This first education budget brief represents a milestone in South Sudan’s public financial management (PFM) discourse and is indicative of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan’s commitment to transparency concerning public finance for children. The brief examines government spending trends on education in South Sudan in recent years, including the underlying policy context and enabling environment for provision of education. The brief looks at the size and composition of budget allocations to the education sector and trends in funding up to fiscal year (FY) 2018/19.

The main objective of the budget brief is to synthesize budget information so that it can be easily understood by different stakeholders; and to present key messages to inform public financial decision-making processes on education. Ultimately this will help support South Sudan to meet its national and international commitments, particularly in reaching Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning.
1. The government is commended for giving greater budget priority to the education sector, which experienced a nearly four-fold increase from FY2017/18 to SSP 7.6 billion in FY2018/19. However, education spending as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) in real terms fails to meet international targets and has been declining since independence from Sudan in 2011; it is currently the lowest in East Africa.

**Recommendation:** The government should continue to progressively increase the share of the budget directed to education in line with the national target of 10 per cent, and the international target of 20 per cent.

2. Other social sectors remain severely underfunded. For example, only 2 per cent of the national budget is allocated to health while there is no funding for child protection, social protection or water, sanitation and hygiene services.

**Recommendation:** The government should continue to progressively increase the share of the budget directed to social sectors in line with international targets (e.g., 15 per cent of the budget for health).

3. Education indicator values (coverage, access and equity) are very low, and enrolment at all education levels, particularly at the early childhood development (ECD) and primary levels, is adversely affected by funding cuts caused by the ongoing socioeconomic and political challenges. Overall, there has been significant underspending within the education sector.

**Recommendation:** Funding shortfalls need to be urgently addressed so that the delivery of educational services can reach all children. Data is needed on funds received compared to actual expenditure, particularly at the subnational level, to support further analysis and insights into the observed spending variances. Budget performance must be stabilized to ensure more predictable and efficient service delivery.

4. Comparison across education levels revealed spending imbalances in favour of the primary (basic) education level, largely driven by recurrent and capital expenditures across the years. Much of this imbalance is likely driven by the resource and personnel costs associated with primary level education.

**Recommendation:** Greater internal efficiency at primary level and more adequate funding at other levels can regulate the lack of symmetry between levels. There is an urgent need for disaggregated expenditure in the sector to shed light on spending patterns and potential spending inefficiencies.

5. Erratic funding further impacts education provision. The flow of recurrent budget, including salaries, is unpredictable due to liquidity issues, and development budget has been very limited or nonexistent. This has caused unintended consequences such as the imposition of school fees, which further limits educational opportunities for poor families.

**Recommendation:** Allocations for development and capital expenditure in education need to be increased, and funding flows for recurrent spending stabilized.

6. The education sector is too donor-dependent. The sector has received significant but unsustainable off-budget donor support, which is likely to decline.

**Recommendation:** Donors are strongly encouraged to move funding on-budget to strengthen planning and institutional capacity. Government needs greater domestic financing allocations and more efficient budget execution, supported by PFM reforms.

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1 Real figures are adjusted for changes over time to take inflation into account. Nominal (unadjusted) figures denote prices current at the time.
Section 1: Background and Context

The Government of South Sudan is committed to building the human capital of its citizens through the provision of accessible, free, quality education to all children in South Sudan, as well as further education and training.

Upon independence, South Sudan resolved to support the development of a national education policy and regulatory framework. The right to education is enshrined in the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011, including Article 17 on the rights of the child and Article 29 on the right to education.

The General Education Act 2012 outlines a regulatory framework and structure for education in the country; specifically, providing national guidance on general education principles and goals, as well as associated structures, systems, standards, financing and accountability for the sector. The Act also specifies the rights of both duty bearers and learners (as rights holders) and articulates a national framework for the recruitment, development and deployment of a nationwide education cadre.

The General Education Strategic Plan (GESP) 2017–2022 is a national roadmap for implementation of the General Education Act and outlines implementation strategies, monitoring and evaluation frameworks and financing of the sector.

