobilizing these actors through two meetings per year organized by the department of partner coordination, bringing

together development partners, the private sector and civil society. During these exchanges, MoGEI will provide relevant updates on funding executions and current areas of greatest need so these elements can be used in advocacy efforts by associated organizations and individuals in their communications with government contacts.

The challenge of education financing is not limited to the national level. Rather, the ESA identified a lack of financial commitments in the budgets of state and administrative areas governments to general education. As a result, the plan will seek to improve engagement with state-level officials regarding their responsibilities in education financing. The Governor's Forum, held on an annual basis, is one of the few occasions wherein state governors meet with national administrations to discuss pertinent national issues and priorities and therefore provides a key opportunity for MoGEI to communicate with the highest-political leadership at the decentralized levels. In previous years, MoGEI has been asked to make presentations highlighting key messages concerning education to be communicated to governors. During the plan period, MoGEI will utilize this annual audience with state governors to advocate for increased state-level financial allocations to education. This will include an emphasis and reiteration of state-level responsibilities to financing education as spelled out in the Education Act to ensure that states are contributing their fair share to the financing of the sector.

Finally, advocacy and the message of MoGEI in terms of improving educational financing needs to have a basis in law and policy. Currently, the predominant policy guiding the education sector is the Education Act of 2012 which sets the target that 10% of all government expenditure be allocated to general education, which is well below the internationally recommended standards of 15-20%. As such, to reach the levels of allocation targeted under the GESP, the Act first needs to be revised upwards to act as a tool for advocacy. In reviewing the Act, the process will first begin within the Ministry itself which will propose an amendment to the Act, specifically referring to Chapter 5. This amendment will be reviewed by relevant stakeholders before being put forward by the education committee in parliament for approval by the judiciary which will pass the amendment into law. The review of the act will be prioritized during the first years of the plan to ensure the necessary financial commitments for effective plan implementation are made available as quickly as possible.

Table 39 Strategy 8.1: Strengthen cooperation between education and legislative structures of the government

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Introduce annual meetings between the parliamentary committee on education and MoGEI	Education recurrent expenditure as a proportion of government recurrent expenditure	5%	20%
Conduct joint monitoring activities with the parliamentary committee on education			
Conduct a general education annual review			
Lobby and conduct advocacy with parliamentarians in collaborations with civil			

society, development partners and the private sector			
Present education financing gaps and responsibilities at the annual governors' forum			
Review and amend financial allocation target in the Education Act (2012) to align with international standards			

4.3.1.2   Strategy 8.2: Review the distribution of funds for general education.

The ESA revealed an inequitable distribution of funds at the decentralized levels, with the amount allocated per student and per school varying greatly between states and administrative areas. This arises due the nationally led budget development process through which transfers to states are based on total number of schools and total number of counties. As such, the current transfer formula does not consider the total number of students enrolled nor the unique characteristics of states such as their size, rurality, and risk index. Furthermore, MoGEI financing was seen to be concentrated on salary expenditure, with no capitation grants or crisis response and disaster prevention budget present. The GESP will therefore strengthen the provision of educational services by ensuring more equitable funding for decentralized administrations through a review of the transfer formula and a strengthening of their capacities in budget creation, while also considering the expansion of non-salary and disaster-risk reduction expenditure.

Addressing the question of the value and method of transfers will be two-fold. Firstly, the transfer formula itself will be reviewed to ensure greater equity. This review will be conducted through a meeting of the technical working group on Education Transfer Monitoring Committees (ETMCs), the Budget Technical Workshop Group and the Ministry of Finance. These bodies will meet before the budget formulation period to consider how the transfer guidelines can be adapted to consider additional factors including the introduction of a supplementary transfer for most at-risk states (as identified in the ESA). This review will be conducted annually to ensure that financing is adapted to the most current situation and will therefore be integrated to the currently operational annual review of the transfer policy. In parallel to the review of the transfer formula, states and administrative areas will be capacitated to develop their own budgets so that funding can further be better aligned with needs. This will involve training for finance staff from all states and administrative areas in how to create budgets according to ceilings (pre-set by the new transfer formula) and will be conducted twice in the plan-period. The training will also serve as an assessment of the appropriate conditions for program-based budgeting, and if conditions are deemed to be supportive, will include training on this aspect as well.

The ESA revealed little MoGEI spending outside of salary expenditure. This included no spending on capitation grants which are awarded according to a fixed amount per student and per school depending on the level of education. Under the current system, the GESS project is responsible for allocating these grants to secondary schools, while the government assumes responsibility for primary schools. Throughout

the ESA and ESP consultation process, it was identified that there is a need for capitation grants to be more adaptable and variable according to different contexts. For example, the cost of materials for school infrastructure upgrading is not the same for schools in rural areas as for those in cities. In addition to capitation grants, the GESS project also distributes cash-transfers to girls in P5 onwards. The results of the ESA suggest that these are having a positive impact on female retention as is observed in the narrowing of the access gender-gap from P5. As such, the ESP consultation process suggested the need to consider extending cash-transfers to the first grade of primary, and furthermore, consider whether cash-transfers could be integrated into the broader capitation grant structure (for example with schools receiving more funding for the total number of girls enrolled). To conduct the review of capitation grants and cash-transfer guidelines, meetings will be held with partners and stakeholders which will consider the most effective method to adjust financing structures including the introduction of a variable funding mechanism according to school characteristics and the expansion of cash-transfers for female students before P5.

As part of an expansion of non-salary expenditure, South Sudan has a need for flexible, adaptable, and quickly deployable funding to prepare for and respond to the various risks its faces, namely in terms of flooding, drought, and conflict. This is becoming increasingly urgent at the effects of climate change continue to compound. Currently, the MoGEI budget structure lacks a specific budget or allocation for disaster prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery and crises affected schools are reliant on redistribution efforts from their respective states or administrative areas or, are left to rely on partners for financial support. To remedy this situation, the ESP intends to create a reserve or contingency budget that can be used not only to provide funding quickly to states and administrative areas affected by disasters (response and early recovery) but also to implement climate change adaptation measures (prevention measures). These measures will make it possible to increase the resilience of the education system and this minimize the effects of extreme weather events on education. This budget line will be created by the Department of Finance and Planning in annual MoGEI budget which is submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP) and will be reviewed annually in joint meetings.

Table 40 Strategy 8.2: Review the distribution of funds for general education

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Review education transfer formula including capitation grant formula to better respond to needs and improve equity	Education recurrent expenditure as a proportion of government recurrent expenditure	15%	20%
Train MoGEI, SMoGEIs, three AAs and CEDs on budget preparation and execution			
Review the cash-transfers policy including the amounts			
Create a reserve/contingency budget for disaster prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery			

4.3.1.3 Strategy 8.3: Strengthen financial cooperation and coordination between MoGEI, MoFP and Public Service

A key issue in terms of education financing identified in the ESA was the low levels of education budget execution, especially in comparison to other sub-sectors and the overall government budget. MoGEI will need to work closely with the Ministry of Finance and Planning as well as the Ministry of Public Service to improve budget execution as they are ultimately responsible for the timely release of funds. The involvement of the Ministry of Public service is key in ensuring satisfactory levels of execution of salary funds, particularly adherence to new salary scale, while the Ministry of Finance is responsible for the execution of all non-salary expenditure. To promote the timely release of funds and overall budget execution, MoGEI will improve coordination and communication with these two key ministries and will also work to build mutual trust through strengthened financial transparency.

Communication and linkages between the financing ministries and MoGEI are sporadic and as such, the ESP will introduce bi-monthly financial review meetings between MoGEI, MoFP and the MoPS where progress in terms of budget execution can be reviewed. These meetings, held between high-level stakeholders including the Undersecretary and the Director General of Finance and Planning within MoGEI, will serve as an opportunity for MoGEI to advocate for the timely release of funds from both MoFP and MoPS.

Throughout the ESP consultation process, one of the underlying issues behind the low levels of budget execution in education identified was low levels of trust in MoGEI from the MoFP and MoPS due to a lack of transparency and accountability. Following the introduction of reforms and capacity building aimed at increasing accountability detailed in strategy four, two public expenditure reviews and tracking surveys will be conducted over the plan period to demonstrate the positive effects of reforms on financial transparency. These reviews will therefore help to build trust between MoGEI and MoFP and MoPS and increase the likelihood of the timely release of allocated funds.

Table 41 Strategy 8.3: Strengthen financial cooperation and coordination between MoGEI, MoFP and Public Service

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Introduce bi-monthly financial review meetings between MoGEI and MoFP and MoPS	Improved proportion of salary transfer released on time	25%	100%
Conduct a public education expenditure review every two years	Improved proportion of capitation grants released on time	15%	100%

4.3.1.4 Strategy 8.4: Strengthen financial accountability and public fiscal management systems.

The Education Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) conducted in 2021 revealed critical issues in terms of the accountability of funds and a lack of strong public fiscal management systems, particularly in the process of decentralization to the level of states and administrative areas. The ESA analysis confirmed these concerns, with data regarding budget execution at the state and administrative area levels remaining elusive. This lack of accountability was further observed to apply to teachers' salaries, with concerns about transparency therefore permeating throughout the system. The GESP will address these concerns by

strengthening existing financial accountability systems and public fiscal management systems through capacity building and resource mobilization and introducing a budget performance dashboard.

