1. This report appraises the Government of Sudan (GoS) Interim Basic Education Strategy (IBES) prepared by the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) with support from education partners for endorsement and support to the GoS’s application to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

2. A specific set of guidelines was developed, based on the GPE Guidelines for Appraisal of the Primary Education Component of an Education Sector plan to make sure that the key issues are addressed, while taking into consideration the country-specific situation.

3. The appraisal was conducted by the education Development Partners (DPs) in Sudan and has two objectives: (a) to provide evidence that a conducive programmatic environment exists for implementing the Interim Basic Education Strategy and for strengthening the education sector, and that capacity constraints are being addressed to facilitate programme implementation; and (b) to guide the donors in coordinating their support and ensuring that the country’s Interim Basic Education Plan is credible and lays the basis for system strengthening and better programme implementation over the longer term.

1. The content of the IBES

4. The strategy provides the framework within which the MoE and the education partners in Sudan will strive to achieve the overall strategic goal of achieving “significant and measurable progress towards ... access for all to basic education of good quality, and expansion of quality secondary, vocational and non-formal education supported by a strengthened education system”. Under this overarching goal, three pillars have emerged as particularly critical for the basic education subsector during the IBES period, namely (1) Access (2) Quality and (3) System Strengthening.

5. Based on the 2011 Status of the Education Sector in Sudan (hereafter ESR) findings, the strategy focuses on developing an early childhood development (ECD) strategy which will strengthen the pre-school subsector. It will also provide targeted support for service delivery in low-income communities, especially rural areas.

6. Under Access, the strategy provides for the construction of 6,580 basic education classrooms over three years. This includes the provision of seating for over 350,000 students in these classrooms, provision of water and sanitation facilities, administration offices, laboratories, student accommodation and over 800 teacher housing units (nearly 20 per cent of the total number of new teachers hired), and the recruitment of an additional 13,100 teachers. The increased teacher numbers will also have a significant impact on increasing the quality of education provision.

7. The IBES acknowledges and recommends the strengthening of initiatives to support learning opportunities to children out of school and in disadvantaged communities, including remote, conflict-affected, nomadic or displaced populations, and children with special needs, using a range of formal and non-formal approaches.

8. A system of grants to schools and school feeding are the two strategies suggested to reduce the impact of costs incurred through fees, uniforms and other direct costs. This will be supplemented by a systematic lobbying of relevant authorities to reduce nationally imposed taxes/duties on educational supplies and materials.
9. In addition, differentiated approaches will be used to effectively address the key factors limiting demand for education in certain states and localities. In some states, significant demand-side barriers may be early marriage, cultural attitudes against girls’ education, and nomadic lifestyles, whereas in conflict-affected states, security in travelling to school might be the main factor limiting demand for education. National campaigns will be used as one means to influence these.

10. To improve quality of learning in basic education, the IBES identifies key inputs known to affect the quality of learning. In addition to the improvement of school physical facilities and infrastructure, the strategy includes key interventions to ensure that schools are safe and conducive learning environments. In addition, the strategy recommends interventions such as preventing violence in school (including policies on corporal punishment, sexual and gender-based violence and bullying), reinforcing school management committees/PTAs with student representation, and gender-sensitive extra-curricular activities. The MoGE will continue to lead and support policies and interventions in these areas, and to encourage the establishment of state strategies for compliance with these policies.

11. The quality of teaching will be strengthened through the improvement of the pre and in-service teacher training programmes. The target number of teachers whose qualifications are to be upgraded is about 15,900 for the IBES period. The IBES recommends the procurement of over 19 million textbooks and 440,000 sets of teaching materials by the end of the IBES period, as well as the appointment of 900 additional inspectors.

12. The strategy recommends six areas of system strengthening during the IBES period: (1) development of a national strategy for ECD, (2) technical assistance to develop the capacity of the National Centre for Curriculum and Education Research (NCCER) which is the national body responsible for curriculum development, (3) development of a learning assessment system, (4) strengthening of school management through capacity development of school councils, (5) development of a teacher management system and, (6) system management, with a particular focus on the Education Management and Information System (EMIS) as well as capacity development of the MoGE to plan, manage, monitor and report on performance against set targets.

