

Islands of education  
Schooling, civil war and the Southern Sudanese  
(1983-2004)





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Schooling, civil war and the Southern  
Sudanese (1983-2004)

Marc Sommers



International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)

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## Foreword to the series

UNESCO is increasingly requested to provide an educational response in emergency and reconstruction settings. The organization is in the process of developing expertise in this field in order to be able to provide prompt and relevant assistance. It will offer guidance, practical tools and specific training for education policy-makers, officials and planners.

The fifth of the eleven objectives adopted by the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 explicitly focuses on the rights of children in emergencies. It stresses the importance of meeting “... the needs of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability and conduct[ing] educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and that help to prevent violence and conflict”. The *Dakar Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2000: 9) calls for national Education for All plans to include provision for education in emergency situations. Governments, particularly education ministries, have an important role to play in an area that has often been dominated by the actions of NGOs and United Nations agencies.

Moreover, the field of educational planning in emergencies and reconstruction is still young. It has to be organized into a manageable discipline, through further documentation and analysis, before training programmes can be designed. Accumulated institutional memories and knowledge in governments, agencies and NGOs on education in emergencies are in danger of being lost due both to the dispersion and disappearance of documents, and to high staff turnover in both the national and international contexts. Most of the expertise is still in the heads of practitioners and needs to be collected, since memories fade fast. Diverse experiences of educational reconstruction must now be more thoroughly documented and analyzed before they disappear.

This task includes the publication in this series of seven country-specific analyses being conducted on the planning and management of education in emergencies and reconstruction. They concern the efforts currently being made to restore and transform education systems in

countries as diverse as Burundi, Kosovo, Palestine, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Timor-Leste. They have been initiated and sponsored by IIEP, in close collaboration with the Division for Educational Policies and Strategies at UNESCO headquarters.

The objectives of the case studies are:

- to contribute to the process of developing knowledge in the discipline of education in emergencies;
- to provide focused input for future IIEP training programmes targeting government officials and others in education in emergencies;
- to identify and collect dispersed documentation on the management of education in the seven countries; and to capture some of the undocumented memories of practitioners;
- to analyze responses in seven very different situations to educational provision in times of crisis; and
- to increase dissemination of information and analysis on education in emergencies.

IIEP's larger programme on education in emergencies and reconstruction involves not only these case studies, but also a series of global, thematic, policy-related studies. In addition, IIEP is producing a handbook for ministry of education officials and the agencies assisting them, and developing training materials for a similar audience. Through this programme, IIEP will make a modest but significant contribution to the discipline of education in emergencies. Its hope is to enrich the quality of the planning processes applied in this crucial field.

Gudmund Hernes  
Director, IIEP



# Contents

Acknowledgements		5
Foreword to the series		7
List of abbreviations		11
Executive summary		15
Author's preface		19
Prologue: islands of education within oceans of destruction		21
Chapter 1	Introduction: 'One per cent'	25
	Methodological approach	26
	Organization of the case study	33
Chapter 2	Background: occupation, conflict and education	35
	Northern and Southern Sudanese: dimensions of the landscape	38
	The identity debate	41
	Tracking education and conflict in modern Sudanese history	46
	Lessons learnt	63
Chapter 3	Education in southern Sudan	65
	Introduction	65
	Education in northern Bahr el Ghazal – the case of Akon Payam	93
	Education in eastern Equatoria	121
	Lessons learnt	136
Chapter 4	Education for Southern Sudanese refugees	139
	Refugee education, war and escape: the spectacular odyssey of the 'Lost Boys'	139
	Southern Sudanese refugee education	146
	Education in Kenya	159
	Refugee education in northern Uganda	178
	Lessons learnt	204

*Contents*

Chapter 5	Education for the internally displaced in Khartoum	207
	Khartoum's internally displaced	207
	The climate for education	210
	IDP education in Khartoum	217
	Lessons learnt	250
Chapter 6	Conclusion: an educational disaster	251
References		269
Supplementary bibliography		291

## List of abbreviations

ACT	Action by Churches Together
AET	Africa Educational Trust
ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BEPS	Basic Education and Policy Support
CAR	Central African Republic
CBO	Community-based organization
CEAS	Church Ecumenical Action in Sudan
CMS	Church Missionary Society (Anglican)
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DOK	Diocese of Khartoum (Roman Catholic)
DOT	Diocese of Torit (Roman Catholic)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
EPSR	Education Programme for Sudanese Refugees
ESN	Education Support Network
FAI	FilmAid International
GOS	Government of Sudan
GTZ	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i>
HAC	Humanitarian Aid Commission (Sudan)
IDP	Internally displaced person

*List of abbreviations*

IIEP	UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks (of OCHA)
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MSF	<i>Médecins Sans Frontières</i>
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRDRO	Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDA	Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (of USAID)
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
P1, P2, etc.	Primary school grades 1, 2, etc.
PEP	Peace Education Programme
PLE	Primary Leaving Examination
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTC	Parent-Teacher Committee
PTSS	Programme and Technical Support Section (of UNHCR)
SBEP	Sudan Basic Education Program
SCC	Sudan Council of Churches
SCUK	Save the Children, United Kingdom
SOE	Secretariat of Education (of the SPLM)
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army

SPLM	Sudan People’s Liberation Movement
SRS	Self-reliance strategy
STAR	Sudan Transition and Rehabilitation programme
TTC	Teacher training centre
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO PEER	UNESCO Programme for Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USCR	United States Committee for Refugees
US\$	United States dollar
VGSP	Village Girls’ School Project
WFP	World Food Programme
WUS	World University Service



## Executive summary

War, isolation and instability have dominated southern Sudan since 1955. After a brief period of peace between 1972 and 1983, a second civil war swept across the already devastated country. Together with the recent expansion of conflict in Darfur, Sudan currently has in excess of 5 million internally displaced people (IDPs), far more than any other country in the world. The conflict has also forced over half a million Southern Sudanese to seek asylum as refugees in neighbouring countries. Thousands more have been abducted into slavery. War in the south has caused approximately 2 million deaths.

These events have left Southern Sudanese as one of the most undereducated populations in the world. The overwhelming majority of Southern Sudanese children and youth have had little access to education of any kind. Schooling has largely consisted of island-like entities surrounded by oceans of educational emptiness.

*Islands of education: schooling, civil war and the Southern Sudanese (1983-2004)* is the first study to analyze and describe the harrowing educational reality that Southern Sudanese people have faced during 21 years of civil war. It is the result of extensive archival research and two field research trips. The fieldwork featured interviews in southern Sudan, in the internally displaced person (IDP) camps and squatter settlements in Khartoum, in refugee camps and settlements in Kenya and Uganda as well as a visit to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' headquarters (UNHCR) in Geneva. The book draws compelling lessons from the civil war period and provides recommendations for future action, both for Sudan and for educational responses in other conflict zones.

Following a brief overview of the origins and major points of conflict of the civil war, the book presents four dominant themes:

- co-ordinating educational action involving the education authorities (in this case, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the

- Government of Sudan), international donors, United Nations (UN) agencies and NGOs;
- school curriculum choices, which have often created confusion, resistance, and conflict;
  - locating where responsibility for education falls and should fall; and
  - access to education of reasonable quality.

The complex issue of identity and mistrust between the predominantly Muslim, Arab north and the non-Arab, non-Muslim south reveals the link between these troubled relationships and the problematic considerations of curriculum and language of instruction. The government's attempts to impose Arabic as the sole language of instruction in schools, combined with an Islamic national curriculum, led to deep-seated resentment amongst the Southern Sudanese: school was no longer a refuge from conflict but rather a place to express resistance, a place permeated by a sense of subjugation and division.

Several lasting educational trends in southern Sudan trace back to the British-dominated, pre-independence Condominium period, when education was intentionally underdeveloped to maintain the perceived 'purity' of the Southern Sudanese and simplify administrative responsibilities. These trends included exceptionally poor educational quality, selective access to school, a pronounced tendency for boys to dominate school attendance and an undeveloped and weakly co-ordinated education system.

*Islands of education* depicts the severity of the educational situation in southern Sudan in two specific cases: that of Akon Payam, in northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Narus, in eastern Equatoria. In the former case, Save the Children UK (SCUK) implemented a community-based programme that provided basic education to many children and youth in Akon. In Narus, by contrast, the Catholic Diocese of Torit established a small number of schools characterized by high educational quality and narrow access. The book compares the respective benefits and disadvantages of each approach.

The book's examination of the educational prospects of hundreds of thousands of Southern Sudanese refugees living in nearby countries begins with the extraordinary tale of the famous 'Lost Boys' of Sudan. It then looks at the refugee camps of Kakuma, Kenya where a multiplicity of



educational opportunities exists despite a huge youth population and friction with the host community. The refugees in settlements in northern Uganda reside in an area of high insecurity yet benefit from relatively encouraging educational prospects.

*Islands of education* also explores the realities of life for the 1.8 million IDPs in Sudan's capital city, Khartoum. Pervasive government intimidation and control have led to chronic uncertainty and insecurity for the displaced, and constrained co-ordination of education for IDPs. This situation has inspired a hesitant and limited international response. The book chronicles how a somewhat promising collaborative response to IDP education needs, following the arrival of displaced Southern Sudanese to Khartoum in 1987, dissolved into a period of prolonged difficulty for schools for the displaced. The book highlights a number of responses, including the IDPs' expression of political and religious resistance through limited revisions of the state curriculum, which they are forced to use.

*Islands of education* documents the educational catastrophe facing the Southern Sudanese. It illuminates their strong desire to educate themselves and their children. Among its major findings are:

- the disastrous consequences of underinvesting in education during conflict;
- serious deficiencies in the co-ordination of education;
- a direct connection between quality education and compensating teachers;
- alarmingly low levels of representation of girls in schools;
- the dangers of involving military personnel in the management of education; and
- the invasive effects of state dominance on learning for the internally displaced.

With an eye to southern Sudan's new era of peace, *Islands of education* recommends ways to create access to quality education for Southern Sudanese children and youth and to enhance the development of an education system.



## Author's preface

Writing this book was not an easy task. It attempts to account for the educational situation of the Southern Sudanese during a long, intensely bitter and profoundly destructive civil war, and was written while steps towards peace in southern Sudan gradually advanced and the startling, ferocious and horrific tragedy in Darfur exploded.

The task was made all the more difficult as education has been largely unavailable (some would say denied) to school-age Southerners, not only during the recently ended civil war in the south but also across earlier conflicts, periods of shaky peace and occupations. Education for Southern Sudanese, where it has existed, has also been an enduring conflict issue: War has been fought, in part, over which curriculum and language of instruction should be used for educating Southern Sudanese.

The purpose of this case study is to analyze and describe the facts of education for Southern Sudanese during the more than two decades-long civil war and suggest lessons and recommendations that can be derived from this case. It is a look back at the civil war years that have recently ceased, and is being published a few short months after a negotiated peace was finalized. Throughout this book, the author seeks to apply an impartial as well as independent perspective to the endeavour. And while controversy may be inevitable when the task calls for frankly addressing such a contentious topic, it is neither the intention nor the purpose of this work to express bias towards either side.

This insistence on maintaining an independent perspective was consistently expressed to those who were interviewed for this case study. Most responded with positive commentary. As the educational shortcomings for Southern Sudanese are both longstanding and extensive, it is hoped that the findings, descriptions, analyses, conclusions and recommendations contained in these pages reach receptive ears, particularly now that peace has finally arrived in southern Sudan and investments in education have begun to increase.

Education for Southern Sudanese continues to lack a full accounting of its current state, particularly as it has emerged over the course of the civil war that has just ended. Significant information gaps remain. It was not possible to visit or document more than a limited number of places where Southern Sudanese reside. *Islands of education* thus represents one author's necessarily incomplete attempt to tell this complex and important story.

Marc Sommers  
Boston, Massachusetts, USA  
April 2005

## Prologue: islands of education within oceans of destruction

Southern Sudan's tortured history has been plagued by conflict, invasions, famine, slavery, isolation and deprivation. Connected to the civil wars pitting Sudanese Southerners against Northerners has been a plethora of quarrels. One involves the origins of the North-South dispute itself. Francis M. Deng, an historian, analyst and advocate from the south, has argued that the separation between 'the Arab Muslim North' and the 'African South' derived "its roots in the Arabization and Islamization of the north and the resistance to those forces in the South" (1995: 9). This process, Deng asserts, began several millennia ago, when Arab traders first settled in northern Sudan, and then "intensified" with the coming of Islam in the seventh century A.D. (1995: 10).

Alternatively, Mohamed Omer Beshir of the University of Khartoum challenges this accent on elemental differences separating Sudanese by blaming outsiders for pitting Northerners and Southerners against each other. He has, for example, criticized "many writers" and "so-called 'experts'" for 'overlooking' an entirely separate interpretation of the past: that "communities in the north and the south have lived in comparative peace together before the nineteenth century". Beshir places the "roots of the conflict" between Northerners and Southerners squarely on the shoulders of "the two colonial regimes" – the Turco-Egyptian and the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Administration (1984: 12-13). During interviews for this case study and while reviewing documentation on southern Sudan, both Southern and Northern Sudanese expressed one similar view: that their perspectives of war identity, and history were generally overlooked, while the views of the opposite side predominated. Deng D. Akol Ruay's defence of the Southern perspective, for example, expresses a sentiment similar to Beshir's assertion of the Northern view: "Of course there is already in existence, a plethora of print [about the nature of Afro-Arab, or Southerner-Northerner relations in the Sudan...] depicting the Northern Arab viewpoint" (1984: 12-13). As a result, Ruay seeks to deal with "the same subject" but from "the South's African outlook" (1994: 12).

### **A word on terminology**

As in many civil conflicts, there is little agreement on what geographic areas should be called. In this book, the areas of southern Sudan will be divided as they are most commonly identified in the literature, as divided into three regions: Bahr el Ghazal, the Upper Nile and Equatoria. The Nile River, which splits Equatoria in two, is generally thought to be the dividing line between eastern and western Equatoria. This study showed that the education experiences in each half of Equatoria differ in significant ways. Commonly-used titles for other contested areas will similarly be applied, such as for the Nuba Mountains in southern Kordofan and the southern portions of the Blue Nile Region.

Deciding whether to capitalize ‘Southern’ Sudan presented another challenge, because it represents both a geographic area and an identity. In recognition of this challenge, it was decided that the geographic area would not be capitalized (southern Sudan) while the identity would be capitalized (Southern Sudanese and Southerners). The same applies for people from northern Sudan, who are here considered Northerners and Northern Sudanese.

It would be entirely incorrect to infer any favouritism whatsoever for either side in this conflict from these decisions.

International actors in the humanitarian world have been accused of stirring Sudan’s conflict pot. Alex de Waal (1997: 148), for example, considers Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), which arose as an international humanitarian response to “the 1988 war-induced famine in Bahr el-Ghazal” in southern Sudan (Karim, Duffield *et al.*, 1996: 2), to have become “institutionalized, part of the military, political and economic landscape in southern Sudan”. “The final result”, de Waal concludes, is that the OLS-led relief “is inextricably bound up in the political economy of war in southern Sudan. Relief is provisioning both civilians and soldiers, is influencing political mobilization and military strategy, and is one of the prime foci of international diplomacy” (Karim, Duffield *et al.*, 1996: 150). David Keen has used this case to criticize “major international donors” for: (1) failing to tackle the underlying processes of famine (1994: 116); (2) focusing on “getting relief to ‘accessible’ areas” (1994: 118); and (3) “not taking steps to ensure that [relief aid] was actually received by

famine victims” (1994: 119). These three components of donor neglect, in turn, also allowed donors “to present an image of successful relief operations and maintain relatively good diplomatic relations with a Sudanese government that was actually promoting the famine” (1994: 120).<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of which group is fingered, at least one simple, undisputed fact remains: the profound and truly longstanding neglect that Southerners have endured, a neglect that existed long before the recent civil war. As Peters has observed,

“In a country where underdevelopment is the norm, the south remains perhaps the most underdeveloped area not only of Sudan but, arguably, of Africa as a whole. Years of neglect have meant an almost complete lack of investment and basic infrastructure – roads, schools, hospitals, local government, and industry. Since 1983, most of the meagre infrastructure that did exist in the south has been destroyed by war and, since 1991, by inter-factional conflict among various ethnic groups and rebel forces” (1996: 9).

The level of development in southern Sudan has been so consistently low that it might be more frankly characterized as ‘undevelopment’. Soon after the peace agreement between northern and southern Sudan was signed at the end of 2004 to mark the end of the more than two decades-long civil war and nearly five decades after independence, Lual Acuek Deng, a new economic advisor for the emerging Southern government, remarked that: “People keep talking about reconstruction, but there is nothing to reconstruct” (Polier, 2005: 37). Southern Sudan is also almost entirely devoid of reliable education facilities of any reasonable quality.

Indeed, if education can be considered a general indicator of development, then southern Sudan is an unqualified disaster. For it has not just been war that has undermined support for education. The assertion by Duffield *et al.* that “Outside support to education [for Southern Sudanese] has been limited” (2000: 44) is actually a colossal

1. Not all international analysts, of course, share this perspective. Larry Minear, for example, has argued that OLS “imposed a certain discipline on both sets of belligerents” (2002: 91). More broadly, Minear has concluded that “the criticism of humanitarian action for playing a substantial role in sustaining or exacerbating armed conflicts has been substantially overblown” (2002: 157).

understatement. For most places where Southern Sudanese reside in the region, international and national support for education has been either scant and unreliable or, more likely again, virtually nonexistent. The exceptions to this general lack of investment are mostly island-like entities: small formal education institutions (most all of them primary schools) surrounded by oceans of destruction and undevelopment. The islands frequently reveal distinctly different characteristics, from church-inspired schools bent on excellence for the few to international agency and community-based schools striving for quality against heavy odds. Nearby refugee camps that provide education have developed a widespread reputation as isles of educational stability and opportunity. Schools in government-held cities in the south (often referred to as garrison towns during the war), most prominently Juba, the longstanding regional capital, have endured almost literally as islands. During the civil war, they were isolated entities surrounded by vast territories held by enemy forces. Yet another metaphorical island exists in Sudan's capital city, Khartoum, where perhaps 2 million or more displaced Southern Sudanese (the precise figure remains disputed) have lived with access to very few schools of any kind. These schools dot the camps and settlements where Southerners subsist, mainly along the ramshackle margins of Khartoum State. For much of the war, across most of this bleak educational landscape, poor and sometimes nonexistent co-ordination between educational islands has reigned, signified by the jumble of curricula that have been variously applied.

This case study will look at some of these educational islands, as well as the immensity of educational emptiness that has arisen between them. It will also attempt to position this experience within its historical context. Throughout this journey, an appreciation of the challenges and implication of efforts made to provide education will be highlighted.



## Chapter 1

### Introduction: ‘one per cent’

*One per cent.* Two examples of the significance of a single percentage point shed light on the extreme situation that has faced so many Southern Sudanese over the course of the current civil war. The first exposes some of the horror that Southern Sudanese have faced. During the famine in the late 1980s in northern Bahr el Ghazal in southern Sudan, and just north of that area in southern Kordofan, thousands of displaced Dinka, the largest ethnic group in southern Sudan, fled to camps. In 1988, the death rates in some of these camps “reached the unprecedented level of 1 per cent per day, far higher than any levels recorded before or since for famines in Africa” (de Waal, 1997: 94).<sup>2</sup> The second illuminates the shocking scarcities that plague so many Southern Sudanese lives. In the eastern half of the Southern Sudanese province of Equatoria, a local non-governmental organization (NGO) related to the author estimates that less than 1 per cent (0.7 per cent, to be precise) of all school-age children in Kapoeta County were actually attending school.

Such episodes in Sudan’s recent past help elucidate the challenge of addressing the objective of this case study, which is to document lessons that can be learnt from the management of education in southern Sudan and of the education of internally displaced and refugee Southern Sudanese from 1983 to 2004, the year the civil war finally ended. Given the broad timeframe of this study and the sheer expanse of experience for Southern Sudanese in terms of geography, flight, misfortune and occasional opportunity, this would seem to be exceptionally difficult.

At the same time, two issues have necessarily limited the scope of study. First and foremost, it is a well-known fact that most Southern

2. David Keen outlines some of the specifics: “According to Médecins Sans Frontières (18 August), in the camp for famine migrants at Meiram, southern Kordofan, an average of 7.1 percent of the population were dying every week in a nine-week period from the end of June to mid-August [1988]. By comparison, in Korem, at the height of the Ethiopian famine in late 1994, an average of 1.6 percent of the displaced were dying every week” (1994: 111).

Sudanese of school age over the past 21 years have had no chance whatsoever to attend any school, much less complete their primary education. Many have been fortunate to survive at all, or have been thrown into the business of fighting or sustaining some sort of livelihood at a very early age. Others have had chances to go to school, but school itself has been so unstable and of such low quality that it received a low priority. Even when the prospect of attending a school has become a reality, the chances of remaining in school long and consistently enough just to finish primary school has constituted a truly daunting challenge for many schoolchildren. Secondly, distinctly uneven levels of information exist about the educational opportunities that have been available to Southern Sudanese. Education of Southern Sudanese has been documented only partially over the years and distribution of most documents has been limited.

Within the boundaries of these and related constraints and limitations, the story of education for Southern Sudanese over the course of the current civil war will be described here.

## Methodological approach

### *Sites and sources*

Research for this case study centred on two field research trips. The first lasted nearly four weeks in September-October 2003. It included field interviews in Sudan (northern Bahr el Ghazal and eastern Equatoria), Kenya (Nairobi, the capital city; and Lokichoggio, located near the Sudan border and the centre for OLS operations to Southern Sudan), and Uganda (Kampala, Uganda's capital city; Adjumani, a central operations base for supporting Sudanese refugee camps; and some refugee camps in Adjumani District). A Field Researcher from the Department of Government and Public Administration and the Centre for Refugee Studies at Moi University, Stephen Mwachofi Singo, visited the Kakuma refugee camps in north-western Kenya.

The second field trip lasted two weeks in mid-November 2003. Most of the time was spent in Khartoum, Sudan's capital city, including all four camps for internally displaced Sudanese (most of whom are from southern Sudan) and two squatter settlements populated with Southern Sudanese IDPs, all located within Khartoum State. The trip was then followed by a visit to the headquarters of the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva, Switzerland, where UNHCR officials were interviewed and archives reviewed.

The combination of a limited field research timeframe and a broad array of possible research alternatives created the need to make difficult choices regarding both the selection of research sites and the issues that would receive particular attention. In some cases, the decision-making process was clear-cut. Deciding to concentrate attention and limited time in the Sudanese capital and its immediate environs instead of other Sudan government-held areas where internally displaced persons (IDPs) from southern Sudan resided was fairly straightforward, since Khartoum was thought to have the highest concentration of IDPs in the world. Identifying visits to southern Sudan, on the other hand, was far more difficult. It was important to find two sites that were accessible and represented different kinds of educational opportunities and experiences of civil war. To help make this decision, several officials generously offered their advice and assistance, including members of the Government of Sudan's (GOS) Ministry of Education, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement's (SPLM) Secretariat of Education (SOE), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Save the Children UK and CARE USA.

In the end, the heavy rains that took place during the field research period simplified the decision-making task by making some prospective sites inaccessible. Fortunately, northern Bahr el Ghazal and eastern Equatoria remained sufficiently reachable, and proved to be excellent field research sites. Both contained significantly different educational experiences developed by Catholic missionaries in eastern Equatoria (the Diocese of Torit and the Comboni Brothers Mission) and by an international NGO in northern Bahr el Ghazal (Save the Children UK). Finally, both sites had experienced high degrees of instability and hardship at various times over the past 20 years. Akon Payam<sup>3</sup> in Gogrial County, northern Bahr el Ghazal, has endured a war, severe famines, displacement, attacks from soldiers and marauding militias (particularly the infamous *Murahalin*,<sup>4</sup>

3. "A payam is the fourth administrative level, after the supra-regional level, the region, the county or district. In generic terms it could be called a subdistrict. Each county in the SPLM areas has approximately six payams. Within each payam there are several villages headed by chiefs" (UNICEF, 2001: *ii*).
4. Also known as the Murahaliin.

who will be discussed later in this case study), abductions into slavery and other wartime devastations.

Narus, in Kapoeta County, eastern Equatoria, has variously experienced conflicts involving SPLM and GOS troops as well as bombings by GOS planes, again among many other wartime hardships and calamities. It has also tended to receive generally lower levels of international support than many other parts of war-torn southern Sudan. Indeed, the presence of OLS member agencies in eastern Equatoria is significantly lower than in, for example, western Equatoria or the Lakes District. In Narus and most other areas of eastern Equatoria, it is the Catholics who dominate the delivery of educational services to Southern Sudanese. This is not the case in other areas of southern Sudan, including northern Bahr el Ghazal, where scant foreign assistance for education existed until Save the Children UK initiated its work. Significantly, both sites are located near important borders. Narus is near the Kenyan border and the Kakuma refugee camps, a popular destination for many Sudanese in the area. Akon has been perilously close to the border with towns and other positions held by the GOS for much of the war, which has made it vulnerable to repeated attacks.

Selecting research sites for Sudanese refugees also proved challenging. Visiting Uganda was important because its Sudanese refugee population is the highest (188,194; UNHCR, 2004: 26-27, Table 4). Following consultations with UNHCR and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS, the primary implementer of education programming for Sudanese refugees in Uganda) officials in Kenya and Uganda, visiting Adjumani over other sites (namely, Moyo and Arua) was thought best, given its accessibility, the presence of JRS education operations there and UNHCR sub-field offices in nearby Pakelle, and the proximity of refugee camps in the area. Selecting Kakuma was chosen both because of its significant population of Southern Sudanese refugees and its longstanding and truly widespread reputation for providing education to Southern Sudanese refugees. The first refugee camp in Kakuma was initiated following the arrival of Sudan's famous 'Lost Boys' in 1992, whose story will be detailed later in this case study. Stephen Mwachofi Singo carried out field research there on behalf of the project.

Three other field sites require mention. Interviews were carried out with UNHCR and JRS officials in the Ugandan capital of Kampala, who also graciously assisted with logistics and travel to Adjumani and shared copies of relevant documents. Kenya's capital, Nairobi, is home to the

headquarters of a wide range of important actors in Southern Sudanese education. Interviews were carried out there with the Secretariat of Education of the SPLM, a leading donor agency (United States Agency for International Development, USAID), UN agencies (UNICEF in particular) and a range of international NGOs. Finally, documents were gathered and interviews conducted in Lokichoggio, the staging point for OLS' operations into southern Sudan and an operations base for a significant number of NGOs and UN agencies.

Relevant field and document data was also drawn from two earlier field studies. In 2000, the author visited Nairobi, Kampala and refugee camps for Southern Sudanese in northern Uganda and Kenya, in preparation for writing *Peace education for refugee youth* for UNHCR (Sommers, 2001). In 2002, the author visited two sites inside southern Sudan (Yambio, western Equatoria and Narus, eastern Equatoria) as well as the Kakuma refugee camps and Nairobi in Kenya before drafting *Crossing lines: 'magnets' and mobility among Southern Sudanese* for USAID and the Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity (Sommers, 2002). Two research assistants also used library and internet sources to gather documents for this endeavour.

### *Challenges and constraints*

Khartoum, Akon, Narus, Adjumani, and Kakuma. Visiting these five sites cannot possibly encompass the diverse experiences of war, flight and education that Southern Sudanese have faced during the current civil war. Certainly five other research sites may have proven equally appropriate. At the same time, given the mammoth scope of the case study in terms of geography, logistics, length of the war and breadth of war experience, in addition to the research team's narrow resources, travel timeframe and the frequently limited available documentation, difficult decisions had to be made. Other important areas could not be highlighted here, such as Southern Sudanese in Egypt and Ethiopia, Sudan government-controlled areas beyond Khartoum, western Equatoria, Upper Nile and the Nuba Mountains. All of these cases cry out for additional studies to be made. Such shortfalls in coverage and depth were unavoidable for the reasons reviewed here. For this particular study, the rationale for choosing the field sites is examined above. Other central research methodology decisions and techniques are listed here.

An early determination was made to highlight primary school activities for Southern Sudanese, since it was available to far more Southern Sudanese children than any other formal or non-formal educational offering. While secondary, tertiary and non-formal educational activities will be discussed in this case study, primary education is particularly featured here as it is the only widely shared (and thus comparable) educational experience during the current civil war years.

Four dominant themes concerning education for Southern Sudanese emerged during the research and analysis process. They will be highlighted in subsequent descriptions and analysis. The first is the co-ordination of educational action: how it has developed over time and where shortcomings exist. The second concerns the different school curriculum choices that have been made for separate populations of Southern Sudanese. The third is an examination of who is responsible for educating different populations of Southern Sudanese children and youth. The fourth concerns access to education and the quality of education that exists (as best as can be determined). The implications of decisions that have been made will be examined in all of these cases. In addition, other central education concerns – such as issues relating to teachers, the relevance of various educational offerings, the degree and nature of community participation and the roles that donors have (and have not) played – will be examined, but as they relate to one of these four principal themes.

The focus on specific education cases, the limited time at each field site and the general paucity of reasonable levels of information concerning educational work forced the research to emphasize qualitative research methodology during field interviews. While quantitative documentation was always gathered where it existed, an open question format was applied to address dominant themes and issues that surfaced both prior to and during interviews with informants. In addition, in nearly all cases key information about current and past education activities existed only in the memories of individuals. Recording this data was a consistent research concern. In support of this work, translators were carefully selected (when those who were interviewed were fluent in English, translators were not required): only recommended, experienced translators were employed.

Research and analysis work has tried to recognize and adapt to an array of constraints that have seriously affected most educational efforts during the current civil war in Sudan. Degrees of stability and instability

have limited or impeded much educational work and funding for education has been, in general, inconsistent and inadequate. Moreover, both field and documentary research in support of this case study has repeatedly highlighted the most recent education activities and conditions. Recollections and information about educational work taking place further back in time – five, 10, 15 and 20 years ago – are either difficult to detail or do not exist.

In addition, a prominent and striking characteristic of most of the documentation on educational programmes and projects that has been collected is their largely ahistorical nature. Descriptions of international agency efforts often contain little or no reference to the educational past. Information on the educational history of the people or area where the programme or project is taking place tends to be scant or nonexistent. Implicit in this tendency is a strong sense that little existed prior to the entrance of the particular education efforts that each document described. While in some instances this may well have been the case, it is frequently difficult to substantiate, except in areas where field research was carried out.

The unavoidable need to rely on international agencies – the United Nations as well as NGOs – for both logistical support and information carries with it a generally unintended and often difficult to delineate result. While such generous assistance is deeply and genuinely appreciated by those involved with this endeavour, it is also true that close contact with international agencies can influence assessments of their programme and project work and cultivate a sympathetic perspective of their efforts. On one hand, this may be quite understandable. Carrying out educational work in circumstances riven with instability and danger is difficult, generally laudable and sometimes heroic. On the other hand, describing the activities of internationals engaged in developing education for Southern Sudanese is not the primary purpose of this study.

All efforts have been made to present an independent and unbiased account of education for Southern Sudanese. As a result, significant efforts were consistently made to draw out the perspectives of others involved in education – generally those held by Southern Sudanese individuals and members of institutions – of pertinent issues and activities. For example, the issue of 'dependence' – the widespread international concern that humanitarian aid has created a Southern Sudanese population that is

dependant on outside support – is presented here as a debate, as some have argued that international institutions and individuals have exploited the situation by enriching their organizations while keeping Southern Sudanese ‘dependant’. In this way, some contend, international institutions and individuals are ‘dependant’ on Southern Sudanese as well.

In addition, where possible, efforts were made to visit schools and interview education officials who do not receive direct international support. Similarly, interviews with officials from local NGOs in southern and northern Sudan, and officials from various levels of the Government of Sudan as well as the SPLM, were actively sought and recorded. At the same time, no officials who were interviewed will be named here (although the agencies they worked for are stated where appropriate), in an effort to maintain the confidential nature of the research work. The confidentiality of all interview data was an important component of the research methodology because it allowed those who were interviewed to speak openly and without fear of negative repercussions following the interview.

Sharing information about the research was a consistent methodological component. In all interviews, the purposes and objectives of the case study were explained. Copies of the terms of reference for this case study were usually distributed. A limited number of copies of a previous report on education for Southern Sudanese were also distributed (Sommers, 2002). The lone exception to these efforts to share relevant documentation with Southern Sudanese, many of whom reported that information on education for Southern Sudanese was exceedingly scarce, took place during most visits to schools for displaced Southern Sudanese in Khartoum. In those cases, I was warned that Southern Sudanese who were found to possess such documents could create a confrontation with government authorities. Even though all necessary permits were obtained from the Government of Sudan, and high-ranking education officials were interviewed in the national and Khartoum State levels, there remained the possibility that other government officials might inquire where the person had received the documents and whether they had permission to receive them. Given the complex and decentralized government security system in Khartoum State, it was decided not to distribute the documents to most displaced Southern Sudanese who were interviewed. Issues relating to security concerns in Khartoum will be related in *Chapter 5*.



It was also important to appreciate and recognize the possibility that the severely underfunded nature of most educational programming might influence interview responses. A local education official, for example, might be afraid to “bite the hand that feeds them” by criticizing the actions of those actors (usually international agencies and their officials) whose largesse they either were seeking or already relied on. Efforts to ensure that the interview data remained reliable and valid in this regard were made by plainly stating in interviews that this research work is a case study of what has already taken place, is emphatically independent in its perspective, would only consider making unbiased recommendations at the end of its analysis and that interview data sources would remain confidential.

Finally, it is worth noting that a common response by Sudanese and international agency officials alike, after learning about this case study, was to highlight what they viewed as the tardy arrival of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). “Why did it take UNESCO 20 years to come here and ask us about education?”, a Southern Sudanese working for an international NGO asked. “Why is UNESCO not in southern Sudan?”, an international agency official inquired. “Why is UNESCO in Somalia, where insecurity is much worse, but not in southern Sudan?”, another Sudanese education official asked. “You people in UNESCO, do you really help?”, a head teacher in southern Sudan inquired. “I’ve never heard of UNESCO helping any schools in southern Sudan.” Such questions were frequent, regardless of the site visited or the officials interviewed. UNESCO’s scant involvement in Southern Sudanese education over the course of the recently concluded civil war, quite simply, attracted consistent attention. To its credit, the agency has recently decided to open field offices in Khartoum and Juba (UNESCO, 2005).

## Organization of the case study

Education of Southern Sudanese has been documented only partially over the years. The experiences of NGOs and UN agencies, and those of the emerging governmental structures with educational planning and management within southern Sudan, need to be recorded and analyzed. The same applies to the education offered in refugee communities and to the internally displaced in the north of Sudan. While some research has

been conducted on the provision of education to Southern Sudanese in particular locations, no comprehensive overview of planning and management of education for all Southern Sudanese has yet been written.

This study will attempt to provide this overview in the following way. *Chapter 2* will sketch the background of education and conflict in Sudan's past, and provide context for considering particular educational cases in subsequent chapters. *Chapter 3* will examine education within southern Sudan since 1983, highlighting educational models that have arisen in northern Bahr el Ghazal and eastern Equatoria. *Chapter 4* will explore refugee education and will feature the educational programming that has been developed by and for Southern Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda and the Kakuma refugee camps in north-western Kenya. *Chapter 5* will spotlight education for internally displaced Southern Sudanese residing in areas controlled by the Government of Sudan. This chapter will feature education for displaced Southern Sudanese in Khartoum. The concluding chapter, *Chapter 6*, will review central research findings and consider the implications of these findings for Sudan and from a global perspective.

## Chapter 2

# Background: occupation, conflict and education

Sudan's civil war in the south has inspired an outpouring of research and documentation. There have been so many dimensions to this tragedy: not only war but extensive deaths and casualties, famine, slavery, humanitarian action, human rights abuses, religion, oil and other natural resources, child soldiering, shifts in political alliances and momentum, overwhelming poverty and deprivation, and the largest population of forcibly displaced people in the world. But while war and its terrible after-effects have generally been well recorded, other central components of human endeavour, such as education, have not.

### **Two civil wars and a short interlude: a thumbnail sketch<sup>5</sup>**

Warfare and instability have plagued southern Sudan since 1955 – the year before independence arrived. In fact, civil war between the government in Khartoum and the south has been present since that time, save for a slice of relative peace separating the two civil wars: 1972-1983.

The initial rebellion began in the eastern Equatorial town of Torit, where Southern soldiers mutinied and at least 300 people, mostly Northerners, died. The rebellion began and intensified in 1958, when General Ibrahim Abboud seized power in a coup in Khartoum. His regime launched an effort to “accelerate ‘Islamization’ of the south through an aggressive proselytising campaign” (Prendergast *et al*, 2002: 9). Repression led some Southerners into exile as refugees in neighbouring countries.

Surviving leaders of the 1955 mutiny eventually emerged as an opposition military movement called *Anya-Nya* (‘snake poison’). The military battle was engaged by General Abboud and more than a half million

5. Much of this narrative was drawn from Prendergast (2002: 9-21).

Southerners fled the area and became refugees. Prendergast says that, by 1963, “there was full-fledged civil war” (2002: 9). In 1969 a second military coup in Khartoum brought General Jaafar al-Nimeiri to power, and in 1971 he began to make steps towards a peace accord. Under Colonel Joseph Lagu, who had seized authority of Anya-Nya himself and declared the formation of the southern Sudan Liberation Movement, peace negotiations eventually proceeded. The Addis Ababa Agreement was signed in March 1972. Southern Sudan had achieved a degree of autonomy from the national government and a degree of peace. Duffield *et al.* suggest that many Southerners did not ultimately find the agreement satisfactory: “The failure of the 1972 agreement to address the unequal and antagonistic relationship between north and south led to the resumption of war in 1983” (2000: 18).

Peace in the south, which had already begun to crumble, effectively came to an end in June 1983, when Nimeiri abrogated the Addis Ababa Agreement and declared an end to regional autonomy in the South. Nimeiri also officially transformed Sudan into an Islamic State, decreeing in September 1983 that Sharia, or Islamic law, would apply to all Sudanese. The government also “revived the Arabized-Islamised education system for all schools in Sudan”, which Southern Sudanese considered “a deliberate act of aggression towards their culture, values and languages” (UNICEF, 2001: 7). One third of all Sudanese were not Muslim, most of them living in the South.

The new Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), which eventually created a civilian counterpart, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), emerged as the chief military opponent of the new Islamic government in Khartoum, and the second civil war, which extends up to the time of this writing, began. By June 1989, the SPLA controlled “almost the entire south and was exerting considerable military pressure on the government”. Nimeiri had already been overthrown by another military coup in 1985, which was followed by a succession of unstable government coalitions led by Sadiq al-Mahdi. Prospects for peace looked reasonably promising. A cease-fire was announced.

Then, on 30 June 1989, Brig. General Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir seized power in Khartoum and cancelled all prior government agreements with the SPLA. Soon the SPLA faced considerable difficulties, losing its base in Ethiopia when the Mengistu regime collapsed in 1991, and then splitting into two antagonistic groups: one led by John Garang, an ethnic Dinka, and the other, called SPLA-United, led by Riak Machar, an ethnic

Nuer. Warring and raids then ensued between the two SPLA factions, displacing and killing thousands of civilians.

A host of military and political twists and turns ensued, with Southern civilians bearing the brunt of such battles. It also extended into the Nuba Mountains, where the government and SPLA first squared off in 1987 (de Waal, 2001: 130). The conflict there has been ferocious, and the 1992 jihad by government troops against SPLA-held areas of the Nuba Mountains was later termed “arguably genocidal” (de Waal, 2001: 131). Human rights abuses and atrocities have become a central characteristic of the conflict. While it has been asserted that “all parties to the conflict prey on the civilian population” (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1994a: 7), most international observers contend that the Government of Sudan’s attacks have been more extensive and devastating. It has also combined a diversity of tactics, including supporting Northern (and Southern) militias who attack Southern civilians. Some have not only killed and raped, looted and destroyed, but have also abducted women and children into slavery.

The war raged onwards, however, but began to ebb when a breakthrough meeting between al-Bashir and Garang took place in 2002. The road towards a peace accord continued while events in Darfur in the West, where a second civil rebellion already existed, erupted into outright warfare, displacing hundreds of thousands, leaving tens of thousands of civilians dead and leading many figures in the international community to consider the tactics of the Government of Sudan to be genocidal. Their tactics involving Janjaweed militia groups were also similar to those employed in the civil war in the south (Power, 2004: 62).

The final peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the SPLA was signed on 9 January 2005 (Lacey, 2005: A3). Three weeks after returning to Khartoum, amidst great fanfare, to become Sudan’s First Vice President on 9 July 2005, Garang met his untimely death on 30 July in a helicopter crash near New Site in southern Sudan (International Crisis Group 2005).

The proportion of school-age Southern Sudanese children receiving education is staggeringly low. And yet, a recent report suggests that the number of Southern Sudanese students actually more than doubled over the course of the current civil war. Luka Deng’s estimate of primary students in the pre-war years of 1980-1981 was 143,000. The primary school

population rose to approximately 318,000 students by 1999-2000 (Deng, 2003: 7). UNICEF and Africa Educational Trust (AET) estimated that there were 1.06 million primary school age Southern Sudanese children in 1999, meaning that 30 per cent of all school-age children were actually in school (UNICEF and AET, 2002: 3).

Amidst an array of horrors of this civil war, including an estimated 38,276 children conscripted into military forces and 34,909 abducted into slavery by militias on the government side between 1985 and 1999 (UNICEF 2000a: 141), the dramatic school enrolment increase during the civil war seems, at first glance, even more difficult to explain. Deng presents this finding as paradoxical, followed by a plea not to read too much into it. “This impressive increase in the level of access to primary education during the civil war in southern Sudan”, he writes, “should be taken with caution as the quality of such primary education is crucially important to provide a nuanced understanding” (Deng, 2003: 7-8).

The story of education for Southern Sudanese is full of such counterintuitive discoveries. Like the region itself, it is a rich and complex story, and sometimes does not seem, at first glance, to make much sense. In this chapter, the stories of education and civil war in southern Sudan will be tracked over time and briefly described. A sense of Sudan’s geography will also be introduced. The chapter will end with some outlines of the scope and character of education for Southern Sudanese since the current civil war began in 1983, before turning to specific cases of education in the three subsequent chapters.

## Northern and Southern Sudanese: dimensions of the landscape

Sudan is gigantic. It is Africa’s largest country in size: 2,505,813 sq. km (or 967,500 sq. miles). Much of it is geographically united; a huge flat plain containing the White and Blue Niles, which merge into the Nile River at the site of the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. The country’s population was thinly dispersed even when there was no war. Khartoum is at least 1,000 km away from 80 per cent of the country’s population (Allan, 2003: 1061).

In the decades-long conflict between Northern and Southern Sudanese, so much is contested. In terms of simple geography, this can be confusing.

Even though it is fairly clear, on a map at least, just where the ‘South’ of Sudan is (Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile, and Equatoria Provinces), Northern and Southern perspectives may paint a different picture. In some United Nations and government of Sudan documents, the ‘South’ merely refers to three government-held (or ‘garrison’) towns located below the north-south geographic divide: Wau, Malakal and Juba. At various times during the war, other government-held towns have been included, such as Torit and Kapoeta. On the other hand, from refugee camps or SPLA-held areas, those same government-held ‘garrison’ towns are considered part of the ‘North’, even though Juba, for example, is the largest southern city and is located in the South’s heartland.

The precise population of Sudan is difficult to estimate. The government listed it at just under 25 million following the 1993 census. Since this census took place while war raged in the south, it is necessarily inexact. The United Nations estimated the population to be just under 33 million in 2002 (Allan, 2003: 1,060). Prendergast (2002: 3) listed it at 36 million in 2002. Just how many Southern Sudanese inhabit other countries in the region is also difficult to estimate, particularly since it is unclear how many of them are refugees, refugee asylum seekers, illegal immigrants or economic migrants. A UNHCR official working on behalf of refugees in Egypt, for example, explained that while “I understand there are millions of Sudanese living in Egypt”, there are “9,000-10,000 Southern Sudanese refugees known to us”. UNICEF has estimated that approximately 5 million people live in southern Sudan (Brophy, 2003: 2-3).

For several years, and until recently, a common estimate was that Sudan had 4 million IDPs (significantly more than any other country in the world), including an estimated 1.8 million Southern Sudanese civilians. There were also approximately 442,500 refugees (Watch List, 2003: 2). With peace in southern Sudan now officially at hand, one might have assumed that these figures would have begun to decline. But the opposite has been the case: the number of Sudanese IDPs and refugees has instead spiralled upwards. The ongoing conflict in Darfur is the primary cause. Estimates of those Sudanese uprooted by the end of 2003 ran to 5 million IDPs and 600,000 refugees and asylum seekers (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2003a: 1). The numbers continue to rise: a 13 May 2005 report estimated that 1.86 million people from Darfur “are internally displaced

or have been forced to flee to neighbouring Chad” (*Integrated Regional Information Networks – IRIN news*, 2005: 2).

A backwards glance suggests that the seriousness of this situation has persisted for many years. One million Sudanese, for example, fled their country during the first decade of the current civil war in the south (1983-1993). Eighty-five per cent of all Southern Sudanese were forcibly displaced at least once between 1987 and 2002 (Save the Children UK *et al.*, 2002: 22). An estimated 2 million Southern Sudanese have died since the beginning of the recent civil war (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2003a: 1-2). Such astounding statistics are only estimates of course. Precise knowledge of the populations and activities of Southern Sudanese remains scant.

Given that the White Nile runs through southern Sudan and connects it to northern Sudan and Egypt, one might suspect that it might be a natural way to travel between northern and southern Sudan. But for most of Sudan’s history, this has not been the case. Among the central causes of historic separation between most Northerners and Southerners has been the presence of two swamps: the Machar and the enormous Sudd, which is Arabic for ‘barrier’ (Hoagland, 1979: 21). It was described in particularly dramatic terms by Moorehead (1960: 85):

“There is no more formidable swamp in the world than the Sudd. The Nile loses itself in a vast sea of papyrus ferns and rotting vegetation, and in that fetid heat there is a spawning tropical life that can hardly have altered very much since the beginning of the world; it is as primitive and as hostile to man as the Sargasso Sea.”

It is significant that the expanse and logistical difficulties that the Sudd presents are immediately connected to Moorehead’s depiction of Southern Sudanese in the following passage:

“[...] this was the thing that causes a basic uneasiness among all the white men who penetrated into south Sudan – the feeling that they were in a wilderness where life never progressed but simply turned over and over on itself in a timeless and aimless cycle [...] These effects were redoubled in the Sudd. Here there was not even a present, let alone a past; except on occasional islands of hard ground no men ever had lived or ever could live in this desolation of drifting



reeds and ooze, even the most savage of men. The lower forms of life flourished here in a mad abundance, for but black and white men alike the Sudd contained nothing but the threat of starvation, disease and death. In the wet season it covered an area as large as England” (Moorehead, 1960: 85-86)

Moorehead’s famous book, *The White Nile*, features the exploits of various outsized nineteenth century European explorers, soldiers and adventurers (most of whom were British) who searched for the source of the White Nile and inspired “the great age of Central African exploration” (Morehead, 1960: 5). Throughout, the author describes southern Sudan as vast, remote, primitive, hostile and thoroughly mysterious. It was a region where an explorer’s valour and courage were tested and very few friendships were ever made with the many peoples who lived there. Most of these tendencies and perspectives continued well into the period of British and Egyptian occupation and beyond, and helped influence both the stunted and uneven understanding and appreciation of Southern Sudanese and the development of education in southern Sudan.

## The identity debate

What does it mean to be a ‘Southerner’ or a ‘Northerner’ in today’s Sudan? Civil war in Sudan has routinely been described as a battle between Arab Muslims from the north and African Christians and ‘animists’ from the South. One source considers the population of Sudan to be 65 per cent Arab and 35 per cent African, and 70 per cent Muslim, 20-25 per cent followers of traditional religions, and 5-10 per cent Christian (Prendergast *et al.*, 2002: 5). All Southern Sudanese are considered Africans, and most belong to one of the latter two categories of religions. Yet Southerners have rebelled less because of their own religious identity than because of a shared resistance to becoming both ‘Muslim’ and ‘Arab’. It is equally imprecise to simply state that Southerners were enslaved by Northerners, because the slavers from the north and beyond enslaved Muslims from western Sudan in addition to ‘pagans’ from the south. They also did not enslave people from all southern regions equally.

One should wade into such an intensely heated and longstanding debate with considerable caution. As Deng (1995: 60) has noted: “The complex and intense history of the Sudan indicates that the country is

confused in its sense of identity and vision of its destiny". The issues considered here have helped cause and inflame not only civil wars but extensive distrust, a combination that will undoubtedly threaten steps towards peace that are, as of this writing, emerging. At the same time, examining the identity debate is necessary, because it is important to delineate who Southerners are and what they appear to have in common.

### *Arabs and other Northerners*

Deng D. Akol Ruay, a Southerner, sees the south's isolation as a central cause of its separation from the north. Ruay considers it an "accident of colonial history" which caused southern Sudan to "become an integral part of the Republic of the Sudan" (Ruay, 1994: 11). After describing southern Sudan's remoteness and expanse, Ruay turns to "the political context". The Republic of the Sudan, Ruay explains, "is made up of two distinct parts: the north which is Arabized and Islamicized and the south which is African and largely traditionalist" (Ruay, 1994: 12). The term 'Arabized' is particularly significant here, because what is thought to be an 'Arab' has a peculiarly Sudanese definition.

While statistics issued by Republic of Sudan state that Sudan is principally comprised of what it terms the Black (52 per cent) and Arab (39 per cent) ethnic groups (United States Embassy of the Republic of Sudan, 2004b: 1), considering either of these categories as 'ethnicities' is open to considerable discussion. Regarding the Sudanese Arabs (differences between 'Black' Sudanese, particularly those from the south, will be considered shortly), for example, the *Historical dictionary of the Sudan* suggests that becoming a Sudanese 'Arab' is at least partly a matter of choice:

"The broader definition of an Arab [in Sudan] is a matter of cultural self-awareness and self-identity, rather than strict terminology. Perhaps a third of Sudanese are 'Arabs' in the general sense and claim descent through the Ja'aliyin, Khazraj, or Juhanya [...] Arab groups."

The sense that being an 'Arab' in Sudan is a claimed identity is supported by Idris (2001: 133), among many others, who states that "in the north, many people produced genealogies that tied them to Arab descent. Northerners who invented their imagined Arab and Islamic identity considered their cultural norms and practices superior to those of the non-Muslims and non-Arabs".

At the same time, Idris notes that: “Being a Muslim in the Sudan did not protect many Muslims from western Sudan for example from being enslaved” (2001: 134), a point of particular significance to the people of Darfur, who are currently involved in a war with the Government of Sudan and have endured extensive forced displacement, deaths and casualties as a result. Having, or claiming, Arab descent mattered, and Muslim converts living outside the centres of power along the Nile became a kind of non-Arab, Muslim class. As African Rights (1995: 5) notes:

“The North-South divide leaves the marginal people of the north – such as the Nuba, the Ingessana, and more than thirty non-Arab groups in Darfur – in an uncomfortable, liminal position. These are, for the most part, ‘Northerners’ by geography but people who do not share equal access to the resources of the State.”

The oft-mentioned dual processes of Islamization and Arabization, in other words, appears to have been distinctly uneven: There are many more Muslims than Arabs in northern Sudan.

Government of Sudan web sites describe a kind of fortunate racial mixing and cultural acceptance within the borders of Sudan. The Embassy of the Republic of Sudan in London’s web site (2004: 1), for example, notes that Sudan’s geographic location, sharing borders with “nine African countries of which two are Afro-Arab,” allowed Sudan to ‘naturally’ become “a zone of interaction between the Hamitic Arabs and the Negro Africans. This blending resulted in Sudan’s many different ethnic groups and unique cultures”. The web site for the United States Embassy of the Republic of Sudan (2004a: 2), supports this accent on Sudan as a cultural crossroads and location for widespread racial mixing: “Sudan received and continued to receive people from all parts of the globe, thus becoming [a] melting pot for different races and cultures and, simultaneously, a passage for thought and religions between Africa and the outer world since early times”. In both web site descriptions of Sudan’s geography and history, there is no mention of civil war during the post-independence period.

The implication of this cumulative picture is clear: As many government officials of the Republic of Sudan stated during interviews in Khartoum regarding Sudanese from the south and the north, “We are all Sudanese.” Southerners, they maintain, are not separate from Northerners.

On the contrary: They represent two components of a single Sudanese identity. Sudan government officials explained that this emphasis on unity is one of the chief reasons why the term ‘IDP’ (for Internally Displaced Persons) strikes them as inaccurate and improper, if not offensive. “Even the President or the Vice-President” of the Government of Sudan, a high-ranking government official explained, “will say that we don’t like the word ‘IDP’ because we are all Sudanese. If you’re from Juba [in southern Sudan], you can move to any place in Sudan. It is your right. So there’s no reason to call [Southerners] ‘IDPs’”.

Again, one finds no mention of war, famine, flight or resistance in this depiction. People who are properly considered IDPs have been forcibly displaced from their homes and communities of origin due to war, famine, human rights violations or a related catastrophe, and sometimes due to a combination of these.<sup>6</sup>

Although the Government of Sudan lays considerable emphasis on unity and freedom within Sudan, it also seeks to maintain a society with a principally Islamic character. This elemental tension inherent within the Government of Sudan’s ideology is suggested in the Embassy of the Sudan in the United States’ web site description (2004: 3) of “Religious diversity in Sudan”. While allowing that “Islam and Christianity are the two major religions in Sudan,” the passage also explains that:

“Islamic Sharia [or Law] and customs are the sources of legislation and non-Muslims are governed by their own laws in personal issues. The law guarantees full freedom of worshipping and equality of all religions.”

While asserting the presence of religious diversity and equality in Sudan, this description also infers a hierarchical structure. If Islamic law and customs inform government laws, then followers of other religions have freedoms that chiefly pertain to private concerns and separate religious worship. For in public life, the system of governance would likely assert the dominance of Islamic Sharia. The implications of this dominance

6. The United Nations’ *Guiding principles on internal displacement* (1998: 1) define IDPs as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border”.

have had a strong influence over education issues for Southern Sudanese, and will be detailed later in this work.

