All children need to have access to education. In South Sudan, the entire education system seems to be allowed to disintegrate due to neglect and lack of funding.

The UN and humanitarian agencies are appealing for US$40 million for emergency education. Only 56% has been covered. This underfunding will mean that many thousands of children will go without education and lose out on critically important opportunity to progress. Girls in particular are marginalised from education in South Sudan and underfunding will result in a further limiting of their opportunities.

The humanitarian operation in South Sudan is the largest in any single country, yet despite this huge effort the emergency response is seriously underfunded. The UN and humanitarian agencies are appealing for $1.8 billion for the coming year. Thus far only $634 million has been received.

Governments attending the Geneva funding conference on 16th June must address education as an emergency need and ensure that the humanitarian appeal for education is fully funded.

SUMMARY
In December 2013 conflict broke out in South Sudan disrupting the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. Communities have been uprooted and children are facing violence, trauma and thousands are unable to attend school. This comes on top of an already existing dismal situation, not least for education – an essential area for development that has been hard hit for decades.

The ongoing conflict continues to displace people and prevent children and young people from accessing urgently needed education services. Even before the start of the crisis, some 57% of children and adolescents in South Sudan did not attend school. Children and adolescents who are not in school or do not see...
returning to school as an option are also at a higher risk of being recruited by armed actors.\textsuperscript{3}

In South Sudan on average just 6 per cent of 13 year old girls complete primary school. So extreme are the gender inequalities that today, a young girl in South Sudan is three times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than to reach grade 8.\textsuperscript{4} While girls enrolment is low and dropout rate high in peace time, the conflict has increased the risk of violence on the way to and from school in many parts of the country and increase financial pressure on parents meaning that adolescent girls are more likely to be made to stay home and look after siblings while brothers go to school.

Over the last decade education has been acknowledged as a priority in the global humanitarian aid system,\textsuperscript{5} yet funding for this commitment remains woefully inadequate. On average, education receives less than 2\% of total humanitarian aid committed through emergency appeals and the education sector routinely receives less than half of the funding it asks for to meet children’s educational needs. In the case of South Sudan, the Strategic Response Plan\textsuperscript{6}, which covers all humanitarian funding needs, currently has a target of $40m for education in emergencies yet only 56\% of funding has been covered. With such a dire overall humanitarian situation there is a risk that emergency education will be deprioritised. The international humanitarian response in south Sudan needs to prioritise measures that ensure emergency education services are provided and that measures are taken to enable girls to access and stay in education.

Even before the recent crisis the South Sudan education system was rated as one of the least functioning in the world, with demand far outstripping supply; few children and youth completing the full primary cycle – let alone going on to complete secondary and post-secondary studies.\textsuperscript{7} While enrolment in the primary and secondary systems has increased dramatically in the years since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005), over-age children make up 85\% of all primary school enrolees, and 90\% of those children enrolled in secondary school.\textsuperscript{8}

This increased demand for education has led to a shortage of qualified primary school teachers. In addition, poor management and supervision of teachers, lack of physical infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and low participation of school committees and communities in school management contribute to access and quality challenges.

**Impact of the conflict on education**
Around 70 per cent of the 1,200 schools in the major conflict states have closed raising grave fears that a generation of children could be left behind by the civil war.\textsuperscript{9} Children who miss out on early year’s education have a much harder time gaining access to education later on. Older children do not want to sit with younger children and so alternative and accelerated education needs to be in place to help them. Even in a conflict situation it is critical that education services are provided as part of the humanitarian and development effort.