2. Technical Appraisal

2.1 Quality, coherence and relevance

13. In general this is a good quality strategy based on sound analysis of the national context and the current educational need and provision. The key outcome targets are practical and based on the current trajectory of expansion of the system. The IBES makes significant progress in laying the ground for improved access to basic education and a sound strategy to be used to improve subsector performance over the coming years.

14. With the recent secession of South Sudan and subsequent loss of oil revenue, Sudan faces challenges in funding basic social services for 33 million Sudanese citizens, of which close to 50% are children and youth below 16 years of age. Two major external factors will also need to be considered according to changes over the coming months: the intensity and location of conflict within Sudan or between Sudan and South Sudan; and the state of the economy.

15. Conflict has been cyclical over recent decades in Sudan – both an outcome and a cause of underdevelopment. The lack of equitable access to basic services is one of the key underlying drivers of conflict. Added to this is an increasingly high proportion of uneducated,
unskilled and unemployed youth. This must be addressed if the cycle of conflict is to be broken and stability achieved. Improving overall levels of basic education, particularly for girls, is central to success given the multiplier effect this has on all areas of individual, household, and community social and economic well-being. This strategy and the implementation plan will need to be underpinned by a thorough conflict analysis and conflict sensitive programming.

16. The medium-term economic prospects are heavily dependent on progress on the oil revenue sharing, but are also affected by the broader global economy. The economy is currently in poor shape, with a shortage of foreign currency, a weakening Sudanese Pound, and rising inflation. Even with agreement on oil revenues there is little short-term prospect of improvement given the limited economic diversification and dependence on oil exports.

17. The IBES is a flexible and dynamic framework that takes into consideration Sudan’s context and practical realities that may constrain or facilitate programme implementation at planning, implementation and monitoring levels. The IBES recognizes the need for flexibility in humanitarian or development engagement on education as the context and operating environment fluctuate.

18. The strategy builds on positive aspects of the current system: improved enrolment rates since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement; a well-established decentralised system; reasonably good federal Ministry core systems; and good transition and retention rates.

19. However there are a number of challenges which are already addressed in part in the current strategy, but will need further research and analysis both for the federal and state implementation plans and ahead of the full 5-year Education Sector Strategic Plan. These include: falling revenues within the already resource-constrained environment; social disparity, with a particular focus on gender and children with special needs; budgeting, particularly from the federal to the state level; provision for marginalised and nomadic communities; training, deployment and in-service management of teachers; inequitable and varied access within and between states; low completion rates; and low levels of learning achievement.

20. The risks and mitigating actions section is strong and recognises openly the majority of concerns facing all those involved in delivery of the strategy. A live risk-management approach to implementation of the IBES will be vital.

21. The strategy is well-supported by sector-level data and analysis drawn from the 2009 Sudan Household Survey, the 2008 Sudan Census, and data gathered for the 2011 Status of the Education Sector in Sudan. However it is widely acknowledged that data sources are unreliable and inconsistent in Sudan and that decentralised reporting and information management are weak. It would be wise to factor in a margin of error when projecting costs related to levels of need until further more robust data gathering has taken place. While unlikely to provide failsafe answers, a World Bank Public Expenditure Tracking Survey in the education sector would provide further disaggregated data by state and a clearer sense of levels of funding allocated from the federal level to the states and then on to the different elements of education. Until the Education Management Information System is strengthened the targets and indicators would benefit from more accurate baselines.
2.2 Priorities

22. The three priorities – access, quality and system strengthening – are appropriate and well-defined.

23. Achievement of the **access for all** targets will depend much on the objective analysis of this situation and designing apt solutions. A significant trade-off is the choice to focus on pre-primary and basic education over secondary, higher and technical and vocational education. The detailed rationale for this decision is provided in the IBES and a strong case made in favour of pre-school and basic education, but the real impact on the other subsectors of education including the specific financial trade-offs will need to be detailed in the full Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP).