### *The Southern constellation*

The critique of many if not most Southerners diverges from the Government of Sudan's view that all Sudanese share important similarities and experiences. Descriptions from Southerners (in addition to a considerable number of international observers) assert that Southerners are a separate and distinct cultural, geographic, religious and historic entity. African Rights (1995: 5) states simply:

“The distinctiveness of northern and southern Sudan is clear and incontrovertible. ‘Typical’ Northern Sudanese Arabs from the Nile Valley have a strikingly different appearance from most Southern Sudanese, a different religion, language and culture.”

It is indeed a fact that most Muslims live in the north while relatively few reside in the South. It is also beyond dispute that the south is not ethnically homogeneous. The broad grouping of peoples who form the Southern identity include the Dinka, who are the largest of the Southern peoples: perhaps one tenth of all Sudanese are Dinka and “allegedly they numbered two million or more in 1983” (Lobban *et al.*, 2002: 79). No precise estimates exist to certify their size (or that of any other Southern group) at the present time. Other groups of people who will be among those mentioned here are, within the northern areas of southern Sudan, the Nuer and the Shilluk, and the Bari and Toposa further south, in Equatoria. Another prominent group is the Nuba who reside in the Nuba Mountains.<sup>7</sup>

What appears to matter most in the gathering of a Southern Sudanese identity among such a large and culturally and linguistically diverse assemblage of peoples is their broadly shared non-Arab and non-Muslim characteristics. Even more than that, however, it is their shared resistance to the advance of what is often considered Arabization and Islamization

7. Taken together, southern Sudan contains what Holt and Daly (2000: 3) consider “a bewildering array of ethnic groups and languages,” which has been illuminated in different ways by various sources. Wai (1973: 9-10), for example, categorizes Southern ethnic groups as follows: Nilotes (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Anuak, Burun, Bor Balanda, Jur, Shilluk Luo, and Acholi); Nilo-Hamites (Bari, Mundari, Nyangwara, Pojulu, Kakwa, Kuku, Nyepu, Lokoya, Luluba, Latoko, Lopit, Ligo, Toposa, Donyiro, and Jiye); and the ‘Sudanic tribes’ (Azande, Ndogosere, Moru-Madi, and Bongo-Baka).

from the north. This would include their collective and historic resistance to slavery, economic domination, real and perceived manipulations, and sheer neglect. "For the past hundred years," Lako (1993: 16) asserts, "the history of the southern Sudan can be seen as a continuing process of resistance to the various alien invaders, beginning with their appearance in the middle of the nineteenth century". Deng (1995: 69) goes further. The "southern identity of resistance" drew strength from resisting the "imposition of the northern perspective" of "Islamization and Arabization" (1995: 492). Differences between Northerners and Southerners have been "confirmed, reinforced, and deepened by successive regimes over the past two centuries" (1995: 494).

Why does a case study on education concern itself so heavily with the issue of identities? Resistance lies at the core of the Southern Sudanese identity and remains a prominent and visceral theme in education. Identity is directly connected to considerations of curriculum and language of instruction. Learning in English instead of Arabic and following a curriculum that is not the Islamic curriculum developed and endorsed by the Government of Sudan in Khartoum is a distinct and important form of Southern identity formation in addition to political resistance and even nation building. Attending a school that is either a Sudanese 'government' school or one of many non-government schools underscores the significance of who has access to and responsibility for education for Southern Sudanese. In these and related ways, education and Southern identity formation are closely linked. Accordingly, understanding Sudan's identity debate is a critical component to understanding education concerns for Southern Sudanese.

## Tracking education and conflict in modern Sudanese history

The arrival of foreigners into southern Sudan has been almost always jarring, frequently traumatic and sometimes catastrophic for Southern Sudanese. The first significant advances of both Northerners and foreigners into southern Sudan took place in the nineteenth century and were largely inspired by the Egyptian thirst for slaves, ivory and other exploitable resources. Slavery remains an institution in the Sudan. Given the raw exploitation of the south since the onset of interactions with non-Southerners, the often intense animosity and profound distrust that many Southerners have felt towards Sudanese from the north may be understood.

Other trends originated at or near the unfortunate beginnings of Southern interactions with Northerners and foreigners, including: the forced conscription of Southerners into armies; the lack of development of southern Sudan; differences among Southern peoples in the character and intensity of interactions with non-Southerners; and the connection of religion to both conflict and education. Throughout most of the recently ended civil war, Southerners did nearly all of their fighting against other Southerners. Relatively few Northern soldiers have been directly involved in combat. The ongoing underinvestment in education and other primary forms of development in southern Sudan by both Northerners and foreigners persists. Religion, particularly the advancement (or imposition) of Islam into Southern lives, has been a central cause of conflict and distress. Its connections to and influence on educational issues extends back to the creation of formal schools by mostly British Christian missionaries and continues to have an impact on current concerns such as the appropriate curriculum and language of instruction for Southern students.

What follows is a brief review of Southern Sudanese history, presented as sequential epochs, with particular attention being paid to the emergence of education as an intentionally underdeveloped component of colonial expansion.

### *Before the British (1820-1898)*

In 1820, the armies of an Albanian named Mohammad Ali, who served the Ottoman Empire as its Viceroy in Egypt, invaded and swiftly conquered much of northern Sudan. The Embassy of the Republic of Sudan in London speculates that “It appears that Muhammad Ali invaded Sudan mainly in the hope of obtaining gold and black men to enlist in his army, which he intended to use in his schemes against his own master, the Ottoman Sultan” (2004: 4). At any rate, in 1839, a Turkish frigate captain named Salim received orders from Mohammad Ali to explore the White Nile by boat. It was an objective that had “defeated [Roman Emperor] Nero’s centurions in the only other official expedition ever to have attempted to discover the sources of the White Nile” (Gray, 1961: 1). Captain Salim succeeded where the Romans had failed nearly two millennia earlier. He managed to break through the Sudd and reach the Southern Sudanese outpost of Gondokoro, far up the river. As Richard Gray writes, “the outside world suddenly discovered a navigable waterway stretching far into the unknown interior” (Gray, 1961: 1).

Salim's "lunge deep into central Africa" (Gray, 1961: 1) proved that the region was now accessible from the north. It set in motion a series of events that forever changed southern Sudan and marked, Douglas Johnson asserts, "the beginning of the North-South divide in the Sudan" (2003: 4). The 'Turco-Egyptian' era (also known as the *Turkiyya*) was marked by Egyptian overlords bent on expanding their empire and extracting resources and soldiers in the process. This caused what Johnson considered a kind of domino effect: "The two most significant developments contributing to the North-South divide were the impoverishment of some areas of the northern Sudan through new forms of taxation and landownership, which then contributed to the dramatic expansion of slave-raiding and slave-owning" (Johnson, 2003: 4-5). Moreover, "since the slave population in the north was drawn very largely from the southern Sudan, Johnson concludes that "in the popular mind [in northern Sudan, that is] slaves and [Southern Sudanese] 'blacks' were synonymous". Even though "not all Southern peoples were affected" by the slaving industry, and "some benefited from collaboration" with the invaders, the south had nonetheless essentially become "the state's exploitable hinterland" (2003: 6) and its inhabitants were viewed as a distinctly inferior race of people.

From the outset of these interactions between Northerners and Southerners, then, one can see elements of Northern and Southern perspectives being developed. Even though the slave trade was instigated by foreigners, Northern Sudanese (as well as Southern collaborators) were involved in slaving raids into the south, began to take slaves themselves and evidently began to consider Southerners as lesser people.<sup>8</sup>

The period known as the *Mahdiyya* (1881-1898)<sup>9</sup> is hailed in the north as a time when (Northern) Sudanese overthrew their foreign rulers

8. Beshir has hastened to assert that "there was nothing unique about the Sudan slave trade except that it started as domestic slavery and turned into gang slavery to supply the European demand" (1968: 11). This statement is curious because it fails to mention the Turco-Egyptian regime's strong desire for slaves. But then Beshir clarifies: "Many of the 'Arab' slave traders" actually "depended on capital provided by European creditors" (1968: 12). However, this second statement does not seem to erase the Turco-Egyptians' direct involvement in slavery – it only suggests that it was lucrative and also involved people from beyond Africa and the Middle East. Beshir also mentions that the institution of slavery existed in Sudan (and beyond) at local levels prior to the coming of the Turks and Egyptians in 1820. Slavery in Sudan "was part of the structure of the societies of the North and the south whether these were Muslim or pagan, Arab or negro" (1968: 11).
9. Daly (1993: 3) states these dates for this period, while Johnson (2003: 6) suggests a slightly shorter period: 1883-1898.



and established a state government ruled by Sudanese themselves. It was led by Muhammad Ahmad Ibn el-Sayyid Abdullah, considered the saviour or *Mahdi*. The Mahdi himself was both a nationalist and a spiritual leader, and a messianic quality is attributed to him. Describing him as a captivating speaker and man of “extraordinary personal magnetism”, Moorehead relates that:

“He was a man possessed. [The Prophet] Mohammed had promised that one of his descendants would one day appear and reanimate the faith, and Abdullah now declared, with an unshakable conviction, that he himself was that man. His hatred of Egyptians was intense” (Moorehead, 1960: 207).

The Mahdi’s forces eventually routed the Anglo-Egyptian forces (which contained large numbers of Sudanese troops) at El Obeid, captured Khartoum (killing the famed Briton, Lord Gordon, in the process), and established a government in 1885. Over time, Daly (1993: 4) notes, “the Mahdiyya assumed the quality of a nationalist myth, its chief actors the mantles of patriotic heroism, and its ideology of xenophobia and Islamic rectitude became an exclusive heritage of the North”.

As may be expected, the role of Southerners in this revolutionary epoch is disputed. Johnson addresses this issue in the following way:

“The Mahdiyya is now often interpreted in Sudanese history as an early form of Sudanese nationalism, and the presence of Southern Sudanese in the army (and therefore in some parts of the administration) of the Mahdist state is represented as evidence of the truly nationalist aspirations of the movement. This is to misread the Mahdiyya through modern spectacles. Racial attitudes in the north remained unchanged from the Turkiyya. In many ways the Mahdist state developed its own form of internal colonialism” (1993: 6-7).

What matters for our study here is that the nineteenth century experiences prior to the British colonial period laid the groundwork for North-South divisions in Sudan, an extensive slave trade and the development of Northern armies based largely on extracting men from the south, as well as for a strong sense of separation between two distinct sets of regions and peoples. It is also important to note that the seat of government and the centre of a broad regional economy was located in

the north, while the south was exceedingly vulnerable, degraded and merely considered exploitable hinterland. The coming of Anglo-Egyptian rule at the very end of the nineteenth century institutionalized this manifestly uneven relationship.

*Britain's lasting footprint (1899-1955)*

From the outset, the British adventurers and colonialists entering southern Sudan saw themselves as a fundamentally different kind of interloper from their Arab predecessors. They arrived bent on eradicating slavery and bringing 'civilization' to Southerners. But from the perspective of Southerners, their behaviour proved strikingly similar to the slavers they sought to replace:

"The British officers commanding patrols of Sudanese soldiers in the south frequently declared to the peoples whose submission they sought that the 'new' government was not the same as the 'old' government which had burned Southern villages, stolen Southern cattle, and enslaved Southern people in the past. Appearances were often against them; especially when, in response to local defiance, or even local indifference, the troops of the new government burned villages, seized cattle as 'fines', and carried off war captives and hostages to distant prisons or for conscription in the army, all in the name of establishing government authority" (Johnson, 2003: 10).

A second element arising from the literature by and about early British visitors to southern Sudan is that while their views of Southern Sudanese may have been sincerely compassionate regarding the Southerners' victimization from slavery, their regard for Southern Sudanese cultures and traditions appeared to have been, in general, low. Lord Samuel White Baker, the first Briton to visit the region in the late nineteenth century, certainly set a precedent in this regard. Referring largely to what now comprises southern Sudan (in addition to central and northern Uganda), Baker declared that:

"The ethnology of Central Africa is completely beyond my depth. The natives not only are ignorant of writing, but they are without traditions – their thoughts are as entirely engrossed by their daily wants as those of animals; thus there is no clue to the distant past; history has no existence. This is much to be deplored ..." (1866: 315).

Observations by subsequent visitors to southern Sudan retained a similar viewpoint. Domville Fife described the people he saw during his travels to Kordofan, Bahr el Ghazal and the Nuba Mountains as “some of the most curious, revolting and still savage races of mankind” (1927: 17).

Viewing African societies as ‘uncivilized’ and resting at a lower plane of development was hardly an unusual phenomenon during the era described here. At the same time, the reality is more complicated and has considerable bearing on our discussion. For beyond the suggestion of cultural hierarchies, there is a strong sense in British colonial reactions and policy that ‘primitive’ Southern cultures, however ‘barbaric’, were also ‘pure’. Accordingly, they should be ‘preserved’ and not infected by civilizing activities such as Christian conversion and Western education. As Stevens suggested about the Nuer and Dinka of southern Sudan following her stay there in 1910:

“[...] as civilisation lays insidious hands on these savages, their needs, at present so grandly few, will multiply; their life, now so simple, will become complex. The thin end of the wedge is already inserted [...] Missionaries prepare the way for the trader. Education creates other needs and desires; the Serpent will offer the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and these naked Adams will begin to wear clothes, incidentally needing the wherewithal to pay for them [...] Poor savage! I am glad that I saw him in the dignity of barbarism!” (1913: 257 58).

This was not merely an antiquated viewpoint from a distant era. More than a kernel of this sentiment can be found in the emergence of British policy regarding Southerners in the post-Mahdiyya period in the Sudan. Education was thought unnecessary, with minimal exceptions, for most of southern Sudan. Limiting the spread of education would limit threats to local customs and so, in the view of British colonial administrators, make governance easier. At the same time, the British colonial rulers allowed Christian missionaries to set up schools in southern Sudan, even though they were concerned that mission education would “divorce students from the customs of their own tribe, thus reducing their effectiveness as tribal leaders” (Johnson, 2003: 15). This in turn could limit the utility of local rulers to help them govern and facilitate British trade. Thus one can see a fundamental ambivalence underlying British education policy in southern Sudan during the post-Mahdiyya period.

It has since been argued that this ambivalence persists, to some degree, to the present day. During an interview for this study, a veteran southern Sudan education expert echoed Stevens' view in 1913: "The odd Western aid worker, often the most committed" still contends that "schooling leads to modernity, which threatens African culture". Those who believe this "are essentially saying, 'Let's have schools [in southern Sudan], but not everywhere, because it will change people and make them modern, and if that happens, they won't be African anymore'".

What matters to our discussion here are three concerns. First, while such reflections on tensions between cultural purity and education have been difficult to widely substantiate in the current era (perhaps because it is not a view that one would readily admit), it is a fact that access to education in southern Sudan remains exceedingly uneven. Second, the unbalanced access to formal education prevents many pastoralists and other Southern Sudanese from having the opportunity simply to *decide* whether or not their children might attend school. Third, it is clear that the generally low and unequal availability of formal school facilities, in addition to a number of other trends that will be outlined below, dates back to the dawn of Condominium era (as the post-1898 British-Egyptian regime came to be called).

Given the inauspicious beginnings of the Condominium's Native Administration in southern Sudan, it is perhaps not surprising that they continue to receive very little credit for their efforts and considerable blame for exacerbating – indeed, in the view of some in northern Sudan, virtually creating – the North-South divide in Sudan. The British record on education is a central component of this unfortunate legacy, as were their decisions to invest far more heavily in the north than the south and ensure that the north and the south remained isolated from each other. Unlike the north, which received the lion's share of British attentions and investments during the Condominium era, the south was not so much colonized and developed as much as intentionally isolated and lightly administered – and, as its earlier occupiers had also done, viewed as a resource for military manpower. Much of southern Sudan was also, by the mid-1920s, considered a 'Closed District', where "the movement of non-native persons into the South" (Johnson, 2003: 12) was regulated and limited.

### *Eight lasting educational trends*

Education in southern Sudan, under such circumstances, was destined to be an afterthought at best. Eight major education trends arising from this period have influenced subsequent events and will be described here.

The first is the direct connection between Christianity and education. As Garvey-Williams and Mills observed: “Formal education in [southern Sudan] was introduced almost entirely by Christian missionaries who founded schools and provided many of the facilities” (1976: 23). Garvey-Williams and Mills were among the relative minority of analysts who retained a degree of empathy for the British working in the south regarding this issue: “Although [British] officials were not unsympathetic towards the spread of education, the resources available to the government at the time were quite inadequate for the establishment of a state system of schools” (1976: 23). Garvey-Williams and Mills’ perspective of the attitudes of British administrators regarding education for Southern Sudanese does not seem to be widely shared.

The lack of sympathy towards the British during this period, in fact, is telling. Viewed from the ground, many of the British administrators in southern Sudan during the Condominium period, particularly the so-called ‘bog barons’, developed a compassionate view of the Sudanese they worked with. These British district officials learnt local languages, remained in an area for years at a time, and “closely identified themselves with the people they ruled” (Collins, 1984: 12-13). “So long as they kept the peace in their district and spent as little money as possible”, Collins observed, “the Bog Barons were left alone by the central government” (1984: 13). At the same time, however, the limited investment for the Native Administration in the South and the ‘Southern Policy’ that informed it suggest that paying for much education in the south was never seriously considered by British authorities in Khartoum. Until late in the Condominium period, as independence for Sudan grew on the horizon, “the educational policy of the Sudan government in the south was naively simple: Leave it to the missionaries” (Collins, 1983: 198).

The combination of low investment in education for Southerners (and thus exceedingly limited access to education) and a reliance on Christian missionaries has attracted derision. The prolific Northern Sudanese scholar, Beshir, for example, has argued that “conversion to Christianity was [the

missionaries’] only justification for educational activity” (1969: 121). A subsequent critique by Beshir blamed the Christian missionaries and the British Administrators who supported their work in education for, among other things: “excluding the Northern Sudanese Arab and Moslem culture”; promoting “new and different concepts and values based on Christianity, different from those in the [Muslim] North”; dividing education in the south “between the missionaries each with its own sphere of influence”; and having such limited resources at their disposal that they were “naturally unable to extend educational facilities to the same extent [as] among the northern population” (Beshir, 1977: 16). Beshir goes on to argue that “education in the south contributed to the development of attitudes and concepts hostile to the culture of the north”, which planted “seeds of separation” that eventually became a cause for civil war in the South. Beshir also hails the simultaneous introduction of Arabic into all southern schools by Northern Sudanese administrators beginning in 1953 and the subsequent expulsion of Christian missionaries (1977: 17).

Deng effectively supports Beshir’s contention that Christian missionaries aimed to change the views of Southerners:

“The premise of Christian missionary education was that before the advent of Christianity and the enlightenment that accompanied it, the people were immersed in the abyss of intellectual, moral, and spiritual darkness or emptiness. Christian teachings promised to provide the remedy and the path to salvation” (1995: 207).

However, Deng directly disagrees with Beshir’s suggestion that the seeds of civil rebellion came from the British or, for that matter, any other set of foreigners:

“Northerners mostly dwell on the separatist policies of the British and especially the encouragement of a southern identity based on traditional systems with the modern influence of Christianity and Western culture. Their remedy is to try to undo this history through Arabization and Islamization, to remove the Christian Western influence, and to integrate the country along the lines of the northern model. What they do not realize is that traditional identity and Christian Western influence have combined to consolidate and strengthen a modern southern identity of resistance against Islamization and

Arabization. Forced assimilation is no longer possible, if it ever was” (1995: 205).

According to this view, one that my field research suggested was widespread among Southerners, the missionaries’ combination of Christian conversion and education did not create a sense of separation from the north. It only strengthened a growing sense of separateness that was already present there.

A second major educational trend was its exceptionally poor quality. This was largely intended. In general, Collins argues that while children “should first be taught to read and write [...] most missionaries agreed that a literary education was dangerous” (1983: 199). Instead, the broader purpose of education was “meant to [help] prepare the way to the Christian religion” (1983: 200). Sconyers notes that in 1945, after decades of education work led by missionaries, “the goals of missionaries remained essentially what they had been: evangelization and, secondarily, as much (or little) education as was required by the Government as the condition for their continued subsidy” (1978: 151-152). Tensions between British administrators and missionaries over education never seemed to subside: “The refusal to provide education unless it was accompanied by religious instruction remained a major disagreement between government and missionaries throughout the 1928-1946 period and beyond” (Sconyers, 1978: 144). Bermingham and Collins sum up the tensions in the following way: “The Government wanted Southerners educated to become agents of the Administration and later leaders of their people”. On the other hand, “the missionary societies were in the southern Sudan to evangelise, to teach the Word of Jesus Christ, [and] to convert the Africans to Christianity” (1984: 207-208). Indeed, Sconyers suggests that the government requirement to allow a student to remain in school even if parents did not want their child to attend Bible class “must have been honoured more in the breach than in the practice” (1984: 207-208). The conflict over the purpose of education was never resolved.

Sconyers also notes that the components of the education system (if one could even call it a system) were weak:

“‘bush’ [schools] or outschools providing very basic instruction in literary skills, [were] often criticized as being nothing but catechism centres; next were the elementary vernacular schools where the

children from the bush schools were taught in the local vernacular [in addition to rudimentary vocational skills]; the final step in the south were the intermediate [something akin to post-primary] schools. In addition to this foundation system, there were trade schools and teacher training schools” (1984: 127-128).

Between 1929 and 1945, the number of bush schools grew to 388. Elementary vernacular schools reached 57. There was no growth in the number of intermediate schools: only four in 1929 and no more by 1945. No trade schools existed after 1932, and there were only four teacher training schools by 1945. The first secondary school in southern Sudan was not founded until 1948 (Garvey-Williams and Mills, 1976: 23). Yet, Sconyers warns that “the steady growth in the number of [bush and vernacular] schools should not be interpreted as steady improvement” (1984: 128). Most of the teaching was performed by European and American missionaries who lacked any formal teacher training. In addition, the expansion of schools did not significantly expand the number of teachers. Sconyers relates a poignant example of this trend, which he calls the “thinning of the missionary presence in the schools” (1984: 129). In the Church Missionary Society schools, the teacher-student ratio declined from 1:74 in 1928 to 1:300 in 1944.

A third trend was generally poor co-ordination within the school ‘system’. British administrators may have insisted on the maintenance of some sort of ‘system’, but their limited funding, regulations, inspections and overall management of the missionary schools made it nearly impossible. This was especially the case because church missionaries competed with each other for influence. A curious aspect of the Condominium period in the south was that the Catholic Verona Fathers, “of Italian peasant stock” (King, 1973: 29), dominated missionary activity. British officials “had doubts about [their] effectiveness in teaching English to Africans” and relations between the two groups were frequently tense. The predominant Protestant groups, the British Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) and, secondarily, the American Presbyterian Mission, generally had a much more limited presence in southern Sudan. Competition over geographic spheres of influence for each of the missions was fierce, even after British government officials attempted to formally delineate the extent of these spheres. Collins notes that these efforts had little or no influence over missionary activities: “Although there were thrusts



and counterthrusts by both Protestants and Catholics, the Italian Catholics, who far outnumbered the British Protestants, were generally on the offensive, while the British Protestants defended their turf with vigilance and righteous indignation” (1983: 225). There appeared to be only one major issue where co-ordination existed: an agreement by missionaries from different churches and the British government officials to use and adapt curricula developed in British colonial Uganda as the “African model for curriculum development and school activities suitable for the Southern Sudanese” (1983: 212). At the same time, the separate organization and work of education carried out by competing missionary societies can be seen as early ‘islands’ of education.

A fourth trend was selective access. In general, government policies “tended to discourage, rather than encourage, education in some areas of the southern Sudan, especially among pastoralist people” (Johnson, 2003: 15). There was a tendency for mission schools and education to assume greater significance “in the more sedentary communities”, Western Bahr al-Ghazal and parts of Equatoria in particular (Johnson, 2003: 15). Johnson notes that the trend was particularly clear in Equatoria, where it was “far more common for the sons of chiefs in Equatoria to be educated than in any other part of southern Sudan” (2003: 15). Two important exceptions to this trend are useful to note, however. First, the “longest established school in the pastoralist regions was the CMS school at Malek, in Bor District, founded in 1905” (Johnson, 2003: 15). The other exception was the region’s first secondary school at Rumbek, founded in 1948. Both of these schools were located in Dinka areas and educated some of the most significant Dinka leaders following independence. Many prominent political leaders from Equatoria were similarly educated in mission schools.

A fifth trend was the pronounced tendency for boys, and not girls, to attend school. It has already been mentioned that British government officials largely wanted the sons of chiefs to attend schools. In addition, British government officials also wanted to offer school to a relative handful of Southern Sudanese boys, largely to prepare them to serve in clerical positions (Johnson, 2003: 15). At the same time, “the education of girls was not central to the issue of educational development in the southern Sudan.” (Collins, 1983: 239). Collins notes some of the factors that limited the enrolment of girls in schools: “tribal customs, ways of living, and the prejudices of older missionaries who did not favour coeducation”

(1983: 239). Low enrolment figures for girls in southern schools persisted across the Condominium era.

A sixth trend was resistance in many parts of southern Sudan to attending school. This is a complex issue to decipher, because it not always clear whether Sudanese were resisting education or the emphatically evangelizing nature of nearly all of the education that was available. There was also a tendency for other suspicions about education to surface as well. King notes, for example, that the Dinka “seem to have had a reluctance which came from associating going to school with becoming an ‘Arab’ or a Northerner” (1973: 26). The Nuer appear to have been particularly resistant to attending schools, while the Azande in Ekuatoria, on the other hand, “always appeared eager and receptive to western education” (King, 1973: 28). This is the only educational trend that does not appear to have extended into the era of Sudanese independence. King, for example, observes that by the early post-independence years, Dinka students “were providing three-quarters of the intermediate and secondary school population” in southern Sudan (1973: 27).

The seventh trend was controversy over language of instruction. Particularly because Arabic was the official language and language of school instruction in the north, selecting the official language for southern Sudan (and the primary language of instruction) was not an insignificant decision. A language conference was held at Rajaf in 1928. Collins noted that:

“In many ways the question of the official language for the southern Sudan was the single most important issue in the history of the south during the Condominium. Upon the decision as to which world language, Arabic or English, would become the official medium of instruction and communication rested the future of the upper Nile basin. Political issues have an ephemeral life. Security and frontiers are imposed and adjusted to circumstances. Tropical diseases are cured. Language is forever. The issue was momentous.” (1983: 219).

The conference concluded that English would be “promoted as a lingua franca and a necessary skill for advancement in government service. Arabic, and even the use of common Arabic terms, were to be discouraged” (Holt and Daly, 2000: 119). To some degree, the significance of this pronouncement was understood by the decision-makers. As

Sconyers observed: “The exclusion of Arabic and other northern influences was seen by the British not as divisive but as strengthening the fibre and sense of group identity of the south which had always been distinct from the north” (1978: 206). But they could not have realized how lasting the reverberations from their 1928 decision would be.

An eighth trend arose from the growing significance of dramatically lower levels of investment in education in the south when compared to the north. It has previously been noted that education in southern Sudan during the Condominium era received consistently minimal funding. As Collins summarized: “For fifty years education in the south had been done on the cheap” (1983: 244). But what grew in significance over the course of this era was how the south remained alarmingly far behind the development of education in the north (Beshir, 1969: 187). By the mid-1940s, British officials sought to shift their policy regarding southern Sudan towards preparing Southern Sudanese “to stand up for themselves as equal partners with the northerners in the Sudan of the future” (Beshir, 1969: 243). Investment in education was increased, but the results were only marginally better. “The decades of earlier neglect”, Johnson concludes, “meant that there were few Southerners experienced in modern forms of administration and commerce when independence came in 1956” (2003: 15). While education for Northern Sudanese attracted far greater amounts of investment and generated considerably higher levels of quality and access, Sconyers sums up the paltry record of education during the Condominium era as involving “less than 300 missionaries teaching a few thousand children from a population of two to three million”, and adding that “most of these [school]children never went past the first six years and then returned to their tribes to forget most of that to which they had been exposed” (1978: 165-166).

Gazing back at five decades of the Condominium period, half a century since it came to a close, it is striking how this pre-independence era continues to deeply influence education in southern Sudan. The pronounced connection between religion and education in both the north and much of the south, the scant availability and abysmal quality of nearly all of the education and the dramatically higher levels of educational quality and rates of access in the north, the rise of isolated ‘islands’ of education, the decidedly low levels of co-ordination between these education ‘islands’, the adoption of foreign curricula for use in southern Sudanese schools, the

emergence of politicized elites in southern Sudan arising from areas where education was available, the low enrolment of girls as a persistent challenge, the debilitating and divisive battle over whether English or Arabic should be the primary language of instruction – this river of trends and tendencies dates back a century, yet has retained its potency and significance as it courses through Southern Sudanese education right to the present day.

A final series of events close to the end of the Condominium period cemented that era's profound influence over education in southern Sudan. With the end of British influence and independence on the horizon, decisions were made as early as 1947 to allow Arabic to spread into southern Sudan. The first Sudanese minister of education, Ali Taha, assumed office at the end of 1948 and shortly thereafter began to promote a policy for introducing Arabic into schools across the south "with a view to it becoming the common language in the three southern provinces" (Collins, 1983: 246). Southern Sudan, Beshir observed, "would no longer be looking outside to Uganda or east Africa nor remain isolated from the north" (1969: 174-175). After 1951, in the final years of the Condominium, educational reforms emanating from the new government in Khartoum surfaced alongside significant disruptions. Garvey-Williams and Mills noted that "the imposition of army rule and the harsh uncompromising insistence of the government of the time on the spread of Arabic as a language and Islam as a religion alienated the people of the southern provinces and law and order deteriorated" (Garvey-Williams and Mills, 1976: 24). In 1955, a year before Sudan became an independent nation, the mutiny of Southern soldiers at Torit marked the dawn of Sudan's near-continual civil war since that time. Beshir considers the fateful educational policy launched in 1949 as an underlying cause of the mutiny (1969: 187). Yet the shadow of that policy extended far beyond 1955, across the subsequent decades of Sudan's civil wars to the present day.

### *Southern Sudanese education from Independence until 1983*

Education in southern Sudan since the time of independence breaks approximately into two periods. The first starts in 1956, the year of independence and a year after the mutiny at Torit, and extends until the peace accords were signed in 1972, which commenced the second period that lasted until war began again in 1983.

Two major events took place that undermined the little formal education that had existed before independence. The first was the nationalization of all schools by President Abboud and his government in Khartoum in 1957, meaning that every school in Sudan, including those in the south, would follow the national curriculum in the Arabic language and infused with Muslim teaching. This is a historic date for many Southern Sudanese, as it marks the beginning of the ‘Arabization’ and ‘Islamization’ of Southerners through formal education. The 1957 decree also meant that Christian missionary schools, since they were private, had to be closed. O’Balance notes that Abboud viewed the missionaries as “trouble-making” and so “clamped further restrictions on them and their work” (1977: 52). These restrictions were extensive. In 1964, the second major event occurred: all foreign missionaries were expelled from southern Sudan (Eprile, 1974: 85).

Despite the end of most missionary schooling, education in some quarters persisted. But it began with a rapid decline. The Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) noted that: “At the beginning of the 1956-57 academic year, primary and intermediate schools were closed in the rural areas [of southern Sudan], and their properties were transferred to the main towns” (1999: 105). The SCC also noted that some Northern Sudanese teachers had been killed during the mutiny at Torit. But by 1957, some government-led schools were established. Three schools, all with Northern Sudanese teachers and Southern Sudanese students, re-started education (the schools had been closed and the teachers evacuated to Khartoum). SCC notes that one of the schools, Rumbek Secondary, “became the top in the Sudan School Certificate Examinations in 1957-58” (1999: 105). Overall, however, very little formal schooling appeared to have been going on anywhere. “From 1955 to 1972”, when the first civil war took place, “the meagre education facilities were virtually brought to a standstill” (Ahmed *et al.*, 1988: 54). In addition, UNICEF notes that “Southerners had no say in curricular changes, which they viewed as imposed on them by a central system hostile to their culture and traditions [...] Resistance took the form of an exodus of southern students to neighbouring countries” (2001: 6).

Following the Addis Ababa agreement in 1972 and up to 1983, when the second civil war began, Sesnan (1998: 61) observes that the number of schools in southern Sudan increased significantly. In the early 1960s, for example, there were only two secondary schools in all of southern Sudan.

By 1983, there were 25. There were also 650 primary schools in southern Sudan by 1983. An indication of the significantly higher level of access to education in Equatoria than in Upper Nile or Bahr el Ghazal is suggested by the following statistics: of the 650 primary schools in southern Sudan in 1983, 485 of them – or nearly three quarters – were in Equatoria (Sesnan, 1998: 61). Another significant indicator arose from the fact that the peacetime interlude marked the time when “many of its current leaders were able to gain their education – many of them, from all areas of the country, at Rumbek Senior Secondary School” (Duffield *et al.*, 2000: 45).

The 1972-1983 period was a time of limited political autonomy. While a new curriculum was introduced, a veteran education official from southern Sudan recalled when interviewed that it was eventually cancelled. In addition: “It was written with the collaboration of the north. The material was very shallow”. Language of instruction split the south into two separate tendencies. At the primary school level, “most schools in Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile Provinces” used Arabic, while in Equatoria most apparently used English. They were accordingly divided into ‘Arabic pattern’ or ‘English pattern’ schools (Fully, 1987: *ix*). Recalling his experience as a student in Equatoria during this period, a Southern Sudanese education expert confessed, “I can’t remember anything in school that had a specific reference to the local context or southern Sudan”.

In conflict-affected communities, educational provision was inadequate even before the renewal of the civil war: in 1976 it was estimated that over 90 per cent of the population of southern Sudan had never attended school (Save the Children UK *et al.*, 2002: 25). This historic under-education of Southerners, particularly when compared to Northerners, remains a significant issue in the minds of some Southern Sudanese interviewed for this study, as they made an explicit connection between warfare and the lack of education. As a Southern Sudanese refugee in Uganda commented:

“The war came because of a lack of education in the South. The Arabs were well educated and could deceive the Southerners. So the best gun to fight the Arabs with is education. You can fight militarily and take over towns. But if you don’t have good planners, you can easily be deceived. Without education, you can’t do anything.”

## Lessons learnt

- Significant weaknesses that continue to plague the delivery of education to Southern Sudanese date back to the earliest times of formal education a century ago.
- Narrowly available, mostly poor quality education and an imposed language of instruction and curriculum have fuelled a succession of major conflicts in southern Sudan.





## Chapter 3

# Education in southern Sudan

“I was born in war, I’m getting old in war, and I will die in war”. A Catholic nun described her life in this way during a visit to western Equatoria in 2002. It is a perspective honed by tragedy and seemingly endless warfare. In the face of such world-weary views, however, there is education. Indeed, the level of sacrifice for and value placed on education is one of the most compelling characteristics of the Southern Sudanese population.

### Introduction

Even in the face of warfare, deprivations of all sorts, dislocation and extreme instability, communities strive to provide education for their children. Drumtra described an elementary school in an IDP camp in Labone in 1999. “It is a clear sign that something is tragically wrong when a primary school offers its students more bomb shelters than textbooks”, he states. “The school children seem to accept the foxholes as a normal part of their school’s landscape, the way children in other countries expect to find slides and swings on their school playgrounds”. Bombings by government warplanes had killed at least nine people in the previous two years. Most of the students are unaccompanied minors. School supplies are sparse. Those who complete primary school turn around and face the class as teachers, and “the quality of teaching”, not surprisingly, “is often poor as a result”. Despite all this, the school director somehow manages to carry on. “We are at war, so we cannot compare ourselves to the education programmes in other countries”, he simply states (1999: 36 37).

This description of education amidst desolation aptly sets the stage for much of what will follow in this chapter. Inside most of southern Sudan, access to formal schooling is low and lower still for girls; student attendance is irregular while drop-out levels are high; and educational quality is difficult to measure but presumed to be truly minimal. A trained teacher, a textbook, a blackboard, a piece of chalk, a classroom with a roof – all of these normal items of education are precious, and too frequently rare, school

commodities. Describing education in southern Sudan, in short, is much more about what does not exist than what does.

In this chapter, the severity of the educational situation in southern Sudan will be depicted mainly through detailed descriptions of two cases: Akon Payam, in northern Bahr el Ghazal; and Narus in eastern Equatoria. This approach was partly chosen because of the shortage of information about education in southern Sudan since the current civil war began in 1983. Documentation certainly exists, but nearly all of it provides ahistorical snapshots of education at a particular point and place in time. Writing in 2000, Duffield *et al.* suggest a cause of this lack of historical context in operations in both northern and southern Sudan: “Some NGOs have 15 to 20 years of experience in Sudan, in the south, the north or both. Yet few NGO Country Directors seem to know what their agency was doing fifteen months ago, let alone fifteen years ago” (2000: 16). Accordingly, the initial section will briefly provide some pertinent information regarding the education situation, including a presentation of statistical data and short descriptions of the central themes and players in Southern Sudanese education. The purpose of this first section is both to provide the reader with a general sense of the education situation as well as to set the stage for the cases of education in Akon and Narus, which aim to provide a deeper understanding of education challenges amidst southern Sudan’s long and punishing civil war.

### *Background*

Speaking in Rumbek, in southern Sudan in 2002, Jeff Drumtra of the U.S. Committee for Refugees shared a number of ways in which the situation in war-affected southern Sudan has proven unusual. The first was that “the magnitude and geographic scope of internal displacement in Sudan is unique” because:

“the displaced population in Sudan is far-flung and remote. If you jumped from an airplane and parachuted down almost anywhere in southern Sudan, you would probably land within 50 kilometres of displaced people. That’s extraordinary.” (2002: 46).

Drumtra’s second point was that “most displaced people do not live in camps”. Third, “southern Sudan has an abnormal amount of sequential displacement”. That is, “many families fled a first time; then from there

they fled a second time; then from there they fled a third time; and on and on". Fourth, "it is unusual that the distribution of displacement in Sudan is nearly evenly divided between government-controlled areas and non-government areas". Of the approximately 4 million Southern Sudanese IDPs, about half are in government-controlled areas (mostly in Khartoum), while the other half are in SPLA-controlled areas (Drumtra, 2002: 46-48). Drumtra did not address in this speech the nearly 0.5 million additional Southern Sudanese living as refugees.

The long civil war in southern Sudan, in short, had created a situation where a great many Southern Sudanese have had to flee far and repeatedly. Many had never reached a place that might be described as stable. This made mere survival exceedingly difficult, humanitarian assistance both expensive and complicated, and efforts to educate Southern Sudanese children and youth unusually challenging. It is with this in mind that the following background information is provided.

#### ■ Operation Lifeline Sudan

A great deal has been written about Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) and its degree of effectiveness as a mechanism to address the humanitarian needs of Southern Sudanese as well as to "coordinate the activities of its member organizations" (Salinas and D'Silva, 1999: 6). That ground will not be trod here. Instead, some of the key components of OLS will be outlined.

OLS was created in 1989 in the aftermath of the largely inadequate response to a horrifying famine in northern Bahr el Ghazal and Southern Kordofan (Karim *et al.*, 1996: 2), an issue that will be briefly considered in the Akon case later in this chapter. OLS is a United Nations-led entity that was considered to have broken 'new ground' in that it "negotiated humanitarian access with the warring parties" (Minear, 1998: 3). Karim *et al.* contend that OLS "has national, regional and global significance" because "it was the first humanitarian programme that sought to assist internally displaced and war-affected civilians during an ongoing conflict with a sovereign country, as opposed to refugees beyond its borders" (1996: 1). It does not challenge the "ultimate sovereignty of the Government of Sudan" yet, at the same time, it has created "an equivocal and temporary ceding of sovereignty to the UN of parts of south Sudan that are outside government control." OLS has been subject to considerable criticism since

its inception, partly because of the way in which it has balanced its goal of neutrality during civil war with the challenge of sovereignty. OLS had conducted a near-constant tug-of-war with the warring parties, the Government of Sudan in particular. Many observers have also contended that the warring parties have manipulated OLS aid to suit their ends; a not unsurprising, if tragic, wartime finding. Minear sums up the challenges in the following way: over time, OLS had its humanitarian access “eroded by the belligerents and by its own decision to shift OLS’ administrative base from New York to Khartoum” (1998: 3).

Despite its efforts to deliver humanitarian aid with a degree of neutrality, OLS instead became regularly convulsed in politics, a situation that plagues its actions to this day. The most constant challenge, in this regard, was for the OLS operation based in Khartoum, which operates only within government-controlled territories. Within this so-called ‘Northern Sector’, Karim *et al.* contend that “the scope and coverage of OLS is determined on the basis of GOS approval, rather than actual need” (1996: 5). In the ‘Southern Sector’, a swirl of controversy surrounded the issue of ‘Ground Rules’ that were created to regulate relations between OLS agencies and rebel movements such as the SPLA.

Here one sees but one way in which the absence of education negatively impacts Southern Sudanese lives as well as efforts to support them. A component of the Ground Rules was for OLS agencies to provide some ‘capacity building’ to the humanitarian wings of opposition movements and Sudanese NGOs. This effort proved difficult to address, and, as a result, “The weak capacity of Southern Sudanese counterparts has been widely seen as a hindrance to the delivery of humanitarian services” (Minear, 1998: 4). According to Bradbury, the sensitivity of SPLM/A “to the view that it is vulnerable to international pressure for [humanitarian] access or political reform” propagates a perception that Southern Sudanese are “incapable of doing anything for themselves” (2000: 36). Again, one can see how the historically low levels of training and educational capacity within the Southern Sudanese population help create negative results or, in this case, impressions.

Regarding education for Southern Sudanese, some key aspects of OLS are pertinent. UNICEF was the lead agency for the Southern Sector and based out of Kenya (Karim *et al.*, 1996: 3). Most, but not all, local and international NGOs, in addition to all United Nations agencies that

are involved in education activities for Southern Sudanese in Sudan, were OLS members. Access to sites for members was provided with OLS approval, co-ordination and assistance, such as both field visits within southern Sudan for this book in 2003 (to Akon by air and Narus by road).

### *The dependency debate*

A persistent theme in some of the literature on war-affected Southern Sudanese, in addition to in many of the interviews with international humanitarian officials, is the assertion that Southern Sudanese are dependent on international assistance. This is largely due to the sheer length of time that humanitarian assistance has been provided to Southern Sudanese.

To counter such dependency, humanitarian agency officials (and their donors) often want recipient communities to volunteer some of their labour in exchange for receiving something: food, construction materials, school supplies and so on. Tackling dependency, in the view of many international agency officials and observers, is about moving recipient populations from reliance on assistance to self-reliance. But from the view of many Southern Sudanese interviewed, it is also a question of power. The way in which international agencies relate with Southern Sudanese was an issue that many Southern Sudanese leaders were sensitive about. As one Southern Sudanese leader stated:

“There’s truth in the dependency of Southern Sudanese, especially for food aid. But dependency is more than meets the eye. If there’s no hunger, there would be no jobs for the United Nations and NGO officials involved in it.”

The official then asserted that the high costs of agency overhead, salaries and other costs left relatively little for Southern Sudanese recipients.

A second critique is directly tied to education and surfaces from the fact that relatively little capacity building of Southern Sudanese has taken place. A hard-boiled assessment of the result was shared by an international agency official:

“The problem is you need a government to run the education system. But NGOs are acting like governments now, because there’s no

education system. The SOE [the SPLM's Secretariat of Education, which will be described shortly] is still new and is totally dependant on NGOs. The local education authorities cannot think; they don't know how to plan."

Have international agencies made education and capacity building a priority in southern Sudan since 1983? As the forthcoming discussion about international assistance relates, the answer is largely no, although this tendency is beginning to change in the new post-war era. Educating people within southern Sudan has both not been a main concern and, in many situations, has not even been possible. In addition, the educational priority has been focused on primary school, not secondary school. It remains an issue that arouses consternation among some Southern Sudanese education leaders. "We want certified secondary school education", one leader stated, and "we have a plan and a budget". But because agencies think that secondary schools are, in the words of one international official, "a luxury", the result is that "Now we have to beg for funds".

Such power and policy struggles are bound to be part of the process of system development as southern Sudan enters a post-war era. Officials from different perspectives and backgrounds will sometimes disagree. Different priorities will be asserted and some will be viewed as unrealistic or inappropriate. What rankles, in the view of many Southern Sudanese educational leaders (in addition to others who were interviewed) is that their impoverished and often disempowered position has not often allowed them to dispense with dependency and assert not just their self-reliance, but indeed their independence. But perhaps that, too, will change.

#### *An overview of education*

Over a 20-year period, the overall education situation in southern Sudan has been exceedingly bad. An astonishing 0.3 per cent of school-age children complete all eight years of primary school (Brophy, 2003: 3). Beyond primary school, UNICEF has noted that war "almost totally extinguished secondary education in the south, together with vocational and technical education, post-secondary institutions, teacher education, higher education and adult education" (2001: 8). A review of some recent statistics, mainly drawn from Brophy's analysis of available data, gives a sense of the seriousness of the situation:

- *Enrolment:* Primary school enrolment is “extremely low” at somewhere around 30 per cent of school-age children (Brophy, 2003: 11). About 60 per cent of all primary school pupils are in the first two grades. Only 26 per cent of school pupils are girls (Brophy, 2003: 4), suggesting that, at most, 7 per cent of all school-age girls attend school.
- *Teachers:* Nearly 70 per cent of teachers in southern Sudan have had at least some primary school education. Thirty per cent have some degree of secondary education and less than 2 per cent have a diploma or higher certificate. Less than 7 per cent of all teachers are women. Seven per cent of teachers have been trained and had at least a year of college, or pre-service, teacher training. Forty-five per cent lacked any teacher training, while 48 per cent reported to have had at least some teacher training (perhaps as little as a two-week in-service training).
- *Facilities:* One third of all schools have latrines, but the figure for Bahr el Ghazal is 11 per cent and it stands at 13 per cent for the Upper Nile. When latrines exist, there is approximately one latrine per 200 pupils. Nearly half of all schools lack a source of clean water (in Bahr el Ghazal, the rate is almost three quarters). Forty-three per cent of all classes are taught outdoors (Brophy, 2003: 4-5). This may not be particularly surprising given that “virtually all school buildings were destroyed during the civil war” (Ruijter, 1998: 4). School might last anywhere from one to 10 months in a year (UNICEF and AET, 2002). A UNICEF official reported in 2003 that of the approximately 1,500 primary schools in southern Sudan, “NGOs are supporting approximately 350 primary schools”. By that same year, there were only 22 secondary schools in all of southern Sudan and one tertiary institution: the Institute of Development, Environment and Agricultural Studies (IDEAS; Secretariat of Education, 2003: 8).
- *Textbooks:* Many schools have no textbooks whatsoever. One study found an average of 2.2 library or textbooks per student in nearly 1,100 schools (Brophy, 2003: 5). From interviews and field visits, the type of textbook available in schools can vary widely according to curriculum and publication date. The condition of the textbooks may be miserable, since two thirds of all schools lack storerooms

(Brophy, 2003: 5). In addition, “there is no secondary curriculum or textbooks in the southern part of Sudan” (UNICEF, 2001: 8).

The resulting picture is here described by Save the Children UK *et al.*:

“Schools in southern Sudan are mostly makeshift structures built by parent-teacher associations or the local community, staffed mainly by volunteers and supported by community contributions, which are severely reduced during times of food insecurity or conflict. Lack of adequate remuneration makes it hard to recruit and train qualified staff. To add to the difficulties, aerial bombardment puts children in some places in fear of their lives” (2002: 25).

#### *International assistance to education*

Limited international assistance to education in southern Sudan has been partly tied to the widely recorded poor human rights record of the Government of Sudan in Khartoum. Brophy notes that as a result many European governments, in addition to the European Union, suspended funding support for Sudan during the late 1980s and early 1990s. He adds that “as there was no official recognition of the SPLM and other movements in southern Sudan the suspension applied equally to the north and the south” (2003: 8).

In this case, international assistance for education can be limited during civil war either because the internationally recognized state government has a negative human rights record or because the rebel side, by definition, remains unrecognized. In the case of southern Sudan, both have applied and thus have negatively affected international assistance for education for Southern Sudanese. Duffield *et al.* added during the war years that “since rebel movements are by definition non-state actors, it is difficult to engage in development activities [such as education], as normally understood, with them” (2000: 16-17). The non-state actor SPLM/A in southern Sudan supports a Secretariat of Education (SOE) designed to plan and lead an education system in southern Sudan.

Brophy lists other factors that have served to limit international donor assistance:



- the failure of the Government of Sudan “to service its debt to the World Bank”;
- “the view that funding long-term development would reduce the demand for peace” in southern Sudan;
- “continued fighting and a general lack of security” during the civil war years;
- the agencies working in southern Sudan “were predominantly relief oriented and their field staff rarely had any knowledge or experience of educational development”; and
- the “prevailing belief within the international aid community in the early [1990s] that relief, rehabilitation and development were separate stages in the aid process and that education belonged to the development stage” (Brophy, 2003: 8-9).

This finding is supported by earlier research in Sierra Leone involving the donor agencies of the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) of USAID and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO). One official interviewed explained the issue of timing in the following way: “Development is about investing for the future” while “humanitarian aid is about saving lives now”. Accordingly, “supporting development for tomorrow doesn’t make sense when people are dying today” (Sommers, 2000: 36). Since many humanitarian agency officials consider education a development activity, funding for education is supposed to wait – even when warfare continued for, in the case of southern Sudan, 21 years.

The decision of some donors not to fund education during the recently ended civil war is also noted by Duffield *et al.* regarding the assistance of ECHO in southern Sudan. The authors note that, as of 2000, non-food aid provided by ECHO had consistently “focused on food security” such as health, water and veterinary programmes (ECHO, like so many other donor agencies, would not support education, presumably because it was not seen as connected to food security concerns). The approach was based on an “economistic approach to vulnerability and the fear of dependency”. As a result, war was simply viewed as something that interfered with the ability of Southern Sudanese to become economically self-sufficient. The authors conclude that even though ECHO “recognises that peace is a pre-condition for absolute self-reliance”, its analysis fails to consider the fact that “peace may not necessarily address the root cause of the problem of the south” (2000: 18). Among the authors’ recommendations was to

“organize a major investment in both primary and secondary education, particularly in non-Government of Sudan areas. Without this, the circumstances which led to the [recently concluded civil] war will be repeated in the future” (Duffield *et al.*, 2000: 53). Duffield *et al.* thus contend that not supporting education for Southern Sudanese could help lead to still more conflict in southern Sudan in the future.

Duffield *et al.* also note that “ECHO does not mention education in its Global Plan, because ECHO’s original conception of an emergency was as a short-term problem” (2000: 45). But the emergency in southern Sudan was obviously a long-term problem, directly challenging this approach. Moreover, the authors note that Somalia had received support from a related European donor agency, the Directorate-General of Development (DG Development), which “suggests that the EU does not see education as unattainable in areas of insecurity and limited governance”. Duffield *et al.* consider education “the greatest single remaining opportunity to restore self-reliance to south Sudan short of ending the war and rebuilding the country” (2000: 45).

Another donor agency that has struggled with policy decisions over supporting education in southern Sudan is the British Department for International Development (DFID). An account of a seminar on education in Sudan, held at the DFID London Headquarters on 29 July 2002, sharply illuminates the dilemmas (UK DFID, 2002). The seminar was attended by 53 representatives of around 30 organizations – local, national and international NGOs, UN agencies – working on education for Southern Sudanese. According to DFID’s report of the seminar, the opening speaker, Sally Keeble, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, DFID, welcomed progress towards peace in Sudan. Ms Keeble stated that “over the war years, DFID’s programme focused on meeting humanitarian needs and did not offer support to education as such. DFID considered that peace must come first”. She then outlined DFID’s commitment to “act now. We will invest in the future of Sudan through scholarship programmes [...] support projects in areas where there has been a significant breakthrough on peace [...] and] strengthen our partnerships with NGOs and international organizations working in Sudan, so that when peace comes, we can move quickly to make a major contribution towards rebuilding Sudan, through education and other programmes” (UK DFID, 2002: 3-4).

Subsequent speakers from both the Government of Sudan and the Southern Sudanese took issue with DFID's approach that educational assistance was only then becoming possible because peace was at hand. Sulef Al Din, State Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, Government of Sudan, stated that: "Donors must reject the view that there can be 'no schools without a final peace settlement'. Development projects will help to build the peace" (UK DFID, 2002: 4). Elijah Malok Aleng, Executive Director, Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (the principal humanitarian relief co-ordination agency of the SPLM), noted that "'just because there is a war, it does not mean that you can do nothing'. Even in war, there are peaceful areas where development projects are possible." He disagreed with the view of some in the international community that 'the guns must be silent before aid can be given'" (UK DFID, 2002: 4-5).

According to one participant interviewed for this study, the reactions of the mainly field-based NGO attendees of the seminar to this exchange expressed disappointment at the DFID stance. That position was characterized as having been rigid in its lockstep insistence that education was a developmental activity and therefore impossible to support meaningfully until peace came to all of southern Sudan. Some blamed the lack of international investment in education of the Southern Sudanese for worsening the underlying social conditions that fed the civil war. Others characterized the withholding of educational assistance as a denial of the basic human right to education. The DFID seminar report summed up the discussion diplomatically: "A number of participants supported the two Sudanese speakers in challenging the assertion that peace must come before investing in education. In their view, peace and education are mutually supportive, not exclusive" (UK DFID, 2002: 5).

It is a passionate argument. Nonetheless, such pleas to many major donors to support education in southern Sudan have often fallen on deaf ears, largely for the reasons outlined above. Brophy observes that, as a result of such reasons, "throughout the 1990s the majority of international and bi-lateral donors were unwilling to support education in southern Sudan" (2003: 9). This statement would appear to apply to the 1980s as well. It is a significant summation, because warfare was but one of the causes of the extreme underdevelopment of education in southern Sudan. One of the others is limited funding. Brophy notes that there were a "few exceptions" to this larger trend. "The Norwegian Government, for example,

provided support through UNICEF and through NGOs such as Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and the Africa Educational Trust (AET)" (Brophy, 2003: 9).

