APPRAISAL

of the

EDUCATION SECTOR STRATEGIC PLAN

of the

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,

REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN

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Sudan has lost a considerable tract of its area and a substantial segment of its population, together with the bulk of its energy reserves. There have been decades of civil war, conflict and dislocation. Large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers are being accommodated. Sanctions and embargoes have exacerbated the situation. Poverty, vulnerability and privations prevail.

In such a setting, the production of a positive and, in many ways, optimistic Education Sector Strategic Plan is a remarkable achievement. The resilience of Sudan's educational decision-makers and planners is acknowledged and admired.

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ACRONYMS

BERP	Basic Education Recovery Project
BYOD	Bring Your Own Device
CR	Completion Rate
DP	Development Partner
EC/EU	European Commission/European Union
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPG	Education Partners Group
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Programme
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FMoE	Federal Ministry of Education
FY	Financial Year
GE	General Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GIR	Gross Intake Rate
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GoS	Government of Sudan
HDPN	Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus
HE	Higher Education
iBES	Interim Basic Education Strategy
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
INSET	In-Service Training
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
JSR	Joint Sector Review
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoFNE	Ministry of Finance and National Economy
MoHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
NCCER	National Centre for Curriculum and Education Research
NCLAE	National Council for Literacy and Adult Education
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	Non-Government(al) Organisation
NLA	National Learning Assessment
OOSC	Out of School Children
PIU	Programme Implementation Unit

PPP	Public Private Partnership or PowerPoint Presentation
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
SDG	Sudanese Pounds or Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (indicators)
SMoE	State Ministry of Education
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Organisation
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an independent appraisal of the June 2018 English language version of Sudan's 5-year Education Sector Strategic Plan. While acknowledging the requirement to be constructively **critical**, its author has attempted above all to be sympathetically **helpful**. Utilising the structure and questions set out in the GPE/ UNESCO/IIEP's 2015 *Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal*, it is the Appraiser's considered opinion that:

In terms of **leadership and participation**, the plan preparation process been definitely been country-led, participatory, and transparent: FMoE has managed the process, developing its capacity as the Plan evolved, and there has been genuine and widespread participation involving Development Partners, civil society, some other Ministries and all SMoEs.

With regard to **soundness and relevance**, the ESSP constitutes a solid corpus of strategies and actions addressing the key challenges of the general education sub-sector: higher education is not an integral Plan element. Attention is given to the need effectively to gather manage, analyse and utilise data. The high level of household expenditure on education is recognised: this is unlikely to fall during the coming five years and, should there be further economic challenges, poverty may have a major negative effect on ESSP objectives.

The issues of **equity, efficiency and learning** may, with the application of Recommendations presented in this document, be regarded as soundly addressed to increase sector performance. However, the substantial geographical disparities, while well-documented, are insufficiently addressed in the proposed actions, just as the attention given to children with special educational needs, refugees and IDPs is limited. Change strategies are convincing but, while SDG4's aim of all Sudanese children having free, equitable and quality education by 2030 is mentioned as an aspiration, it will not come to pass on the basis of this Plan's intentions. Given Sudan's present economic and educational situation, that is a reasonable recognition.

As far as **coherence** is concerned, there is reasonable consistency between the various components of the ESSP, and that too may be strengthened by responses by GoS to the Recommendation: the intended change of focus from Access to Learning may better be regarded as an integrated approach on both of Increased Quantity and Upgraded Quality – they are not mutually exclusive.

In relation to **feasibility, implement-ability and monitor-ability**, the financing, implementation, and monitoring arrangements may – again after the application of the Recommended improvements, offer a good perspective for achievement. The funding gap is acknowledged, risks addressed and coordination attended to: on those bases, this 5-year Plan offers a reasonable roadmap for enhancing the general education sub-sector's coverage, efficiency and qualitative achievement while building a good foundation for a genuine sector-wide approach in the not too distant future.

Practical suggestions are made in response to those findings and considerations and a number of those are presented in the concluding Chapter, including the following:

- The eventual **English language version of the ESSP document** – the 'master copy' – will be the key educational document over the coming years, with clarity and consistency achieved and errors and ambiguities are eliminated. Once finalised, the eventual Arabic version should accurately reflect the approved English one.

- The possibility of an **ESSP Mid-Term Update and Revision** towards the end of its third year (i.e. April through June 2021), based upon a Mid-term ESSP Review should be considered: at that stage, the EMIS data situation should have improved, extending to the coverage of refugees, along with greatly enhanced FMoE and MoHESR cooperation and coordination.

- On the basis that the more key people who know that an ESSP is being produced, and why, and what its aims and consequences will be for them, the better, it is suggested that a well-crafted **media release/ministerial statement** may be opportune and, of course, more detailed coverage at the time of the ESSP's launching.

- **Computing, ICT and Digitisation** offer opportunities for greater efficiencies and cost-saving (digital textbooks, English-Arabic translation, in-service teacher development et cetera) if seized on a well-planned basis. In terms of learning, the potential of hand-held devices may well be a sensible way forward: these possibilities should be addressed.

- The return to a **9-grade basic education structure** should be creatively thought through, not only in terms of learning at the general education level but as a consequence of more mature and better educated youngsters moving into higher education.

- Attention should be given to ways in which the contributions of **National Service and Volunteers** in schools could be more effective and beneficial for both them and the children.

- The process of developing and implementing **School Improvement Plans** could be optimised, using the grants as catalysts for school/community wide needs analyses, creative planning and participative action.

- The transition from **Examinations to Continuous Assessment** involves a dramatic change of learning and teaching philosophy which many may resist: a starting-point might be the encouragement of a 'feedback pedagogy' accompanied by inspectors focusing on 'Are the children learning?' Ultimately, the definition of 'success' might move away from test scores towards a richer and broader definition of education quality.

- In respect of **Nomadic Education**, further justification for the decision to focus upon dormitories could usefully be provided, showing that the selected strategy takes full account of international experiences and that attention has been given to alternative or complementary

approaches such as mobile classrooms, peripatetic teachers, enabling nomadic adults to become 'teaching associates', devising tailored curricula and the potential for E-learning

While whether, when and how the Ministry responds to these Suggestions does not affect the appraisal, the **Recommendations** for FMoE action that follow are considered necessary if the ESSP is to become a credible basis for the sector's development over the coming five years. The Appraiser's intention has been to set out a realistic way forward, focussing upon the essentials, and he has, therefore, restricted the number and complexity of his Recommendations.

Many of them incorporate two basic messages: '**Make the Policy clear!'** and '**Come up with a good Outcome Indicator**!' That advice may well be applied across the sector. Let it be recognised also that, even if every Recommendation were to be fully responded to, there would still be gaps and imperfections. There is no such thing as an impeccable ESSP and the adage that *The Perfect is the enemy of the Good* should be kept in mind.

Table of Recommendations

Area	Recommended Action
Tertiary Education	This ESSP's coverage of Higher Education should be (a) clear, (b) limited to mutual concerns, and (c) approved by MoHESR, moving in time towards genuine sector-wide and jointly authored Plans
Equity	The ESSP should set out clearly the policy towards the reduction or elimination of disparities and inequalities across and within States and between urban and rural communities; there should be at least one measurable outcome indicator
Refugees	The ESSP should include clear educational policies and strategies, consistent with GoS policies and definitions, regarding refugee, asylum seekers' and non-citizen children, with indicators extending to their educational performance
IDP	As with Refugees, above
Teachers	The ESSP should set out clearly the actions to be taken (by specified dates) to implement the Teacher Education Strategy and other measures to enhance the conditions, prestige (the Licence to Teach) and equitable deployment of teachers, along with measurable outcome indicators
School Feeding	The ESSP should set out how the development of clear policies and efficient structures will be achieved, hopefully within the early years of the plan period, and how the long-term provision of school meals will be funded and organised. Indicators should cover the approval and consequences of policies and extend to the educational outcomes of enhanced nutrition

Literacy and Adult Education	Strategies and activities related to OOSC, youth and adult illiterates should be incorporated into the ESSP, including outcome indicators in each of these areas
Capacity Development	The ESSP should include a Capacity Development section setting out in general terms the required skills, existing gaps and intended actions. The outcome indicator would relate to efficient ESSP implementation and monitoring at all levels
Educational Data	The ESSP should include a clear indication on how integrated and effective information-driven planning and monitoring will be achieved
Indicators	All ESSP objectives should be reflected in skilfully devised, readily-verified and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) outcome indicators
Development Partners	The ESSP should include an informative section on Development Partner support to the sector, extending to clear arrangements for FMoE-nurtured coordination and the encouragement of shared activities
Action Plan	The Action Plan (chapters 6 through 8 of the ESSP) should, for each activity, provide clear and explicit indications of timing, responsibilities and costs

Once each of the above Recommendations has been effectively responded to, the ESSP will be – in this Appraiser's opinion – a credible foundation for further action.

APPRAISAL OF SUDAN'S EDUCATION SECTOR STRATEGIC PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This document presents the Independent Appraisal of the June 2018 English version of Sudan's Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), conducted by Mike Douse during August through September 2018. It assesses whether a positive policy environment exists for productive investments in the education sector and whether capacity constraints are being addressed to facilitate policy implementation. It also cover areas of government leadership, knowledge and data, institutional and human capacities, and dialogue between education stakeholders.

This appraisal is based directly upon the GPE/UNESCO/IIEP's 2015 *Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal*, taking full account also of some interesting and more recent documents from that same source, namely the recent *Effective Partnership Review* and the *Secretariat's Response* of June 2018.

The Education Sector Analysis (ESA) was the starting-point for producing the new ESSP and, to ensure ownership and active engagement of government officers, a draft in Arabic was produced. After extensive preparation and consultation with the States Ministries of Education (SMoE), the revised draft was shared with partners in October 2017 who provided their feedback on the methodology and the content. Simultaneously, FMoE, with the support of the World Bank team, started the preparation of the ESSP itself. The revised ESA of February 2018, although not appraised as such, is regarded as a key document in the process and it is commented upon in Annex B, below.

The preparation of the new ESSP commenced, with GPE financial support, in June 2016. The draft ESSP issued in February 2018 was received by the Development Partners (DP) who provided extensive feedback to the Ministry in April 2018. Comprehensive feedback was also provided by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) country lead. The Ministry then reviewed the draft and issued a revised ESSP: it is the **June 2018 English version** of this document that is now being appraised.

It is recognised that this version responds conscientiously to the feedback on the earlier version received from both DP and the GPE, It is noted also that, while no separate 'ESSP Operational Plan' document exists, the final chapters of the ESSP itself comprise the operational plan.

This has been a reading, observing, listening, questioning, discovering, analysing and discussing assignment embracing a sensitive and participatory approach. First-hand data, as such, was not explicitly sought: the statistics were to hand: it has been the reflections, ideas and opinions that have best guided the Appraiser. These have been obtained by means of a substantial literature search (see Annex C, below); and interviews and discussions with key stakeholders and field visits to educational institutions (Annex D). Towards the conclusion of the Appraiser's three-week period

in the Sudan, he held debriefing workshop sessions with senior government officials, development partners and others, in order to present and discuss provisional findings and observations: a PPP was utilised and shared.

This report's structure follows that of the Guidelines, addressing in turn the ESSP's leadership and participation (Chapter 2), soundness and relevance (Chapter 3), equity, efficiency and learning (Chapter 4), coherence (Chapter 5), and feasibility, implement-ability and monitor-ability (Chapter 6). The Appraiser's considered conclusions and reflective recommendations are then presented (Chapter 7) followed by the formal Checklist relating to Key Aspects of Credible Education Sector Plans (Annex A).

Acknowledgements are warmly made to all who of those – stakeholders, teachers, children and parents – who gave their time and shared their ideas. Particular thanks are due to those at the FMoE and UNICEF who arranged meetings and visits, together with the provision of translation. Without their open, friendly and very competent cooperation this appraisal would have not been possible.

2. LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

This chapter explores whether the ESSP preparation process been country-led, participatory, and transparent?

2.1 Leadership and ownership

It is abundantly clear that the FMoE's planners and decision-makers, supported by many participating stakeholders, 'own' this ESSP and that it has evolved participatively through national leadership. Minutes of meetings and much other evidence testifies to this major GoS effort, as does the substantial list of 'persons met' by the Appraiser, and their observations to the Appraiser. The national team, with some outside support, provided consistent leadership in developing and writing the ESP.