24. There is recognition that inequity is widespread: between and within states; between urban and rural communities; between boys and girls; and particularly for other socially excluded and marginalized groups. The focus of the interventions seems correct – on girls, rural locations, and vulnerable groups. However there needs to be more specific indication of how these disadvantaged groups will be identified and what mechanisms will be used to target allocation of resources to them. The state plans, which include implementation details for each state strategy, will require this level of detail.

25. A robust analysis of out-of-school and drop-out population from gender, ethnicity, and poverty perspectives will be enhanced to support existing interventions. Data collection for nomadic and internally displaced people, along with orphans and the disabled will be strengthened. Here too, a robust conflict sensitivity analysis will be central to decision-making to ensure access to education in remote, conflict-affected and hard to monitor areas.

26. Further detail of how emergency education can be provided during humanitarian crises for displaced children, with clarity on coordination, security and protection mechanisms for inter-sectoral collaboration would be welcomed. The strategy also advocates a much stronger and evidence-based gender and social exclusion analysis to provide a basis for the ESSP. Indicators and results should be disaggregated by sex throughout and some indicators included that specifically target increased access, retention and completion of education by girls.

27. The proposed interventions to improve the **quality of education** are again largely appropriate: strengthening teacher training, recruitment, deployment, and management; improving school management and school supervision; increasing the provision of up-to-date and relevant learning materials; and ensuring safe and better school facilities, particularly in relation to encouraging the enrolment and retention of girls and the recruitment of adequate numbers of female teachers. Curriculum changes will need to be mainstreamed throughout teacher training, new learning materials and in-service support. Improving learning and literacy will be critical. This can be addressed through improved teacher pedagogy and closer supervision of levels of teacher attendance by school inspectors in collaboration with head teachers and communities.

28. On **system strengthening** an analysis of the system capacity would be useful with a map of the institutions and key positions of those who will be involved at various stages of implementation and control of the strategy. Since capacity needs vary substantially across states, the state plans should include analysis of capacity gaps. This will give a more concrete idea of the shape and size of capacity development needs. It will also help with prioritising capacity building activities and encourage commitment to capacity building at national, regional and community levels, with a balance between strengthening education authorities’ leadership, community involvement and enhancing social stability. A more comprehensive capacity analysis will be required ahead of the full ESSP.
29. The **Monitoring and Evaluation** framework is a credible plan for tracking performance on the strategy, recognising the need for information drawn from the EMIS, teacher management databases and the learning assessment framework. To adequately collect data on the strategy, it will be necessary for all data to be sex-disaggregated, and disaggregated by age and region where appropriate. The drafting of the implementation plan will provide an opportunity to revisit linkages between some of the objectives, indicators and activities to ensure that relevant progress can be measured accurately.

30. The strategy recognizes the existence of critical knowledge and data gaps related to data on enrolment and access and on learning achievements of students and provides strategies for addressing these gaps in the long term. The most comprehensive component is the plan for the development of a national learning assessment, which will be a key tool in improving the quality of education. The proposed GPE financed project includes a consultative process and extensive external technical support to establish a high quality learning assessment system, recognizing that this will take time to accomplish.

31. The effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation plan will be demonstrated by its impact on the state implementation plans articulated through annual operating plans and budgets. The plan for a Mid-Term Evaluation is welcomed.

### 2.3 Linkages with Government strategic plans

32. The Government of Sudan prioritizes education as a key strategy in addressing the root causes of poverty, and thus in addressing the root causes of tribal conflicts, honouring principles such as equal citizenship, and broadening the horizons and opportunities for individuals as well as for the nation. The country also understands that failing to provide quality education in Sudan puts children and youth at risk of being enrolled in the army, and fuels the involvement of children and youth in activities that are in conflict with the law, further delaying construction of globally-competitive economies that are critical for sustained growth and increased labour productivity.