**In South Sudan…**
- **Students**… Since the crisis began, at least 866,000 school-aged children have been displaced, often to areas without access to protective learning spaces, or to host communities where education resources are non-existent or overstretched. An estimated 400,000 children have dropped out of school. Those who remain out of school are particularly susceptible to dangerous labour practices, recruitment into armed groups and

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\textsuperscript{3} http://www.ineesite.org/en/crisis-spotlights/south-sudan
\textsuperscript{4} UNESCO-Building a better future: Education for an independent South Sudan, p 1, (2011)
\textsuperscript{5} UN General Assembly Resolution on the right to education in emergency situations, A/RES/64/290 (2010)
\textsuperscript{6} https://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R32sum_A1062_5_June_2015_(12_05).pdf
\textsuperscript{7} Education in South Sudan: investing in a better future, Gordon Brown and Kevin Watkins, p 19 (2012)
\textsuperscript{8} Business Case for the GIRLS EDUCATION SOUTH SUDAN (GESS) PROGRAMME, DfID, (2012)
\textsuperscript{9} Jonathan Veitch, UNICEF Representative in South Sudan; http://www.unicef.org/media/media_79847.html
other negative coping mechanisms such as crime and substance abuse.

- **Teachers**...Many teachers have been displaced from their homes and forced to seek alternative livelihoods due to school closures and the lack of payment. Previously trained professionals have sought jobs with more reliable or higher payment. The overall effect of this is a lower quantity and calibre of teachers available in the three conflict affected states. Most teachers in both the government-held and opposition-held areas have been unpaid since November 2013, thus reducing the incentive to come back to the profession when schools re-open. Teachers located in opposition-held areas will not be paid by the government in the foreseeable future. More than 5,200 teachers are necessary to reach the 519,700 students to be assisted by the education cluster in 2015.

- **Schools**...Many schools are no longer safe havens as they have been damaged or destroyed by fighting. Since the conflict erupted, at least 91 schools have been occupied by armed groups or used as shelters by the displaced. Teaching continues under trees but this is a completely unsatisfactory learning environment in addition to the lack of essential facilities i.e. latrines and potable water.

**Why education is critical in conflict situations**

Education during emergencies is a core humanitarian need – provides physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection in times when needed most. It sustains life by offering structure, stability and hope for the future during a time of crisis, particularly for children and adolescents, and provides essential building blocks for future economic stability. It also helps to heal bad experiences by building skills, and supporting conflict resolution and peace-building. Education in emergencies saves lives by directly protecting against exploitation and harm, and by disseminating key survival messages.

‘...this situation is proving to be an obstacle to my education.’

In a survey conducted in 2013 Plan found that in cross section of five crisis affected low income countries, levels of school dropout were high for both adolescent girls and boys in times of crisis, but respondents felt that girls were more likely to drop out than boys. In South Sudan, 15-year-old Sarah said: “This year [2013], I do not think my parents will be able to send me to school as the cattle they had hoped to sell to generate money for my school fees died as a result of last season’s severe drought. I really don’t know what to do as this situation is proving to be an obstacle to my education. I sometimes ask myself: why did God create me to be punished this way?”

In South Sudan on average just 6 per cent of 13 year old girls complete primary school. Social acceptance of the general lack of education for girls in rural areas has a huge bearing on low literacy rates and lack of contact with or understanding of the outside world. Fears of gender based violence also acted as a disincentive for education, particularly as inadequate infrastructure and supplies, like female hygiene materials and appropriate bathroom facilities, were said to engender discrimination and violence. Furthermore, without an education, a woman who is unable to fulfil even her most basic needs is less able to develop coping mechanisms to address gender based violence. Studies show that not only is she affected, but her children, in particular her girls, are also likely to be subject to the same dynamics, creating cyclical disadvantages that limit the entire community’s development potential.

Yet this dire situation is worsened still by conflict:

- While girls enrolment is low and dropout rate high in peace time, the conflict has increased the risk of violence on the way to and from school in many parts of the country and increase financial pressure on parents meaning that adolescent girls are more likely to be made to stay home

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12 Burkina Faso, Niger, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and the Philippines
and look after siblings while brothers go to school.

- Early marriage has increased as a coping mechanism due to the dowry as conflict reduces other income generating activities especially for those in Internally Displaced People camps or Protection of Civilians sites.\(^{15}\)

**The case for Girls Education**

Although the Republic of South Sudan Child Act 2008 grants the child right to survival and development as well as protects children from torture, corporal punishment, “early marriage and other negative and harmful cultural and social practices,” the reality reveals protection rights are in many regards still under siege due to cultural practices coupled with weak child protection systems in South Sudan.

