



A Case of India-South Sudan Cooperation in Education and Science and Technology in South Sudan



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Introduction

South Sudan, the newest nation in the world enjoys a very cordial relationship with India and this relationship has a long history. India recognized the formation of South Sudan and extended diplomatic relationship within a short period after formation of South Sudan and upgraded the Consulate in Juba to the Embassy level within eight months. The bi-lateral co-operation is now restricted to few areas but there is scope to expand and diversify it. In this paper I argue that India can play a key role in improving the educational system in South Sudan, particularly in higher education and also help in strengthening the fledging S&T infrastructure. It is pointed out that despite the fact that South Sudan gets external aid and assistance in cash and kind in educational sector, there is enough scope for India to contribute in this sector. This paper thus suggests steps and measures that have to be taken by both countries to facilitate bi-lateral collaboration in education and S&T. This is more an expiatory piece than a strategic plan backed by data and analysis.

Educational System in South Sudan

South Sudan's educational system is being revamped and expanded. Higher education at South Sudan refers to the education offered at post secondary level and this comes under Ministry for Higher Education and Science and Technology (MoHEST). MoHEST was established in 2010. It oversees development of higher education. The educational system suffers from many problems, most of which can be traced to the protracted civil

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war and underdevelopment of South Sudan. Nevertheless, with active support from aid agencies, civil society, foreign governments efforts are being made to enhance literacy, enrol more girl children in the education system, build capacity at all levels and expand considerably the secondary and tertiary education. Even if financial resources are available the question is where are the teachers and trainers and institutions that will develop human resources in education and work consistently over long term in making education system responsive to the needs and aspirations of the society. The data available indicates the daunting tasks. The enrolment rates are low and the number of institutions in higher education are very limited. Understanding the need for greater involvement of aid agencies and others, the government had formed various bodies to develop, implement and oversee the educational sector.

According to USAID, the enrolment has increased to more than a million but drop out rates are high and only 18% of those who are enrolled continue till class 8th. As South Sudan lags behind in female literacy with only 10% of the females are literate, it has an impact on education of girl children right from primary classes. Only 13% of primary school teachers and 10% of secondary school teachers are women. In terms of qualification, most teachers are educated up to primary and secondary school level and teachers with graduate or higher qualifications are less than 15%. Besides infrastructure problems, the low level of enrolment at primary school level itself poses many challenges. How to reach out to those who want to attend and get educated but have no access when the formal school system is underequipped. When the number of children enrolled and those outside the education system are almost the same, the limitations to formal school system in providing education are obvious. The enrolment has increased from 3,00,000 in 2000 to 1.3 million or so by now. But the number of children in secondary schools is less than a lakh. The statistics regarding university education indicates that despite problems and constraints progress is being made. With demand increasing, the number of private universities have increased.

Perspectives from World Bank

“Basic education outcomes remain low. The adult literacy rate was 27 percent in 2009, below that of other fragile and conflict-affected states when they emerged from conflict (see Table 3.2 and Table 3.3). In 2000, 20 percent of students completed primary school. By 2011, the completion rate had increased to 37 percent (compared to 69 percent for SSA on average). In 2009, 48 percent of primary-aged children were enrolled in school, declining to 42 percent by 2012, and the rate is assumed to have declined further since then due to the conflict. Data on the number of secondary school graduates in South Sudan are limited.

According to the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), the gross enrolment ratio in 2015 was 9.3 percent, far below the average for SSA and countries with fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCS) (see Table 3.3). Those who can afford it send their children for secondary school outside the country, typically to Kenya or Uganda. However, there are no data tracking the enrollment or completion rates for this group, nor is there good information regarding the number of graduates who return to South Sudan or seek employment in the public sector. With regard to higher education, there are five operational state/public universities: the University of Juba (founded in 1977), University of Upper Nile at Malakal (1992), University of Western Bahr el Ghazal at Wau (1990), Rumbek University (2009), and Dr. John Garang University of Science and Technology in Bor (2010). The University of Juba has about 6,000 students in active learning and has graduated about 6,500 students since 2006. According to MoHE data, in 2015 there were 721 professors and lecturers serving in South Sudan’s 13 universities (more than half at universities in Juba); all 13 had a library and generators; none had dormitory facilities and one-quarter did not have safe drinking water.”