MoGEI has already begun to respond to some of concerns regarding transparency and accountability raised in the PETS through the creation of State Education Transfer Monitoring Committees (SETMCs). These bodies, composed of eight members, have recently been set up at the state-level and are responsible for monitoring the reception and execution of transfers received from MoGEI. While SETMCs have been provided with initial training, there is a need to provide continuous training as members change and new systems or policies are introduced, particularly any reviews to the transfer formula as are envisaged under strategy two. These trainings will be conducted twice in the plan period by staff from the central administration who will travel to states and administrative areas. Furthermore, the GESP consultation revealed that while SETMCs are in existence in principle in all states, they currently are not functioning as initially envisioned due to a lack of resources and incentivization. The GESP will therefore introduce a monthly allowance for each state and AA specifically designated for the SETMCs, which will be provided conditional on the submission of a monthly SETMC report, which can be used for transportation and other logistical costs related to SETMCS. This conditional funding alongside with continuous training will facilitate SETMCs to conduct their tasks efficiently, namely in the monitoring of expenditure at the decentralized level and the communication of this information to MoGEI.

To date, ETMCs have been created only at the state level. However, MoGEI has also planned to establish them at the county level where they will be responsible for conducting parallel functions as at the state. The establishment of County Education Transfer Monitoring Committees (CETMCs) under the GESP will involve first the selection and training of CETMC members based on materials and guidelines developed for the SETMCs. These trainings will be conducted by members of the SETMCs of the respective states who will also be responsible for conducting oversight. Two trainings in each county will be conducted in the first year for the CETMCs to ensure the bodies understand their roles and responsibilities, followed by a refresher training once in the plan period. CETMCs will similarly be allocated a monthly allowance to cover operational costs including transportation, which will be paid by the relevant SMoGEIs conditional on the submission of a monthly CETMC report.

In addition to state and county ETMCs, financial transparency and accountability will be improved through the harmonization of financial processes and strengthening of capacity in their utilization amongst state and administrative area MoGEI's and county education departments. This will include training on the use of paysheets and the creation of a digital payroll aligned with the South Sudan Public Payroll System. Digitization at the state level will allow for the creation of a unified payroll which will also support teacher management and distribution efforts conceptualized under the quality priority programme. Training will also be provided on the budget tracking tool which will be used by administrations to track their monthly spending and who will then be responsible for submitting this to MoGEI. These trainings will engage the state or administrative area DG of finance and DG of planning as well as state level payroll managers and county-level senior inspectors. Trainings will bring together these actors at the state level to receive training from central MoGEI staff twice throughout the plan period.

In addition to capacity building at the decentralized level, yearly trainings led by external facilitators will also be provided to the national department of finance including accountants and auditors to build their capacities on financial accountability and public fiscal management systems. This training will be conducted once through the plan period at the national level and will work to strengthen ongoing Public Finance Management (PFM) reforms. Furthermore, a digital budget performance dashboard will be created by an external consultant wherein expenditure and allocations from both central and decentralized levels can be presented and updated in real time.

Financial transparency in South Sudan is hampered by its weak banking sector, which suffered significantly during years of conflict. For example, the public expenditure review noted a limited availability of bank accounts amongst county and Payam education departments as well as schools and teachers leading to bottlenecks in the flow of funds. Furthermore, consultations during the GESP revealed that states must pay money transfer service providers to physically deliver salaries to counties with these fees thereby being deducted from salaries received. To ensure teachers and other education officials at decentralized levels received their salaries in full, an additional budget line for cash transfer agent fees will be introduced for areas that are not currently serviced by banks. This fee, which can be as high as 18% of the total amount to be transferred, will be included in budgets so that it is not deducted from the received amount.

Table 42 Strategy 8.4: Strengthen financial accountability and public fiscal management systems

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Provide refresher trainings to the state education transfer monitoring committees	Proportion of states and administrative areas with external audit reports	0%	100%
Operationalize and facilitate state education transfer monitoring committees			
Establish county education transfer monitoring committees in all counties			
Operationalize and facilitate county education transfer monitoring committees	Proportion of states and administrative areas submitting returns	70%	100%
Build capacity of SMoGEIs, AAs and CEDs on financial reporting including the South Sudan Electronic Payroll System, paysheets and the budget tracking tool			
Strengthen the capacity of the department of finance and key personnel in financial oversight and public fiscal management	Proportion of counties submitting returns	0%	100%
Introduce a budget performance dashboard			
Introduce a budget for cash transfer agent fees for salary payments in non-serviced areas			

4.3.2   Policy Goal 9: Improve planning and effective coordination practices.

4.3.2.1   *Strategy 9.1: Enhance the capacity of the Ministry's in data analysis and planning including crisis-sensitivity.*

The ESA identified an underutilization of data to inform strategic planning as well as a lack of micro-level planning, particularly at the decentralized levels. Additionally, existing plans were seen to lack crisis-sensitivity, meaning activities had inadequate levels of adaptability and flexibility to meet the challenges of conflict and climate-change present in South Sudan[2]. As a result, the GESP will improve data analysis and crisis-sensitive planning capacities of departments at central and decentralized levels through capacity building and will further introduce coordinated planning processes.

Improving planning capacities necessitates the strengthening of data analysis abilities to ensure that plans are evidence-based. Therefore, capacity building trainings will be provided, focusing on data analysis and the importance of data in planning processes. These trainings will function under a cascading model whereby the national team will first be trained by external facilitators before disseminating this knowledge through trainings at the state level, which will be composed of state and select country representatives. Data analysis and processing trainings will be conducted on an annual basis to ensure that staff competencies are consistently being developed in line with emerging data quality challenges and new analysis tools.

Training on data analysis will be complemented by training on strategic planning including crisis-sensitive planning to ensure that analysed data translates into actionable plans. Trainings will be held twice within the plan period and will again follow a cascading structure by which national staff are first trained by international experts on crisis-sensitive educational planning, before travelling to the state to conduct trainings utilizing this knowledge. In addition, capacity building will be delivered to states through national facilitators on the development of annual work plans. These events will be conducted yearly and will ensure active engagement of state representatives in the design of annual workplans aligned with the national workplan to ensure improved coordination and collaboration. Finally, the directorate of planning will conduct study and exposure visits abroad to engage in knowledge sharing with other countries in planning, data analysis and processing. These visits will be needs-based according to identified areas and will be conducted once per year within the plan period.

Table 43 Strategy 9.1: Enhance the capacity of the Ministry's in data analysis and planning including crisis-sensitivity

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Strengthen capacity of planning staff at MoGEI, SMoGEIs and AA in data analysis and processing		46%	100%

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[2] Crisis sensitive planning (CSP) strives to overcome inequity and exclusion in education while encouraging a culture of risk awareness across all levels of the education system, thus ensuring that all education actors can anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Strengthen the capacity of planning staff on strategic planning and management at MoGEI, SMoE and AAs including crisis-sensitive planning	Execution rate of the budget of general education		
Build the capacity of MoGEI, SMoGEIs and AAs in annual workplan development, prioritization, and alignment			
Conduct needs-based study and exposure visits for the national directorate of planning			

4.3.2.2 Strategy 9.2: Improve monitoring and evaluation of schools and sector policies and plans including disaster risk reduction.

Data processing and analysis as outlined in strategy five requires a basis of high quality and reliable data with good coverage. The ESA report revealed many issues with the quality and coverage of data of the Annual School Census (ASC), with certain counties not having any schools enumerated due to accessibility issues, and questionnaires missing the inclusion of key indicators such as those related to disaster risk reduction and climate change. Outside of the school census, the ESA was unable to gather data from any other continuous monitoring activities which can provide deeper insight into the everyday functioning of schools. The GESP will address questions of quality and coverage through activities targeting the root of challenges including through producing guidelines, decentralizing data collection, conducting regular school monitoring, and the creation of a harmonized data platform.

The annual education census is the backbone of most education management information systems. Currently, South Sudan has conducted censuses sporadically, with the most recent conduct in 2021, proceeded by one in 2018. Throughout the plan period, a census will be conducted on an annual basis, and furthermore, will move to a decentralized system of data collection to improve efficiency and coverage. The new decentralized system of data collection, which will begin in 2024, will be implemented through the training of two state statistics officers per state and one county-senior inspectors per county as enumerators. Trainings will capacitate enumerators on the use of the data collection tool as well as associated policies and will be held once per year before the data collection phase. Trainings will be grouped into two regional workshops and will be facilitated by national EMIS staff. State and county enumerators will further be supported by national level staff in a supervisory role and by Payam education supervisors, who will aid with school location and access, throughout the data collection phase, which will take place over the period of four- to six-weeks. In addition, enumerators will receive appropriate equipment including motorcycles for school visits, tablets for the collection of data, power banks and rain protection.

To support the decentralization of data collection activities including the annual school census, MoGEI will develop a policy outlining key roles and responsibilities under this new model. The new EMIS policy and strategy, which will be developed in 2024, will outline the functioning of the decentralized system and will be accompanied by data collection guidelines and enumerator manuals. These guidelines will include localized timelines for data collection that will be aligned with the seasonal realities of different regions of the country as well as a protocol for inaccessible schools to ensure higher coverage of schools in the

census. Data collection tools themselves will also be reviewed against existing tools, including those of partners, to avoid duplication and to integrate indicators related to disaster risk reduction and prevention.