ECHO, it must be said, was not the only major donor agency to mainstream relief aid while marginalizing aid to education. USAID was a counterpart agency similarly resistant to supporting education. However, in 1998, USAID began what has become a breakthrough regarding a broadening of major donor support beyond traditional humanitarian relief items (such as food aid) to include areas often considered to be 'development' (such as education). For a decade (1988-1997), the US government provided more than 1 billion US\$ in humanitarian assistance to Sudan (Salinas and D'Silva, 1999: 6). Nonetheless, a USAID publication noted that "despite the costly international response" in southern Sudan provided by USAID and other donors, "the needs [of Southern Sudanese] have not diminished significantly" (Salinas and D'Silva, 1999: *vii*). USAID spied an opportunity to change its fairly uniform stance by targeting the 'West Bank' or all parts of Equatoria west of the Nile River (that is, all of western Equatoria and the part of eastern Equatoria existing west of the Nile). Since the area had been reasonably stable and secure since at least the mid-1990s, and is also viewed as an area of considerable agricultural potential, USAID considered it ripe for an expansion of its assistance.

This is not a small point, because a common reason for limiting or not funding education has been that it is too dangerous and unstable inside southern Sudan. But this has only been accurate for more than a decade in some parts of southern Sudan. Others have signalled that western Equatoria, as well as areas in southern Sudan (such as southern Bahr el Ghazal), have been reasonably stable for quite a long time and constitute a very substantial section of southern Sudan, both in terms of geography and population. A symposium sponsored by the SOE and UNICEF in 2001 stated the existence of large stable areas in southern Sudan in the following way: "For more than 10 years, several parts of the New Sudan [that is, what the SPLA and SPLM and, increasingly, many other Southern Sudanese and foreigners, call southern Sudan], particularly western Equatoria, have enjoyed relative peace and stability, which have created a firm foundation for development – and a real prospect for education for all" (Waya, 2001: 3). Since USAID was moving into the largest stable area (western Equatoria), it was also able to chide "other donors [who]

are reluctant to fund rehabilitation activities as they fall outside of the traditional definition of ‘relief’ or ‘emergency’ assistance, which is primarily limited to food aid” (Waya, 2001: 6). When USAID created the Sudan Transition and Rehabilitation programme (STAR), it asserted that it would be “charting waters that have never been charted before”, that STAR “represents a turning and a starting point for the use of development assistance in the context of complex emergencies and ongoing conflicts”, and that USAID, because of STAR, “has broken new ground by supporting activities aimed at economic recovery in southern Sudan”. It also cautioned that “USAID should not continue to be the sole supporter of these important activities” (Waya, 2001: 35, 38). The report recommended that part of its response should consider support for education (Waya, 2001: 39).

It should be noted that STAR represented a fraction of USAID’s annual overall budget for southern Sudan: perhaps 3–4 million compared to US\$60 million for humanitarian assistance and food aid for 2000 (USAID, 2000: 22) – that is, between 5 and 7 per cent. It also does not appear to be accurate that USAID was the ‘sole supporter’ of rehabilitation activities, given, for example, Brophy’s observation of the Norwegian Government’s support for education in the 1990s. More recently, the British Department for International Development (DFID) has begun to fund education within southern Sudan. Still, it is a breakthrough for a major international donor such as USAID to change its stance to assistance during a humanitarian emergency, albeit a belated one, and it led to the Sudan Basic Education Program (SBEP), which will be reviewed below.

### *Education actors*

A regrettable but unavoidable shortcoming of the chosen case-based approach featured in this book is exposed in this section. The investment of time in describing, in considerable detail, the story of education in Akon and Narus later in this chapter leaves limited space to account for the significant efforts taking place in so many other parts of southern Sudan.

Hopefully, interested readers will explore other cases themselves, such as education in the Nuba Mountains (see for example Obura, 2003). The important work of local actors in other areas will also not be considered here, including Southern Sudanese NGOs such as the Youth Agency for Relief, Rehabilitation and Development for southern Sudan (YARRDSS) in the Shilluk Kingdom, Upper Nile and the New Sudan Council of

Churches (NSCC) as well as Southern Sudanese institutions such as the Institute of Development, Environment, and Agricultural Studies (IDEAS) in western Equatoria. There is also a growing number of international agencies carrying out educational efforts in southern Sudan, such as CARE USA, Norwegian Church Aid, Catholic Relief Services, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and Save the Children Sweden. While a catalogue of the works of these agencies will not be provided here, the cases investigate the educational efforts of both an international NGO (Save the Children UK in Akon) and a local institution (the Diocese of Torit in Narus).

Broad statistical data about schooling in southern Sudan exists. Documentation of institutional activities describes particular efforts. The approach supplied here is envisioned as complementary: highlighting a sense of the education experience on the ground and over time. Parts of the two highlighted cases have nothing to do with agency work or the operations of the SPLM's Secretariat of Education, particularly in Akon, because for most of the time since the civil war had begun, no agencies worked there and no education authority was able to establish a presence. One of the chief reasons was that instability would not allow it.

Before examining the detailed case studies, some of the activities of three important actors or sets of actors – the SPLM's Secretariat of Education (SOE), the Sudan Basic Education Program (SBEP) and UNICEF – will be reviewed briefly.

#### ■ The Secretariat of Education (SOE)

How do you start an education system in a place where formal education itself scarcely exists? This has been the massive challenge of the Secretariat of Education, which is responsible for carrying out the “Education Policy of the New Sudan and Implementation Guidelines” (Sudan People's Liberation Movement, 2002a). The SOE is effectively the education ministry, or authority, for southern Sudan at the moment, although, as will be suggested, its reach on the ground remains slight.

Tasked with establishing an education system in a devastated landscape and with people largely uneducated but passionate about education, it might be difficult to know where to start. The process appears to have begun in 1993, when the initial Education Policy for the SPLM

was developed. It was then approved by the first SPLM National Convention in April 1994, a watershed event for the development not only for launching an education system as well as a government for southern Sudan by the SPLM. Even so, the education policy was “not widely disseminated due to a lack of publishing resources”, which led to the policy being “interpreted in different ways by local educators, their partners and donors”. Late in 1998, the New Sudan Education Policy was established as a revised version of the 1993 document, but once again, “it was not widely circulated due to lack of resources”. Speaking in 2001, William Ater Maciek, a leader in the Secretariat of Education, stated that: “To this day, little is known about the policy by educators, parents, or their partners in education” (Sudan People’s Liberation Movement, 2002*b*: 37). That same year, UNICEF noted that: “In the southern part of Sudan there is no established education authority or system” (2001: 25).

The Secretariat, based in Nairobi, did not formally come into existence until 1998 or 1999, a Southern Sudanese official recalled, based on a decision “of moving education away from emergency and relief to a development approach”. A Commissioner leads it. Beneath this level is the Director-General, followed by six departments: Planning, Administration and Finance, Quality Promotion and Innovation, Gender and Social Change, General Education and Higher Education. The Education Policy of 2002 established an 8.4.4 system for formal schooling (Sudan People’s Liberation Movement, 2002*a*: 3).

Given its emergence from a rebel movement, it may not be unexpected that the Secretariat is dominated by men, most of whom reportedly have military backgrounds. The implications of this on the development of the Secretariat have proven significant. A number of international education officials with experience working with the SOE have noted that the system tends to be ‘top-down’ and authoritarian. Most are also ‘not educationalists’, another official remarked. Finally, another international education official noted: “There are hardly any educated Sudanese women in top management posts. When they rise they get distracted by girls’ education instead of becoming mainstream education managers. This limits their education careers”.

The starting point for the SOE’s work is, as has been reviewed here, exceedingly daunting. Speaking at the historic education symposium in Yambio, western Equatoria in June 2001, the SPLM’s Commissioner for

Education, Kosti Manibe shed some light on the challenge before the Secretariat of Education. Manibe noted that “since colonial times, there had never been a clear education policy for southern Sudan”. He then mentioned that “every government in Khartoum [since independence] has been unwilling or unable to provide meaningful education for the children of southern Sudan”. Manibe stated that the SPLM and the New Sudan were “pushing for the development of its own, separate education system” – a frank admission of the fact that, as of mid-2001, southern Sudan did not yet have much of one. “Structures for the central management of the education system are either weak or non-existent”, he explained, “and are usually woefully short of resources”. Illustrative of this was Manibe’s assessment of the curriculum. “There is still no standard curriculum applicable throughout the New Sudan”, he stated. A syllabus for primary education existed, but not for secondary education. “It is time”, Manibe concluded, “to reflect and plan how to finance the cost of public education for the New Sudan on a sustainable basis” (Sudan People’s Liberation Movement, 2002*b*: 6-7).

By 2003, the SOE’s education sector plan, applicable from mid-2004 through mid-2007, sought to, among other things: increase girls’ primary enrolment from 11 to 30 per cent; have between 10 and 20 per cent of all adults in southern Sudan, and half of all SPLA soldiers enrolled in literacy programmes; establish vocational training centres for out of school youth, including demobilized soldiers; and establish teacher training institutes. How these ambitious targets would reasonably be met is detailed as action plans, most of which include the involvement of other actors.

It is not an overstatement to say that these targets and plans are ambitious, particularly given the current state of affairs that the sector plan also described, which included: a teacher training curriculum “for a certifiable teacher qualification” still “in the process of development” (Secretariat of Education, 2003: 8); incomplete curricula for primary and alternative basic education, and difficulties getting existing textbooks, teacher guides and syllabi into classrooms either because of distribution challenges or because schools use other curricula; “the absence of a certification system” (Secretariat of Education, 2003: 9); generally low or nonexistent levels of school supplies; and “no standard means of preparing school administrators for their role” (Secretariat of Education, 2003: 10). There are also massive additional challenges coming. Now that the peace



agreement with the Government of Sudan has been signed, the SOE must absorb into their new education system what will probably amount to many hundreds of thousands of returning students from refugee and IDP populations. It leads the SOE to state that “the requirements of such influx [...] cannot be under estimated” (Secretariat of Education, 2003: 13).

The gap between the Secretariat’s immense responsibilities and its own capacity is difficult to appreciate, particularly for those unfamiliar with the Southern Sudanese situation. Commenting in 2005, international education experts with direct experience with the SOE shared the following comments. “The SPLM’s education office [which later became the SOE] was a few bare rooms in 1997”, one recalled. “The telephone has been non-functional for as long as I can remember. I’m not sure if their office had any paper. They didn’t get a computer until well after 2000”. Another characterized the situation in 2005 in the following way: “There are no budgeting procedures, no policies, and little to no management skills”. The SOE, still another added, “lacks telephones, electricity, transportation, etc. Planning, organizing, co-ordinating and producing results in a timely manner are new concepts. It’s basically two leaders in Nairobi with some very old dedicated men at the county level”.

This may sound unfair. The two leaders referred to just above, Kosti Manibe and William Ater Maciek, are respected and experienced professionals. At the same time, the overall level of capacity of the SOE is decidedly low. One factor informs some of this situation: An education system for southern Sudan has a minimal presence in part because it has never really been resourced. Like other civil service areas, Southern Sudanese personnel contributions to education system work have mostly been voluntary. The lack of resources has made it difficult to maintain connections between the top of the structure, the Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya, and provincial, country and payam levels within southern Sudan. “There is very little direct funding for the Secretariat”, a veteran international expert with experience working with the SOE remarked. “To date there is no public funding, so the SOE has nothing to actually budget”. The SOE, which is expected to become the Ministry of Education for post-war southern Sudan, has remained in a state of bare existence while international agencies have been simultaneously funded to provide education to Southern Sudanese for many years. No one involved with the Secretariat of Education is paid, or paid very much, either in the main

office in Nairobi or in the provinces, counties and payams that constitute southern Sudan, which makes their level of dedication remarkable. “Only 1 per cent of donated funds remain with the Secretariat”, an SOE official stated. It is a longstanding imbalance.

An issue voiced by SOE officials is their interest in establishing control over the many actors involved in southern Sudan’s expanding education field. “We have an education policy and framework”, an SOE official explained late in 2003. “Soon, those who don’t want to work within the framework will have to go”. This perspective is fairly understandable, given the funding imbalance between the Secretariat and international agencies. It may also be an expression of an expectation of discipline emerging from the prior military training that many SOE personnel have had. But this concern contrasts with one of the achievements of the Secretariat, in partnership with UNICEF: a large and operational co-ordination mechanism for Southern Sudanese education. Originally called the Education Coordination Committee, its name was changed to the Education Reconstruction and Development Forum in 2004. Its membership has grown to be broad and diverse, including local and international organizations working in most parts of southern Sudan. It meets quarterly. A Sudanese official frequenting the meetings explained that “all agencies involved in education in southern Sudan review their progress together and plan for the upcoming quarter”. It has also served as a “forum for the donors to identify interest and priority areas for support”.

An NGO official recalled how Commissioner Manibe predicted that “the skeletal civil service of the SPLM [including the SOE] is likely to be overwhelmed by donor finance and returning populations”. “Nobody in the donor community seems to understand the implications of the lack of a management capacity” within the SOE, another veteran NGO official commented. “The idea that huge amounts of money could be absorbed and utilized with so little management capacity is just over the top”.

#### ■ Sudan Basic Education Program (SBEP)

The Sudan Basic Education Program “is a direct result of the visit to northern and southern Sudan”, a USAID document by Andrew Natsios, the USAID Administrator and Special Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, reports. It is a five-year (2002-2007), US\$20 million programme aiming to “increase equitable access to quality education in southern Sudan by

improving teacher education programmes; increasing the capacity of primary and secondary schools to [deliver] quality education, especially for girls, [and] improving non-formal education for out-of-school youth and adult learners” (USAID 2004: 1). The programme is being implemented through a co-operative agreement with CARE International, which leads a consortium that includes the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst/Center for International Education (University of Massachusetts, Amherst/Center for International Education; Sudan Basic Education Program, 2004: 1).

SBEP has six objectives:

1. rehabilitate four Regional Teacher Training Institutes owned and managed by Sudanese;
2. train up to 2,000 women teachers using accelerated learning and scholarships;
3. foster partnerships between Sudanese teacher training institutes and teacher training institutions in East Africa and the United States;
4. sustainably rehabilitate up to 240 primary schools and 10 secondary schools;
5. increase the supply of school materials provided by the Sudanese private sector; and
6. promote non-formal education and distance learning for up to 20,000 out-of-school youth and adult learners (USAID, 2004: 1).

SBEP has attracted a high degree of attention for a number of important reasons. First, as was earlier noted, it is precedent setting for USAID, because it began to support education during a civil war in a territory not held by the recognized government. Second, it constitutes, for southern Sudan, a significant amount of money for the education sector relative to other investments (but not, it should be noted, relative to the educational needs within Southern Sudan). Third, it works directly in concert with the SOE.

It is this final reason that was a constant source of discussion during interviews with SBEP and SOE officials. This is almost to be expected, given the close working relationship that has increased over time and reportedly began even before SBEP got underway. “The Secretariat of Education was involved in the design of SBEP with USAID officials”, one education expert recalled. The prominence accorded to SBEP illustrates

the way in which USAID views its role. “USAID is the only donor doing development in Southern Sudan”, a USAID official stated in 2003. “No other donor will do development until a peace treaty is signed”. At the same time, the official noted that “USAID can’t do it all”. Accordingly, the agency has tried to “get other donors to pitch in”.

SBEP got off to slow start, something that many officials interviewed about SBEP openly stated. It has since developed a number of important achievements. It has begun to rehabilitate two teacher training institutes, 118 primary schools and one secondary school (SBEP, 2004: 5, 7); has initiated the Gender Equity Support Program (GESP), which “supports girls directly and indirectly through programs designed by participating institutions” (SBEP, 2004: 6); and is developing a teacher education curriculum for pre-service and in-service teacher training. SBEP is also expanding the development of the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) originally developed by Save the Children (UK); developing an intensive English language course “to support the transition to English in south Sudan” (an issue of particular concern for internally displaced teachers who have only taught the Government of Sudan’s Arabic curriculum; SBEP, 2004: 8); and reportedly has directly contributed to developing the New Sudan primary school curriculum. The Secretariat of Education produced its new Education Management Tool Kit, designed for education officials at the county and payam levels with technical and financial support from SBEP. It will likely provide the first technical training that such officials have ever received. SBEP, in addition, has also developed the Education Support Network (ESN), which it describes as an “implementation and training structure encompassing all SOE operational levels from the SOE central office to the regions, counties and payams with the provision of education and management programs” (SBEP, 2004: 4). While the ESN essentially provides a “structure and processes for SOE to implement programs,” it is also “not clear how long it will take” to become fully functioning. SBEP has expanded operations into the Nuba Mountains (SBEP, 2004: 3, 10).

SBEP is a breathtakingly ambitious programme, particularly given the considerable logistical and capacity constraints it faces. One such challenge is what SBEP describes as a tension between building systems and delivering services: “SBEP is expected to establish systems while, at the same time, to deliver training programs, instructional materials, and

even rehabilitate schools” (SBEP, 2004: 9). It has found that it cannot easily do both at the same time. It has also been difficult to contract NGOs (local as well as international) that can then complete school rehabilitation and programme implementation work. This appears to be largely due to staff turnover: SBEP trains NGO staff, many of whom then leave (SBEP, 2004: 10).

What appears to be SBEP’s central challenge, announced both in documents and during interviews, is the uneasy nature of SBEP’s relationship with the SOE. This is due, in part, to the fact that the SOE cannot directly access USAID funds, only technical assistance. As a small, resource-poor institution with limited capacity, minimal infrastructure and an enormous mandate, this is no small point, and it has not seemed to go away: SBEP professionals have money while SOE professionals do not. SOE officials and teachers may receive capacity building, technical assistance and financial support for equipment and facilities. But “USAID doesn’t pay recurrent costs”, a USAID official simply explained. This policy extends to community work, which conflicts with the policies of other NGOs operating in the same areas. “Largely because other NGOs have paid community members for their contributions”, the SBEP annual report for 2003-2004 admits, “it has been difficult for SBEP to convince communities to agree to the in-kind contributions expected by our program” (SBEP, 2004: 12).

Not surprisingly, this policy has not sat well with SOE officials. “International agencies will tell you: ‘We have come to help you’”, an SOE official stated, “but when we tell them that our need is to pay teachers, they say no”. An international education expert essentially supported this perspective: “The international community typically disempowers embryonic national structures by keeping them out in the cold while they go everywhere, onto the ground and into the air.”

Considerable frustration rests on the side of SBEP officials as well. “The slowness with which SOE has appointed its own staff, assigned them roles and responsibilities, and delegated authority for decision-making has delayed the ability of SBEP to move forward”, an SBEP annual report explains (SBEP, 2004: 11). In the view of one SBEP official, SOE staff “doesn’t know how to organize and plan”. “Resistance to SBEP is partly because we’re outsiders”, another stated. In addition, “the Sudanese lack

practicality about where they're at. They don't realize that building an education system is a very long-term process".

Stepping back from the fray, it remains clear that SBEP is filling a necessary supporting role that the SOE certainly seems to require: a kind of implementing arm for the Secretariat. And the achievements arising from this collaboration appear to be significant. Of course, the regular interaction of well-paid foreign experts and veteran Southern Sudanese working in the education sector, who are products of a long and punishing war in a region that has suffered severe hardships for decades, was almost bound to create frustrations, as well as, most probably, resentments and perhaps even a sense of humiliation among some Southern Sudanese. But such a result may not be a particularly unexpected consequence of international assistance during and after wars.

#### ■ UNICEF

No international agency involved in education in southern Sudan has had anything close to the geographic reach of UNICEF. As the lead UN agency for OLS in southern Sudan, UNICEF has been well placed to carry out education activities. There was not one area visited in southern Sudan, for this or for prior field research, in different parts of Bahr el Ghazal and Equatoria, where UNICEF's presence in education had not, somehow, already been felt. If a school had received exercise books, for example, they most likely had received them from UNICEF. The documentation of UNICEF's own work in southern Sudan is extensive, much more than that of other agencies active in education in southern Sudan. The agency has also carried out some significant studies on the state of education in southern Sudan, such as the Education for All report (UNICEF 2001) and the School Baseline Assessment (UNICEF, together with the Africa Educational Trust, 2002), which are used as resources for this study. A UNICEF official explained that the agency has opened field offices in six locations in Southern Sudan: Yambio (western Equatoria); Rumbek (southern Bahr el Ghazal); Nial (Upper Nile); Aweil West (northern Bahr el Ghazal); Abu Roc (Upper Nile); and the Nuba Mountains.

UNICEF has also worked with the Secretariat of Education on a number of activities, an association that a veteran international education official characterized as ad hoc and project-based, but which "has continued for years". The relationship reportedly began in 2000, when, a UNICEF

official stated, “We were the first [international agency] to support the Secretariat of Education”. UNICEF has helped the SOE facilitate important gatherings such as the Symposium on Education of 2001 (documented in Sudan People’s Liberation Movement, 2002*b*) and the quarterly co-ordination meetings mentioned earlier in this chapter. It has also generated some debate. UNICEF has steadfastly focused its work on primary-level education in southern Sudan. This rankled some officials at the Secretariat. As one commented, “UNICEF concentrates on primary education. When we ask for secondary schools, UNICEF says they are a luxury”. There remains, of course, an extraordinary amount still to do in all education sectors in southern Sudan, primary education being among them. The SOE official then explained how, in Rumbek, southern Bahr el Ghazal, a secondary school was started that is “mostly supported by the local community and the SPLM. NGOs give some assistance, but not regularly”.

It is not the purpose here to review all of UNICEF’s activities, but instead to briefly consider some particularly pertinent characteristics of its work. The history of UNICEF’s involvement in education in southern Sudan illuminates the difficulties of supporting education and how the situation has improved in recent years. A UNICEF official explained that UNICEF’s education work began in 1994. “Up to 2000, we were doing ‘hit-and-run education’”, the official recalled. “We’d do a course for one to three months somewhere, then pull out.” Educational materials were also distributed from time to time. Beginning in 2000, there was a “big shift” in UNICEF’s response, based on the realization that approximately two thirds of southern Sudan “was fairly stable”. This significant move towards a more development-focused approach aligns with similar changes undertaken earlier by the SPLM (in its creation of the SOE) and USAID (in its initiation of the STAR programme).

A senior UNICEF official described the agency’s ‘three-pronged approach’ to their post-2000 education activities. The first was to provide emergency response supplies, largely in the form of three kinds of ‘emergency education kits’ to schools. There was a Classroom Kit, containing “pens, pencils, slates, exercise books and other materials for 200 children and 4-5 teachers”. There was a Head Teachers Kit containing “sport materials, simple science materials, a map of Africa, a clock and paper for making drawings of maps”. There was also an Emergency Education Kit, which comes in a backpack and was designed to serve

one teacher and 50 students. The idea is that the teacher “can set up a classroom anywhere and teach for three to six months. And then, after that, we see”.<sup>10</sup> The second prong was related to the first: a ‘global’ approach, which the UNICEF official characterized as “doing something everywhere” – in this case, providing Classroom Kits to as many schools in southern Sudan as possible. The third prong was to intensify education activities in particular areas based on the area’s security, accessibility and needs.

Aspects of their ‘third prong’ work are suggested in documents, such as the July 2003 Monthly Report for UNICEF’s southern Sudan Operations. It includes descriptions of the agency’s training of Parent-Teacher Association members in school management, a refresher training course for primary school teachers and a Life Skills programme, which “targets children in and out of school, especially adolescent girls” (UNICEF, 2003: 2). A featured component of the third prong, the senior UNICEF official explained, was the Village Girls’ School Project (VGSP), based on the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) model developed in Bangladesh. The project aims, a UNICEF official stated, “to complete primary grades 1-4 in three years of schooling”. The non-formal education approach is targeted almost entirely at girls, the rationale of which was described in a UNICEF publication:

“Parents feel reluctant to send their daughters to a distant school, and besides, the long hours spent in regular schools, in [parents’] views, deprive young girls from their roles in the family to look after younger siblings and take care of domestic chores as assigned by parents. The VGSP sets out to address these silent but yet important factors that hinder girls education in the remote areas of southern Sudan” (Acharjee and Dabi, 2002: 1).

A UNICEF official further explained why girls must be targeted: “The enrolment of girls in southern Sudan is so low that it must be our focus”. The project is underway, but the implications of this approach – community-based schooling for the early primary school years targeting girls – do not yet appear to be well understood. How such an approach, where girls are involved in these schools while nearly all boys are not, will

10. For general discussions of the value of pre-packaged educational kits in emergency settings, see Sinclair (2001: 57-66) and Nicolai (2003: 78-83).



impact on overall educational attendance, retention and learning among boys and girls in areas where quality education is a rare or unknown commodity, is a question that would seem to require careful study.

While UNICEF's extensive education contributions are considered to have been generally positive, the programming and co-ordination that UNICEF aimed to deliver in support of a demobilization of ex-child soldiers in 2001-2002 in Rumbek is viewed with disappointment. It followed on the heels of a conference there in 2000, which produced a publication of high production quality (UNICEF, 2000*b*). Weak co-ordination problems and disorganization plagued their contribution (Save the Children, 2002). The schools they set up in Rumbek for ex-child soldiers, one official who was involved in the activity recalled, "drained local schools of teachers because UNICEF paid them US\$50 a month to teach at their schools".

#### ■ Curriculum quandaries

The SOE's development of their New Sudan Curriculum is a recent initiative that remains an unfinished product. Some of the primary grade syllabi textbooks and teacher guides have been developed. The SOE has been directly involved in the development of the Accelerated Learning Programme that will be described in the Akon case. The SOE admits that, even after some primary grade curriculum materials are ready to be used, one of two problems surface: either "schools do not have copies" of the New Sudan materials, or schools "desire to present their pupils" for the primary leaving examinations (PLEs) of neighbouring countries – namely, Kenya and Uganda. Of the two, the depth of connection is historically stronger with Uganda's curriculum, which is known by some as the 'East Africa Curriculum'. "Only 48 per cent of [primary] schools are currently using the New Sudan curriculum" (Secretariat of Education, 2003: 9).

Curriculum choice can be haphazard or creative. One international agency official recalled how their logistics officer decided on which set of textbooks and teacher guides to send to a particular school. The decision was based on which materials were the easiest to procure and transport (Kenya's materials won, in the end). A Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organization (NRRDO) official described the curriculum used in the Nuba Mountains as "a mixture of the Kenyan, New Sudan, and Ugandan curricula". A Comboni Missionary priest described their approach to the uncertain situation. "Since we don't have a point of

reference for curriculum choice, each Comboni missionary decides on education curriculum and education standards issues themselves”. In one IDP camp, in Tambura, western Equatoria, Southern Sudanese arriving from government-held areas wanted to set up their school in the only curriculum they knew – that of the Government of Sudan. The teachers were qualified, but had only taught in Arabic. In Tambura, they were informed that they would have to teach in English, a (suggested) requirement for schooling in SPLA-held areas. The problem was that the teachers and students “couldn’t really speak English”. Although the teachers received some training from an international NGO, the level of English “is so low that the students can barely learn”. Although Tambura is many hundreds of kilometres from Kenya, the teachers and students were using materials from Kenya’s national curriculum, a fact that amazed the priest, who exclaimed, “I couldn’t believe when I discovered that the Kenyan curriculum was there”.

Steps towards altering this dynamic actually began years ago. In 1994, for example, a Curriculum Development Workshop for Southern Sudan was held. By 1999, Ruijter noted that the “achievements of the [Curriculum Steering Committee, formed in 1994] are commendable: new primary school syllabuses have been developed for the south for Primary 1 to 8 [and] teacher guides for nine subjects for lower primary [grades 1-3] have been developed and printed” (1999: 3). Progress has been made since that time as well, by a combination of actors and led by the SOE.

Nonetheless, Southern Sudanese schools using either the Ugandan or Kenyan national curricula are challenged to figure out how and where their students will sit for national examinations. Transporting students into Kenya or Uganda can be either prohibitively costly or out of the question. Education officials in Kenyan and Uganda can also express concerns. One official related how the Catholic Diocese in Rumbek has attempted to have their students “sit for exams in Kenya, but the Kenyan government didn’t accept it”. Kenyan officials are also concerned about allowing their national examinations to be delivered within southern Sudan, as they have expressed concern over “the poor paperwork and standards [inside southern Sudan] that are suspicious”. Hardly any school in southern Sudan has had a chance of taking the national examinations of either Uganda or Kenya. Many schools are fortunate to have any textbooks at all, as statistics listed earlier in this chapter revealed. SOE officials readily

admit that, after more than two decades of war, curriculum concerns are not, as one official related,

“[...] so significant to us. The medium of instruction is English. The point is that they’re learning. The most available curriculum is the one schools can use. What matters is what you have in hand”.

The issue of English as the language of instruction is a significant linking theme for education in southern Sudan, a tendency that has existed since the days of the Condominium. Sesnan explained the rationale: “It is important to emphasize that having good knowledge of English has always been seen by Southerners as their only way to succeed in a racially-biased Sudan” (1998: 61). In addition, the New Sudan curriculum draws significantly from other ‘East Africa’ curricula, namely those of Uganda and Kenya. Interviews with agency officials and Southern Sudanese in Sudan as well as in Uganda and Kenya strongly suggest a perception that the SOE’s emerging New Sudan curriculum materials are inferior to those of the established and internationally recognized curricula of Kenya’s and Uganda’s national governments.

#### ■ Teacher payment

There is no co-ordination of the pay scales of teachers in southern Sudan. The situation has led to spectacular differences in compensation and a confused landscape on the issue. The reported range is US\$2 per year (SOE, 2003: 7) to US\$1,800 per year (US\$150 per month, provided by the Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organization – NRRDO). The rationales underlying these two approaches are equally divergent. The justification for not paying teachers either a salary or an incentive is drawn from the idea that supporting teachers with outside funds fuels dependency, is unsustainable and expensive, does not emphasize community ownership and should not be carried out when most SPLM government officials and SPLA soldiers are not being paid. Parent Teacher Associations are expected to pay teachers instead. The result of the “unpredictable and inequitable” pay, in addition to its low level, is “reflected in [teacher] absenteeism and shortening of the academic year” (SOE, 2003: 7). The highest end of the pay scale is represented by the NRRDO, which recruits certified teachers from Uganda and Kenya to work at schools in the Nuba Mountains. An NRRDO official stated the rationale

for paying teachers a wage well beyond the level that, reportedly, all other southern Sudan schools pay:

“We are very behind in education in the Nuba Mountains. We’re not well equipped. So we’re trying to push up education with the little that we have. We got some donors to fund what we call model schools. Because there were not any good teachers in the Nuba Mountains, we recruited Kenyan and Ugandan teachers to push up education there. From 1983 until 1998, there were no schools in the Nuba Mountains at all”.

The implications of paying some teachers very little and others significantly more will be examined in the case studies of education in Akon and Narus, respectively.

#### ■ School feeding

The provision of food to schools is both popular and controversial. The programme of delivering food to schools (generally where NGOs are already operating) is thought to dramatically increase both enrolment and retention. However, this has proven to be a double-edged sword. A World Food Programme (WFP) official recalled that: “There were objections from [an international NGO] and the SPLM that school feeding was attracting children from other schools which could have been thriving if not for the school feeding programme”. The official believed that “there’s a fear that food comes first, so it can spoil both kinds of schools – overloading schools receiving the school feeding programme and depleting schools that don’t receive food. Teachers are also taken out of classes to both serve the food to children and organize the children” in preparation for receiving a meal. The dynamic impacts of WFP’s supplying of schools with food will be examined in the Akon case below.<sup>11</sup>

11. For a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of school feeding programmes in emergency and reconstruction settings, see Meir (2005) and Baxter (2005).

## Education in northern Bahr el Ghazal – the case of Akon Payam

### *A tortuous war experience*

Akon Payam, in Gogrial County, northern Bahr el Ghazal, is an excellent candidate for a detailed examination of education amidst conflict in southern Sudan. Northern Bahr el Ghazal, homeland to hundreds of thousands of Dinka, had remained a consistent focal point of the civil war, and the experience of civilians from northern Bahr el Ghazal provides a compelling optic on Sudan's civil war and the struggle to provide some sort of formal education to Southern Sudanese children.

Before turning to the education of the area, a brief review of its experience of war since 1983 is useful. The first major catastrophe to rock northern Bahr el Ghazal was also one of modern history's worst famines. The two primary causes of the famine were raiding by Northern forces and those allied with the Khartoum government (often "in combination with scorched-earth army tactics") and expanding insecurity (Keen, 1994: 114). The period of this initial famine was 1983 through 1988. At its peak in 1988, David Keen writes that "death rates among (mostly Dinka) famine victims in Bahr el Ghazal were among the highest recorded anywhere in the world" (Keen, 1994: 111).

Keen argues that a contributing factor to the widespread death and dislocation caused by the famine was the slow and largely inadequate response by Western donor nations. Donor nations were for the most part: hesitant to criticize the Sudanese government and the relationship between their war tactics and the famine until "the winter of 1988/89" (Keen, 1994: 116); "largely accepting [of] government definitions" of what areas were accessible to famine relief (Keen, 1994: 118); and failing to take sufficient steps "to ensure that [relief] was actually received by famine victims" (Keen, 1994: 119). The famine of northern Bahr el Ghazal (which spread into southern Kordofan and Darfur) and the international community's tardy and limited response to it were central causes of the founding of OLS. Early efforts by the OLS have been praised by some, such as Weiss and Minear, who comment that OLS "helped avoid the widespread starvation and displacement that had occurred in the Sudan during 1986-88" (2003: 198).

Keen further notes that attacking Dinka civilians in northern Bahr el Ghazal constituted a central component of the Sudanese government's war strategy. The Dinka were core SPLA supporters and occupying the SPLA in Bahr el Ghazal provided the opportunity to gain "access to unexploited oil" in other areas of southern Sudan (1994: 113). But it was the nature of this war strategy that opened up a particularly devastating war tactic against the Dinka of Bahr el Ghazal. The Baqqara (also spelt Baggara) of Kordofan and Darfur lived along the border of Dinka lands to the north, and had themselves endured a history of economic marginalization, drought and famine (de Waal, 1993: 146). By joining the notorious *Murahalin* militias and raiding Dinka villages in Bahr el Ghazal beginning in 1986, "Baggara frustrations were channelled against the south" (Keen, 1994: 113).

An international aid worker explained another method of collaboration. "The train running to Wau", the expert explained, was "utilized to resupply soldiers from the North". Militias "on horseback, with robes and swords" would ride alongside the train during its trip to Wau, guarding against ambush. Once the train was safely in the Wau garrison town, the militias – principally *Murahalin* – "would raid villages, take slaves, destroy crops, and kill civilians". Prendergast *et al.* also note that "the majority of slaves were taken from the [northern] Bahr al-Ghazal area within a certain radius of the rail line from Babanusa to Wau" (2002: 123). Estimates of the total number of slaves taken range from 5,000, according to the Government of Sudan, to 200,000, according to some NGOs (2002: 122).

These descriptions of the *Murahalin* militias and their activities align with those given by villagers interviewed in northern Bahr el Ghazal. The efficiency of the *Murahalin* raids and the destruction and terror they inflicted stood out. The frequency of *Murahalin* raids is difficult to detect in documentation – Johnson, for example, notes that *Murahalin* raids reached their peak in 1986-1987 (de Waal, 1993: 122). But many of those interviewed in Bahr el Ghazal are far more precise: from the mid-1980s until 2002, the *Murahalin* raided Dinka villages in Bahr el Ghazal every year during the dry season.

Further terrors and hardship were visited on Bahr el Ghazal civilians by the "always unpredictable" Major Kerubino Kwanyin Bol (Johnson, 2003: 62). Kerubino was a former military officer in the first civil war

(Johnson, 2003: 61) and a founder of the SPLA who was “known for his prowess on the battlefield” (Adeba, 1998: 1). In 1987, Kerubino was arrested and put into detention by SPLA’s Commander-in-Chief, John Garang for allegedly plotting a coup against him (Human Rights Watch, 1998: 1). Escaping to Uganda and onwards to Kenya in 1992, he eventually made his way to northern Bahr el Ghazal in 1994, recruiting fighters from the surrounding population and aligning with Khartoum. From 1994 until 1997, Kerubino’s forces “mainly inflicted substantial damage on his own people” – Dinka civilians, primarily in Gogrial, Twic and Abyei Counties in northern Bahr el Ghazal (Human Rights Watch, 1998: 1). The subsequent famine there was “in fact a direct result of Kerubino’s atrocities on the civilian population” (Adeba 1998: 1). Tens of thousands reportedly perished during Kerubino’s reign of terror. By early 1998, Kerubino switched sides once again, re-joining the SPLA before falling out with Garang once again and attempting to “realign himself with the pro-government forces” (Sudan Update, 2004: 2). Kerubino met his end in factional fighting in September 1999 (Johnson, 2003: 125).

#### *History and hardship: education in Gogrial County*

The aftershocks of calamities caused by famines, Murahalin raids and fighting involving Kerubino (and others) were widespread. While the two famines twice emptied the population from the area, many survivors returned in the ensuing years, frequently more than once. Indeed, the larger picture for the people of northern Bahr el Ghazal is an extended pattern of forced displacements and returns. The only constant seemed to be the extreme suffering that nearly everyone suffered across the civil war years. A visit to the area around Akon, in Gogrial County, northern Bahr el Ghazal shed light on the combination of movement, hardship and loss, and illuminates how education withers when mere survival is paramount.

One purpose of interviews with local political and education leaders was to piece together the educational history of the area. The information is decidedly sketchy, being based on shared recollections. The first school in Gogrial County, northern Bahr el Ghazal was reportedly opened by Catholic missionaries in the 1920s. “By 1946”, a local leader recalled, education had come to the town of Akon, the capital of Akon Payam, in Gogrial County, where “people were teaching under the trees”. This was, apparently, the first formal education effort in the Payam. The first school building in Akon began in 1952, the local leaders and experts recalled.

Remnants of that building, which was never completed, remain in downtown Akon. When the independence era began, government reforms were immediately felt in the lone school in Akon Payam. The official day of rest switched from the Christians' Sunday to the Muslims' Friday. Catholic missionaries were "sent away" by the government. In addition, "with the missionaries being forced out", one leader recalled, "most of the schools [in Gogrial County] collapsed". The leaders added that Southern Sudanese teachers working in government schools "were never promoted", while Arab teachers moved ahead: "All the headmasters were Arabs", one explained.

There was a strong belief that schooling in southern Sudan remained scarce and inadequate by intention, since an uneducated population would be less likely to rebel against the new government in Khartoum. In addition, the new curriculum and language of instruction that arrived in the south in 1956 was "translated from the British education system [into Arabic] and with Islam and the history of northern Sudan added to it". The education reforms that followed the end of the first civil war in 1972 were slow to arrive in Akon, the leaders recalled. In subsequent years, however, a revised curriculum arrived, together with a combination of Southern and Arab teachers. Two schools were re-started in Akon Payam during this period.

Everything changed in 1983. The second war started and schooling ended. Many Southern teachers joined the SPLA's ranks. During these initial war years, the Sudanese government retained a presence in Akon. As a result, as one leader explained,

"Teachers and everybody else left [the immediate area]. There was nothing else to do. If you went into Akon town, you were arrested as a spy. You couldn't work in town, either [...]. If they [government officials] found four or five local people meeting together, they might suspect that you were part of the [SPLA] resistance, kill you, and dump your body. We have really suffered."

There are undoubtedly other renditions of this early history of the current civil war in Akon. But they were difficult to uncover within the constraints of the fieldwork period, either in Akon or elsewhere. For many of the Akon Payam residents who were interviewed, it was often difficult to know just who was attacking, evidently because people fled for their



lives in the wake of a series of attacks. “Most people from Akon Payam were running from place to place”, one leader recalled, although it appears that most who fled nonetheless remained in the general area. “Villages were being demolished and set on fire, cattle was being raided, children and women were being abducted, and men were being killed”. It appears that government soldiers may have been part of these raids at times, but the Murahalin militiamen were most often mentioned. More recently, there were Kerubino’s attacks to endure as well. Visiting a village near Akon, for example, residents pointed out the foxholes that some of Kerubino’s men had used to fire at villagers who were attempting to return to their homes.

Remarkably, it appeared that attempts to reconstitute learning environments for primary school-age children continued whenever residents managed to return to their homes (and before they fled again). One resident recalled the regular pattern of fleeing and then resettling, only to flee once again, in the following way:

“This part of the southern region is on the front line: it’s near the Arabs. The Murahalin come especially in the winter [the dry season]. They come and raid cows, abduct children, and steal any property they like. So people run away, moving up and down [within the general area] and hiding from the Murahalin. Then they come back to their homes and restart their schools.”

Schools were also periodically bombed; how often was unclear, but it appeared that the threat of bombardment helped keep many children from attending school in Akon. This, one education official explained, was due to the fact that “schools in the towns have iron sheets”. Such iron sheeting makes for easy targets for bombers flying overhead. Learning in the open air, under trees or in houses, regardless of how difficult the physical circumstances became, was preferable, since it lessened fears of an aerial attack.

Eleven teachers interviewed together surmised that schooling didn’t really get started in any organized way until 1987, when “people had to start school again from the beginning”. In 1988, when the first severe famine of the war hit northern Bahr el Ghazal, “school stopped”, since “there was no food anywhere”, but started again the following year. This stop-and-start education appears to have taken place without any

connection to education efforts that may have taken place elsewhere. The impact of such efforts, in educational terms, appears to have been miniscule, particularly since teachers, among others, were rotating in and out of Ethiopia. “Some would go to Ethiopia to be trained for the [SPLA] military”, one Akon resident explained. “When they returned, others would go”. In the midst of this period of tremendous instability, Operation Lifeline Sudan began to make its presence felt, if only from the air. In 1989, the World Food Programme began dropping food to famine survivors in Akon. The following year, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) arrived on the ground with a feeding programme for malnourished children.

The bare bones of what might be called a very localized education ‘system’ in Akon Payam began in 1989. A returning education professional explained this particular history in the following way. “The SPLM asked me to volunteer as an education officer for Akon Payam. Until now, I have never received any salary for this work. It’s a contribution to the movement”. The education professional then explained his method for establishing a series of what appears to be the most rudimentary of schools:

“First, I asked the leaders of each village to meet. I would explain the use of education. After they would accept [to support education], I would tell them to build the Tukuls [traditional houses]. Then I had to bring in teachers from the community; that is, those who could read and write. Through this process, I succeeded in opening 24 schools.”

The education professional emphasized the point that “there were no salaries” available for any education personnel – a situation that remains the case nearly everywhere in southern Sudan to this day. Teachers in Akon Payam and elsewhere might occasionally receive in-kind support from communities or international agencies, or nothing at all. Either way, teachers interviewed related how they must support themselves through work outside of teaching. Some of the schools in Akon Payam, the education official recounted, “were unlucky to have teachers with very little knowledge”. To be sure, in a place where few adults had ever had a chance to attend primary school, those who had received some education were probably easy to identify. The education professional surmised that the relative handful of adults who had completed at least a year of post-primary education “could teach”, while those who had finished the fourth grade of primary school “could only teach the ABCs and other things they could

remember”. Some teachers had fewer than four years of primary school education. But in all cases, the purpose of teaching was the same: “The little things that the teachers know, they have to give them out” to students.

Bereft of school materials or facilities of any kind and with volunteer teachers, most of whom had had scarcely any education themselves, much less any teaching experience, the education professional had precious little to work with. Accordingly, teacher training began with finding out whether the volunteer teachers “could write ABCs and numbers”. This was done by asking a teacher to use a stick to “write what they know” in the ground. The second training task was to develop lesson plans. For most teachers, this amounted to the following:

“For the first day, the students would learn how to write the letter A. For maths, they would learn about the number one. Then on the second day, the students would revise what they learned on the first day [that is, A and one], and then learn the letter B and the number two. And so on.”

However paltry the lessons were, the education professional explained,

“It is better than nothing. What else is there to do? The students must do something. They may learn all the sounds of the letters, but to learn words, they will need another teacher who knows more. You see, we are strugglers. If students can spell words, then they can get their education started.”

This is heroic work. Regularly confronting extraordinary trials and frequently facing desperate circumstances, the communities of Akon Payam stand out as an illuminating testament to the degree to which Southern Sudanese value formal education in a region that has had the slightest of formal educational offerings available to them across their history.

In an effort to enhance educational quality by recruiting more qualified teachers, the education professional turned to the armed forces. Beginning in 1994, he “asked SPLA to release people from the military” to teach in these schools – a policy that the SPLA apparently decided to carry out across much of the regions they controlled. He submitted a list of names of soldiers who had at least some primary school education and came from Akon Payam to SPLM officials. Those on the list who had become

military officers, he explained, refused to demilitarize. However, many of “those on the front lines, who had less education, wanted to come home to teach”. In other words, only the most poorly qualified returned to teach in schools.

### *Enter the internationals*

How do you start supporting education in a place where it scarcely exists? What should the priorities be, particularly when access to remote areas and levels of revenue and expertise are minimal? Arriving in Akon in 1994, Save the Children in the United Kingdom (SCUK) arrived to begin providing limited assistance to education in Akon Payam.

From the outset, SCUK had to make a decision: whether to provide what might only amount to a nominal amount of education to many schools or comparatively enhanced education for a relative handful. They chose the latter: SCUK works in three of the 22 schools in Akon Payam. In terms of educational assistance, however, SCUK is not quite the only show in town. UNICEF had delivered a finite amount of education materials to most if not all of the 22 schools (it was not clear just how far the materials extended). Educational assistance from other international agencies has also arrived in Akon Payam, but it appears to have gone only to the three schools where SCUK had already established a presence. By far the most significant of these agencies is the World Food Programme (WFP), which has established its School Feeding Programme at the three ‘SCUK’ schools. Schools receiving support from SCUK, in other words, effectively receive a package deal: Nearly all international agency support follows where SCUK already works.

At first glance, SCUK’s decision to work in only three schools in the Payam may sound harsh. But it is not. Equipped with limited access, funds and capacity, SCUK, like all other international agencies supporting education in southern Sudan, are forced to make difficult decisions. And similar to other agencies in other parts of the region, they chose to invest their time and money in establishing a foothold of educational quality in Akon Payam. As one SCUK official explained, the decision was really not that complicated:

“It’s better to have a few schools that have some quality education. So we give them all the resources. Otherwise, there would be no

quality education anywhere in the Payam. Since we cannot bring every school on board, we have to have a limit on the number of students who register for schools we support.”

If the decision to invest in educational quality over providing broader access appears straightforward, the challenge of deciding which schools to work with is an understandably sensitive issue, and tends to put education officials, local and international alike, on the spot. The suggested criteria for deciding which schools SCUK and other international agencies should work with is ‘community support’. One official working for an international agency explained that educational support is provided “only to schools that the local education authorities identify”. But a local education official countered this contention by suggesting that the “the other 19 schools in Akon Payam have community support, but those communities don’t have enough funds to provide enough support”. As a result, the official contended that “the schools where SCUK works are in densely populated areas”. What seems to have resulted is that schools in communities that appear to be comparatively better organized and more committed to investing in education than other schools in the area received SCUK support. But this result may be caused at least partly by the fact that they have comparatively more resources to donate to the education effort. Schools in the poorest (and remotest) communities, in other words, might find it particularly difficult to become candidates for educational support from international agencies. At the same time, as will be described shortly, not all of a community’s students are necessarily excluded from the educational benefits that SCUK and other international agencies direct to other communities and schools.

#### ■ Education programme structure

SCUK’s essential objective is “to enhance educational provision for children affected by conflict and disaster in terms of access, relevance and quality, with particular attention given to girls” (SCUK, 2003a: 1). There are five stated elements of their education strategy for their work in northern Bahr el Ghazal and the Upper Nile:

1. “a community-based participatory approach”;
2. providing educational supplies;
3. actively encouraging the enrolment of children into schools, with particular attention paid to increasing the enrolment of girls;

4. an emphasis on enhancing educational quality “through teacher training, programme learning, monitoring and evaluation and collaboration” with other education actors in southern Sudan; and
5. integrating advocacy for “favourable policies and good practice in education service provision at local and national levels” (SCUK, 2003a: 1).

Among the central features of SCUK’s approach were:

- conducting a 3.5 month teacher training course (the UNICEF/OLS ‘Phase’ training module) for teachers at schools that SCUK was supporting;
  - carrying out one-day workshops for Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) that must be present at each school where SCUK works;
  - conducting two-day workshops with students to provide information about the programme and obtain the views of students on relevant subjects;
  - “provid[ing] and distribut[ing] comprehensive school supplies” to all schools (SCUK, 2003a: 4);
  - sharing information and, where possible, co-ordinating with relevant actors “to enhance collaboration and delivery of services” (SCUK, 2003a);
  - increasing the enrolment and retention of girl students; and
  - piloting, developing and expanding the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP). The ALP is an ambitious effort to educate out-of-school children between the ages of 12 and 18 by teaching them the SOE’s eight-year primary education curriculum in four years.
- Five challenges

What does SCUK’s effort in Akon Payam look like on the ground? Before turning to five challenges that have surfaced there, three observations are pertinent:

First, SCUK works virtually in a void – there are no other NGOs and no UN agency (such as UNICEF) leading education efforts in the areas where they are working, and very few in neighbouring areas. In addition, SCUK has chosen to work in places that are particularly unstable; quite unlike NGOs and UN agencies working in southern Bahr el Ghazal (in the area of Rumbek in particular) and western Equatoria. After nearly

two decades of almost no education available to the residents of Akon Payam, SCUUK has had to start practically from scratch.

Second, in a great many cases, the assistance that Southern Sudanese seek is not necessarily what international agencies are prepared to provide. While this disconnect arose in Akon Payam, it appears to be a common theme not only in most other places where Southern Sudanese receive educational services from international agencies in the region, but across many emergency and post-war contexts as well. This issue is boldly illustrated in the issue of compensating war-affected teachers, Southern Sudanese and otherwise, a subject that surfaces in the forthcoming discussion. It also surfaces in the discussion of community mobilization, which also follows. It can arise on still other issues as well, such as when local educationalists prioritize the expansion of educational access while international agencies emphasize educational quality (see, for example, Sommers, 1996).

Third, a theme that is related to the community-international agency disconnect suggested above is that the assistance that SCUUK supplies is not necessarily used in the ways that it was intended. WFP's food, for example, can bring students to school, but it cannot make them learn. In other words, the promise of receiving food at school significantly enhances interest in attending that school. But increased demand, as this case illustrates, may overwhelm the school's educational capacities and threaten educational quality – a primary purpose of SCUUK's work in Akon Payam. It may also threaten the attendance of girls in school, another focal SCUUK objective. Both of these issues are described in the subsequent discussion.

#### ■ Community mobilization

In a place as ravaged by war and famine as Akon Payam, the fact that most communities will not receive support for their schools was bound to create difficulties, jealousy and resentments. Speaking with officials responsible for promoting the 'mobilization' of communities revealed the limits of the community-based approach endorsed by SCUUK and other international agencies. The idea, one SCUUK official explained, is for "NGOs to supplement the efforts that already existed" in communities. Unfortunately, as reviewed above, finding much evidence of schooling prior to the arrival of NGO inputs was difficult. Education of some sort did exist, but it was sporadic and, unavoidably, of low quality.

Of particular interest to international NGOs and UNICEF, the official continued, was “mobilizing communities to build schools and pay teachers”. But the official admitted that “community mobilization is actually a big problem”. While “some communities are very serious and committed” to actively supporting education, others are not. Almost inevitably, the issue of community commitment circled back to whether or not a community’s efforts would ultimately meet WFP’s Food for Work and School Feeding Programme requirements. “We tell communities that if they don’t construct classrooms, we cannot give them things like Food for Work” from WFP, an NGO official explained. Furthermore, “unless the school buildings are well constructed, with cooking and eating facilities [in addition to classrooms], it’s a waste of time.” In addition, the official explained that “in our version of community mobilization, the community should give some support to teachers, donating a little money from each household”. The support is “very little” and may only occur, at most, twice a year. Each time, the total amount a teacher receives “is enough only to buy washing powder”.

Persuading communities to build school compounds and occasionally provide funds for their teachers is a tall order in at least five ways. First, it calls for communities to contribute part of their scarce labour and resources to building schools and supporting teachers, in the hope that the school will receive, at the very least, WFP support. Yet even if they do construct a compound, it may not necessarily mean that WFP’s support will automatically arrive. What a community considers a sufficient level of construction, for example, may not align with WFP’s requisite specifications. As a result, the community may view such an investment as a bit of a gamble. Second, the community development concept explained here appears to have arisen from the application of traditional development concepts (originating from peacetime situations) to war-affected communities. Yet while community development generally presumes that communities are functional, some war-affected communities may be dysfunctional and thus unable to organize themselves either effectively or consistently. Third, community mobilization efforts take place in communities where very few adults (sometimes none at all) have gone to school. Largely unfamiliar with education themselves, communities are nonetheless pressed to invest limited time and resources towards something – school – of which they have very little firsthand experience. Fourth, the power relationship between international agencies (the NGOs’ community



mobilizers and WFP's programmers) and community members appears to be essentially vertical. It may be the international agency advocates, often together with local officials and leaders, who are urging communities to build schools for their children. Fifth, as will be discussed below, there is as yet little evidence of educational quality in most parts of southern Sudan. Parents and other community members may be unconvinced that their efforts, even if WFP arrives, will yield the sort of educational result that one might expect from a fairly significant investment of time and resources. Taken together, it is perhaps not surprising that community mobilization efforts, in Akon Payam and elsewhere, tend to meet with mixed results.

While the ultimate goal of SCUUK (and other NGOs) is "community ownership of schools", many agencies working on education in southern Sudan seem to want communities to respond to their advocacy for education, and their promises of support for education, in a particular way. As one NGO official explained: "The people [in Sudanese communities] have to be sensitized. They have to realize that the schools belong to them". A source of frustration for education agency officials is that they frequently do not. As the official explained:

"When we try to sensitize a community, I know community members are thinking, 'well, you get a salary and we don't'. But there's nothing else to do: either we convince them [to build school facilities] or we try to find another strategy."

In a sense, such interactions involving agency officials and community members are tragic because the evidence largely suggests that both parties are on the same side. Officials and community members alike stated clearly that they wanted Southern Sudanese children to learn. Communities in Akon Payam demonstrated this prior to the arrival of SCUUK and WFP, when they supported instruction for their children, as related above. However, that support was not for school institutions, but rather for the education of their children. This is not a small distinction. Building an institution is much more costly, and entails a degree of administration and support that simple instruction does not. Nonetheless, the difficulties that agencies and communities both face are due in no small part to a truly compelling lack of funding to support schools for Southern Sudanese children. This consistent shortfall has, unfortunately, contributed to often

challenging relationships and what appeared to be regular misunderstandings and frustrations.