The GESP addresses four important national priorities: increase equitable access to general education; improve the quality of general education; enhance management capacity; and promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to improve the employability of youth and adults. The GESP also includes education in emergencies and humanitarian activities that link to the medium-term development objectives of the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI).
Education in South Sudan is organized into two ministries, the MoGEI and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MoHEST). The overall objective of the MoGEI is to provide quality education through to the secondary level for all children; and the objective of MoHEST is to produce highly skilled human capital that meets national and international standards, transforming the country into a competitive knowledge-based economy, as depicted in Figure 1 below.

**Education provision in South Sudan**

Education in South Sudan is provided within the following structure:

- **Pre-primary education** is characterized by a theoretical entrance age of 3 and a duration of three years in ECD classes.

- **Primary education** generally starts at age 5–6 years and lasts for eight years. At the end of the cycle, pupils are required to pass the Certificate of Primary Education Exam to proceed to secondary education. According to the General Education Act 2012, “primary education shall be free and accessible to all citizens in South Sudan without discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity or health status, including HIV/AIDS, gender and disability”.

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**Figure 1: South Sudan’s national education ladder**

- Pre-service teacher training lasts for three years for a diploma and two years for a certificate.
- MoGEI policy stipulates that eligible candidates for in-service teacher training must hold a SSCE. In the past, however, P8 graduates were enrolled as in-service candidates based on need.
Secondary education lasts for four years under the new South Sudan national curriculum. It is validated by the South Sudan Certificate of Secondary Education which is required to enter tertiary education.

Tertiary education consists of either a diploma or a bachelor’s or master’s degree from a university; or a teacher training certificate from a teacher training institute.

The alternative education system offers non-formal, fast-tracked, basic education programmes targeted at children and adults who have either never attended formal education or have dropped out. The Accelerated Learning Programme targets out-of-school teenagers and young adults, while the Community Girls’ Schools Programme encourages fast-tracking to the formal system for girls. Other alternative education system programmes include the Basic Adult Literacy Programme; the Intensive English Course, which supports transition from Arabic to English instruction; and the Pastoralist Education Programme based on flexible mobile schools.

TVET offers a variety of programmes and certificates at post-primary level, usually targeting older youth. While MoHEST is responsible for technical education, vocational aspects are shared among a variety of ministries, including MoGEI, the Ministry of Culture, Youth,
and Sport, and the Ministry of Labour, Public Service and Human Resource Development.

**Private sector and religious institutions also provide educational services across the country.** These independent schools provide mostly ECD, primary, secondary, technical and vocational education. The government provides overall guidance and technical materials and support. The proportions of non-public service providers at each education level are 71 per cent (ECD), 28 per cent (primary) and 42 per cent (secondary).\(^3\) The higher education level is largely led by government and implemented through national and private universities across the country.

**Rising number of school-age children**

The school-aged population is projected to increase. South Sudan’s total school-aged population was estimated at 5.8 million in 2015 and is expected to increase to 7.7 million in 2030. Between 2015 and 2030, this increase will translate to an additional 515,500 children eligible to enter at the pre-primary level; 875,400 children eligible at the primary level; and 521,200 children eligible at the secondary level (Figure 2).

**Constrained sector performance overall, with pockets of progress**

**Overall, the performance of the education sector is constrained.** Within the five-year period after the 2011 announcement of South Sudan’s independence, the youngest country failed to attain most of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. Also, the overall dearth of data in the sector continues to constrain subnational disaggregation, including by gender, place of residence and income.

Although these initial shortcomings are understandable, the post-independence economic and political crises, including the consequences of the 2013 civil war, continue to threaten the nation’s prospects in achieving education targets of the Sustainable

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\(^3\) Computed from Student Attendance Monitoring System data.
Development Goals by 2030. For example, the consequences of 2013 conflict have caused the dispersion of approximately 1.3 million school-aged children and youth into protection of civilian sites, host communities or refugee camps in neighbouring countries. The provision of adequate and continued education services to these children will remain a challenge for years to come.