Alongside nationally led school visits, continuous data collection occurs via headteachers, who are responsible for filling out various data collection tools including the school performance monitoring tool and the Child-friendly School Index. Both forms are collected by Payam education supervisors and provide information regarding school attendance, learning acquisition and overall school performance. The GESP consultation identified a need to support headteachers and Payam education supervisors in completing these forms and other monitoring tools to ensure that the data received is reliable. Training for headteachers on these tools is currently ongoing and as such, the plan makes a provision for a follow-up training to be conducted later in the plan period. Trainings will follow a cascading format through which tutors in county education centres will be trained by national staff, who will then provide training to headteachers and Payam education supervisors in their respective counties either at the county education centre or through cluster trainings conducted in schools.

To assure the quality of the data collected from decentralized offices, monitoring and evaluation representatives from MoGEI will conduct four spot monitoring visits per year in selected schools in each state and administrative area (52 total visits a year) to assess data collection practices and accuracy. The monitoring and evaluation department within the national ministry will further be furnished with appropriate materials to produce periodic reports based on these visits regarding the implementation of projects and programmes.

Beyond government activities, partners also conduct large-scale data collection in South Sudan, namely the South Sudan Attendance Monitoring System (SSAMS). However, currently, MoGEI is unable to create links between these different databases due to a lack of a harmonized school list and unique school IDs. A need was therefore identified to create a harmonized data system that brings together data sources, including the ASC and SAMSS, in one platform. This system will further utilize unique school codes so that data from various sources can be attributed to a single institution. The introduction of a harmonized data platform will be key in supporting the development of evidenced-based policies and will further aid in monitoring implementation. The technical committee for data integration will select an external consultant to develop this platform whose Terms of References (ToRs) will include training the team on the completed platform. Once the platform has been developed, it can be shared with partners allowing them to input their own data using the school codes provided.

Table 44 Strategy 9.2: Improve monitoring and evaluation of schools and sector policies and plans including disaster risk reduction

Activities	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Conduct an annual education census	Proportion of schools covered in the annual education census	75%	100%
Train AEC enumerators at decentralized levels on data collection tools			

Equip EMIS units and AEC enumerators at state, county, AA, and central levels with data collection tools			
Develop an EMIS policy and decentralization strategy including data collection guidelines, enumerator manuals and review data collection tools			
Train headteachers and education managers (Payam and county) on the use of the school performance monitoring tool and the child friendly school index			
Conduct oversight monitoring of school/education data			
Produce periodic reports on the implementation of projects and programmes			
Establish a harmonized and integrated data platform (EMIS, SAMSS, HRIs, REMIS etc.) utilizing unique school codes			

4.3.2.3 Strategy 9.3: Enhance and strengthen national and sub-national research and statistical capacities.

The decentralization of the annual school census will be accompanied by the decentralization of statistical analysis and research activities. This process will allow for the strengthening of statistical analyses and provide greater opportunities for more targeted research to inform evidence-based policy development. Currently, the work of the research and policy development unit within MoGEI is constrained to the national level and lacks adequate funding and prioritization. The lack of in-depth research on specific topics was noted through the ESA process which was largely only able to identify correlation rather than causation. As such, the GESP will seek to strengthen MoGEI's research and policy development activities through the development of a policy, strategy, and guidelines, ensuring adequate financing to conduct qualitative studies and evaluations on various educational challenges alongside the decentralization of statistical analysis and research activities.

The decentralization of the ASC calls for a parallel process of decentralization of research and statistical analysis activities. This will involve the establishment of a research and statistics unit under the department of planning and budgeting at the state and administrative area level. These units, composed of one staff, will be responsible for analysing data collected through the census, and identifying areas for further research relevant to their specific context. In addition to this process of decentralization, the national knowledge evidence and research technical working group and the monitoring and evaluation unit will be provided with capacity building so they can adequately support and supervise the activities of the states and administrative areas. This training will be conducted yearly during the plan period to solidify the new decentralized structure and will be carried out by an external facilitator.

The department of research and policy development currently does not have a strategy, plan or guidelines that outline the work and role of the department in the short-, medium- and long-term. The development of these documents will be supported by an external consultant and will undergo a validation process with

national representatives and representatives from development partners to improve coordination between the Ministry and partners on research activities. This document will also support the decentralization process and will be developed in 2024.

Under the new strengthened and decentralized system, the national research and policy development unit, in collaboration with the state and administrative areas research and statistics units will be tasked with carrying out at least one study per year aligned with identified research needs. Potential topics for these studies to be conducted under the plan period include the impact of capitation grants, curriculum implementation, reasons for female drop out and community attitudes towards education in the early years, among others.

Table 45 Strategy 9.3: Enhance and strengthen national and sub-national research and statistical capacities

Activities	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Establish research and statistics unit (under planning/budgeting) at decentralized levels	Education coordination framework fully operational	Non-operational	Operational
Strengthen the capacity of the knowledge, evidence and research technical working group and the M&E unit			
Develop a national research policy and strategy and guidelines			
Conduct qualitative studies to improve educational planning and practice			

4.3.2.4 Strategy 9.4: Enhance the capacity of the Ministry(s) in communication and coordination.

The risk analysis chapter of the ESA identified a lack of communication and coordination, both within MoGEI as well as between Ministries regarding disaster risk reduction and climate change. An overarching lack of communication between central and decentralized levels was also identified throughout the ESA particularly in chapter 4. These challenges were reflected in the uneven application of policies at the state and administrative area levels, including in the salary structure, as well as a lack of staffing capacity to carry out coordination tasks. As a result, the plan will strengthen the capacity of existing staff members within communication and coordination while also expanding the number of staff within relevant units.

The current MoGEI structure focuses on development partner coordination and does not have a dedicated person for inter or intra-ministerial communication. This was attributed as one of the reasons why information rarely trickles down from the central to the lower administrative levels. To improve this, an individual will be appointed as the internal communication and coordination focal point within the Partners Development Coordination Unit at the decentralized and central levels who will be responsible for managing communication and coordination between their respective state or administrative area and the national MoGEI. Furthermore, training will be provided for this individual as well as the Partners Development Coordination focal person, whose role will shift to solely focusing on external communications. Trainings will also extend to other representatives from states, administrative areas,

counties and MoGEI on the application of the communication framework, which was deemed to be non-operational, as well as the use of information and communication technologies.

In addition to regular communication of key policy messages, South Sudan needs to ensure that it can react to the increasing risk posed by climate change. In doing so, a focal point will be identified in all states and administrative area MoEs as well as the central MoGEI for disaster risk reduction and climate change. This will be accompanied by the establishment of a unit for disaster risk reduction at the central level through the review of the blue book to adapt the current organizational structure. These individuals will be provided with training by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MEF) and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MHADM). The MoGEI focal point will further be included in the National Early Warning Technical Group and Disaster Management convened by the MEF and the MoHA to increase knowledge sharing between the Ministries.

Table 46 Strategy 9.4: Enhance the capacity of the Ministry(s) in communication and coordination

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Appoint and train a focal person within the office of coordination for disaster risk reduction and climate change in all SMoGEIs, AAs and a unit within MoGEI	Education coordination framework fully operational	Non-operational	Operational
Build capacity of MoGEI, AAs, SMoE and CED personnel in the application of the communication framework and ICT equipment			
Strengthen capacity and expand staffing of partners development coordination unit at MoGEI, SMoGEIs and AAs			

4.3.2.5   Strategy 9.5: Strengthen internal governance and communication structures.

While communication and coordination challenges were linked to low levels of capacity in the application of frameworks on one hand, they were similarly attributed to an absence of communication tools and institutional systems on the other. This included the absence of information and communication technology tools such as computers and internet connection as well as frameworks and structures for external coordination, whether this be with partners or other Ministries. As a result, the GESP commits to the provision of ICT tools to the decentralized levels, the establishment of an early-warning system for disaster risk reduction and the creation of a centralized donor activity and finance tracking tool.

A key reason for the lack of communication and coordination between central and decentralized levels was identified through GESP consultations as a lack of internet connectivity. While some states have been provided with satellite internet by partners, the government has not committed to taking over the costs of these subscriptions once the project ends. As a result, the GESP commits to sustaining connectivity in offices where it already exists throughout the plan period, as well as establishing or upgrading internet connectivity in central, state, or administrative areas where it is currently lacking or of low quality.

In addition to internet, the GESP commits to the distribution of ICT tools to SMoGEIs, AA MoEs, County Education Department and County Education Centres. This will include desktop computers for county offices, laptop computers for state offices and the national ministry, solar power electricity systems for all state and county offices and combined printer copiers for state offices and the national ministry. These tools, supported by solar power systems with the appropriate capacity, will facilitate communication between decentralized offices and the national ministry and improve both coordination and transparency. Furthermore, the supply of ICT tools with be supported by the establishment of an ICT unit including the provision of a server to all states. This unit will be staffed by two ICT specialists who will oversee the maintenance of ICT tools and support staff in their utilization.

The ESA was able to diagnose many challenges and bottlenecks in the South Sudanese education system from a quantitative standpoint. However, the analysis was unable to consider questions of internal governance and functional operations through an institutional analysis. The GESP proposes conducting a functional analyses of governance structures which is particularly relevant for South Sudan given the fact that the current decentralized 10-state system was only recently established. Analysing the system will therefore allow for the identification of gaps and opportunities which can be built upon and addressed through a review of the Blue Book. This analysis will be conducted by an external consult who will travel to the states to conduct interviews with key informants. The results of this research will be presented to MoGEI and will include recommendations on how the current structures and systems presented in the Blue Book can be reviewed to ensure greater ministerial efficiency.