The planned educational objectives correspond directly to the priority objectives of national development as set out in the Five-Year Programme for Economic Reform 2015-19 which covers the quality of basic education, its being 'compulsory and free' (as in the Constitution), improving teaching conditions and upgrading their capacities, providing and maintaining schools, with seating for all students and eradicating illiteracy. They accord also with Sudan's Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRPS), acute and widespread scarcity being the context in which this Plan will be implemented.

Minutes and personal testimony of those interviewed indicate that members of the local education group, in Sudan known as the Education Partners Group (EPG), participated appropriately in the preparation of the plan.

2.2 Participatory process

Involvement in ESSP preparation among local stakeholders and development partners has been open and significant. Successive draft versions of the ESP and of the ESSP itself were shared and discussed amongst a broad range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, teacher unions, decentralized levels of government, non-governmental education providers, and development partners. The wide range of stakeholders met and interviewed during this appraisal provided good evidence that participation was broad, inclusive and genuine; they also affirmed, generally, that the outcomes of the stakeholder consultations were reflected in the ESSP although, particularly in relation to Refugees and IDPs, there were some concerns and these have been reflected in the Recommendations (set out in Chapter 7, below).

Participation extended to State level decision-makers and planners and, while some attempt was made to gain the views and assess the capabilities of those at locality and school levels, this was limited due to the geographical challenges. Officials from the finance and international development ministries participated in the plan preparation process, the former being involved in specifying the macro-economic financial assumptions and sector projections.

2.3 Capacity development

ESSP preparation has certainly developed national capacities in education policy and planning and, although this was less structured and explicit than it might have been, it is widely recognised at FMoE and beyond that the process has enlightened and upskilled those involved. One particular feature was that those involved at FMoE will have experienced the challenges of producing a document in Arabic, receiving, translating and responding to comments in English on a translated version, and repeating that procedure until the eventual ESSP – the 'master copy' in English – is finally accepted.

It is important that this process be reflected upon for future activities of this kind: basing the Plan's evolution within FMoE on successive Arabic versions seems to have enabled 'ownership' but could arrangements – for instance, immediate digital translation – make it easier and better next time around? It may be added that, although generally the English is clear and correct, in some instances it fails to rise to the occasion. For instance, while the Arabic version of the Strategic Vision may well be powerful and stirring, "*A distinguished education system in terms of values and science*" is less so. Such key ESSP sentences call for authors who are fully-comfortable in the English language (although this monoglot Appraiser is certainly in no position to criticise).

Technical support was provided by partners during the plan preparation process, particularly in terms of information gathering, the simulations and the actual drafting. This was coordinated by FMoE and, at all stages, national officers worked closely with the consultants, achieving – at least in the short run – an effective transfer of techniques and competences. For that to be sustained, in-house training sessions should now occur, exploring lessons learned from the process and developing, if not a comprehensive manual, at least a set of notes to be used in conjunction with the Guidelines. These should cover each step of the plan preparation process (sector diagnosis, programme design, scenario and costing, action plan, monitoring and evaluation framework), extending to the definition and allocation of responsibilities, and aimed at enabling FMoE to prepare future plans from, as far as feasible, its own human resources.

It may be added that an explicit Capacity Development plan for ESSP implementation and monitoring is one of the Recommendations provided below.

3 SOUNDNESS AND RELEVANCE

This chapter considers whether the ESSP constitutes a solid corpus of strategies and actions addressing the key challenges of the education sector.

3.1 Evidence-based Education Sector Analysis

A reasonable amount of empirical evidence was available, including up-to-date data gathered as an explicit part of Education Sector Analysis (ESA) development. The ESA addressed each of access, internal efficiency, participation, equity, quality, management, costs, and financing. It was based upon the data (including sex-disaggregated education data) gathered during the nationwide Rapid Survey. When asked, by the Appraiser, what was the biggest challenge they faced in plan preparation, the planners replied 'Lack of Reliable Information'.

Some other studies and analyses, including studies from civil society organizations, were used in plan preparation although, as commented on in relation to the ESA (Annex B, below), some relevant research, together with evaluations of some recent interventions, seem not to have been accessed and analysed. Most of the important challenges were identified and, to some degree, analysed in the ESA although, in some areas, perhaps the analyses was insufficiently deep.

While there was no explicit Vulnerability Analysis as such, the ESSP (rather than the ESA) does give some attention to the susceptibility of the education system to economic and social risks (political and environmental risks are less openly addressed). Poverty is already widespread and, given also the high share of educational expenditure that derives from households rather than government, should economic circumstances deteriorate, a decline is access (participation) as well as quality could occur. A major economic decline could wipe away the educational gains of recent years – which this is not explicitly addressed, many who read the ESSP will be aware of that eventuality.

3.1.1 Education Management Information System

The Education Management Information System (EMIS), which had been a focus of significant Development Partner support over several recent years, was generally considered not to have been operating effectively – many senior officers still regarded it as a 'technical' exercise rather than the basis for their decision-making. It is good that the ESSP itself seeks to overcome this limitation: "…the EMIS has undergone metamorphosis in the country with several lessons learnt in the course of several trials… building from the successful launch of the online platform that is expected to be the central repository for education information... and also learning from the rapid survey series, the plan will support enhancement of the launched system to be the single source of truth in the sector for a long term stability".

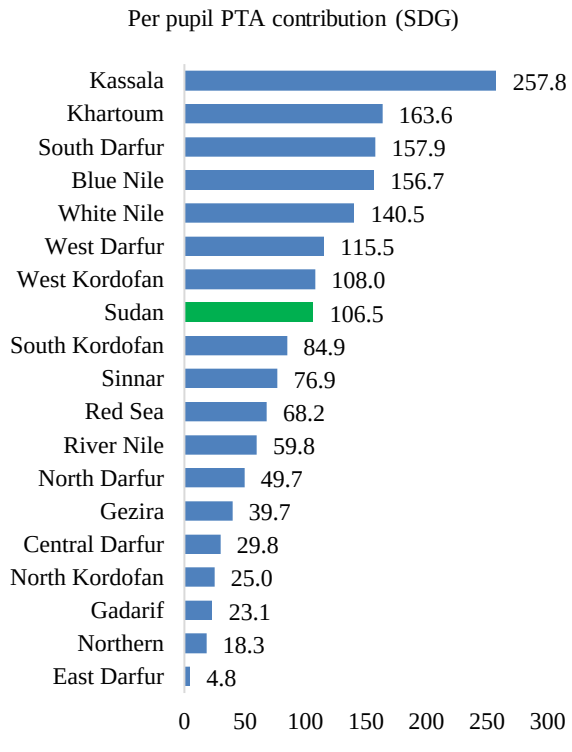
The ESSP's references to increased coverage of variables collected through the survey, building capacity to collect specific information about OOSC and children with potential of dropping out of the system, feedback to ensure teachers are also kept in a data management loop and piloting of

examination processing and feedback to schools at locality level are all encouraging developments. Similarly, the ESSP's intention to improve database on education system performance to develop policies aimed at reducing inequalities in education provision between states, between localities, and between schools is a worthy ambition – almost identical with an objective set out in the original EMIS remit of 2005.

3.1.2 Household Contributions to Education

The contribution of Sudanese households to education is high, in comparison with that of neighbouring countries, in comparison with resources received from the federal, state and locality levels and, above all, in the context of the widespread poverty that prevails. According to the recent Cost and Finance study (UNICEF, 2018), "households' contribution to recurrent education financing is 1.6 percent of GDP while that of government is 1 percent". The ESSP claims that "In Basic Education for instance, on top of the SDG 2.6 trillion covered by public finances, parents contributed a total of SDG 496 million in the 2016/17 FY, translating to about 16% of the known spending". Such differences in the estimated amounts of that contribution, and in the proportion of household expenditure or of school income that it constitutes, between the Rapid Survey and the UNICEF Study are no doubt a consequence of differing methodologies. [No Central Bureau of Statistics data are available since those obtained in the 2009 household survey and they throw no light upon the issue.]

PTA contribution per learner in Basic education, 2017 (from the ESSP)



But, in any case, it is indisputable that families and local communities contribute to education development to a major extent and also that, as illustrated, the level of that contribution differs massively across the nation: SDG 4.8 per learner in one State and SDG 257.8 in another symbolises the vast disparities across Sudan – what public action could compensate for or counterbalance such a difference! And, of course, relying to such an extent upon households builds in those educational disparities and, in many areas, makes schooling especially vulnerable to financial crises.

Results of the household survey show that a significant share of school expenditure (on average 45 percent) is being spent on teacher needs: as made clear in the ESSP, schools in remote and least well-provided for areas are those that have fewer teachers than their entitlement. Breakfast is

another major household expenditure item – school feeding is discussed further below. Pre-primary educational services – which are emphasised in the ESSP – consume a substantial share of the family budget and their teachers are mostly paid by communities and households. Quite properly, the ESSP aims to reduce the financial burden on households regarding payments of contributions for the education of their children. In practice, it is unclear that this will happens significantly over the coming five years or that the disparities in contributions across Sudan will be reduced.

3.1.3 Higher Education

The ESSP's focus is on general education, giving limited attention to the tertiary sub-sector, due to the organisational structure involving two separate ministries, FMoE and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR), with limited linkages between them. The current higher education situation is, however, outlined in the Plan document although that section is one of the least convincing in the entire document with, for instance, a table ('Tertiary education enrolment in selected countries') drawn from a 2003 (!) World Bank document and loose sentences such as 'Only 10.2 percent of higher education students survive during the study of 2012'. Data on 'higher education' are included in several tables and, indeed, funds are allocated for recurrent but not for capital expenditure. However, tertiary/higher education is not a true and integral element of this ESSP and there are no policies, activities, inputs or targets that relate to it. Even the Open University, offering important in-service opportunities to teachers, is unmentioned, let alone media reports stating that "More than 2,500 Sudanese students study in China" which, if true, could be an interesting educational phenomenon.

This well-recognised situation raises a number of serious concerns. For example, the numbers successfully completing secondary education (theoretically zero in 2023-24) must to some extent dovetail with the quantity (and range) of post-secondary opportunities. Similarly, the pre-service training of teachers should articulate with general education's requirements – and not just quantitatively but also in terms of subject specialisations. Whether and the extent to which the higher education sector will respond to planned developments related to, for example, teachers for technical secondary schools, special educational needs or refugee languages is unclear. Having separate Ministries is a matter for Sudan to decide but a high level of coordination and shared actions between them is highly desirable – and it is hoped that this may in time be embodied in genuinely sector-wide ESSPs.

MoHESR's higher education strategic plan of 2013 sets out a clear Vision of "A high quality, relevant, responsive to society needs and internationally recognised higher education system" and sets out principles, goals, policies and strategies in pursuit of that lofty objective. Just as such a structure might be adopted by general education, so also may the approaches to focussed activities and indicators in the ESSP by embraced by higher education, with the entirety combined in the one integrated entity. It would seem opportune for Sudan to think through the goals and objectives of higher education and how it might best serve all of:

- the needs of the nation;
- the aspirations of its learners and researchers; and HE's overriding task of

- extending and deepening human understanding.

Such a reappraisal would recognise how ICT and digitisation have transformed the requirements of educational (including higher educational) systems while simultaneously enabling their achievement. It would be conducted in the light of many international programmes and schemes within which its HE institutions and faculty members might cooperate. If the 2023-2027 Education Sector Strategic Plan fully embraces everything from pre-school through to post-doctorate, and if the activities and approaches of all sub-sectors are truly integrated, Sudan and its people will be that much better served.

3.2 Relevance of policies and programmes

In general, the proposed priorities and programmes form a relevant response to the challenges. The low access and completion rates are fully responded to and the emphasis upon extending pre-school participation nationwide are priority challenges responded to by major programmes. In terms of overcoming disparities, and in particular relation to refugees, IDPs and nomadic people, perhaps the emphases are less specific: this is addressed in the Recommendations. It is noted that the recent study of Sudan's financing of general education (UNICEF, 2018) claims that contrary to the announced government policy of targeting disadvantaged communities, the government has made very little financial support to nomadic communities and IDPs.

The strategic policies and plan priorities are to a reasonable degree informed by the empirical evidence presented in the sector analysis. In terms of access, evidence from school construction investment in recent years indicates that the proposed strategies and interventions will have the expected impact. In terms of gender, the relatively low participation of girls (in comparison with boys) at the basic education phases is fully addressed (the ESSP notes that "overall, there are more boys accessing basic schools compared to girls, the former recording a GER of 75% while the latter posted 71%"). However the tendency of boys not to proceed to post-secondary education, compared with girls, is not addressed: this is an interesting finding – with parallels in many countries across the world – deserving of analysis and response.