33. The current strategy is closely linked to the Government’s 5-year national development plan, the state-level 5-year development plans, the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the national plan to 2024. The messages are consistent and sensible. It will be important to see close integration of activities across strategies in health, nutrition, and water and sanitation. Questions remain however about the financial viability of all these plans given the state of the economy and the fluctuating conflict with South Sudan and with rebel groups within Sudan. The impact of both these factors will be significant. There will need to be flexibility both in terms of targets and models and locations of intervention. Overall momentum must be maintained but with a prudent risk management strategy and innovative approaches to programming at the local level.

### 2.4 Fiscal viability

34. A major factor affecting the success of the strategy will be the levels of funding for the education sector over the next three years. There has been positive progress over the last ten years. Between 2000 and 2008, the share of education in total public spending increased by almost 4 per cent to 13 per cent; and as a share of GDP it more than doubled to 2.7 per cent. However, Sudan still spends less than countries with similar incomes and a similar proportion of school-age population. Recurrent spending accounts for 91 per cent of total spend, with development spending comprising only 9 per cent. With inflation increasing, this raises alarms over the potential need for further increases in recurrent spend to assure teacher salaries, with the concomitant detraction from capital investment in improving the weak infrastructure.
35. There are currently relatively low levels of external financing for the education sector. A handful of donors are providing small-scale funding to niche areas, but the Multi-Donor Trust Fund does provide some more significant funding. More donor funding is envisaged, although overall numbers will remain low. This is not an indication of satisfaction with the provision of education, but rather limited donor flows and a closing down of some donor programmes due to other priorities.

36. The designing of the IBES has involved development of a simulation model and cost projection tool that will be helpful at federal and state levels to enable spending authorities to adjust their plans, given the uncertainty about levels of domestic financing. Successful completion of the GPE process is crucial for Sudan as it will help mitigate the impact of the anticipated revenue losses and maintain the education achievements made since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. The GoS has a good record on providing counterpart funding for projects. They committed to and matched donor funding for the Multi-Donor Trust Fund.

37. The development of the IBES has provided an opportunity to catalyze stronger partnership between the Government of Sudan and the international community. It is hoped that the implementation of the strategy and its state plans will continue to strengthen this partnership and provide broader and more predictable support to the basic education sector in Sudan. There is a very real risk of the education budget being severely affected by the economic contraction. The 2012 Government budget cannot be credible in the short term if there is no return to significant oil revenues. Notwithstanding the current uncertainty over conflict, the Government must dedicate more resources to the social and productive sectors. Political will towards education provision and finance as evidence of this are critical.

2.5 Recommendations for State Education Plans and the Federal 5-Year Education Sector Strategy Plan

38. The interim strategy makes some important strides towards the establishment of a 5-year Education Sector Strategy Plan in Sudan. There is a positive policy environment in the education sector, an encouraging donor dialogue with MoE, and work in hand to address capacity constraints. The key issue will be whether the implementation plans contain state specific activities that pave the way towards realizing the country’s longer-term education strategy.

39. The 5-Year Education Sector Strategic Plan will benefit from a close focus on reducing the drivers of fragility, and especially conflict, through stronger education provision, targeted at reducing the inequalities of the present provision and building towards greater stability and economic opportunities across all 17 states. This will mean balancing short-term service delivery with longer-term development and institution building. It will need to look beyond basic education, inclusive of pre-school education, to secondary and broader technical and vocational training for older youth. A stronger focus on assuring positive learning outcomes will reduce the numbers of dropouts, and training, apprenticeships, and community service give opportunities for youths to contribute positively to society.

40. It will also need to support education authorities at all levels, to effectively manage public resources in an equitable and transparent manner. This will require significant capacity building at both federal and state level.