Communication and coordination were not deemed to be solely internal challenges, but rather were observed to apply to external partners as well. This was particularly true with regards to financial coordination as, while it is known that partners contribute large-amounts of off-budget financial support to the education sector in South Sudan, there is a lack of information sharing regarding financial investments as well as actions of local NGOs at state or county levels. As such, existing coordination mechanisms including the Local Education Group and the Education Donors Group will be strengthened through the introduction of a digital tracking system which will contain information regarding what type of activities are being implemented, by what partner, where, and the amount of funding allocated for these activities. This system will be developed by the Donor Coordination Technical Working Group and will be updated bi-annually in donor coordination meetings.

As mentioned in the risk analysis in the ESA, a lack of inter-ministerial coordination is increasing the barriers to implementing effective DRR and climate change adaptation strategies. More specifically, there seems to be a lack of coordination between MoGEI and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, as well as the MHADM. Although early warning systems are in place to identify a hazard three months in advance and regular meetings are also held to address the impacts of these identified hazards, MoGEI is not part of these discussions, due in part to the fact there is no focal person or unit within MoGEI responsible for DRR and climate change. With the new DRR and climate change focal points previously identified and trained, they will not only be included in these discussions, but also integrated into an inter-ministerial early warning communication chain, which would work as follows: once the MHADM identifies a hazard,

the MoGEI focal point will be alerted. The MoGEI focal point will then contact the focal points of the States/AA that will be affected by the identified hazard. Once the states are alerted, each focal point will communicate directly with the schools (principals) so that they can start implementing in advance some measures to ensure learning continuity as identified in the contingency plans to be developed under the quality priority programme.

Table 47 Strategy 9.5: Strengthen internal governance and communication structures

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Sustain and improve SVAT internet connectivity at SMoE and AA offices	Education coordination framework fully operational	Non-operational	Operational
Distribute additional ICT tools to SMoGEIs, AAs, CEDs and CECs			
Establish ICT unit at MoGEI and in all states and AAs			
Conduct a functional analysis resulting in a review of the Blue Book according to conclusions			
Establish a centralized donor funding and activities tracking system			
Establish an early warning communication system/chain between MHADM, MoGEI DRR focal points at decentralized levels			

4.3.3 Policy goal 10: Strengthen and unify TVET system governance.

4.3.3.1 *Strategy 10.1: Improve the policy and regulatory landscape of TVET including assessment and certification.*

To oversee the management of the newly unified system, a TVET Authority will be established, comprising both national and state administrative offices. This authority will be responsible for the oversight and regulation of the TVET system, and central to its operations will be the implementation of a South Sudan National Technical Qualification Framework (SSNTQF). At various decentralized levels, including the national level, the authority will be led by a director, complemented by a team of three support staff. Additionally, the authority will incorporate the integration of a South Sudan National Qualification Authority (SSNQA), which will operate from the national office, harmonizing the system under a universally recognized qualifications framework. This will streamline and professionalize the management of TVET programs across the country.

The administration of the unified system will be supported by a National TVET Assessment and Certification Awarding Body. This entity will be responsible for conducting assessments and awarding certifications for trade skills units within the South Sudan Examination Secretariat, thereby standardizing TVET assessments and certificates at a national level. These certifications will serve as a measure of proficiency and qualification for individuals transitioning from non-formal to formal education and training programs. To ensure the effective operation of the Assessment and Certification Body, a team of three staff members will be assigned to facilitate the training of assessors under the new system, further

enhancing the overall quality and credibility of the TVET assessment and certification process. Furthermore, the system will benefit from the establishment of quality standards, with engagement from the private sector, where a sizeable portion of TVET graduates find employment. This endeavour will include the formulation of inspection guidelines tailored to the diverse array of TVET trades and subjects. Subsequently, these guidelines will be disseminated to decentralized TVET authorities, empowering inspectors to apply them effectively during their assessments of TVET institutions.

Table 48 Strategy 10.1: Improve the policy and regulatory landscape of TVET including assessment and certification

Activity	Outcome Indicator	Baseline	Target
Establish TVET Authority for system regulation and SSNTQF, including state offices	Number of TVET centres certified under minimum standards	0	219
Develop guidelines for recognition of prior learning			
Establish a National TVET Assessment and Certification Awarding body	Number of TVET graduates certified under the unified assessment system	0	75,000
Develop TVET quality standards with participation from private sector			

5. Cost of Implementation of GESP and Financing

This section discusses the expenditure and financing requirements to meet the policy priorities and objectives set out in the 2023-2027 General Education Sector Plan (GESP). The financing structure presented below includes both the cost of the activities proposed under the GESP, as well as the cost of sustaining and expanding the current educational system. The projections were made using a demographic simulation model which was developed for South Sudan. The simulation model allows, based on hypotheses formulated on the evolution of students and on the selected policy options and objectives, an estimation of the main costs of the planned education policies and strategies. The model only includes enrolment-driven costs of planned policies and objectives focusing on staff salaries and incentives, school buildings and equipment, and key non-salary expenditure, including textbooks and teaching and learning materials. All other interventions, here termed "system strengthening activities," were costed in sessions with the national team and technical experts with this cost including those related to policy development, staff training and community awareness campaigns.

5.1 Future Economic Outlook

The economic outlook for South Sudan is cautiously optimistic, with an economic rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly linked to an increase in the price of oil, observed. It is upon this foundation that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects the South Sudanese GDP to grow an average of 5% annually over the plan period. In addition to this positive economic growth, increased resources are anticipated to be available to the government due to the end of the mandatory fixed payment scheme to the Sudan which expired in 2022. While other mandatory expenditures related to the processing and transit of oil will be maintained, the end of the annual fixed sum payment which was agreed during the peace agreement has lapsed, thereby providing greater fiscal space for the government provision of public services including education.

Total recurrent expenditure on education is projected to grow from 5% of total recurrent expenditure in 2021/22 to 17% by 2026/27 and total development expenditure on education is projected to grow from 4% of total government development expenditure to 10% over the same period. While these increases are significant, they are deemed to be realistic because of the pre-existing levels of commitment to education and the anticipated efforts of the plan to alleviate key bottlenecks in financing processes. In this way, while only 5% of recurrent expenditure was executed in education in 2021/22, the initial budget allocated to education was 16% of the total recurrent budget. This suggests that the low expenditure in education is less a question of political will at the budgetary level, but more at the level of budget execution. In this way, the 17% target to education is not seen to be out-of-reach and efforts will be made throughout the GESP to improve budget execution through improved financial transparency and strengthened communications with the Ministry of Finance (see governance and financing priority programme). This will ensure that the levels of financing needed from the government throughout the plan period are attainable.

Table 49: Macroeconomic Outlook, 2021/22-2027/28

	2021/22	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Population (thousands)	13,651	14,675	15,145	15,693	16,290	16,872
GDP (Constant, Tn SSP)	4,245	4,779	4,998	5,228	5,458	5,699
GDP / Capita (Constant, SSP)	310,965	325,633	330,042	333,169	335,077	337,753
Government Expenditure (Mn SSP)	**723,542**	**814,488**	**851,955**	**891,145**	**930,355**	**971,290**
Recurrent expenditure	698,637	786,453	822,630	860,471	898,332	937,858
Capital expenditure	24,905	28,035	29,325	30,673	32,023	33,432
Education Expenditure (Mn SSP)	**37,973**	**73,997**	**93,746**	**115,154**	**138,070**	**162,779**
Recurrent expenditure	36,995	72,329	91,704	112,708	135,192	159,436
as % of govt recurrent expenditure	5.3%	9.2%	11.1%	13.1%	15.0%	17.0%
Capital expenditure	978	1,668	2,042	2,446	2,878	3,343
as % of govt capital expenditure	3.9%	6.0%	7.0%	8.0%	9.0%	10.0%

Note: The government expenditure does not include mandatory expenditure

5.2   Costing of the General Education Sector Plan

The process of costing the plan followed a collaborative and iterative design process, which began with the identification of policy priorities, policy objectives, strategies and definition of activities, the latter of which served as the base for the costing process. The process included discussion with representatives from the ten states and three administrative areas to ensure the experiences and realities of the decentralized levels were considered in the planning process. Once activities were defined, they were separated into two categories: enrolment-driven activities and non-enrolment driven or otherwise termed "system-strengthening" activities. Enrolment driven activities are those whose cost is driven by the learners enrolled in school, and whose evolution could be projected through the financial simulation model, whose fundamental driver is population. Activities that were deemed not to be enrolment driven went through a costing process whereby cost drivers for each activity were identified, followed by the associated cost of each driver and the quantity needed for the respective activity. The frequency of activities over the plan period was then considered resulting in the generation of a yearly cost of activity implementation. The costs of cost drivers were standardized across the plan to ensure that activities of similar nature did not have varying costs. Furthermore, these costs were generated through consultation processes with the national technical team including government engineers, to ensure alignment to the South Sudanese context.

Once initial costs were identified, a rationalization process was undertaken, beginning with those activities included in the model, particularly development costs, which at the beginning were obviously a shopping list and the associated cost was so elevated. Through a collaborative process, consensus was generated on the prioritization of development activities particularly the construction of new classrooms and schools, rather than the upgrading of existing facilities or the rehabilitation of institutions. Institutional capacity to undertake the interventions was also considered, especially with regards to the system's capacity to train

sufficient teachers needed for improved access, as well as construction capabilities considering that the government has not undertaken any construction of schools since independence. Targets for the various parameters running the simulation model were agreed upon through this collaborative process until a reasonable financing gap was reached. Cost rationalization of system strengthening activities was also conducted through the revision of quantities and targets as well as the identification of redundant or duplicate activities across the plan.

