



Public Policy Paper: Investing in Primary Education to Build Inclusive Identity, Post-conflict Sudan

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the challenges and strategies for ensuring effective humanitarian aid delivery in Sudan amidst ongoing conflict. It explores the impact of the conflict on aid distribution, highlighting issues such as resource scarcity, logistical barriers, and health crises. It incorporates qualitative data from interviews and surveys, offering recommendations to improve aid resilience through localized capacity building, feedback mechanisms, and innovative approaches. The paper provides actionable insights for policymakers and humanitarian actors seeking sustainable solutions in conflict zones.



Introduction:

Sudan's diversity is represented in its geography and ecology, ethnic groups, languages and cultural traditions, native administrations and political parties and different economic structures in cities and livelihood style based on agriculture and pastoralism in remote areas. Its unique characteristics make it a distinctive entity. Yet, due to the mismanagement of diversity, the wars has engulfed, and the country remained as conflictual place for more than 67 and to date.

Sudan's historical and deep issue of identity can be traced back to the Anglo-Egyptian condominium (1898-1955), and the closed districts policy that it followed, which culturally alienated Sudanese communities from each other and produced the problem of identity. However, over 68 years of the post-colonial period, consecutive Sudanese governments are still in a vicious circle repeating mistakes, failing to find a constitutional framework to shape a consensus identity and build a unified nation. Hence, the country has been engulfed in civil wars and conflicts.

The question of identity has been Sudan's major issue, but there is no consensus about the many questions it raises. Questions like who we are, and what do we want to be? What is the right approach to manage the heterogeneous interests of the Sudanese people?

These questions in addition to the regional disparities in development are implicated in the vertical wars between the center and marginalized peripheries in one hand, and horizontal wars between local communities in disadvantage regions in another hand. "Inequalities in development' means the vast disparities in wealth and power between the cultural and economic heartland of the state – centered on the northern Nile valley and integrated into the global economy – and Sudan's vast, diverse and disconnected peripheries. (E. Tomas,2015).

There is an important link between education, peace and the creation of attractive and inclusive national identities. Bahou stated that "the education has a vital role in wider peace-building strategies" (L. Bahou,2015). High-quality primary education classrooms full of socio-cultural diversity are vital in order to, harmonize cross-cultural relationships, and the interaction of values. The right kind of education enhances potentialities for social peace. Ultimately, education builds reconcilable and rich identity and synergizes talents and capacities to advance the nation for the prosperous future.

A rich identity facilitates the enrichment of knowledge, skills, abilities, social awareness across narrow affiliative divides and provides spaces for the better interaction within the pluralistic nation, and supports positive communication with the globe.

Violent conflicts are more likely to happen in nations with low education rates, and in the nations whose education system does not reflect or undermines cultures of minority groups. So, strategizing long-term quality education, and embracing the characteristics of diversity is essential to bring intrinsic and sustainable value in conflict transformation processes within diverse communities.

The paper presents remedial post-conflict policy would help children return to the schools and develop their knowledge, skills and qualities to contribute at laying the foundation stone for building the



diversity in unity.

A brief overview about education and its implications on identity and conflict:

Sudan has 18 states and about 133 localities, according to the (2022 estimation) Sudan inhabited by 48 million, children aged 6-16 comprise 49 percent of the population. It covers about 1.89 million km².

The historical marginalization of socio-cultural groups, has extended to education sector; system, policies and strategies of education were built up on exclusionary way, on a monoculture, contradicting the pluralism the country abounds in, and at the expense of nation's unity and advancement.

The education in Sudan was a tool in hands of successive governments for the sake of political interests. E.g, the objective of the implementation of the new education policy in the country between 1970 and 1985 was to prepare the people for constructing a new socialist society by introducing a new kind of education, in addition to an expansion of schooling, (A. Batterjee,2015). While the National Salvation Government used partisan fundamentalists who designed the curriculum to the Islamic ideology, its highest manifestation represented in the militarization of students and strengthening jihadist culture, they made students wear military camouflage clothes, and pushed them into the army at the end of secondary school.

One of the Sudan's ordeals, is that the ruling elites did not care about education to the required standards for the sake of knowledge that unifies the nation, instead, have framed reactionary system of education and designed a curriculum not based on dialogue but on a unilateral imposition of Arabic language and a divisive version of religion, thus, they created complicit education policy structure that creates and supports conflicts.

After Dec revolution 2019, as a response of the requirements of democratic transformation, transitional prime minister Abadalla Hamdok has appointed Omer Al- Garrai, a scholar who spent many years in exile, as executive director of National Curriculum Center, to democratize the primary education system. El Garrai began designing the curriculum and amending policies and strategies, but very soon resigned because of demagogic protests and threats from Islamists and the followers of the deposed regime.

However, the war which broke out on 15 April 2023, between Sudan's two major forces the Sudan Armed Forces, and the Rapid Support Forces, catastrophically hit infrastructure and decimated education. In Khartoum, Al Jazeera and western Sudan education institutions turned to rubble, while in the other states institutions are not operating like before, due to the collapse of policies and supplies center in Khartoum.

Paradoxically, the severe tribal and political polarization for war included school age elements. The battlefields videos on social media show under-aged fighters, while other pupils have become hand workers. "with the protraction of the war, more school-aged children will return to other fields like mining, nothing that school had not been particularly appealing to students" (Alkamal, 2024)



The war has destroyed the future of thousands of students, many died and millions have fled to shelter centers, displacement and refugees' camps while other remain in Sudan with nothing to hope for, naturally, the violence that students have been exposed to impacted their psychological status some may need trauma mitigation sessions.

Thus, the path for education require thoughtful vision and a wise strategy taking into account statistics and the estimations of the status quo to priority need like rehabilitating infrastructure including institutions, paper and online repositories, strategic communication, academic records, reformulating the educational curriculum.