One result of the limited availability of funding was that it inspired criticism of NGOs that are present and working with communities and thereby bear the brunt of criticism from community members. Some NGO officials expressed their frustration caused by working to develop a degree of educational quality with limited funds and little support from other agencies. As one official stated, “It is still very difficult for donors to be convinced to support development programmes [such as education]. They’re only committed to relief support [such as food aid]”.

At the same time, some residents of Akon Payam, as well as Sudanese working for international agencies, were critical of NGO behaviour. Some suspected that NGOs were profiting significantly from their work in southern Sudan – a suspicion related by Southern Sudanese elsewhere in the region – reserving much more funding for salaries and overhead than support for Southern Sudanese directly. This might naturally have surfaced as a problem, given the policies of many international agencies to emphasize capacity-building measures. It may have appeared that Southern Sudanese were being asked to sacrifice, not the agency workers. Regardless of whether this state of affairs was avoidable or not, it did not seem to strike many of those interviewed in Akon Payam as particularly fair. It was also the case that, inevitably, schools not receiving assistance from international agencies complained to local education and political officials. One stated that officials from schools that are not receiving SCUUK support regularly ask them: “Why are we forgotten? We don’t have things like Akon Primary does”. SCUUK’s emphasis on quality, in other words, is almost bound to summon complaints from those schools that could not receive their support. This created an uncomfortable situation for local officials.

It should be noted that most critiques were directed at NGOs generally, not towards any particular NGO. In addition, critiquing NGOs was a tendency that Southern Sudanese expressed in other locations as well. As one Southern Sudanese official in Akon admitted, “NGOs are the ones we complain about because we are close to them”. Furthermore, it may well have been that the critiques were partly an outgrowth of mounting frustration at the sheer length of the war and a pronounced sense that the trials of Southern Sudanese have been forgotten by much of the outside world.

Finally, it is notable that these criticisms were generally reserved for the perceived shortcomings of those on the ground. Those agencies that were not present were targets of criticism much less often.

The fact that the people of Akon were desperate for assistance was not a good starting place for negotiating priorities. A community mobilization meeting, consisting of local education and political leaders and international NGO representatives, illuminates both the significant power differential between international agency officials and community leaders and differences in perspective separating how communities and international agencies may perceive of educational challenges and potential solutions. The meeting was led by an official from an incoming international NGO, who had returned to Akon to further investigate whether and how to support education in Akon Payam. Working in concert with SCUK and WFP, this NGO shared the philosophy of developing quality education in a finite number of schools. Their programme, the official explained, concentrated on “constructing or renovating selected schools”; building the capacities of Parent-Teacher Associations (or School Management Committees), which “often don’t know their roles”; and helping schools and their communities “develop income generating projects that are managed by the PTAs or School Management Committees”. Explaining that the official’s NGO was contemplating expanding their work to Akon, where SCUK had already started their activities, the official explained that “We have a hub and spoke model” for educational development: “You start at the hub, or good school, where there’s some capacity”. The metaphor might suggest that the next step would be to expand the work to other schools. But the official was quite aware that the opposite had already occurred in Akon Payam: that “students from under-the-tree schools [that is, the tiny community schools not receiving international agency support] will attend the hub school” – that is, Akon Primary School, the school already receiving much of SCUK’s attention. From the outset, then, the NGO’s model for community engagement did not apply to Akon Payam. In addition, as will be shown, the international official leading the community mobilization meeting would seek to impart a sense of community ownership for his agency’s educational investments while retaining central decision-making powers. In contrast, the leaders of Akon, an impoverished, war-affected community, did not appear to have many bargaining chips at their disposal.

The purpose of the meeting was, as the NGO official explained, “to see if Akon Primary would mobilize to help improve the school structures”. “We want to know what the community and [my NGO] can do for Akon Primary School”, the official continued. What ensued was a long and expansive discussion. Local officials sought a significant degree of financial investment from the NGO. One official stated the need to create dormitories, to make Akon Primary a boarding school. Others added a number of other structures to the list: more classrooms, a dining hall, a kitchen, storerooms, staff offices, latrines, a chapel, a library, and so on. In case there would not be enough funds to construct all of these structures, local officials then debated how to prioritize what should be built first.

Indeed, issues relating to equity and priorities threaded their way through much of the meeting. It eventually emerged that the international NGO was willing to contribute construction materials that would need to be brought in. However, there was an expectation that local materials and labour should be provided by the Akon community. Local leaders asked whether local labourers could be paid with a Food for Work programme from WFP. One local official, however, had heard that “in Rumbek, there was a construction company building schools”. Could a similar company carry out the work in Akon? That was not going to be possible, the NGO official informed them, nor was paying for unskilled labour. Supplying construction tools and requesting Food for Work from WFP, however, was possible. An elderly local official, however, expressed the following worry: “But sometimes, WFP will not come.”

Next, discussion turned to activities that could generate income for the school and community. Local officials supplied their suggestions: a tractor, a boat to navigate the river, a grinding mill. All interested users would be charged a fee, they explained. There were proponents for all three options, but the grinding mill was particularly notable because of the additional connection to the attendance of girls. “A grinding mill can help girls go to school”, one official explained. Since girls must stay home to pound food that is either harvested or donated by WFP (it is, the official later related, “girls’ work”), a grinding mill would allow girls to attend school more regularly. Subsequent discussions with women in Akon Payam revealed that different grains took different amounts of time to pound. Locally grown sorghum took the least amount of time. One *malwa* of sorghum, one woman explained, might take a girl three hours to pound.

WFP-donated maize, on the other hand, cannot be pounded in a day: “If you pound in one day for four hours, only a portion [of a malwa of maize] is ready” to be used in cooking as flour. Wheat, another grain that WFP donates, “is even more difficult to pound”.

The uncooked food rations that are regularly donated to Southern Sudanese communities that qualify for assistance by WFP, in other words, can result in a reduction of the school attendance of girls in school. The hierarchy of grains that was explained – wheat being the grain that may cause girls to miss the most school, followed by, in order, maize and then sorghum – suggests that, while WFP’s School Feeding Programme may succeed in attracting more girls to enrol in school, its general feeding distributions can affect how often they are able to attend.

The discussion of income-generating options was left to a future meeting. Talk shifted to the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), which SCUUK had helped organize and for which it had provided a training workshop. The PTA would need to be regularly responsible for organizing and supervising the contribution of community labour and materials, the management of any funds, the utilization of the international NGO’s donated materials and the distribution of Food for Work, should it arrive. The women officials attending the meeting begged off from being part of this work, since they were regularly invited to workshops sponsored by international agencies in other parts of southern Sudan. These workshops were regularly mentioned by local officials, as they were sources of training, enhanced prominence and funding (those attending workshops normally received a cash per diem, which many considered significant). As educated Southern Sudanese women, it appeared that these two officials were in high demand, since workshop organizers regularly sought women’s representation and qualified women were hard to find. As a result, one or both of the two women officials regularly left the area to attend workshops. A male official attending the meeting supported leaving the two women off the PTA’s emerging ‘Building Committee’ since “we can’t elect a person who is always flying around.”

Led by the international NGO official, the local officials eventually arrived at a number of 19 people in Akon who would be put on the PTA’s Building Committee. The issues that the NGO official needed to accomplish were attained. The community members’ priorities and requests for material support were sublimated and packaged to meet the constraints and priorities

of the NGO. The decision-making power at this community mobilization meeting ultimately rested with the international NGO. A future meeting would be scheduled when the NGO official could return. Finally, an elderly local official closed the meeting with the following request from the NGO official: “There is something missing from the meeting agenda. There are no health services in Akon. WHO is only doing polio control here. Please look for an NGO to come and help us.”

■ Access vs. quality

In southern Sudan, educational quality can be undermined in a multitude of ways. Faced with limited funds, teacher capabilities and training, with the promise of few if any supplies, textbooks, facilities or opportunities for advancement on the horizon, and usually supported by a severely compromised administrative system, schools mostly struggle just to exist. A visit to a school in Akon Payam that did not receive support from any international agency shed light on just how difficult the attainment of educational quality, in addition to broad access, can be.

Reaching the school required a boat ride across a river and a long walk. Among those walking in the other direction were students headed towards Akon Primary School. This is precisely what local officials anticipated that I would find. “On the way there”, one official had predicted, “you’ll be passing the intellectual students coming to Akon because the teaching isn’t good at their schools”. “The children defect to the SCUK-supported schools”, another had mentioned, “and this causes overcrowding”.

After I had hopscotched around the edges of marshes and huge mud puddles, passing family compounds and tall sorghum fields, the school finally came into view: three trees with shards of blackboard underneath and a flat compound consisting of low walls of an unfinished classroom block and staff office, both overgrown with weeds, and a tiny storeroom with a thatched roof. Having received a letter from the Assistant Education Officer the night before, students of the small school, the head teacher and five community elders (all men) patiently awaited my arrival beneath the largest tree on the school compound. The two other teachers at the school were not present. “I gave the teachers a holiday”, the head teacher explained, “because we are in the bush. There are no houses for the teachers to sleep in, and there is no food for the teachers to eat”. Attending school is entirely

voluntary. None had ever been trained. The head teacher and one of the absent teachers had both reached the first year of secondary school in Khartoum. The head teacher had returned to his home “after hearing that my parents were in a desperate situation”. The third teacher was a primary school leaver. It was very rare, the head teacher explained, to find all three teachers at school at the same time.

Just after introductions, the conversation immediately addressed the school’s interest in attracting the attention and support of international agencies. “The WFP said they had no budget for food for this school”, the head teacher explained. “Save [the Children UK] is supposed to report which schools qualify for support to WFP, and then the WFP can provide”. Local education officials related that the community must build a latrine and classrooms before it would qualify for WFP’s desired School Feeding Programme. But the community members who built the classroom and staff office walls now wanted to be paid, in some way, to continue their work. Later, the community leaders and the head teacher carefully explained what they perceived as a kind of ‘Catch-22’. As the head teacher commented:

“The parents selected a committee to build the school. Now that committee needs to eat in order to build the store, latrines, and finish the classrooms. But we need food to finish the buildings [to use as payment]. We need food to hire people to go and bring the grass [to thatch the roofs].”

At the same time, the head teacher explained that “we need buildings to qualify for WFP’s food”. The school’s supporters were caught between a community that either could or would not contribute any more labour and agency regulations that could not be met without additional community contributions.

The school was a year old. It had the first three primary grade classes (known as P1, P2, and P3). There are actually two streams of P1: those students who didn’t know the alphabet are placed in P1-B, while those who already knew it are assigned to P1-A. Since there were four separate classes and only three teachers, “the teachers rotate” between them. The main student target group were “smaller children who can’t go to Akon Primary because they don’t know how to swim” across the river, the head teacher explained. “That is why we started a school here”. It is anticipated

that students who complete P3 at this primary school will be strong enough to swim across the river and attend Akon Primary School. The tiny bush school was thus a kind of unofficial feeder school for Akon Primary.

Once the school was established, the education officers for Akon Payam sent it 100 exercise books and pencils from a UNICEF contribution. In addition, the school received one textbook per subject. While the English textbooks for P2 and P3 were from the Kenyan syllabus, six other textbooks were from the New Sudan curriculum. The school had one textbook for P2. The others are borrowed from a student who had a small collection of textbooks.

While the school had 150 students on their enrolment lists (30 of whom were girls, or one fifth of the total enrolment), only 25 were present that day, 24 of whom were boys. Seven of the boys were orphans, a result, in part, of repeated attacks from Kerubino's troops in the mid-1990s. The head teacher estimated that students in his school ranged between ages nine and 15. While low attendance was common, one of the reasons for the low attendance that day involved an exercise that began the day before, when SPLA soldiers in the area came to the school and 'took' 17 boys and eight girls to carry food from the river across from Akon to Alek, reportedly a six-hour walk. More students were taken earlier on the day of the visit. Another girl student attempting to enter the compound during the school visit was 'caught' by an SPLA soldier and taken away to carry food to Alek. "Other students are still herding today in the bush, to avoid being taken by the SPLA to carry food", a community member explained. Whether the food the children were carrying was WFP-donated food, shares of local harvests given to the SPLA or some combination of the two could not be established. Leaving the school, accompanied by an escort of students, community leaders and the head teacher, we all saw a single file of children walking towards us, each with a sack of grain on his or her head, with an armed soldier walking just behind them. Seeing this, many of the older students ran away, to avoid being made to carry food.

The visit to this small, new primary school, which was not receiving assistance from international agencies, differed in most ways from the oldest and largest primary school in Akon Payam, Akon Primary School. All of the students at Akon Primary School had been exposed to at least some of the UNICEF/OLS 'Phase' training module. The average class size was over 100: one class visited had more than 150 students in a



classroom without a roof. It had a school feeding programme that fed not only students but teachers and support staff as well. Teachers reported being paid in food from the community following each harvest.

There were 88 schools in the seven Payams of Gogrial County by the time of the field visit for this research in the autumn of 2003. Only five of the 88 schools – one each in five Payams, none in the remaining two – contained all eight primary grades. 18,262 children attended school, of whom less than 16 per cent (2,479) were girls. An NGO official estimated that only 20-30 per cent of all school-age children were in school. The ratio of male to female teachers was six to one. Thirty-five per cent of the NGO's 423 teachers had received some degree of training. No secondary schools exist in Gogrial County. In fact, outside of the Government of Sudan-held garrison towns, the lone secondary school in all of Bahr el Ghazal was in Rumbek, far to the south of Akon.

In the context of Akon Payam, Akon Primary School had it all: moderately trained teachers, coverage in all eight grades, some school supplies and textbooks (a local education official explained that “at least three quarters of all students receive textbooks”) and, not least, WFP's famous and much-desired school feeding programme. It also was a site for SCUK's Accelerated Learning Programme, which will be considered below. Because of its stature and comparative advantages, Akon Primary was essentially a magnet school, attracting students from smaller primary schools in the vicinity, most of which struggled simply to survive. The situation of Akon Primary School thus illuminated how the efforts of SCUK, WFP and, quite likely, additional international agencies in the near future, to develop a degree of educational quality by concentrating all of their investments and efforts on a handful of schools could be threatened by the pressure to increase access to the schools they supported. Building up a small number of schools, in other words, shrunk the size of other schools by attracting ever larger numbers of students to the supported schools. As a result, thinly trained teachers were being asked to teach very large classes of children. The added pressure to expand educational access had compromised efforts to enhance educational quality.

#### ■ Educating girls

As in most other places in southern Sudan (and beyond), it has been unusually difficult to attract and retain large numbers of school-age girls

in school. It is a familiar challenge for those working in international education in many parts of the world, but one that has proven particularly daunting in places such as northern Bahr el Ghazal.

The crux of the challenge centred on the threat of a girl becoming pregnant as a student. The chances of protecting a girl from the threat of rape, or becoming involved with a boy or man, were thought to be much higher if the girl stayed at home rather than went to school. One education official summed up the local view by commenting: “It’s a matter of insecurity when girls are mixed with the boys”.

At the same time, according to the Dinka cultural traditions that held sway in Akon Payam and well beyond, educating daughters contains a potential benefit. “All wealth is based on daughters”, a local leader explained. When a daughter is married, her parents receive cows. “If a girl does not go to school”, one elderly man explained, “her parents can get 20, 30, 40 or even 50 cows”. However, if a girl attends school and does not become pregnant, she might then marry an educated man. In such cases, the daughter “can even bring in 100 cows” for her parents. A potential danger of sending a daughter to school is that, “if she becomes pregnant, the family receives no cows” from a marriage transaction. This is a considerable threat to a family, many explained, particularly if the girl’s family is poor. When that is the case, as it was for many in Akon Payam, the pressure from family members to protect and marry off daughters soon after they reach puberty was strong. In such cases, it would be difficult for a girl to have a chance to go to school. Families, in short, tended to be risk averse, choosing the safe bet (protecting daughters at home) over a risky investment (sending daughters to school).

There were two primary responses, from both local education officials as well as international agency officials, to the tendency of households to keep girls out of school. The first concentrated on persuasion. “In 1998, when Akon Primary re-started”, a local education official recalled, “there were no girls in the school”. As a result, education leaders “had to talk to the community to get girls to go to school”. Similarly, a SCUK official related how community members “need to be sensitized, conducting community workshops where people can debate such issues”. This approach was particularly unsuccessful for parents living far from schools, because, quite simply, “parents won’t allow their daughters to walk a long distance to school”. Through this approach, local and international officials agreed,

the parents' paramount concern of protecting their daughters was not adequately addressed. The response that emphasized persuasion was thus not considered especially successful.

The second response – creating schools for girls – was widely thought to yield success, even if only one girls' school existed in Akon Payam. This school, however, was peculiar, because it was not a primary school but a pre-school. All of the girls at this school were pre-pubescent. It was thus not a protection measure as much as a hopeful enticement to attract young girls to school. The pre-school (although it also taught the first year of primary school) was also unique because it considered itself a feeder school not to Akon Primary, just up the road, but to the Accelerated Learning Programme instead. "We want to send all of our students above age 10 to the ALP", a pre-school official explained. In other words, girls who might normally attend Akon Primary would instead wait until they were old enough to attend the Accelerated Learning Programme. The school has received school uniforms from SCUK and is a beneficiary of WFP's School Feeding Programme.

Providing pre-school exclusively to girls was both unusual and, to some observers, questionable. "A pre-primary school for girls?" an international education expert asked incredulously. It was the first the expert had ever heard of it. "It matters much more to promote the normality of children [that is, boys and girls] mixing together in school. It's very important not to make girls' education an issue until they reach puberty". In addition, the expert asked: "Why should primary schools be separated by gender? Nowhere in Africa is this true, but in southern Sudan, it's happening". This phenomenon is most clearly exemplified by UNICEF's Village Girls' School Project (VGSP) in southern Sudan, an accelerated learning programme exclusively for girls between the ages of 8 and 11. Outlines of the programme were provided earlier in this chapter.

### *Teachers*

The challenge of training teachers in northern Bahr el Ghazal (as well as Upper Nile) was succinctly addressed in a SCUK report that evaluated the training of teachers in three sites, Akon Primary School among them. The 'OLS/UNICEF 3-Phase Module' that was being employed at the training aimed to: improve the teachers' "knowledge and understanding of the school syllabus and curriculum"; enhance teaching

methods and classroom skills; and create a learning environment during the training period “whereby teachers can concentrate on their study, as well as interact and share ideas, concerns and suggestions...” (Kueth *et al.*, 2003: 3).

Nearly all of the trainees passed the final examinations that were given at the end of each of the three-phase courses. All of the teachers in Akon, for example, passed the Phase 2 exam, while only two failed the Phase 1 and 3 exams. However, the teacher profile suggested that serious teaching challenges persisted. Some trainees had themselves only completed the third or fourth year of primary school, and the literacy and numeracy skills of some trainees were “very low”. In addition, some trainees knew Arabic, not English, which was the language of instruction (Kueth *et al.*, 2003: 10). There were few women teachers, and since no teachers in Akon Payam were regularly paid, there were additional difficulties in ensuring that teachers regularly attended school. As one NGO official remarked, “teaching is a question of zigzag. They go to teach, but other times they divert from their activities”. According to this official, keeping teachers in school constituted yet another responsibility of communities. “The community has to mobilize the teachers so that they continue their work”, the official explained.

If the very low competencies of most teachers in southern Sudan were well-known, equally well-known was a near-constant teacher concern: the lack of payment for their work. “Everywhere I go”, one education official remarked in Akon Payam, “teachers ask about incentives. What we give them is not something that can solve their problem. It’s just enough to pay for soap”. “The lack of teacher salaries is an obstacle to education”, a community leader remarked. Since teachers don’t receive salaries, he continued, “they always scatter”. “The only problem that teachers face is the lack of incentives”, one teacher stated.

SCUK, like many other international agencies supporting education in southern Sudan, did not pay teachers incentives. The restrictions against providing cash to teachers or other local education personnel appeared to be mandated from their donors. A SCUK official explained the policy in the following way: “There are no cash payments to teachers in Akon or elsewhere” in southern Sudan “because the SOE can’t afford to pay teachers or any other actors in education because they have no resources. So they need to rely on donors”. But many donors were reluctant to pay teachers

and education administrators for their work when members of most other professions – from soldiers to Payam, County and Provincial personnel in SPLM-controlled areas (in addition to most SPLM officials) – receive no salaries.<sup>12</sup>

Nowhere in southern Sudan did this appear to be a popular policy within communities. Perhaps the most significant source of criticism was the widely recognized fact that the policy was decidedly inconsistent, thus inspiring the reaction that it was unfair as well. It was well known that some international agencies paid teachers in other parts of southern Sudan incentives (as well as teachers in refugee camps). Indeed, teacher incentives policies were distinctly unco-ordinated. Primary school teachers working for some Christian organizations, for example, might receive as much as US\$52 a month. A teacher working in the Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya could receive US\$39 a month. A secondary school headmaster working for the Diocese of Torit received US\$111 a month.<sup>13</sup> This lack of a co-ordinated approach to paying (or not paying) Southern Sudanese teachers remained a major constraint on efforts to enhance educational quality, since the volunteer nature of the profession in many parts of southern Sudan made it difficult to attract and retain sufficient numbers of committed teachers. Being paid, it should be noted, did not necessarily mean that teachers expressed satisfaction to visiting researchers. In most sites that were visited, teachers complained either that they received no incentive at all, or that the incentive level they received was much too low. Indeed, from the highest levels of the Secretariat of Education (SOE) of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) down to the school level, the issue of teachers and other education officials not being paid with international agency funding (or not being paid enough) was a prominent, and sensitive, issue.

The decision not to pay teachers was exacerbated by the fact that, in the view of at least some local officials, international agencies paid their own officials well and appeared to have significant resources in reserve. The comparatively well-provisioned bases where NGO and UN agency officials lived and worked, and the regular arrivals of airplanes, foreigners, supplies, food and petrol signified to some Akon Payam residents who were interviewed not just the cost of running assistance

12. This issue is considered in more detail in Sommers, 2002.

13. This data was drawn from Sommers, 2002: 19-20.

programmes in a remote, unstable area. By all appearances, agency officials were comfortable – perhaps too comfortable. From the perspective of SCUK and other agencies, on the other hand, these education and other projects were run on a shoestring. All agency workers could do was regularly communicate the policy of not providing teacher incentives – and weather the complaints that inevitably followed.

### *Curriculum*

As in most other parts of Sudan, the selection of a curriculum is not a matter of choice. Teachers and students use whatever textbook is available to them. If schools are using any textbooks in Akon Payam, they are most likely using textbooks from Kenya. A local education official explained that: “We’re using the Kenyan curriculum here. We give one copy to the teacher”. None go to the students. The exceptions are the SCUK-supported schools, which are mainly using the new curriculum being developed by the SPLM’s Secretariat of Education, with assistance from international agencies CARE US and its SBEP colleagues in particular. The new Accelerated Learning Programme is developing its own textbooks, based on the SOE’s New Sudan curriculum.

The availability of Kenyan textbooks in Akon is notable because the Kenyan border is nearly 1,000 kilometres away from Akon. It appears that small numbers of textbooks arrive with people entering the area via airplane from time to time. New Sudan textbooks are beginning to make their way into the area as well. Teachers at Akon Primary School related that SCUK brought New Sudan textbooks to their school for Primary school grade one (P1) through P3 in 2000, followed by textbooks for P4 through P6 in 2001, mathematics textbooks for P7 and P8 in 2002, and science textbooks for P7 and P8 in 2003. The New Sudan curriculum for primary school was completed at the end of 2004, although a Southern Sudanese education expert familiar with the process noted that “all the material seems to be in draft form and has not been published except for lower primary” (that is, P1-P4).

### *The Accelerated Learning Programme initiative (ALP)*

The Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) that surfaced in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and later in Zeraf Island, central Upper Nile, emerged following the UNICEF-led demobilization of child soldiers in

southern Sudan in 2001 (reviewed earlier in this chapter). Those child soldiers returning to their homes required education to facilitate their reintegration. Thirty-nine per cent of the 3,500 child soldiers were from the area of Northern Bahr el Ghazal where Akon is located (Aweil East). As this was already an area where SCUK was in operation, SCUK officials began to develop the ALP to respond to child soldier and other out-of-school youth needs there. It was the first NGO to develop an accelerated learning programme for youth in southern Sudan (SCUK, 2003b: 1). A SCUK official explained that UNICEF supports the programme and the SPLM's Secretariat of Education (SOE) "has blessed it." This is interesting evidence of the status of the SOE as a nascent Ministry of Education.

While the programme is still in the pilot phase (SCUK has developed the first two years of the curriculum and the CARE-led SBEP is slated to carry out the third and fourth year, with SCUK's input), the outlines of the ALP are useful to review. The concept is simple: condensing eight years of primary school education (following the SOE's New Sudan Curriculum) into four, reducing the weekday class time to four hours (either 8 a.m. to noon, or 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.), and offering students between the ages of 12 and 18 an opportunity to receive a primary education. Class size was capped at 50. The classes themselves are male-dominated: approximately 60 per cent are former child soldiers (who are all male youth), and the remainder are 20 per cent male and 20 per cent female out-of-school youth. An SCUK official reported that the ALP classes that were piloted in Malual Kon (north of Akon) had a boy-girl ratio of five to one. At the same time, an early finding during the pilot phase was that "the demand for these classes far outstripped supply, especially for out-of-school girls" (SCUK, 2003b: 2). While there were no classes reserved exclusively for girls, SCUK responded to the low female enrolment by starting a 'Social Advocacy Team' that used girl pupils to advocate for the enrolment of girls in the ALP.

A SCUK official explained that a working group comprised of SOE and SCUK curriculum experts developed the initial materials (for the first year of the programme). Incentives were paid to SOE contributors to this process. This in itself may not appear significant, but it took place while ALP teachers were not paid (and complained about it).

The course the working group designed is intensive, and calls for each student to have textbooks for all courses: mathematics, English, mother

tongue (in this case, Dinka in northern Bahr el Ghazal and Nuer in Upper Nile), science and social studies. A key element of the programme is supplying students with an “intensive input of supplies, especially textbooks, to ensure child-centred learning, reduce time copying from the blackboard and enable the children to keep up with the pace” (SCUK, 2003*b*: 2). But a SCUK document notes that “in true Southern Sudanese style”, many of students’ textbooks were ‘redistributed’ to students in primary school classes (ALP is based at SCUK-supported primary schools) “and to children who did not have *any* textbooks” (SCUK, 2003*b*: 2). This tendency to distribute school supplies is an example of how communities appear to favour enlarging access to education over the UN and international NGOs’ emphasis on concentrating supplies and capacity building within a limited number of schools.

Teacher capacity is limited: Visiting an English class for the first ALP level in Akon, for example, revealed a teacher who could barely speak English himself. The Akon classes met only twice a week. Demand may be high, but the total number of youth in the programme was 60, of whom only 10 were former child soldiers. The ALP, still small and in the pilot phase, also appears to be threatened by a wealth of good intentions. Even when the generally minimal capacities of teachers already constitute a significant constraint on the ability of students to advance swiftly through the intensive curriculum, there are plans to expand the ALP curriculum to include four additional subjects: peace education, conflict resolution, environmental education and HIV/AIDS education. Such plans may well undermine some of the worthy intentions of this promising and much-needed initiative, as it remains unclear how even minimal educational quality can be ensured when the load of courses will expand. Moreover, if additional courses increase the number of classroom hours, it may limit the ability for some girls to attend school. As a SCUK document warned, “even four hours [each day for ALP schooling] was too much time for [girls] to sit in a class” (SCUK, 2003*b*: 2).

### *Reflections on an ‘NGO’ education model*

This extended section on education in Akon Payam, Gogrial County, northern Bahr el Ghazal detailed one education case in an area of southern Sudan that has been overwhelmed by tragedy during the civil war. It highlights the challenges and difficult decisions of Save the Children UK. It is intended to be a representative case of NGO education work; the



principles it illustrates are not specific to SCUK. Like many other NGOs working in southern Sudan, SCUK strove to develop educational quality in an area where scarcely any had ever existed. To be sure, SCUK's education model tried to make do with limited resources of all kinds: financial, material and available capacity. Its concentration of limited manpower and funds on a handful of schools was reasonable. But it also inspired unintended consequences. Perhaps most significantly, focusing on three schools in Akon Payam effectively transformed the SCUK-supported schools into magnets. Other schools in the Payam had little chance of significantly expanding enrolment and retention, given the competition and comparatively significant investments that SCUK-supported schools received. In addition, the pull of students in outlying areas towards beneficiary schools like Akon Primary greatly enlarged classroom sizes. The prospect of a comparatively enormous rise in quality, together with the promise of eating a WFP-supported hot meal at school every day, attracted so many children that the sheer numbers threaten the quality that SCUK was struggling so hard to improve. Indeed, the presence of the WFP's School Feeding Programme at SCUK-supported schools (and reportedly none of the other primary schools in the Payam) proved particularly significant to community members, students, education officials and parents alike. In a place such as Akon, getting food at school mattered.

## Education in eastern Equatoria

Eastern Equatoria is an anomaly in southern Sudan. Unlike many other parts of the south, the UN and international NGO presence is slight. This does not mean, however, that outside agencies are not engaged in education in the province. On the contrary, there are a small number of international and indigenous agencies supporting education in eastern Equatoria. All of them are, reportedly, of Christian origin. As a Catholic education official proudly asserted: "Education in eastern Equatoria is done only by the Christians". The agencies that seem to have the strongest educational presence in the province are Catholic. This circumstance simply does not apply to any other area of southern Sudan. Indeed, the management of education is quite similar to the management style during the pre-independence Condominium period: dominated by Christian organizations that made their own decisions about curriculum and maintained little or no co-ordination with other education actors. The dominant education provider in eastern Equatoria, the Diocese of Torit (DOT), retains a second

similarity to the pre-independence era: The emphasis on limiting access to quality education has remained a central feature of their educational philosophy.

With the exception of DOT and a small handful of other agencies, the marginal or nonexistent presence of most OLS agencies – UN agencies and a range of national and international NGOs – was due primarily to the persistent instability that has plagued the province for nearly the entire war period. However, one international NGO official who had repeatedly visited eastern Equatoria also noted that agencies are accustomed to going elsewhere in southern Sudan. “I’ve never really understood why no one is interested in investing in eastern Equatoria”, the official observed. In addition to security concerns, the official speculated that the ‘pastoralist lifestyle’ that pervades much of eastern Equatoria did not align well with common international agency approaches to relief and development. Pastoralists “move about” and sometimes express a “general stubbornness towards authority”. Such tendencies might challenge the community-centred approach that is endorsed by many international agencies, the official explained. Moreover, international agency “people seem more comfortable with what they’ve seen elsewhere in agricultural communities [in southern Sudan] rather than coming to pastoralist areas, where you have to first understand lifestyles and culture, and build things up from there”.

Notwithstanding this critique, it was difficult to dispute the fact that eastern Equatoria has been unstable. Eastern Equatoria’s three major towns – Juba, Torit, and Kapoeta – have all been garrison towns controlled by the Government of Sudan for much if not, in the case of Juba, all of the civil war phase. A series of battles have been waged at these three locations between SPLA and Sudanese government forces. Landmines are reported to remain a problem in these areas, even around the SPLA-liberated town of Kapoeta. The Government of Uganda’s war with the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) has also extended into eastern Equatoria in recent years as well. Church World Service reported that the LRA “has turned against local [Sudanese] communities and hundreds” of civilians were reportedly massacred in 2003 (2003: 1).

Problems involving the air space over eastern Equatoria have contributed to deprived and dangerous conditions in the area. “For years”, three USAID officials observed in December 2002, “much of eastern Equatoria was under a Government of Sudan-imposed flight ban, creating

many problems for the delivery of humanitarian assistance” (Bradley *et al.*, 2002: 1). But in addition, parts of eastern and western Equatoria have been subjected to bombing from Government of Sudan Antonov airplanes. “Antonovs are terror weapons”, an international official familiar with the situation in the Equatorias explained. “They roll bombs out of the Antonovs to terrorize civilians”. The bombing activities tend to be irregular and often do not create extensive casualties. But they almost always target civilians. Antonovs are also said to make a different sort of sound than other airplanes used in the area. It was widely reported in Narus that children could recognize the sound of Antonovs long before adults, and would lead other civilians to bomb shelters. Much of the time, the Antonovs reportedly fly over civilian communities without dropping a bomb. Nonetheless, their mere presence carries the ability to terrify civilians. A research team of *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) carried out research of bombings in western and eastern Equatoria in 1999 (2000). They detailed allegations of cluster and chemical bombs being released by the Government of Sudan’s Antonov airplanes and listed 64 specific bombing actions in 1999 alone, which MSF considered possibly incomplete, mainly in eastern Equatoria (*Médecins Sans Frontières*, 2000: 14-15). Hospitals, civilian homes and schools were among the primary targets that have been regularly bombed.

Operation Lifeline Sudan’s annual report for 2002 reveals the enduring difficulties of providing education in areas of persistent instability and danger such as eastern Equatoria. In 2002, OLS reports that more than 30,000 residents were displaced from eastern Equatoria. Kapoeta and Budi, the two Sudanese counties located closest to Lokichoggio, the staging for OLS operations into the south from Kenya, have no OLS education presence whatsoever except the Diocese of Torit (DOT). OLS education support in the remainder of eastern Equatoria is mainly located in the areas bordering Uganda. Education statistics about eastern Equatoria are difficult if not nearly impossible to come by. The most comprehensive survey data available, UNICEF and the Africa Educational Trust (AET)’s *School baseline assessment report* (May 2002) mixes data on eastern and western Equatoria together as one region: Equatoria. It appeared that this data is skewed towards western Equatoria, where many more schools were able to be visited and thus included in the survey work than in eastern Equatoria. The dire education levels existing in eastern Equatoria are suggested by data gathered on education among the Acholi, an ethnic group residing in

eastern Equatoria near the Uganda border. House and Philips-Howard report that their survey of Acholi residents revealed an average of 2.8 years of formal education for all males surveyed (between ages 5 to over 60). Women averaged 1.2 years, and the total population average 2.03 years of formal education experience (1986: 5). The survey was carried out in 1983, the year the current civil war began. Twenty-one years later, following significant displacement and recurrent instability in the Acholi area, it is unlikely that these education levels have improved, and more probable that they have declined.

Gathering information about education in eastern Equatoria was difficult because the primary OLS education actors – including UNICEF, CARE, and SCUUK – have little or no information or experience within the province. It is primarily an area of isolated educational islands; either those controlled within Government of Sudan garrison towns (Juba, and at various times Torit and Kapoeta), or mainly Catholic outposts dotting the province.<sup>14</sup> Information on community-supported schools was scarcely ever mentioned by those working on education in eastern Equatoria.

The predominant actors in education in the Province – the Diocese of Torit (DOT) and, secondarily, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) – have not co-ordinated their activities effectively, either with OLS counterparts or with each other. Co-ordination with local county education officers, however, appears to regularly take place. But essentially, both JRS and DOT moved into the areas where few or no other international actors are supporting education and set up shop. DOT is based in Nairobi and has schools in a handful of towns in eastern Equatoria. It employs the Kenyan curriculum and pays what are very nearly the highest teacher and head teacher salaries (DOT does not pay incentives) of any schools within southern Sudan. The activities of JRS recently surfaced as an extension of their longstanding work with Sudanese refugees in Uganda, which began in 1993. All of their work within eastern (and just inside western) Equatoria takes place on or very near the Uganda-Sudan border, in Nimule, Lobone and Kajo Keji. They employ the Uganda curriculum and pay regular teacher and head teacher incentives that are significantly lower than their

14. The main exception would be Norwegian Church Aid, which has also carried out educational activities in small portions of eastern Equatoria, reportedly in association with the Africa Inland Church.

counterparts receive from DOT. Most of the teachers are returned refugees who were trained and certified to teach Uganda's national curriculum.

What follows here is an examination of the educational activities of the Diocese of Torit, particularly those that exist in the town of Narus. The educational work of JRS will be described in the following chapter, in conjunction with the consideration of education for Sudanese refugees in Uganda.

*Going it alone: Catholic education in Narus*

The Diocese of Torit is a remarkably resilient institution. With its former headquarters and Bishop Paride Taaban's residence in Torit controlled by the Sudanese Government for nearly the entire civil war period, DOT has shifted to Narus, a town founded in 1993 and located perhaps 50 km from the Kenyan border. DOT has support offices in Kenya. It claims to be responsible for, as a high-level DOT official described it, "the whole of eastern Equatoria, from Boma [near the Ethiopian border] to Narus [near the Kenyan border] to Nimule [near the Ugandan border]". DOT claims that 410,000 of the 550,000 people living in this area (79,000 sq. km) are Catholics (approximately three quarters of the total population) (*Les églises au Soudan*, 2004: 1), a figure that is impossible to verify. DOT does not operate in areas controlled by the Government of Sudan. As one of its publications states, "Torit and some other larger villages are controlled by the Central Government and cannot be served from Narus". DOT thus only works in SPLA-controlled areas (*Les églises au Soudan*, 2004: 1).

A high-level DOT official described the history in the following way. "In 1972-1983, and even before 1972, the Diocese of Torit was all over eastern Equatoria", the official related. The current war began to affect the area beginning in 1983. From that time, the Catholic Church that was responsible for eastern Equatoria split its authority in half. "When the government took a town, people ran away. The Diocese of Torit had to leave with them". As a consequence, the Diocese of Torit claimed the internally displaced and all others in SPLA-held areas as their area of responsibility.

In the garrison towns they were forced to leave, including their headquarters at Torit, the Diocese of Juba assumed responsibility for education: “Only the Diocese of Juba can work on the Government of Sudan side”. The official contended that the Government of Sudan now sees the Diocese of Torit “as supporting the SPLA”. This struck the official as “funny, because when the SPLA besieged Torit in 1996, the SPLA accused the Bishop of the Diocese of Torit and two priests [associated with his Diocese] of favouring the Government of Sudan”. The official recalls that the SPLA imprisoned them for nine months. In reality, while “the DOT preaches neutrality, justice and peace”, it nonetheless has been seen in recent years as favouring the SPLA because it works in areas controlled by them. As a result, the official explained, “the church is torn apart” by the civil war, because “if a Diocese works on the Government of Sudan side, it is seen by the SPLA as collaborators”. The same rationale operates in reverse as well. As a result, each Diocese must “choose a side”.

War and severe levels of instability, warfare and displacement seriously affected DOT’s educational operations during the first decade of the current civil war. Then, in 1993, DOT shifted its base of operations to Narus, which was at that time essentially a brand new town, mainly comprised of internally displaced persons. The Comboni Brothers Missionaries, a Catholic missionary society, had actually founded a boys’ primary school in 1992, the very same year that the so-called ‘Lost Boys’ arrived in the area.<sup>15</sup> That school, like all other activities carried out by Catholics in the Diocese, is under the effective control of Bishop of the Diocese of Torit. Soon thereafter, the Diocese of Torit began a primary school for girls in Narus. In subsequent years, DOT founded two new secondary schools (a girls’ school in Narus in 2001 and another in Kyiatire) and re-started one in Isoke. The ability of DOT to both adapt and expand its operations is highlighted by the fact that Kyiatire is located not in eastern Equatoria but in Masindi District, northern Uganda. A DOT official related that because most of eastern Equatoria had been controlled by the Government of Sudan for much of the war, “the Bishop [of DOT] said, ‘well, there are children from eastern Equatoria in the refugee camps, and the schools in the camps weren’t providing quality education, so it’s better to have quality education for some of the refugee students’”. This is an

15. The story of the Lost Boys and their connection with Narus will be examined in the next chapter.

illuminating comment, since it suggests that another Catholic institution, the Jesuit Refugee Service, is not providing quality education to the refugees. JRS is the primary education provider for Southern Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda, and their approach to the provision of education, which reaches a vastly larger number of students than the DOT's operations do, differs significantly from the DOT approach. The JRS programme and approach will be described in the following chapter.

What has evolved in areas of eastern Equatoria where DOT operates is a system of education that differs from systems that exist elsewhere in southern Sudan. At the most rudimentary level there are what a DOT official called 'bush schools': tiny, community-run primary schools whose connections to DOT schools appear to be slight. There are, by available accounts, very few of these. Next, there are primary schools based in communities that are supported by DOT and Comboni missionaries. This chiefly takes place in the Narus-Kapoeta area, where there are eight such schools, most of which do not extend beyond Standard 3 (Sommers, 2002: 14), perhaps 4 (confusingly, these are also often referred to as 'bush schools'). But quite unlike the small, outlying schools in Akon Payam, to name just one example in southern Sudan, these schools are supported by the principal education actor in the area (DOT, although they are managed by the Comboni Mission). This support includes salaried teachers in all of these schools, most of whom are Kenyan.

At the top of the primary school hierarchy are DOT's 'modern schools': three primary schools that extend across all eight primary grades. There are two in Narus (a girls' primary school managed by DOT, a boys' primary school managed by Comboni) and another in the nearby town of Lolim, which is also managed by Comboni. Qualified students in the smaller, outlying Catholic schools can be accepted into one of the three larger schools. A DOT official described this shift in the following way: "Those students who are doing well in the bush schools [that is, those receiving some support from DOT] are picked to go to the modern schools". However, it does not appear that this matriculation often takes place.

The 'modern schools' are, in comparison to nearly all other primary schools in southern Sudan, gloriously provisioned. They are stocked with textbooks, trained and salaried teachers, school materials, school uniforms, boarding facilities for some of the students, and permanent structures for classrooms, staff offices and housing, and latrines. Indeed, the only sign

that these school compounds are located in war-torn, undeveloped southern Sudan (and not in, for example, neighbouring Kenya) is the presence of a series of bomb shelters located near the classrooms.

Moving away from DOT's base of operations at Narus and into other parts of eastern Equatoria, there are far fewer schools. In most places, DOT tries to support one primary school per Catholic parish area. The shrunken availability of education since the onset of current civil war is dramatic when compared to the period just before it. In the parish where the ethnic Didinga reside, for example, DOT supports one primary school (Lorema Primary). Prior to the war, there were 34 functioning primary schools and an untold number of 'bush schools' (Sommers, 2002: 14).

The DOT stands out from virtually all other prominent education actors in southern Sudan because it focuses on delivering high quality education for relatively few Southern Sudanese students. Their approach differs significantly from the 'NGO' model outlined in the SCUUK case in northern Bahr el Ghazal, for even though NGOs in other parts of southern Sudan work to enhance quality, community pressures to expand access and limited funding can severely compromise the development of educational quality. But more than that, the Diocese of Torit, quite simply, employs a singular approach that is directed towards a different purpose. Their schools, in general, appear able to achieve a significantly higher level of overall quality than most other schools in southern Sudan. At the same time, their reach is intentionally narrow. Before turning to the implications of such an approach, an overview of DOT's education programme is necessary.

"Modern education is what we do", a DOT official explained. "We need good infrastructure and permanent buildings, just like any other modern school". Local materials are out of the question, since buildings made from dirt and other available materials "just fall apart". DOT also seeks "good, trained teachers". Unlike in so many other parts of southern Sudan, where primary school teachers may not have completed primary school themselves, DOT exclusively employs (O-Level) secondary school leavers teaching in their primary schools. For secondary school, all teachers must have completed advanced secondary school (A-Level). In both cases, the teachers received their diplomas in Kenya or Uganda, not Sudan. In fact, most of the teachers in DOT's education programme since the current



civil war began have been Kenyans. Many teachers have also attended a teacher training college and received teacher certification in Kenya. “For those who don’t have a teacher certification”, the official continued, “we provide in-service teacher training”.

The Diocese of Torit is among the very few education actors who pay their teachers. They are even more unusual because their payments cannot be considered ‘incentives’, which imply both low payment levels and no expectation of being paid over an extended time period. Incentives are attempts to compensate teachers for the opportunity cost of teaching. They are usually set at the rate of earnings of manual, agricultural labourers. They are not professional wages. DOT actually pays salaries, and the head teacher and teacher salary levels are exceptional. “We know we have the highest salaries around”, the DOT official explained. In the past, the official related that “we lost very good teachers who went to work for [international] NGOs because they offered a higher salary”. This in itself is a significant point, because DOT considers its frame of reference other NGOs. In dramatic contrast, most other agencies working in education in southern Sudan stress that it would be unfair to pay teachers when all (or nearly all) officials working in local government and social service sectors (such as health) remain unpaid. A second reason provided is that they lack the funding to do so.

To preserve their teacher corps from being ‘poached’ by other NGOs searching for educated and qualified Sudanese (and Kenyan) workers, DOT recently raised their teacher salaries to compete with NGOs: from 5,000 (US\$67) to 7,000 (US\$93) Kenyan shillings a month) for trained primary teachers, and from 3,000 (US\$40) Kenyan shillings to 4,500 (US\$60) Kenyan shillings for untrained primary teachers. In secondary school, salaries went from 6,000 (US\$80) to 9,000 (US\$120) Kenyan shillings for trained teachers, and from 4,000-5,000 (US \$53-67) to 5,000-6,000 (US \$67-80) Kenyan shillings for untrained teachers. Compare this pay scale to teachers in much of southern Sudan (including teachers in Akon Payam, northern Bahr el Ghazal), who receive, at most, irregular in-kind ‘incentives’ and no cash payments of any kind. Teachers in refugee camps are paid, but not as handsomely, an issue that will be covered in the following chapter.

There were frequent references by local and international education officials to what was called the ‘model school’ approach employed by

DOT, in addition to other Christian actors in education. ‘Model’ and ‘modern’ schools, in fact, seemed to be interchangeable terms. “Model schools are concrete schools”, one DOT official stated. A Comboni Brothers missionary commented that the “NGO model is hands off. We’re more hands on”. “Most churches have a model school approach”, a Catholic NGO official explained. “They have one school in each area, and then concentrate [their resources] around that school”.

It can well be argued that the NGO model, such as the one described in the northern Bahr el Ghazal case earlier in this chapter, similarly concentrates resources around their selected schools. Certainly both the NGO and Catholic approaches attempt to enhance educational quality and increase the number of girls who enrol in their schools. Yet the difference in approach between the NGO and Catholic models is fundamental, and comes down to how finite resources are invested. For NGO schools, a balance is generally sought between addressing issues such as community ownership, enhanced access (particularly for girls) and quality education. On the other hand, the Diocese of Torit, while retaining a concern for community ownership and the inclusion of girls in their schools, makes quality education their paramount concern and operational objective.

As a result, a much smaller proportion of students are involved in DOT’s model, or modern, schools, which is where the lion’s share of their education resources are invested, than in what might be termed the NGO model approach employed by international agencies in most of southern Sudan beyond eastern Equatoria. As a DOT official explained:

“We don’t look at the quantity of students, but the quality of their education. Even though we don’t have the capacity to educate everyone, at least we have the capacity to educate some people who will be able to meet some of the needs of Southern Sudanese, like civil servants, doctors, nurses, teachers, and so on.”

The implications of this separate approach – centred around a high investment in education for a limited number of students – are as significant as they are controversial, and will now be reviewed.

A central criticism that is regularly directed at DOT is that they only educate future elites. That DOT’s policies essentially affect this result is

not avoided. Instead, it is embraced, with a rationale to back it up. As a high-level DOT education official remarked:

“The elites in southern Sudan got their primary and secondary education from church schools. Before and after independence until 1972, there was a big gap in providing education. Then, after the *Any-Nya* war<sup>16</sup> ended in 1972, nobody was prepared to do civil servant work or provide education to prepare people to do those jobs. The Bishop of the Diocese of Torit has seen war, and peace, and war. He views education as a core of the Diocese’s work. He believes that we need good, educated Christians who can serve in various jobs that people need once there’s peace”.

Here, the DOT official is essentially explaining how preparing elites to assume work as civil servants is a role that Christian schooling has carried out for decades. DOT’s approach appears to have existed in southern Sudan since the Condominium era, and many of Southern Sudan’s current elite have indeed benefited from the Christian model aimed at providing high quality education for the fortunate few. By comparison, the community education approach employed by many international agencies in southern Sudan, provides education for more students but is highly unlikely to provide a level of educational quality that can even approach the level obtained in the best DOT schools. An NGO official criticized DOT’s approach by stating it creates “two classes of people: those in the model school and those in the community [or bush] schools”. In truth, the overall effect is, essentially, a *three*-tiered education approach within southern Sudan: one that provides elite education for a limited number of children (DOT’s approach); the other providing a much lower level of quality education for more students (the approach utilized by a number of international agencies working in education in southern Sudan); and those poorly provisioned, exceedingly low quality community or ‘bush’ schools that receive little or no outside support and may only be able to have classes for early primary grades – and even then, only when their volunteer teachers show up.

The educational approach that DOT has adopted is most certainly in the minority among education providers in southern Sudan, and its response

16. *Any-Nya* is the popular name among Southern Sudanese for the first civil war (1955-1972).

to criticism might be characterized as insular. Focused on its objectives, DOT does not seem to be particularly interested in co-ordinating its work with other educational actors, including other Catholic organizations. As one DOT official admitted, “there’s some little co-ordination, but not much co-ordination”. DOT reportedly has a distant relationship with the SPLM’s Secretariat of Education (SOE), and, while DOT is a member of OLS, it does not regularly attend education co-ordination meetings in Nairobi.

DOT officials are also disdainful of the New Sudan Curriculum (one official repeatedly called it the ‘SPLA Syllabus’). It is not used in DOT schools because, as one official explained, “there’s no certificate” that might demonstrate international recognition. As a result, “we feel that it is a waste” (a sentiment shared by many Southern Sudanese, most particularly refugees in Kenya and Uganda). Nonetheless, DOT does use the New Sudan Curriculum texts for geography, history and civic education classes for the first four years of primary school. Beyond that, DOT employs either the national curricula of Kenya or Uganda. Whether a school uses the Kenyan or Ugandan curriculum is decided by the school’s location, not the comparative strengths or weaknesses between the two national curricula. Schools located closer to the Kenyan border, as a rule, use the Kenyan curriculum. Similarly, those with access to the Uganda border use the Ugandan curriculum. Then, DOT arranges with Catholic diocese officials to allow for their students to cross into Kenya (the Diocese of Lodwar) or Uganda (the Dioceses of Gulu and Arua) to sit for Kenyan or Ugandan national school examinations, the primary school examinations in particular. DOT officials have related that their students regularly perform well in such exams.

The emphatically insular educational environment that the Diocese of Torit has created around its modern schools is supported by what appears to be a remarkable web of mainly Catholic donors. Many DOT officials and school staff mentioned the many ‘friends’ of the DOT Bishop who support the school. While these ‘friends’ appear to be mainly comprised of Catholic donor institutions in Europe, it was notable that DOT officials and school staff highlighted the significance of the Bishop himself in garnering funds and other kinds of support (such as the Catholic Relief Services’ school feeding programme) for their schools. Many mentioned Bishop Taaban’s charisma, warmth, and innate appeal to European visitors. The degree to which donor funds depended on Bishop Taaban’s involvement

was difficult to establish, although all reports contended that it was significant.

Despite the unmistakable achievements of DOT's approach, the consequences of 'going it alone' were not all positive. In addition to its distance from other education actors working in southern Sudan, DOT's interactions with and connections to the surrounding community appeared to be minimal. The operation, for all intents and purposes, was self-sufficient and separate. Entering Narus, one can immediately get a sense of this. Leaving the main road and turning eastwards into town, one enters a neighbourhood of houses and family compounds. There is also a river bed, with a market alongside it, the small pond and watering hole from which the town reportedly receives its name, and some government and local NGO buildings. Then, if one follows the road as it winds southwards, one enters the area of town that is dominated by DOT's modern schools and central operations base. If not quite an island on land, DOT's physical presence in the town of Narus was nonetheless detached.

While Narus (and Kapoeta County) is located in an area that is dominated by ethnic Toposa, most of its students in the modern schools were from other parts of southern Sudan. Out of an estimated 600 students enrolled at St. Bakhita Girls' Primary School in Narus, for example, only 74 (less than 13 per cent of the total) were Toposa. Given the difficulties of enrolling and retaining Toposa girls in school, this might be seen as a shining achievement. Every official interviewed with either DOT or its schools, in addition to civil society and local government officials in Narus, stated that enrolling Toposa girls into school was a particularly difficult challenge. Local officials insisted, for example, that Toposa parents "need to be encouraged" to send their girls to school. DOT's response can be considered savvy, given the fact that one of the reported concerns expressed by Toposa parents was identical to one expressed by parents in Akon Payam (and, indeed, by parents in other parts of Africa and beyond): They are concerned about the protection of their daughters, both while travelling to and attending school. This may be a particularly poignant problem among pastoralist peoples (such as the Toposa), who may not be able to remain in one place with their herds. As a result, in order to retain Toposa children as students in school, one DOT official explained that "if you don't have boarding schools, you can forget it". A Toposa civil society official supported this view. "The Toposa don't like day schools", the

official explained. “The only thing that will work [to retain Toposa children in schools] is boarding schools”.

At the same time, the distance between Toposa community members in Narus and Catholic schools was reportedly substantial. For one thing, DOT’s educational approach might be described as feisty. A criticism of DOT, an official explained, is that DOT is “destroying Toposa culture” by including them in their schools. As related in the previous chapter about the Condominium period, this criticism dates back many decades, and is related to the idea that undeveloped areas (and thus, peoples) in southern Sudan are somehow pure and pristine. A high-level DOT official had a straightforward response to this critique: “Not all culture is good”. Furthermore, the official continued,

“Some parts [of Toposa culture] are discriminatory, like not allowing girls to go to school, or not allowing women to have a say in society. Women are property: When a Toposa man talks of his property, he includes his wives. So for the Church, it’s not enough to preach that [Toposa] culture is not good. It’s also important to educate them, and to help sensitize them.”

In addition, it was not clear the degree to which DOT officials and school staff understood Toposa culture. One teacher at a DOT school, for example, explained that educated Toposa were seen as a threat to uneducated Toposa, who gave educated Toposa the title ‘stranger’ or ‘enemy’. Toposa leaders interviewed in Narus strongly objected to this depiction. “The real issue [limiting the Toposa in schools] is their inability to pay school fees”, one explained. In addition, the official continued, the availability of education for the Toposa in Kapoeta County is only just beginning. Toposa historically have had little access to formal education, in addition to limited political participation, and so were unfamiliar with the experience of attending schools. As a local government official explained, most Toposa parents “don’t know the importance of education”.