In succession to the ESA 2022, a financial simulation model, which reflects the levels of expenditure on the current system and the relative outputs across sub-sectors was developed. The model is dependent on the number of schools, learners, teachers, instructors, and other moving variables observed in the 2023 ESA, with future years predicted according to associated population growth. In examining activities proposed in the plan, any that were seen to be dependent on these factors, were accommodated within the simulation model, with costs associated to expansion of existing programs in the current education system. For example, the recruitment of teachers is accommodated in the simulation model as it is an expansion of the existing workforce. The cost to the plan would be the additional salaries for newly recruited teachers to the government payroll, in addition to the pay of teachers already in the system. These types of costs are projected based on the evolution of the GDP, so that elements such as teachers' salaries would increase alongside economic growth and vice versa. It is important to note that the simulation model is fundamentally dependent on population and its growth, and as expounded in Box 5.1, the costs coming from the model are only valid to the extent that the population is valid.

Box 5.1: The Influence of Population Growth on Costing Estimates

The cost of expanding the existing programs the current education system, or enrolment-driven activities, is driven by the estimated population. For the purposes of the costing of this sector plan, population growth for South Sudan has been constrained to the sub-Saharan African average of 2.5%. A regional average has been used due to the lack of reliable population data available for South Sudan. This is because South Sudan has not conducted a census since independence and therefore existing projections are predicated on old census data, whose basis becomes weaker for projection as one gets far away from the census year. Utilizing this 2.5%, there is estimated to be over 600 thousand school-aged children (3-18 years old) added to the system. The cost of expanding the education system, as projected by the simulation model, considers this population growth factor, and this assumption alone has huge cost implications on the plan, particularly related to the construction of new schools and classrooms.

5.3   Cost of Implementing the General Education Sector Plan

The cost of implementing the plan is composed of two facets; the costs associated with the new activities, as well as the costs of running, and expanding the existing system. Considering both facets, the 2023-2027 GESP is projected to cost around SSP 701.1 billion over the five-year period. This is made up of SSP 505.4 billion in recurrent costs, and SSP 195.7 billion in capital costs when learning and teaching materials are considered to be part of recurrent costs, with the infrastructure related capital costs translating to 28% of the projected costs. When learning and teaching materials are considered as development, capital expenditure as a share of the projected costs averages 40%. Over the plan period, the level of expenses is projected to increase over time, from SSP 33.3 billion in 2023/24 to SSP 176.1 billion in 2027/28. The

substantial increase between 2023/24 and 2024/25 is driven by the commencement of construction activities in this year after which the costs were projected to stabilize. Overall, there is an anticipated five-fold increase in spending over the period to support both the expansion of the sector at the various education levels, in line with school population projections, and the construction efforts needed to increase educational access.

Table 50: Projected cost of GESP implementation by type, 2023/24-2027/28 (Mn SSP)

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
Expected costs (Option 1)	**33,311**	**161,595**	**173,152**	**156,970**	**176,083**	**701,112**
Recurrent (Includes books)	29,522	115,864	125,616	107,732	126,707	505,441
Capital	3,789	45,731	47,536	49,239	49,376	195,671
Capital as a % of expected cost	11.4%	28.3%	27.5%	31.4%	28.0%	27.9%
Expected costs (Option 2)	**33,311**	**161,595**	**173,152**	**156,970**	**176,083**	**701,112**
Recurrent	29,522	78,658	90,829	103,395	121,542	423,946
Capital (includes books)	3,789	82,937	82,323	53,575	54,541	277,166
Capital as a % of expected cost	11.4%	51.3%	47.5%	34.1%	31.0%	39.5%

Infrastructure is expected to make up 28% of total plan costs (in the first option where capital costs exclude learning and teaching resources), a major increase from 7% of expenditure in education expended in capital in 2021/22. This increase has been deemed reasonable due to the post-conflict nature of South Sudan which has left a severe under-supply of learning institutions and thereby necessitates strong construction efforts. Moreover, since independence, the government has not been able to fill the gap left by schools which were destroyed or damaged beyond repair because of conflict and natural disaster. The GESP proposes to invest on infrastructure (see Table 5.2) for the next five years to make up for past years in which no government-led construction efforts have been executed.

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Table 51: Summary of schools and classrooms to be constructed

	Schools/ Institutions	Classrooms
Pre-Primary	-	510
Primary	116	3,303
Secondary	135	-
AES	-	-
TVET	11	-
TTI	11	-
Total	**273**	**3,813**

Large-scale construction of classrooms and schools at both the primary and secondary levels will help to improve access to and retention in primary and secondary education as shown in the schooling profiles in Figure 5.1. The plan embraces a hybrid approach in the delivery of the schools and classrooms, where 10% of the schools and classrooms will be permanent while 90% will be based on semi-permanent structures trialled in the current ESPIG. The costing has accommodated differentiated unit costs for the permanent

and semi-permanent structures. Furthermore, as partners have been sole financer of infrastructure developments in recent years, it is reasonably assumed that this trend will continue making the high proportion of investment in capital feasible and attainable.

Figure 2: Projected access rates by grade, 2021 vs 2027
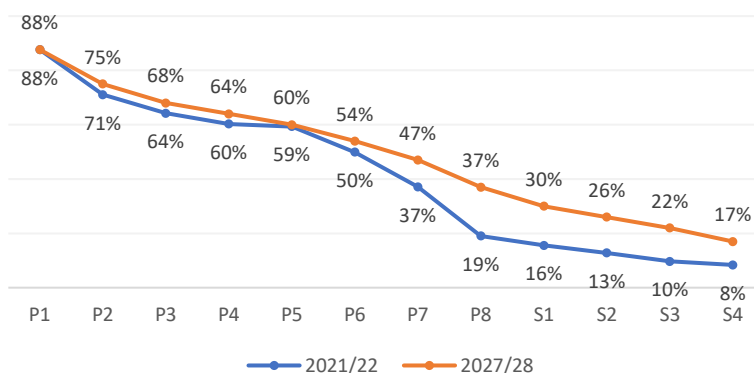
Recurrent costs will mainly be driven by the expansion of the system in terms of increased enrolment in both public schools at various levels of education. Another cost-driver will be the increase in teachers' salaries to reach an average of twice GDP/capita in 2026/2027 from a baseline of a multiple of less than one. This was deemed to be a crucial intervention to improving the attractiveness of the teaching profession and is a reform that is currently underway with MoGEI and the MoPS.

Table 52: Cost of expanding existing programs and strengthening the system, 2023-2027

(In Mn SSP)	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
Total projected costs	33,311	161,595	173,152	156,970	176,083	701,112
System expansion	25,468	142,585	156,578	145,600	167,826	638,058
System strengthening	7,843	19,010	16,574	11,370	8,257	63,054
as % of total costs	23.5%	11.8%	9.6%	7.2%	4.7%	9.0%

System expansion activities will represent most of the costs over the plan period, projected at SSP 641.1 trillion or 91% of total expected plan costs. This concentration on system expansion activities is representative of the prioritization of activities related to improving access and retention as well as accommodating the rapidly growing school age population. New interventions (system strengthening) will cost a total of SSP 63 trillion over the plan period. These activities will include the development of policies, training of MoGEI staff at central and decentralized levels, community awareness campaigns, targeted teacher trainings and strengthening of data collection amongst others. The cost drivers behind these activities such as transportation or technical assistance as generally observed to be lower than more resource consuming activities such as construction which can also explain for their low share in the cost of the plan.

5.4   Financing Implementation of the General Education Sector Plan

There is an anticipated SSP 664.5 trillion that is likely to be available to the education sector, including SSP 277.1 trillion from the government and SSP 387.4 trillion from development partners and donors. The resources expected from the government is based on the macroeconomic parameters discussed earlier including GDP growth, as well as government commitment to increase the proportion of recurrent education expenditure as a proportion of government recurrent expenditure from 5% to 17% and proportion of development education expenditure from 4% to 10%. The effect of these efforts is seen in the evolving recurrent and capital resources in Table 5.5. In both cases, the total government expenditure considered are net of mandatory expenditures. Including the mandatory expenditure distorts the discretion of the government to allocate resources to a particular sector. Additionally, the proportion of the total education budget allocated to Basic Education (composed of MoGEI and the National Examination Council) is projected to increase from 36% to 50% further increasing the available resources. This shift was deemed to be a realistic assumption through the examination of past trends which have generally had more even sharing of the education budget between basic and higher education. Implementation of this plan is founded on the assumption that the government will honour the targeted recurrent and capital resources.

Table 53: Estimated resources likely to be available for implementation of the plan (Mn SSP)

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
Expected resources	**100,801**	**166,937**	**128,264**	**130,420**	**138,051**	**664,473**
Domestic resources	31,280	41,662	53,695	67,412	83,061	277,110
Recurrent	29,611	39,620	51,248	64,534	79,718	264,732
Capital	1,668	2,042	2,446	2,878	3,343	12,378
External resources	69,521	125,274	74,569	63,008	54,990	387,363

In addition to the public resources, education donor group and various education development partners have committed an indicative SSP 430 trillion over the next five years towards implementation of various activities associated with the plan. In estimating the resources likely to be available to implementing departments and units, the technical team assumed an average of 10% program costs to the committed funds, in which case the resources likely to be available drops to SSP 387.4 trillion over the next five years. The commitment from education donors translate to about 58% of the resources likely to be available for the sector. Table 5.6 presents the breakdown of the financial commitments that donors and education partners have made towards the GESP.