Despite these post-independence challenges, gains have been recorded against some indicators during the period from 2012/13 to 2017 (Table 1). Primary and secondary enrolments have increased and the transition rate between the two levels has improved. There has, however, been a disconcerting decline in the pre-primary enrolment rate during this same period that will adversely affect future primary and secondary enrolment.

**Gender equality and school life expectancy remain a concern**

Trend analyses show that disparities between boys and girls in accessing schooling at various grade levels have narrowed slightly over time. In 2015, 70 girls accessed P1 (primary school year 1) for every 100 boys, compared with 68 girls in 2009. The primary completion rate has also narrowed with the gender parity index (GPI) increasing from 0.53 to 0.55 over the same period. More girls are also accessing secondary school, although their participation is still very restricted (GPI of 0.5 in 2015). Conditional cash transfers to girls supported by the UK Department for International Development might have played a positive role in favouring girl’s access and retention.

Within the region, primary and secondary completion rates for both sexes remain comparatively low, with far fewer girls in South Sudan making it to the last grade of primary education. For every 100 boys completing primary school in 2015, only 63 girls completed the cycle (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018). Overall, school life expectancy in South Sudan has been historically low among other countries in the region (Figure 3).

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4 The programme, which targets girls in P5 to S4 (secondary school year 4), seeks to enable families to send girls to school by alleviating some of the direct and indirect costs associated with girls’ education. Payments are conditional on school enrolment and attendance. In 2015, 103,000 girls benefited from this programme. This figure is quite substantial given that 140,500 girls enrolled in P5 to S4 in 2015, according to the education management information system.
Source: IIEP Pole de Dakar, 2015
Note: The light green orange column isolates the Greater Upper Nile (GUPN) states, which are amongst the poorest performing regions. The dark green column is without GUPN.
Government funds to the education sector have remained low for the past five years. The budget allocation to the sector hovered between 4 and 6 per cent of the total national budget during the period 2013/14–2017/18, but in FY2018/19 rose to 9.4 per cent (Figure 4).

The corresponding spending on the education sector during the period 2013/14 to 2016/17 ranged from a high of 5 per cent in FY2014/15 to a low of 3 per cent in FY2016/17 (overall government spending data was not readily available for FY2017/18). When adjusted for inflation, the expenditure trend over the period shows a steep decline in the sector’s budget, primarily due to the sharp fall in the country’s real GDP (US dollars) between 2013/14 and 2017/18. Thus, the sector experienced a severe cut in spending after the 2013 crisis (Figure 5).

Increased government commitment but still falling short of targets

Notwithstanding the sector’s spending trends (in nominal terms) during the post-independence period, the 2018/19 budget allocation to the sector demonstrates a more pronounced commitment by government to at least maintain and, if possible, gradually increase the real value of key service delivery transfers; with the long-term objective of returning close to their initial value in FY2013/14.

The increase represents a doubling in proportion (to 9.4 per cent) of the overall national
budget in current prices, beyond the average proportion over the previous five years. This proportion (on aggregate), however, neither met the 10 per cent threshold set by South Sudan’s General Education Act 2012 and the Higher Education Act nor the 20 per cent benchmark of the national budget recommended by the Education for All Initiative.

With the security sector and public administration funded equally at 18.9 per cent of the national budget (Figure 6), the funding for the education sector remains limited, particularly in real terms, due to hyperinflation. This persistent underfunding of the sector compared to global benchmarks prevents the sector from achieving education targets set forth

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**Figure 4: Budget allocation to the education sector, FY2013/14–FY2018/19 (% of total national budget)**

- MoHEST & MoGEI
- MoGEI

**Figure 5: Education sector allocation and spending in US$, FY2013/14 to FY2018/19**

- Allocation
- Spending

*Source: MoGEI*
in the National Development Strategy and related sector plans and strategies.

Furthermore, gaps in expenditure data have constrained the comparison of sector expenditure in nominal terms against expenditure in real terms.