The knowledge base for each of the strategic priorities is generally recognised as imperfect (e.g. number of refugees who should be attending school) and this is to some extent attended to in the Plan. There are knowledge gaps – the quantitative ones should be bridged by an enhanced EMIS, the qualitative uncertainties should, in time, be overcome by information-sharing and research

To some extent, the ESSP's strategies take account of the lessons learned from past policies and implementation experience. However, evaluations of earlier interventions, even when they actually occurred, seem not to have been explicitly acted upon. Other than JSRs, the interim Education Sector Plan was not evaluated and this is regretted. However the strategies and programmes are based on explicit causal chains for each of Pre-School Primary and Secondary, and these Theories of Change (Figures 38, 39 and 40) are amongst the most convincing ESSP elements.

The strategies and interventions are fairly well defined and relevant to addressing the constraints in each of the priority areas. Safety and security challenges are, it is felt, less significant to learning

than is the deployment of qualified and motivated teachers and the provision of basic resources (schools, facilities, learning materials and suchlike). To some extent, the priorities take into account the risks and constraints faced by the education sector. As already noted, the high dependence upon household contributions leaves the schools, especially those in the many poor and isolated areas, vulnerable to economic (or political) shock. While no set of strategies could prepare for all such contingencies, the demonstrated ability of the sector to continue, and to some degree expand and improve, over recent decades of civil war and other major disturbances, offers some grounds for optimism.

3.3 Soundness of the financial framework

The Plan's financial structure is reasonably adequate although, in the challenging economic circumstances of contemporary Sudan, it would be difficult to construct an entirely credible framework. The ESSP includes a quantitative scenario, generated by simulation modelling. This was a new procedure for almost all of those involved in Plan preparation and it is reported that FMoE officers fully participated in and appreciated the exercise. The projections include general education (pre-school, primary and secondary) and cover enrolment, human and physical resources, along with financial requirements. They are based upon data collected during the recent Rapid Survey and the quantitative scenario generally reflects the Plan's strategies, programmes, and targets.

As reported in the ESSP, in constant 2016 prices, there was a 55% drop in the unit cost per basic learner from 2009 to 2016, and by 61% per secondary learner. Looking ahead, it is admitted that "The projection of costs for the ESSP is based on unit costs obtained from the federal level for each of the interventions that have been identified in the plan. There is a huge potential that the estimated costs presented here will vary significantly during implementation. It should be noted that the costs do however provide a credible framework for validating the feasibility and sustainability of the plan." Accordingly, while the overall estimated cost of the ESSP is comprehensive, in that it includes the planned programmes and covers the entire general education budget, evolving circumstances may conceivably interfere with these good financial intentions. Moreover, given that for example in basic education, 90% of the recurrent spending goes to salaries of teachers while 3% goes to non-teaching staff, leaving only around 6% for teaching and learning materials, and yet again with much disparity between states, very limited room for manoeuvre is available.

In terms of the funding gap, the partial inclusion of Higher Education somewhat clouds the picture. Looking solely at general education, the gap may be said to be clearly identified and reasonable although the assumption that there will no external funding is unduly pessimistic. The analysis of past and potential external funding is yet to be added and is the subject of a Recommendation. The 'realism' of the macro-economic assumptions made to project potential domestic resources is difficult to judge, given the Sudan's current situation. Certainly they are based upon official assumptions and MoFNE representatives were involved in preparatory discussions and, in conversations with the Appraiser, endorsed the approach.

3.4 Soundness of the action plan

This ESSP represents a 5-year action plan from which annual plans may be developed. The activities are, again assuming that the Recommendations are responded to, sufficiently comprehensive to attain the objectives and are in line with the ESSP policy and strategy choices modelled in the financing framework. It may be reasonably readily be cross-referenced with the national education budget and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework.

While the activities are reasonably clearly identified, costed, and linked to results, and while resources for all activities are generally identified, this is an area where more precision is required. No specific strategy for identifying additional funding sources is included, which may be regarded as an understandable approach in Sudan's current circumstances.

Absorptive and implementation capacity was openly discussed during interviews and in relation to Federal, State and Locality levels. For a sector struggling to get by on very limited resources, and with no expectations of moving very far beyond acute scarcity, the challenge is less one of dealing with increased resources than of continuing to make the most out of that which may be received. Nevertheless, the need to strengthen implementation and monitoring capacity is recognised and devising a Capacity Development schedule has been recommended.

Several of the Recommendations relate to indicators and targets, especially at the outcome level. Once identified, these will be amongst the reporting/evaluation indicators that may be assessed during annual joint sector reviews. A Mid-Term Review and a Final Evaluation is also recommended by the Appraiser. Clarity is also called for in relation to the designation of responsibilities for results and mandates for each activity. Overall, it is considered that, if the Recommendation is followed, the Action Plan (Chapters 6 through 8) will provide a sound operational framework for ESSP implementation and monitoring.

4 EQUITY, EFFICIENCY AND LEARNING

This chapter addresses the key dimensions of equity, efficiency, and learning asking whether they are sufficiently and appropriately addressed to increase sector performance.

4.1 Robustness and relevance of the strategies

The designed strategies and programmes certainly address equity, efficiency, and learning and the ESA clearly identified these three key dimensions. Considerable disparities are reported in the ESSP related to schools, classrooms and seats, textbooks and pupil/textbook ratios, access to electricity; fences; usable water and sanitation facilities, along with educational participation and performance. Substantial data are deployed to assess these acute imbalances and their correlations with learning, but this issue of equity – as opposed to general deficiencies – is not followed through, either at the level of objectives nor in terms of outcomes. Very limited attention is given to disability and special educational needs. According to the 2008 National Census, people with disabilities make up around 4.8% of the general population; on that basis, some 720,000 Sudanese children under the age of 18 have a disability (UNESCO, 2018 and UNICEF, 2013).

Limited attention is given to the efficiency of the system (i.e. the ratio of the outcomes to resources for the three dimensions). Similarly, learning improvements (quality and availability of inputs, learning outcomes) is focussed upon overall improvements rather than the reduction of disparities. Some indications of causal explanations and determining factors for equity, efficiency and learning are offered in the Plan and others may be inferred from the information presented. While to some extent the underlying causes are addressed in the strategies and programmes, the emphasis is much more on providing all children with the same facilities – which will be hard to achieve – rather than on redressing imbalances and removing disparities.

To a limited extent, the ESA has enabled the strategies on the three dimensions to take into account lessons learned from evaluation of past programmes and experiences but, as observed below (Annex B) this could have been a deeper analysis, even building upon international practices. According to the recent UNICEF study cost and financing (UNICEF, 2018) the observed increase in public spending on education has not translated into a more balanced distribution of resources to address inequality across states and reduce poverty gaps. The ESSP includes some specific strategies for OOSC, refugees and drop-outs, and offers a structure within which marginalized, disabled, and at-risk groups (such as underserved communities, girls, the poor, children with disabilities, orphans and children in hard-to-reach communities). However, further attention will need to be given to this issue if the strategies and interventions were to reflect, in practice, an equitable distribution of the resources and inputs to the system.

Issues of efficiency are only partially addressed in relation to access, quality, and learning outcomes and it is only indirectly implied that the strategies related to equity and improved learning are cost-efficient and cost-effective. Yet we are dealing with very limited resources and, on that basis, the strategies and interventions reflect an adequate deployment of public resources relative to impact, along with a commitment to achieving increased private sector investment and

whatever external finance may be forthcoming. Viable alternative strategies are difficult to envisage in these circumstances.

As ESSP admits, "…with the expected increase in enrolment, it is inconceivable that the government together with its development partners will cover the expected expansion. Coupled with the heavy equipment required for technical and vocational training, there will be need for heavy investment in the sub sector. The plan will support the development of a Public Private Partnership framework to guide investments in education. This is expected to provide an incentives framework for the private sector to invest in education." Even with the proposed 'robust system of Monitoring and Evaluation to oversee the performance of private schools, regarding premises, setting fees, curricula and staff recruitment' there are many assumptions and, indeed, dangers, in this entirely understandable PPP strategy, including the potential creation of two classes of school.

The Plan's intention is to increase the pre-school Gross Enrolment Rate from 43% to 52% by 2023. [The recognition that pre-school will be 'enjoyable learning readiness' rather than 'Grade 1 two years earlier' is very much welcomed. To quote ESSP: "pre-school children are more playful and are more intrigued by visible art, the plan will support the acquisition of books and where possible states may pursue the provision of creative learning materials to catalyse learning".] The ESSP also intends that the basic education GER will, in 2023, be 88% and the secondary GER 50%; with completion rates for the two phases 67% and 53% respectively. These intentions do not inspire confidence in there being a wholehearted commitment to the achievement of the SDG4 target that covers ensuring that **all** girls and boys completing **free, equitable and quality primary and secondary** education by 2030.

By interpolation, the likelihood is that only around 42-45 per cent of the age cohort will complete the secondary phase in 2030-31 (excluding refugees from those calculations). The education will have been far from free. And, while parity between boys and girls will be close, considerable disparities on geographical and other bases will remain. This is by no means a criticism of the ESSP nor of the commitment to SDG4 of those responsible for it. It is, rather, a recognition of Sudanese economic and educational reality: the destination may not be reached on time but the journey is in the correct direction. Regarding the quality aspects, the ESSP devotes some attention to managing and remedying learning issues: the results of the National Learning Assessment have shown persistent challenges in the acquisition of desired knowledge in literacy and numeracy at the foundational stages. According to the 2015 NLA, "4 in 10 grade 3 learners in Sudan are not able to read familiar words by themselves and only 15% can read at the internationally recommended benchmark" while "a lot of the learners struggle to carry out addition, subtraction and even identifying number patterns". With both literacy and numeracy there is wide variation across states. However, while 'improved NLA performance' is certainly desirable, experience elsewhere suggest that there may be a dangerous temptation to 'teach to the test' (see Program 5.1(iii) for possible early indications).

One particular response is the on-going extension of basic education from 8 to 9 years. Another is the matter of 'repetition' (but Note: if this practice is abolished it will have a negative direct effect upon GER!). Language of instruction is being addressed in relation to refugees; a major

concentration on the provision of sufficient teaching and learning materials is intended; and the key issue of qualified teachers, incentives and deployment is a Plan focus. As stated in the ESSP, "…the extent to which distribution of government teachers is based on school size is only 31% in basic education and 49% at the secondary level": the recent Rapid Survey scatter plots are striking and the disparities are undoubtedly significant. The Appraiser has first-hand experience of schools with 280 learners and 1,430 learners having the same number of teachers – and many of the latter being 'not at school' when visited. The Final Evaluation, and research activities, should aim at determining the consequences of these initiatives on student learning processes and learning outcomes.

In the Education Sector Analysis, Tables 33 and 34 present the 2015-16 data on Teachers by Qualifications for basic and secondary education generally. These tables, which are not carried forward into the ESSP itself, although much attention is devoted there to remedying them, depict a situation of under-qualification: for example, no fewer than 60 per cent of basic education teachers have no more than 'secondary' qualifications. It is suggested that the intended end-of-Plan teacher qualification situation be included in the ESSP: those ESA tables, with planned 2023 figures for categories of teachers would be a useful indication of intent. If there is to be a Teacher Education Strategy, a 'Teaching Licence', Open University and continuous professional development, it will be interesting to consider what will have happened on the ground (i.e. in the classrooms) by the plan period's conclusion although, of course, the transformation to a fully-qualified profession will take somewhat longer.

The examinations at the end of basic and secondary education are of overwhelming importance. Discussion of performance over the years ("The basic education pass rate is stuck around 78% since 2014") was limited by uncertainty over whether they are normative or criterion-referenced examinations. What is clear is the lifetime significance that these exams possess – a score of, say, X means that you are destined to become a doctor, one of merely Y means that you might become an engineer or a pharmacist, one as poor as Z condemns you to a life of teaching (Z+ to secondary or university teaching, Z- to basic education). A few schools, including many private schools, have become extremely successful in this exam factory role but, as visitors (and these are the kinds of Sudanese schools to which international guests tend to be taken) will testify, they are also the educational institutions that offer a wide range of sporting, cultural, service-oriented and other extra-curricular activities.