Table 54: Indicative commitment from education development partners (Mn US$)

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
GPE	**4.86**	**23.92**	**19.42**	**19.42**	**19.42**	**87.03**
Accelerated Flood response	4.50	4.50				9.00
Multiplier Grant		2.99	2.99	2.99	2.99	11.97
STG		10.44	10.44	10.44	10.44	41.76
Girls Education Accelerator		5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	22.50
SCG	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	1.80

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
World Bank IDA		8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	**33.30**
Save the Children	**20.74**	**27.98**	**7.88**	**0.82**		**57.42**
MYRP	17.02	12.35	6.64			36.01
Danida	0.42	0.42	0.42			1.25
Norad	1.83					1.83
Sida	0.66					0.66
SC Norway Telethon	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82		3.27
Green Climate Fund (&GPE Multiplier)		14.40				14.40
FCDO	21.06	21.06	21.06	21.06	21.06	**105.30**
USAID	**18.36**	**17.10**	**11.70**	**7.20**		**54.36**
GESS	9.00	5.40				14.40
Youth Empowerment	9.36	11.70	11.70	7.20		39.96
UNICEF		22.39	6.19	6.19	6.19	40.95
Sida	4.50	4.50	0.00			9.00
Estimated Total	**69.52**	**125.27**	**74.57**	**63.01**	**54.99**	**387.36**

Note: These estimates have considered a 10% program cost that will probably be spent by the donating organizations

Comparing these total projected resources to the overall projected cost of the plan, including both maintaining the current system and the addition of new activities, the education sector will have an operating deficit of around SSP 36.6 billion or US$ 36.6 million, representing around 5.5% of the total projected resources (see Table 5.7). In the long term, MoGEI will need to have a sustainable financing plan for mobilizing resources for the sector. This may include more transparency around mandatory expenditure in the computation of the resources that eventually come to education.

Table 55: Estimated funding gap, 2023/24- 2027/28

|	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
In Mn SSP						
Domestic resources for education	31,280	41,662	53,695	67,412	83,061	277,110
Estimated external resources	69,521	125,274	74,569	63,008	54,990	387,363
Total expected resources	100,801	166,937	128,264	130,420	138,051	664,473
Projected cost of the plan	33,311	161,595	173,152	156,970	176,083	701,112
Financing gap	67,490	5,342	44,889	26,550	38,032	36,639
Gap as % of expected resources	*67.0%*	*3.2%*	*-35.0%*	*-20.4%*	*-27.5%*	*-5.5%*
In Mn USD						
Domestic resources for education	31	42	54	67	83	277
Estimated external resources	70	125	75	63	55	387
Total expected resources	101	167	128	130	138	664
Projected cost of the plan	33	162	173	157	176	701
Financing gap	67.5	5.3	44.9	26.6	38.0	36.6
Gap as % of expected resources	*67.0%*	*3.2%*	*-35.0%*	*-20.4%*	*-27.5%*	*-5.5%*

While the economic development outlook is largely positive, South Sudan is still susceptible to much volatility in terms of inflation and currency devaluation. For the costing process, most unit costs were identified in USD as is conventionally the practice, while costs associated with the current operation of the system, such as salaries and goods and services, were identified in SSP as is the case in all budgets and expenditure. When the costing process began, the exchange rate of the SSP to the USD was around 600:1. However, by the end of the process, the exchange rate had increased to 1000:1, with the possibility that the financing gap might increase even further before the start of implementation of the plan, triggered by inflation alone.

6. GESP Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

6.1 Implementation Arrangement

A clear and functioning implementation arrangement is critical for the successful realization of the objectives, strategies, and activities outlined in Sections 3 and 4. The implementation arrangement outlines responsibilities between governmental and non-governmental actors, ensuring the integration of partners, donors, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and civil society towards coordinated efforts in the sector. The GESP implementation framework borrows from the revised General Education Coordination Framework, which aims to streamline education activities in the country along the GESP. The framework is composed of three levels (i) Policy Direction and Safeguard, which is responsible for high-level policy development, backstopping, and monitoring; (ii) Technical and Strategy, which is responsible for implementation and accountability; and (iii) Clusters, which are responsible for specific implementation tasks under the three GESP programme areas of access and equity, quality, and management, with an additional cluster responsible for education in emergencies. Figure 6.1 illustrates the General Education Coordination Framework.

Figure 3: General Education Coordination Framework

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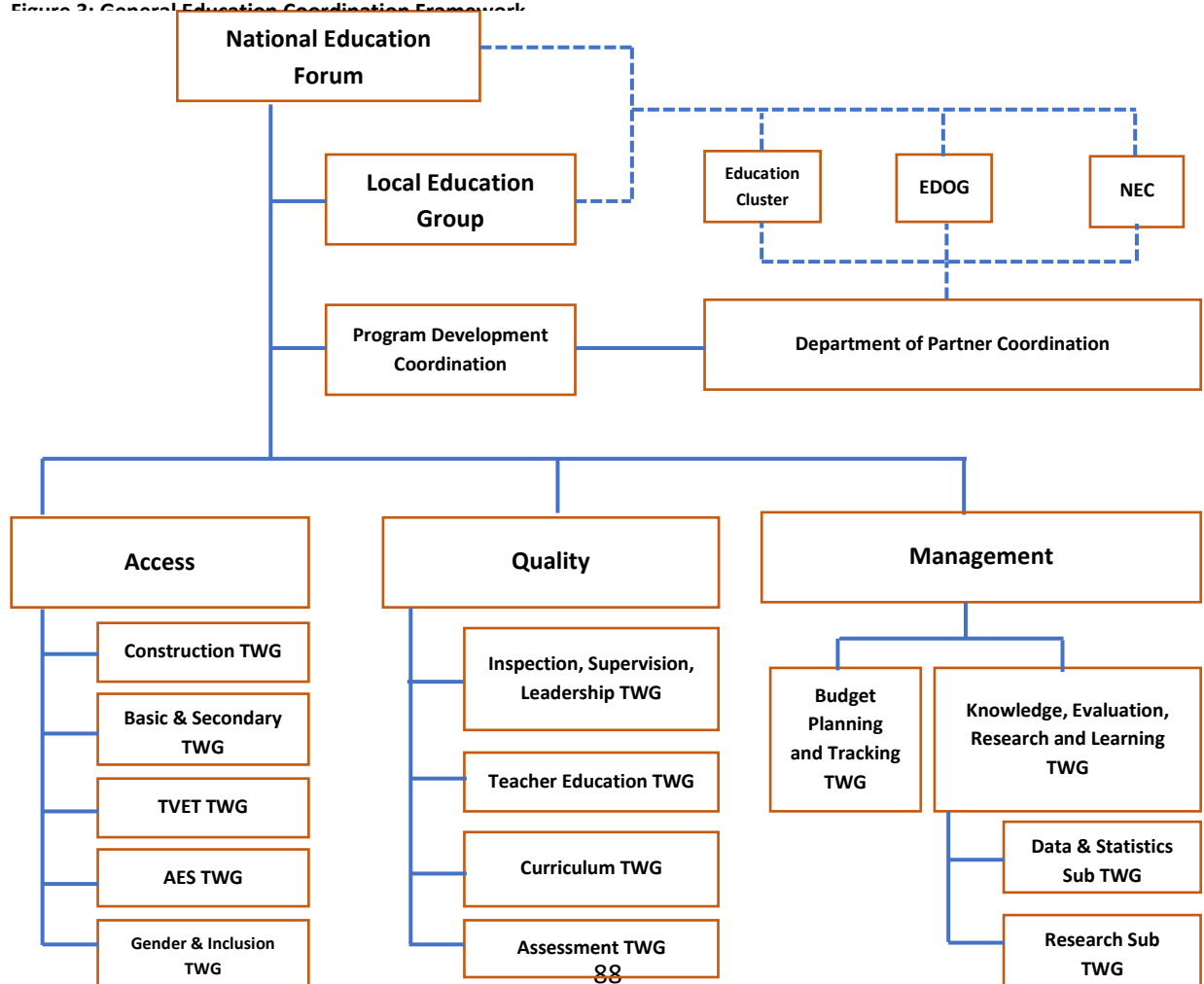
6.1.1 Policy Direction and Safeguard Level

6.1.1.1 National Education Forum

The National Education Forum (NEF) is a joint forum for MoGEI and development partners in the education sector including other Government sectors that have a working relationship with education. The NEF is the highest oversight body within the coordination framework with the broadest membership including representatives from MoGEI, the states, and administrative areas, flagship programs, major donors, UN representatives, and NGO and INGO representatives. Additionally, the NEF includes civil society, teachers' union, and private sector representatives, as well as representatives from other Ministries including the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Finance and Planning, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, the Examination Council, and the Chairperson/Representative of the Education Committee in the Transitional National Legislative Assembly Parliament (TNLA). The NEF oversees issues related to the GESP policy, program planning and implementation, as well as budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation. NEF meetings will be held biannually, the first to present the annual plan and budget pre-view and the second to conduct the General Education Annual Review. It will hold special sessions in the third and final year of GESP implementation to present the results of the midterm and final reviews.