41. The following recommendations represent some of the key priorities in preparation for the full strategy:

   a. Support successful decentralisation through clear allocation of budget and definition of roles at federal and state level;
b. Develop capacity of staff and teams in federal and state-level education ministries;

c. Focus on learning outcomes: language of instruction, literacy and numeracy;

d. Focus on girls and other socially excluded groups to ensure they are enrolled, have equal access to quality learning, and transition through to secondary schooling;

e. Monitor the impact of conflict and ensure all programming is conflict sensitive;

f. Run a general campaign to increase demand for education, designed to inform and educate parents and communities;

g. Undertake more research into:

- Pre-school provision by non-state as well as state institutions and the best model for rural areas;
- The causes of low access of rural children and of drop-outs more broadly and how to change the situation most effectively and rapidly;
- The needs of nomadic, internally displaced, and orphaned children and how to provide for them;
- Teacher utilisation and class contact time; and
- Develop updated risk mitigation strategies based on realities on the ground.

3. Ownership and Consultative Process

42. In line with these aspects, the preparation of the IBES relied on national priorities prepared by the Higher National Council for Strategic Planning in consultation with all the states and key stakeholders (donors, UN agencies, national and international NGOs) during the past year. The data used in the design of the strategy was mainly based on the ESR prepared by the Ministry of Education with support from the World Bank. The ESR is an analytical and comprehensive product using existing statistics, a few targeted studies and information from different sources. It thus presents a diagnostic evaluation of Sudan’s education system as a whole, as well as the evidence needed to justify and quantify the components of the IBES.

43. There is broad ownership and a high level of commitment in the MoGE, the Ministry of Finance and the National Council for Strategic Planning to achieve the targets set out in the IBES. The two latter acknowledge the IBES as a credible framework and are committed to support its implementation by ensuring government budget allocation and effective monitoring of the IBES activities.

44. The Ministry of General Education used a participatory approach to involve key stakeholders in the preparation of the IBES. Initially, the MoGE focused on establishing an effective coordination system to ensure that all partners, whether humanitarian or development in nature, effectively work in synergy, rather than duplicating each other’s roles.

45. The preparation process of the IBES provided education partners with the opportunity to discuss and engage in the education challenges and priorities. For each major step, meetings of the Education Coordination Group were convened to discuss the development of the IBES. The MoGE also sponsored a two-day consultative workshop with Sudanese civil society organizations and international NGOs to consult on the status of education in Sudan. A first version of the IBES was shared with DPs to allow those who do not have education technical expertise in Sudan to share the draft with technical experts in their respective
headquarters. The IBES draft was sent with specific questions to guide the DPs’ appraisal, taking the Sudan specific context into consideration. The DPs’ initial comments and feedback were compiled and shared with the MoE who used these comments to improve the document.

46. Finally, the most recent version of the plan, including DPs' inputs, was appraised by the DPs.

4. Concluding remarks and endorsement

47. As a strategic planning framework, the IBES provides a strong basis to help ensure that development investments are targeted at reducing the disparities between states and within states. The strategy identifies the most vulnerable children, those who are at risk of being out of school or dropping out of school, and the challenges in the education system as well as the monitoring structure that needs to be set to achieve the targets.

48. DPs consider the IBES an important statement of GoS commitment in making significant and measurable progress towards achieving access for all to basic education of good quality, supported by a strengthened education system despite its increasingly scarce resources.

49. The IBES further capitalises on and strengthens the collaboration, coherence and effectiveness between the GoS and the international community by delivering immediate and visible support to improve the education sector based on an agreed situation analysis.

50. DPs note that the GoS has already put in motion the process for the preparation of its comprehensive 5-year Education Sector Strategy Plan and 17 state-level strategic plans by March 2013.

51. DPs are committed to working with the MoGE to provide support for the development of these state-level plans and to continue to work as partners in addressing the challenges identified in the IBES.

52. In light of this appraisal, the DPs endorse the IBES as an interim strategy and, accordingly, support GoS' application to the GPE for financial assistance over a three year period.