



The five main sectors
↓
(education)



education



health



nutrition



water,
sanitation,
& hygiene
WASH



child
protection



Education in Sudan

Sudan has recorded steady progress in education, from an increase in primary school attendance to gender parity in primary classrooms. However, Sudan's simmering wars, a lack of awareness about the importance of education and chronic under-development all contribute to the poor schooling of boys and girls in Sudan. In addition, cultural pressures and the traditional views of the role of women mean fewer girls attend and remain in school. The inability to pay fees—even though school is free according to government policy—also prevents some poor families from sending children to school. Even if all the barriers to

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education are somehow hurdled, once in the classroom the quality of learning is below the required standards.

Teachers are often untrained, undersupervised and unequally distributed between rural and urban areas, instruction is rote learning, the school environment is unfriendly with inadequate separate sanitation facilities for boys, girls and teachers and materials tend to be inappropriate or non-existent.

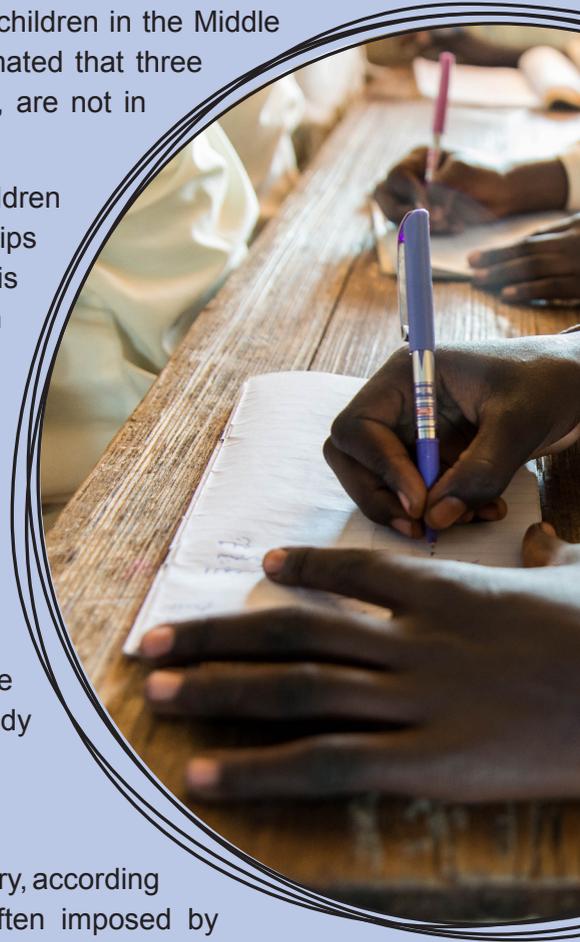
A recent report reflects these conditions, concluding that Sudan has one of the largest number of out-of-school children in the Middle East and North Africa region. It's estimated that three million children here, aged 5-13 years, are not in the classroom.

Seventy-six percent of primary age children attend school; in secondary that figure dips to 28 percent. At 43 percent, Blue Nile is the worst performing state for children out of primary school. At the other end, only six percent of children in Northern State are out of primary school. On teaching, for example, according to the Ministry of Education, the total number of unqualified teachers in South and East Darfur is 3,692—this out of a total number of 7,315 employed teachers. In other words, half of the teachers in those two states are not ready for the classroom.

The 'Cost' of Education

In Sudan education is free and compulsory, according to government policy, but fees are often imposed by parent teacher associations. The fees are to supplement the low level of government funding for education. Because of these fees, together with the costs of uniforms, notebooks and pens, education is out of reach for many poor families. The demand for schooling is there, but the classroom is also lacking or overcrowded: few and untrained teachers, poor water and sanitation facilities, poor learning materials.

The opportunity cost must also be considered: labor foregone—a girl in school versus what she can contribute at home, for example. When she has her period it's even more difficult as her school may lack water and gender sensitive latrines. So she stays home and falls behind in her studies for a few days, month after month. Her parents are now more





In a recent five year period, national basic school enrollment increased by 600,000 children.

In response to the schooling interrupted by conflict, each year we aim to extend basic education services to more than 300,000 children.

Primary school enrolment has risen to 76 percent; The gender ratio is split evenly between boys and girls.

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focused on marrying her off—one less mouth to feed plus there's the dowry. If she has far to walk to school the distance and security is also a worry. And with boys at the school, and mainly male teachers, her parents—who had very little schooling themselves—conclude it's better just to keep her at home.

