



Returnee`s children education challenges a case study of Kuajok town the capital city of the former Warrap state south Sudan

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Abstract

The paper endeavors to painstakingly enunciate the voluntary return of former IDPs and refugees to their respective areas in Warrap State, using Kuajok as a case study. The centerpiece objective of the study is to examine the return process for returnees, the social, economic reintegration and the livelihood activities. The social services provided for returnees, such as health, education, water, and sanitation are strenuously elaborated. As well as the land ownership issue is also surmounted. However, the main challenges floundering returnees` education inclusively subsumes, overcrowding and congestion of schools, lack of teaching materials, poor infrastructure, the medium of instruction is English and the most of the returnee children, speak Arabic, walking for long distance, lack of enough secondary schools, lack of qualified teachers in secondary schools.

Keywords: returnees, education, language, teaching materials, congestion

1. Introduction

South Sudan had experienced severe civil wars which have been continuously active even before independence was formally achieved in January 1956. Two rounds of civil war have erupted in Sudan: the first since 1955 until 1972 when peace negotiations culminated in the historic Addis Ababa Agreement. The second round lasted from mid-1983 until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed, putting an end to the longest civil war on the continent. These two wars represented the extreme cases of migration-inducing forces that threatened physical survival, destroying the economic, physical and social infrastructure, with the subsequent outbreaks of epidemics, has forced millions of people out of their ancestral homelands, throughout most of South Sudan, to areas of relative tranquility within the Sudan or in the neighboring African countries. The root causes of the conflict in Southern Sudan represent a complex web of social, economic, historical, religious, racial and geographical factors. The aforementioned factors caused the wars which have resulted in the massive displacement of approximately four million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sudan and they are without a clear future about being integrated into a new area or returning home to start their rural livelihood.

The initiative of the return of former IDPs from their places of displacement to their places of origin came up after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLM/A) in January 2005 in Kenya. The CPA has provided three options for IDPs and refugees in neighboring countries; these options are reintegration, relocation and return/repatriation which is supported by the international community, the UN, the Government of Southern Sudan (Goss), the Government of National Unity (GNU) and NGOs. According to a study, done by IOM and CARE in partnership with the Government of

Sudan (GoS) and UN Development Program (UNDP) and conducted in 2003 in IDPs camps in Khartoum, about 60 percent of IDP households covered in the study, indicated they intended to return home, especially South Sudanese IDPs. A study done by Assal (Assal, 2006,) addressed the demographic and socio-economic profile of IDPs living in Khartoum. In addition, the question of repatriation and reintegration of IDPs in Khartoum was addressed. Social services, in general, aim at improving the welfare of the population and improving their standard of living in different ways. Social services include education, health, water supply, and sanitation.

However, education is vital for a nation's social and economic development, as well as for the welfare of the individual persons. As an investment, it pays it back later in life both at the level of the nation and at that of the individual. Through education, people understand the working of the government better. In South Sudan, the majority of children and youth have not received any formal education. Formal education in South Sudan was very limited even before the civil war; British colonists had not established a good education system in South Sudan. Many formal schools built during that era were Christian missionary schools. The colonial administration had differing educational policies in the North and South that exacerbated the schism between the two regions. Children in northern schools were instructed in Arabic with an Islamic-based formal national curriculum, while those in the south were instructed in English with a non-uniform curriculum that emphasized Christian religious instruction. This policy has affected Southern Sudan in terms of a lack of good school instruction, high drop-out rates due to the unavailability of a good formal education and ignorance about the role of education in the community.