Looking ahead, a local government official involved with education considered the implications of the distance between DOT’s education work and the Toposa community. It did not look good. “DOT has created a problem because they have not sensitized the [Toposa] parents in how to invest in education”, the official stated, and then explained that:

“Toposa parents know that DOT has donors. DOT also doesn’t involve the community in their education development plans. That’s why education is a completely DOT-owned process. I wonder if the donors and CRS will eventually pull away because the schools are not community-owned. Donors won’t pay for schools forever, and when they leave, I am afraid that the schools will collapse. So it is important to get the community to run these schools. I think that the local government, the disadvantaged, the poor and the teachers should also get involved.”

From this perspective, and from the general thrust of DOT’s approach, which is to be self-sufficient and maintain near-complete control over their efforts to develop and sustain quality education, one can see the other side of DOT’s education coin. Whereas the ‘NGO approach’ lacks the ability to achieve a level of quality education that even approaches the DOT model, it is their comparative success in involving communities in education that has contributed to their slower move towards quality education. Comparing the two models illuminated the trade-off between prioritizing educational quality or community sustainability.

One advantage that DOT retained over educational programmes in most other parts of southern Sudan is the education market that they belong to. To understand this concept, one must understand the idea of boundaries and markets as they unfolded in southern Sudan and its immediate environs. For Southern Sudanese, national boundaries are not necessarily very meaningful and educational boundaries do not align with national borders. Largely shut off from the rest of southern Sudan for almost the entire war, people from Narus, and elsewhere in Kapoeta County, have been travelling to the Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya for years – most probably since its inception in 1992. Some of these commuters claim to be refugees (and have UNHCR’s refugee identity cards to ‘prove’ it). Others venture to Kakuma to visit relatives or ‘feast’ on donated food during food distributions in the Kakuma camps. A common educational strategy, widely reported in Narus, was for a child to attempt to access the early years of primary education in the Kakuma refugee camps before trying to gain entrance to DOT’s modern primary or secondary schools (a sizeable proportion of students in DOT’s St. Bakhita Secondary School, for example, received their primary schooling in the Kakuma camps).<sup>17</sup>

17. These issues are also discussed in Sommers, 2002.

In contrast, the people of Akon Payam are situated much further from an international boundary but closer to an educational boundary (that is, where a separate education system exists). Whereas DOT's schools in Narus are situated in another country from Kakuma yet are part of the very same education system, people in Akon may have relatives living within the nearby garrison town of Wau, yet do not travel there: that would mean crossing from one side of the civil war to the other, a highly risky prospect. Furthermore, crossing into Wau would also mean crossing an educational boundary, since the schools in Wau follow the national curriculum of the Government of Sudan.

DOT officials, like so many others in the area, are active participants, or consumers, in their cross-border education market. They not only make use of Kenya's national curriculum. They use offices in Kenya to support their operations in Sudan, accept students from refugee schools, and actively and openly hire teachers from Kenya. Kenya is known to have an overflow of trained teachers who are searching for work. Many of the Kenyan teachers, in addition, were intrigued by the chance to teach in Sudan. "There's an advantage to having increased exposure and experience", one Kenyan teacher working for a DOT school remarked. It also "adds to your CV" (*curriculum vitae*). In addition, most of the Sudanese teachers working in DOT schools previously served in refugee schools in Kenya. Taken together, the diverse ways in which Kenya and eastern Equatoria are connected raise questions about the definition of a refugee and the significance of national boundaries to local populations. These issues will be among those considered in the next chapter on Southern Sudanese refugees.

## Lessons learnt

- The shift of major international donors towards supporting education during a civil war and in areas not controlled by the recognized government has been slow to evolve, and remains uneven. The advantages of reducing some dependency by investing in education and capacity have begun to be recognized. Very low levels of investment in education continue to be a significant negative impact on its development.
- Struggles to deliver quality education are made considerably more complicated when access cannot be controlled. A central component



of the success of the Diocese of Torit's 'model school' approach, aimed at developing well-educated Southern Sudanese elites, was its limiting of access to its schools.

- Save the Children's community-driven work in Akon was much less successful at delivering quality education. It did not directly manage any schools, did not pay teachers, and worked largely in primary and not secondary schools (none existed in Akon Payam). At the same time, it attempted to reach significantly larger numbers of students and teachers with limited amounts of funding and manpower.
- An unintended impact of focused investment in particular schools within areas of low educational quality is the enlargement of inequities in access to quality education.
- Recognized educational actors tend to concentrate their efforts at the same schools. Food aid to schools is generally directed at schools that are already receiving support from other agencies.
- The dependency of many Southern Sudanese on some international assistance appears to be a widely shared contention. It also exasperates many international workers and is a sensitive topic for many Southern Sudanese. Underinvestment in building the capacity of Southern Sudanese has contributed to the challenge of dependency.
- Educational services can be provided in areas of uneven stability and security.
- For most of the war, no education system operated that connected the educational activities of actors operating within southern Sudan. While the SPLM's Secretariat of Education has begun to develop and lead a system, its influence and reach remains limited.



## Chapter 4

# Education for Southern Sudanese refugees

This chapter on refugee education opens with a description of the story of the Lost Boys. The plight of this group of Southern Sudanese boys and young men eventually influenced both refugee education in, and third country resettlement from, the region. It also shed a spotlight on the civil war's many victims, child soldiering by the SPLA, and the international humanitarian response to unaccompanied minors. The chapter will then provide an overview of education for Southern Sudanese refugees in the East Africa region before turning to the two cases that will be featured in this chapter: education in Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camps, still the residence for most of the Lost Boys, and in the refugee camps in northern Uganda, where the largest concentration of Southern Sudanese refugees reside.

### Refugee education, war and escape: the spectacular odyssey of the 'Lost Boys'

The 'Lost Boys of Sudan' are famous, probably the most celebrated Southern Sudanese in the world. Outside of Sudan itself, they may be best known in the United States. After the State Department resettled about 3,800 from Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp to the United States in 2000 and 2001, they became, for a time, celebrities on America's stage. The resettlement was widely described as a rescue mission. "Savaged by war in East Africa, the young refugees had lost families, friends, their childhoods", a newspaper article opens in the *St. Petersburg Times*. "Now a group of them had arrived in Florida", the article continued. "Could they find the American dream?" (Lush, 2001: 1).

Shortly thereafter, there surfaced a documentary film about their lives, a new comic book illustrating their plight, and countless news stories. A common news theme, in addition to the tragedies of their past and the promise of their future in the U.S., was how surprising new American amenities and culture seemed to them. A Lost Boy mistook ice cubes for

ice cream, and wondered if hippopotamuses live in the United States, one reporter observed (Lush, 2001: 1). There were published photographs of Lost Boys seeing snow or electric lamps for the first time. In all of this, the theme was, as one subtitle characterized the arrival of one Lost Boy to a community in Washington state, of a “Lost Boy found” (Michael, 2004: 2). Just how these youngsters became child soldiers, fled through three countries, managed essentially to found a town in eastern Equatoria and a refugee camp in Kenya, and emerge in the world’s spotlight is an extraordinary saga that sheds light on, among other things, the peculiarities of the refugee experience, the profound vulnerability of unaccompanied minors during wartime, the priorities of international agencies and education for the war-affected.

It has often been stated that the Lost Boys are orphans, but this is difficult to confirm. Most are of Nuer and Dinka descent and fled, as one source explains, the “bombing of villages in southern Sudan in the late 1980s” (Watch List, 2003: 17) and headed into Ethiopia. However, not all left Sudan in this fashion. Some were reportedly recruited by the SPLA to venture into Ethiopia, and the lure was the promise of education. Human Rights Watch/Africa maintained that “initially the SPLA encouraged many boys to leave their parents and go to refugee camps in Ethiopia for educational purposes”. They also noted that others arrived with their families, “as whole villages took flight from government army and tribal militia abuses” (1994b: 6). Once inside Ethiopia, the SPLA intentionally segregated their new young male recruits. “Since 1987”, Human Rights Watch/Africa wrote in 1994, “the SPLA has maintained large camps of boys separate from their relatives and tribes in refugee camps in Ethiopia and in southern Sudan”. SPLA officers have then drawn on this reservoir “regardless of the age of the boys” (1994b: 6). It can thus be hardly surprising that “there was strong resistance from the refugee leaders [who were mainly SPLA officials] towards any move to place the children in foster care” (Derib, 2002: 6).

The SPLA held a prominent role in the Southern Sudanese refugee camps in south-western Ethiopia until 1991 – its members actually served, together with their ‘designees’ (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1994b: 14), as refugee camp administrators. Military groups that effectively lord over refugee camps are not supposed to be the norm, but then the Sudanese refugee camps in Ethiopia were unusual in a number of ways. To begin

with, the SPLA were allies of the Mengistu government in Addis Ababa, receiving “substantial military and logistical support” from Mengistu and conducting military attacks against a combination of rivals and enemies of the Mengistu government and the SPLA alike (Johnson, 2003: 88). In other words, the SPLA used the refugee camps, and their environs, as military outposts, and this was not only accepted but encouraged by the host country regime. The SPLA apparently had a free hand to create ‘minors’ camps’ alongside refugee camps, where unaccompanied minors (nearly all boys) lived separately. There were 17,000 such boys in these camps, all of whom were “given military education as well as education” (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1994*b*: 6). Sesnan reports even higher figures: In 1991 one camp had “25,000 unaccompanied boys – and four unaccompanied girls” (1998: 62). From time to time, SPLA commanders plucked youngsters from these camps (many of whom were under age 15) to fight alongside Ethiopian government army troops “against Ethiopian rebels” (Sesnan, 1998: 62). Not well known are those students, most of them boys, who “were transported from Ethiopia to schools in Cuba”, where they received vocational and military training. These students came to be known as the ‘Cubans’. Most of them were ethnic Dinka and Nuer. After graduating, many returned to the region. Some later “joined the SPLA, while others decided to remain outside Sudan as refugees” (Sesnan, 1998: 62).

The nature of the education these children received is unclear. A UNHCR assessment of one of the three significant camps at the time, Fugnido (the other two were called Itang and Dimma), noted that “the refugees have taken the initiative with the establishment of a system of primary schools for 15,000 children” (Williamson, 1988: 7). The education system appears to have been somewhat of a hodgepodge. Southern Sudanese refugees were attending local Ethiopian schools (and thus following the Ethiopian national curriculum) while others were learning parts of the East Africa Standard Curriculum (that is, Uganda’s national curriculum).

The UNHCR document does not account for why the camp was comprised of more than 85 per cent males (and 87 per cent of the males were between the ages of 6 and 16 years old). The assessment does note that, as of its publication date:

“This may well be the largest group of unaccompanied minors [15,400] that UNHCR has ever dealt with in a single location. It is also likely to be the highest proportion of a camp population [41.6 per cent] made up of unaccompanied minors ever assisted by UNHCR” (Williamson, 1988: 2).

Nowhere in this document are the separate camps for minors mentioned, nor the presence of the SPLA. It is certainly possible that the refugee leaders, and the boys themselves, hid this fact from the UNHCR authors. As Human Rights Watch/Africa asserted: “The SPLA instructed the boys in the camps in what to tell expatriate relief workers and other outsiders about their relations with the SPLA”. Human Rights Watch/Africa also concluded that “the SPLA recruited the boys for both education and military purposes, but attempted to conceal the military purpose” (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1994*b*: 12). At any rate, a combination of war, military training – reportedly three to four months for all boys in the camps (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1994*b*: 14) – and some sort of education prevailed in the lives of many thousands of young male refugees until 1991, when Mengistu’s government, the SPLA’s ally, collapsed.

What happened next for the approximately 200,000 refugees (Whande, 1992: 2), including the 17,000-plus male child soldiers and military trainees (US Department of State, 2001: 13) was a combination of warfare, forced flight – and chaos. Johnson notes that: “The SPLA administration of the camps had anticipated the fall of Mengistu, and when fighting broke out in the Gambela region they organized a mass evacuation” of the Southern Sudanese refugee camps (2003: 89). Some refugees attempted to return directly to their homes in Sudan. About half eventually settled around the border town of Nasir. Johnson is harsh about the international relief response to the refugees’ return to Sudan. In his view it was “both ill-coordinated and inadequate” (2003: 90). He suggests that the Khartoum government sought to manipulate the relief, while the United States government obstructed the relief effort (to divert relief aid to Ethiopia), making the refugees themselves “a political football” (2003: 90). He does not mention the role of the SPLA in this mess, which appears to have been highly significant (SPLA commanders in Ethiopia, after all, had orchestrated the mass return of refugees to Sudan in the first place).

Meanwhile, thousands of boys ventured elsewhere, some with SPLA commanders, some not. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

registered 14,000 unaccompanied minors (all boys) in three border towns within Sudan (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1994b: 15). Others drifted inland. Still others marched with SPLA escorts to Kapoeta, close to the Kenyan border. Some walked 1,000 km or more (US Department of State, 2001: 1), escaping attacks from soldiers, lions and crocodiles in the process. Eventually, more than 12,000 out of at least 17,000 unaccompanied minor refugees in Ethiopia (US Department of State, 2001: 13) but perhaps far more, congregated along the Kenyan border location of Narus. It is due to this initial congregation at Narus that some claim that the Lost Boys founded the town of Narus. “Narus was created by the Lost Boys in 1992”, a county government official in Narus explained in 2003. “There was nothing here. The whole area [before their arrival] was actually a bush”.

In May 1992, the town of Kapoeta fell to Government of Sudan troops. SPLA soldiers and thousands of civilians fled, many towards the brand new settlement at Narus, just to the south. Subsequently, “22,500 people walked into Kenya”, a UNHCR document explained, “of which 12,500 were young unaccompanied boys” (Whande, 1992: 2). Some Dinka refugees in Uganda asserted that some of the Lost Boys trekked to Uganda, where they remain. Their arrival caused an international media sensation, and their new name, the Lost Boys, was born, which only heightened the notoriety that the unaccompanied minors were beginning to receive. Shortly after arriving in a hastily established transit camp in Lokichoggio, a refugee camp was created for them in nearby Kakuma. An early head count of the boys in Kakuma found that somewhere between 1,500 and 3,000 of the boys were missing. Although the SPLA denied it, it was widely believed that SPLA officials had ‘kidnapped’ the boys and returned them to Narus, where a humanitarian official based there noted “a sudden increase in the number of boys mainly in their late teens” (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1994b: 17). In addition, UNHCR’s Senior Legal Advisor reported that “the majority of the refugees are heavy supporters of the SPLA, which has a great control and influence over the refugee population” (cited in Whande, 1992: 8) – including, as will be explained later in this chapter, in the education sector. The alleged kidnapping attracted still more media attention to the plight and whereabouts of the Lost Boys (Whande, 1992: 7).

Amidst a welter of reports about the trials of the newly christened Lost Boys in 1992, it was difficult to imagine that their astounding journey

was, for some, in fact only just beginning. The attention that the Lost Boys in Kenya attracted<sup>18</sup> contributed to a high degree of investment for refugee education in the Kakuma camps, which eventually boasted a breadth of educational offerings that most refugee camps in the world could only dream of. The SPLA's presence remains strong in Kakuma, in addition to refugee camps in nearby countries. An indication of the SPLA's presence, and their continuing involvement in education, was suggested during interviews with Sudanese members of Kakuma's Refugee Education Committee. All of those interviewed were SPLA military officers. "We are commended for our work", one explained to me. In addition, the Lost Boys who remained in Narus, or were returned there from Kenya, did not remain there. Some were deployed as SPLA fighters. Others, from Narus and elsewhere in southern Sudan, scattered. I interviewed young men in refugee camps in Uganda, in Kenya and in Narus in 2002-2003 who all steadfastly claimed to be 'Lost Boys'.

The latest chapter of the Lost Boys saga probably attracted the most attention from other Southern Sudanese. Between November 2000 and September 2001, the United States Department of State resettled 3,800 'Lost Boys' from the Kakuma Refugee Camps to the United States – "the largest resettlement of its kind ever" (Walsh, 2002: 1).<sup>19</sup> "With war in Sudan continuing", a U.S. Department of State document explained, "return to a homeland for these children and young adults could mean forced military conscription and/or other danger to their lives" (2001: 1). Once again, an event featuring the Lost Boys had attracted international media attention. "A stream of camera crews and journalists has visited Kakuma" since the Lost Boys began to leave to the United States, a journalist, Declan Walsh, reported (2002: 1). Walsh also recorded some of the ways in which this event was directly connected to the issue of education. "Some aid workers and church leaders fear that southern Sudan is being robbed of a generation of its best educated young men", he reported. An official with the Lutheran World Federation, which implements a large education programme in the Kakuma camps, stated that: "The whole project is very questionable. It undermines our work" (Walsh, 2002: 1). Approximately 7,000 'Lost Boys' still remain in Kakuma, "awaiting

18. Including a lavishly illustrated children's book featuring some of the Lost Boys' drawings and stories describing their plight (Wilkes, 1994).

19. Together with, reportedly, 89 Southern Sudanese girls (Watch List, 2003: 17).



resettlement since the United States tightened its policies following the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States” (Watch List, 2003: 17).

The publicized resettlement of the fortunate few to America also inspired a wave of reaction from other Sudanese. Some refugees and humanitarian agency officials reported that news of the resettlement attracted young men from refugee camps in other countries as well as southern Sudan to come to Kakuma, claiming to be members of the original Lost Boys. “We are *lost!*” a group of young refugee men emphatically insisted during a 2002 interview. All were desperate to be resettled to the U.S. Refugees old and young repeatedly insisted that some of those who were resettled were not ‘real’ Lost Boys, but had ‘cheated’ their way onto the resettlement lists. A State Department official disputed this assertion in 2002, despite widely publicized reports of a ‘UNHCR corruption scandal’ involving a “criminal ring, including some UNHCR staff” which required a bribe of as much as US\$6,000 to get onto the resettlement lists. The criminal ring would then “arrange to substitute individuals, some of whom were not deserving of resettlement, in the place of deserving refugees” (Human Rights Watch, 2002: 178). Women with infants, in addition, lined up outside UNHCR’s gates at Kakuma, claiming to be the wives of Lost Boys and asking to be resettled in America to join their husbands. “Now almost every teenage boy in the camp can reel off stories of crocodiles, bullets and desert marches like a movie script”, Declan Walsh, a journalist, explained in the aftermath of the Lost Boys’ resettlement from Kakuma (Human Rights Watch, 2002: 178). Another discussion topic among Southern Sudanese was whether any of the Lost Boys, after becoming well educated in the U.S., would ever return to southern Sudan. A Southern Sudanese official affiliated with the SPLA, for example, stated that “if 30 per cent of the Lost Boys return from America, I would be very happy. And if the rest are alcoholics, let them stay there. Let them go”.

The Lost Boys saga serves, in part, to shed light on the issue of education for Southern Sudanese in a number of ways. The SPLA reportedly used education to help attract Southern Sudanese boys to refugee camps in Ethiopia. After they arrived, education took a back seat to military training for thousands of minors. Some fought as well. Their forced return to Sudan meant the end of any sort of formal education and forced them to endure a withering trek combining war, the elements, animal attacks and other dangers. That many of these children survived is remarkable enough.

That they also managed to essentially found a town in southern Sudan and a refugee camp in Kenya, and help inspire both considerable investment in refugee education in Kakuma and a heralded resettlement programme is astonishing. The lives and influence that these children and youth inspired continue to reverberate across the Southern Sudanese community to this day.

## Southern Sudanese refugee education

In general, information about education for Southern Sudanese refugees in the east and north Africa regions is woefully inadequate (the primary exceptions pertain to those refugees in Uganda and Kenya, as will be documented later in this chapter). While this section will unavoidably reflect this information deficiency, it is hoped that it will provide at least a general understanding of some of the major education challenges that have confronted Southern Sudanese refugees over the past 21 years.

While Kenya's Kakuma refugee camps have garnered the lion's share of attention accorded to Southern Sudanese refugees, the population of Southern Sudanese in Kenya is moderate. Uganda has by far the largest proportion of recognized Southern Sudanese refugees, with 188,194. Next is Ethiopia, with just under 90,000, followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo (75,781), Kenya (57,779), the Central African Republic, CAR (37,375) and Egypt (7,629), which, officially, has only slightly more than Australia (6,033; UNHCR, 2004: 26-27, Table 4). Not listed in anyone's official refugee estimates are those Southern Sudanese who reside illegally in other countries. The most renowned example of this phenomenon are the Sudanese living in Egypt, many of whom are from the South. The U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) has observed that "three million or more Sudanese lived in Egypt in 2001, according to various estimates". What was unclear, USCR continued, was precisely how many Sudanese fled to Egypt because they feared persecution, and how many went to Egypt "for economic or other reasons" (USCR, 2002: 2). The variety of reasons that motivated Southern Sudanese to cross out of their country and into another will be addressed in the Kakuma and northern Uganda cases as well.

What follows is a brief review of education issues in the four primary countries bordering Sudan that host Sudanese refugees (with the exception of Uganda and Kenya, which, again, will shortly be described in

considerably more detail). It will open, however, with comments about UNHCR, which is the most significant provider of education to the world's refugees, including those from southern Sudan.

### *UNHCR*

UNHCR's strengths and weaknesses in the support of refugee education largely stem from its mandate, organizational approach, and institutional strengths and limitations. The Southern Sudanese refugee case illuminates how the agency can serve the educational needs of refugee students in a variety of productive ways. Its management of refugee education in Uganda and Kenya, illustrated in this chapter's subsequent discussions, has a number of significant strengths. The education programme for refugees in the Kakuma refugee camps, for example, offers an unusually wide array of educational opportunities. The education provided to Southern Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda is available to tens of thousands of refugee children. These and other programmes boast solid achievements, which will be discussed below. But their approach also suggests significant institutional shortcomings, particularly as they pertain to the southern Sudan case. Two will be briefly reviewed here.

The first surfaces from the peculiar limitations arising from UNHCR's decentralized organizational structure, and the way in which empowered country offices carry out their responsibilities. The southern Sudan case illustrates these tendencies effectively. Many UNHCR officials who were interviewed from UNHCR country offices expressed an insular perspective in direct terms. UNHCR officials in both Kenya and Uganda openly admitted during interviews that their knowledge of southern Sudan was, at best, minimal. Part of this approach was derived from indifference. "We're not interested in going to Southern Sudan", a high-level UNHCR official in Uganda explained. "Our interest is in the protection of refugees in Uganda". Later, the same official stated that "our primary interest is Uganda. We're going to make the UNHCR programme here as good as it can be, according to our standards".

A factor contributing to this country-specific perspective is the institutional restrictions that separate each country office from the rest. As with all international humanitarian agencies based in Khartoum, UNHCR's Sudan office is unable to visit the vast areas of southern Sudan not held by the Government of Sudan. At the same time, UNHCR officials

explained that UNHCR's access into all parts of Sudan, even those held by groups opposing the Khartoum government, must be made through, or with the involvement of, UNHCR's Khartoum-based office. One can imagine that UNHCR in Khartoum, as with other international agencies based there, had to be careful not to offend the Sudanese government, and so limit access of UNHCR personnel into southern Sudan. The result of this state of affairs has been that few, if any, UNHCR officers have been allowed to enter southern Sudan since Ugandan refugees were repatriated from southern Sudan to Uganda nearly two decades ago.

UNHCR was thus effectively isolated from first-hand knowledge of southern Sudan – an unusual organizational circumstance. Numerous other international organizations in Sudan have skirted this problem by having two offices: one based in Khartoum to gain access to Government of Sudan-controlled areas, and the other based in Kenya, to gain access to all other areas of southern Sudan. OLS, of course, is set up to address this need for humanitarian access to both sides of the civil war. UNHCR has not followed this route. One UNHCR official explained their agency's approach in the following way:

“UNHCR-Sudan in Khartoum is restricted from going to southern Sudan, and UNHCR in neighbouring countries can't go into southern Sudan except via UNHCR-Sudan. So no one in UNHCR can go to southern Sudan.”

Illustrative of this tendency is the following comment from a UNHCR official in Uganda. “We are not allowed to stick a toe inside of Sudan”, the official stated, with emphasis. An official in UNHCR's Kenya office struck a similar tone. Although “UNHCR-Kenya can go to southern Sudan without permission from UNHCR-Khartoum”, the official explained, “it would be difficult” to achieve. More significant, however, was the fact that few UNHCR officials had ever visited southern Sudan. While this has begun to change recently, UNHCR has not had a presence in southern Sudan for many years, and, by the admission of UNHCR officials interviewed in the region, has made exceedingly few visits there – apparently since Ugandan refugees completed their return home, many with UNHCR assistance, from southern Sudan in 1986. Once the Ugandans returned to Uganda, UNHCR left southern Sudan. Nearly two decades later, beginning, reportedly, in 2004, UNHCR began the process of re-establishing its presence in southern Sudan.

UNHCR was thus in the peculiar situation of protecting and assisting a refugee population which contained members who regularly visit the host country, while allowing itself exceedingly limited first-hand knowledge of the refugees' country of origin. This may not seem unusual, given the fact that a civil war has been taking place in southern Sudan for more than two decades. But, in fact, it has been, because OLS member agencies, including other UN agencies, have not only regularly visited many parts of southern Sudan for many years but, in many cases, have also established field offices there. Their knowledge of changing circumstances and conditions on the ground in different parts of southern Sudan is deep, often fairly nuanced, and regularly monitored.

Meanwhile, UNHCR has largely remained apart, tending to express a perspective of southern Sudan that has emphasized the dangers that refugees face. An NGO official based in Uganda expressed this difference bluntly (and perhaps with a touch of overstatement): "UNHCR knows absolutely nothing about southern Sudan. They only have information from newspapers and the radio. UNICEF, on the other hand, has already started working on their peacetime approach". UNHCR's limited institutional perspective and knowledge of southern Sudan is suggested elsewhere as well. As I noted in an earlier publication regarding UNHCR's Kenya country office and U.S. State Department officials based in Kenya:

"UNHCR and State Department perspectives of southern Sudan emphasized the absence of peace in southern Sudan and the dangers that Southern Sudanese still faced within their country. They were less well versed on activities in stable areas of southern Sudan, some of which encompass large populations and geographic expanses" (Sommers, 2002: 8).

UNHCR's concerns about existing instabilities within southern Sudan are understandable, given UNHCR's mandate to protect refugees and ensure their safe, secure and voluntary return. At the same time, UNHCR's somewhat detached relationship with many other agencies working with Southern Sudanese, and its fairly separate perspectives of southern Sudan, helps shed light on the second significant institutional shortcoming that will be reviewed here: co-ordination with other agencies (and between UNHCR country offices) on shared concerns.

In many respects, UNHCR is experienced and adept at co-ordinating its activities, including education concerns.<sup>20</sup> But with respect to co-ordinating issues of Southern Sudanese education, its efforts have been limited. The case of co-ordination over curriculum issues sheds light on this issue. When I attended a co-ordination meeting on Southern Sudanese education in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2003, it became evident that refugee education was minimally represented. Neither officials from UNHCR's Kenya office (located three blocks away), its nearby Regional Office, nor its chief implementing partner for refugee education in the Kakuma refugee camps, Lutheran World Relief (also based in Nairobi), were attending the meeting. There were no officials representing refugee education from other countries either (such as Uganda and Ethiopia), with the exception of the Jesuit Refugee Service, which is involved in Southern Sudanese education both within southern Sudan and, most intensively, in refugee settlements in northern Uganda. At the same time, there were officials representing agencies working on education within southern Sudan from many hundreds of kilometres away. Inquiring with veteran participants at that meeting, it was reported that the attendance of UNHCR's Kenya office and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Kenya was infrequent and irregular (for this particular meeting, UNHCR-Kenya officials had been invited but did not attend, while LWF officials had not been invited).

A veteran UNHCR official addressed UNHCR's distancing of itself from co-ordinating education in the following way:

“We've got Southern Sudanese refugees in five or six asylum countries. What are they doing in education? They're studying in five or six different curricula. At the same time, I was told [in the late 1990s] within UNHCR that this doesn't matter because the Southern Sudanese refugees are never going to repatriate, given the situation in southern Sudan.”

20. See, for example, passages on UNHCR's leadership of co-ordinated efforts involving Rwandan refugees in Tanzania, in Sommers, 2000.

By 2003, with the prospects for peace having improved dramatically, UNHCR was actively planning to repatriate refugees to southern Sudan.<sup>21</sup> In the eyes of this same official, the lack of first-hand knowledge of the region and the fact that refugee populations had been educated separately in separate countries had helped create significant educational challenges. The official asked:

“How will student and teacher certification from the different countries be validated? Nobody’s working on this, but someone in southern Sudan is going to have to match them all up. Also, what happens to returning students who have had different languages of instruction in refugee schools? How will kids cope?”

The official was unsure of just how these difficult issues might be reasonably addressed.

At the same time, at least for some working for UNHCR in the region, UNHCR’s separation from co-ordination activities on issues such as education was intentional and, by their own reckoning, reasonable. A high-level UNHCR official in the Uganda country office reflected this sentiment well. In the first place, UNHCR becoming involved in co-ordination work might be seen by some refugees as an unfortunate statement of favouritism. “Who represents the refugees?”, the official asked. “Does the SPLM [who chair the co-ordination meetings in Nairobi] really represent them?”. Unlike Southern Sudanese refugees in Kakuma, within the refugee community based in Uganda, the popularity of the SPLA and SPLM is widely questioned. The official backed up his point by asserting that, in the Southern Sudanese refugee community in Uganda, “there is resentment against the Dinka”, who are thought to dominate the SPLA. The official also wondered whether “those born in exile [as refugees] will ever return home”.

In addition, the official expressed a feeling that whenever the refugees returned from Uganda to Sudan, they may not remain there for long. Five years following their return, the official asked, “What will happen inside

21. The situation has advanced towards implementation since that time. In April 2005, a UNHCR bulletin reported that “UNHCR’s approach in southern Sudan is two-pronged – to meet the immediate needs of the 600,000 Sudanese who have returned on their own, and to start the repatriation and reintegration programme for another 550,000 refugees and an equal number of IDPs.” Implementation for this work is set for September 2005 (UNHCR, 2005: 1).

Sudan again?”. The official then invited others involved with Southern Sudanese refugee education to come to Uganda. Any co-ordination with those working with Southern Sudanese elsewhere would occur, provided the relationship was reversed. UNHCR’s Uganda country office officials would not be coming to co-ordinate their education programming with SPLM and OLS officials meeting in Nairobi. However, “here [in Uganda] we’d like to incorporate everyone in the UN family and all stakeholders”. But other agencies could come to co-ordinate with UNHCR for Southern Sudanese located within Uganda. To underscore the agency’s resistance to broader co-ordination, the official explained that “we haven’t talked with UNICEF-OLS”, which is actively involved in Southern Sudanese education within southern Sudan. “Not at all. Why should we?” From the perspective of UNHCR’s Uganda office, in other words, education and other issues relating to Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda would be addressed as if the refugees residing there constituted a separate population. The island of education metaphor is certainly applicable to this context.

It was not always this way. Among the issues that participants discussed at a UNHCR Regional Education Workshop in Nairobi in 1995, for example, was the absence of a unified curriculum for Southern Sudanese located within southern Sudan or in refugee communities in Ethiopia, Zaire [Congo], Central African Republic (CAR), Kenya, Uganda, and Egypt. Two workshop recommendations are relevant here. One urged that “education should be oriented towards repatriation to avoid cultural conflict on their return home.” A second addressed the curriculum conundrum affecting Southern Sudanese directly: “UNESCO/UNICEF/UNHCR should promote the establishment of a unified curriculum for all Sudanese refugees to benefit them on their return home. This should include unified exams for all” (Sinclair, 1995: 14).

Nothing much became of these recommendations. A former UNHCR official involved with the workshop later recalled that “there were people who very much wanted to develop a common curriculum, but I don’t think much happened”. In addition, the official noted that:

“In practice, I think that with long running emergencies like southern Sudan, and no language of instruction issues (i.e. everyone wants to use English in schools), the current reality is the best – that the students follow the version of the East African curriculum in their asylum country, so that they can proceed to secondary or higher education in



that country. The crucial thing is to keep the language skills needed for repatriation if the opportunity comes.”

One challenge confronting this viewpoint is the fact that the only two asylum countries that use a version of the East African curriculum and regularly use English as the language of instruction are Uganda and Kenya. In all of the others – Congo, CAR, Ethiopia and Egypt, in addition to most of the schools that Southern Sudanese IDPs attend in Khartoum and other Government-held parts of Sudan – curriculum and language of instruction issues persist. Refugees in Kenya and Uganda indeed benefit from these two assets. But the same cannot be said for Southern Sudanese residing in many other parts of the region.

In a sense, the pronounced institutional separation between education within southern Sudan and education for refugees, and then further separation between refugee education programming in different countries, is understandable. Until quite recently, there did not appear to be any reasonable end in sight for Sudan’s civil war. After more than a decade of work on education for refugees who appeared to have little hope of going home any time soon, it is hardly surprising that UNHCR in Uganda sought to integrate Southern Sudanese refugees into northern Ugandan communities, for example. Such decisions have been influenced by the interactions of parties in conflict and states who have all been involved, in some way, with the plight of Southern Sudanese. Nonetheless, it also appears that UNHCR lacked an adequate regional approach to educational and other challenges confronting Southern Sudanese refugees living in different countries. As one UNHCR official asked:

“Why did the regional concept fail so badly within UNHCR? Because UNHCR officials can’t think regionally. This has caused so many problems. For example, UNHCR has never even had a regional education officer for Southern Sudanese refugees.”

Even though UNHCR has a regional office based in Nairobi, the country-specific perspectives of UNHCR country offices have proven difficult to harmonize.

While UNHCR, the primary international institution responsible for refugees, has lacked a regional approach to address the Southern Sudanese refugees’ educational challenges, Southern Sudanese have generally had

one. As noted at the end of *Chapter 3*, their perspective tends to be regional, and not especially separated by national borders. Most refugee populations in the region have not been isolated from southern Sudan at all. In many cases, borders have been passable if not porous, and Southern Sudanese have regularly crossed into and out of southern Sudan on their own. The refugee populations in each country may be administrated largely as separate islands. But they are not necessarily viewed in this way by Southern Sudanese themselves.

### *Ethiopia*

Despite the population's considerable size, education for Southern Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia has been poorly recorded. Little documentation proved accessible, and most of it addressed the early years (the late 1980s and early 1990s), which was described in the initial section of this chapter on the Lost Boys. That section provided some outlines of the education situation for the initial influx of Southern Sudanese refugees in the 1980s, which peaked at more than 200,000 refugees in Ethiopia by 1991 (or, perhaps, 300,000 refugees, as cited in U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1998: 2). Most returned to Sudan when the Lost Boys did in 1991, again as described earlier in this chapter.

Southern Sudanese began to return to Ethiopia in significant numbers in 1993. Nearly all again settled in refugee camps in western Ethiopia. There was an attempt to divide the refugee camps along ethnic lines to limit conflicts between groups, but this ultimately failed: Anuak (or Anyuak), Nuer and Dinka refugees, together with Anuak from within Ethiopia, repeatedly clashed, leading to high numbers of deaths (107 refugees in Fugnido camp alone during a 2002 conflict) and some dislocation (UNHCR, 2003*b*: 1), including approximately 15,000 Ethiopian Anuak fleeing to Sudan in 2004 (*IRIN news*, 2004*a*: 1). As with the earlier influx of refugees, the SPLA exerted its influence within the camps. As UNHCR reported, "the refugees' affiliations with various factions" of SPLA played a role in "fuelling" conflict (2003: 1).

Such instability has not helped the development of quality education for school-age refugee children. UNHCR reported that, for all refugee students within Ethiopia (nearly three quarters of whom are Southern Sudanese), the overall student to classroom ratio was 110:1 and the student to latrine ratio was 127:1 (2004*b*: 187). A UNHCR official reported that

the refugee schools used Ethiopia's national curriculum, and the language of instruction was Amharic.

*Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)*

Approximately 75,000 Southern Sudanese refugees in the DRC have sought protection and assistance in a country immersed, in recent years, in war and post-war instability (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2004a: 1). That they have found any at all is in itself notable. It has not been easy, however. As the U.S. Committee for Refugees has noted: "Because of the war and overwhelming transportation problems, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian agencies had virtually no contact with about half" of the hundreds of thousands of refugees within the DRC, "and only sporadic access to tens of thousands of others" (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2004a: 3). It also stated that UNHCR lacked a permanent presence, but instead made regular visits" (US Committee for Refugees, 2004: 4). On the other hand, the SPLA maintained a regular presence among Southern Sudanese refugee populations, just as it has maintained a presence in refugee communities in other asylum countries in the region (notably Ethiopia and Kenya). Limited access suggested that the refugee protection situation in the area bordered on the disastrous. USCR, for example, also noted that "lack of local authorities made it impossible to preserve the [refugee] settlements' civilian nature" (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2004a: 4). Among the results was that some SPLA members "reportedly trafficked arms" there (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2004a: 4).

Most of the refugees from southern Sudan arrived from western Equatoria in 1990-1991. Over time, some interviewed in Uganda reported that many shifted to northern Uganda, where security, assistance and access to education was far superior. "The major thing was that there were no schools in Congo", said a Southern Sudanese refugee who had fled to Zaire from 1991, remaining there until 1994. "But we knew in Uganda there were schools, so we went there from Congo". Sesnan noted in 1998 that there was "virtually no education" for Southern Sudanese refugees in DRC (then known as Zaire; 1998: 64). Those that remained in the DRC largely resided in Orientale Province, nearly 2,000 km from DRC's capital, Kinshasa, but close to the Sudanese border. USCR claims that "about half of the Sudanese refugees were self-sufficient and lived on their own without assistance" (US Committee for Refugees, 2004: 4).

There is scant evidence that a very limited number of Southern Sudanese school-age refugees managed to attend school. UNHCR, for example, noted that 2,891 children in Sudanese refugee settlements attended primary or secondary school in 2003 (UNHCR, 2004b: 134). UNHCR also noted that it has built some classrooms, rehabilitated some schools, distributed school materials, paid boarding fees and distributed second-hand clothes to “enhance the participation of Sudanese refugee girls in secondary education” (UNHCR, 2004b: 134). Southern Sudanese refugee students not only reportedly follow the DRC school curriculum (the language of instruction is French), many also “learn side by side with local [Congolese] children. More than 40 per cent of school children in the Sudanese sites are Congolese”, UNHCR reports (UNHCR, 2004b: 134).

#### *Central African Republic (CAR)*

By all available accounts (and they are few), the 37,000 Southern Sudanese refugees in the Central African Republic have had a difficult time. Nearly all of them are situated in or around the town of Mboki, 1,200 km from Bangui, the capital of CAR, but close to the borders of both Sudan and DRC. The area itself is largely cut off from the rest of the country by bad roads and sporadic instability (U.S. Committee for Refugees 2003: 2). It has not helped that since the central government in Bangui “has good relations with Sudan”, it consequently “has little interest in the welfare of refugees from the rebel-held south” (Jones, 2002: 4). A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) report called them “Sudan’s forgotten refugees” (Jones, 2002: 1).

As with their similarly isolated (and, to be sure, forgotten) refugee counterparts in DRC, most of the Sudanese refugees in CAR arrived in the early 1990s. They lack regular protection and aid from UNHCR, which no longer has an office in Mboki, and many are “largely self-sufficient by growing crops” on 1 ha of land per family (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2003: 2). As a result, most Sudanese refugees stopped receiving food aid in 2000 (USCR, 2001: 1). There are reports that primary and secondary schools for 4,000 refugee children are fraught with difficulty (USCR, 2001: 1). In addition to limited supplies and support, in 2002 it was reported that they are “scarcely operating amid accusations from the refugees that the government is replacing teachers who speak Arabic and English, the same languages of the Sudanese, with French-speaking teachers” (Jones, 2002: 3). Inquiries with Southern Sudanese education experts have

suggested that refugees in Mboki follow the CAR national curriculum, but no firm confirmation of this proved available.

### *Egypt*

Education for Southern Sudanese refugees (and non-refugees) in Egypt is a subject crying out for additional research. In general, a UNHCR official explained, “there is very little documentation of refugees in Egypt.” The official also stated that: “Even though only a small number of Southern Sudanese in Egypt are known to UNHCR, millions are probably in Egypt”. In 2000, the World Council of Churches has estimated that somewhere between 2 and 5 million Sudanese “have come to Egypt in recent years [and] more are arriving each week” (Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, 2002: 2). Of this prodigious population, it remains unclear how many Southern Sudanese there are and what they are doing. It is equally unclear “how many Sudanese [have] remained in Egypt because they feared persecution in Sudan, and how many [have] resided in Egypt for economic and other reasons” (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2002: 2). Who is and is not being educated, under what circumstances, and which curriculum, are additional questions.

Forced and unforced Sudanese migration into Egypt was spurred by the Wadi El Nil Treaty between Sudan and Egypt in 1978, “which granted Sudanese people the right to live in Egypt without a residence visa” (Hassan, 2000: 4). This opened up an opportunity for Sudanese migrants and an escape hatch for those fleeing war in Sudan. It became “extraordinarily easy” for Sudanese to migrate and receive permanent residence status in Egypt. Some were even offered citizenship (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2002: 2). Sudanese poured into Egypt until June 1995, when, after Sudanese Islamists attempted to assassinate Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak, Mubarak “held the Sudanese government responsible and revoked the treaty”. Since that time, Sudanese can receive a one-month tourist visa, which is difficult to renew, making any continued stay in Egypt illegal (Hassan, 2000: 4). Thousands if not millions continue to do this regardless of the dangers. For those seeking refugee asylum, the Egyptian government has allowed temporary residence status and some legal protections since 2001 (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2002: 2). But for most, as one UNHCR official described it, “whatever the refugees are doing is technically illegal”.

The relatively small proportion of Southern Sudanese that are known to UNHCR, and the NGOs and Churches that assist some of them, are mainly refugees or asylum-seekers concentrated in Egypt's sprawling capital, Cairo (Ismail, 2002: 1). There, petty trade or worse (such as prostitution) reportedly constitute the only economic prospects for most. Since apartment rents are high, many cram themselves into tiny apartments and sleep in shifts. Round-ups of refugees and asylum seekers are not unknown. Life for these Southern Sudanese is described as desperate and sometimes intimidating by observers (see, for example, Akuei, 2004; Apiku, 2003; and Hauser, 1998).

While it has been noted that "churches and NGOs in Egypt [again, largely in Cairo] offer education, medical care, or packages of oil, beans and sugar to the refugees" (Hauser, 1998: 2), little evidence exists regarding the quality and nature of the education provided. Sesnan, for example, notes that some Southern Sudanese who entered Egypt in the late 1980s "succeeded, through the help of the Catholic and Anglican churches, in getting into school" (1998: 63). Still, it has also been noted that most lack access to any education at all (Akuei, 2004). A UNHCR official described the situation in the following way:

"Strictly speaking, refugees are supposed to have no access to education. In reality, those that are going to private schools run by churches and NGOs are doing so discretely. When an Egyptian challenges them about working or being in school, obviously the refugees don't win."

One Southern Sudanese refugee living in Cairo explained that "if you want to join a school in Cairo you must pay". School fees for refugees are prohibitive. The refugee interviewed explained that it was 1,000 Egyptian pounds per year (approximately US\$165) for primary and secondary education, and 3,000 Egyptian pounds (nearly US\$500) for a university education. Such costs are out of reach for most refugee families.

UNHCR has the responsibility of hearing all refugee asylum cases and granting refugee status to those that meet the proper requirements. It is a difficult assignment, particularly since money is scarce. As UNHCR's entire caseload in Egypt consists of urban refugees, some receive limited monetary support. Others do not. As a UNHCR official noted in 2003: "Approximately 2,000 families out of 11,000 refugees get a monthly

stipend from UNHCR. The rest are getting nothing”. The official estimated that between 9,000-10,000 of the approximately 11,000 refugees that UNHCR was assisting were from southern Sudan.

The purpose of travelling to Cairo, however, was not merely to seek assistance and protection as refugees. It was also to try one’s luck at hitting “the jackpot – resettlement to a Western country” (Wilkes, 1996: 1). As with the Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya, Cairo had obtained a reputation among Southern Sudanese in the region as a resettlement launching point to a Western nation (most particularly the U.S.). Few of those who travelled all the way to Egypt’s capital city then made it through the difficult prospects of receiving refugee status. UNHCR statistics suggested that only 28 per cent of all Sudanese asylum applicants received refugee status in 2000-2001 (Akuei, 2004: 1), a process which might take a year or more to be resolved. Still the odds against resettlement were considerable. Nonetheless, the chance to resettle to the west remained, and many Southern Sudanese continue to try their luck in the hope of some day making it there, particularly since long-term alternatives in Egypt do not appear to exist. As Akuei has noted:

“Although only a small percentage of the many people arriving [in Egypt] from war-torn Sudan are determined bona fide refugees and become eligible for third-country resettlement, resettlement has been acknowledged as the most viable solution for this population. The main reason is their very limited prospects for local integration, in particular deficiencies in rights to employment, education, medical and other social services, that would help them establish self-sufficiency and viable livelihoods” (Akuei, 2004: 1).

## Education in Kenya

### *Hell or paradise? Kakuma’s many worlds*

The three refugee camps in Kakuma, Kenya are among the most unusual in the world. They are cosmopolitan, containing refugees from nine countries in the region and more than 20 ethnic groups (Sommers, 2001: 188). While most of the world’s refugee camps are thought to primarily contain women and children, the Kakuma camps continue to be demographically dominated by boys and male youth – many of whom are former child soldiers. Kakuma is thought to be a set of interconnected

refugee camps,<sup>22</sup> yet it is contended by many Southern Sudanese and international humanitarian officials in the area that a considerable proportion of those who reside there are not refugees at all, but instead might more accurately be described as commuters: people who visit the Kakuma camps to receive education, visit relatives and friends, obtain a refugee identity and ration card, and attempt to resettle to a Western country.

Kakuma is likely the most famous set of refugee camps for Southern Sudanese living anywhere in the world. For those who do not live there, it is also a resource with many uses, including the following:

- It is a market destination. Reports drawn from Narus indicated that farmers from the Didinga Hills in eastern Equatoria grew the lucrative chat or miraa crop, which is popular with Somali refugees. Travelling at night in armed groups to defend themselves against armed bandits, Didinga farmers travelled to Kakuma to sell their wares to Somali refugees living there (Sommers, 2002: 12);
- It is a mail delivery point. A Dinka refugee in Cairo, who was in the process of resettling to the United States, described how the bride price for his young wife was negotiated. He sent a letter to his father via a Southern Sudanese refugee friend in Nairobi, who then sent the letter to someone residing in the Kakuma refugee camps. From there, the letter went to Gogrial, in northern Bahr el Ghazal. “There are so many people travelling to my area” from Kakuma or nearby Lokichoggio, the Egypt-based refugee explained. He surmised that a letter took three to four weeks to get from Kakuma to Gogrial. The response letter returned in the same fashion, and in the end, the refugee proudly explained, “We made the agreement”;
- It is a place to visit friends and ‘feast’ after biweekly food distributions take place, reported many residents of Narus who were interviewed, including secondary school students;
- It is a location where a person, if fortunate enough to obtain a refugee identity and ration card, can regularly receive food. In fact, many

22. Since its inception in 1992, it has expanded from one to eventually three connected camps (Kakuma I, II and III). Kakuma II was founded in late 1997, and Kakuma III began in early 1999 (Sommers, 2001: 188).



Southern Sudanese in the area near the Kenya-Sudan border (including the areas of Kakuma in Kenya and Narus inside Sudan), appeared to equate a refugee not as someone requiring protection, but as someone owning a UNHCR ration card (Sommers, 2002: 13);

- It is a place where a Southern Sudanese might receive access to a range of educational services that is almost certainly unparalleled among refugee camps in Africa (if not beyond), in addition to health services that are unavailable in most of southern Sudan; and
- Finally, and most famously of all (at least among Southern Sudanese), it is a site where the fortunate few are selected for resettlement to a Western nation. Kakuma is known to attract young Southern Sudanese who hope to follow in the footsteps of the Lost Boys who resettled in the United States, as their resettlement “has created a sensation among those youths remaining in Kakuma and Southern Sudanese elsewhere in the region” (Sommers, 2002: 11).

Mentioning all of these extraordinary possibilities and potentials that Kakuma’s refugee camps offer lends the impression that Kakuma is, as one USAID official termed it, some sort of ‘Club Med’ (Sommers, 2002: 9). It is not. Nor is it the ‘prison’ that a UNHCR official in Kakuma labelled it.<sup>23</sup> It could not be, since the camps’ periphery and the national border located just north of Kakuma are both so porous. Nor, furthermore, is it in danger of being transformed, as one NGO official working in Kakuma warned, “from a refugee camp to a resettlement processing centre”, despite the reported investment of millions of U.S. dollars (the NGO official cited the figure of US\$5.5 million) for resettlement infrastructure within the Kakuma camps. Most of Kakuma’s residents, refugee or not, will most probably never be resettled either to the U.S. or to any other Western nation.

One cause of Kakuma’s peculiar circumstances appears to lie in conflicting donor priorities. These are dramatized by the case of the U.S. Government, whose support for Southern Sudanese has been split between two separate sources of funding with divergent outlooks on the plight of

23. The official explained it in the following way: “Kakuma is a prison. It has facilities, but it’s still a prison”.

refugees in Kakuma. The U.S. State Department enthusiastically supports education for refugees in the Kakuma camps. Together with UNHCR officials, the State Department perspective emphasized “the dismal environment and quality of life in the Kakuma camps and the shortages of food and other essential supplies” (Sommers, 2002: 9). Meanwhile, USAID officials interviewed in 2002 in Nairobi were clearly frustrated by the pressure to feed many people who, at least in the eyes of some officials, could easily repatriate to Sudan: “The USAID view contains an implicit challenge to the Sudanese population’s refugee status [and thus UNHCR as well], arguing that safe return to many parts of southern Sudan is viable, realistic, and already underway” (Sommers, 2002: 9). Regardless of the validity of these arguments, Sudanese refugees remain in the Kakuma camps. The government of Kenya has placed tens of thousands of refugees in camps located in remote deserts near the towns of Kakuma and Dadaab (the latter of which hosts primarily Somali refugees located near the Somali border). Since the carrying capacity of the camps’ hostile environs is low, it is hardly surprising (though, for some reason, it has seemed to surprise many) that tensions and violence (including sexual violence) have regularly surfaced between refugees in camps and Kenyans living nearby. As UNHCR has intimated: “The sociological and demographic imbalance created by the massive settlement of 65,000 refugees on the local nomadic Turkana population of 45,000 cannot be overlooked” (2002: 1).

That is an understatement: In ecological terms, it appears that the refugees, who outnumber the locals, are considered invaders threatening the survival of Turkanas in the locality.

One result of this unfortunate situation is a skewed sense of equity between the two disempowered communities involved. While it is widely reported, for example, that the refugees have regularly suffered from malnutrition, Crisp reports that “according to aid agency workers, the level of malnutrition amongst the Turkana is higher than it is amongst the refugees in Kakuma” (2000: 618). Furthermore, “the fact that UNHCR and other agencies provide almost the only source of employment and business in the area leads to intense competition for jobs, contracts and access to the various resources of the refugee assistance programme” (2000: 619).

If refugees and Turkanas in the locality thus appear to be stuck with each other, it would be inaccurate to accuse their regular confrontations

as the source of all the Kakuma camps' violence. Crisp notes that the areas surrounding both Kakuma and Dadaab have historically been hotbeds for "banditry, cattle rustling and insurgency as well as violent clashes between the Kenyan army and local armed groups" (2000: 618). For the bandits, refugee camps in Kakuma and Dadaab "have led to a geographical concentration of the violence. There are simply more items to steal, more people to rob and more women to rape in and around the camps than in other parts of the two provinces" (Crisp, 2000: 619). Adding to this situation is the longstanding problem of impunity in both regions. Crisp further catalogues a diversity of other kinds of violence: domestic and community violence, sexual abuse and violence, armed robbery, violence within national refugee groups, violence between national refugee groups and, as has been noted above, violence between refugees and local populations. Stirring the pot, to some degree at least, is the strong presence of the SPLA in the Kakuma camps, whose "leaders in the camps may at times be linked to camp violence" (Human Rights Watch, 2002: 128).

Significantly, Crisp also notes that education, in the end, provides a highly limited alternative to violence for refugee youth in Kakuma:

"For younger refugees, the absence of opportunity is a particular concern [...] In Kakuma, only a small proportion of primary school graduates are able to go on to the camps' secondary school facilities. And while the skills training programme in Kakuma is of very high technical quality, refugees who complete the course are not always able to make productive use of the skills they have required" (2000: 628).

The result, Crisp notes, is "all too predictable". He cites an NGO worker's comment that the lack of sufficient "education, training, recreational and work opportunities in the camps is 'a very good way of making more bandits'" (2000: 628).

### *Refugee education in Kakuma*

On the surface, the situation in Kakuma, at least in terms of education, should be much better than it is. It boasts, after all, an impressive array of educational opportunities. Yet substantial educational challenges nonetheless persist, and they have proven difficult to address adequately.

To understand this situation, it is useful to first consider the demographics of the camps and the early stages of Kakuma's education programme.

From the outset in 1992, the Kakuma refugee camps, led by the Lost Boys, have been overwhelmingly young and male, with large numbers of this majority being unaccompanied, militarized and dominated, or at least influenced, by the SPLA. An early head count of the 1992 refugees found that there were 10,885 boys and young men between the ages of 6 and 23 (although the numbers of those between 18 and 23 were deemed 'insignificant'), 830 girls and young women between ages 6 and 23 (married women between ages 15 and 23 were not included), and 1,901 children between ages 0 and 5 (Whande, 1992: 9). Those refugees aged 24 and above numbered 4,684, or 25 per cent. Three quarters of the initial Sudanese refugee influx, in other words, was under age 24, and nearly 60 per cent of the camp's founding population were males between the ages of 6 and 23, nearly all of whom were minors.