6.1.1.2 Local Education Group

The Local Education Group (LEG) ensures mutual accountability from policy option(s) to execution and an oversight on major flagship programmes such as the multi-donor Global Partnership for Education (GPE) program, Education Cannot Wait (ECW) program, Girls Education South Sudan (GESS) programme, government-funded programmes, and other activities aligned to the sector plan. The LEG comprises the Undersecretary of MOGEI (Chair), Director Generals of MoGEI and development partner representatives namely, UNESCO, USAID, FCDO, EU, UNICEF, ECW, MYRP, Save the Children, NRC, School Feeding Program, African Development Bank (AfDB), NEC, BRICE-Oxfam, and representatives from other emerging donors. LEG meetings are held on a bi-monthly basis, but extraordinary meetings can be called upon as needed.

6.1.1.3 Education Donor Group (EDoG)

The Education Donor Group (EDoG) is a forum for the organization and coordination of development partners' support to the General Education sub-sector with the aim of advancing the aid effectiveness agenda. The EDoG supports the development, implementation, and monitoring of the GESP and takes an active role in the GEAR. It also provides a platform to prepare and present jointly agreed agenda items for consideration by the Undersecretary and Department for Partner Coordination for the subsequent National Education Forum meetings.

6.1.1.4 National Education Coalition (NEC)

The National Education Coalition (NEC) is a joint forum for National and International NGOs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and community service providers delivering education services in South Sudan.

NEC's central aim is to voice and address pressing educational priorities and challenges within the context of South Sudan and to recommend pertinent mitigation measures that feed into the EDoG, the NEF, the GEAR, and the National Education Budget meetings. NEC is entirely an independent network, and it is managed by a seven-member council drawn from member organizations. Its day-to-day operations are managed by a secretariat (hosted by Oxfam South Sudan Program), headed by a full-time National Coordinator. NEC meetings are organized quarterly or called when the need arises. NEC meetings are chaired by the Chair of the Council.

6.1.1.5 *The Education Cluster*

The Education Cluster operates as a specialized hub tasked with the management of partnerships among agencies engaged in Education in Emergencies. Jointly led by UNICEF and Save the Children, the education cluster has diverse representation that includes stakeholders from the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), various United Nations (UN) agencies, International and National Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs and NNGOs), donors, academic institutions, and not-for-profit organizations. This entity operates under the oversight of the Humanitarian Coordinator, upholding its commitment to its membership and the populations affected by crises. The overarching goal is to function as an inclusive coordination platform, ensuring the predictability and effectiveness of humanitarian education responses, accountability to affected populations, and the provision of clear strategic leadership. It also offers guidance to its members in advocacy efforts and the allocation of roles and responsibilities to enhance the delivery of high-quality educational services to all children and youth affected by both man-made and natural humanitarian crises in South Sudan. Additionally, the Education Cluster extends its representation to the State/Administrative Area Level when deemed necessary for coordination purposes.

6.1.2 Technical and Strategy Level

6.1.2.1 *Programme Development and Coordination Committee (PDC)*

The Programme Development and Coordination (PDC) committee shall be the standing technical committee for the LEG. It shall comprise MoGEI Director Generals, Directors, representatives of implementing partners and grant agents, representatives of Technical Working Groups (TWGs), and a representative from the Ministry of Finance and Planning. The PDC Committee is chaired by the Director General for Planning and Budgeting of MoGEI, and its meetings shall be held monthly or bi-weekly as deemed necessary by the chair.

6.1.2.2 *Department for Partner Coordination*

The Department for Partner Coordination is housed within MoGEI and is led by the Director for Partner Coordination. The Department for Partner Coordination (DPC) is responsible for monitoring Development Partners Education activities and programmes; liaison between the MoGEI and Development Partners (including bi- and multilaterals and NGOs); coordination of Development Partner activities to ensure their integration and alignment with sector-wide approach; and mapping of partners to avoid

duplication/overlapping; and develop and oversee the implementation of Development Partners' reporting systems. Members of the DPC include the MoGEI staff in the Department for Partner Coordination and partner representatives from NEF and the Education Cluster.

6.1.3   Thematic Clusters and Technical Working Groups

The final layer of the GESP implementation framework is formed of three clusters: access, quality, and management, which mirror the three priority programmes of the GESP of access and equity, quality, finance, and governance. Each cluster is responsible for the technical working groups which fall underneath as detailed in Figure 6.1. Technical Working Groups (TWGs) are smaller, more focused committees tasked with the day-to-day support to the running of the various MoGEI programmes. The TWGs shall comprise of at least seven persons including MoGEI and partner representatives ensuring adequate representation. Cluster meetings are held bi-monthly to receive timely updates from TWGs and ensure that messaging is communicated through the chain outlined in the framework.

6.1.4   State/AA and county-level coordination for the implementation of the GESP

Due to the decentralized nature of the education system in the country, the coordination framework extends to the states, administrative areas, and counties. The National Education Forum is replicated at the state/administrative area level forming thirteen State/Administrative Area Education Forums and 80 County Education Forms. At the State/Administrative Area level, the TWGs report to the State/Administrative Area Education Forum, while the County Technical Working Groups report to the County Education Forum. The TWGs ensure the implementation of education activities, while the education forum oversees implementation, monitors, and evaluates progress in programme implementation, and provide advice and guidance on the way forward at their specific level.

Every State/Administrative Area and County is expected to follow the reviewed coordination manual when establishing a functional coordination education forum. As stipulated in the manual, regular meetings will be organized and chaired by State/Administrative Area Director Generals (DGs) at the State/Administrative Area level, and County Education Directors at the county level. Ideally, at a minimum, each State/Administrative Area and County should aim at bi-monthly meetings. State/Administrative Area/County participation in the National Education Forum will take place at least twice a year during budget preview and annual review meetings.

6.2   Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the GESP will be conducted through both continuous monitoring activities as well as periodic evaluations. Monitoring mechanisms will provide appropriate data to assess whether plan implementation is progressing as foreseen and whether activities are leading to desired outputs and outcomes. Evaluations will examine the higher-level strategic key performance indicators identified below which will evaluate the plan's success in terms of achieving systematic transformation. Both processes will provide opportunities to identify challenges in plan implementation as well as offer opportunities for adjustments in targets and activities, as necessary.

6.2.1   Performance Monitoring

6.2.1.1   Quarterly Monitoring Reports

The TWGs in the national coordination framework are the foremost entities responsible for monitoring the implementation of the GESP according to the identified monitoring frameworks. The national TWGs will communicate with their sub-national coordinating bodies as identified in the above tables to gather relevant data, including continuous monitoring from schools, and monitoring reports from the state and administrative areas, and compile this information in quarterly monitoring reports. These regular quarterly monitoring reports, based on data collected from the sources identified above, will report on progress on planned activities in the annual workplans, budget release, and utilization and identify key bottlenecks and challenges. These reports will then be communicated up the chain identified in the implementation framework, ensuring that information is disseminated to those at the decision-making level so appropriate solutions can be identified.

6.2.1.2   National Education Forum

The NEF will serve dual purposes in the implementation of the GESP by providing an oversight on the implementation of key programming as well as by playing a key role in monitoring and evaluation. One of the key responsibilities of the NEF as identified above will be to plan for, organise the Annual Plan, and Budget Preview as well as the General Education Annual Review. In view of the decentralized nature of education delivery in South Sudan, all states and administrative areas will participate in these monitoring events.

6.2.1.3   General Education Annual Review

The NEF will also be responsible for organizing the General Annual Education Review that will be conducted in October or November of each year of the plan period. The GEAR will provide an opportunity to assess progress made against GESP targets and identify bottlenecks in implementation. In addition to the national review, state and administrative area annual reviews will similarly be conducted and be led by their respective NEFs, with their reports feeding into the national level report. Data for the GEAR will be collected from the annual education census as well as partners' project data and other sources (which

are to be harmonized into a single system under the GESP implementation. In addition, joint field visits will be carried out as necessary prior to the review to fill data gaps.

The GEAR will examine the overall performance of the general education sector as well as progress on key activities under the GESP. It will report on overall performance in terms of the KPIs listed below and will also consider financial execution and commitments. The GEAR will identify areas in which implementation is lacking, and its findings will be used to inform the annual plan development for the following year, to make up for areas of slow progress.

6.2.1.4   Annual Work Plan and Budget Preview

To ensure coherent implementation of the GESP, annual work plans will be developed for the central and state/administrative areas that are linked to the GESP's strategic objectives and activities. To date, only national workplans have been developed and as such, the GESP includes a specific activity to support states and administrative areas in the development of these plans to build their planning capacity and ensure that sub-national plans are linked to the overall national plan. These plans will be used to guide a set of annual activities at each state and administrative level and implemented activities will be monitored against them. Drafts of the workplan will be shared with members of the NEF prior to the review meeting which will normally be held in April, before the conclusion of the budget planning period.

6.2.2   Evaluation of the GESP

Various evaluations will be carried out throughout the lifespan of the GESP. These evaluations will be carried out to assess implementation progress against strategic targets to assess the plan's effectiveness in terms of achieving system transformation. These targets comprise intermediate and outcome indicators. Evaluations will allow for necessary adjustments to be made and will allow for periodic review and updating of the GESP. It is well understood that over time, the conditions, and assumptions made during the preparation of GESP may change unexpectedly, especially given the context of a fragile state such as South Sudan. Evaluating the plan and making necessary adjustments is therefore crucial to ensure that optimal success is obtained, and maximum efficiency is maintained.