2. Methodology

The research is based on two sources of data: secondary and

primary. Secondary sources include materials from libraries, books, United Nation report on returns, as well as other appropriate organization reports on return and reintegration. Primary data was collected from fieldwork using different methods of data collection, including the use of questionnaires, direct observation, and group discussions. Interviews were conducted with men and women and with both returnees and resident representatives. In addition, traditional leaders and government officials responsible for returnee issues were interviewed. The general approach used in the research includes:

The descriptive approach draws its data from literature such as social and economic processes that impacted the reintegration and return process with special attention paid to the relationship between returnee and resident households to see evidence of competition over resources and the potential for any conflict. Also, the research reviewed policy and program documents on return and reintegration, other studies on return in Sudan, as well as assessment and data on the return process and recent evaluations on the areas of return in Warrap State. The analytical approach depends on primary data as the source of its information; the main tools that are being used for collecting primary data are questionnaires and interviews, in addition to other sources as available. Kuajok town has been taken as an example for this study and therefore the research covers several villages within the area. The villages visited are Anguei, War All, Kuajok East, Kuajok West, and Majak Amal. 210 questionnaires were distributed to respondents during the visit.

3. Education policy in southern Sudan

The Government of Southern Sudan has come up with the foundation of an education system that will improve access to and equality of schooling. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) is functioning at the federal and state level and has been proactive in setting priorities and taking initiatives. The main priorities and areas of focus in recent years have included recruiting, training and supporting teachers; developing curriculum; procuring books; building learning spaces and coordinating with donor agencies. MoEST is in the process of establishing a unified primary and secondary curriculum to replace the varying curriculum being used in the south. This curriculum has already been finalized for primary school (grades one through four) and the curriculum for grades five through eight is developed. MoEST and partner organizations have developed a broad curriculum for adults and youth who are not currently in school. The Accelerated Learning Program condenses eight years of primary school into four years and allows graduates to sit for exams to continue onto secondary school. With the support of the most branch, Ministry officials at the state level have begun to establish employment and payroll rosters of teachers. The government is planning to establish local education centers to train teachers. The priorities MoEST has set and the initiatives that have been undertaken are cognitive of the real steps that are required to build an effective education system. Moreover, the priority areas also reflect the reality that a quality education system needs time to be built. Education can be seen in different forms in the various areas and depends on the situation in which education is needed, meaning that there

are several education fields, including formal education, informal education, education in emergencies and Accelerated Learning Programs (Education and Livelihood Report, 2007).

3.1 Formal Education

Schooling follows a regular pattern: admission of students around age six or seven, promotion from one grade to the next on a yearly basis and the use of a curriculum that covers a wide range of knowledge, skills, and values. A formal education system includes primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational education.

3.2 Informal Education

Education activities targeted to specific groups, where there is a possibility to provide attention to individual learners, comprises informal education. Activities may include courses, workshops, and apprenticeships in fields such as literacy, numeracy, health and hygiene, informal-sector business training, conflict management, peacebuilding, and human rights education (Education and Livelihood Report, 2007).

3.3 Education in Emergencies

Formal and non-educational training are provided to children and youth whose access to national or community education has been destroyed by war or other humanitarian disasters. It may take various forms and serve many purposes. Types of educational programs can include structured recreational activities, youth centers, formal education, vocational or skills training for youth, Accelerated Learning Programs, bridging programs (designed to reintegrate young people aged 10-17 back to the National Education System), life skills education, teacher training, and distance learning programs (Education and Livelihood Report, 2007)

3.3 Accelerated Learning Programs

These are designed to address gaps and disruption in education experienced by many youths and other people who have been affected by conflict. Generally, these programs are designed to condense six years of education into three years. (In Southern Sudan, eight years of schooling will be condensed into four).

4. Educational Opportunities in Kuajok Town

Kuajok is the capital of Warrap State and a large commercial center. It is developing very fast with a large population coming from different counties within the state due to its social services, the availability of government headquarters and NGO sites. This movement of the population towards the town has put pressure on the limited services, such as health, water supplies, and education, which face difficulties. As the town has insufficient services and the government of Warrap, since its relocation from Wau to Kuajok, has not built any schools and has merely renovated the only secondary school in the town.