(World Bank 2017 P 42)

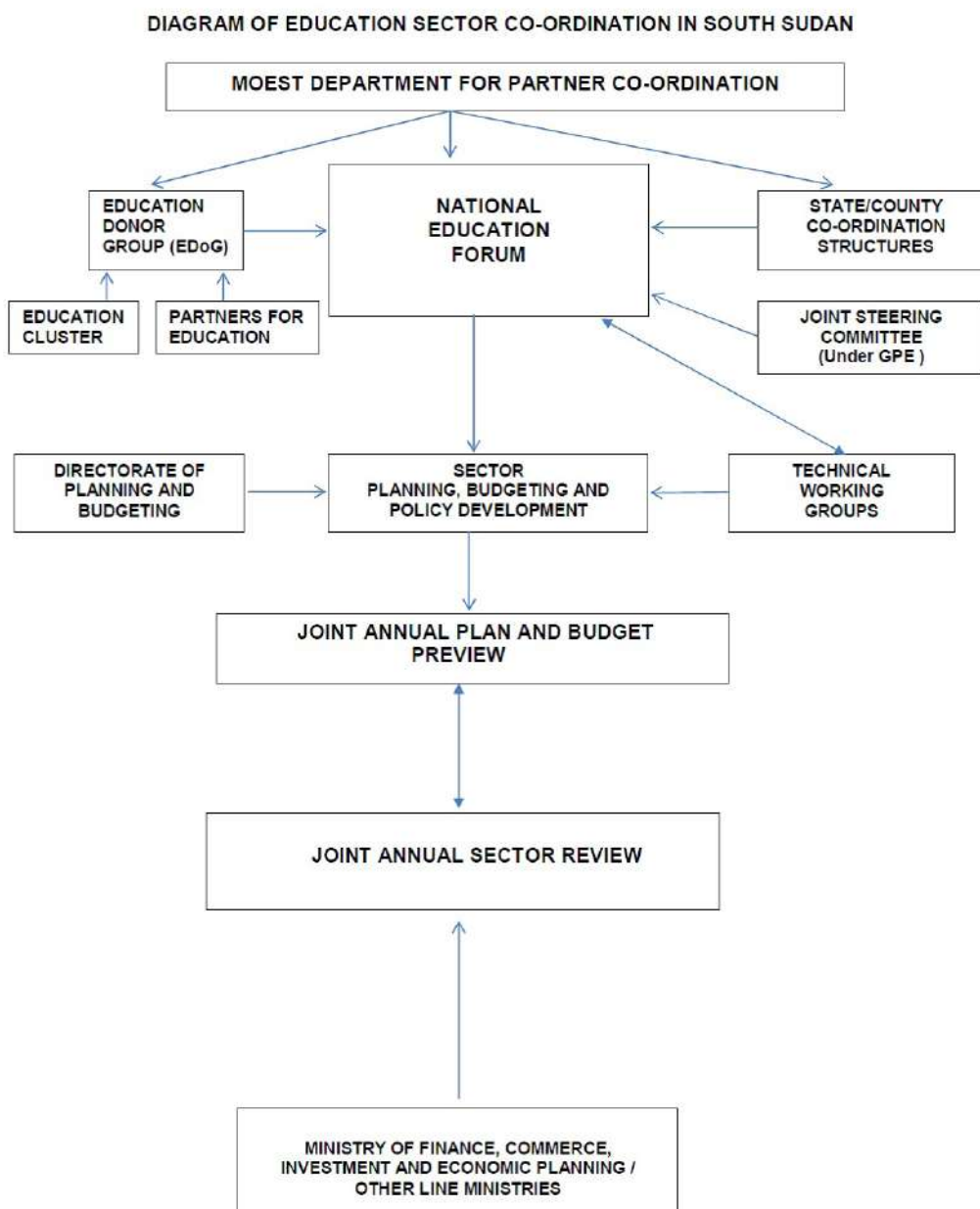
World Bank also points out that even if a quarter of the students enrolled which was 11,419 in 2015 were to graduate the number of new graduates will be less than three thousand. This is too small a number for a country that

needs significant number of graduates and other qualified personnel to rebuild and take the country forward. While the number of Universities is on the increase, concerns about the quality of faculty have been raised. According to **Kuyok**