The task of tackling ingrained gender inequality in South Sudan and the social norms that perpetuate it is a long term process. While the conflict is proving a barrier for many children to access education it is also bringing displaced communities into new contexts where access to school is better and girl’s education is being promoted. This is an opportunity to make the case to parents and communities for the value of girl’s education. These include the case that investment in girls, especially in adolescent girls, can provide long term benefits through intergenerational human capital improvements, as educated women with greater empowerment and awareness of reproductive health, family planning and broader choices, tend to have fewer children. Women with economic and decision-making power invest in their children and ensure that they receive high quality education and healthcare.

**Balancing emergency and development funding for education**

Education is a low priority for humanitarian donors: The *Common Humanitarian Fund* removed education from 2014 grant allocations. The vast majority of education funds in South Sudan are for development programmes, which are managed through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST). Donors in South Sudan co-ordinate their support to the education sector through the *Education Donor Group*, which includes major financing partners, UN organisations and NGOs from both emergency education cluster and development cluster. Given the long term objective of building a durable education system in South Sudan the partners are keen to avoid developing parallel ‘emergency’ and ‘development’ systems. Efforts are underway to adapt education development programmes to work in both opposition and government-held areas of the Greater Upper Nile region.

The DFID-funded Girls Education South Sudan programme (GESS) is a highly successful example of support to girl’s education. It is adapting to the current context by disbursing capitation grants and cash transfers to the primary and few secondary schools open in the states where conflict is taking place.\(^{16}\)

Initiatives to cover emergency educational gaps need to be much better funded and co-ordinated better with efforts to build government systems. The MOEST strong technical leadership, which should not be undermined by emergency programmes. That does not mean that education can be delivered by the South Sudanese government alone – there are community schools, faith-based institutions, low-cost private schools and NGO-supported schools; ultimately these should be sought to be regulated through MOEST at state and national level.\(^{17}\)

Greater flexibility needs to be built into development programmes enabling them to adapt to face continuous crises, while emergency funds need to be made available to fill the gaps.

\(^{15}\) Interview with Plan South Sudan staff  
\(^{16}\) Interview with Plan International staff  
\(^{17}\) Interview with Plan International staff
Girls and boys continue fighting child marriage

CASE STUDY: Plan International Child Rights Club, Duony Gok, Awerial County

Diane*, 12 year old girl

Diane convinces girls to return to school if they have dropped out or whose parents prevent them from attending.

Diane would like one day to be a nurse.

“In a place like this one, it is good for a mother to read so she can check medicines for her child or read about preventing some diseases. I fear the parents because they are not always welcoming about girls’ education so I wait when we are alone and convince them. Then I tell them to ask their parents to allow them go to school. So far only five girls have joined school.”

Dave*, 15 year old boy

Dave has two sisters aged 3 and 9 and a brother 5. His 5 year old brother is in school but his 9 year old sister has never been to school, and stays at home preparing food for the family, while his mother and father work. Dave has been in the child rights club for 2 years and wants his sister to go to school.

Dave would like one day to be President.

“It makes me feel unhappy that she is not in school. When she grows older she will have to work in the homes of educated people.”

*not actual names

CASE STUDY: Minkaman IDP camp, Awerial County

Following the December 2013 attacks on the town of Bor, Jonglei state, 100,000 people fled across the White Nile River in search of refuge in Awerial County in neighbouring Lakes state. Most of those displaced are Dinka, having fled the predominantly Nuer insurgents who captured and briefly held the town.

The influx soon settled into the heavily overcrowded Minkaman IDP camp. At its peak in early 2014 the camp struggled with minimal humanitarian support and shortages of shelter, water, sanitation and education services. The current population has reduced to 71,000 including IDPs and host community. Those who left travelled to Juba, Uganda with many returning to Bor. A number of UN and aid agencies are providing services but many of these programmes are closing and some agencies leaving in May 2015 due to a lack of funding. As long as there is such a large IDP population, there should be a humanitarian response, since the majority does not have other sources of support and is reliant on humanitarian services. Hence, ensuring continuity of funding, rationalisation of activities and close engagement with the clusters for the planning of activities by implementing partners remains a key priority.