4.1 Primary Education

There are nine primary schools in the town with a total of 3 200 pupils; many of whom are returnees' children. These schools have a poor infrastructure with some schools functioning in open air places or under trees, thatched

buildings or ones made of mud. This is in addition to a lack of qualified teachers, teaching materials, and lack of facilities such as water supplies, latrines, furniture, textbooks and exercise books. The number of students per teacher or classroom is overwhelming and the teachers lack training in pedagogy or language and therefore face a great test when managing the learning process. In villages where schools do not exist, students have to walk long distances to attend a school in the town, usually in the rain or amid many other challenges. The main challenge for returnees' children is the language barrier especially in the higher grades such as P7 and P8 because they have previously been schooled in Arabic. This is because the language of instruction in Kuajok is English and since most returnees' children are from northern states, they had been attending Arabic schools. In any circumstance, school reintegration is difficult and this is keeping most of the children out of school, which in turn has accelerated the number of drop-outs and has increased child labor in the town, especially in the market.

However, some NGOs are supporting teachers with additional training to enable them to manage children from different language backgrounds. As a result, many returnee families have been separated with school-aged children remaining in the areas of displacement to continue their schooling. There is no selective division within the education system targeting returnee children; there is only the language barrier. Also, it has been observed that orphaned children who have lost their parents during the conflict are missing out on school due to a lack of family support and poverty. No reformation program has been proposed by the state government or NGOs to address the orphaned children's issue and to put an end to a situation in which many of them working in the market are likely to be abused by their employers. Added to all of these difficulties, due to over enrolment, some returnees' children, who came recently, have not been able to secure enrolment. This is evident by the high number of pupil enrolment in the school and the limited capacity of the schools to meet the high demands due to a lack of trained teachers, learning spaces and teaching materials. Moreover, there is the issue of the language of instruction in schools as previously mentioned and explained in the following table:

Table 1: Language of Instruction

Language of Instruction	Frequency	Percent
English	210	100 %
Total	210	100 %

Source: Fieldwork May 2009

Table (6-1) shows that English is the language of instruction in the schools, as asserted by 100 % of respondents. This difference in the language of instruction is keeping returnees away and as a result, keeping children from the schools. Some families sent their children back to the areas of displacement to attend school or to some other place where there are schools teaching in Arabic, like Wau. Whether returnees' children secure their education in the town or not, is clear from the following table.

Table 2: Returnees' Children's Education

Do returnees' children get an education?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	187	89 %
No	23	11 %
Total	210	100.0 %

Source: Fieldwork May 2009

Table (6-2) shows that returnee s' children who have access to education in the town is 89 percent of respondents. The main issue faced by the returnees is the language barrier. This is in addition to the poor infrastructure of the schools as many school buildings are made from thatch and mud. Moreover, there is a lack of qualified teachers and teaching materials and the issue of the curriculum in some areas where schools use the different curriculum at the same time. The following table clearly outlines the agencies supporting education.

Table 3: Organizations supporting educational facilities

Organizations Supporting Education	Frequency	Percent
UNICEF	122	58.1 %
UNICEF & GoSS	52	24.0 %
UNICEF, GoSS & NGOs	3	1.5 %
GoSS	25	11.9 %
Local NGOs	8	3.8 %
Total	210	100.0 %

Source: Fieldwork May 2009

Table (6-3) shows that the biggest UN agency supporting education is UNICEF. Approximately 58 percent of the respondents confirmed that UNICEF supports schools with furniture, textbooks, exercise books, and other schools materials. The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) provides salaries and teacher training, but these salaries are not regularly paid and this sometimes affects the school's stability. Some NGOs provide teachers training on pedagogy especially SC UK. Also, WFP provides food for education and recovery in rural areas.

4.2 Adult Education

There are six adult schools in the town with approximately 323 students enrolled. These schools are under the Accelerated Learning Program which targets the community, especially returnee women. It also helps in reducing illiteracy among women as well as youth. Moreover, the program has been supported by the state Ministry of Science and Technology who has provided textbooks (especially in adult education learning), exercise books, teachers and teaching materials.

Education is also supported by NGOs, especially through the empowerment of women, by introducing activities besides adult education. One of the leading organizations is IOM which has established three centers in Kuajok and two other centers outside the town. The purpose of establishing these centers is the empowerment of returnee women through the support of adult education by providing teaching materials and incentives for teachers. Moreover, IOM facilitated adult education as the main tool to its program which is mainly

focused on introducing livelihood programs for women. This program needs a minimum standard of education to be addressed to women so that they are able to understand livelihood, especially income generating activities.