It will be by no means easy to abolish these end of basic and end of secondary examinations in favour of continuous assessment. The ESSP's focus with regard to that enormous cultural shift is limited to that of upgrading the examination council's capacity, which is certainly one key aspects but which is dwarfed by (a) the task of explaining the fresh approaches to the public, and (b) the need for fundamental transformations amongst teachers. In both instances there will be much resistance. Successful primary and secondary schools display with pride the marks obtained: they may be suspicious of change. Parents whose children do well, like the existing system: and in many instances they will be more influential citizens than the families of those who children score relatively poorly. Families generally will, at least initially, be bewildered by the need to cease telling the schoolchildren to 'learn it off by heart' in favour of guiding them to 'think about it

creatively'. And teachers, of whom much is asked with little tangible reward, are being required to move into a new world of formative assessments and the creative utilisation of immediate feedback. The change, if and when it occurs, will certainly be in the right direction but let no-one imagine that it will be easily-won or even largely achieved within this 5-year plan period.

As already noted, significant educational disparities exist between boys and girls with the latter having a lower chance of accessing school and being less likely to remain in school than the former. Indicators are, as stipulated, broken down by gender and the special needs of girls (and indeed of female teachers) are explicitly responded to in a number of ways. Policy priority 3 involving 'increasing access to and equity in formal basic education' notes that "girls from rural poor households (are) the most excluded from education" and the expected outcomes include "…reduced disparity in participation between boys and girls". Much research within Sudan has addressed these issues – see for example the study on 'Factors affecting the education and retention of girls' (EU, 2015) – and the situation is not a simple one. While in basic schools the GER for boys is 75% compared with 71% for girls; by the secondary phase, girls have a coverage of 41% compared to 35% for boys; while data presented in section 3.2.3 of ESSP suggest that females make up around 53-56% of higher education students. So it is a two-fold challenge: the lower participation of girls at the basic level and the lower participation of boys thereafter. This higher survival rates of girls beyond the basic level is an international phenomenon: one interesting line of theory is that education, as presently delivered, is, socio-culturally, a 'feminine' activity.

4.2 **Change strategies**

The Theories of Change (Figures 38, 39 and 40) are an impressive and convincingly presentation of the chain of intended results aimed at introducing transformational changes. Given the situation of limited participation, poor quality learning, acute shortages and major disparities, it is unsurprising that the approaches are characterised by achieving normality as opposed to facilitating transformations. The ESSP is not characterised by innovative approaches to addressing the key issues but perhaps these may evolve as the plan unfolds. Teachers' continuous professional development is one potential area for innovation, with the Open University a potential player: the possibility of a 'License to Teach' is itself a landmark approach.

Moving back to 9 years of primary education should be as much innovatory as it is administrative: that extra year should enable a higher level of learning to be achieved, just as higher education entrants being both one year older and that much better educated, should enable a review of higher education's curricula and expectations. It is reasonable to link the Digital Age with the learning of science, technology, engineering and mathematics but it should be recognised also that these STEM subject are those that Robots are particularly good at. Artificial Intelligence cannot (as yet) compete with humans in creativity and, accordingly, it may be self-defeating to downgrade music, literature, social sciences and the arts generally – and computer coding, debating and poetry, for instance, are reciprocally supportive rather than mutually exclusive activities.

ICT and computerisation get no mention in the Plan whatsoever. It is understood that there is an E-Learning Committee and certainly, when the issues were raised, it is clear that the potential for

greater efficiencies and even some cost-saving through the planned and creative applications of digitisation were recognised. In terms of learning, the cost implications of including ICT within the curriculum may have been perceived as prohibitive. As being increasingly recognised worldwide, expensive desktops are not the solution and a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) approach may be more realistic if, within the 2018/19-2022/23 period of this plan every Sudanese child is to become familiar with computers (and, ideally, able to programme) before leaving school.

The planned programmes and actions may be expected to have some level of leverage effect on the sector performances in terms of greater equity, efficiency and improved learning. Here again, with the emphasis necessarily being on basic provision, the most noticeable consequences will be locally profound: this community now has a school, covering all basic grades, involving all families, requiring scarce household contributions, but offering a gateway to hitherto undreamed of futures. This is a social facility, a starting-point, a foundation for future developments as more and more children complete the primary phase, proceed through secondary and beyond, and obtain skills and gain employment in kinds of areas that no-one in their families before them had ever engaged in. That is the kind of sectoral leverage, extending across and beyond education, to be achieved through the EFA provision of essentials.

4.3 Results framework

With the applications of the Recommended actions, the results framework may then be used to monitor improvements in the three key areas of Equity, Efficiency and Learning. ESSP's expected results related to these dimensions still need to be reflected in the M&E framework and, as detailed in Chapter 7, below, work still needs to be done on the indicators, especially at the impact level. Once action is taken, they will be readily monitored on annual bases and results shared with stakeholders to enable an understanding of progress, of particular difficulties, and of necessary remedial action.

Several DP and civil society representatives saw it as commendable that the **education of refugees and asylum seekers** is referred to in the ESSP and that the challenges – the availability of schools and basic resources, facilities and teachers – are openly addressed. Available evidence (depicted in the Rapid Sample Survey of 'Refugee Enrolment 2017' table) seems to suggest that only a small proportion of the 1.7 million children and adolescents in need of education services are in school. Several references to 'refugees' are contained in the policy and activities sections of the Plan, including "Supporting children with vulnerable backgrounds including refugees and girls", "in refugee camps, the plan will support a framework for the engagement of refugee teachers to support smooth integration of learners into the local education environment" and "the expansion of schools in refugee camps and in refugee host communities to further enhance integration especially in the case of communities hosting South Sudanese nationals".

However, the distinction/overlap between 'internally displaced persons' and 'refugees' is not always clear, just as the underlying policies for either group are not entirely explicit. Does Sudan, with all of its difficulties in providing "inclusive quality education and lifelong opportunity for all" to its own nationals, intend to deliver SDG4 to all children of school age presently located within

its boundaries? Does the School Age Population rising to almost 15 million by 2022, include refugees? Are they all included within the GER denominators? How will GoS policies and definitions be embodied in educational strategies, activities and indicators?

In interviews with representatives of DPs and NGOs, it was advocated that the role of refugee teachers needs to be defined with the aim of mainstreaming them into the national system through a vetting process so as to address the current teacher gap and assist in retaining attendance of refugee children in schools. Similarly, many feel that the issue of the language of instruction needs to be clarified and, for English to be a viable option, the capacity of teachers to deliver the curriculum in that language needs strengthening. A formalized process was proposed whereby refugee children would be tested and subsequently placed in the 'right' grade for their achievement, given their age and where they had previously been. The ESSP might well cover these possibilities.

5 COHERENCE

This chapter considers whether the ESSP constitutes a consistent and coherent corpus of strategies and actions.

5.1 Coherence among the strategies, programmes, and interventions

The strategic policies and plan priorities are reasonably well aligned with the evidence presented in the ESA and there is a good logical structure and reasonably clear organisation: as already noted the three Theories of Change (Figures 38, 39 and 40) are convincing. Moreover, the strategies are mutually supporting: for example, universalising pre-school should have a positive impact on primary access and – provided pre-school inculcates an enjoyment of learning – primary completion. Similarly, enhancing learning, through the provision of effective teachers, backed up by improved facilities and sufficient and suitable learning materials, should promote attendance and retention.

The Policy Priorities for 2018-2022 state that the GoS will, through its FMoE, "join its global partners in strategically shifting focus, not in its entirety, from access related issues and interventions and centralize its work around the concerns of quality of education in general education". Perhaps the important thing here is the realisation of the link between participation and quality and to advance on these two fronts simultaneously. In practice this is occurring: basic education policy priorities are fourfold: Retention, quality, access & equity, and literacy. The three Policy Priorities for Secondary Education are access, improved learning and system strengthening (relating to enhanced assessment and upgraded management). You cannot have one of (a) Increased Quantity and (b) Improved Quality without the other.

The intention to 'Strengthen technical and vocational pathways to attract students with skills orientation', backed up by 'Program 9.2: Expand technical and vocational programs in secondary', raises some issue. Firstly, effective TVET is expensive and, if only a small proportion of secondary learners are affected (at present "about 3% of the total enrolment in secondary education"), there will be no economies of scale. Secondly, many employers worldwide prefer to have good secondary academic graduates who they can then train. And thirdly, there is the matter of status. Vocational training is described in the ESSP as "a post basic education program that lasts two years and attracts enrolment from learners completing basic education who do not make it to secondary education". If, "in the long run, the government will ensure that all eligible schools are equipped to provide effective technical and vocational training", and if that attracts high-performing secondary students as opposed to those who fail to make it to the academic stream, then it may be a good investment. But, in conditions of acute scarcity, these issues need careful considerations – and there are many warnings – along with some success stories – from international experience.

In line with SDG4 and the issues identified in the ESA as impediments to education development, the ESSP identifies thirteen key priorities for investment during the 2018-22 Plan period. Of those 13, 3 relate to pre-school, where public investment is likely to be far exceeded by that of families.

There is consistency between the pre-primary, primary and secondary components of the ESSP but it has to be recognised that the Plan's limited and surface-level handling of post-secondary education is a hindrance. The ESSP's design (Chapters 1 through 5) is consistent with the action plan (Chapters 6 and 7). Given certain major assumptions, notably that there will be no major economic deterioration nor a widespread resumption of hostilities nor natural disaster, the proposed strategies and interventions appear sufficient relative to the targets provided.

5.2 Comprehensive costing aligned with the budget

Estimating financial resources expected to be available for the sector is challenging given the current economic climate, notably the dramatic inflation rate fluctuation impacting upon the Sudanese currency. ESSP assumes that the GDP will continue to grow at an annual average of 4% during the plan period, that total recurrent expenditure for the whole of government will remain stable at 10.1%; and the share of education recurrent expenditure as a share of total government recurrent expenditure will also remain at 9.8%. The proposed increasing of the share of government recurrent expenditure voted to education from 9.8% to 12% by 2023 will see the recurrent resources to education increase from SDG 5.67 billion in 2017 to SDG 8.8 billion in 2023. The expected resources in basic education have been simulated based on the global benchmark of 45% of recurrent education budget voted for 6-year basic education – in which case the expected share of an 8-year cycle is 60%. By increasing the resources allocated to basic education from 47.5% to 53.7%, the expected resources will more than double, growing from SDG 2,616 million in 2017 to SDG 5,598 million in 2023, as set out in the ESSP. This overall pattern was confirmed in discussions with MoFNE whose senior officers, when met by the Appraiser, considered it reasonable.

The Plan's scenario and the costing are consistent with other parts of the ESSP including strategies, programmes and targets. The cost estimates cover all subsectors although higher education is, as already mentioned, not fully embraced. The targets and costs of secondary education, as described in the ESSP, are reasonable in relation to the goals in basic education and the costing is consistent with the targets set, including all planned programmes and activities. Post-secondary education is not, as already discussed, covered effectively in the ESSP. The ESSP's action plan structure may readily be modified to be fully conversant with the budget classification.

5.3 Coherence of monitoring and evaluation indicators

Attention will now need to be given to ensuring that the M&E indicators may become consistent with the policy priorities and the planned programmes and activities. Recommendations have been provided to enable key indicators, especially at the outcome level, properly to reflect plan priorities and expected consequences. At present there are missing areas and many M&E indicators are not SMART – in response to the Recommendations, each may now be well defined.

There should be continuous monitoring and reporting on the plan; successes, challenges and lessons learnt so as to inform future planning and programming.

6. FEASIBILITY, IMPLEMENTABILITY AND MONITORABILITY

This chapter assesses the extent to which the financing, implementation, and monitoring arrangements offer a good perspective for achievement.

6.1 Financial feasibility

Given the circumstances of contemporary Sudan, it is reasonable to conclude that the financial plan is as realistic and as adequate the situation permits. As ESSP puts it, "…given the inherent unpredictability of revenues, there is a need to periodically review spending plans as more accurate information becomes available. This will be done through the annual planning and budgeting process, and the implications for the delivery of the ESSP priorities will be reviewed annually. The Government will continue to take steps to improve the accuracy of forecasting through reviewing unit costs and building staff capacity in finance and planning both centrally and at a decentralised level".

Depending upon definition, the funding gap may or may not be regarded as at a reasonable level over the planned period. For example, the anticipated overall ESSP costs are SDG 63.5 billion: SDG 50.7 billion in recurrent expenditure, and SDG 12.8 billion in capital expenditure. However recurrent education includes SDG 8.2 billion for higher education but that sub-sector has no capital expenditure provision. It is projected that "the education sector will potentially be allocated SDG 38.41 billion during the plan implementation period" and, assuming, as the Plan does, that there will be no development partner support to the sector, a resource deficit of SDG 25 billion would apply over the plan implementation period.