**South Sudan has the lowest education spending in East Africa**

Within the region, South Sudan’s aggregate education sector spending levels are very low. The UNESCO database of government expenditure, which uses education national accounts to allow for cross-country analysis, ranks South Sudan lowest among East African countries, with an investment in public education standing at less than 1 per cent of real GDP in 2017 (Figure 7). This is significantly below the target set in the Incheon Declaration, which requires countries to allocate between 4 and 6 per cent of GDP to education to realize Sustainable Development Goal 4. This low investment has necessitated heavy off-budget reliance on donors and the private sector for basic service delivery and has burdened communities with additional costs to support their children’s education.

Undoubtedly, the conflict has been a major obstacle to realizing higher investments in education. However, with the conclusion of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, substantial increases in education investment are crucial to realizing the aspirations of both the peace agreement and global education commitments.
Key Takeaways:
Education Spending Trends

➢ The Government of South Sudan has demonstrated its commitment to investing in education by increasing the allocation of public funds to the sector in the 2018/19 budget.

➢ Although the sector received a relatively high proportion of the government budget in 2018/19, this proportion in real terms remains insufficient to meet the vision and challenges of the sector.

➢ South Sudan’s spending on the education sector is one of the lowest in East Africa and falls short of both national and international targets, which must be met to reach Sustainable Development Goal 4.
Section 3: Composition of Education Spending

The bulk of expenditure by the MoGEI and MoHEST for the period 2013/14–2017/18 is associated with recurrent costs incurred at national and subnational levels. Capital or development expenditure for the education sector has been virtually nonexistent due to funding priorities of the government. Public funds for development were mostly spent by the Presidency, National Legislative Assembly and Ministry of Transport.

In the period 2013/14–2017/18, nearly 90 per cent of MoGEI spending was recorded against wages/salaries and transfers to subnational structures and schools (Figure 8). During the period 2013/14–2016/17, transfers constituted 82.2 per cent of the budget, increasing to 86.4 per cent of the 2017/18 budget. These aggregate recurrent costs as a proportion of the overall budget exceed the international standard of 80 per cent.

The marked increase in the proportion of transfers vis-à-vis other categories could result in significant leakages if spending discretion is not closely tracked. In the FY2018/19 budget, transfers to subnational structures and schools make up 58.7 per cent of the budget, the bulk of which went to subnational wages and salaries. A significant percentage of the overall MoGEI budget (28.8 per cent) was allocated to capital transfers.

Figure 8: MoGEI budget composition comparison by economic classification (%)

Source: Budget Books, MoFP
Key Takeaways:
Composition of Education Spending

- The bulk of sector funds are currently used for recurrent costs such as wages, salaries and transfers.
- Capital or development budget has been almost nonexistent in recent years due to competing government priorities, although the FY2018/19 budget does provide for this budget category.
- Parents and communities shoulder a significant cost burden to enrol and keep their children in school.

Subnational transfers
The MoGEI county transfers include salaries, operations and service delivery. The operating transfers support the county education departments, the payam education offices and the county education centres. The transfers to service delivery units (schools) include capitation grants\(^5\) for primary schools, which are disbursed to facilitate basic school running costs. These costs include stationery and school supplies, maintenance and repair and extracurricular activities, as well as transport. Transfers do not cater for non-teaching staff.

The state salary, operating and service delivery transfers are disbursed to facilitate post-primary education. Operating transfers enable the states to provide oversight, coordination and dissemination of policy for education delivery at county level. Service delivery unit transfers include teacher incentives to secondary schools. In FY2018/19 the MoGEI also included ECD, TVET and teacher training institute teacher incentive transfers in its budget. Primary school teacher incentives continue to be supported through the European Union IMPACT programme and education cluster initiatives.