4.2 Secondary Education

There is one secondary school in the town. The school was established in the 1950s by missionaries from the Catholic Church. Later on, the school was promoted to a national school and admitted students who came from different areas to attain secondary education in Kuajok, which, at that time, was a site for the Catholic Church, as well as a police station. During the civil war this secondary school was extremely devastated, but after the CPA and the selection of the town to be the site for the government of Warrap state, the school was renovated by the state Ministry of Education and reopened. The school usually accepts students from different areas of the state and approximately 700 students are currently enrolled in the school from the first year up to third. It is the only center for Sudanese Certificate Examinations in the state. In addition to this school, there is one school in Wau under the Warrap State Ministry of Education. There are also approximately four secondary schools in the state counties including Turalei in Twic County, Akon Secondary in Gogrial West County, Mary Lou in Tonj North County and Thiet Secondary in Tonj South County. These schools were established under the SPLM/A during the war and were using the foreign curriculum, mainly Kenyan and Ugandan. In addition, Kenyan and Ugandan teachers are teaching and supporting in the schools due to a lack of qualified national teachers and a lack of Southern Sudan secondary curriculum.

5. The Main conundrums for returnees' education in the State

- Overcrowding and congestion of schools, especially in the one and only secondary school in the town, affecting the quality of education, in addition to the insufficient number of qualified teachers for the secondary school.
- Lack of teaching materials in the schools such as furniture, textbooks, exercise books and other educational supplies.
- Poor infrastructure of the schools, especially in primary schools, and a lack of water supplies and sanitation facilities.
- The language of instruction is English and since most of the returnee children came from northern states, they speak Arabic, which means school reintegration is difficult and as a result, it usually keeps most of the children out of the school. This is a major problem for returnees as the Government of Southern Sudan's policy stipulates that English is the medium of instruction from P4 onwards, with Arabic taught as only one subject. Due to the discrepancy in languages taught and those spoken by children, returnees' children face difficulties in the schools and often have to drop two grades or more to be able to understand the lessons; others have totally left school.
- Children walk long distances to reach school, especially those who are living in villages around the town where there are no good schools. Therefore during the rainy season, children face difficulties to reach the school and thus are often absent from school due to the rain.

- Lack of enough secondary schools in the town and a lack of qualified teachers in the only secondary school.
- The teachers in the school lack training, one of the most significant obstacles to education in the state. Also, many teachers who are teaching in primary schools have not completed primary school themselves. Poor working conditions, insufficient teaching materials and accommodations for teachers make it difficult for a qualified teacher to return.
- Many teachers returning from Khartoum and other Arabic-speaking garrison towns in Southern Sudan also face challenges of teaching in English, the new official language of Southern Sudan. On this issue, the IOM, under the Return and Reintegration of Qualified Sudanese Program (RQS), has been facilitating the return of qualified teachers to their respective areas so that they can help to fill in the gap in expertise, knowledge, and skills in education as well as others fields. But the program has not successfully achieved its goals due to a lack of budget and the language barrier as many teachers from the north are Arabic.

6. Conclusions

The returnee's population generally floundering arduous conundrums in their returning home such as inadequate services in terms of health facilities, water supplies, poor infrastructure. Also, lands issue is deemed as community property instead of individual ownership. However in the main challenges encountered by returnee's children basically enmesh congestion of the learning's facilities owing to increasing number of students, insufficient of qualified teachers in the secondary school, dearth of teaching materials in most of the schools, insufficient of water supplies in primary schools, the medium instruction issues which from Arabic in displacement places into English in the current host places.

However, secondary schools are very limited owing to the unavailability of secondary school's teachers as well as lack of training. Also inadequate working conditions, insufficient facilities such as and accommodations. Moreover, returnees' teachers returning from Khartoum most of them teach in Arabic while the medium of instruction in Southern Sudan is English, this in addition to the poor remuneration of teachers owing to lack of fund which emboldens qualified teachers to leave teaching professions and prepare other works.

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