6.2.2.1   Midterm and Final Evaluations

The GESP will undergo comprehensive reviews in both the third and final year of the cycle. The mid-term review will be conducted in 2026 and will examine progress against the KPIs identified in the GESP. Crucially, the mid-term review will provide a chance to reconsider targets and activities identified under the GESP, allowing for modifications according to the current context and progress made. The main objective of the midterm evaluation is to correct the course of the implementation of the GESP and help to achieve program objectives by the end of the plan period in 2028. Specific terms of reference will be designed to identify the scope of the evaluation process, focusing on measures of outcomes, effectiveness, efficiency, equity, lessons learned, and sustainability.

A final evaluation of the GESP will be conducted in 2028 and will assess whether the policy objectives set have been achieved. The purpose of this exercise will be to draw comprehensive lessons from the implementation of the GESP and to provide guidance and recommendations to inform the planning for the next strategic plan.

6.2.2.2 *Thematic/Specific Studies*

In addition to these comprehensive reviews specific research/studies may be carried out to provide adequate information and influence policy decisions. For example, if specific issues are identified during the GEAR, relevant studies can be designed to examine these issues in detail. These specific research studies may be commissioned anytime as needed, before or after the midterm evaluation. Results from these studies will provide policy makers with the information that they need to fill identified data gaps to make evidence-based decisions for the improvement of the implementation of GESP. Moreover, research and analytical works will be undertaken to measure impact and service delivery improvements.

6.2.3 Sources of Data for Monitoring and Evaluation

Data sources have been identified for all output and strategic outcome indicators listed in the GESP. The annual school census will be the primary source of monitoring data for many activities, including those pertaining to enrolment and construction. This underlines the importance of ensuring that a high-quality census is conducted on an annual basis as proposed in the plan. Furthermore, the plan also envisions the creation of a harmonized data platform that will bring together data from various sources including the Annual Education Census (AEC), South Sudan Schools' Attendance Monitoring System (SSSAMS), and other partner databases. This harmonization will also allow for more frequent monitoring of plan implementation activities as the database will be updated quarterly.

In addition to AEC data, the plan will strengthen the collection of school-based data through the training of school heads on the use of school monitoring tools. The regular completion of these tools will provide MoGEI with more up-to-date information regarding teacher attendance, enrolment patterns, and availability of teacher and learning materials. Furthermore, the Department for Monitoring and Evaluation is set to be strengthened throughout the plan period and the plan has accommodated the production of periodic monitoring reports based on field visits aligned with key GESP activities and partner-aligned programmes. These reports will also serve as a source of data for monitoring overall plan implementation and will help to fill specific gaps not addressed in continuous data collection. Other key sources of information for monitoring will be school inspection reports (once the system is fully operationalized) and activity tracking and completion reports.

6.2.4 Key Performance Indicators

The GESP contains many indicators at the output and strategic outcome levels for the various programmes. However, the measurement of the achievement of the GESP strategic initiatives further requires the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to periodically assess progress towards the

achievement of GESP targets. These indicators have been selected to help policy and decision-makers as well as education managers to monitor and evaluate how well they are performing and direct their policy formulation and target setting. They reveal the strengths and weaknesses and help the top management and the stakeholders decide what needs to be strengthened to accelerate the system transformation envisioned under the GESP. In addition, the KPIs will form the basis of GEAR that will track progress over time. The KPIs denote a set of measures on the aspects of organizational performance that are the most critical for the sector in the plan period. As such, KPIs are relatively few and focus on key issues and areas of concern, thereby serving as top-level indicators for monitoring, including the GEAR.

Table 56: Key Performance Indicators for GESP (2023-2027)

Indicator	Baseline (2021)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Access and Equity						
Pre-primary gross enrolment ratio (GER)	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%	17%
Primary gross enrolment rate (GER)	60%	60%	61%	62%	62%	63%
Primary gross intake rate (GIR)	88%	88%	88%	88%	88%	88%
Secondary gross enrolment rate (GER)	12%	12%	13%	13%	14%	15%
Secondary gross intake rate (GIR)	16%	20%	23%	25%	28%	30%
Number of AES students/100,000 inhabitants	683	1,122	1,341	1,561	1,780	2,000
Total AES students	56,357	99,552	122,849	148,131	175,397	204,065
Number of TVET centres certified under minimum	0					219
Number of TVET graduates certified under the	0					75,000
Number of TVET students/100,000 inhabitants	207	321	378	434	491	548
Total TVET students	28,325	47,106	57,209	68,185	80,025	92,459
Primary retention rate	22%	29%	32%	35%	39%	42%
Survival rate to primary 4 (P4)	69%	70%	71%	72%	72%	73%
Secondary retention rate	54%	55%	56%	56%	56%	57%
Proportion of govt. primary schools with full cycles	30%	53%	64%	76%	86%	96%
GPI in Primary GER	0.93	0.94	0.96	0.97	0.99	1
GPI in Secondary GER	0.82	0.86	0.89	0.93	0.96	1
TVET Gender Parity Index	0.21					0.7

Indicator	Baseline (2021)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Proportion of students with disabilities as per the total student population in pre-school, primary, secondary	1.2%	1.5%	1.8%	2.0%	2.2%	2.4%
Number of new functional resilient community schools established across all sub-sectors	0					865
Proportion of crisis-closed schools implementing continuous learning programmes	N/A					100%
Quality and Management of Resources						
Teacher retention rate (Primary)	TBD					90%
Teacher retention rate (Secondary)	TBD					90%
% of correct score in EGRA among Grade 3 pupils	39.1%					50.0%
% of correct score in EGMA among Grade 3 pupils	69.0%					79.0%
Share of qualified ECE teachers	80%	84%	88%	92%	96%	100%
Share of qualified primary teachers	68%	74%	81%	87%	94%	100%
Share of qualified secondary teachers	63%	70%	78%	85%	93%	100%
Share of qualified AES teachers	73%	78%	84%	89%	95%	100%
Share of qualified TVET teachers	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
Pupil-workbook ratio (pre-primary)	N/A				1:1	
Pupil-textbook ratio (primary)	8:1				2:1	
Pupil-textbook ratio (secondary)	2:1				2:1	
Pupil-textbook ratio (AES)	N/A				2:1	
Pupil-teacher ratio (ECE)	42	38	37	36	35	35
Pupil-teacher ratio (primary)	42	42	42	42	42	42
Pupil-teacher ratio (secondary)	20	20	25	30	35	40
Pupil-teacher ratio (AES)	29	29	29	29	30	30
Pupil-classroom ratio (ECE)	77	65	59	52	46	40
Pupil-classroom ratio (primary)	63	63	63	63	63	63
Pupil-classroom ratio (secondary)	43	43	43	43	43	43
% of primary schools offering AES programmes	11%	19%	23%	27%	32%	37%
% of primary schools implementing the CBC	N/A			100%		
% of secondary schools implementing the CBC	N/A			100%		
Number of PEP programmes operating	0	0	6	12	18	25
Number of functional TTIs	3	3	6	9	11	14
Number of functional formal MoGEI TVET institutions	3	3	6	9	11	14
Average teacher salary as % of GDP/capita	78%	119%	139%	159%	180%	200%

Indicator	Baseline (2021)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Basic education curriculum and associated materials are fully developed	No					Yes
Proportion of teachers practicing effective teaching practices	TBD					TBD
Learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy in lower primary	TBD					TBD
Learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy and upper primary	TBD					TBD
Learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy in secondary	TBD					TBD
Proportion of Schools undertaking formative assessment	0%					100%
Proportion of schools meeting the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Indicators	TBD					TBD
Proportion of schools that have access to safe water for drinking	68%					77%
Proportion of schools that have a reliable source of electricity	2%					31%
Proportion of schools that have functional sanitation facilities	48%					77%
Percentage of schools with effective Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GRM) in place	0%					100%
Percentage of schools reporting reduced cases of school related violence	N/A					100%
Proportion of qualified TVET instructors (according to minimum requirements)	0%					100%
Proportion of TVET centres implementing the competency-based training curriculum	N/A					100%
Number of TVET annual reports being produced	0					5
Proportion of TVET centres with private sector partnerships	0%					85%
Finance and Governance						
Education recurrent expenditure as a proportion of government recurrent expenditure	5%	11%	14%	17%	20%	20%
Share of recurrent education budget allocated to general education	36%	42%	45%	47%	50%	50%
Share of total capital government budget allocated to education	4%	6%	8%	9%	10%	10%
Execution rate of the budget of general education	46%	56%	71%	85%	100%	100%
Proportion of schools covered in the annual education census	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%	100%
Number of primary students in government and community schools receiving cash-transfers	0	0	155,719	325,362	510,218	711,113

Indicator	Baseline (2021)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Number of secondary students in government and community schools receiving cash-transfers	0	0	22,292	48,201	78,426	113,426
Number of AES students in government and community schools receiving cash-transfers	0	0	5,802	13,991	24,849	38,548
Proportion of salary transfer released on time	25%					100%
Proportion of capitation grants released on time	15%					100%
Proportion of states and administrative areas with external audit reports	0					100%
Proportion of states and administrative areas submitting returns	70%					100%
Proportion of counties submitting returns	0					100%
Education coordination framework fully operational	Non-operational					Operational

Notes: All indicators whose baselines are to be determined (TBC) should be confirmed in the first year of implementation and associated targets set thereafter.