Communities shoulder the burden caused by underfunding
The community contribution to supporting education remains significant. The current budget structure of the sector still does not provide sufficient resources for non-personnel items such as minor repairs and regular maintenance, scholastic materials, teaching aids for schools and related basic school equipment, school furniture and associated consumables. Direct costs for scholastic materials, transport and feeding of learners are, by and large, shouldered by parents and communities across the country. Although pre-primary and primary education is free, the MoGEI estimates parents spent SSP 38,560 on a pre-primary pupil per annum, and SSP 68,110 and SSP 65,650 respectively on a primary pupil and secondary pupil per annum. This suggests that communities, particularly those affected by the conflict, are heavily burdened with the costs of education.

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\(^5\) Capitation grants allocate a fixed amount of money per student and are based on the number of recognized pupils enrolled in a school.
The period 2013/14–2017/18 saw a marked variation of spending in the sector. Comparison across education levels over the last several years reveals spending imbalances in favour of the primary (basic) education level (Figure 9). Much of this imbalance is likely driven by the resource and personnel costs associated with primary level education. However, greater internal efficiency at primary level and more adequate funding at other levels can regulate the lack of symmetry between levels.

Spending at various education levels has been historically lower than the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR) average. Data available for 2016 indicates South Sudan’s expenditure on education was proportionally lower for pre-primary through upper secondary level. However, spending at the tertiary level was higher than the ESAR average.
average. Primary education in South Sudan received the second largest share (36.5 per cent) of government education expenditures, followed successively by upper secondary at 9 per cent, lower secondary at 3.5 per cent and pre-primary at 0.5 per cent. The tertiary education expenditure share was more than double for South Sudan (50.5 per cent) than the ESAR average (23 per cent). There was also a significant difference between the South Sudan lower secondary education expenditure share (3.3 per cent) and the ESAR average (17 per cent) (Figure 10).

**Spending per pupil is historically less than the ESAR average.** There is limited data on multi-year government funding patterns per student, but available data from 2016 shows spending per student of US$3.9 at pre-primary, US$46.6 at primary, US$50.6 at lower secondary, and US$256.9 at upper secondary. This is less than the ESAR average at these same levels (Figure 11). It should be noted that there was no tertiary level data available for South Sudan, but the ESAR tertiary average was US$3,184.1 per student.
Key Takeaways:
Spending by Levels of Education

- There are clear imbalances in spending across levels of education.
- There is an urgent need for disaggregated expenditure in the sector to shed light on spending patterns and potential spending inefficiencies.
- Budgetary support to and prioritization of critical education areas, such as the ECD sub-sector, is insufficient.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics
Note: Data on South Sudan is from 2016, except for the tertiary level, which was not available.
Budget execution in the education sector has been unsatisfactory in the recent past. While other priority sectors such as security and rule of law generally recorded significant variances (overspending) in the period 2013/14–2017/18, overall there has been significant underspending within the education sector in general. Actual expenditure (outturns) has always been below the approved budgets, according to MoFP budget and expenditure data, with average four-year outturns at 65 per cent during the period 2013/14–2016/17. In 2017/18 MoGEI expenditure stood at 86 per cent. This recurrent
budget credibility hurdle adversely affects the provision of quality and equitable education services. (Figure 12).

**Detailed analysis on budget execution is constrained.** The records reviewed show that the budget execution over the 2013/14–2017/18 period has been uneven.

Data on funds received as compared to actual expenditure, particularly at the subnational level, remains limited. Such an analysis could provide insight into the observed spending variances, which may potentially be a result of poor sector planning across the various levels or weak absorptive capacity to spend released funds.

**Irregular resources further limit educational opportunities for children**

The Girls’ Education South Sudan (GESS) programme has documented that the Cash Grant submission-approval-payment cycle often generates an irregular flow of resources. This carries a risk for frustration and disappointment over missed opportunities and indicates challenges in effectively planning interventions. When the flow of public and/or partner resources is unstable, schools look for alternative revenue, generally in the form of fees to secure their basic operating costs. The charging of school fees, including registration fees, and a lack of transparency about their collection and use is particularly widespread, potentially excluding many children from accessing education opportunities.