Uncertain future

The decision by donors to discontinue funding has partly been informed by the assumption that with calm restored in Bor, IDPs would return on mass. However the fear of renewed fighting remains strong among those remaining in Minkaman. Many come from villages in Twic East and Duk counties which border Nuer areas, and feel that return will only be viable once a clear resolution has been reached between the warring parties.

“People still feel fear, they see leaders going to Addis (location of peace talks) but failing to agree. War may erupt any time.” James Dau, Teacher, Minkaman

As the site population has been decreasing, a longer-term rationalisation of the response strategy fostering increasing self-reliance is being promoted. Services will be consolidated, scaled down and/or handed over to local authorities / local partners / communities based on agreed population indicators and identified core functions. However, local authorities and partners not continuing the work for those that remain will jeopardise the gains already made.

Impact on girls’ education

In the first months after the arrival of IDPs local schools were completely overwhelmed. Minkaman Primary School with a capacity for 600 students was suddenly struggling with 2500 students. Aid agencies have built new classrooms and are providing salaries for
teachers, easing the pressure and enabling more children to settle in to school.\(^{18}\)

An unexpected benefit of the influx of IDPs and aid agencies has been to make education available to the host community that was previously very underserved. Prior to the 2014 only 524 children were enrolled in school. Currently 12,173 children are in school including IDPs and host community children.\(^{19}\)

Besides providing education, schools play an essential role in the psycho-social support for children traumatised by the conflict.

“"My mother died in the war and when I think about her, I feel sad” says 5 year old girl.

“I like the centre, because I can come and learn and play with my friends and it makes me happy. I have made many friends here but I like two of them the most and we skip the rope together” She adds.

The opportunity to be out of the home, occupied with play, learning, and making friends provides normality in the midst of exceptional circumstances.

With the closure of education programmes, critically girls will lose a precious avenue for personal advancement. According to community members the presence of aid agencies promoting girl participation in education has increased girls enrolment.

“If we allow schools to close, what are we saying about the value of girls education. The case for keeping Girls in School falls down. In school we have a captive audience to support girls and promote their development. Where else is there such an equal playing field.” Cleopatra Nzome, Education cluster lead in Minkaman

“I am suffering because I cannot read or write. If I had been to school my family would be free. I have let my daughter finish her school.” Monica Adol, 57, church pastor

RECOMMENDATIONS

The UN General Assembly resolution on ‘the right to education in emergency situations’ emphasizes the obligation to secure education for all children regardless of context.\(^{20}\) The UN Secretary General’s Education Initiative, Education First, also upholds the right to education in conflict and humanitarian emergencies, reinforcing the General Assembly resolution. Critical steps to increase access to education in South Sudan during the current crisis include:

1. **Funding to cover education for ALL children:** The overall education funding needs of South Sudan must be met to enable long term development and progress. Donors must commit to ensuring education needs will be considered a key component in the South Sudan humanitarian response and demonstrate this by fully funding the education appeal budget line of USD40 million in the Strategic Response Plan.

2. **Prioritising Girls Education:**
   Steps to increase girls’ access to education include.
   a. Funding to train and support teachers with a focus on female teachers
   b. Funding to create or expand accelerated or alternative learning opportunities (particularly for over-age children). This could also include informal education opportunities on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights/protection/life-skills for girls

3. **Donor – NGO coordination:** There is an urgent need for inter-donor coordination to devise a comprehensive funding strategy aimed, on the one hand, to support high-capacity actors in the delivery of emergency education services and, on the other hand, to facilitate as much as possible the transfer of responsibilities to government authorities and national/local NGOs. Education clusters should be given greater prominence in donor decision making on funding allocation and activity planning.

18 Minkaman previously had 6 teachers paid by ministry of education. Plan International provides salaries for an additional 8 teachers. Other agencies are providing books and teacher training.

19 Interview with Minkaman, Education Cluster lead

20 UN General Assembly Resolution on the right to education in emergency situations, A/RES/64/290 (2010)