What UNICEF Sudan is doing

The Ministry of Education with UNICEF support leads Sudan's humanitarian response for education. This

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is huge responsibility given the many barriers to education here, but we have been able to make a difference with the targeted use of our influence and resources.

Sudan's 18 states now have draft education sector strategies in place, all with UNICEF support in our unwavering commitment to strengthen the state ministries of education capacities. These strategies are being consolidated into the country's national strategic plan. In addition, we also supported education strategies on girls, nomadic children, children with disabilities, Alternative Learning Programme strategy and school construction to mainstream Child Friendly School standards for future projects.

Child-Friendly Learning

At UNICEF-Sudan we high-profile the rights of children, including making schools accessible and child-friendly. This means lobbying Government for enough schools to reduce on walking distance—a big barrier, especially for girls—while ensuring proper facilities, qualified teachers, materials and community participation. A child-friendly school is one equipped with water and separate latrines for girls and boys. Such a school reflects UNICEF's push for integration that touches on multiple sectors: education, WASH, child protection, health and nutrition.

Even with pupils in the classroom—from enrolment efforts, and from a build-it-and-they-will-come approach—it's all for naught if the quality of learning can't match the demand

or the child-friendly facilities. For families to care about education, and to care that their daughter is in school, it must be relevant to their lives. Parents and communities must see the value now; it can't be abstract. This can include simple but innovative lessons in mathematics and agriculture with examples that are drawn directly from the community.

Returning children to the classroom

UNICEF understands the challenge of bringing back out-of-school children, and so prioritizes community sensitization and community involvement through school enrolment campaigns, even mobilization at the household level. Studies confirm that the demand for education is often there. But without enough teachers, for example, and especially female teachers who are also trained and equipped with quality materials, then the value to a community can be in doubt.

With improved information on where children are and what

children are suffering from, UNICEF is able to target its education support. For example, from schooling statistics on South and East Darfur, UNICEF launched the Training of Teachers programme there. Classroom and school leadership is critical to education outcomes so this programme trains 80 teacher trainers and provides in-services training to an additional 2,000 teachers, 400 school heads and 50 senior head masters across both states. We also support teacher trainings in emergency settings, in accelerated learning programmes and for

Parent Teacher Associations.

In response to the schooling interrupted by conflict, each year we aim to extend basic education services to more than 300,000 children. These services include the construction of schools,

providing learning materials free of charge to students and teachers, the training of teachers, building the capacity of teacher-parent committee members, and enhancing children's active participation in the learning process through child clubs.

In addition to conflict areas, we focus on children in very remote areas and children of nomadic groups. As part of our out-of-school development programme we support solar-powered tablets loaded with lessons for those outside of the formal education system.

UNICEF also supports Alternative Learning Programme Centres with teaching and learning materials aimed at children who never attended school, dropped out of school or have fallen so far behind that they cannot return to mainstream education without first catching up on missed lessons. There are now nearly 2,500 of these UNICEF-supported Alternative Learning Programme Centres in Sudan.

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UNICEF education support for children uprooted by conflict

El Neem Camp, East Darfur

In Darfur, when the gunmen come to your village, the only thing to do is run. Back in 2013 that is exactly what Hassan Mohamed Ahmed was forced to do.

Along with thousands of other refugees, he took his wife and nine children and headed towards El Neem, a camp for internally displaced people in East Darfur.

But with the sanctuary of the camp, came the inevitable difficulties of building a new life. For his children, the transition was equally tough – they had

been forced to give up one of their fundamental rights: the right to an education.

“The children, were always asking me, ‘when can we go to school’,” said Hassan, 50. “All of the refugee children were worried about their future. They would see other students going to school in the camp and they would start crying.”

The situation was so bad that teachers who had also fled the fighting would arrange lessons beneath trees inside the camp for boys and girls who wanted to continue their education.

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For the first six months, little changed. Established schools in the camp were unable to take fresh arrivals, while new classrooms were not erected due to a belief that families such Hassan’s might soon be able to return to their villages.

Then a UNICEF-supported programme was launched to build eight new, semi-permanent classrooms. Thanks to the Common Humanitarian Fund, and with assistance from the State Ministry of Education, construction was eventually completed, allowing the school to provide education for more than 1,500 boys and girls.

“This school is very important,” said headmaster Hamouda Abu Bakr Abdullah. “It’s important not only for the children, but for the community.”

For Hassan’s family, it has also provided an invaluable degree of normality after the trauma of seeing their lives destroyed by conflict. A member of the school’s parent-teacher association, he said that children in the community were “very, very happy” when the UNICEF-supported building programme was finally completed.