The total resources projected to be available for recurrent programs totals SDG 30.3 against the total recurrent estimated plan cost of SDG 42.5 billion, producing a reduced resource gap of SDG 12.3 billion: these are the projections that result in the 'approximately 40% funding gap' response to item 12 in Annex A, below. Dropping the capital costs and comparing the cost of recurrent interventions in basic education against the projected resources for basic education, the attendant resource gap is SDG 7.2 billion. If and when resource commitment from development partners are obtained and included, the reported gap may significantly go down (or even disappear). If Higher Education were to be included – not merely in these financial tables but as an integral part of the sector plan – further variation would undoubtedly occur.

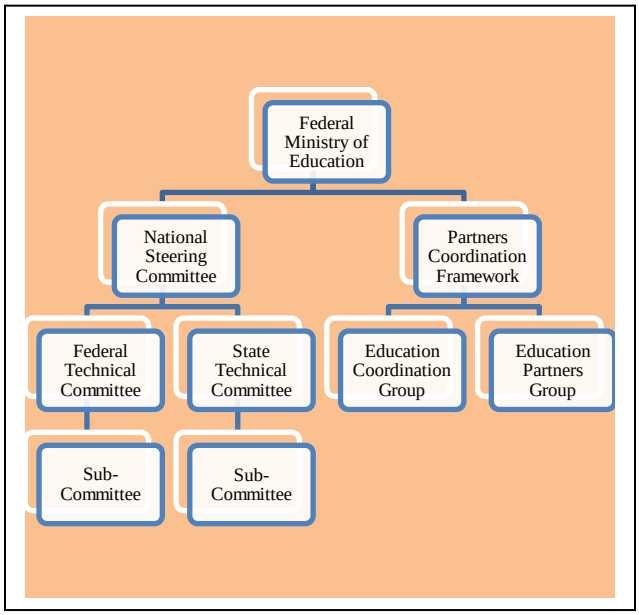
The gap is clearly significant. To meet it, GoS will continue to develop partnerships with donors, the private sector, and NGOs. ESSP recognises that there is a considerable risk that this gap may not be bridged, calling for prioritization of funding, at the cost of not fully meeting all objectives outlined in this ESSP. This uncertainty is real and it is hard to say how this acknowledged reality could be represented in any other way. It may be noted here that the recent UNICEF study of educational costs and financing called for increased "public spending on education closer to the GPE recommended 20 percent of the overall public financing, and increasing the share of spending on pre-primary and basic education". Additional revenues received could be allocated to education to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of Universal Primary Completion by 2030.

With regard to higher education, those spoken with at MoHESR report that capital funding was regarded as a 'residual': should any funding be left over after recurrent requirements are met, then that might be applied to developmental activities. This perception would seem to be a further argument for the higher education sub-sector being a full ESSP participant, developing systematic strategies and innovative activities in pursuit of its mission.

Overall, the domestic resources do not cover planned recurrent expenditure and the needs for donor contributions are implied rather than quantified, and that only at the general education level. In discussions with the Appraiser, the key development partners indicated their understanding of the financial situation and displayed a willingness to align their financial support with the ESSP. Which is not necessarily to suggest that sufficient international support will be forthcoming to bridge the funding gap, given existing concerns at the political level.

6.2 System capacity

The ESSP does not explicitly identify and address capacity constraints of either human resources or of systems that would affect plan implementation. While the needs in personnel and skill development in central and decentralized administration are implied in the ESP, and taken some account of in the budget, clear definitions or job descriptions of the roles and responsibilities, and the corresponding profiles, of education personnel at various levels have yet to be delineated. It is Recommended that this be attended to and that, in addition to implementation guidelines at federal, state and locality levels, a realistic capacity development plan be developed and implemented.



The organization of functions of government in Sudan allocates clear responsibility between the two levels of governance with clear financing modalities. The ESSP will be implemented largely at the locality level and resource allocations are designated, through the States, accordingly. Civil society and non-governmental education providers indicated their commitment to the ESSP plan and, while this may also be true of universities (especially the Faculties of Education), their limited direct involvement in ESSP development could be a negative factor.

As described in the ESSP, the Plan's implementation and coordination mechanisms include a National Steering Committee, a Federal Technical Committee, and eighteen State Technical Committees. In addition there will be the Education Coordination Group comprising representatives of government ministries, donors, international development partners, civil society and local and international Non-Governmental

Organizations with leadership from the FMoE. The Development Partners' Education Coordination Framework includes the Education Partners' Group with local representatives from bilateral and multilateral development partners and other donors. The roles of each of these groups and committees are set out in the ESSP, including a diagrammatic representation (Figure 41) of their interaction.

Objective reviews of how effectively those implementation and coordination mechanisms operated in practice under the Interim Basic Education Strategy (iBES), through the interim sector plan and with the Basic Education Recovery Project are not available. On the face of it, and taking account of the fact that programme management systems will need to be superimposed, this may come across as an elaborate network. The 'Coordinating Agency', as stated in the ESSP, will "strengthen the communication link between the FMoE and the EPG to facilitate implementation of the iBES" [NOTE: iBES covered the period 2012 to 2014, and focused on the Basic Education sub-sector – it is assumed that "…implementation of the ESSP" is intended here.] UNICEF is the Coordinating Agency and its role involves:

- Facilitating the work of the local education group, which is done quarterly and on ad-hoc bases;
- Fostering a strong, inclusive approach, involving inviting partners and stakeholder to participate; and
- Supporting the Joint Sector Reviews, which have taken place in each of the last three years.

As stated, "Implementation of the ESSP will take advantage of the existing structures with provision of coordinating structures to ensure inclusivity and enhanced accountability in the implementation process – noting the considerable contribution of local and international development partners to the development of education in the country". This is encouraging. However, Steering Committees are not always effective, while some SMoEs coordinate implementation better than others – these matters might well be given further attention. In addition to ESSP coordination, there is programme and project coordination and the possibility of the implementation and monitoring of all education sector interventions being streamlined and integrated into the one process similarly merit consideration: if that is already intended, it should be emphasised in the ESSP.

6.3 Governance and accountability

While there are some strategies in place to improve, and establish good governance practices and management accountability across the system, these should now be reviewed, widened and enhanced. A robust communication strategy should be developed in order to help stakeholders at all levels understand the objectives, strategies, and activities of the plan, and the role of stakeholders in implementing them.

There will be some increase in the transfer of resources to units and schools below the national level, and some attention been given to ensuring equity, efficiency, accountability, and predictability. Initiatives such as the Grants to schools may be used as catalysts to enable teachers and communities to review their situation, challenges and priorities, and to determine the best ways forward, utilising but not limited to the applications of those Grants.

Gender imbalance in educational management has not, to the Appraiser's knowledge, been explicitly identified as a concern and there are no ESSP strategies aimed at addressing it. The Appraiser recognises a substantial transformation in the gender make-up of FMoE since his first acquaintance with it in 2006: far more women in fairly senior position, many more women planners, a woman Minister, but not yet gender parity at the senior public service level. Similarly, while far more teachers are female, those in very senior positions tend to be male: which is by no means a Sudan-specific situation.

The ESSP has no set of service delivery standards that would be monitored nor explicit instruments for community feedback: these possibilities should be addressed as the plan unfolds. The Joint Sector Reviews offer provision for third-party evaluations while those interviewed see no barriers to easy public access to ESSP monitoring and evaluations. FMoE's financial system extends to the expenditure tracking of resources distributed or disbursed to schools.

6.4 Risks to implementation and the mitigation of risks

Assumptions and risks have already been referred to: contemporary Sudan has been – and remains – in a precarious condition and this riskiness is reflected across the education sector. These constraints and that vulnerability were in the forefront of the minds of those developing this ESSP and, even where they are not explicitly set out in the plan document, they have been analysed in some depth in discussions.

Accordingly, while assumptions have been made regarding, for example, the absence of major natural or man-made disasters, the resources and incentives outlined in the ESSP have the potential to support implementation and progress toward the expected results provided circumstances do not radically deteriorate. Implementation capacity constraints at all levels have been assessed and there are appropriate strategies included, or implied, to address them. Sudan's education sector has made fair progress in very challenging times: those involved at all levels, from Federal and State decision-makers through to teachers and PTAs, will welcome good times but – as they have demonstrated – will not be driven under by bad, should they eventuate.

6.5 Robustness of the monitoring and evaluation framework

As recommended in the concluding chapter, below, the M&E indicators require SMARTening and a general re-examination to ensure that the achievement of intended objectives may be based upon objectively verifiable measures of outcome and aligned with plan priorities and strategies. With EMIS as bases and Rapid Surveys as supplements, it is intended that there will be valid, reliable and up-to-date data upon which to monitor the progress toward the achievement of outputs and outcomes described in the results framework. The reporting, feedback, and consultation mechanisms are reasonably transparent and adequate enough to maintain broad ownership during implementation, and this the DPs acknowledge.

While the Plan Monitoring Framework is clear and comprehensive, several item need checking:

for example the 'Number of pre-schools/Classrooms constructed' is 1,702 rather than 15,000.

In several of instances, carried over into the Results Framework, the indicator is the completion of a study ('Baseline report on pre-school services in Sudan, 2020') or the issuance of a policy ('An operational policy on non-repetition and re-entry, 2020'), or a system ('New curriculum framework", "Learning assessment", "Teacher Management Information" or "Information for school-level data collection') being in place. As with the 'Number of dialogues held to discuss status of education: 18 annually' the meaningful matter is the consequence of these researches, edicts and arrangements, which is harder – but more important – to assess than is the issuance of a document or the holding of a meeting. Attention could usefully be given to the longer-term outcomes of these events: how have the numbers of repeaters altered, for instance, and what good things have happened as a result of those State-level dialogues? In a few instances, the consequences may lend themselves to SMART indicators; in most cases, these are items for monitors, JSRs and evaluators to assess.

The ESSP Results Matrix – the final table in the document – aims at 100% GIR, 88% GER and 67% CR for the final year of the plan period (2023 – although it may well be, should the ninth primary year be about to commence, the year becomes prior to that cohort's completion). The intention is to calculate separate indicators for boys and girls; GER is also covered for pre-primary (rising to 52%)

Although a results framework is presented, it is felt that additional work on it is needed and the Recommendations make the requirements clear. Similarly, while most key outcomes are included, there are gaps and these are addressed below. Indicators are disaggregated by gender and, in broad terms, by location ('urban' and 'rural') but not by socio-economic status: it would be interesting to look at the latter in relation to private school participation.

Transparent arrangements and processes for stakeholders to review and validate the sector results and performances exist, through the Partners Group and the Technical Sub-Committees at Federal and State levels. The EPG is seen as having a key role in M&E arrangements, including reporting during annual joint sector reviews and in the potential Mid-Term Review. FMoE is in good contact with a wide range of stakeholders at the national level (as testified by the wide range of organisations and people met by the Appraiser – see Annex D, below) but the situation in some States may not be as encompassing.

While the monitoring of strategies to mitigate the vulnerability of the education system to political, social, and environmental impacts is implied rather than explicitly identified in the programme design, those involved are fully aware of and discuss these issues along with potential responses should such negative circumstances eventuate. The recommendation regarding Capacity Building extends to the human resources capacity to implement the M&E arrangements: institutional responsibilities for reporting should be more clearly identified. It is believed that, once the recommended measures are taken, the coverage of M&E output indicators will be sufficient to adequately monitor progress, just as the upgraded set of outcome indicators will enable an intelligent monitoring of the ESSP's achievement of its objectives.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter brings together the implications of the analyses presented earlier offering, in the Appraiser's considered opinion, a clear set of actions to be taken by FMoE in order to bring the ESSP of June 2018 up to an acceptable standard of credibility and relevance.

7.1 Introduction

Two types of observations are offered:

- **Suggestions** by the Appraiser covering a number of approaches and actions that the FMoE might like to consider. Most of these have already been discussed with educational planners. Whether, when and how the Ministry responds to these Suggestions does not affect the appraisal.
- **Recommendation** for actions by FMoE that, in the Appraiser's opinion, are necessary if the ESSP is to become a credible basis for the sector's development over the coming five years.

After those Suggestions and Recommendations, a short concluding section addresses the programme of support that may be delivered by WB/GPE in response to the ESSP. It should be noted that many key areas – such as curriculum, children with special needs, or the role of the private sector – are not specifically addressed. This is because the Appraiser, in concentrating upon areas where improvements are essential, and in wishing to offer a realistic way forward, has restricted the number and complexity of his Recommendations. Many of them incorporate two messages: '**Make the Policy clear!'** and '**Come up with a good Outcome Indicator**!' That advice may well be applied across the sector.