Ten years later, even after steady increases in the refugee population and following the exodus of nearly 3,800 Lost Boys to the United States between 1999 and 2002 (UNHCR, 2002: 1), a UNHCR report nonetheless indicated that the population breakdowns had remained virtually unchanged, with 74 per cent of Kakuma's population under age 25 and 60 per cent of the population comprised of male refugees. As a result, the report concluded that "the excruciating problem in Kakuma is the demographic imbalance" (UNHCR, 2002: 2). UNHCR's 2002 report also suggested the degree to which Kakuma had become a kind of terminus for at least some of the largely Sudanese refugee camp. While it found that 81 per cent of the total refugee population, or 52,032 of the total of 64,381 refugees, was comprised of Sudanese refugees, UNHCR also noted that the results of their latest head count revealed "a 27 per cent reduction of the refugee population". It also found that "there were thousands of [non-refugees] living in the camps without any valid documents or registration", a figure that no doubt included Sudanese visitors arriving from Narus and elsewhere within southern Sudan, refugee camps and settlements in Ethiopia and Uganda, and Nairobi and other towns in Kenya (UNHCR, 2002: 3).

The desire to begin educating a population of mostly young and male refugees, many of whom were also unaccompanied, arose from the outset. "Education activities must be set up as soon as the children and the community are ready", an early UNHCR report recommended. It also

urged the development of in-service teacher training and pre-school activities (Whande, 1992: 11). By 1994, an estimated 75 per cent of all the students in both the primary and secondary schools (12,000 of 16,000) were still “unaccompanied Sudanese males” (Sinclair, 1994: 50). A mere 9.8 per cent of the 15,160 primary school students were female (Sinclair, 1994: 50). Sudanese teachers taught the Kenyan curriculum, even if most of their teachers were former secondary school graduates who had learned the Sudanese curriculum in the Arabic language. Conditions in classrooms were exceptionally poor, with leaky, highly permeable roofs, mud walls that eroded during the rainy seasons, too-small or no blackboards, short school hours (three per day), a shortage of textbooks and student benches made of crumbling mud (and only in the better off schools – one school “had no mud benches, just a thick dust floor”). Even those students sitting on the mud benches suffered, because they “were said to damage clothing and to entrap the river bed dust (with its dried faecal matter)”. The lone secondary school contained a mere 141 students, with classroom conditions dramatically better than in the primary schools (cement floors, large blackboards, and desks and benches for the students; Sinclair, 1994: 51). Among the schools’ needs was to “check whether the refugee teachers are able to teach the Kenya secondary curriculum effectively” (Sinclair, 1994: 52).

Interviews with veteran refugee education officials, Kenyan and Sudanese refugee officials alike, present at the founding of the Kakuma refugee camps and the beginnings of its educational programme revealed a number of significant issues that remain significant to this day. The officials recalled that:

- The first education system established in Kakuma was the Ethiopian education system, which Lost Boys and their refugee teachers imported from the refugee camps in Ethiopia. Initial classes took place ‘under trees’ with volunteer teachers;
- The presence of SPLA military officers in the Kakuma area actually began before the founding of the first refugee camp. One official estimated their arrival at 1986. The same official believed that they helped establish the switch from the Ethiopian to the Kenyan national curriculum soon after the refugee education system was initiated. The rationale for this change was detailed by a senior Sudanese refugee official on the Refugee Education Committee:

“The Sudanese refugee leaders met to decide on what system of education they needed to teach the students. They agreed that it would be the Kenyan curriculum. They refused the Sudan curriculum because it had been Arabized and operated in the Arabic language. That curriculum tried to sideline the English language, which has existed in the south since the time of the British [that is, the Condominium Period]. Before independence in 1956, education in southern Sudan leaned toward the education systems in British East African countries. So it was felt that if we chose the Kenyan national curriculum, it wouldn’t be so different from what we had already been exposed to in Southern Sudan”;

- Soon after the establishment of schools, a Refugee Education Committee was formed. It consisted of 10 “former Sudanese teachers who had been with the students in Ethiopia” (the number of members has since expanded to 12). Given reports from interviews with some committee members and research on the pre-1991 refugee schools in Ethiopia, it is probable that all of the first education committee members were also members of the SPLA’s military, as was the case in later years;
- Significantly, early attempts were reportedly made to, as one Refugee Education Committee member characterized it, “decide what to include to supplement the Kenyan curriculum with regard to Southern Sudanese culture and history.” Particular concern was voiced about the content of three subjects: geography, history and Christian religious education. The effort to revise the curricula of these three subjects, however, had to be dropped because refugees from other countries began to arrive. As a result, the Kenyan curriculum is taught to all refugees in Kakuma regardless of their country of origin without alteration. Stranded in camps, refugee students consequently learn about, for example, Kenyan history and geography, learning nothing about southern Sudan, or, for that matter, the histories and geographies of Somalia, Ethiopia, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, or any of the other countries from which refugees in Kakuma had fled, in formal schools;
- Kenyan teachers were brought into refugee schools almost from the outset. One Refugee Education Committee member recalled that while “most teachers were refugees, we asked the authorities to employ Kenyan teachers to teach Swahili and other technical subjects.”

Characteristic of the committee's priorities, the official explained the reason for this: "We thought this was good because of our desire to lean towards the Kenyan curriculum";

- "Virtually all" of the adult refugees entering Kakuma with the Lost Boys and other Sudanese refugee youth had a military background, another Refugee Education Committee member stated. As a result, and similar to the formal education in the refugee camps in Ethiopia where they came from, "education was targeted at fitting students into the army". Accordingly, the thrust of early education in Kakuma was "not education for development, but education for the military". Unlike the Ethiopian camps they had evacuated in 1991, this changed over time in Kakuma, as "education gradually began to be viewed as more relevant for skills development";
- From the outset, the teaching challenges were substantial. Given the reported military background of many of the teachers, one official recalled, their classroom approach "seemed more like indoctrination than the imparting of knowledge and skills". They also had limited teaching skills, qualifications, training and experience – a background that, given the slim educational heritage of the areas where the Southern Sudanese refugees came from (largely Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile), is not surprising;
- The Sudanese refugee population was already dominated by ethnic Dinka and they settled within Kakuma according to clan affiliation; and
- From the outset, regular school attendance arose as a significant challenge (one of many which has endured).

Two years after the establishment of the initial Kakuma refugee camp, additional educational offerings were already available to supplement basic primary schooling. There were educational scholarships for eight blind students. Two hundred and fifteen were involved in Don Bosco's vocational training centre, which Sinclair judged as providing "good courses", each lasting a full year, for students learning carpentry, masonry or agriculture (Sinclair, 1994: 53). By 1996, two further years of refugee education at Kakuma had produced still more initiatives. There were scholarships to established schools outside of the refugee camp. An

education for peace/human rights programme was introduced as an upcoming pilot programme. A second pilot project for environmental education was underway. The World Food Programme was supplying breakfast to primary school students. The number of other organizations involved in refugee education programming was beginning to expand. The list included UNHCR's NGO implementing partner for education in the Kakuma refugee camps, Radda Barnen (Save the Children in Sweden, which reportedly supplied primary and secondary education from Kakuma's refugee camp from 1994 until 1998), as well as Don Bosco (for vocational education), International Rescue Committee (IRC) for health education, the UNESCO Programme for Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction (PEER), members of Kenya's Ministry of Education and CARE for environmental education, and the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) and the Jesuit Refugee Service providing secondary and vocational scholarships. UNHCR would be leading the peace education programme (Sinclair, 1996: 14-15). More NGOs and programmes would be arriving.

The number and diversity of educational programmes continued to expand. By 2003, the following education programmes (which, despite considerable effort, is probably still incomplete) had been introduced in the Kakuma camps, and many had commenced years earlier:

- The Windle Charitable Trust provided scholarships for limited numbers of eligible refugees seeking to attend secondary schools and universities in Kenya, Hong Kong, Wales, and England. The Trust also runs the Kakuma English Language Programme (KELP), which provides refugees with a wide array of non-formal English language courses, including: the Kakuma Advanced English Language Programme, for small numbers of adult refugees, most of whom are Sudanese men who already work for NGOs in the camp in their advanced language course; a six-month intermediate course for selected teachers in the refugee primary and secondary schools; additional intermediate and upper intermediate classes for selected students, all of whom need English language skills before gaining access to vocational and other training opportunities in the refugee camps; an English language course for those needing to pass English language tests to attend universities in Canada and the United States



(it was not clear who was paying for refugee student scholarships); and a course aimed at refugee women. There appear to be somewhere between 30 and 40 students in each course. Another funded activity is Skills for southern Sudan, which facilitates the hiring of Southern Sudanese refugees with skills training and job placement (Windle Charitable Trust, 2002: 7);

- The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), a scholarship programme implemented in Kenya by the Africa Refugee Education Programme (AREP Foundation). The programme covers all relevant costs to allow limited numbers of qualified refugee students to attend universities in Kenya. They also benefit from a programme that allows students to intern with private companies and NGOs in Kenya (Kindler-Adam, 1998);
- An environmental education programme carried out by *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ) that incorporates environmental education, clubs and activities such as tree planting in primary schools, which are termed kitchen gardening activities, energy conservation work (including distributing energy saving stoves) and planting trees/afforestation (GTZ, 2003);
- FilmAid International (FAI), a project devised by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which was originally “founded in 1999 by a group of concerned filmmakers to address the boredom and trauma experienced by Kosovar refugees” (FilmAid International, undated: 1). The programme features daytime and nighttime screenings of largely educational films. The nighttime screenings typically attract 8,000 viewers (Sommers, 2002: 10). FAI also runs a Participatory Video Project (PVP) in which refugees make their own videos;
- Don Bosco Kakuma runs a vocational training school that trained 568 refugee youth in 2002. It trains students in a number of trades, including computer skills, mechanics and carpentry (Sommers, 2002: 10); and
- UHNCR has implemented a Peace Education Programme in the refugee camps of Kakuma (and Dadaab). It emphasizes skill acquisition, is activity-centred and promotes peace building and

conflict prevention. It has two components. The first is a schools programme, which features one lesson per week for all children in both the primary and secondary schools. The community workshop programme centres on weekly workshops that take place for perhaps three months. There are also public awareness and planned peace education activities. In less than five years (1998-2002), it was estimated that the programme had “directly reached 30 per cent of the current camp population” (Obura, 2002: 8) – fully 50 per cent above its coverage target (20 per cent of all refugees based in camps in Dadaab and Kakuma). The programme has been reviewed and evaluated with generally high marks regarding quality and impact, and is exceptionally popular with refugees in both Kakuma and Dadaab (Obura, 2002; Robinson, 2000; Sommers, 2001).

There is still more educational programming in the Kakuma refugee camps, including: an HIV/AIDS and reproductive health course that is “woven into the normal school curriculum” (UNHCR, 2004c: 2); a vocational training centre for handicapped children; a rehabilitation programme that trains refugees in physical therapy and other medical skills; a youth and culture programme that reaches upwards of 20,000 youth per year; a sports programme that involves thousands of young refugees in sports competitions; an adult continuing education programme; a distance learning programme that provides degrees from the University of south Africa; and scholarships to Kenyan secondary schools provided by the Jesuit Refugee Service (Sommers, 2002: 10). Taken together, the array of educational offerings available to refugees in the Kakuma camps (including the formal education system that will be detailed below) is spectacular by nearly any standard, and most particularly when one considers that all of these programmes and possibilities are all offered to refugees living in three camps in a remote corner of Africa.

Far and away the largest education effort in the Kakuma camps is the Lutheran World Federation’s (LWF’s) formal education programme. By the beginning of 2002, it had grown to include over 28,000 students in its six pre-schools, 23 primary schools and three secondary schools. An LWF-Kakuma document asserts that despite

“persistent constraints, it is however [delightful] that there has been a steady and gradual improvement in the [students’] performance over the years in the [Kenyan] national exams both at the Primary

and [Secondary] level. Our students compare favourably in the national exams with their colleagues in the Kenyan schools, a number of them scoring qualifying marks for admission into Kenyan national schools” (Lutheran World Federation, 2002: 4).

This statement does not mean that the refugee students are generating breathtaking scores. A look at the Kenyan national exam results from Bor Town Secondary School, for example, sheds light on some of the struggles that students and their teachers face. The highest subject score was a ‘C’ in, curiously enough (given its pronounced Kenyan emphasis), history. The lowest collective score was a failing grade in Swahili, with all of the remaining subject scores falling in between these two (nearly all of which were in the ‘D’ range). Notwithstanding what might seem to be fairly uninspiring grades, however, it should be pointed out that refugee students attained these sorts of scores regardless of the fact that “per capita expenditure on education in the [Kakuma refugee] camps [...] was [US]\$25 in 1999; the national [Kenyan] figure was some [US]\$200, or eight times as much” (Jamal, 2000: 22).

Nonetheless, the educational quality of Kakuma’s refugee schools continues to be debated. Shrill critiques consistently emerged, for example, during interviews with students and teachers who had left Kakuma’s schools to enter those run by the Diocese of Torit in Narus. One education official there, recalling reports from teachers and students arriving from Kakuma, recalled that “from what I’ve heard, the secondary schools don’t emphasize discipline, and students there can go on strike. They really don’t seem very serious about education”. And yet the educational attractions of Kakuma were undeniable. Kakuma retained a renown across southern Sudan for both education and the chance to be resettled to the West, the U.S. in particular. “It is still true”, a teacher working within Sudan related, “that there are more secondary school students in Kakuma than in all secondary schools within southern Sudan combined.” While this is probably no longer the case (the figures were difficult to confirm), it illustrated a popular perception that education in Kakuma was both available and good. Education in Kakuma was widely believed, by Sudanese and international agency officials alike, to be a ‘magnet’ that attracted Sudanese searching for educational opportunities. At the same time, education did not appear to be Kakuma’s primary attraction. “The possibility of resettlement,

however unrealistic the chances may be, is the primary attraction of Kakuma for Southern Sudanese” (Sommers, 2002: 11).

As for Southern Sudanese elsewhere in the region, the enrolment figures for girls in school remained a pressing concern within the Kakuma refugee camps. This might be expected, given that the population demographics were so strongly skewed in favour of males over females. But it was made all the more complicated by evidence of unaccompanied Southern Sudanese refugee girls as part of the mix. These ‘Lost Girls’ reportedly arrived in Kakuma with their ‘Lost Boy’ brothers, after which the sisters were “taken in by foster families” from among the Southern Sudanese refugee population. Watch List states that, in situations similar to other refugee settings, “some unaccompanied girls in Kakuma are treated like commodities and forced into slave-like conditions and used as domestic servants”. One outcome of this situation has been that “most unaccompanied girls do not have access to education” (Watch List, 2003: 17).

Despite this alarming situation for what appears to be a fairly small proportion of Southern Sudanese girls in Kakuma, LWF, UNHCR and many other agencies have tried to expand girls’ participation in education. LWF’s efforts underscore the creative and multifaceted methods that agencies have employed to attract and retain more girls in education programmes. They have employed, among other efforts, “vigorous community awareness campaigns; [and] provision of material support in the form of uniforms, sanitary wear and soap to girls”. It has also paid “particular attention [...] to the girls who drop out of school due to early marriages and pregnancy” (Action by Churches Together/ACT, 2002: 13). Progress has indeed been made in recent years. One sign of this, an LWF official recalled, was that “before 1999, there was only one girl who graduated from secondary school”. The official also noted that plans were underway by LWF to “establish a girls’ boarding primary school” in the Kakuma refugee camps. This approach is similar to that undertaken by other agencies and groups within southern Sudan.<sup>24</sup> Yet it appears that this effort, which would seem to be quite costly, is fuelled by an inaccurate assumption – namely, that girls’ enrolment, at least in primary schools, is low.

24. See, for example, the Akon case in Chapter 3.

A look at camp statistics suggests otherwise. In 2002, for example, 38.2 per cent of all refugees in Kakuma between the ages of 6 and 17 were girls (Action by Churches Together, 2002: 6). If one can reasonably assume that this age bracket constitutes most primary school students in the camps, then the proportion of refugee girls attending school is likely higher for Southern Sudanese girls in Kakuma than just about anywhere else in the entire region. LWF's enrolment statistics for 2002 revealed that of the 20,322 students attending their primary schools that year, 6,683 – or almost one third (32.9 per cent) of the total student population – were girls. While this hardly demonstrates an acceptable rate of girls' enrolment, it remains, within the Southern Sudanese context, strikingly high, particularly when one takes into account the fact that a great many of the refugees in Kakuma hail from areas and cultures within southern Sudan with highly limited exposure to formal education. In fact, LWF's concern appears to be misdirected: It is in secondary school, not primary school, where the drop-off of girls' enrolment is so significant. In 2002, girls constituted a mere 12.5 per cent of the total secondary school population (269 out of 2,157 secondary school students; Lutheran World Federation, 2002: 2).

Ninety-five per cent of teachers are refugees (Action by Churches Together 2002: 12), nearly all of whom are Southern Sudanese. Female refugee teachers constitute a mere 3 per cent of the primary school teaching staff (12 out of 398), and 4 per cent of those teaching secondary school (3 out of 73). Refugee teachers were paid the equivalent in Kenyan shillings of US\$39 in 2002, while school headmasters received the equivalent of US\$59 (Sommers, 2002: 20). This may not appear to be high, given the demands of the teaching profession. It is also low when compared to the salaries that DOT teachers are paid just across the Sudanese border in Narus. But it is far higher than most other teachers receive in most of southern Sudan, either as in-kind payments, incentives or salaries (as was reviewed in *Chapter 3*).

Most are not trained as professional teachers (Lutheran World Federation, 2002: 2-3), although a new teacher training centre (TTC) began in 2002. It is also managed by LWF. The new TTC aptly demonstrates how LWF's programme prepares refugees to advance within the Kenyan national education system. The purpose of the TTC is "to prepare teachers for certification in the Kenyan national education system", which "underscores how the Kenyan education system remains the frame of

reference” for those involved in formal education in Kakuma (Lutheran World Federation, 2002: 2-3). As Action by Churches Together (ACT) explains, “The [refugee] teachers will be trained in conjunction with [...] Kenya’s Ministry of Education and teachers awarded teaching certificates will be recognised in post camp life” (Action by Churches Together, 2002: 13).

One of the central thrusts of education for Southern Sudanese refugees, in Kenya and elsewhere, is that it has generally *not* been designed or implemented specifically to facilitate repatriation. This may be understandable, considering the fact that, at least until 2002 or 2003, a peace agreement for southern Sudan appeared a distant possibility, and perhaps even unattainable.

Yet the consequences of this perspective were present everywhere. The Refugee Education Committee, SPLA officers, all encouraged young refugees to go as far as they could in the Kenyan education system, and to seek resettlement if the opportunity arose. They have been introduced to the SPLM’s New Sudan curriculum, but are not yet interested in implementing it for Southern Sudanese refugee students, since it is as yet incomplete and is not thought to have approached the level of international acceptance that the Kenyan curriculum receives. Taken together, this may seem to be a reasonable and perhaps unavoidable approach, given a nearby civil war that has often seemed nearly perpetual. An additional influence of the Kenyan curriculum is suggested by the fact that the children of many of the major SPLA officials, including those of its leader, John Garang, reportedly attend Kenyan schools. But this stance was buttressed by other factors and encouragements that effectively kept Kakuma’s education system turned away from Sudan and towards Kenya and beyond. During interviews carried out in Kakuma in mid-2002, for example, not one NGO or UNHCR official engaged in refugee education had either been to southern Sudan or had anything more than cursory knowledge of the educational offerings there. LWF’s education programme was essentially a Kenyan education programme customized for refugee learners, run primarily by qualified and dedicated Kenyan education professionals. The quality of their work was consistently demonstrated, in their view, by how refugee students compared to their Kenyan counterparts on national examinations.

Additionally, there was a strong awareness that some of the refugees studying in various educational programmes would probably be resettled to a country in the West. A Catholic priest involved in the Don Bosco's vocational school illustrated this popular perspective in the following way. Speaking of the new computer skills training course, he noted that learning these skills would not be a waste if a student's "computer skills can be used by NGOs working in Southern Sudan". The priest added that the skills would also help them "if the guys are to be resettled elsewhere – the United States, Canada or Australia". More to the point, however, learning computer skills appeared to be particularly useful because "I hear that a certificate in computer skills training can help a refugee's chances of getting resettled". Finally, the priest wondered whether the skills that Southern Sudanese learned in the Kakuma refugee camps would prove even useful after repatriation. "In certain parts of Sudan", the priest asked, "how will education help if people go back to the bush just to herd cattle?". The implication that southern Sudan would remain an educational backwater is clear here, as is the sense that repatriation may not be the best option open to a young refugee even if peace were to arrive.

The pronounced lack of information about education within southern Sudan, or, in some cases at least, simple disinterest in the subject among international agency officials, contrasted sharply with Southern Sudanese refugee perspectives. The Diocese of Torit's well-developed education operation in Narus, perhaps 160 km from Kakuma, appeared to be well known by refugees. In the past, it had recruited teachers from schools in Kakuma's refugee camps, and some students in DOT schools reported that they had decided to 'shift' from Kakuma to Narus on their own, given their assessment that the quality of education was superior in Narus, where DOT also follows the same Kenyan curriculum. Similarly, news that Church Ecumenical Action in Sudan (CEAS) had recruited Dinka teachers from Kakuma's refugee primary schools by matching LWF salaries and providing other benefits was well-known – it was difficult not to know about, since CEAS had hired an airplane to fly their new refugee teachers from Kakuma to Bor. CEAS' teachers, in most cases, reportedly had their families remain in Kakuma, so their children could continue their studies without disruption. One teacher interviewed in 2002 had returned to Kakuma from his new post in Bor "just for an R and R"<sup>25</sup> and to visit his family and friends. The approach of leaving one's family in Kakuma (or, indeed, the refugee camps in northern Uganda) and working in Sudan is

also employed by SPLA soldiers and officers, a veteran Southern Sudanese teacher related. Given the ready availability of such information, one senses, just perhaps, that many non-refugee education officials in Kakuma (the education programmes were generally led by Kenyans and international staff) may have been working with refugees while not wanting to grasp the educational realities beginning just 120 km north of Kakuma, across the Sudan border.

*“Frustration”: educational challenges in Kakuma’s camps*

Despite being unannounced, my quiet visit to Zone Three in Kakuma II camp in 2000 nonetheless drew a huge crowd. On the main road under the hot mid-afternoon sun, crowds of thin Southern Sudanese male youth stood in groups along the streets. The roadside had a series of ‘breweries’ – bars where local beer is brewed and sold, and most of the young men were thoroughly drunk. One young man explained why he was there. “I’ve failed education and I’ve failed getting a job”, he explained. “I’m just idle”. His food ration had run out, he explained, so he came to the bar to drink. “If I stay two days without food”, he explained, “beer becomes a medicine” which “helps you forget about hunger”. On the day that I interviewed him, he explained that “I didn’t get breakfast or lunch, but after one bottle of beer today, I feel OK”. Another young man explained what had taken place recently in Zone Three. There had been a fight between two boys. One was an ethnic Dinka from Bor County, the other was from Equatoria. They had stolen something together, the youth explained, but then got into a fight over how to split up their goods. During the fight, “the Dinka took an arrow in the abdomen”. Other Dinka youth retaliated, burning “all the houses of Equatorians” in the area. “Do you know hunger?” another young Sudanese man asked me during a visit to another part of the camp. “When you have hunger, you can’t see, so you can’t be peaceful. You normally fight”. Still later in Kakuma I, while visiting a ‘video parlour’ – a darkened room off the main street where movies and soccer matches are shown throughout every day for a small fee – another young man explained why he was there. “I came just to pass the time”, he explained.

Educating refugees in Kakuma was never going to be easy. Despite the impressive educational programming present there and the generally

25. That is, ‘rest and relaxation’.



determined and steadfast efforts of many NGOs (with LWF deserving particular recognition), a number of factors serve to limit their impact. Most of these factors cannot be altered by any of the education professionals working there. Not often highlighted among the Kakuma's demographics, for instance, is that most of the Sudanese refugee population in Kakuma (and, indeed, within all of Kenya) are ethnic Dinka and Nuer. Relatively few of their family members have ever had much exposure to education. The limited educational background of so many Southern Sudanese refugees is coupled with the fact that many of Kakuma's male youth are either orphaned or at least dislocated from their families, leaving them "deprived of the social coping mechanisms usually learned within the family" (Refugees International, 1998: 2). There is also the simple fact that there are far more male than female youth in the camps. In addition, interviews with humanitarian officials working in Kakuma in both 2000 and 2002 revealed a perception that, as Jamal also found, "the issue of resettlement preoccupies much of the camp population. In the absence of other solutions, it seems that the burning desire of 80,000 persons [that is, every refugee residing within Kakuma's refugee camps] is to move to Miami or Toronto" (2000: 33). A UNHCR consultant interviewed in 2000, who was helping to prepare the Lost Boys for their resettlement in 2000, argued that "taking away the Lost Boys" from Kakuma would be "addition by subtraction". This does not seem to have been the case, because the majority of Sudanese refugee youth in Kakuma were never selected, creating considerable frustration and even despair among those who remained behind.

Frustration, indeed, surfaced as a common refrain during interviews with Sudanese refugee youth in Kakuma. One male Sudanese youth who was not in school argued that in Kakuma "there are two types of boys: those who like to attend school and those who don't like to attend school". Those who drop out, another explained, do so "due to frustration". For example, "if there's not food at home, they cannot understand what they've learned". Yet those who get education, another stated, are similarly frustrated because "there's no way to use our education". Opportunities for work are slim. Educated or not, the sight of idle young men is commonplace in Kakuma. And most, as has been noted, seek resettlement, regardless of how slim their chances are.

Kakuma's 'drop-outs' – youth who had left school, or what a Sudanese women's group leader termed "youth outside of society" –

constituted a significant proportion of Kakuma's Sudanese refugee population. "Despite the wealth of youth activities and the availability of free education", an earlier report noted, "many refugee youth in Kakuma drop out of school and participate in few or no youth activities". The 'drop-outs' also "lack representation in the larger refugee community, a fact repeatedly made clear by refugee leaders". Drop-outs "routinely ignore their advice" as well (Sommers, 2001: 191). If education seems pointless to so many male refugee youth, many female youth are not even allowed to attend school after a few years of primary education. "Sudanese [refugee] girls are reportedly driven out of school in the higher primary grades, often by male students [...] who do not want girls receiving higher examination grades than they do." Still others are pulled out of school to be married against their will (Sommers, 2001: 192).

As a result of these and other factors, those working to educate refugees in Kakuma face a particularly dispiriting situation. More significant than the challenge of student enrolment are the challenges of attendance and retention. Relatively few students either remain in school for very long or regularly attend classes, and regardless, the slots for secondary or vocational education are few. Retaining teachers was also problematic. As Sinclair reported in March 1998: "There is a rapid turnover of teaching staff due to low incentives and other factors such as resettlement (an estimated loss of 80 per cent of teachers over two years, and a loss of 41 teachers in 1998 so far)" (1998: 2). In some classes, an education official stated, the teacher-student ratio reaches 1:120. There was also a problem of discipline in the schools due to "nepotism and clan rivalry" among students. Teachers are often afraid, the official explained, to discipline a student because it may create 'reprisals' against the teacher by the student's clan members. Despite the renown of Kakuma's educational facilities among Southern Sudanese, the preponderance of dejected, dislocated and often traumatized male Sudanese youth in the refugee population make the education challenge unusually daunting. In Kakuma, the 'drop-outs' dominate.

## Refugee education in northern Uganda

The situation of Southern Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda is in many ways both remarkable and distinct. The refugees in Uganda have attracted far less media attention than their more famous counterparts in

Kakuma, even though Uganda's Southern Sudanese refugee population is easily the largest in the region, and more than three times as numerous as that of Kakuma. Refugee society is far more stable than in Kakuma, as northern Uganda lacks the severe demographic imbalances inherent in Kakuma's refugee population. Most – but not all – live in refugee settlements instead of refugee camps, which is hardly an academic distinction because those residing in settlements in Uganda have been allotted farm plots. The climate is neither harsh nor particularly foreign for most refugees in Uganda, since they come from the same geographic area, just over the Sudan border. Even more significant is the fact that most of the refugees tend to be from the very same ethnic groups (or those closely related) as the local Ugandan population. Indeed, relations between refugees and the host population are frequently supportive and collaborative, and could not be more different than the context in Kakuma. The Ugandan government has in many respects been unusually friendly to and supportive of the refugees, most particularly when compared to all other asylum countries in the immediate region. The Uganda-Sudan border is also uncommonly porous, even by African standards, and refugees, migrants, visitors and traders have been crossing from one side to the other since the border itself was created. Easy movement across the border has not prevented the SPLA from visiting Uganda's refugee settlements. Yet while the cases of both Kenya and Ethiopia demonstrate the dominant presence of the SPLA in the refugee camps generally and in refugee education in particular, the same simply cannot be said for the SPLA in Uganda's refugee settlements. As a veteran refugee educator noted, "the SPLA has no permanent presence in the settlements in Uganda".

Finally, it would be difficult to dispute that the quality of education available to Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda is, in general, higher than any education available to Southern Sudanese in the immediate region. Some exceptions to this tendency exist, such as DOT's 'model schools' in Narus. But the DOT schools in Narus are available to few students, while the primary and secondary schools available to refugees in Uganda have reached tens of thousands of students and employ many hundreds of trained teachers. Comparing the vastly different education systems and contexts of refugee education in Uganda and IDP education in Khartoum is also difficult to do. Nonetheless, on balance, given its considerable size, the relative stability and expanse of the education system, the utility of the curriculum and language of instruction (as compared to IDP education in

Khartoum, for example), the relative lack of repression influencing schooling (again, as compared to the Khartoum context), the established heritage of education within the Southern Sudanese population, and evidence of educational quality, the education system available to Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda is most likely second to none. No other large population of Southern Sudanese has access to a better education system than the one in Uganda.

This is not to say that the situation there is either acceptable or trouble-free. On the contrary: The refugees have endured the particular misfortune of fleeing one war zone and entering another. Refugee children are unusually vulnerable to being abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that is terrorizing the immediate region. There have also been forced abductions of refugee adolescents into the SPLA (Lowicki and Pillsbury, 2001: 19). The settlements are isolated and evidence of trauma among refugee children is significant (Peltzer, 1999: 111), work is hard to find, secondary schooling, quite unlike in Kakuma, is not free and severely limits refugee participation and, most seriously, refugees are forced to live in highly insecure and unstable territory. Life for Southern Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda is, without question, consistently difficult and dangerous, and the protection issue remains pressing. At the same time, it has assets – education of reasonable quality most of all – that most of their Southern Sudanese counterparts simply cannot access.

### *Border flights*

The movement of people from the same or similar ethnic groups shifting across the Uganda-Sudan border because of war has an established legacy. There were Sudanese refugees in Uganda during the first civil war (that is, before 1972). In 1979, when Ugandans began fleeing to southern Sudan in the aftermath of the Tanzanian invasion and the fall of Idi Amin's regime (Harrell-Bond, 1986: 31), Sudanese "who had sought refuge in Uganda during the Sudan's [first] civil war, and who had not returned home after 1972" joined them. By 1981, some 60,000 Sudanese nationals had returned home in this fashion (Harrell-Bond, 1986: 36). By 1985, there were an estimated 196,000 Ugandan refugees residing inside Equatoria (Mebtouche, 1986: 1). Then, when Southern Sudanese began to seek asylum as refugees in northern Uganda in 1986, they fled alongside Ugandans who had started to exit southern Sudan as returnees.

Sudanese refugees interviewed in Uganda in both 2000 and 2003, together with Ugandans (including government officials) who were interviewed, were quick to point out the fact that Ugandans remembered how Sudanese had helped them when they were refugees inside Sudan. Now, the hospitality had to be returned, and the extension of support began early. Early entrants into Uganda often “settled in their relatives’ compounds or sent their children there to attend Ugandan schools as Ugandans” (Sesnan, 1998: 64). But by 1987, the first large wave of Sudanese refugees began to cross into Uganda. In 1990, over 100,000 Southern Sudanese refugees resided in transit camps just inside the Ugandan border (Sesnan, 1998: 64). 1993 and 1994 saw a second large wave of refugees attracted into Uganda, and by 1997 the three northern districts of Arua, Moyo and Kitgum in Uganda, with a population of 1.2 million Ugandans, were hosting 201,848 refugees, of which 179,730 were from southern Sudan (Aguilar, 1998: 3-4). Unlike their counterparts in Kakuma, most of the refugees had not fled very far. Many of their home areas were just over the border, in the towns or environs such as Yei, Kajo Keji or Nimule. The breakdown of the Southern Sudanese refugee population provides evidence of this. Statistics from UNHCR’s Pakelle field office in 1994, for example, showed that of the 158,490 refugees residing in that area at that time, 45 per cent of the refugees were Madi, 40 per cent were Kuku, 9 per cent were Acholi and 3 per cent were Kakwa. The traditional home areas of all four of these ethnic groups (97 per cent of the refugee population) straddle the Uganda-Sudan border (Peltzer, 1999: 111). A refugee education leader detailed the relationship of many refugees with Ugandans in the locality:

“The Turkana who live around the Kakuma refugee camps do not live in Sudan. But the same people live on both sides of the Uganda and Sudan border. These people have also lived together and received education on both sides. So Ugandans have feelings for the Sudanese refugees. There is that sympathy.”

Unlike refugees from other parts of southern Sudan, such as most of those in both Kenya and Ethiopia, the refugees in Uganda are from an area that generally had both the deepest experience of education and pronounced distance from the SPLA. An indication of western Equatoria’s educational heritage surfaces in Sesnan’s comment that Maridi, a town in western Equatoria located just northwest of Yei, is the “‘education capital’ of southern Sudan, having two training colleges and the Institute of Regional

Languages” (1998: 64). Yet when the SPLA took Maridi in 1991, most of the qualified staff fled to Zaire as refugees, after which they entered Uganda and Kenya (Sesnan, 1998: 64). Johnson, in fact, notes that: “The reception of the SPLM/SPLA in Equatoria has long been ambivalent” (2003: 85). While he also observes that many Sudanese began to accept the SPLA in western Equatoria over time, this was not what Merx notes among Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda in 2000. “Sudanese refugees in Adjujmani district (north Uganda)”, Merx reported, “often refer to conflict within the SPLA, sometimes even giving this as the main reason for fleeing to and remaining in Uganda. Many recall how they have suffered at the hands of SPLA forces” (2000: 11).

Yet refugees in Uganda have not been able to avoid the presence of the SPLA. In 1993-1994, when Khartoum government forces tried, and ultimately failed, to seal off the Sudan-Uganda border, Khartoum’s allies in northern Uganda, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), attacked convoys bringing supplies to SPLA troops in Equatoria and refugees in northern Uganda (Johnson, 2003: 100). At the same time, refugee children and youth are vulnerable to being abducted by both the SPLA and the LRA in Uganda (with the LRA’s abductions being more frequent) – although, it must also be said, that some refugee youth have volunteered to become SPLA soldiers (Lowicki and Pillsbury, 2001). Indeed, some refugee youth reported that a refugee with a secondary school diploma from Uganda qualifies to become an officer in the SPLA. They related that some graduates had chosen that path in the past. Nevertheless, the SPLA’s relationship with many refugees in Uganda remains a serious sticking point. One refugee education leader explained that many refugees in Uganda still consider the SPLA a ‘Dinka army’, and thus separate from them. In addition, the leader believed that “everywhere in the south, they know that the big guys in the SPLA are Dinka”. Suspicions and difficulties that directly involved the SPLA and refugees in Uganda arose when another refugee education leader described a periodic problem that refugees face:

“The SPLA used to come here and recruit refugees at night, maybe twice a year. When they would come, everyone is collected in one place and spoken to. Of course, people are forced to fight for the SPLA. The SPLA people come with guns. They also say that they’ve come with guns to find the deserters, the defectors. We don’t know

how many people have been taken. So the SPLA are not popular here.”

The refugee leader also related that SPLA officials, in turn, have expressed considerable bitterness towards the refugees’ situation. “We are the ones who are fighting while you refugees, you are enjoying”. He added that more recently, some SPLA officials had complimented the refugees for “doing a great job” and “urging us to come back” to Sudan.

There are other predations on refugee children and youth as well, including the rape of refugee girls and female youth. In one survey of refugee children, researchers found that 28 per cent of their sample reported to have been tortured at some time in their past, 9 per cent said they had been sexually abused and 25.5 per cent stated that they had been separated from family members. In addition, Sudanese refugee children “reported significantly more PTSD-like complaints [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] such as trouble with sleep, nervousness, traumatic memories, and behavioural problems as well as depressive symptoms and psychosomatic complaints” than their Ugandan counterparts in the area (Paardekooper, de Jong, and Hermanns, 1999: 534).

### *Educational beginnings*

Although Sudanese began entering Uganda in 1987, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), UNHCR’s principal implementing partner for education did not arrive until 1993. In the interim, very little outside support was provided to the refugees for education. It is fairly atypical for UNHCR and its implementing partners to institute a refugee education programme so late after a significant refugee population has arrived in an area. But the uniqueness of the refugee situation in northern Uganda, including the development of refugee education, extends far beyond this. Early supporters of refugee education, for example, were members of the Diocese of Torit, which was similarly exiled in Uganda. Sesnan recalls that:

“As usual, long before any organization was persuaded to help, parents had taken the lead in setting up primary schools with volunteer teachers. There were no books or materials other than those supplied by a very small number of well-wishers and the priest seconded to the camps by the exiled [Diocese] of Torit” (1998: 65).

It is often anticipated that parents and community members will become the first to initiate education for refugee – or, for that matter, IDP – children.<sup>26</sup> But it is unusual for refugees to receive so much early support from the host population and government. The story of the establishment of one of earliest refugee schools in Uganda, here recalled by one of its founders, dramatizes the challenges and triumphs of the early refugee arrivals from Sudan. It also contains details of sacrifices and trials that, while they took place 15 years earlier, were nonetheless easy to recall because, in the words of the refugee educator (and school co-founder), “when you get bitter experiences, it’s normally difficult to forget them. It’s easier to forget things that are very pleasing”.

“I came to Uganda in 1988 from Kajo Keji”, the refugee educator recalled. He arrived with nine relatives. In Sudan, he had been a primary school teacher. After residing in a transit camp for a month or so, the refugee educator and his family were shifted to Masuru Settlement, which he explained was the oldest in Adjumani District. “I’m still there”, he added. His family was given four hectares of land by the Ugandan government. The area was remote, “just a forest” at that time, in a lowland area known for heavy numbers of mosquitoes (which may well explain why it was unsettled until that time). “Originally, the land was very fertile”, the refugee educator explained, “but now the land has become exhausted”. Crop yields, he said, have dwindled over time.

“The funny thing” about the situation soon after approximately 4,000 refugees were initially settled there, the refugee educator recalled, was that “immediately people started thinking of schools. So in February 1989, we started schools under the trees”. These pioneer refugee educators creatively addressed a series of early challenges. The need for blackboards, for example, was met by colouring empty food cartons (from UNHCR donations) with charcoal. Dried pieces of cassava served as chalk. Few school-age children attended this early school, mainly, the refugee educator recalled, because they “were too weak and malnourished”. Others were busy helping their parents clearing land and cultivating crops. Yet by the end of 1989, he proudly explained, “we had 800 children in our school.” During this first year, the teachers “were just giving anything we could to

26. See, for example, Sinclair, 2001: 18 and Sommers, 1999: 3.



the children”. Some of the teachers and parents had arrived with some textbooks. Whatever they had arrived with were used in the school.

It is worth trying to understand just why a community would stress education so early after their arrival as refugees in a new country. The refugee educator explained his community’s motivation in the following way:

“You see, education was a priority. If you wait until we resettle, it might take three years. And we arrived with children who had been attending school in Sudan. If we waited to start a school, the children might have resisted returning to school. Also, girls in our society can only go to school when they’re young. After age 15 or so, they will no longer go to school.”

The refugee educator continued, but broadened his explanation to include the perspectives of living in forced exile as well as his experience of education in Sudan:

“Losing any time in school is terrible because how will you cope with the changing world as a refugee without education? If refugees don’t go to school, what will be their future? Even if there’s peace, the Southern Sudanese would likely remain slaves to the Arabs, because what will you do without education?”

These dual themes – of education providing refugees with tools to help them cope with change and resisting any attempts by Northern Sudanese to dominate them – appeared to be widely held among Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda as well as Kenya, and IDPs in Khartoum.

Significantly, former Ugandan refugees who had recently returned from the Sudan provided some of the earliest support for education in this settlement. The refugee educator, by chance, met with a former Ugandan refugee who lived in the village nearest the refugee settlement, 5 km away. They had, in fact, attended the same teacher’s training college in Maridi, western Equatoria, together. The Ugandan teacher’s school soon assisted the refugee school with one textbook for each subject for primary grades 1-4, and some for primary grades 5-7. “This is when we started teaching the Ugandan national curriculum”, the refugee educator explained. Shortly after receiving this assistance, an international official from UNHCR visited. “He responded

positively to our cry”, the refugee educator stated, “but he also said that education was not a priority” for UNHCR at that time. The official donated some plywood for an improved blackboard and some exercise books to support teacher preparation. “That was the only help we received from UNHCR in 1989”, he said. The next year, the UNHCR official provided ledger books and pens for the teachers, but also “reminded us that education was still not a priority”. The priorities at that time, instead, were protection, food, and medicine. During these early years, refugee parents “showed their seriousness by contributing food as an incentive for the teachers”. Refugee leaders also “sacrificed two days a week to put up some class structures”.

It was during this second school year, 1990, that, the refugee educator recalled, “we started to see that something good was coming” from their collective efforts to support education for their children and additional support began to surface. In May of 1990, the refugee educator recalled, the Ugandan government District Education Officer (DEO) for that area “sent in a trained Ugandan teacher to head the school”. With this step, the school effectively become integrated into the Ugandan government school system. The DEO also interviewed some of the refugee teachers and eventually “started giving us some little incentive” in the form of a monthly cash payment, the refugee educator explained. It was during this period that UNHCR began to support the school with food (groundnuts, tea leaves and sugar) delivered to teachers as part of the agency’s ‘food for work’ programme. The following year, the Ugandan government’s Office of the Prime Minister donated furniture for the school office, while World Refugee Service began to provide in-service teacher training for the teachers. Then, in 1993, “the JRS came in, and started picking up the responsibility of helping the school in terms of school materials, teacher training, and so on”.

This initial school in a remote settlement in Uganda was among the first formal schools for Sudanese refugees in Uganda. Indeed, it may have been the first – the refugee educator related, with considerable pride, that “our school, Magbaru, was the first Sudanese refugee school to be founded in Uganda”. It was started by refugees, but then assisted by Ugandan civilians and the Ugandan government before any international agencies provided any formal assistance. This is strikingly different from the Kakuma case, and those of many other refugee populations as well. To find the

host government, and not UNHCR and its implementing partners, providing generous assistance to refugees, particularly so soon after the refugees' arrival, is unusual if not extraordinary. This case also illuminates how swiftly refugee schools adopted the Ugandan curriculum and began to integrate their schools into the existing school system.

Barry Sesnan has provided a second first-hand account of early refugee education activities in Uganda. He comments on his direct involvement in the founding in 1991 of the Education Programme for Sudanese Refugees (EPSR), a Ugandan NGO that received "the traditional sympathy [that] Makerere University [in Kampala] had for refugees" (1998: 66). Taking its mission to be advocacy for the Southern Sudanese in Uganda, EPSR organized an early consultation meeting in 1992 in Kampala. With refugees, "refugee support organizations from both Kenya and Uganda", including JRS, and representatives from southern Sudan, the "forum confirmed that the refugees in Uganda were content to use Uganda's curriculum in their schools" (Sesnan, 1998: 66).

There is a curious continuity in this decision. Sesnan explains that many at the forum "were happy to be using the curriculum they had used in their previous exile" – that is, when people from Equatoria sought refuge in Uganda during the first Southern Sudanese civil war (which ended in 1972). The Ugandan curriculum is also called the 'East African' curriculum by Southern Sudanese in Uganda and elsewhere (Sesnan, 1998: 66). EPSR also hosted subsequent meetings and helped found, with UNCHR, the Education Co-ordination Committee, which met four times a year and brought together UNHCR, the Ugandan government and NGOs involved in refugee education (Sesnan, 1998: 66-67). It should be noted that this sort of commendable co-ordination initiative nonetheless retained a specific country focus (in this case, Southern Sudanese in Uganda only). While this sort of focus is fairly typical, it serves as a reminder that education for Southern Sudanese has lacked a regional co-ordination mechanism throughout the entire civil war. EPSR also supported refugee education by raising money and providing a limited amount of vocational training courses and scholarships. But their more substantial contribution was their resource centres that provided principally secondary students and teachers with library and reading facilities, a training site and even distance education (Sesnan, 1998: 69-70).

### *The refugee education programme*

#### ■ Training, scholarships and youth opportunities

Sesnan notes that the Uganda Red Cross helped carry out formal refugee education system with the Jesuit Refugee Service (1998: 66-67). In fact, there have been other actors in the administration and management of formal education for Southern Sudanese, such as Inter Aid and the Ugandan government's Ministry of Local Government. It is not the purpose here to describe the entire refugee education situation in all of its elaborate detail and across many years, or to keep up with the various changes in educational responsibilities of UNHCR implementing partners. Instead, it will briefly review some of the central educational themes that have surfaced since 1992 (the earliest date of available documentation on refugee education). It will also feature the role of JRS since that time, as it has dominated management responsibilities in formal education for most Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda since 1993.

Following EPSR's arrival in 1991, UNHCR entered the refugee education scene more directly, constructing school buildings, paying teachers' incentives and providing some scholastic materials (Brown, 1994: 1). There is also a report of UNHCR's initial Education Adviser focusing her attentions on "trying to standardize practices and monitor material support" (Hasson, 1992: 11). A 1992 assessment of the situation found that there was a dire need for additional support to the education situation for the refugees, with problems such as: nursery schools lacking latrines, water and trained teachers; a pronounced need for improving teacher capacities at the primary school level; absence of scholarship support for secondary and post-secondary education; and need for enhanced vocational and adult education support (Hasson, 1992: 11-13). Years later, while facilities and supply levels had been dramatically upgraded, many of these themes retained much of their currency. The two most persistent themes, drawing from documentation and interviews with educators, were the continuing call to improve teacher capacity in refugee primary schools and scholarships for secondary and post-secondary education.

Of the two, primary school teacher training has been the most pervasive. It is indeed striking how consistently calls for more teacher training arise in documents assessing the refugee education situation in

northern Uganda. Notwithstanding indications of gradually improving educational quality, there appears to have been little reduction in recommendations to further enhance teacher training. Since many Southern Sudanese refugee teachers arrived in Uganda without the requisite teacher certification, educational quality was directly tied to enhancing teacher capacities. What is not mentioned is that educational accomplishments of refugee teachers were high relative to most other areas where Southern Sudanese lived. In 1996, Margaret Sinclair, UNHCR's Senior Education Officer, explained that "most of the [primary school teaching staff] are untrained [refugee] teachers, who had completed the Sudan School Certificate (similar to O-level) some years ago." The fact that having a large corps of teachers who had completed secondary school would be extraordinary in itself in nearly all parts of southern Sudan does not mean that they do not need appropriate training as teachers. As Sinclair observed: "They need guidance to achieve adequate standards of teaching of the Ugandan curriculum in the newly established schools" (Sinclair, 1996: 2).

Sinclair further noted that JRS had already begun to employ a novel approach to addressing the teacher training deficiency. JRS had used field advisers or 'consultants' to visit schools, "advise on the preparation of lesson plans, observe teaching and advise individual teachers on teaching methods". In addition, the consultants also took note of "whether teachers are absent or come to school drunk" and organized systematic in-service teacher training programming (Sinclair, 1996: 2). Other efforts to upgrade teacher skills were to pay for them to attend Ugandan teacher training colleges (a trend that continues to this day) and to enrol teachers in a distance education scheme called the Northern Integrated Teacher Education Programme (NITEP), in which a teacher receives a teaching certificate after three years of study. Teachers lacking a secondary school certificate could also sit for O-level equivalence exams. "All of these forms of in-school and off-site training", Sinclair asserted, "are important for the quality of schooling in exile and, importantly, for the development of a cadre of teachers who can restore the school system in south Sudan after eventual repatriation" (Sinclair, 1996: 3). This drive ever to increase the capacity of refugee teachers has extended to recent years, and with some mentioning the very same rationale. "If the current level of teacher ability in Sudan is so low", a refugee teacher stated in Uganda in 2003, "then the level of quality teachers here in Uganda should be upgraded, so they'll be a better resource for the Southern Sudanese people". In 2002, a JRS evaluation

reported that “two main aims were developed: upgrading of the primary teachers and upgrading the administrative skills of Head Masters” (Agnes *et al.*, 2002: 25). Problems regarding teachers nonetheless persist. A 1998 report from UNHCR, for example, highlights “lack of educated women in the refugee population”. Eleven per cent of primary school teachers were refugee women at that time. The author underscored the “lack of female role models for girls”, given that the best qualified women were their teachers. Evidently, few educated refugee women could be found in other skilled positions (Aguilar, 1998: 10).

In a sense, the steady efforts of UNHCR, JRS and other agencies involved in bolstering access to and the quality of primary school refugee education have been victims of their own success. To begin with, many Southern Sudanese students arrived in Uganda with a strong interest in either starting or completing their secondary education as refugees. They appear to have made their voices known from the outset. Sesnan, for instance, notes that EPSR’s decision to advocate for enhancing education for refugee communities “at a policy level” beginning in 1991 was naturally “unpopular with the vocal, mainly male, Ugandan youth who were trying to get scholarships to secondary school” (1998: 66). Over time, the pressure from refugees seeking to attend secondary school has only increased, as there has been a steady growth of the numbers of refugee primary school leavers who have obtained grades that would qualify them for entrance. Indeed, as early as 1996, there was evidence that refugee students had already begun to outdo Ugandan students in their competition to qualify for secondary school. “In the recent end of year National Primary Leaving Examination [PLE]”, a JRS report noted, “the Refugee schools took 80 out of 87 Division One positions in [Adjumani] District” (Jesuit Refugee Service, 1997: 1). By 2002, it was increasingly clear that the funds required for secondary school scholarships could not possibly meet the demands. “Post-primary education is still a privilege enjoyed only by a minority of the [refugee] population in Uganda”, a JRS evaluation report stated (2002: 18). At the same time, “the growing number of students leaving [primary school] with good PLE results, and wishing to go forward to secondary school, raises issues for JRS about the future of the Secondary Education programme, and the level of personnel and resources it can commit” (Jesuit Refugee Service, 1997: 24). That pressure did not appear to be decreasing. A JRS secondary school co-ordinator explained that more than half of all refugees who sit for the PLE qualify for secondary

school. Of those who pass, sometimes half or less of those who qualify attend secondary school, mainly because they did not receive scholarship support and so cannot afford to attend.

The shortage of scholarship funds for secondary school, mainly from JRS and UNHCR (with support from the same DAFI programme present in Kakuma; Kindler-Adam, 1998), seemed to be a near-omnipresent source of frustration for those refugee youth who qualified for secondary school (there are also some scholarship funds available for vocational education, but that issue rarely surfaced during interviews and is sparsely detailed in available documentation). “The only problem we have here is education”, a young man explained. He was part of a group who had all completed their O-level (four-year) secondary school education but sought to advance to ‘A’ level (the two-year senior high school course that follows) before proceeding to a university. For male youth, such education is connected to avoiding idleness and gaining employment, an enhanced social status, stability – and marriage. “We need [an advanced] education before money”, one explained. Once this is obtained, you’ll get a good job, and “if you have a job, you will not be idle”. Furthermore, another explained, “you can’t marry without a dowry, so if you don’t have money, you can’t marry”. Sometimes there are ways around this problem. “Here”, an elder teacher explained, “they give a girl on credit. [The groom] will pay cows from home when he returns there, when peace comes”. But this is not always the case. The issue of youth being frustrated, and having nothing to do, was a common social concern among refugees. “If you’re a primary school leaver, you’re a drop-out”, a refugee high school headmaster stated. “You have nothing to do except go and till the land”. In some settlements, a JRS official related, youth suicides are a particular concern. In addition, the source of the frustration does not only face those who cannot access secondary school or beyond. It also applies to refugee graduates, who receive higher education but are largely restricted, under Ugandan laws, from finding work. Idle youth, whether educated or not, often hold ‘discos’ at night, something that can lead to brawls and drunkenness. It is not something that older refugees approve of, but they nonetheless persist.

The discussion above largely applies to male, not female, youth. “There’s a common concept that girls aren’t as bright as boys”, a JRS official explained. A male refugee teacher added his contention that “girls can’t qualify for scholarships because they’re not as smart as boys”. A

female refugee teacher took another position, explaining that Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda have a “cultural belief that girls don’t matter in a society. And since it doesn’t matter for them to be educated, all they do is drop out of schools”. She offered another cultural belief as a rhetorical question: “Why bother educating a girl if she’ll take that education to another family when she’s married?”. Refugee families tend to pay the secondary school fees for sons and not daughters. As in societies all over the world, getting and then keeping girls in school remains an ongoing challenge for the refugee education system. A UNHCR report investigated this issue in East Moyo District in northern Uganda and came up with a number of causes, including: poverty and hardship, a lack of proper clothing, gender roles and the division of labour, a lack of role models, early pregnancy and poor performance in class (Aguilar, 1998: 14-16). While girls’ enrolment figures and retention efforts will be mentioned below, it is noteworthy that a project known as the Affirmative Action Project exists, in which donors pay one third of secondary school fees for eligible girls. Girls who do not enter secondary school, many refugees explained, often marry early. “The majority of young women not in school are already married, and if you’re married you can’t go to school”, a refugee education official explained.

Male youth appear to have far more options. Some join the SPLA. Some ex-SPLA soldiers “are sent to Uganda” to receive schooling, a refugee elder explained. Some refugee youth “go and come”; that is, visit Sudan and return to Uganda. As a refugee teacher explained, “you go to Sudan, become miserable, and come back to Uganda. You may not find your parents or your home”. Others cross in search of assistance to pay for school fees in Uganda. While girls may brew beer for money, boys can become traders of various kinds, venturing out of refugee settlements and surrounding areas to other parts of Uganda, usually without government permission. Taking such risks is often viewed as necessary because “many refugee families living in the [settlements] lack income-generating opportunities that would enable them to pay the secondary school fees, which are charged to Ugandans and refugees alike” (Human Rights Watch, 2002: 136-7).