For their exams, pupils work towards the same basic education certificate as other children in East Darfur’s mainstream system. According to teachers at the school, more than 95 per cent of the boys and girls who took the most recent exams passed.



A New Way of Teaching

Nyala, South Darfur

Haider Abdullah, a participant in the UNICEF-supported Training of Teachers programme, said the best thing about the approach was the fact that students were “given a chance to practice what they had learned” in front of the class.

“It gave me new ideas about how to do my training,” says the father-of-four. “Previously I used to think that giving lectures was the best way to do it. But now I’ve learned that the best way to teach is as a facilitator. You shouldn’t give your pupils everything.”

According to Ali AbulGasim, the dean of the programme, this is one of the key messages of the course. “When we start, we tell them that they should not give lectures,” he says, adding that group discussions were strongly encouraged on the programme.

Students are split up into pairs and asked to solve problems, or given a task which they have to discuss together, come to a conclusion and present to their fellow trainees.

“Sometimes teachers think they have to lecture students,” added another participant, Ismail Nourein, a teacher with 35 years of classroom experience. “But you need to give them a chance to express themselves.”

“I have really learned a lot from this training,” said Adam Ahmed Adam, another trainer who has benefited from the UNICEF-supported programme. “I have also learned from other teachers I have met on the training,” he continued. “Some of them were displaced, and have given me examples of how they taught children inside refugee camps.

“These teachers talk about their experiences dealing with boys and girls who have been in difficult situations, and that gave me ideas about how to approach the psychological issues that some boys and girls face.

“It has showed me how to teach other people properly.”

Transitioning back to the Classroom

Al Ushura, Gedaref State

In the middle of a town square deep in the countryside of rural Sudan, a man and woman are quarrelling loudly.

“If we let them go to school, who is going to go and farm the fields for us?” asks the man, middle-aged and dressed in a long, white jalabiyya.

The woman is unimpressed. “If the children get an education, they can become doctors and run their own clinics instead of pulling donkey carts.”

Her response draws smiles from a large group of onlookers, who have gathered in the square and are watching the debate unfold. The couple doesn't seem to mind the crowd—after all, their ‘quarrel’ is not all it appears to be. The man and the woman are actors, staging a show intended to demonstrate the benefits of child education.

The play is part of a UNICEF-supported campaign to register out-of-school children across Gedaref State, southeast Sudan.

The area has one of the higher rates of out-of-school children in the country. And this in a country that is the worst in region with an estimated three million children missing out on their right to an education. The figures are due to the large numbers of nomadic families who inhabit this vast region.

“This is a new way for generating

education awareness,” said Abdel Farak Zakariya, an official from the State Ministry of Education who works with UNICEF to implement the campaign.

“Some people don't allow us to enter their houses because of their beliefs and customs. But this way, the local sheikhs can bring people here who have negative views and they can see the play.”

Omr Ali Ahmed Idris, headmaster of the nearby Abu Bakr el-Sadiq primary school, gave his firm support to the campaign. “Hopefully it will increase the numbers of children who are able to go to school,” he said. “It will motivate them to get an education.”

Boys and girls from nomadic families are particularly prone to missing out on schooling. Their lifestyle, moving from one place to another, makes it difficult to settle in one town for long.

Sometimes a child will begin his or her first year of schooling, but then have to withdraw when the family moves on to a new location. There are also cost factors. Parents either cannot afford the school fees, or would prefer their children to work and earn money instead of sitting in classrooms.

In addition there are cultural issues to contend with. Nomadic families in Gedaref state are often highly conservative. Many parents believe that young girls should not go to school,

or effectively terminate the education of their daughters by organising early marriages for them.

This year's enrolment campaign in Gedaref State involved 24 Ministry of Education teams – approximately 240 people – visiting families and community leaders in towns and villages across the region in a bid to register children for school. According to Abdel Farak Zakariya, teams often find it difficult to persuade families about the merits of child education.

“Many families prefer Koranic school to the normal school,” he said. “They believe that the Koran is the most important subject. But there are many other subjects that are important, and when a child goes to school, he will learn these subjects.”

There are also challenges in terms of capacity for the children who are being registered. To give one example, Abu Bakr el-Sadiq school in Al-Ushura currently has 140 students. Yet in Al-Ushura alone, more than 1,800 out-of-school children have been signed up during the campaign.

Progress is being made. According to Mr Zakariya, UNICEF has supported the local authorities by helping to establish 15 Alternative Learning Programmes—schemes that offer educational assistance to children who have missed out on formal schooling.

Sudan by the numbers: education

Percentage of children out of primary school, by state