It is emphasised also that there is no such thing as an impeccable ESSP and the adage that *The Perfect is the enemy of the Good* should be kept in mind.

7.2 Corrections and Clarifications [Suggestions]

Before finalisation, the English version of the ESSP document – the 'master copy' – will no doubt be carefully checked and corrected [the Appraiser has submitted a number of suggestions]. Some key elements require clarification for those unfamiliar with Sudanese practices, such as the dates:

- The ESSP includes 2018-2022 in its title; some (but not all) tables refer to 2019 through 2023;
- The academic year – and indeed the FY – commence in July; but
- The calendar year, 2018, is rapidly disappearing.

The terms 'elementary', 'general' and 'basic' education appear sometimes (not always) to be used interchangeably: that too requires clarification. Similarly, the expressions 'pre-school', 'pre-primary', 'early childhood development and education' are sometimes applied without clear distinction; as are the terms 'higher' and 'tertiary' education.

As the eventual English language version will be the key educational document over the coming years, it is important that clarity and consistency are achieved and that errors and ambiguities are eliminated. Once finalised, the eventual Arabic version should accurately reflect the approved

English one (and lessons from working with two versions may usefully be drawn and recorded).

7.3 Possible ESSP Mid-Term Revision [Suggestion]

It is suggested that reviewing and revising the 2018-2022 ESSP towards the end of its third year (i.e. April through June 2021) should be considered. Certainly this would not be aimed at creating a 'new' ESSP but, rather, a matter of updating and refining the existing one. The revised Plan would have the same objectives and the same strategies but, based upon better data and building in the experiences of the first three years, there could be improved approaches and more appropriate indicators.

It is suggested that this revision should be based upon a **Mid-term ESSP Review** or formative evaluation during the 2020-21 academic year to tie in with that year's Joint Sector Review and any programme evaluations. At that stage, the EMIS data situation should have improved, extending to the coverage of refugees, along with greatly enhanced FMoE and MoHESR cooperation and coordination. The objective should be an open, widely-participative and capacity developing ESSP MTR.

7.4 Public Information [Suggestion]

This ESSP is certainly 'owned' by FMoE and there has been reasonably good communication within the general education sub-sector, covering SMoEs and Development Partners. This does not always – it appears – extend to other Ministries, higher educational institutions, schools and the general public (although sometimes internal communication within organisations has limited the information flow: sending a draft Plan to the head of an institution is no guarantee of its internal circulation to colleagues).

It is believed that the more key people who know that an ESSP is being produced, and why, and what its aims and consequences will be for them, the better. This is especially true if they believe that it will respond to their needs and those of their children (and maybe also to the needs of present-day Sudan). On that basis, it is suggested that a well-crafted **media release/ministerial statement** may be opportune and, of course, more detailed coverage at the time of the ESSP's launching.

7.5 Computing, ICT and Digitisation [Suggestion]

The most dramatic contemporary developments, in education and beyond, relate to the advent of the digital age – and yet computing and ICT are unmentioned in the ESSP (it is understood that there is an active 'E-learning Committee'). Beyond, learning and teaching, the application of devices and systems is increasing efficiency and, in some cases cost-saving. The 20th century high investment approach (expensively equipped computer rooms in all secondary schools) is **not** recommended. Opportunities for **greater efficiencies and cost-saving** through the careful application of ICT systems should be explored and, when appropriate to Sudan, seized on a well-planned basis. Amongst the many possibilities are digital textbooks, English-Arabic translation,

in-service teacher development, continuous formative assessment, technological literacy for OOSC and support for 3rd and 4th Grade English teaching.

In terms of learning, the potential of hand-held devices (which all teachers and very many children already possess) may well be a sensible way forward. The Smartphone may become education's ally rather than its enemy! Let it be suggested as a topic for discussion by curriculum planners that, before completing Grade 9, *all Sudanese children should be literate and comfortable in at least three languages: Arabic, another international language and a programming language*.

7.6 Nine Basic Education Grades [Suggestion]

The ESSP should, it is suggested, explain and justify the return to a **9-grade basic education structure** – possibly set out the anticipated numbers by grades in 2023-24 (an *ex post* indicator?) along with what will happen at the end of 2025-26 (if that is the year of no HE entrants from the final year of Secondary). The potential transformations made possible by this extension – not only in terms of learning at the general education level but as a consequence of more mature and better educated youngsters moving into higher education – should be creatively thought through.

7.7 National Service and Volunteers [Suggestion]

As well as teachers, those on National Service and many Volunteers serve in Sudan's schools. The former are usually recruited through arrangements with the military services and their pay comes from that source. The volunteers in most cases are supported by the community, recruited by the school but not integrated into the system. Attention could usefully be paid to ways in which the contributions of both categories may be **more effective and beneficial** for both them and the children should be considered – it is understood that some attention is being given to the National Service issue already. A longer-term resolution might be focussed upon in later ESSPs.

7.8 School Improvement Plans [Suggestion]

The process of developing and implementing **School Improvement Plans** could be optimised, using the grants as catalysts for school/community wide needs analyses, creative planning and participative action.

7.9 From Exams to Continuous Assessment [Suggestion]

Replacing the 'end of basic' and 'end of secondary' examinations with ongoing learner appraisal is a welcome but far from straightforward transformation. It is easy to talk of 'competency based curricula' and 'formative assessment' at a national (or Faculty of Education) level, but enhancing the understanding and changing the behaviour of classroom teachers cannot occur overnight (some countries have found that a genuine nationwide conversion may take around ten years). Rote learning occurs widely (teachers tend to teach how they themselves were taught), examinations measure the ability of learners to regurgitate facts rather than apply creativity, inspectors address

how much of the syllabus has been covered (and whether the teacher is physically present).

What is envisaged is a dramatic change of learning and teaching philosophy: perhaps a starting-point might be the encouragement of a 'feedback pedagogy' accompanied by inspectors focusing on '**are the children learning?**' Ultimately, moving the definition of 'success' away from test scores towards a richer and broader definition of education quality may evolve. It may also be added that many people – teachers, students, parents – are satisfied with existing practices: the proposed (and unquestionably valid) changes may be resisted by those whose children now manage to get into medical schools!

7.10 Nomadic Education [Suggestion]

[These is much similarity – possibly overlap – between Program 4.1(ii) and Goal 7.1 (iv).]

The contrast and possible conflict between the way of life of the nomads and the national interest extending to the pursuit of education as a basic human right, is well addressed in the ESSP. The Plan announces (rather than justifies) the construction of dormitories in regular/normal schools to accommodate nomadic children, and this may have social, cultural and even psychological consequences. Alternative or complementary approaches, such as mobile classrooms, peripatetic teachers, enabling nomadic adults to become 'teaching associates' and devising tailored curricula have been attempted across the world with various levels of success. As made clear in the extensive international literature in this area; there are no simple answers: E-learning may be utilized in support of some approaches. It is suggested that the decision to focus upon dormitories may need additional justification in the ESSP and that other approaches may be further reflected upon, aimed at **an integrated approach 'owned' by the nomadic communities** themselves..

7.11 Tertiary Education [Suggestions and Recommendation]

While higher education and post-secondary TVET were included in the analysis and are mentioned in the ESSP, for entirely understandable (i.e. organisational) reasons they are not integral elements of this Plan and thus it is not yet, strictly speaking, a sector-wide set of strategies. It is **suggested** that:

- There should be nothing in the ESSP on HE (data, descriptions of current situation, strategies, plans and financial intentions) that has not been approved [ideally produced] by MoHESR.
- Over the coming weeks (i.e. short term) FMoE should agree with MoHESR on clear ESSP sections covering areas of overlapping interest such as:
  - Quantity and quality of teachers being produced within HE for GE;
  - Quantity and quality of secondary leavers ready to enter HE (how will moving GE from 11 to 12 years impact on university curricula?);
  - Particular developments of relevance such as the Open University.
- Over the 2018-2022 plan period, closer links should be established with MOHESR with a view to the next ESSP being a genuine sector-wise strategic plan. In the longer term, a **genuine Education Sector plan, jointly authored by FMoE and MoHESR** may be envisaged. By such

means may the ESSP process support wholehearted cooperation between and coordinated approaches by Sudan's two education ministries.

It is **recommended** that this ESSP's coverage of Higher Education should be (a) clear, (b) limited to mutual concerns, and (c) approved by MoHESR, moving in time towards genuine sector-wide and jointly authored Plans.

7.12 Equity [Recommendation]

Much of the ESSP addresses disparities (access, schools, teachers, PTA contributions, facilities, NLA performance, transition to secondary and HE et cetera). However this is not reflected in the Vision, nor the Mission, nor in Policy Priorities (which go little further than redressing the input balance), nor in the Indicators. It is necessary to set out the underlying policy: is the intention that there be equal provision for every child or to provide additional support for the disadvantaged? Is the aim simply one of 'equal opportunities' or that of 'more equal outcomes'?

It is **recommended** that the ESSP set out clearly the policy towards the reduction or elimination of disparities and inequalities across and within States and between urban and rural communities; there should be at least one measurable outcome indicator.

A possible indicator might be along the lines of 'narrowing the urban/rural general education Retention Rate gap from 36% [i.e. 85%-49%] to 21%'. Another might address the disparities between states (e.g. proportion of Grade 3 learners who cannot carry out Grade 2 addition: currently 15% in River Nile; 59% in Central Darfur).

7.13 Refugees [Recommendation]

This is a major and far from straightforward issue. The ESSP needs to explain clearly the linkages and transition from humanitarian to development action, recognising that education is the most appropriate sector for the effective application of the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (see UNICEF literature for explanations of HDPN). Fully consistent with GoS policies and definitions, the ESSP should contain a clear statement of FMoE strategies for the provision of good and appropriate education to refugee/asylum seeker/non-citizen children, and an explanation of what that will mean in practice for such matters as:

- Inclusion in educational data, EMIS questions, Intake, GER and CR;
- Availability of schools and resources;
- Role, status and upgrading of refugee teachers;
- Placement of refugee children in appropriate grades;
- Attendance and performance of refugee children in schools; and
- Language of instruction and related curriculum/examination issues.

The ESSP should set out the activities, responsibilities, and output and outcome Indicators.

It is **recommended** that the ESSP should, consistent with GoS policies and definitions, include clear strategies and actions regarding refugee, asylum seekers' and non-citizen children, with indicators extending to their educational performance.

7.14 IDP [Recommendation]

The ESSP scarcely mentions the situation of the displaced population, the government plans on return, the Education in Emergency approach and the intended way forward. As with refugees, the strategy covering the transition from humanitarian to development support through education should be delineated. [Yesterday's 'Emergency' is today's 'Challenge' and tomorrow's 'Normal'.] Information requirements should cover numbers, location, age, gender, special educational needs and educational provision. The ESSP should set out objectives, activities, responsibilities and output and outcome indicators.

It is **recommended** that the ESSP should include clear policies and strategies regarding IDP children with indicators extending to their educational performance.

7.15 Teachers [Recommendation]

While there may be sufficient teachers nationally, they are inequitably distributed. Some graduates cannot get jobs and many choose to work outside Sudan. The ESSP proposes incentives, teacher housing, continuous professional development and other measures to reduce disparities and raise capacities (especially in science and languages). With continuous assessment their role is evolving and it is understood that a much-needed Teacher Education Strategy is now being addressed. Allied with this should be realistic action to enhance the status of teachers – traditionally regarded as a noble vocation – and to establish (or upgrade) a 'professional association' similar to the prestigious organisations of doctors, lawyers and accountants but recognising teaching's especial significance in terms of influencing young peoples' lives and nation-building for the knowledge society

It is **recommended** that the ESSP set out clearly the actions to be taken (by specified dates) to implement the Teacher Education Strategy and other measures to enhance the conditions, prestige and equitable deployment of teachers, along with measurable outcome indicators.

These indicators might include, for example, (i) number/proportion of schools >20% above or below the official PTR; (ii) the number/proportion of teachers applying approaches and skills learned during INSET; and (iii) number/proportion of high-scoring secondary leavers opting for teaching. Given the possibility of a professional 'License to Teach', an updating of the ESA's Tables 33 and 34 to include 2023 projections would be a valuable indication of intent.

7.16 School Feeding [Recommendation]

The provision of school meals, of vast significance in contemporary Sudan, urgently requires a national policy extending to a unified financial structure and operational plan to enable action, clarifying the role of stakeholders and actors at all levels. It is understood that the mechanisms for

disbursements are not functioning, the amount of funding is insufficient and there are no provisions for external (e.g. private sector) contributions. School Feeding at state level needs to find an adequate platform for coordination efforts along with and standardised guidelines. It is mainly operated by Development Partners, such as WFP, as well as other national and subnational actors. Parents' and Teachers Associations and local communities play key implementation roles and, given the disparities across Sudan, there is varying operational capacity with – as in other areas – those most in need tending to be those with the lowest capability.