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**Key Takeaways:**

**Budget Credibility and Execution**

- > **Budget performance must be stabilized to ensure more predictable and efficient service delivery.**

- > **There is an urgent need to identify and address the prevailing budget execution challenges across all levels and geographical locations.**

- > **Government is encouraged to utilize specific diagnostic tools such as public expenditure reviews and public expenditure tracking surveys to help uncover bottlenecks and inform improvement of resource flows and expenditure execution.**
Since independence in 2011, the Government of South Sudan has been consistent in funding the education sector, albeit minimally. The sector receives the bulk of its recurrent budget from domestic resources in support of government policies to achieve its education targets.

**Donor support is significant, but likely to decline in the long-term**

The sector has been receiving significant off-budget donor support. All education donors and partners have committed to supporting the GESP and aligning their programmes to both the transitional and development objectives of the GESP, as appropriate. Collectively, both the recurrent and capital donor funds reported in 2017/18 amounted to over US$93 million, roughly eight times the sector’s domestic budget in the same fiscal year. These funds supplement both the public and community component of the education sector budget.

The Global Partnership for Education is supporting core activities for improving equitable access, quality, and efficiency through a second Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant. The second phase of GESS (GESS II) is scheduled to begin in 2019 with a continued focus on cash grants to girls and capitation grants to secondary schools, and will also introduce support to students with disabilities. The European Union IMPACT programme, which provides cash incentives to teachers across the country, is also considering an extension to ensure stability and functionality of the teaching force over the medium term. The United States Agency for International Development and the Government of Norway continue to generously finance flexible, multi-year programmes administered through UNICEF in support of education. These interventions provide child-friendly spaces, teacher training, and learning and teaching materials to children affected by conflict (Table 2).

**Support is likely to decline as donor government contributions continue to fall globally.** In the short- to medium-term, the government and donors must cooperate more closely to utilize on-budget and off-budget support more efficiently, as well as build capacity for PFM within the sector. These interventions are crucial, as the public financing gap will have to be increasingly filled through greater domestic financing allocations and more efficient budget execution at all levels.
Key Takeaways: Financing the Education Sector

➤ Government is encouraged to continue working towards achieving global benchmarks in public financing for education.

➤ The financing needs of the sector are massive – infrastructure, capacity building, salary support, school and cash grants – requiring a short- to medium-term strategy optimizing use of on-budget and off-budget funds.

➤ Donor funding is unsustainable – the government needs greater domestic financing allocations and more efficient budget execution to replace dwindling funds from the international community.

➤ In the meantime, donors are strongly encouraged to move funding on-budget to strengthen planning capacity and education systems.
The 5Ws (who does what, where, when and for whom) Excel tool is used to capture data from the field on interventions by cluster members and can help to avoid unintentional duplication of work by different agencies. It can also help stakeholders, including affected communities and local governments, to identify response gaps.

Table 2: Off-budget donor commitments to the education sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVELOPMENT PARTNER</th>
<th>ESTIMATED FUNDING</th>
<th>TIME FRAME</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States Agency for International Development (through UNICEF)</td>
<td>US$60 million</td>
<td>September 2017–September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>US$26 million</td>
<td>2017–2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union (through UNICEF and the World Food Programme)</td>
<td>€24.4 million</td>
<td>24 months from the start date (yet to start)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK Department for International Development</td>
<td>£68.4 million</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian Government (through UNICEF)</td>
<td>Nkr 60 million</td>
<td>2018–2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| UNESCO | • €5.0 million  
• Commitment from EU to be determined | • 2015–2018  
• 2019 onward |
| WFP | US$25 million | Ongoing |

54 active cluster partners (based on 5Ws matrix) comprising 37 national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 17 international NGOs through:

a) Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations | US$736,196 | 2018 |

b) Government of Italy | US$4,907,975 | 2018 |
c) Government of Norway | US$2,186,855 | 2018 |
d) Government of Finland | US$641,975 | 2018 |

Source: UNICEF SSCO, 2018

Photograph on front cover © UNICEF/Helene Ryeng