Finally, there is teaching. In the Southern Sudanese refugee settlements in northern Uganda, it turns out that education is not only a central value and priority activity for most refugee children. It may also be the primary



source of employment for refugees who graduate from secondary school. Many refugees who complete secondary education are reportedly funnelled back into the education system as teachers. “Secondary school leavers are geared towards teaching”, a refugee headmaster explained. There are funds available that sponsor such candidates to attend teacher training colleges to become secondary school teachers. In addition, secondary school graduates can also become primary school teachers without prior training. “We don’t have people trained in agriculture or fisheries”, the refugee headmaster stated, “but if you finish your ‘O’ level, you can go either to teach in primary school or a teacher training college, depending on your [‘O’ level examination] grade”.

While the commonplace and persistent commentary among refugees about the difficulties of getting into secondary school, university, and getting a proper job are of course appropriate and reasonable, some context is required. Pre-school and primary education is free for all refugees, or nearly so (Uganda’s Universal Primary Education policy, in fact, guarantees this for Ugandan primary students as well). Unlike the Kakuma case, however, secondary education is not. At the same time, the fact that there are so many primary school leavers seeking entrance to secondary schools dramatizes the extent of education’s positive impact and the eagerness of so many students to continue. This is simply not the case in Kakuma, where retaining students in primary school is a much greater challenge. In addition, while there may not be enough slots for all of those in Kakuma seeking to enter secondary school, the demand for those slots, even though secondary education is more or less free, is far lower than it appears to be in the Ugandan context. The demand for secondary education is an indicator of the relative success of the refugee education programme in northern Uganda. In terms of access to primary education of reasonable quality, and access to secondary or university education of any quality, some refugee students in Uganda may not know how good they have it, at least when compared to their Southern Sudanese counterparts in the region.

■ Some educational issues, concerns and non-formal programming

The educational programme in the settlements in Uganda is considerably more streamlined than its counterpart in Kakuma, and more concentrated on formal education. What follows are short descriptions about some particular educational issues, concerns and non-formal educational programming offered in northern Uganda’s refugee settlements.

UNHCR's population statistics for Southern Sudanese refugees in August 2003 state that 160,299 refugees live in Uganda (excluding urban refugees).<sup>27</sup> There are slightly more males than females in the overall population (nearly 52 per cent male). Fifty-eight per cent of this total resided in Adjumani and Moyo Districts (UNHCR, 2003a: 1), where education documentation proved the most thorough available. Indeed, one is led to wonder why this is the case: there were, for example, far more UNHCR education reports concentrating on Adjumani and Moyo Districts available (and, evidently, produced) than in, for example, Arua District, where a lesser but still significant proportion of refugees (26.5 per cent) reside (UNHCR, 2003a: 1). Data drawn from Adjumani and Moyo Districts, where JRS manages the refugee education programme, will be considered here.

A JRS education official estimated that approximately 90 per cent of all refugee children between the ages of 5 and 17 attend school. In primary school enrolment statistics for 1993, 1997 and 2000, there was a considerable reduction in the numbers of students in school across most of the grades. In 1993, more than one quarter of all primary school students were in the first primary school grade (25.5 per cent), while only 6.7 per cent of the 12,405 students enrolled were in the seventh and final primary school year. By 2000, the number of students in school had dramatically increased (to 21,556), while the proportion of primary school students in the first and final years had both declined (to 18.8 per cent for the first year and 6 per cent for the seventh year). This is not necessarily a negative finding, since the overall enrolment in every primary level had increased. Significantly, the proportion of girls to boys greatly increased over time in the initial primary grade. Forty-six per cent of the 1993 first year class were girls, but by 1997 there were slightly more girls than boys in the first primary level. The girls' enrolment decline had slowed as well. While both girls' and boys' enrolment levels generally decline over time, the drop-off between the third and fourth year levels in 1993, as well as those from fourth to fifth, are significant. By 2000, the most significant drop-off was between the sixth and seventh primary levels, suggesting that more girls were remaining in primary school for a longer period. In addition, the overall proportion of girls in primary school had greatly

27. While Human Rights Watch estimates the urban refugee caseload at 50,000, the estimated proportion of that figure that are Southern Sudanese was unavailable (Human Rights Watch, 2002: 75).

enlarged, from 37.3 per cent in 1993 to 45.5 per cent by 2000. This is a significant achievement for JRS, UNHCR, and, not least, the Southern Sudanese refugee community (Agnes *et al.*, 2002: 27). Efforts to increase girls' enrolment have become a cornerstone of the JRS programme over the years, including community awareness campaigns, often featuring posters distributed to schools and community centres (Aguilar, 1998: 17).

With access to secondary education being “extremely limited” (Agnes *et al.*, 2002: 18), refugees have started four secondary schools. The first, Alere, began in 1991 (with the assistance of EPSR). By 1997, there were three more secondary schools. Parents must pay fees, but at reduced levels (US\$7-10 per term). Thirty per cent of the students in these four schools are Ugandans. The proportion of girls in these schools is low – 16.8 per cent in 2001, for example (Agnes *et al.*, 2002: 19). The exam results, on the other hand, border on the spectacular. For instance, across three years (1999-2001), 1,001 students sat for the national ‘O’ level examinations. Only eight of these candidates failed. The JRS secondary school co-ordinator explained that in 2002, refugee students achieved four of the five best ‘O’ level exam scores in Adjumani District. Primary school exam marks are similarly sterling. In 2000, for example, over 90 per cent of the children passed (Guiney, 2001: 7). Indeed, it appears to be widely accepted that the refugee education programme in Uganda has delivered impressive, and growing, levels of quality education. Sesnan asserts: “Once JRS and Uganda Red Cross took over the mandate for primary education in the camps a comprehensive and good quality system was gradually developed” (1998: 67). Based on exam scores, which is the primary marker of educational quality employed by refugee education officials and in documentation, it would certainly appear that the level of quality of the mainly refugee schools is not only good, but appreciably outpaces other schools in the immediate area.

The fact that refugees teach and learn from the Ugandan curriculum in formal school appears never to have been an issue. As the story of the founding of the primary school in Masuru Settlement illuminates, the Ugandan curriculum was accepted almost from the outset. That students learn the history and geography of Uganda instead of Sudan rarely arose as a concern during interviews with refugee education administrators, headmasters, teachers or students. Perhaps more significant was the finding that very few refugees appeared even to have heard of the SPLM's New

Sudan curriculum. In a meeting with more than 20 refugee teachers, the teachers listed all of the curricula that Southern Sudanese were learning from. The 14 they listed reflected the geographic breadth of the Southern Sudanese diaspora: Ugandan, Kenyan, Ethiopian, Central African Republic, Congolese, Egyptian, Tanzanian, south African, Eritrean, Australian, British, Canadian, American and the Sudanese Government's National Curriculum. Not one teacher even mentioned the SPLM's New Sudan curriculum. This may be an indication of the distance that most refugees reportedly feel from the SPLA/M. But it also illustrates the level of isolation of the refugee community in Uganda from those engaged in education within southern Sudan, such as OLS and SPLM members, who are based in Kenya. In addition, as in the Kakuma context, the issue of the quality of the New Sudan curriculum was raised, only this time not by a refugee but an international official involved in refugee education:

“The SPLM curriculum is not really there. They have a curriculum that is developed up to primary level 5, with textbooks prepared up to primary level 4. So what happens for an NGO who's been using the Ugandan or Kenyan curriculum with Sudanese refugees? What do we do with the secondary school curricula if there are no curricula or textbooks?”

In Uganda, there did not appear to be even a remote possibility that the refugee schools would adopt the New Sudan curriculum in the near future, if ever.

Two other educational programmes for refugees in northern Uganda will be briefly mentioned here. The Peace Education Programme (PEP) that remains active in the Kakuma refugee camps also takes place in Uganda. It was started in 1999 by UNHCR, with the active involvement of JRS almost from the outset, but grew at a much slower pace than in the Kenya programme. It employs the same learning materials that were originally developed by UNHCR in Kenya, using essentially the same approach, with both community and school-based components. The community workshops were instituted first, and an earlier report noted that the programme was “popular with refugees and Ugandans, but it is especially popular during the ‘hungry season’ when food supplies run low” (Sommers, 2001: 199). The workshops provide food and per diems to trainees. By 2002, a JRS monitoring report found that the overall programme had made significant gains, including: an improvement of

problem solving skills by those who had attended community workshops; the active involvement of women and youth in peace building initiatives; the introduction of peace education programming into primary schools; and the involvement of JRS officials (assumed to be those working in PEP) in facilitating local conflicts (Jesuit Refugee Service, 2003: 17).

Nursery schools were originally founded by refugees in the early years following their arrival in Uganda. It is not a small programme. In 1993, there were already 852 pupils and 14 schools under JRS supervision. By 2002, there were 56 schools and 9,855 pupils. There is a higher proportion of boys in the nursery schools. The ages of the pupils range between two and six. The teacher-student ratio is 1:40. All teachers have at least graduated from primary school. JRS runs a series of training services for the teachers, including short three-day trainings and a more formal, three-level training programme lasting nine weeks. Graduates receive a diploma not from the Ugandan government but from the New Sudan Council of Churches. The featured components of the JRS programme are, in addition to teacher training: school supervision; payment of monthly incentives to teachers; the provision of materials for teaching and building; the daily provision of porridge to the children; and building construction and maintenance (Agnes *et al.*, 2002: 8-11).

### *Self-reliance and Sudan*

One of the defining features of the assistance and protection of Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda is the early and direct involvement of the Ugandan government from the earliest stages. This was repeatedly demonstrated during the early education years for refugees, such as when local Ugandan government officials sent a Ugandan professional to head a refugee school in Masuru Settlement. In addition, the shared experience of Ugandans and Southern Sudanese civilians, having exchanged the roles of refugee and host in the past, together with their similar or identical ethnic backgrounds, helped facilitate their often close collaboration.

What emerged was more than collaboration or involvement: it was integration, but of a kind that requires some clarification. The development of the education system that involved refugees illustrates the fairly unusual nature of this development. In Masuru Settlement, in only the second year of a new primary school created by Sudanese refugees, a Ugandan head teacher, paid by the Ugandan government, assumed the reins of leadership

for a school containing refugee students and teachers. While Masuru Primary School remains identified as a ‘refugee’ school, it was actually incorporated, or integrated, into the Ugandan education system at an early stage. Meanwhile, shortly thereafter the education system supported and managed by UNHCR and its implementing partners (principally JRS), contained increasing numbers of Ugandan nationals as teachers, students, administrators and supervisors. In addition, of course, refugees taught and learned the Ugandan curriculum, and refugee teachers attended Ugandan teacher training colleges. Regular education co-ordination meetings involving UNHCR, the Ugandan government and implementing partners, who “come together to discuss refugee education policy and practice in Uganda” (Brown, 1997: 1), have occurred since the early stages of the refugee education programme. And it should be recalled that the Ugandan government also granted land to most of the Southern Sudanese refugees residing in northern Uganda. The extent of this mutual involvement of refugees and the host government and population is not at all what has occurred in other contexts where Southern Sudanese have sought asylum. In Kakuma, for example, while some Kenyans teach at refugee schools and some involve Kenyan students, the host population numbers are minimal. Refugees in Kakuma are largely separate from the host population and government. Interaction is limited, and that seems to be the norm for Southern Sudanese refugees in other countries in the region as well.

In Uganda, on the other hand, the integration of Southern Sudanese refugees is a policy that was hammered out largely by UNHCR and the Ugandan government and finally announced in May 1999 as the Self-Reliance Strategy or SRS (Dryden-Peterson and Hovil, 2003: 8). Given its unusual nature, the integration of services has attracted attention. It was explicitly mentioned in documents fairly early in the tenure of Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda. Sesnan, for instance, stated that by 1995, when “the refugees were already doing much better than Ugandans in terms of access to school and scholarships”, there was already talk about ensuring that “the present and future needs of the Ugandans” were also considered (1998: 69). By 1996, a UNHCR report stated that: “One of the main objectives of the [refugee] settlements is their eventual integration within the local socio-economic infrastructure” (Dualeh *et al.*, 1996: 55). The growing momentum towards some sort of refugee integration is not a small point because UNHCR had become, in underdeveloped northern Uganda, a central, if not the primary, cog in the local economy. “Districts

such as Adjumani and Moyo are very aid-oriented”, Merkx stated in 2000, “and all major investments come from the refugee programme [largely underwritten by UNHCR]”. Merkx also surmised that “UNHCR’s refugee programme is probably the largest employer in the region” (2000: 21). The dependency of refugees on assistance, despite the farmland they received, nearly always accompanies explanations of SRS and its necessity. “Refugee settlements are still very dependent on outside assistance and are kept away from mainstream society”, Merkx argued (2000: 21). SRS aims, in part, to address this challenge. He also asserted, it should be mentioned, that “many officials (UNHCR, government, NGO) have become dependent on the ‘aid industry’ in northern Uganda” (2000: 25) – a charge that many Southern Sudanese, as indicated early in *Chapter 3*, also contend.

A promotional pamphlet developed by UNHCR, called “Together towards self reliance”, attempts to outline and explain the features of SRS to refugees. Containing translations of the same information in a number of languages spoken by Southern Sudanese refugees (English as well as Luo, Bari, Madi, Juba/Arabic and Lugbara), the pamphlet is nonetheless not especially encouraging. It defines self reliance as “refugees from Sudan shall be able to support themselves by year 2003”, reminds refugees that the Ugandan government has already “given refugees from Sudan access to land” (although refugees “do not own it”), explains that UNHCR works together with the Ugandan government to assist both refugees and local Ugandans in improving their living conditions”, and promises that “Self Reliance for refugees will contribute to development of the entire region”. At the same time, however, the pamphlet states that “food rations will be reduced gradually”, “ultimately the districts will provide the same services for the refugees as for the local Ugandans,” and “refugees will contribute to cost sharing and participate in maintenance of roads, bore holes and other facilities” (UNHCR [undated]: 1). Merkx put the objectives of SRS more succinctly: to empower refugees and nationals in the area “to the extent that they will be able to support themselves” and “establish mechanisms which will ensure integration of services” (2000: 23). In other words, UNHCR would continue to fund refugee programming (although, over time, it was assumed that funding would decline), but their primary implementing partner would be, increasingly, the Government of Uganda. UNHCR’s more traditional implementing partners, namely NGOs such as JRS, would play lesser roles over time.

The SRS was not, to say the least, considered an encouraging development by refugees. It is easy to see why. Support for refugees would be reduced, at least to some degree, and the presence of UNHCR and its NGO implementing partners would recede. Refugee community leaders interviewed in Adjumani in 2000, when SRS remained a new and hot topic among refugees, strongly stated their concerns. One stated that it appeared to be a threat: “If we don’t support ourselves, we will face the consequences”. Another added that “the refugees were taken by surprise” by SRS because “they weren’t involved in the decision”. Merckx noted that many refugees that he had interviewed indicated “that the lack of decent education in southern Sudan is one of the main reasons for remaining in Uganda”. Accordingly, refugees “claim to fear that the integration of services such as education will see the deterioration of the services currently provided” (2000: 25). Indeed, it appears that the Self Reliance Strategy was less about actual self-reliance (refugees who were interviewed stated that they required fertilizer to become self-reliant in food production, for example, which UNHCR would not be providing them) than about equal access to services for host and refugee populations and who would be the refugees’ principal service provider. A JRS official stated this last issue plainly. “I told UNHCR”, the official recalled, ““you guys went from a less costly NGO [JRS] to a more costly NGO [the Ugandan government]””. In education, the refugees strongly preferred NGOs such as JRS to the Ugandan government. There appeared to be a widespread belief among refugees, NGO officials and UNHCR that the quality of educational services would plummet after handover to the Ugandan government took place. As a JRS official said, after handover “the quality of education will inevitably drop. There is great concern over what may happen next”.

Others expressed concerns about SRS as well. “The SRS advocates self-reliance without local integration”, Dryden-Peterson and Hovil argued (2003: 9). Instead of acknowledging that service integration and social integration are “mutually dependent”, the policy “is based primarily on the coordination of services” for refugees and Ugandan nationals by the Ugandan government. Merckx suggests that SRS needs to clarify three issues: taxes (although he states that refugees already pay a variety of taxes to the Ugandan government), the implications of refugees receiving increased services and supervision from the Ugandan government without having the ability to vote and the refugees’ continued limited freedom of movement (2000: 25-6).



Implementation of SRS has also been slow to get off the ground. Three years after SRS was announced, Human Rights Watch observed that:

“the full integration of the refugees into local communities has not so far been possible. UNHCR has only attempted to hand one refugee settlement over to the full control of the government of Uganda, and it was a dismal failure. In 2002, UNHCR was still administering the camp” (2002: 135).

In fact, nobody seemed particularly happy about the implementation of SRS. Complaints of others involved in the handover process were commonplace, and there seemed to be plenty of blame to go around. Because SRS has meant the reduction in services provided by UNHCR’s NGO implementing partners, a refugee educator stated, “refugees start blaming NGOs for not doing enough”. Ugandan government demands for UNHCR to bring refugee schools up to ‘Ugandan standards’ in terms of ensuring that the structures are permanent, that there are staff quarters, sufficient desks, and, in addition, increasing refugee teacher remuneration from the level of incentives that JRS paid up to “national teacher standards” was proving much “too expensive”, a JRS official complained. Moreover, Ugandan government education officials in the districts “don’t seem to be accountable”. A UNHCR official asserted that handover in Adjumani District was going badly. “You invite [Ugandan government officials] to a meeting, and they don’t report”, the official said. “We’re under so much pressure to give more, give more, to the Ugandan government”. Ugandan government officials are “making outrageous demands on UNHCR”.

A Ugandan government official fired back. “UNHCR should be a pipeline to pay the government”, the official stated. Instead, UNHCR “assumes the role of the government, and dictates to the government”. In addition, UNHCR officials “want to assume the role of ownership over the money, which is not the case”. UNHCR’s power over the situation, in the official’s view, was frustrating. During their visits from Kampala, officials “only say: ‘This is what UNHCR in Kampala or Geneva has said’. There is no negotiation.” There was also a strong belief that the perceived favouritism towards Sudanese residing in Uganda must be addressed. “Refugees have been doing better in education for some time on national exams. Most of them only came here for education, and some

have been resettled to the U.S. and Australia”. SRS, if properly implemented, promised to redress such educational imbalances.

The wealth of consternation and debate inspired by SRS by humanitarian agency and government officials, refugees, members of the host population and a number of observers just might, in the end, amount to relatively little. As of this writing, a peace accord involving the SPLA (and Southern Sudan) and the Sudanese Government in Khartoum, was signed in December 2004. Donor and humanitarian agencies are primed to, respectively, support and implement new, post-war programming within southern Sudan. Southern Sudan may be on the verge of a new era of post-war peace, governance and, at long last, development. The implementation of SRS may begin to lose its significance if the prospects for peace for and development within southern Sudan appear to increase. At the same time, while interviews with Southern Sudanese refugees and UNHCR officials in Uganda strongly suggested that they are jointly hesitant to embrace such possibilities, and are certainly sceptical about the timing of refugee repatriation, JRS is already on the move. Their education programme, based in the refugee settlements in Adjumani and Moyo Districts in northern Uganda has been firmly planted inside southern Sudan as well.

The practices of JRS differ from those of many other NGOs working with Southern Sudanese in the region. “JRS is a peculiar group”, one international staff member explained. “International volunteers for JRS may get US\$100-400 a month, while Sudanese refugee employees may get more than the international staff and their Ugandan colleagues”. JRS also pays teacher incentives, a practice that, like LWF in Kakuma, is more in line with NGOs working on education for refugees than within southern Sudan. Trained primary school teachers in Uganda, for example, are paid US\$60 per month, and US\$40 for untrained teachers. In addition, 60 per cent of JRS staff (including all teachers) are Sudanese, while 35 per cent are Ugandan and only 5 per cent are international staff.

Yet it was their decision to move into southern Sudan that makes JRS to stand out most. This approach appears to be both unique and significant, particularly in the context of education for Southern Sudanese, and will be briefly described here. In the view of JRS, the SRS strategy complements and supports their plans. Unlike UNHCR in Uganda, whose activities have been tied to assisting and protecting refugees within the

country, JRS wants out. “We are leaving Uganda”, a JRS official stated, and they explained:

“We think a lot of donors may come to support the Ugandan government, so we can leave. We’re always asking UNHCR when we can hand over to the Ugandan government and go to Sudan. Our plan is to gradually shift our education into southern Sudan. Southern Sudan is our priority area. That’s why we’re hoping to have the Ugandan government take over our schools in Uganda.”

Why has JRS decided to shift their activities to Sudan? During interviews in 2003, the feeling at JRS (among other institutions) was that peace in southern Sudan was nearing, and likely inevitable. JRS was thus seeking to be proactive and adjust to changing circumstances. To illustrate this point, a JRS official compared how two other organizations, UNHCR and UNICEF, were responding to these changes:

“UNHCR’s area of concern is refugees. They don’t know what’s going on in Sudan. UNICEF, on the other hand, has already started working on their peacetime approach, while UNHCR hasn’t worked out any plans. This is why we moved into Sudan.”

JRS, in other words, is not only gradually shedding its responsibilities in Uganda while enlarging them inside Sudan. It is also distancing itself from UNHCR’s institutional stasis. The official illustrated this last point with the following comment: “UNHCR would ask us about conditions inside Sudan, since they couldn’t go there”, the official related. “We tried to get the UNHCR head from Adjumani to go to southern Sudan in 2001, but he failed to go”. Meanwhile, JRS was operating on both sides of the border as early as 1997, when its education programme in the Sudanese border town of Nimule opened. They expanded their education work to Kajokeji in 2000 and Lobone in 2001, assisting the development of primary schools and establishing a teacher training programme (Jesuit Refugee Service, 2001, 2002). There are plans to expand into Yei. Collectively, these comprise the home areas of the majority of the Southern Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda. And in all of these places, JRS, like other international NGOs working there, employs the Ugandan curriculum.

In addition, JRS officials appear to share a widespread feeling that many of the Southern Sudanese in northern Uganda are not, or are no

longer, refugees. Southern Sudanese interviewed within Ugandan and southern Sudan contended that the principal attraction of the refugee settlements in northern Uganda was the promise of available and quality formal education. A JRS official surmised that “out of the 200,000 Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda, 100,000 are probably here because of the services” and not, by inference, because of the protection that is provided. Even a UNCHR official admitted that “it’s probably safer in southern Sudan than northern Uganda”.

Education and other services thus comprise a pull factor that inspire Southern Sudanese to come to Uganda. “In fact”, a refugee educator who had returned to Sudan with JRS explained, “the majority of people who stayed inside Sudan [in the areas bordering Uganda] didn’t realize the benefits of education available inside Uganda. Most who did went to Uganda to study”. The JRS shift to Sudan was partly based on this contention. As a JRS official explained, “investing in southern Sudan has become a pull factor as well”. Another refugee educator added that JRS’ reputation and results in education were such that “some Ugandans would prefer to return with us to Sudan” so that they, too, could access JRS-led education services there.

Since quality education plays such a strong role over the decisions that Sudanese (and northern Ugandans) make, JRS’ expansion into southern Sudan, together with its gradual reduction of educational programming in Uganda, promises to play an influential role in the decision-making processes of people in northern Uganda. There is concern in some quarters about how the returning refugees will be received, however. “Refugees feel superior to Sudanese IDPs and residents because they have received better education and health services”, a JRS official with experience in Uganda and Sudan explained. “They say: ‘For me, I am educated, and you, you are fighting’”. Such responses are probably inevitable, since very few of those who remained within southern Sudan had access to much education, particularly education of a level of quality that was available in refugee settlements in northern Uganda since at least 1993.

## Lessons learnt

- The country-specific orientation of UNHCR negatively impacts on both its knowledge base and its ability to co-ordinate with others working on education for members of the same affected population.

- UNHCR's powerful role in the immediate area where refugees reside makes it a player in local development work, including the education sector, in the host nation.
- Educated refugees constitute a significantly underutilized resource.
- Extensive investment in refugee education creates expectations among refugee youth that are difficult to meet, due to constrictions on refugees' freedom of movement and access to employment. Efforts to promote self-reliance among refugees are hampered by such restrictions.
- Population demographics within displaced communities appear to significantly affect the impact of investments in education. High quality education in the refugee settlements in northern Uganda is partly due to the presence of stable social structures and balanced population dynamics. Opposite conditions apply for refugees in Kakuma, in addition to the virtual absence of a labour outlet (such as land), which hampers the delivery and impact of quality education.
- The presence of military personnel in the management can negatively impact the access of children to education that is separated from military activities and influence.
- Education and the promise of third country resettlement can attract war-affected populations to refugee camps and settlements. If these are the primary motives for movement, then the degree to which such people are actual refugees can be questioned. Commitment of agencies to work on both sides of a border promises to dramatically alter such dynamics.
- Investment in education for refugees is conspicuously uneven. The level of response to the educational needs of Southern Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia, for example, appeared to be significantly lower than the response accorded to their counterparts in Kenya and Uganda.



## Chapter 5

# Education for the internally displaced in Khartoum

### Khartoum's internally displaced

Some in Khartoum contend that there is no specific Government of Sudan policy for internally displaced persons. “The policy of the government does not distinguish between IDPs and the others” in Sudan, a government official explained. “It’s only the NGOs who do that”.

With this in mind, it is startling to realize just how many IDPs there are in Sudan’s capital. The National Population Council and the United Nations have jointly estimated that out of 4.4 million residents in Khartoum, fully 1.8 million – 41 per cent – are IDPs (Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme, 2001: 4).<sup>28</sup> Much is made of the four official government camps for IDPs – Mayo Farms (an agricultural area in name only), Jebel Awlia, Dar el Salam and Wad el Bashir – but the proportion of IDPs who live in these four camps is small: just over 14 per cent of the total IDP population in Khartoum State (255,438). In other words, nearly 86 per cent of all IDPs in Khartoum – and thus more than one third of all of Khartoum’s residents (35.1 per cent) – live within “hundreds of unauthorised squatter areas or settlements” (Relief Web, 1998: 1).

The urban IDP lifestyle in Khartoum might be summed up as desperate, grinding and unrelentingly harsh. The United Nations’ Integrated Regional Information Network reports that the squatter settlements are typified by “overcrowding, poor housing and unhealthy water and sanitation conditions”. Health services, in addition were generally “limited to curative treatment, and frequent disease outbreaks were reported” (Relief Web,

28. The 41 per cent figure is also cited by the United Nations’ Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN; 1998: 1).

1998: 1). A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report found that most of the displaced are illiterate and from rural areas. A National Population Council survey in 1995 found the illiteracy rate among women in two IDP camps to be approximately 80 per cent (Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme, 2001: 4). Between 5 and 10 per cent of all IDPs in Khartoum have permanent jobs. It is more common for them to find casual work. They lack land to farm and have “few possibilities for sustainable livelihoods”. Humanitarian and donor officials in Khartoum noted how IDPs in Khartoum are routinely “subject to exploitation and discrimination on account of their southern origins” (Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme, 2001: 4). Jacobsen *et al.* describe the general plight of IDPs in Khartoum in the following way: “Annually, malnutrition rates exceed internationally established emergency levels; housing is poor, with most houses lacking proper sanitation; morbidity is high; illiteracy is common and school attendance is sporadic” (2001: 90).

The government’s practice of demolishing squatter and settlement homes has been widely reported and controversial for well over a decade. Such destruction (a component of the government’s urban renewal policy) is shocking to witness. A visit to two IDP camps in Khartoum in late 2003 provided a panorama of desolation. Thousands of homes, and even some schools, made mostly from the surrounding brown soil, were flattened. Here and there, a latrine or classroom was preserved, but overall the vista was one of undulating rubble, extending for kilometres across the flat, arid landscape. Nearby were hastily constructed shelters made of cardboard or plastic sheeting, and walls of houses marked for destruction with large ‘X’s in whitewash. Some landmarks were carefully preserved, including mosques and water towers, one of which bore the words ‘Dignity for all’. The barrenness was, in its own way, breathtaking, but so was the sense of resignation among the homeless IDPs who were interviewed. It was useless to resist the bulldozers, they reported, a sentiment also noted by Jacobsen *et al.*: “Over time [...] the displaced realised the futility of protesting and coped with the demolitions by salvaging roofing and other valuable materials before the bulldozers arrived” (2001: 86-87).

The government has a rationale for the demolitions. The neighbourhoods are supposed to be rebuilt as planned, in organized communities, with straight roads and land titles for the now-homeless.



“Nobody is bulldozed without having a place to move”, a government official explained. “We’re not denying [the IDPs] anything”. This is not the picture provided in most of the literature on Khartoum’s IDPs. Loveless, for example, notes that the government makes a “distinction between ‘squatters’ and ‘displaced’”. “Under this interpretation”, Loveless states, “the displaced are in the city on a temporary basis, and therefore do not qualify for permanent plot allocation” (1999: 8). As a result of a requirement to obtain seven documents and pay fees, Jacobsen *et al.* add that “for most of those officially recognised as displaced persons, the dream of permanent land tenure is just that: an unattainable dream” (2001: 88). The authors also explain that in 1991 and 1992, the government “redefined the overwhelming majority of displaced persons as ‘urban squatters’ and officially recognised only 60,000 households as being displaced” (Jacobsen *et al.*, 2001: 87-88), all of whom were shifted to four ‘relocation camps’ that are now considered Khartoum’s four ‘displaced camps’. Between 1988 and 1993, an estimated 800,000 people “living in informal settlements around Khartoum had their homes demolished” (Save the Children UK *et al.*, 2002: 22).

From 1991 onwards, most IDPs forever lost their official designation as displaced people. Squalor and invisibility merged with a denial of basic rights. Jacobsen *et al.* summed up the IDPs’ plight in the following way:

“Displaced people in Khartoum face repeated destruction of their houses and forced relocation to official camps while enjoying no legal rights, including tenure rights. Such constant threats kill any incentive to invest in houses or neighbourhoods, and make it difficult, if not impossible, to become established in trade or regular employment and to develop long-term relationships of trust that are vital to communities” (2001: 89).

Government officials who were interviewed were certainly aware that a great many in their midst had fled calamities. They attend gatherings about the displaced, control government camps or settlements for the displaced, negotiate constantly with international agencies about providing humanitarian aid to the displaced, and, of course, manage wars that displace civilians. At the same time, a high-level government official tried to elucidate the government’s position by comparing Sudan to the United States. “A person from Texas who moves to Massachusetts”, the official explained, “he is not a displaced person”. Similarly, people who move from one part

of Sudan to another could not be described as IDPs. “They may be displaced by the war, but if they want to settle in Khartoum, it is OK”. Some may argue that such a perspective simply constitutes the denial of an obvious reality: that people are fleeing a war in which the government is an active participant. Yet such emphasis on the act of migration, and not the cause of that migration (that is, that it was forced) is hardly specific to Sudan. Just as the Government of Sudan prefers to view IDPs in Khartoum as members of the urban poor, so, too, has the Government of Colombia sought to reclassify many long-term IDPs merely as impoverished citizens.<sup>29</sup>

Nearly half of all IDPs are thought to be either Dinka (25.4 per cent) or Nuba (20.6 per cent). Other southern ethnic groups – Shilluk, Bari, Nuer and so on – are also represented. Together with the Dinka and Nuba, the strong majority of all Khartoum IDPs (perhaps two thirds, perhaps more) were displaced by the civil war in the south (CARE and International Organization for Migration/IOM, 2003: 10). In truth, precise statistics about IDPs in Khartoum do not exist, in part because the government continues to debate their numbers and restrict research with IDPs. What is generally understood, however, is that most IDPs were displaced by the civil war originating in the south (but extending into areas such as the Nuba Mountains) and have resided in Khartoum for much more than a decade.

This chapter will examine education for IDPs in Khartoum and not in other government-held areas, such as those in the southern cities of Wau, Malakal and Juba, because virtually no information could be located.<sup>30</sup>

## The climate for education

### *‘Security condition’*

There is a sense of chronic uncertainty and insecurity surrounding IDP lives. This theme of security, or safety, was omnipresent during my visit to Khartoum – together with its mostly unspoken corollary: the threat

29. See, for example, Myers and Sommers, 1999.

30. Whether such information exists is not clear. I found next to nothing about education for IDPs in government-held areas beyond Khartoum, such as Wau, Malakal and Juba.

of danger. The resulting feeling, for IDPs, might be described as unnerving at best and intimidating at worst. References to some dimension of this circumstance, which many IDPs called ‘security condition’, surfaced not only during interviews with IDPs, but with most humanitarian aid officials as well.

Signs of ‘security condition’ were illuminated by the bulldozing episodes mentioned above. But it could also inspire precautions designed to minimize potential interactions with government authorities. One IDP interviewed for this study, for example, worked in downtown Khartoum. The IDP explained a usual method of commuting to work: taking three buses to and from work and always walking the same route, head down, between the office and the bus stop. Because of this disciplined routine, the IDP was unaware of prominent downtown landmarks located just nearby.

Another aspect of ‘security condition’ that surfaced during my fieldwork period related the significance of government permits.<sup>31</sup> “You need a [government] permit for everything” involving IDPs, a foreigner working for an international agency explained. “Everyone is intimidated” in Khartoum. “We [foreigners] as well, not just the IDPs”.

In a separate interview, two Sudanese staff working for another international agency explained that “IDPs are afraid that [government] security people are always around”. This assessment was correct, the officials explained. Such comments enhanced the impression that IDPs walked on uncertain ground in Khartoum.

The uncertainty that this environment created undermined my plan to distribute copies of an earlier report on education in southern Sudan to IDPs working on education in Khartoum (it was the same one I had earlier distributed in southern Sudan and the refugee camps). Even though the report had already been distributed to some of the government officials that I had met with, and it was made clear that IDP educators in Khartoum

31. One such permit was needed to carry out research on the camps or squatter settlements containing internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Khartoum State. Obtaining this permit required the assistance of a number of energetic and well-connected Sudanese. I was told to travel with five or more photocopies of the permit and my passport, together with additional passport photos, just in case an ‘authority’ requested copies.

were eager to learn about education in southern Sudan, I was told that a report on education in southern Sudan in the hands of a Southern Sudanese IDP in Khartoum still might invite trouble. The reason given was ‘security condition’, but the underlying reason was also explained. If a government ‘authority’ discovered an IDP educator with a report on education in southern Sudan, they might be asked questions like: “Where did you get this document?”; “Did the government approve this document before you received it?”; or “Do you have a permit to have this document?”. The report was not distributed.

### *Structural acquiescence*

One of the most striking aspects of the available literature about education for IDP schools in northern Sudan is what is not mentioned.

It might be anticipated, for example, that any study examining curriculum issues in Northern and southern Sudan would naturally recognize that Southern resistance to the government’s national curriculum was a factor in the recent civil war. A UNICEF document illustrates how the re-introduction of Islamic policies across Sudan in 1983 by the government, which included a revival of the “Arabized-Islamised education system for all schools in Sudan”, ultimately contributed to war being declared in the south (UNICEF, 2001: 7). Yet in a study undertaken by a UNESCO consultant at the request of the Government of Sudan and UNDP, the issue was not even raised. Even though the curricula present in the north and the south are reviewed, the study concludes with an endorsement of two objectives: “national unity and technological advancement” (Arora, 1995: 30). No hint of conflict, or even contention, over the national curriculum is suggested. Instead, the final recommendations at the end are prefaced with the following statement: “UNESCO, UNDP and other international agencies may consider supporting the following programmes for the development of basic education in Sudan as an integral part of peace process” (Arora, 1995: 38). Five recommendations follow, all of which advocate furthering the Government of Sudan’s curriculum development process. Despite an entire chapter on a separate curriculum development process in southern Sudan, the curricula present there are not mentioned in the final recommendations section. The implication of the document is clear: One can support peace by supporting (and thus effectively endorsing) the national government’s

educational development efforts. In the midst of a civil war that partly involves curriculum concerns, this was, effectively, a partisan document.

A second and much more consequential example of this tendency towards omission is the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of 2000. This survey was jointly carried out by the Federal Ministry of Health and Central Bureau of Statistics of the Government of Sudan and UNICEF. The effort received partial support from the World Bank. Reading this document, one would not realize that the Sudan has the largest population of internally displaced persons in the world because IDPs are never mentioned. Suggestions of the presence of war and extensive displacement are apparent, however. On page 9, the authors note that: “Among a number of problems, access in the war-affected areas is the major constraint that reduces the chances for full coverage” of the survey. On page 35, the authors write how “it is believed that, for Khartoum state, the majority of the disabled are migrants from areas undergoing strains”. One such ‘strain’, undoubtedly, is civil war.

For the IDPs in Khartoum State, the result of this document proved significant, given how its findings appear to have been applied. An international agency official explained how UNICEF “averaged out the indicators for each of the 12 states” in the survey and decided to only work in those states with the worst health and education indicators. Since “some are very wealthy and some are very poor” in Khartoum State (unlike some other states, where almost everyone is poor), the average levels of health and education indicators for Khartoum State were judged “too high” for UNICEF and other UN agencies to work in. As a result, UN and international NGO officials explained that, beginning in 2001, no UN agency supported any programmes or projects for IDPs in Khartoum.<sup>32</sup> This proved to be something of an overstatement, as a UN official noted that WFP continued to provide some school feeding to areas containing IDPs in Khartoum. Nonetheless, one international agency official concluded that “the [1.8 million] IDPs in Khartoum are being overlooked”. Another explained that MICS was “a situation of smoothing the data. There was no opportunity to disaggregate the data between IDPs and

32. A veteran international agency official present in Khartoum at that time also recalled that, during the same period, “most international NGOs had more trouble finding funds for Khartoum than other areas of Sudan and most left Khartoum”.

others”. While the official explained that the reason was that disaggregating the data to represent IDP concerns would have been “too expensive”, a staff member directly involved with the MICS exercise countered this assessment. “The report got distorted”, the person explained. The final results “did not represent the real situation on the ground”. As a result, the UN “declared that the IDPs didn’t need their assistance”.

A high-ranking UNICEF official in Khartoum flatly rejected such assertions. Pulling out of IDP areas in Khartoum was caused by the fact that “until recently, donors have not recognized the importance of education in humanitarian situations, particularly in Sudan”. In fact, the “limited funding available for Government-controlled areas was due to the imposition of sanctions that limited donor assistance to humanitarian actors and greatly reduced interest in Sudan”. The official stressed that IDPs in Khartoum were “the most surveyed group in the country” and “better off than the rural population in most other parts of Sudan”. Their situation was also “marginally better” than the situation facing IDPs elsewhere in the Sudan, such as, the official noted, IDPs in Darfur. The Khartoum IDPs were also recipients of an unusual amount of attention from “visiting journalists and delegations due to travel restrictions”. UNICEF’s MICS study accordingly “allowed the Sudan Country Office [of UNICEF] to focus on the most needy as opposed to those closest to power”.

The assertion that IDPs were somehow less needy because they lived near the halls of government power is revealing because of its protection implications. The IDPs in Khartoum have had serious protection concerns that were generated by the government, as the house demolition campaigns and other forms of intimidation suggest. Such issues were not addressed in the MICS survey. Of course, other IDPs require protection and assistance as well, including the Darfur IDPs. Yet protecting displaced children is an issue that UNICEF highlights as part of its overall mission. UNICEF’s web site, for example, states that “displaced children urgently need assistance and protection” (UNICEF, 2005: 1). An article by the Director of UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Programmes, moreover, asserts that “for internally displaced and refugee children, who have been driven from their homes because of human rights abuses, protection must be a fundamental part of the international humanitarian response” (Kastberg, 2002: 15).

The UN's decision to shift their services away from IDPs in Khartoum was controversial. It also has been reversed. "In mid-2004", the high-ranking UNICEF official in Khartoum stated, "UNICEF began to re-consider educational support to the Khartoum IDP camps". By 2005, the official continued, UNICEF expanded teacher training support and added provision of classroom supplies, pupil kits and recreational kits.

The actions of any international agency in a place such as government-controlled Sudan must be set into a context that will here be termed *structural acquiescence*. United Nations agencies, for example, are mandated to work with their government counterparts. This creates space for the national government to wield a degree of influence over international agency policies and activities. In fact, the Government of Sudan has developed a reputation for exerting, or threatening to exert, its authority over international agencies working within their sphere of influence. An indication of this phenomenon is noted by Duffield *et al.* Remarking on field research in northern and southern Sudan (on the impact of European Union humanitarian assistance), they note that: "In [Government of Sudan] areas in particular, the research team observed that expatriate and local staff of agencies had developed an overly guarded and diplomatic manner of speaking, in order not to risk obstacles from government officials". The authors contend that "this lack of candour, though understandable, threatened the effectiveness of their programmes" (2001: 13). Jacobsen *et al.* put this issue more succinctly: "It is not only displaced persons who have had to adapt to the government's policies; the international humanitarian community in Khartoum has likewise been forced to make damaging compromises" (2001: 97).

International agencies must accordingly decide whether to accept the government's limitations or face the prospect of being forced out of the country. In order to remain reasonably operational, international agencies must resign themselves to enduring a degree of influence, intimidation or control from the Government of Sudan. Acquiescence thus appears to be structured into the behaviour of institutions seeking to operate in areas that the Government of Sudan controls. While some resistance and advocacy is sometimes allowed, the Government of Sudan has the power call the shots – or, at the very least, strongly influence the shots that are called.

With reference to international humanitarian agencies working with IDPs in northern Sudan and attempting to provide some aid into southern Sudan from Khartoum, the government agency that is primarily responsible for monitoring such activity is the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC). Created in 1995, it is the Government of Sudan's "technical department supervising disaster preparedness and management of IDP protection and assistance" (IDP Project, 2003: 1). It is also the 10th such 'administrative entity' created by the Government of Sudan to manage IDP affairs since 1984 (IDP Project, 2003: 2). In one way, the level of the HAC's influence over international agencies working with IDPs in the north and southern Sudan in general can be significant and extensive. "HAC is the official government counterpart for NGOs on everything", the head of one international agency in Khartoum explained. As an example of their influence, the official stated that HAC officials "control, to a certain extent, who we hire". "There's quite a bit of mistrust between the NGO community and the HAC", the official admitted. Nonetheless, the official believed that "you can still do useful work in a context that is by and large repressive".

A much more widely noted example of HAC's influence lies in its role in providing clearance (or not) for the delivery of humanitarian relief. A BBC report from 2000, for instance, cites a Government of Sudan announcement that the HAC would be given the responsibility to "determine the criteria for allowing relief planes [used by OLS agencies] to enter Sudanese airspace", a move that is "seen as a measure that would step up the surveillance of relief organizations and settle the issue of how the government should relate to them" (BBC Monitoring, 2000: 1). This issue is as longstanding as it is controversial and will not be explored further here, except to help shed light on the Government of Sudan's, and the HAC's, influence over humanitarian activities.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, it has also been noted that the provision of basic humanitarian services for IDPs is not part of the HAC's work, as it "has been largely been delegated to NGOs" (BBC Monitoring, 2000: 3). The Government of Sudan may wield considerable power over education and other humanitarian services provided to IDPs, but as will soon be described, their direct involvement is minimal.

33. Influencing humanitarian action in southern Sudan is also done by others, notably the SPLA. As Prendergast *et al.* have noted: "The SPLA has also obstructed aid and attempted the use the delivery of food in the south for its political advantage [...] The SPLA has also regularly diverted food aid for military use" (2002: 149).



## IDP education in Khartoum

Over the course of the recent civil war, education for internally displaced persons in Khartoum was underfunded. A veteran UN official explained that:

“Donor funding migrated away from the IDPs in Khartoum throughout the 1990s and until the present [2003], as the situation became more accurately described as a chronic state of suffering rather than an acute humanitarian emergency. It was often reiterated that the ‘development sanctions’ of many international donors against the Government of Sudan prohibited any consideration of funding towards education, as it was a development activity.”

IDP education in Khartoum has also been poorly documented and largely unco-ordinated. Documents that provide a broad overview of IDP education are scant, and most written information provides limited perspectives of the education situation. Interviewing education officials in schools, NGOs, UN agencies and the government often reveals that they have little information on the IDP education activities that their agency counterparts are performing.

In much of this, one can sense the cloak of self-censorship and a watchful government affecting the behaviour of educational officials. Some international agency officials working on IDP education, for example, related how project and programme assessments have tended to shy away from reporting findings or analyses that might be considered critical of the government. One official, for example, related that most education assessments

“[...] are done by Sudanese, and they are biased. One consultant took six months to write his report on the management of IDP education. He was a Sudanese. He feared writing about certain issues, due to political and security issues. The assessment failed to identify real management problems and give the real picture of the management of IDP schools.”

This result, the official explained, regularly occurred. Some officials working for other organizations supported this assessment.

One might assume, given the atmosphere described thus far in this chapter, that relations between the Government of Sudan and IDPs in Khartoum were consistently, relentlessly and undeniably negative. The government's conduct in the recent civil war, particularly its record for human rights abuses, has been widely reported. The IDPs may be citizens of Sudan, but nearly all have also been driven from their homes by attacks and famines and regularly faced intimidations and difficulties upon arriving in the capital city. To this day, as recently illustrated in Darfur, the government is regularly accused of denying the realities of its severe human rights abuses while defending itself as misunderstood and victimized.

It thus might be presumed that the Government of Sudan has been in all ways predatory with regard to Southerners during the recent civil war period. Yet in terms of education for the IDPs in Khartoum, this has not been the case. To be sure, the educational situation for IDPs in Khartoum is irrefutably dire. The sense, among IDPs, of cultural, religious and societal oppression is pronounced and, in general, their relationship with the government has proven to be, at the best of times, distant and often coloured with distrust. Yet understanding the context of education in Khartoum (like anywhere else) is nonetheless essential. For example, 44 per cent of IDPs in Khartoum "have no education" (CARE and IOM 2003: 14) and 62.5 per cent are illiterate. That proportion is higher than the overall illiteracy rate for all Khartoum residents (57 per cent); (van Hoewijk, 2000: 4), but about the same as the reported overall illiteracy rate for the entire population in northern Sudan (62 per cent). It is also significantly lower than the illiteracy rate in southern Sudan (85 per cent; Save the Children UK *et al.*, 2002: 25).

Examining IDP education in Khartoum from this perspective alone, the situation may not appear particularly dire. A Southerner has a better chance of becoming literate in Khartoum than nearly anywhere in southern Sudan. On the other hand, one should not assume that education in Khartoum is either readily available to most school-age IDPs or that significant educational problems do not exist with IDP education. Access to and the conditions of education are only two challenges facing displaced students in Khartoum. Once in school, Southern students in Khartoum immediately and constantly deal with additional challenges that their counterparts in the south do not face. Southern Sudanese students in Khartoum, in addition to all other government-held areas, confront language

of instruction and curriculum challenges that simply do not exist in SPLA-held areas or in Southern Sudanese refugee camps. The resulting picture of education for IDPs in Khartoum, as will here be described, has thus not only been largely – but most certainly not entirely – negative and imbued with myriad difficulties and tensions. Despite promising developments in IDP education in the 1980s and early 1990s, IDP education has also become complex, chaotic, disorganized and infused with strains of political and religious resistance.

### *The emergence of IDP education in Khartoum*

In the enormous refugee camps near Ngara, Tanzania, shortly after the end of the genocide and civil war in Rwanda in early July 1994, groups of male Rwandan youth were regularly found just outside the gated and protected compounds of international agencies. Patient yet politely insistent, waiting day after day in the sun and dust, and watching the internationals' four-wheel drive vehicles whoosh past them, they carried petitions. The petitions contained their names and those of fellow secondary school students who had fled Rwanda and were searching for a way to continue their studies as refugees. Their leaders spoke English and French, and pressed their case to any foreigner who found time to stop and listen to them.

It is not unusual to find, early in a humanitarian emergency, secondary school students lobbying for a chance to complete their studies. In Khartoum, the issue of education for displaced secondary school students arose early in the current civil war period (the descriptions are inexact, but it appears to have begun in the mid-1980s). Forojalla explains that many of the early IDP arrivals into Khartoum from southern Sudan “contained substantial numbers of secondary school students who were keen to get back into school, and [...] many had ventured on their own unaccompanied by parents or relatives” (2000: 15).<sup>34</sup> Once the war began in 1983, former Southern students who were boarding at secondary schools in Southern towns and cities reported during interviews that they were trapped. Most of the schools they were attending had closed, and they were unable to return home. Even if they had had a chance to go home,

34. Forojalla's documentation (including Forojalla and Paulino, 1995) is among the only available descriptions of the educational history of IDPs in Khartoum, and will be relied upon here.

doing so might also mean forfeiting any opportunity to continue their education. Accordingly, some noted that they “had no choice” but to go to Khartoum to seek opportunities to continue their studies.

The challenges that displaced secondary and, eventually, primary (or what is termed ‘basic education’) students faced in Khartoum were numerous. Forojalla (2000: 15) names a number of them:

- lack of documentation that would certify their education background;
- lack of openings in existing Khartoum schools;
- different curricula and language of instruction, “particularly for students from Equatoria Region where the medium of instruction for many of the pupils throughout their school career had been English”;
- differences “in cultural outlooks and backgrounds between Khartoum children and displaced children [...] were added factors that would have made co-existence rather difficult at that point in time and might have been disruptive to the smooth running of any school that would have attempted such an experiment”.

One result of the inability of nearly all displaced students to gain access to schools in Khartoum, as a Southern Sudanese education official recalled, was that “Southerners opened schools themselves. We taught children in these schools”.

In addition to these community-organized endeavours, a remarkable collaborative response emerged. In 1987, Prime Minister Sadiq Al Mahdi “appealed to NGOs, national and international[...] and friendly governments, to assist with the education of the displaced students” (Forojalla and Paulino, 1995: 6). The government established a committee for organizing IDP schools. While it was chaired by the government’s Minister of Education and contained eight Southern and seven Northern officials, “the executive administration was wholly made up of southern teachers who had been displaced to Khartoum” (Forojalla, 2000: 15). A second committee was established, led by officials from the Finance and Education ministries, which was “responsible for the receipt and disbursement of funds” (Forojalla and Paulino, 1995: 6). Several donors pledged annual contributions, including the German and Dutch governments, the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and the three Southern Regional governments (Equatoria, Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal). But the donor that supplied the largest level of funds was the Government of Sudan.

In short order, schools were founded and qualified teachers were hired “based on stringent criteria laid down by the Committee and centred on teaching experience and training” (Forojalla and Paulino, 1995: 8). The first school for IDPs was a secondary school, the Sheikh Lufti School in Rufaa. In 1987, eight additional secondary schools were founded in the Khartoum area, almost all of which “operated in the afternoons in the premises of government and private secondary schools” (Forojalla, 2000: 16). Spaces were made for other displaced students to attend secondary schools in different parts of northern Sudan. Communities also contributed. When it began to get cold at a school in Dongola, for example, the headmaster helped raise money to purchase “pullovers and sweaters for [displaced] students”, who had arrived without warm clothing (Forojalla and Paulino, 1995: 9). Other signs of good will and collaboration between Southern IDPs and Northerners, including the central government, also surfaced. For instance, the government negotiated with the government of Egypt to create an additional 300 places for university scholarships in Egypt for qualified displaced Southern students (Forojalla, 2000: 11).

Basic schools for IDP children evolved in a different fashion. In a seminal decision, most of the new basic schools were founded not by the government but by NGOs. The NGO response was based on “an appeal from the government” to provide schooling for displaced children (van Hoewijk, 2000: 2). In addition, NGOs created or supported their own schools with limited reported co-ordination between the many emerging sets of schools. The result, as van Hoewijk noted for the Catholic schools, is that the Catholics’ programme “has evolved into a self-standing parallel system” (van Hoewijk, 2000: 2).

While the same could be said of other non-government educational actors that will soon be mentioned, four brief observations are useful here. First, the Catholics were certainly among the first to begin organizing basic schools for IDP students in 1986, and gradually emerged as the predominant non-government actor in IDP education. Second, most of the IDP schools were managed by religious groups, an issue that surfaced as a particularly important ingredient of resistance in IDP schools (and will shortly be discussed). Third, in the scant available documentation describing this period, the government’s call for assistance was thought to be both practical, and not imbued with politics. The Catholic Archdiocese of Khartoum and the Kosti diocese in 1986, for example, were merely

“answering an appeal [from] the government, because [the] government system was not able to take all these [displaced] children” (van Hoewijk, 2000: 2). Fourth, what is particularly significant about van Hoewijk’s statement about the Catholic “self-standing parallel system” is that it refers not just to an equivalent set of schools, but to one (of many) parallel education systems existing for the same population and in the same location. As Forojalla observes: “The churches and Islamic organizations also heeded the call and embarked on the establishment of separate administrative organs to handle the development of basic schools for displaced children in the different squatter settlements and official camps” (2000: 17). The evolution of basic schools for IDP students is thus partly a story of how IDP education in Khartoum became atomized from nearly the outset. The affiliations of students and their families and communities to particular schools and their attendant systems (or, as Forojalla terms it, “separate administrative organs”) became significant. Relatively few Muslim IDPs from Darfur reportedly attended Catholic or other Christian schools. Some Anglican schools taught in English. Different salary scales and methods for addressing national curriculum constraints were devised. Within the considerable limits of the national government system, different IDP school ‘systems’ sculpted, over time, different systems of education for separate contingents of IDP students, all largely without co-ordination and collaboration between these new systems. The ‘islands of education’ metaphor thus appropriately applies to the rise of IDP education in Khartoum.

Perhaps no one foresaw this outcome. In the beginning, somewhere around 1986, the shared purpose of government and non-government actors informed their immediate intent: collectively to find places for IDP students in basic schools, and to respond fast. IDP communities, as noted above, founded basic schools. The three regional governments affiliated with the central government in Khartoum “each established 10 basic level schools in different parts of the three towns where their [displaced] citizens were concentrated [presumably in Wau in Bahr el Ghazal, Malakal in Upper Nile, and Juba in Equatoria]” (Forojalla, 2000: 16). The government schools used the facilities of existing schools after their students departed in the afternoon. Many IDP communities built *rakubas* (huts made of bamboo or other materials) to create their makeshift schools (van Hoewijk, 2000: 2). By 1993, Forojalla states that “there were a total of 143 basic schools for the displaced with a total enrolment of 46,738 pupils in Khartoum State,

more or less all privately provided” by NGOs (2000: 17). Forojalla then provides an astonishing fact: that the teacher-pupil ratio in IDP schools in 1993 was 1:5. While he also notes that “only 18 per cent of the teachers were trained”, a figure which “was raised to 30 per cent after the UNICEF Emergency programme trained an additional 100 teachers” (2000: 17), the teacher-pupil ratio would be remarkable anywhere on the globe, much less for IDP students in Khartoum. Indeed, although no other statistics were available for this period, this teacher-pupil ratio suggests that the level of educational quality may well have been reasonably high.