It is **recommended** that the ESSP sets out how the development of clear policies and efficient structures will be achieved, hopefully within the early years of the plan period, and how the long-term provision of school meals will be funded and organised. Indicators should cover the approval and consequences of policies and extend to the educational outcomes of enhanced nutrition.

7.17 Literacy and Adult Education [Recommendation]

As there are something of the order of 3 million out of school children and more than 5 million illiterates in Sudan, NCLAE's approaches merit attention in the ESSP. For instance, the conceptual framework of the Alternative Learning Program for OOSC might well be incorporated into the representation of Sudan's educational structure and the Council's activities could be listed. In addition to the output indicators provided in the NCLAE's programme (e.g. number of radios, cell phones, TVs and digital doorways provided in a specified proportion of communities), outcome indicators (e.g. number of youth in employment or self-employment after completing programmes) should be identified.

It is **recommended** that strategies and activities related to OOSC, youth and adult illiterates be incorporated into the ESSP, including outcome indicators in each of these areas.

7.18 Capacity Development [Recommendation]

While it is clear that the skills of those involved in preparing the ESSP have already developed considerably, the only explicit reference to 'capacity development' in the document itself is in the section on 'Needs Assessment for the Examination Agency' where it notes that "…there is need to understand the existing capacity in the examination council…" leading on to the "…identification of necessary equipment and capacity development needs…". While this is no doubt true, the development requirements of human resources and system capacities overall should be the focus, rather than those of one key department.

Moreover, the ESSP needs an explicit programme on capacity development based on an assessment of capacities (see item 22 of Annex A, below). From conversations, it is apparent that this is already in hand: the task now is to set out the proposed aims, actions and indicators in the ESSP itself. This will involve:

- Clarifying the tasks involved in implementing and monitoring ESSP at federal, state and locality levels, extending to exception reporting and effectively responding to problems;
- Determining the skills needed to perform those functions, along with the existing skills gaps;

and

- Identifying appropriate ways of bridging those skills gaps on sustainable bases.

These activities may involve formal training, informal skills sharing and the development of mechanisms and manuals. [Further advice may be obtained in Section II.6 of *GPE's Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation*.]

It is **recommended** that the ESSP include a Capacity Development section setting out in general terms the required skills, existing gaps and intended actions. The outcome indicator would relate to efficient ESSP implementation and monitoring at all levels.

7.19 Educational Data [Recommendation]

Reliable and up-to-date educational information is the foundation for effective planning and monitoring. There is a need to rationalise data collection and management, utilising a reinvigorated nationwide EMIS, supported by Rapid Surveys, and checked against information from other sources such as the Central Bureau of Statistics, studies by Development Partners and UNESCO reports.

It is **recommended** that the ESSP should include a clear indication on how integrated and effective information-driven planning and monitoring will be achieved.

One suitable outcome indicator might cover the utilisation by FMoE and SMoE planners, DPs and others of each academic year's data by, let us say, that April.

7.20 Indicators [Recommendation]

There needs to be a review of Indicators generally, to ensure that the key consequences of the ESSP may be effectively measured, and extending to a major sector-wide evaluation during 2023. As already mentioned, there should be measurable outcome indicators covering Equity, Refugees, IDP children, Teachers, School Feeding, Literacy and Adult Education, and Educational Data and maybe an *ex post* Grade 9 one; in each case these should cover consequences in relation to policies, strategies and objectives. Every ESSP objective should have a corresponding outcome target: perhaps the focus should be on the right-hand rectangles of Figures 38, 39 and 40 [the very well thought out Theories of Change]. Could we have a measurable indicator for each of those outcomes?

It is **recommended** that all ESSP objectives be reflected in skilfully devised, readily-verified and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.) outcome indicators.

7.21 Development Partners [Recommendation]

The section of the ESSP on support from development partners (3.3.6.2) is blank and needs to be compiled. If – as sometimes happens – some Development Partners are unwilling to share their costed intentions, or do not yet know them, each DP might be asked simply to provide 20-30 words

regarding their current and likely future areas of interest within the education sector, without detailing funding levels. In addition to that information, the section should cover how the partners' support to education will be coordinated, delivered, monitored and evaluated to the optimum benefit of Sudanese learners, including FMoE's role in this process. **Institutional memory is lacking**. Donors often repeat what others (or they themselves) attempted a few years earlier – without learning from mistakes and successes. The FMoE is the only permanent and nationwide general educational institutional operator: if its officers do not gather, store, analyse and share the information, no-one else will.

It is **recommended** that the ESSP include an informative section on DP support to the sector, extending to clear arrangements for FMoE-nurtured coordination and the encouragement of shared activities.

7.22 Action Plan [Recommendation]

There is no separate Action Plan document but the concluding chapters of the ESSP cover (6) the Implementation Plan, (7) Plan Implementation Arrangements, and (8) Monitoring and Evaluation – and this presentation is clear. By and large, timelines are given, responsibilities indicated and the total costs delineated, with a general assumption the government, households and, to the greatest extent possible, donors will be the overall funding source. It would be useful to check that each activity is covered in terms of timing, responsibility and costs, extending to funding sources where there is any exception to the general pattern of public finance, private contribution or development partner support.

It is **recommended** that the Action Plan should, for each activity, provide clear and explicit indications of timing, responsibilities and costs.

7.23 Tailpiece

Once each of the above Recommendations has been effectively responded to, the ESSP will be – in this Appraiser's opinion – a credible foundation for further action. Considerations of appropriate **funding modalities and disbursal arrangements** are beyond the Appraiser's mandate, although it is reasonable to suggest that an objective evaluation of the interim Plan, extending to the operation of Programme Implementation Units (PIU) in earlier interventions, would have been helpful. There many implementation modalities, from direct agency implementation to PIUs and even through international consultancy companies. [It should be added that very many of those interviewed felt that a programme of support linked with this present ESSP might most effectively and economically be implemented directly through the normal FMoE structures – which would need strengthening – rather than by means of a distinct PIU.]

Similarly, in identifying measurable indicators to be linked with variable support tranches, some of the key elements of the current situation (that are within GoS's power to influence yet independent of the programme itself) might well be considered, such as:

- The gathering through EMIS, supported by Rapid Surveys, and the timely and open dissemination of educational participation and performance data, including those of refugees and IDPs;
- The publication of key policy documents (such as the Pre-school operational Guidelines, the policy framework on Grade Repetition, the review of the Secondary Curriculum and the Public Private partnership policy) and, more significantly, their practical implementation;
- The reduction in the number/proportion of classrooms with overcrowding, insufficient seating and limited learning materials; and
- The reduction in the number/proportion of schools with significantly more or significantly fewer teachers than the national standard.

Finally, let it be emphasised that the ESSP is a 'Plan', embracing all education sector activities (albeit focussed for the moment on the 'general education sub-sector' of that wider entity). It should not be confused with – but for planning and monitoring purposes should encompass – any and all programmes and projects supporting Sudanese education, including (but certainly not restricted to) the anticipated major intervention upon which the development by GoS of this ESSP has been a condition. It is hoped that Development Partners will design and deliver programmes and projects consistent with and supportive of this Plan's objectives and priorities and that, as far as is feasible, the procedures, implementation mechanisms and M&E of each of those interventions will be streamlined and integrated into the FMoE's ESSP.

Annex A: Key aspects of credible education sector plans

The Appraiser's considered yet succinct responses to the questions listed in the table below are consistent with the conclusions and recommendations set out in the body of this report. Provided the Recommendations set out in Chapter 7 and comments summarised in the right-hand column of this table are responded to effectively, Sudan's Education Sector Strategic Plan may be regarded as 'credible' for present purposes.

No.	QUESTIONS	YES	NO	COMMENTS
1	Sector-wide *Does the plan cover all subsectors including non-formal education, literacy, and higher education?*		NO	Although Higher Education is mentioned, the focus is on General Education only, reflecting GoS structures: see the relevant Suggestions and Recommendation (7.11)
2	Based on a sector analysis *Does the ESP summarize key results of the sector analysis and identify key challenges based on those results?*	YES		
3	Coherent and consistent strategies *Do the general objectives, specific objectives, and activities address the key challenges and their underlying causes?*	YES		
4	*Are there any major inconsistencies in the presentation of general objectives, specific objectives, and activities across different sections of the ESSP (e.g. narrative of the strategies, logic framework, action plan)?*	Room for improvement		Reasonable consistency – some Suggestions made
5	Sound cost framework *Has the plan been costed?*	YES		
6	*Are the data presented by education level?*	YES		
7	*Are the data presented by year?*	YES		
8	*Does the cost framework specify the capital and recurrent expenditures as well as the staff salaries share?*	YES		

9	Sound financial framework *Is the financial framework based on official macro-economic assumptions?*	YES		
10	*Does the financial framework specify the domestic and external resources allocated to the education sector?*	YES		
11	*Does the financial framework specify the financial gap?*	YES		
12	*What is the level of the funding gap as a percentage of the total resources available (including external aid)?*	≈ 40%		General Education only, and assuming no external support (!)
13	Simulation model *Was a simulation model used for testing the policy targets and informing the policy dialogue?*	YES		
14	*Was a simulation model used for devising the financing framework?*	YES		
15	Sound action plan *Does the action plan contain a precise timeline for each activity?*	YES		
16	*Does the action plan contain a responsible authority for each activity?*	YES		
17	*Does the action plan contain the total cost and source of funding for each activity?*	YES		
18	Monitoring tools and mechanisms *Does the ESP contain a description of the monitoring tools and mechanisms that will be used to monitor progress, or mention a plan to develop them?*	YES		Some Suggestions made
19	Clear roles and responsibilities *Are there clear roles and responsibilities defined for the implementation and monitoring of the ESP?*	YES		
20	Sound indicators *Are most of the indicators well defined, meaning they contain a target, a timeframe, and are measurable?*	YES		

21	*Do most objectives have corresponding outcomes, and do most activities have corresponding outputs?*		NO	Recommendations made
22	Capacity development *Does the ESP contain a programme on capacity development that is based on an assessment of capacities?*	Programme needs to be made explicit		Recommendation made
23	Strong government leadership *Did the ESP's preparation process demonstrate strong leadership of the government?*	YES		Very strong
24	Broad stakeholder participation *Did the preparation of the ESP involve a participatory process that included a broad range of stakeholders: central government, decentralized levels of government, civil society, teacher unions, nongovernmental organizations, and development partners?*	YES		Very impressive and genuine

Annex B: A Note on the Education Sector Analysis

[It was reported that a 'finalised' ESA responding to comments received had been produced but this was not sighted: that reference may have been to an Arabic version. The observations that follow – responding to a requirement of the TOR – relate to the revised version of February 2018, upon which the appraised ESSP was based.]

FMoE, supported by development partners and other stakeholders, is to be congratulated on drafting an Education Sector Analysis (ESA) that has served as a useful foundation for Sudan's first Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). It contains substantial data, coherent analyses and State-level educational profiles, enabling key diagnostic areas to be identified and responsive strategies and actions developed. That the ESSP has been reasonably positively appraised – as reported in the body of this present report – bears witness to the validity of the ESA.

Moreover, the process of gathering quantitative and qualitative data for and developing an ESA appears to have strengthened capacity within the education sector: for example, overcoming the hurdles in collecting state-level data is reported as increased the data collection capacity of each SMoE. Similarly, the growing exercise by FMoE's planning directorate of the responsibilities and capabilities in analysing information and identifying interventions may well have an enduring impact on that team's confidence and effectiveness.

The ESA presents useful information on the status of and challenges facing Sudan's education sector, extending to equity, efficiency and learning, as well as dealing with educational financing and management, and the issue of education for refugee and IDP children is highlighted. It puts education in its wider context as part of a national strategy to deal with exogenous factors such as civil conflicts, economic sanctions, and food shortages leading to malnutrition and non-attendance and dropout from schools.

Similarly, it is made clear that, notwithstanding the increase in the number of schools the existing capacity in basic and secondary schools cannot accommodate the eligible population. Even though more children are accessing school today compared to 2009, the system is slowed down by high dropout rates rendering the achievement of universal basic education a big challenge for Sudan. Moreover, retention rate worsened in the system between 2009 and 2017 i.e. the GIR in 2009 was 80% while the completion rate was 54%. In 2017 the GIR is 82% while the completion rate is 51%. These figures depict a challenging quantitative situation.