“ Moreover, the system is dominated by unqualified faculty. For example, in terms of academic qualifications, only 86 of all academics held a PhD in 2012. Furthermore, staff profiles, compiled the same year, revealed that only 36 faculty were full professors, while 62 were associate professors, 76 assistant professors, 242 lecturers,

and 262 teaching assistants. To run the academic programs, universities recruit part-time tutors. Thus, 31 percent and 60 percent of Juba and Bahr el Ghazal lecturers, respectively, were part-timers in late 2016. The staff situation at the other three universities is equally alarming.” Kuyok 2017, 16)

The author points out some positive developments including collaborations with universities abroad and the dedication and commitment shown by faculty in the universities. However these alone will not be sufficient. In the recent years South Sudan has received bi-lateral



Source :Education Sector Coordination Manual, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology P3 (2015)

assistance from many countries and global institutions like World Bank. The bi-lateral aid and aid from NGOs have helped the government to utilize their capabilities in the educational sector. USAID is a major donor and supporter while NGOs have been supporting education for women and girl children. In case of higher education, Realizing the need for effective co-ordination and execution the Government of South Sudan has set up many fora on education as in the diagram below

In the recent years South Sudan has signed Memorandum of Undertaking with Turkey in higher education sector. Similarly South Sudan and Botswana signed a MoU in May 2018 so as to facilitate students from South Sudan to join in universities in Botswana. In fact many students from South Sudan are pursuing education at universities in other countries in Africa but the details are not fully available. A notable initiative to promote engineering education among women an exclusive STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) center has been started at the University of Juba in November 2017 in partnership with IsraAID and STEM Synergy, and with the support of the Mark Gelfand Family Charitable Trust. Thus slowly but steadily efforts are being made to promote education and to make it accessible. However as pointed out, the challenge is huge and the tasks are daunting.

India-South Sudan Cooperation

While both countries enjoy a stable relationship, economic and commercial relations are limited, given the potential. Fellowships are available for candidates from South Sudan in programs offered under ITEC and by Indian Council for Cultural Relations. There is an urgent need to increase the number of fellowships and also provide fellowships in other programs. While there are many initiatives from India, there is hardly anything on higher education or capacity building in the sector on a long term basis. (MEA 2018) From the above brief it is clear that although 10 fellowships were offered by ICCR only 7 were utilized. On the other hand under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)

Training Slots, 200 have been allotted for 2018-19. The number should be increased. But more important is to develop a comprehensive plan for bi-lateral co-operation between Sudan and India in education and S&T.

India has rich experience in education sector and has made impressive progress in education and S&T. More important is the fact that it used traditional methods, non traditional methods such as literacy campaigns, and, developed multiple schemes in education to meet the needs of different groups. South Sudan needs multiple schemes that cater to different needs, particularly the needs of girl children and women. Similarly India adopted innovative policies and programs in education to make it more accessible, affordable and relevant. In S&T, it adopted schemes to promote excellence, diversity and inclusion. South Sudan in fact cannot be served by an approach that fails to acknowledge the diversity in needs and the constraints. With its experience in education and S&T India can help South Sudan to develop a comprehensive action plan in education and S&T. India can help in all dimensions in education, ranging from infrastructure development to promoting excellence in higher education. The same is true of S&T in which South Sudan lags behind many countries in Africa.

Conclusion

This brief paper suggests that India and South Sudan should co-operate in education and S&T. It is worth pointing out that this will strengthen bi-lateral ties. It will be an opportunity for both countries to show to the world a country could begin almost afresh in education and S&T and still achieve considerable progress.

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