

Improving education access and quality in South Sudan



Operational excellence for results that matter

Despite significant natural resources South Sudan remains one of the least developed countries in the world, following decades of conflict. Half of all children do not attend school. Only 27 percent of the adult population can read or write, and 84 percent of all women are illiterate.

Less than 10 percent of all children who do go to school have access to permanent classrooms, where they are protected from the extremes of weather, with many simply taking brief lessons under trees.

To realize its full potential South Sudan needs to build the capacity of its population and to do that, it needs more qualified teachers and more and better schools.

UNOPS and education globally

UNOPS has considerable experience of improving access to education in challenging environments, from building over 200 schools in post-tsunami Indonesia on behalf of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to procuring hundreds of thousands of educational laptops for the Government of Argentina and the Inter-American Development Bank, to boosting women's access to university education in Afghanistan on behalf of USAID.

The following are examples of UNOPS ongoing support to the education sector in South Sudan, in the face of considerable security and other challenges.

“UNOPS has proved to be a trusted partner in delivering DFID's development results in a difficult context like South Sudan. Its hard working teams of engineers, procurement specialists and logisticians are at the forefront of re-constructing the war torn education infrastructure in the country.”

*- Fazle Rabbani, Education Advisor
UK Department for International Development
(DFID) South Sudan*

Building primary and secondary schools

UNOPS is working with UNICEF, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Government of Italy to construct primary and secondary schools under a number of projects across nine out of the ten states of South Sudan.



A school constructed by UNOPS on behalf of USAID at Pabiey. **Photo:** UNOPS

On behalf of these partners UNOPS has already built 48 schools (containing 192 classrooms) as of the end of 2011, with another 38 in the planning or construction stages (containing 272 classrooms). UNOPS is managing the construction of the schools, as well as drilling wells for safe drinking water and procuring the necessary furniture and equipment. UNICEF, in close collaboration with the Government, is providing the 'software' component, which includes technical support and training, to DFID-funded schools.

In accordance with UNICEF policies and in partnership with the Ministry of Education, UNOPS designed all the schools to be as child-friendly as possible, to provide children and teachers with a safe and conducive learning environment. Facilities often include playgrounds and football or basketball courts.

Working with the community to boost sustainability

To ensure newly constructed schools are used to their full potential, UNOPS is engaging local communities in planning and monitoring activities on behalf of the above partners.

Encouraging local communities to be actively involved boosts local pride and ownership of schools, leading to increased use and maintenance.

In some cases UNOPS-supported projects are hiring local community mobilizers to inform and educate the community on the benefits of the project, and to discuss ways to get involved. For example, for the Government of Italy, these mobilizers are working with communities to get functioning

Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in place. These PTAs debate key issues such as increasing the attendance rate, especially of girls, stopping early marriage and improving local security. They also develop effective strategies to get mothers and other adults involved in the decision-making process.

In many cases projects use local NGOs and faith-based organizations to carry out this work due to their existing legitimacy and extensive networks. These organizations can undertake effective community mobilization in support of key issues such as increased educational access for girls and vulnerable children.



Less than ten percent of school children currently have access to permanent classrooms. **Photo:** UNOPS/J. Buckingham



Children studying in the UNOPS-constructed Atlabara West School. **Photo:** UNOPS/J. Buckingham

Getting girls into school

The school-building projects have a particular focus on getting girls into school and helping them complete primary education.

Our community mobilizers are advocating for more female teachers, and schools are being built with separate male and female toilets. Community mobilizers also talk to parents to persuade them of the benefits of allowing their daughters to complete at least the first four years of primary school. Receiving a free school lunch from the World Food Programme and allowing students to take water from the school well back to their homes also helps, as is evidenced in the intervention funded by Italy.

Other methods, such as building girl's toilets near to the school, and cutting back the bush around the school, help to reduce the risk of sexual violence and insecurity.

Strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Education

In partnership with DFID and UNICEF, UNOPS is helping the national Ministry of Education and four state ministries build capacity to plan, build, maintain and manage their own education infrastructure.

By working closely with the ministries while building community schools, it is anticipated that the ministry officials will be able to replicate the child-friendly approach to school design and construction in the future. To that end, a number of implementation and technical construction handbooks are also being compiled.

How we add value

Our partners request UNOPS support to supplement their own capacities, improve speed, reduce risks, boost cost-effectiveness or increase quality.

UNOPS size, scope and track record allows our partners to benefit from economies of scale and specialized expertise. In 2010, we delivered \$1.27 billion through project implementation. UNOPS is a not-for-profit organization and is fully self-financing, prompting efficiency and financial discipline.

Our transparent, accountable management services meet the highest international standards. We also maintain a physical presence on the ground and promotes the ownership and engagement of governments and local communities.