

Knowledge Network
Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation
Research Brief # 16

*Research study to Basic
Education Services in
South Darfur, Sudan*

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This brief is part of a series of research briefs for programme staff of the DCR consortium. It is meant for internal use only. The purpose is to communicate lessons and corresponding recommendations for programme quality improvement. For information on the research methodology please refer to the full report, available upon request.

The DCR programme Sudan has built, repaired and furnished classrooms and offices, provided training for teachers, and made available teaching materials and books in the State of South Darfur. The purpose of this research study is to assess the status of basic education in South Darfur state to see where gaps exist and analyse them so it can mobilize state resources to address them. The aim of the study is to contribute to the ultimate outcome set by the DCR: 'By 2015, children and adults in targeted communities, male and female alike will be able to complete a full course of schooling within the basic package of education services'. DCR further believes that researching basic education in South Darfur will reveal the shortcomings of the basic education – specifically in rural areas. Once these gaps are known, the programs next move will be to align stakeholders to take action to improve it and fill the gaps. The overall research question is: What are the main gaps in the current basic education services in South Darfur (Kass, Elsalam, Gereida & Mershing Localities) and how can these gaps be mitigated / managed?

The (sub) questions the research will answer are:

1. What is the current situation of basic education service delivery in rural South Darfur?
2. What are the factors that have led to each of the situations above? Are there policy changes that have led to current situation? When did these changes take place?
3. What are the possible policy changes that can bring the situation back to acceptable levels? How can identified gaps be mitigated? Which stakeholders can do what (special focus on state actors and resources)?

Lesson 1: Efforts made so far to enable children in South Darfur to complete a full course of schooling within the basic package of education services were not enough.

There are high numbers of out-of-school children. The GER currently stands at 41.9%. Nearly 60% of the children 6-13 years old are not receiving basic education.

Lesson 2: The local government cannot provide free basic education.

Education and other services are constitutionally the responsibility of the local administration which has a weak resource base to with which to meet the cost of basic education. Therefore, schools collect high fees from the pupils to cover running costs.

Recommendations

Recommendations lesson 1:

- Continue to mobilize parents and communities to enrol their children and create more learning spaces to meet the demand for school places.
- Establish non-formal educational and vocational training programs for children who have missed out on school and no longer age-appropriate or who have dropped out before completing.
- Using the state radio service, implement, through the MoE and education partners, a media campaign guided by a clear communications plan to advocate for the out-of-school children issues at different levels.

Recommendations lesson 2:

- Advocate for greater government commitment to providing free education, school resources and teacher salaries.
- Since basic and preschool education is financially and administratively under the responsibility of localities, INGOs and donors should strengthen local institutional capacity in planning, management, implementation, and fund raising.

Lesson 3: Construction and rehabilitation of school buildings by donors and other stakeholders was not enough to meet the demand for school places in South Darfur.

Condition of school infrastructure in the localities is still poor. About 50% of the classrooms need either to be renovated or replaced.

Lesson 4: There is a need to hire and train more teachers in South Darfur to work in the rural villages.

Number of teachers per school is 6.8, while national average of teachers per school is 9.1. Only 46.3% of state teachers are trained.

Lesson 5:

Efforts by the donors and the government to provide textbooks are still lagging behind.

Students have to share the textbooks in all the study schools which lowers the learning quality.

Lesson 6: Education of girls should continue to be given utmost priority by donors and other stakeholders.

Gender disparities still persist in South Darfur. Gender disparities in South Darfur are wider than the overall gender gap reported for Sudan.

Implication of research findings for DCR program implementation

The purpose of the DCR support to the Basic Education programme in Sudan is to contribute to global efforts that seek to put education in emergency and post-crisis transition countries on a viable path of sustainable progress towards quality basic education for all.

One of the important findings of this research is that nearly 50% of the classrooms in the state need either to be renovated or replaced. As Darfur moves towards recovery and development, this finding provides evidence to justify more investments in a comprehensive school construction and rehabilitation programme.

As school drop outs rates and absenteeism are high in rural areas and among children of poor families, DCR should align partners and stakeholders to provide appropriate support services to promote school attendance and retention. This should include school feeding programs to meet nutritional needs, and access to water and sanitation facilities, taking into account the specific needs of girls.

Attention for special groups that have many dropouts (nomads are a case in point) is often lacking in the work of INGOs in South Darfur. INGOs and donors should pay special attention to the many drop outs among nomads, one of the most vulnerable groups in rural Darfur, especially as they are now often settling which makes them easier to reach. However, they are still often overlooked in programming. In addition the continued establishment of non-

Recommendation lesson 3:

- Continue to improve education infrastructure through establishment of new facilities and rehabilitation of certain schools. New investment should target areas where the need is greatest and children are likely to never enter school.

Recommendation lesson 4:

- Ensure that remote rural areas have a sufficient number of qualified and trained teachers through continuous training for teachers and improving teachers' remuneration and incentives policy.

Recommendation lesson 5:

- Continue to support the supply of textbooks. Having textbooks can improve the performance of rural students and students from poorer backgrounds.

Recommendation lesson 6:

- Continue with efforts and measures to reduce gender disparities in basic education in South Darfur.

formal educational and vocational training programs for children who have missed out on primary school and are no longer age-appropriate or who have dropped out before completing primary school needs to receive further attention.

School governance lacks the capacity and/or ambition to address key educational issues within the community, notably low educational quality and low enrolment. In some cases, PTA decisions such as setting of high school fees create disincentives to enrolment. Part of the problem is that key stakeholders (i.e. parents of school-age children, notably mothers) are poorly represented in PTAs. This is an issue that CIS could take up in future programs, in collaboration with other actors involved in basic education in South Darfur such as ZOA and UNICEF.