Future strategies require infrastructure rehabilitation, the processes must be pursued objectively through experts, and subjectively through community participation and oversight, a policies models should be adopted in a way to achieve valuable results within the country, and better communicate to the surrounding social, cultural, economic and political context.

Education is a weapon for the age we live in, a helpful factor in crossing differences of a narrow affiliations, and promotes socio-cultural, geographic, religious and ethnic connections. "Education affects cultural aspects of societies in manifold and complex ways" (A. Batterjee,2015). Investing in education is always strategic way to harmonize and reconcile the incompatible identities, and eases the process of building a nation's identity in which all feel proud to belong to. The classrooms socio-cultural diversity gets reconciled deserves the interaction of values, makes youngsters to love one another and their home and enhances the potentialities to for peaceful prosperous future.

Dr Graeme Chalmers, professor of art education at the university of British Columbia, promote the idea that multicultural education can serve as means for social reconstruction, that it can address persistent forms of racism and prejudice. Education has a major role in accommodating pluralism in society. Surely, without authorities' interference, ethnic groups should have the rights to formulate scientific and literary curriculum to their own languages, if need be to have their own language institutions, without imposing deprivation or inferiorizing local languages, students have the rights to feel pride of historical and contemporary characteristics of socio-cultural.

Primary Education to enhance peaceful communities: Policy option

For post-conflict education programing intervention, a number of priorities to meet the dire need for Sudan's 18 vast states, which have over 19,000 primary schools, to the data collected by (OCHA) in 2023. It needs thoughtful reflection, diligent action and collective will, wishing to achieve the objectives. Securing post-conflict education funds and logistics is the key, it certainly exceeds the post-conflict transitional government capacities, at the time most if not all resources were depleted or damaged by the ongoing violent conflict is not easy task, it takes strenuous efforts and broad array of national and international stakeholders mobilization to secure resources availability.

It's a serious process which requires effective planning with clear timelines, budget allocation, flexible execute and to support both community and government monitoring and execution mechanism.



It's costly, requiring millions of dollars' of budget allocation, to develop and print out curriculum, produce teaching materials, prepare teachers and schools supplies, rehabilitate learning facilities, connecting electrical services, conduct community sensitization sessions, support ethnic communities to put own languages in a scientific formula and then cost of remote areas students to access education and the continuation. More importantly, it requires qualified human cadres to effectively plan, flexibly execute and community/ government monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

To get a wide percentage (at least 90%) of pupils to the schools requires serious activities; community leader's mobilization, KII and broader community sensitization deep-down from pastoralists and agriculturalists levels through the 'door to door' campaign. Allocation of total budget must be less than 15% percentage for education and adoption of strategy support compulsory, semi-free and encourage communities, particularly pastoralists and agriculturalists to enroll their children, bearing in mind the compulsory age children to schools be 6 years old, to avoid faltering education, community/government monitoring mechanism must be established to enhance pupils enrolment, and strengthening the factors and potentialities of the retention at schools.

Pupils return to the primary education schools is cornerstone for Sudan's education future, to learn through reliable curriculum to hone the students with the kind of knowledge, abilities, skills, ethics, values and the attitudes is prerequisite to build unified socio-cultural and political mirror that reflects Sudanese spectrum and makes the country attractive place for all, and equips the generations to come with capabilities, ethics, enthusiasm and sympathy to be future role model leaders is very much needed in this swiftly changing age we live in.

"The current Sudanese government acknowledges the difficulties it is facing in implementing its education reform plans, of which a basic pillar is the production of new curricula that will enable students to accommodate the informatics era in which the world is now living" (ICE, 2008).

Post-conflict curriculum must be conflict sensitive designed and in a way to qualify student to think big and sail across narrow divides, feel confident about who they are, be patriotic loves their national entity, and have self-stem to learn from mistakes and overcome challenges. Certainly they will have the courage and confidence to succeed in building attractive national unity. The policies and strategies must be formed in the way to promote social reconciliation and intra-community ties which can be achieved subjectively through community demands and policies response.

Potential challenges:

This is a critical moment for education to Sudan, the ongoing violence has damaged most if not all institutions and are no longer operational. In order to get go rehabilitation programing thorough review of the damaged institutions is key required to check, if anything remained, academic records, paper data and or online data, this work consumes time and efforts. on the other hand, many of the teachers have been scattered by war many have fled to INDPs and refugee's camps seeking asylums.

Based on the Sudan's complex context and the current war deepens the fragmentation of Sudan, ethnic,



linguistic, geographic, ideological differences may play part when it comes to education policy formulation, particularly academic curriculum.

As political violence has hit eight states, and has indirectly affected the rest of the states the program will need huge amounts of budget, post-conflict government capacities will not manage it, certainly, requires fundraising, business sector engagement INGOs. It needs sensitive negotiations with donors to continue build and strengthen it is partnership to drive rehabilitation programme.

Recommendations and way forwards:

Local languages and social norms means value, students must get to know and celebrate their cultures and languages there must be cultural activities to reflect their cultures.

A strong and strategic partnership between the public and private sectors is necessary to address educational challenges to tackle budgetary issues. While sensitive negotiations foreign aid door such as UNICEF, UNISCO and all agencies and works in the area of children education or the field of diversity and cultural rights must be held to prepare budget for the facilitation of program implementation.

The violence that students have exposed impacted in their psychological, some may need trauma mitigation sessions, communication with psychiatrists and confidential corners specialists is important to have trauma mitigation sessions.

Train teachers and hire qualified teachers and provide supportive/motivational strategies, convincing incentives and create a conducive educational environment to ensure everyone is excelling to deliver his part to specifications and standard required, the success of the program depends on the reliable human capital.

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