Unsurprisingly, all education indicators are low, from inputs such as books and the distribution of teachers, to completion rates and learning achievement. The ESA makes clear that access, particularly with 30% of the school age population being OOSC, as well as high inefficiencies (late entry to primary, drop-outs and repeaters) are major challenges [but, as noted in the main appraisal report, the main priority of the ESSP is 'improved learning outcomes' rather than increased participation]. The ESA identifies late enrolment and lack of grade 5-8 classrooms as critical challenges while fees and early marriage, amongst 'other factors' are mentioned.

However, as one studies the draft ESA, one wishes that those producing it could have gone beyond the data (just as, here and there in the ESSP itself, it is sometimes felt that those responsible might have gone beyond the analysis to develop a concrete and creative action plan). As commented by both the LDG and the GPE team, the ESA could usefully have investigated the underlying causes of OOSC and the other challenges identified and offered evidence-based explanations. For instance, the ESA mentions that retention is a big problem and presents the results of a survey, where fees were a major deterrent, but "other factors" were 41%. These "other factors" represent quite a large number that could have been analysed more closely.

Clearly, the Rapid Survey obtained necessary and reliable state level data (although, as already noted, there was no time left to go beyond the presentation of data in order to explore the underlying causes). It is understood that an integration of this exercise with EMIS, the establishment of which each of FMoE, the SMoEs and two major development partners had devoted considerable human and material resources to over the last decade, is now intended. It is good that the preference for fresh and independent departures over building upon existing albeit imperfect structures, which is a major and all too frequent misjudgement, will be overcome in this important area of reliable and up-to-date educational information.

One further aspect of the ESA deserves mention. Its final section (just before the annexes) offers a brief 'Summary of the Diagnostic in Relation to the Interim Plan 2012-2016' followed by a table depicting planned and actual achievements. It reports that the "Majority of the commitments have been met and where the results show that the targets were missed, the magnitude of the miss is very marginal". This claim may well be contested – it is regrettable that no full evaluation of what became called the 'Interim ESSP' took place.

For instance, the targeted Basic Education Completion Rate was 58%, the actual CR only 51%. While it is quite reasonably commented that: "The achievement fell behind by 7 percentage points. With living standards going down during the plan implementation period, some demand side challenges became lesser priorities leading to low retention", this disparity in a key area is far from 'very marginal'. While some important indicators were certainly achieved, those that were not (for example: 'proportion of basic education children with seating – planned 100%, actual 65%') merited further analyses. Moreover, even when national-level indicators were met ('Pupil/Teacher Ratio – planned 36, actual 36') urban-rural, state-by-state and other disparities were worth accessing and recording.

It is felt, therefore, that there were useful lessons to be learned from the experiences of the earlier Plan and that these could have been addressed in the ESA. These extended to its implementation and monitoring. For example, is a Programme Implementation Unit (PIU), and the particular nature of the modality applied earlier, the appropriate arrangement for programmes of support to the ESSP? This advice might have been useful in ESSP preparation and in the design of responsive programmes of support. It is understood that forthcoming BERP evaluations will cover all aspects from beneficiary survey, implementation arrangements and effectiveness and quality of the interventions: these findings will be most valuable.

Similarly, the ESA neglected to assess the many interventions at project and programme level supported by various donors over recent years and the analyses of those experiences, both positive and negative, would have been valuable.

Finally, it is felt that an ESA needs a list of the documents studied – a Bibliography. For instance, it would be good to know which interventions' evaluations were received and read – such as that of the FMoE/EU/UNICEF EMIS programme or of the contributions of, say, the British Council – and how those relevant experiences fed into the Analyses. Were the ESA's authors familiar with the most interesting 'Six Studies in One Volume' FMoE publication[1] for instance, or SABER-SF's assessment of the School Feeding situation? There have been many studies, including reviews of a wide range of educational interventions, over the last decade and, unless these are accessed and reflected upon, every new initiative is likely to repeat the errors of its predecessors.

All of those (hopefully constructive) reflections having been made, the opening observation is repeated: the ESA enabled what is close to becoming a credible ESSP to be developed and, on that achievement, its authors are to be commended.

[1] Why do children drop out of school; Factors affecting the education and retention of girls; The quality of the teaching and learning process; Community engagement in education; The role and value of education – perceptions of parents and community members; Improving management for better retention.

Annex C: References and Bibliography

On ESSP Appraisal:

- GPE/UNESCO/IIEP (2015) Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal
- GPE/UNESCO/IIEP (2018) Effective Partnership Review; and the Secretariat's Response

Primary Documents (all FMoE):

- Interim Basic Education Strategy (IBES 2012-14)
- Interim Education Sector Strategic Plan (IESSP 2015-17)
- Simulation models, scenarios and input packages;
- Strategy Guidance Note of July 2017;
- Education Sector Analysis (ESA) of February 2018;
- Education Sector Strategic Plan of June 2018 (ESSP): *the appraised document*.

Particularly Pertinent Publications:

- Feedback of Education partners to the ESSP draft of February 2018;
- Global Partnership for Education feedback on that draft ESSP

Important/Interesting Background Reading:

- British Council (2018) Schools Education in Sudan [and other BC publications]
- CBS (2014) National Baseline Household Budget Survey (NBHBS)
- Economist Intelligence Unit (2016) Sudan Country Report October 2016.
- European Union, FMoE and Sofreco (2015) Six Studies in One Volume, part of the Primary Education Retention Programme activities
- European Union (2011) Evaluation of the 'Development of an Education Management Information System (EMIS) in Northern Sudan Project, Dr David B Smith and Dr Omer A Elgarrai for EU and FMoE, September 2011
- European Union (2014) Final Evaluation of the Primary Education Retention Programme
- Feen, P. and Gerasimos, M. (2017) Education in the Sudan
- FMoE (2016 and 2017) Reports of the Joint Education Sector Reviews of 2016 and 2017, conducted by FMoE and education partners,
- FMoE (2017) Draft Orientation Note in Preparation of the Five-Year Development Plan of General Education, Directorate General of Education Planning, July 2017
- FMoE's Annual Educational Statistics report: 2015-16 (hard copy); 2016-17 (incomplete soft copy)
- International Monetary Fund (2013) Sudan: Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Country Report No. 13/318, IMF Middle East and Central Asia Department, November 1, 2013
- International Monetary Fund (2016) IMF Country Report No. 16/324. Sudan – October 2016
- MoFNE (2013) The Five-Year Programme for Economic Reform 2015-2019
- MoHESR (2013) Higher Education Strategic Plan for Reform and Capacity Development
- Umbadda, Siddig [ed] (2015) The status of General Education in Sudan and the Challenges of Reform [Published in Arabic – summaries read in English translation], Mamoun Beheiry

Centre
- SCEFA (2017) Volunteer Policy: developed for the Sudanese Coalition for Education for All TAYA Consulting Group
- Siddig, I.M. and Bashir M.M. (2017) Study to establish prevalence of intestinal parasites among school children
- UNESCO (2018) Sudan TVET Policy Review
- UNESCO (2018) Sudan Education Policy Review
- UNICEF (2014) Sudan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).
- UNICEF (2014) Sudan Country Report on Out-of-School Children; Middle East and North Africa Out-of-School Children Initiative. October 2014.
- UNICEF (2018) Sudan Country Study on Cost and Financing of General Education: 2012-2015, published in June 2018.
- UNICEF (2018) Humanitarian Response Plan for Sudan, available at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/sudan/document/sudan-2018-humanitarian-response-plan
- World Bank (2013) Sudan - Basic Education Recovery Project.
- World Bank (2014) Sudan State Level Expenditure Review; Meeting the Challenges of Poverty Reduction and Basic Service Delivery; Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit; Africa Region.
- World Bank (2015) Sudan Country Economic Memorandum. Realizing the Potential for Diversified Development. September 30, 2015.
- World Bank (2015) Sudan: Country at a Glance, available at http://data.worldbank.org/country/sudan. Accessed on 27 October 2016.
- World Bank (2016) Sudan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Status Report (2012-2014).
- World Food Program (2016) School Feeding: SABER Sudan Report, [Systems Approach for Better Education Results]
- World Food Programme (2018) The Case for School Feeding from the ES Forum Inputs, January 2018

Those above items impacted upon the Appraisal. Sundry other documents – evaluation reports of previous plans, joint sector review reports, budgetary documents, preparatory documents for plan development, general policy documents of the government, project/programme documents, impact evaluations and international literature on specific topics – were received and read. In a few instances, the Appraiser was given – or simply shown – an item 'in confidence': such documents are not listed above but were taken account of in the Appraisal.

Annex C: People Met and Organisations Visited

Federal Ministry of Education

Dr Mohamed Salim, Director General, Planning
Hamad Saeed, - National Council for Literacy and Adult Education
Dr Saida Abdo, National Centre for Training
Hamad Abd Elgader, NCCER
Abdlbagi Ali, Trainer Teacher
Mohamed Hamad, Literacy
Maria Hassan Mohamed, Planning and Statistic
Asma Nour Eldin, Educational Projects
Salwa Mohamed, Students Activities
Walaa Elamin, Assistant Coordinator
Neamat Ali Abkar, Strategic Planning
Thani Ebrahim, Pre- School Department
Dr Iman Elsadig Ahmed, National Centre for Curriculum
Manahel Bashir, NCFE
Atifa Abdalla, Translation
Ibtsam Shah Elzien, M&E
Naima Eljzali, National Centre for Training
Dr Omsalama Elamin, Statistics
Farha Ebrahim, Policy
Duaa Abd Allatif, Statistics
Abeer Faroug Ali El Sedday, Strategic Planning
Lawahiz Awad, Planning
Nazar Abdelgadir Ahmeed, Strategic Planning
Elmahal Abd Allah, Handler
Safa Mohamed Adam, Statistics
Afaf Ahmed Ali, Educational Projects
Mona Hassan Algam, Statistic Department
Islam Hussin Alsmany, M & E
Shadia Basher, Religious Education
On Sima Elamin, Statistics
Shadia Ahmed, M & E
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Afat Ahme Ali, Projects
Amer Mohmad Balitier, Adult Education

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Salah M. A. Saeed, Director General, Planning
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Nadia Elsayad, Statistician

Ministry of International Cooperation

Etchles A. A. Nichie

Ministry of Finance and National Economy

Dr E lsiddiq Elobaid, Director
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World Bank

Omer Nasir Elseed, Task Team Leader

UNICEF

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Mustafa Yassin ElKarib, Education Specialist
Stephane Pichette, Chief Emergency Coordinator
Wigdan Adam Salim, Education Sector Coordinator

UNESCO

Dr Aiman M. Babiker Badri, Education National Program Officer

Embassy of Japan

Minoru Yamaguahl, First Secretary
Yassir Mahdi

European Union

Ivan Bertoux, Education
Andrea Valentini, EQUIP Project Director, SOFRECO Consultant

UNHCR

Linda Akach, Education Officer

World Food Program

Darline Raphael, Head of Section, School Feeding Unit
Anwar Muhideen, Principal Policy Officer, School Feeding Unit
Rizwas Bajwa, Principal Policy Officer, School Feeding Unit

Teachers Union of Sudan

Hamad Abd Elgader

University of Khartoum, Omdurman

Dr Haman Mohd Osman, Faculty of Education
Dr Dafalla Suleman Ahmed, Faculty of Education

UNICEF Education Cost Study Authors

El Fatih Ali Siddig, former Economist with MoFNE
Siddig Umbadda, former Economist with University of Khartoum and with the African Development Bank

British Council

Yasir Hassan, Head of English for Education Systems
Reimaz Haskim
Anne Wesfuran, Team Leader

French Institut

Dr Isabelle Grappe, Team Leader, EQUIP
Dr Jean Luc Fauget, Senior Teacher Training Expert, EQUIP
Dr Mohamed Idries Nur, Teacher Training Expert, EQUIP

Sudan Coalition for Education for All

Nagi Elshafe, Secretary General
Lubna Ahmed, Program Coordinator
Mihadamer Jubara

KERP

Hashan Hanga

Khartoum North Locality

Fateh, Alrishman Abass Mohd, Administration Supervisor

Teachers and learners at Alwaha Pre-School, Altayeb Saeed Basic Boys and Girls Schools and Alsheikh Hamad Girls School.

Informal discussions with faculty, managers and in-service students (teachers) at the **Open University of Sudan** including Mohd Nasser Siddan and Faisal Mahmoud