The 1993 statistics shared here describe a high water mark for IDP education in Khartoum – and, just perhaps, IDP education anywhere in the world. Until the early 1990s, relations between government and NGO officials involved with IDP education, and between government and IDPs themselves, appeared to have been reasonably positive. By all accounts, government appeals for donor and NGO support in the 1980s were considered sincere and even humanitarian. This much-overlooked fact is well worth noting, as it is unusual that a government engaged in a civil war would respond so positively to people who were displaced from rebel areas. Forojalla and Paulino, for example, remarked that the warm cooperation and assistance between displaced Southerners and Northerners regarding displaced secondary students in the late 1980s signified:

“[...] the practical stirrings of the beginnings of national unity. If this good will had persisted and spread to the adult populations of Southerners and [N]ortherners living in close proximity in different parts of the north, true national unity could have evolved” (Forojalla and Paulino, 1995: 10).

Suggestions of such a ‘positive’ development involving the Government of Sudan and Southern Sudanese calls for the following issue to be restated. The contents of the national curriculum that IDPs have used remains a point of considerable and longstanding contention, because Southern Sudanese generally contend that the purpose of the Government of Sudan’s national curriculum is to Islamicize and Arabize all educators and students.

During the 2003 field visit to Khartoum, no reference to such events were raised by any government, United Nations or NGO officials, or by IDPs who had resided in Khartoum at that time. More recent events appear

to have wiped memories of comparatively better times for IDP education entirely away. Yet it is important to note that the dire descriptions of IDP education and frosty relations between the government and both IDPs and agencies involved in IDP education that are so common in Khartoum today mainly apply to an era that followed the military coup that brought General Omar al-Bashir to power in 1989. While all IDPs did not immediately feel the impact of al-Bashir's ascension, by 1994 most of the government's policy changes that affected IDPs were in effect. Although precise dates are difficult to identify in either the existing literature or accounts in interviews with IDPs and IDP education officials, it is clear that a number of significant events shook Khartoum's IDP community to its core during the 1989-1994 period. The events of 1991-1992, when government-led relocations and the bulldozing of IDP (and other squatter) houses began and when nearly all IDPs lost their official designation as IDPs, were reviewed at the beginning of this chapter.

In 1989, "a government decree introduced a greater Islamic element into education – a move which is viewed by many observers as restricting still further the educational opportunities of non-Muslim communities" (Peters, 1996: 38). The shift does not appear to have been enacted either immediately or everywhere. The picture of events, indeed, is not at all clear. A Southern Sudanese headmaster explained that "after the 1989 coup, the government closed all the IDP schools". On the other hand, Forojalla notes that "while the government played a leading role in the promotion of the education of the displaced children at the secondary school level" until the IDP secondary schools were disbanded in 1994, the same was not the case for basic [or primary] schools, where "the responsibility for the development of basic level schools for the displaced has rested largely on the voluntary organizations: the churches, Islamic organizations and more recently, community [b]ased organizations" (2000: 17). Resistance to government decrees, in addition, actually succeeded. Government "attempts in 1991 and 1994 to take over all the schools for the displaced, run by churches or NGOs, failed" (van Hoewijk, 2000: 4).

At the same time, Forojalla notes that this was not the case for "Islamic relief organizations such as Dawa Islamiya" who "were initially involved in the provision of basic education to displaced children". "When the government demanded that all such schools should be handed over to



it, they complied". These schools continue to be administered by the Khartoum State Ministry of Education and are known as "emergency schools." Forojalla's observation that the government "has not exerted much tangible effort towards supporting basic education of the displaced" is evidenced, according to received reports, by poor government support for these 'emergency' government schools (2000: 21). Khartoum State's Ministry of Education founded an Emergency Education Department whose responsibilities are "confined to schools that were previously handled by Islamic Organizations". These schools reportedly "still lack infrastructure, books and other consumables. The provision of salaries to teachers is still a problem" (Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme, 2001: 5). Regardless of whether they resisted government takeover attempts or not, however, all religious organizations and other NGOs did adapt to the government's main reforms, including an extension of primary grades from six to eight years and the implementation of a revised, and heavily Islamic, curriculum that all took place soon after 1989 coup. The implications of the curricular reforms will be shortly reviewed.

#### *Overview of the current era*

The period from approximately 1991 to the present is generally considered both the same era and the frame of reference for nearly all statistics, events, perspectives and experiences that are related in documents or by officials and IDPs themselves. It is this 'current' era that will be described in the rest of this chapter.

Broad descriptions of IDP education in Khartoum State are difficult to achieve for a number of reasons, including the fact that the government considers them "normal citizen[s] in poverty situation" (Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme, 2001: 9) rather than displaced. To illustrate the lack of government recognition of IDPs and their education concerns, an international agency official recalled how a national Ministry of Education official asked for education statistics for IDPs for a report that he was writing. The Ministry of Education official related that no such statistics are kept by the government. A contributing reason lies in the widely reported existence of poor co-ordination for key actors involved with IDP education. A joint government-NGO document stated this problem and its outcomes plainly: "Lack of co-ordination between the government and NGOs as well as

among NGOs themselves resulted in confusion and irrational use of resources” (Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme, 2001: 10). The co-ordination issue will be explored below.

One outgrowth of limited co-ordination of IDP education is illustrated by the lack of even the most general information. For example, an NGO official working on IDP education in Khartoum stated that “nobody knows how many IDP schools there are” in Khartoum State. An NGO education official also stated that there is no education for IDPs in the major government-held towns in the south (Wau, Juba and Malakal). The lack of educational opportunities elsewhere, the official continued, “was a major reason for coming to Khartoum”. For IDPs seeking education in Khartoum, “there are at least textbooks, even if you have to buy them yourself in the market”. In addition, “there are also educational pamphlets and reference books”. And most important, “at least there’s some opportunity for an IDP to get education in church or NGO schools”.

The result of both the government’s lack of recognition (or much responsibility) for IDP education and the limited co-ordination among NGOs is that statistical descriptions of IDP education are usually provided without broader statistical context. Surveys represent samplings. NGOs describe only the schools that they support. Although general IDP education statistics did exist in earlier years (such as Foroajalla’s 1993 statistics listed above), it is nonetheless apparent from available documentation and interview sources that the overall state of IDP education is poor. The report of a visiting academic illustrated this tendency:

“The school I visited while in the [displaced] camp, was funded by the Church. The facilities can only be described as inadequate. Primary 1 consisted of a reed shelter with only blackboard and no desks or chairs. The teachers I spoke of complained of inadequate funding, lack of teaching materials and also of the fact that students often fainted in class because of a lack of food” (Bekker 2002: 21).

What is lacking in such descriptions is an understanding of how the generally dire state of IDP education differs from education for the urban poor. Limited indications from available documentation suggest that government support for basic schools for both IDPs and the urban poor is, at best, limited. “The decentralised Khartoum State [education] ministry

lacks the resources to support schools with the necessary inputs”, Save the Children UK explained. It noted that “teachers are poorly and irregularly paid in state schools and often lack appropriate training” and then states that:

“Students in state schools now pay a number of fees and charges as schools attempt to share the costs of education. Whilst the wealthy and middle-class have thereby maintained their children in schools, the majority poor are finding it increasingly difficult to activate their children’s right to education” (Save the Children UK, 2002: 5-6).

While this description suggests that support for both urban poor and IDP schools are both inadequate, there exist problems that are particular to IDP education (such as co-ordination issues) and to Southern Sudanese IDPs (curriculum concerns) that will shortly be described. Nonetheless, one should not conclude that all IDP schools are necessarily worse than schools for other impoverished Khartoum residents. Indeed, given this state of affairs, it is quite possible that some basic education schools for IDPs are demonstrably better than schools for impoverished urbanites who are not IDPs, since IDP schools, at least, have some access to support from outside donors.

One should also not assume that the government stays entirely away from IDP schools. NGO education officials, in addition to IDP staff, mentioned regular visits from government education inspectors. For example, 33 teachers in the 15 project schools of Save the Children UK (SCUK) “are employed by the Ministry of Education”. Of the others, 74 are supported by the Swedish Free Mission, 139 receive incentives from SCUK directly and 15 are not paid at all (van Gerpen and Nordstrand, 2003: 3). This is evidence of how the government continues to provide limited support to IDP schools, despite its failure to recognize IDPs as a specific population category.

This said, the state of education for IDPs beyond the basic education level is dire. Forojalla notes that while the “percentage of the [IDP] school-age population” that attends school is simply “not known”, it is also “certain that there are still large pockets of the areas occupied by the displaced, which are without schools”. An NGO official supports the lack of basic data on IDP education with the comment that “no specific number of school-age IDPs are known”. The official also adds that “the general

estimate is 500,000 school-age IDP children” in Khartoum State. Forojalla notes that “studies have shown that girl pupils tend to drop out from the 6th grade [upwards]” (2000: 18). Furthermore, “the real bottlenecks with respect to the education of the displaced are at the secondary and higher education levels” (Forojalla, 2000: 18). As of 2000, and following the government’s closure of IDP secondary schools in 1994, three ‘self-help’ secondary schools for displaced students existed. Only 812 students attended these three schools – an alarmingly low figure given the sheer size and high proportion of children and youth within the IDP population (1.8 million – 56.6 per cent reportedly below age 20; CARE and the International Organization of Migration, 2003: 8) in Khartoum. One available indicator of access is found in the CARE-IOM study, which states that, according to their survey of IDPs in Khartoum, 38.7 per cent of their sample of IDPs between ages 19 and 25 had attended primary school, 20.7 per cent had attended secondary school, and 6.9 per cent had attended university (CARE and the International Organization of Migration, 2003: 14). While these population proportions are undeniably low, and notwithstanding both southern Sudan’s truly appalling state of education and the presence of a devastating war, there is simply no question that, within the borders of Sudan, the best chances for a Southern Sudanese to attain any level of formal education rest in Khartoum.

### *Key education actors*

The initial part of this section provides short descriptions of two of the more prominent IDP basic education programmes that separately exist in Khartoum: the Diocese of Khartoum (DOK) and Save the Children UK (SCUK). It will then briefly review both the activities of some of the other actors in this field.

#### ■ The Diocese of Khartoum<sup>35</sup>

“The Catholics”, an NGO official stated, “are managing education for a higher number of IDP students than anyone else”. The Diocese of Khartoum (DOK), indeed, is widely considered the paramount IDP education actor not only in Khartoum State, but also across northern Sudan.

35. The main document that is referred to was the most thorough available on the Save the Saveable programme of the Diocese of Khartoum. It was written by Ria van Hoewijk (2000).

Forojalla also noted that it had “established a special department under its Education office that is responsible for the development of basic level schools for the displaced” (2000: 20).

The DOK provided statistics of their current enrolment in basic education schools for IDPs for the 2002-2003 school year. The statistics are revealing. They run 73 schools, which have a total of 661 classes and 40,724 students – up from 8,500 in 1987-1988 (van Hoewijk, 2000: 6) but down from more than 60,000 in 2001 (personal interview) – and 976 teachers. The teacher-pupil ratio is nearly 1:42. A remarkable 73 per cent of Sudanese IDP teachers are trained, and 26 per cent of them are female. Almost 43 per cent of all students are girls, a figure that the schools in Akon, for example, would have considered unusually good. The DOK’s statistics also keep track of how many of their students are Christians: 34,846, or over 85 per cent of all students enrolled. This is a particularly significant statistic, because it suggests that the overwhelming majority of the DOK’s students are from Southern, not Western Sudan.

This last comment was not lost on an IDP headmaster from Darfur. The IDPs from the west are mostly Muslims, while most of those from the south are not. As a result, the Darfur IDPs “have chances of getting small-small work” in Khartoum, while most Southerners do not. On the other hand, he insisted that “people from the west and north are also being exploited” in the capital city. And yet, in the Darfuri headmaster’s view, it was the IDPs from the south who received greater educational benefits. “If you’re from the South”, the headmaster stated, “you’re used to having NGOs supporting you”. The headmaster’s perspective was that the “NGO [including Catholic] schools were very good. They have much more furniture, textbooks, and exercise books compared to government schools” that IDPs from the west and north (and some from the South) attend. However, the headmaster noted that “most of the Southern Sudanese students in government schools are Muslims”. The headmaster further contended that “IDP schools [‘IDP’ and ‘NGO’ schools being interchangeable terms] pay teachers better”. He concluded by stating that “the IDP schools are excellent” while the government schools are merely “very good”. To illustrate his point about the reputation among IDPs regarding ‘NGO schools’, he told the story of one run by SCUK that “the government wanted to take over”. However, “the community resisted because they feared losing the many benefits supplied by the NGO”.

The DOK's statistics and the Darfuri headmaster's perspectives aligned in one important way: they suggested that most IDPs attending their schools were Christian Southerners. One document notes that DOK's target group is "girls and boys displaced from the South" (van Hoewijk, 2000: 6). This is an indication of just how segmented the IDP community in Khartoum really was. The further statement that NGO or IDP schools were superior to government schools is notable, but there was, in fact, insufficient available documentation to make a useful comparison. Both sets of schools appeared to be, in general, underfunded and poorly equipped.

Founded in 1986, the DOK's education programme is known as the 'Save the Saveable Programme'. It has two objectives: (1) improve access to pre-school and primary education for displaced children; and (2) protect displaced Christian families "from being swallowed by the Islam oriented society" in Khartoum (van Hoewijk, 2000: 6). The accent on protecting Christian children, as also noted by the Darfuri headmaster above, is indeed significant, and will again surface in the section below on the curriculum, which is where the religious battle in IDP education is mainly waged. Save the Saveable provides the following: kindergarten and primary schools; in-service teacher training; individual student sponsorships for secondary and university education; and an education management office. There is also a school feeding programme (van Hoewijk, 2000: 6).

Similar to the case of the Diocese of Torit (described in *Chapter 3*), the funding sources for educational programming for Southern Sudanese are entirely Catholic while the implementing agencies – the dioceses – are Sudanese. In the case of Save the Saveable, 51 per cent of their funding comes from Misereor (the German Catholic Bishops' Organization for Development Cooperation), 35 per cent from Cordaid (a large Dutch Catholic donor), and the remaining 14 per cent from DOK monies and school fees (about US\$2 per child per year). Funding from Misereor and Cordaid has largely been in decline in recent years: from 3.5 million Deutschmarks (DM) to less than 2 million DM in 2000-2001. Funding levels continue to descend (van Hoewijk, 2000: 6; and personal interviews).

There is considerable consternation regarding the ability of DOK to adequately continue the programme. A donor official expressed concern over the management and financial capacities of the Sudanese administrators of Save the Saveable. "The [Sudanese] agencies were used to receiving large amounts of money and taking care of all the

operational costs”, a veteran donor official explained. “Now [as of 2003], it’s difficult to restructure and change the [Sudanese] mentality”. The official categorized this ‘mentality’ as ‘dependency syndrome’, also explaining that teachers had not been trained for years, that school feeding programming was not connected to school attendance and that the quality of Catholic IDP schools was nonetheless superior to the government’s schools that IDPs attend. The official remarked that “unfortunately, the [Catholic] donors came in” to support Save the Saveable early on. The influx of donor funding undermined the situation existing at the outset of Save the Saveable, where, the donor official contended, “the Diocese of Khartoum started the programme, teachers worked without salaries, and the programme was doing very nicely”. School fees started in the ‘transition year’ of 2000-2001, wherein donors sought to reduce their funding levels since “the IDP situation was permanent”, considered to be fairly stable and no longer in an emergency phase, and so should become self-sustaining.

The donor official expressed a view that many foreign officials associated with international agencies in southern Sudan also shared: that Sudanese teachers should work without salaries. The context, however, was different. In the south, it was explained by some international agency officials that teachers should receive incentives, not salaries, since “if soldiers in the military and officials in the local government aren’t paid, how can teacher salaries be justified?” (Sommers, 2002: 18). In the case of Save the Saveable in Khartoum, however, a Catholic donor official explained that “before donors came in, teachers accepted to teach without salaries. They came from the south and were quite well trained. Since they had nothing else to do, they taught”. The issue of teacher morale and retention was connected to much more than payment, however. “In the early years [of Save the Saveable], the education was better because the teachers were motivated. They expected to return home in a few months or a year. But the longer the IDPs stayed in Khartoum, the more that teachers left the profession for other jobs”. The issue of teacher flight was noted by others as well.

Many of those affiliated with the Save the Saveable programme boasted of the quality of its education. This was proven, many related, by the test scores of their grade 8 students. As of 2000, there was an 81.5 per cent success rate (85.8 per cent for boys, and 73.3 per cent for girls), higher than government schools in Khartoum (74.2 per cent). Such success rates were particularly notable, van Hoewijk noted, “if you take into account

the bad conditions of schools: almost all are made of bamboo, hardly any adequate equipment, [and] high staff turnover” (2000: 8). At the same time, van Hoewijk observed that the proportion of girls who sat for exams was only 30 per cent (as opposed to 45 per cent in government schools). Only 39 per cent of Save the Saveable teachers were women (compared to 70 per cent in government schools). As the author commented: “It is remarkable that for the whole of Sudan, girls seem to do better [than boys on national exams], while in the church schools it is the opposite”. DOK officials attribute this to “the different and stable situation that [non-displaced Sudanese girl students] enjoy when compared to the displaced children”. At the same time, while poverty and family preferences for boys instead of girls to attend school are noted as reasons for the high drop-out rate of girls in Save the Saveable schools, management practices that are partial to male students were also noted. Save the Saveable schools, van Hoewijk notes, have an “unattractive social climate for girls”, particularly in the seventh and eighth grades, and policies and management practices in Save the Saveable schools “do favour boys” (2000: 8).

As with the Diocese of Torit, the management of DOK’s Save the Saveable programme was highly centralized, and appears to be heavily dominated by two clergymen of DOK: the Educational Secretary (responsible for budget preparation and control) and the Executive Director (responsible for the ‘day to day management’ of Save the Saveable schools in Khartoum). Headmasters, on the other hand, have “limited decision-making power”. The seven-member Board of Trustees sets policy, recommends annual budgets and oversees administration (van Hoewijk, 2000: 9-10). Visiting donor officials, in addition to DOK personnel, all expressed concern over whether this Sudanese-run institution could adequately manage the programme as donor funds continued to decline.

#### ■ Save the Children UK

Much less information was available about SCUUK’s Khartoum Displaced Basic Education Programme (KDBEP) than the Diocese of Khartoum’s Save the Saveable programme. SCUUK states that it has “established itself as the only international non-governmental organization operational in the basic education sector since 1990” (van Gerpen and Nordstrand, 2003: 3). It was a significantly smaller programme, beginning with 2,700 students in 1990 and expanding to 10,800 in 2001 and 14,400 in 2003 (SCUUK, 2002; Bethke and Braunschweig, 2004: 140). It enacted a



community-based, decentralized programming approach that is similar to SCUK's programme in Akon: assisting communities to build classrooms; supplying school materials; providing a limited degree of in-service teacher training; and "paying incentives to volunteer teachers" (SCUK, 2002: 1). In a system that differs dramatically from the DOK schools, the school headmasters "effectively control school finances and decision-making without effective accountability to the community" (SCUK, 2002: 5).

The SCUK schools appear to be far less stable than the DOK schools. A SCUK document relates how "student attendance is frequently erratic, with students taking days off during term-time or leaving classes during the day", "large numbers of students drop[ping] out of school after a year or two" and "teacher attendance and punctuality [being] variable" (SCUK, 2002: 5). Still other problems persist: "School feeding programmes are now erratic and insufficient" (unlike, apparently, the DOK schools); "classrooms are generally unattractive and teaching aids are lacking"; and there was "evidence that many students are not acquiring literacy and numeracy at school" (SCUK, 2002: 3).

SCUK's response has nonetheless led to considerable progress. Van Gerpen and Nordstrand list a number of accomplishments. There is an accelerated adolescent programme for 1,440 'working children'. Situating the 15 project schools in IDP resident areas, the authors claim, has helped the displaced "preserve their community identity and values in a hostile environment". Partnering with IDP communities to construct and rehabilitate classrooms, offices and latrines was also essential (2003: 2). In addition, SCUK's programme claims to have helped "sensitize" the Ministry of Education in Khartoum State to "make a limited contribution to education for displaced communities". Crediting the "co-ordinated efforts of various NGOs and religious groups supporting education in the camps", van Gerpen and Nordstrand note that "the Ministry now appoints a limited number of teachers, supervises the initiatives of humanitarian agencies and undertakes inspection of schools". At the same time, they state that "the official practice of relocation and urban re-planning, which has resulted in several schools being demolished in the past, has soured relations between the local authorities and the displaced communities" (van Gerpen and Nordstrand 2003: 3).

Four points are worth mentioning here, all of which suggest that enhancing the involvement of the government in IDP education is a mixed

blessing, and sometimes much less than that. First, SCUK's successful advocacy for co-ordination mentioned here is particularly noteworthy because it appears to be an exception to the rule. Others refer to the challenge of co-ordinating IDP education as a particular weakness. Second, the authors note that government assistance is arriving in IDP camps and not squatter settlements, thereby limiting assistance to locations where less than 15 per cent of Khartoum's IDPs reside. Third, these state government contributions were not mentioned by education ministry officials during interviews. This does not discount the authors' claims as much as suggest that government officials appeared to be reticent about stating any support for IDP education. This is perhaps not surprising, given that the IDP category is both scarcely recognized by the government for those IDPs residing in the Sudanese capital and that there exists "confusion over who [within the decentralized government structure] ultimately has responsibility" for IDP education (van Gerpen and Nordstrand 2003: 4). Fourth, the presence of government inspectors in schools and their supervision of NGO activities may not necessarily be judged favourably by IDP educators and NGO officials, given the government's relocation tactics and insistence on the national Islamic curriculum that, as will shortly be reviewed, has both roiled the Southern Sudanese IDP community and served to limit the educational achievements of Southern Sudanese students.

The SCUK schools emphasize the involvement and empowerment of communities. SCUK has formed Parent Teacher Committees (PTCs), just as in Akon and elsewhere in southern Sudan. PTCs are partly designed to "make schools accountable to the communities they serve" (van Gerpen and Nordstrand, 2003: 3). But it is an uphill battle, since IDP communities have "high levels of illiteracy among the adult population", are faced with an "unsettled and economically vulnerable status", "lack the political power to demand their rights with authorities", and often "have problems in dedicating sufficient time to school affairs when they have no regular sources of income" (van Gerpen and Nordstrand, 2003: 4).

The head of a Parent-Teacher Committee (PTC) for an IDP camp school that had recently formed suggested the difficulties that PTCs face. "I can't advocate with the government", the PTC head explained. "We get no feedback from the government, so we don't talk to them anymore". For example: "We contacted the government about getting textbooks and

help in rehabilitating classrooms”. But the government “only provided empty responses”. In general, the PTC head explained, government officials “say *Inshallah* [If Allah wishes] and nothing happens”.

Oxfam GB had recently begun to work with this particular PTC. An Oxfam official commented that: “Most PTCs are not well organized”. Some PTCs “have only two or three members”. This applies not only to NGO-supported schools, but also to church and government schools serving IDPs. The official asserted that the PTCs for government schools dominated by the ‘urban poor’ instead of IDPs perform comparatively better. In general, the official said, the urban poor PTCs “are more organized, and have PTC constitutions and laws”, while “most PTCs for IDP schools do not”.

#### ■ Other education actors

Oxfam GB’s IDP educational niche differs from DOK, SCUK and other IDP education providers in Khartoum. Its initial involvement in managing IDP schools was small and has remained minimal. In 1997-1998, it ran three schools for IDPs. In 1999, they handed two of the schools over to World University Service (now known as Education Action International) and continued to manage one because, as one Oxfam GB official explained, they had a “shortage of funds”. This is a common statement among non-government actors working on IDP education in Khartoum: all have reported that donor funding, particularly from major donor governments, has generally been slight, particularly with reference to the magnitude of educational need.

Indeed, ‘donor fatigue’ was a commonly heard phrase among IDP education officials. However, the general decline in donor support, according to NGO sources, is at least partly connected to a broader push to get the Sudanese government to dramatically enhance both its support and responsibility for IDP education. As has already been explained, this has proven to be an uphill battle. Oxfam GB is one of the groups seeking to broaden the government’s role. Since 1999, Oxfam GB has increasingly focused on “advocacy [for IDP education] rather than provision”, one official explained. This advocacy is also aimed at getting major donors to increase support for IDP education – a second uphill battle. Oxfam has also been involved in helping to develop and train Parent Teacher Committees. A listing of what Oxfam GB also funds illustrates just how

rudimentary IDP education generally is in Khartoum: “help in the rehabilitation of schools” and latrines, providing teaching aids, benches and desks, and some teacher training (Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme, 2001: 8).

The Sudanese Council of Churches (SCC) “provides an umbrella” (Forojalla, 2000: 20) to 14 member churches who are interested in supporting IDP education in Khartoum. SCC “acts as a facilitator and strategic planner” while the 14 churches implement programmes, including education-based programming. SCC’s education objective for Khartoum IDPs is to “increase and sustain the number of displaced children attending primary schools”. Its member churches had 14,710 students in IDP schools in 1996, and 32,578 in 2000. Significantly, each church and the attendant communities are responsible for their own schools. According to the Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme, the best performing schools are ‘Christian Church schools’, which it says are “well organized and perform well academically” (2001: 5). But there appear to be some general differences. While the Catholic DOK schools have a school feeding programme of their own, SCC schools try to “offer displaced children a meal” but have been unable to consistently finance this (Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme, 2001: 9). In addition, there is a “shortage of Christian education teachers”. Like all other IDP education programmes, teachers are purported to be poorly paid and there is a high turnover rate. The Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme jointly note that SCC’s attempts to enhance its role in IDP education in Khartoum have been hamstrung by “low awareness among the displaced community” and, more significantly, “the poor capability of SCC to organize and build local capabilities” to enhance community participation (2001: 9). The primary SCC actor is the Episcopal Church of the Sudan.

There are other education actors in Khartoum, of which information proved difficult to obtain. Forojalla called the World University Service (WUS) a newcomer in IDP education in Khartoum in 2000. He notes that they supported local community-based organizations (CBOs) “that run schools of their own” (2000: 20). Forojalla observed in 2000 that CBOs were ‘a recent development’ that were ‘barely finding their feet’. The tendency for international agencies to support CBOs appears to be growing (Forojalla, 2000: 52). In the case of WUS, it was achieved by “setting up

a special project [SEIDPINS/Support for Education Initiatives of Displaced People of Northern Sudan] for funding the 13 partner organizations involved in running kindergartens, basic schools as well as adult literacy classes” (Forojalla, 2000: 20). It has also provided management training to CBO officials as well as training for teachers (Forojalla, 2000: 20). WUS appears to have identified a particular niche in early childhood education and non-formal literacy programming (Gilkes, 2002: 5).

Two United Nations actors require brief mention. The first is UNICEF, which had developed an ‘emergency education programme’ for IDPs in Khartoum that provided school furniture, equipment and materials in addition to cash to IDP schools. It also supported in-service and ‘intensive crash’ programming for teachers (Forojalla, 2000: 20). The second is the World Food Programme (WFP), which Forojalla notes provided emergency school feeding (for student breakfasts) and food for work programming (for community members who contribute labour to developing IDP schools; Forojalla, 2000: 21).

### *Three persistent challenges*

There is a plethora of problems confronting IDP education in Khartoum. A joint publication authored by the Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme (2001: 5) reviews fourteen major problems facing IDP education in Khartoum:

- a lack of functioning Parents Councils (or Parent Teacher Councils) that could help maintain schools, raise funds, pay volunteer teachers and help supervise school administration;
- a high drop-out rate for boys beginning at the sixth grade level. Girls’ drop-out rate is also high, although it appears to start before sixth grade and then continue through basic school. The reasons that girls and boys drop out are the same: poverty that pushes them to seek income by doing petty jobs and home service;
- ‘considerable confusion’ over which part of the government system is responsible for IDP education. The document lists every government level as lacking defined responsibilities for IDP education;
- a low enrolment rate for school-age IDP children: “at best below 30 per cent”;
- unmotivated teachers, due to insufficient training and payment;
- poorly managed and supervised schools;

- low student retention and attendance;
- “poor sustainability of the [IDP] education effort in terms of funding”;
- “severe poverty and high illiteracy among [the] displaced minimizes the supportive role of the family to education of their children”;
- inadequate supplies, including school textbooks;
- “poor facilities, especially schools of the unplanned areas”;
- overcrowded schools;
- unhealthy school environments, including “lack of latrines, poor environmental health and lack of potable water”; and
- “lack of co-operation among stakeholders”.

One can easily conclude from this overview that the IDP education system is an underfunded, low access, low quality, poorly equipped, confusing muddle. Some of these problems outlined here have been detailed earlier in this chapter. One more requires mention here. It was not entirely clear how the non-government schools that IDP students attend should be categorized. While nearly all IDP school educators, church officials and NGO officials that were interviewed all labelled schools according to their principal supporter, such as ‘Catholic’, ‘Save the Children’ and so on, a veteran international NGO official who has worked on IDP education in Khartoum stated that “you’d be wrong to call”, for example, “schools run by Christian agencies” a Christian, Catholic, Anglican etc., school, “even if some of the Church authorities may use this terminology”. Instead, according to this official, all schools that IDPs attend that are not run by the government are, properly, “community schools supported by a range of actors: diocese, local NGO, international NGO, school fees, the Ministry of Education (at least in terms of supervision and inspection) and other (including UN, although not in Khartoum State)”.

A veteran international observer of schools that IDPs in Khartoum attend, on the other hand, provided a different perspective:

“Not all schools supported by NGOs and/or churches are ‘community schools’ – one of the weaknesses of DOK’s Save the Saveable Programme was the absence of the community. Also, support for primary schools is not necessarily restricted to community schools.”

At the same time, the observer noted that “government schools can be supported by NGOs”. In addition, “there is quite a lot of financial support from the Arabic world for education, and Islamic NGOs can ‘take

over' schools from communities". The affiliations or identities of schools for IDPs appear to be somewhat confusing.

For the remainder of *Chapter 5*, three of the most significant broader problems of IDP education will be highlighted: those involving coordination, teachers and the curriculum.

■ Co-ordination in an atomized landscape

In the management and organization of IDP schools, chaos reigns. "There is a lot of confusion on the management of the basic education [for IDP education] and no clear policies ruling it" (Forojalla, 2000: 53). This is one of the reasons why co-ordination between central government and non-government actors in IDP education in Khartoum is so splintered.

The starting point for understanding the deficient co-ordination is the gap between suggested government responsibilities and frequent government inaction. To begin with, it has been difficult for IDP education actors to understand just what the government has wanted to do. No government policy for IDP education exists. Local government councils, at the level of the Locality and Sub-Locality, are supposed to: supervise and inspect all IDP schools; provide and pay some teachers for IDP schools; allot land for IDP schools to be established; and provide books to IDP students. While they are typically hamstrung by limited resources, it is not always clear whether they are really committed to supporting IDP schools – a not unreasonable response, given the national government's discomfort with (and frequent hostility towards) the masses of IDPs in its capital city. As van Gerpen and Nordstrand observe: "The environment [surrounding IDP education in Khartoum] remains highly sensitive politically and government policy is unclear" (2003: 4).

The non-government community shares a number of views about the dire state of IDP education and the need to improve it. Some advocacy actions appear to have succeeded in bringing IDP education a somewhat higher profile with the Sudanese government and international donors. But many of their approaches directly contradict each other. Secular, international NGOs, notably SCUK and Oxfam GB, have sought to enhance their relations with government actors. Oxfam GB has co-hosted workshops on IDP education with the government, for example. An SCUK document pronounces that "unlike some Christian institutions, whose agendas are

perceived as antagonistic to the process of Islamization, SCUK has maintained a co-operative relationship with the local authorities” (van Gerpen and Nordstrand, 2003: 4).

On the other hand, co-operating with the government any more than is necessary appears to be antithetical to local Christian institutions. Given the heavily Islamic nature of the national curriculum, this might be expected. Yet it is significant that church-based organizations have been able successfully to resist repeated government attempts to take over their schools. As Foroajalla has noted: “A major problem that is still unresolved is the disagreement between the Churches and the State Ministry of Education over the control of schools” (2000: 53). The disagreement has proven enduring, and is an underlying reason for persistently poor co-ordination.

The Sudanese government has also played an indirect yet significant role in ensuring that non-government actors cannot co-ordinate among themselves. One Sudanese non-government official explained that ‘politics’ prevents co-ordination between IDP education actors outside of the government. If it was attempted, it would “signify organizing without government involvement”, the official explained. “Threats from government” could result. As a result, “local NGOs back out of any co-ordination effort”. In fact, it was attempted, and it seemed to have failed for the very reason that this official suggested. Other NGO officials related that in 2001-2002, Oxfam GB and SCUK attempted to “form an NGO alliance” on IDP education in Khartoum State, “because the government is not helping at all” and “we need to co-ordinate our work instead of each NGO doing everything randomly”. However, the officials explained that “it didn’t work out” because local NGOs felt it was “too political”. The idea that non-government entities would meet and discuss issues about IDPs without government involvement was, for local NGOs, potentially dangerous, something that a Khartoum State Ministry of Education and Oxfam GB Khartoum Urban Programme document addressed: “Transparency [of all NGOs] should be enforced to minimize [suspicions] from the side of government, community or the donor” (2001: 13). The Sudanese government, in other words, might be variously indifferent to, mildly involved in or obstructive of IDP education. But enforcing the transparency of non-government entities was another matter entirely. “Meetings by non-government agencies without the government”,



an international agency official stated, “it’s definitely not encouraged, to say the least”. The upshot of the inability of non-government actors to co-ordinate their work, much less simply share information, provided an environment of mostly isolated educational activities and a void of even the most basic of information on IDP education, as has been noted earlier in the chapter.

Another contributor to the co-ordination void does not involve the Sudanese government. Instead, it appears to have arisen, to some degree, from a widespread sense that the civil war in southern Sudan might never end. As a result, the implication of helping to develop entirely different education systems for southern Sudan in different parts of Sudan and the region has never been adequately addressed. Most Southern Sudanese IDPs and IDP education officials had little or no knowledge of education taking place in southern Sudan or beyond. Most IDPs and education officials who were interviewed had never heard of the New Sudan Curriculum, for example, and did not know that the SPLM had established a Secretariat of Education. They knew little about what education curricula were being used in the South. Most also did not know who were the major actors in education in southern Sudan, much less in the Kenyan or Ugandan refugee camps.

Such lack of information was understandable for IDPs, whose communication networks into the south may be limited. An illustration of their limited knowledge arose during a meeting with Southern Sudanese teachers. One teacher said that: “We have heard that the other side has another curriculum, which is totally different [from the Government of Sudan’s curriculum] and reflects Southern culture”. Interviews with non-government agency officials involved in education for Southern Sudanese revealed that co-ordination and information sharing within the same organizations working on both sides of the North-South divide had only recently been initiated. This was the case for such major actors as UNICEF and SCUK. For others, such as the Sudanese Catholic dioceses working on opposite sides of the divide, it reportedly has not yet begun. With peace on the horizon, this state of affairs is finally beginning change.

#### ■ Teacher retention

The central irony involving Southern Sudanese teachers in Khartoum is that while they constitute the largest corps of reasonably well educated

and trained Southern Sudanese teachers anywhere, they are trained to teach a curriculum that many Southerners detest and in a language that schools in the south resist. Those who eventually return to the south will thus be both prepared and unprepared to teach there.

The situation facing IDP teachers in Khartoum is not enviable. This may appear to be an unusual statement, given that so many adult men and women from the south lack regular, viable employment. But most are not well paid, and some are paid only irregularly. At one NGO-supported IDP school that was visited, the teachers had not been paid any ‘incentive’ for months. “I have no money and I’m teaching all the time”, one teacher explained. Interviews with teachers and officials involved in IDP education elicited consistent concerns over teacher morale, attendance and turnover. All of these issues directly, and negatively, impact on educational quality.

Forojalla’s survey of 145 Southern Sudanese teachers in Khartoum illuminates a range of significant assets and challenges. Khartoum was the only site where most of the teachers were women (52 per cent female and 48 per cent male). Teachers were mostly young, with more than half between the ages of 26 and 35. The level of educational background is high. In Forojalla’s sample, 60 per cent had completed secondary school, while 19 per cent had received university degrees. Fifty-eight per cent of all teachers in the survey teachers in Forojalla’s sample had already attained a professional teacher’s certificate, and just under three quarters of all primary school level teachers held a professional teacher’s certificate. At one basic education school for IDPs that was visited during field research in Khartoum, all 20 teachers who were interviewed had already received their university degrees. At another, 5 of 18 teachers had university degrees, three were university students and 11 had completed secondary school. A DOK official asserted that only secondary school leavers can teach at their basic education schools. Nothing close to this level of educational accomplishment exists at more than a handful of schools in the South. The general level of education among teachers is also higher than can be found in refugee camps in either Kenya or Uganda (Forojalla, 2000).

Nonetheless, during interviews with teachers it appeared that many of those who served as teachers did so only because it was the only job available to them. The ‘brain drain’ of qualified teachers is a significant problem in IDP education, as many of the most qualified and best trained teachers search for better employment early in their teaching tenures. “Every

year, we lose teachers during the Christmas holiday”, a Diocese of Khartoum education official explained. “They go to Egypt, seeking migration to Canada, Australia, and America”. It is a pattern that plagues southern Sudan as well: many teachers who receive training search for opportunities outside of the education sector. This search may lead educated Southern Sudanese to enter nearby countries, claim refugee asylum and seek resettlement. As in other Southern Sudanese contexts, teacher training is often used as a ticket out of the teaching profession.

■ Education as resistance: the curriculum issue

Amidst the welter of poignant and pressing educational problems outlined in this chapter, the predominant theme arising in interviews with IDPs and international officials involved in IDP education was another (albeit related) concern: the government’s near-overwhelming presence in each and every school in Khartoum arising from the curriculum and language of instruction that IDP schools must use.

Arabization and, most especially, Islamization, are ever-present realities for schoolchildren and their teachers and administrators, in Khartoum and all other government-held areas. For Sudan’s government, the issue is straightforward: there is one language of instruction (Arabic) and one national curriculum, which is Islamic in both emphasis and content. This language and curriculum must be used in all schools across the country. This is the law. “Some time ago”, an NGO official in Khartoum recalled, “some international agencies tried to advocate for curriculum change” for IDP students. However, “the government didn’t respond because the curriculum is an issue not to be discussed. They only told us that the government is responsible for the curriculum, and it will review the curriculum if there was ever any need”.

Despite this government stance, the sense that Khartoum’s IDPs, so often described as belittled and intimidated, are fairly passive victims of government controls must be reconsidered. A silenced population is not necessarily cowed – it may simply be choosing where to stand its ground. In Khartoum, an IDP’s open resistance to the state is about as unproductive as battling a bulldozer. On the other hand, education in Khartoum is a battleground. As one IDP school administrator commented: “In Khartoum, people don’t fight with guns. People fight with minds”. “Teaching is another way of fighting”, the administrator added. At another school, a Southern

Sudanese teacher stated that “the most important thing is that the whole curriculum is Islamized”.

Beneath the strict official policies are ad hoc exceptions. Perhaps not surprisingly (given the government’s strong religious accent), it is Christian NGOs that have devised alternative educational approaches, and it is here – regarding the curriculum and related educational practices – where the political and religious resistance of IDPs from southern Sudan in Khartoum emerges and takes form.

That the government curriculum affects the quality of education for Southern Sudanese IDP students is evident. During interviews, Southern Sudanese educators and international agency officials consistently characterised the government’s curriculum as alien and intrusive. “The teachers try to simplify the curriculum and the students are confused by it”, an NGO official explained. In general, the government’s curriculum contains, as an SCUUK document explained, little relevant content, since it is aimed at Muslim, Arabic-speaking students. Nearly all Southern teachers and students are neither. In addition, educators consistently stressed that the level of Arabic contained in the curriculum was unusually challenging for most of their students, for whom Arabic was a second language. In addition, there was a difference between the ‘classical’ Arabic used in school and the Arabic used for communication in the streets. But in addition to the language issue, there were problems of relevance and religion, issues that a Southern Sudanese headmaster and three of his teachers at one IDP school illustrated in their description of the challenges that the government’s curriculum presented. To begin with, the curriculum “is according to the northern environment. For example, we have to teach about Egyptian beans – do we know them?”. This is an illuminating comment, given that similar questions could have been raised by Southern Sudanese refugee educators in Kenya and Uganda regarding foreign curricula but generally were not. But then, the Kenyan and Ugandan governments were not direct adversaries of the Southern Sudanese. The Government of Sudan was.

Accordingly, Southern Sudanese educators in Khartoum were particularly troubled by the fact that, in the words of one headmaster, “everything in the curriculum is built on the Koran, even in mathematics”. “It’s based on government objectives, and is not relevant to Southerners”. Many Southern educators explained that there was no way to teach the

curriculum without making direct reference to Islam. Nearly all Southern teachers and students are not Muslim, which challenges their ability to understand religious references. To teach the government-sanctioned curriculum, Southern teachers must first gather some understanding of Islam and classical Arabic, and then relay it to their students. Feeling forced to partake in and contribute to the process of Islamization and Arabization is keenly felt because these are the very forces against which Southern resistance is organized. Teaching in government-held areas thus becomes a deeply troubling experience for many Southern Sudanese, negatively impacting on teacher morale and inspiring many teachers to leave the profession as soon as another opportunity arises. School, quite simply, is no escape for the displaced, but instead constitutes the central place where the issues of war, resistance and a sense of subjugation remain at or near the emotional surface of Southern Sudanese communities.<sup>36</sup>

To understand the daily challenges that Southern IDP students, teachers, administrators and agency officials collectively face, it is useful to first examine the government's perspective. When I interviewed a high-ranking government education official, he objected to the assertion that the national curriculum "is trying to convert Southern students, that we are trying to Islamicize and Arabize them". This cannot be true, the official insisted, because:

"In the Islamic religion, converting someone by force is not going to be accepted. Such a person wouldn't be accepted by God as a Muslim. God will not reward you. So this cannot happen because such an act would not benefit anyone."

At the same time, the official said that "Yes, I admit that the curriculum we're using is an Islamic curriculum. It gives an Islamic point of view, even in mathematics, physics, and geography".

The official then demonstrated how the Koran can be used as a pedagogical resource. "For example, in geography", the official related,

36. This was not necessarily the view of IDPs from western Sudan, who are predominantly Muslim. As Loveless notes: "Whilst Southerners feel threatened by the Islamic content of the curriculum, some Westerners feel that their Islamic tradition is receiving *insufficient* attention" (1999: 39).

“when the teacher is talking about mountains, there are some verses in the Koran describing mountains in a very beautiful way. It describes the mountains under the ground and the mountain over the ground.”

Another example related to the formation of clouds:

“With clouds, and how heat evaporates and forms clouds, or where there is thunder, there is a beautiful description of these facts in the Koran. So the author [of the textbook] will quote the verses in the Koran to give more explanation about those facts.”

The official then turned to a word problem to illustrate the utility of the Koran to the teaching of mathematics:

“There are five prayers in the day [for Muslims]. Ahmad has already prayed twice. How many more times does he have to pray that day? In this way, the student learns that five minus two equals three. And instead of saying something in the abstract, we have a practical example.”

The official concluded by stating that “the Koranic verses are associated with practices from the daily lives [of students] and what they practise in the community”. This reliance on the Koran in the curriculum made particular sense because “most Sudanese are Muslims”.

Most Southern Sudanese, of course, are not Muslims. From a Southern perspective, the following translated excerpt from the national curriculum will be examined. It is from the mathematics textbook for the sixth primary grade:

**Patrimony (wealth inheritance)**

God said in Sura Alnisa

In the name of Allah the Merciful and Compassionate.

{Men have their share of the wealth left by the father/mother and relatives, women have their share of the wealth left by father/mother and relatives; whether it is a small or large share awarded.}

Believe in Allah the Great.

Allah has given Man his share from the wealth of the dead relative and the share inherited is known as patrimony. And in the verses of the Holy Koran, we will receive the correct way for distributing patrimony to people, whose relatives are dead as in Surat Alnisa.

Here is an example for the distribution of shares as indicated in the patrimony.

Example:

A man died and left his wife, two (2) boys and one (1) girl behind. He also left behind an amount of 64,000 [Sudanese] dinars. How will you divide this patrimony (the wife has an eighth, the two boys have twice the size of the girl's share)?

[In the subsequent exercise, the following mathematical formulas were provided. The widowed wife received one eighth of the 64,000 dinars (8,000 dinars). The remainder (56,000 dinars) is then divided among the children, with each boy receiving a two fifths share (22,400 dinars) and the daughter receiving a one fifth share (11,200 dinars).]

*Source:* Al Jack, A.M.; Abdalkarim, A. 1991. *Basic education for primary six* (pp. 46-48, translated excerpt). Khartoum: Cooperation of Education for Printing and Distribution, Ministry of Education and Guidance.

This excerpt from a Sudanese Government-sanctioned textbook illustrates the heavy Islamic influence, in both its religious as well as cultural dimensions, in the government's curriculum.

Resisting such Islamic influences in textbooks is something that some Southern Sudanese IDP educators have addressed. In a process that has arisen in a decentralized fashion, and is tacitly allowed by the government, IDP schools that are run by Christian organizations regularly re-write passages in textbooks. "There are two systems of education" in Khartoum, a Diocese of Khartoum clergyman explained. "The government schools have Koranic verses, even in mathematics". At the same time,

"when the curriculum is out, our teachers [at each school] go through the curriculum themselves. For example, in some subjects there are Koranic statements. We'll try to reflect these statements in a Christian way, replacing Koranic excerpts with excerpts from the Bible. If

there's a reference to Mohammad, such as 'Mohammad did this and this', we'll replace it with 'Jesus did this and this'."

The issue of religious resistance is manifest within this curriculum revision, or adjustment, process. "Our main goal", the clergyman explained, "is to prevent our children from being diverted from the Christian to the Muslim faith". He added that "the government is trying to make [Southern Sudanese students] become Muslims. So the curriculum is a weapon to fight changes."

The fact that DOK officials allow each school to adjust the curriculum themselves is significant for at least two reasons. First, through this process, participation in religious and political resistance is expanded to include school-level educators. Second, this decentralized approach to curriculum revision is probably the only reasonable alternative available, since a DOK-revised national curriculum would no doubt invite direct confrontation with the government. A look at how one school approached the revision process, however, revealed how a practical balance is struck between resistance against religious and cultural influences (by strengthening the students' identification with Christianity) and ensuring that the students' chances for educational success *within the Sudanese government education system* is preserved. One headmaster working at a Catholic IDP school supplied additional information about how he and his teachers revise the curriculum. "We change the understanding of the curriculum according to the way we like. If it's too difficult to change, we leave the Koranic verse as it is". At the same time, revisions only took place for textbooks in the first four years of primary school. "For the upper classes [that is, primary grades 5-8], we don't change the curriculum", he explained. By grade 5, the headmaster continued, "the children are already matured. They know the situation and can learn the national curriculum without having their faith change, too".

Why, if the national curriculum is supposed to be taught everywhere, are these sorts of curriculum revisions, or adjustments, allowed? While the answer is not entirely clear, it appears the government has allowed Christian schools to operate somewhat beneath their radar. A veteran UN official explained that even though the government had mandated that Arabic must be the language of instruction for all primary schools in 1990, and that the Islamic curriculum "was forced" on schools in all government-held areas, Christian schools remained the exception. "They teach in English



and Arabic up to now”, the official explained in late 2003. The government has even created both English language exams and something called ‘Special Arabic’, a simplified version of Arabic that is reportedly easier than ‘National Arabic’. This exception, the official explained, has applied to Christian private schools “for the well-to-do”. Similarly, a high-level official in the national education ministry explained that allowances also exist for IDP schools. The application of such allowances, the official explained, are inconsistent. “Sometimes IDP schools have loose regulations”, the government official explained, “especially regarding national examinations. Sometimes they make the exams easier by tailoring the exams for IDPs, especially religious studies or Arabic”.

There appears to be no pattern for accepting curriculum revisions by Christian schools and secular IDP schools, as the ministry official suggests. At a private Anglican school for Southern IDPs in Khartoum, the headmaster explained that they had translated the entire curriculum into English, except for an Arabic language course. When informed of this, a high level education official at DOK, who had never heard of such a precedent for a school for IDPs, remarked: “I don’t know how they can do that”. The Anglican headmaster from southern Sudan further explained that while, in Khartoum, “most Catholic schools operate in Arabic” and some Anglican schools teach in English, “in Juba it is just the opposite: Catholic schools teach in English while Anglican schools teach in Arabic”. Meanwhile, much less variation appears to exist in IDP schools supported by secular NGOs. There, fewer curriculum revisions are allowed, apparently because the schools are not considered Christian. As the headmaster for one SCUK-supported school explained, “You cannot ignore the Koranic passages and teach the lesson, as the lesson is based on the passage in the Koran”. As a result, the headmaster continued:

“Teaching this curriculum is trying to colonize the minds of students. A small Southern Sudanese student can be confused and inculcated by the curriculum. The government wants to control the country and make it all a Muslim system. They want us all to be Muslim, but they haven’t succeeded up to now.”

Such differences mainly apply to primary education. Most of those IDP students who ultimately attend secondary school will go to those run by the government, where the Islamic influence is strong.

In a curious way, the regular battles that Southerners have waged with the government's curriculum have had their benefits. After years if not decades of exile in Khartoum, the curriculum struggles appear to have created daily opportunities to emphasize Southern identification and political and cultural resistance against the government of the north.

## Lessons learnt

- Government intimidation and control, together with limited advocacy from outside actors, can create severe negative impacts on the delivery of educational services to war-affected communities. Among them is the inability of actors involved in education to co-ordinate their activities effectively and the undervaluing of the needs and rights of the internally displaced. The latter negative impact is illustrated by the exiting of most of the United Nations' presence from areas in Khartoum where most IDPs reside.
- The Government of Sudan's role in education for IDPs has been uneven. While it has been largely negative, its comparatively positive early contributions in the 1980s appear to have been overlooked or forgotten.
- Resistance to state authority can be expressed through educational activities such as minimal curriculum alterations, and may yield some positive potential results regarding identity formation. This said, the heavy religious orientation of the Government of Sudan's national curriculum remains a persistently divisive and powerful influence in Southern Sudanese educational experiences in government-held areas.
- It may be unusually difficult to address language of instruction and curriculum concerns for the internally displaced adequately. This would include the inability to co-ordinate and plan education activities between population members living in nearby regions.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion: an educational disaster

What becomes of a child's right to education? Over the last 21 years, the overwhelming majority of Southern Sudanese children have had no chance to access any education, and fewer still to any education that might be considered of reasonable quality.

Instead, children have mostly been under attack. Government soldiers have rolled bombs out of Antonov planes onto Southern Sudanese schools below. At least 800,000 Southern Sudanese have had their schools and homes bulldozed by government workers, sometimes more than once, in Khartoum. Thousands of children have served as soldiers in forces on both sides of the conflict, but more so in the armies of the south, the SPLA in particular. Militias supported by the Government of Sudan have carted children off to become slaves in the north. The forced and unforced recruitment of teachers into the military, together with policies by international agencies not to pay teachers, have stifled isolated attempts to develop quality education in southern Sudan. Mostly minimal co-ordination has forced the relatively few Southern Sudanese children attending school to learn from one of a myriad of educational curricula. Support from major international donors for Southern Sudanese education has proven to be, at best, insubstantial, often unco-ordinated, and, until recently, further limited by internal restrictions. If all children do have a right to education, then it would be difficult for Southern Sudanese to have much appreciation for what the practice of that right could possibly mean.

And yet, if most Southern Sudanese children have not received sufficient support (and too often none at all) to allow them access to education (particularly education of any reasonable quality), the valuing of education remains, and not just for Southerners. "All over Sudan", Peters has observed, "people are obsessed with getting an education for themselves and for their children. People everywhere express a burning wish to learn, to broaden their horizons, and to obtain the skills that will help them improve their lives" (1996: 37). The sacrifices that Southern

Sudanese have routinely made to provide or attain education, often under conditions of considerable deprivation and duress, are so remarkable that they are difficult to adequately express here. In Upper Nile, amazed international agency officials recalled the story of young men carrying boxes of school supplies on their heads during the height of the rainy season for days. The youth crossed through water up to their chests and occasionally rested on islands of higher ground. Once they arrived home, their community developed makeshift schools and started teaching children immediately. Some of the other stories of Southern Sudanese starting schools under conditions of extreme duress in northern Bahr el Ghazal, northern Uganda, Khartoum and elsewhere, have been recorded here. It is also well worth noting just how difficult it has been for the multitudes of Southern Sudanese, the Secretariat of Education, and agencies who have supported their work – from UNICEF, UNHCR, CARE and Save the Children UK to a diversity of religious-based organizations such as JRS, LWF and the Catholic Dioceses of Torit and Khartoum, and Sudanese NGOs like the Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development Organization – to develop and support education ‘islands’ in areas of deprivation and instability. None of this has been easy, and much of it has been heroic.

In this chapter, while such mighty and truly significant struggles to educate Southern Sudanese will be noted, the harrowing overall reality of education for Southern Sudanese is the principal finding of this case study. Accordingly, the dimensions of this profound educational tragedy, and how it might be better addressed, will properly dominate the discussion. In addition, this case study aims to provide lessons that can be drawn from southern Sudan’s misfortune that can be positively applied in the future, both for Southern Sudanese and elsewhere.

### *A relentless educational catastrophe*

It is hardly an overstatement to say that Southern Sudanese are one of the most grossly undereducated populations in the world. This may be expected in a region, and a country, so consistently devastated by war and instability for all but a decade of the modern era. Yet a closer look at some of the facts tell a different story: of international agencies, frequently hampered by institutional restrictions and policies, unable or perhaps hesitant to provide even the most minimal of educational offerings either to relatively stable areas of southern Sudan or the location having the highest concentration of internally displaced persons in the world:

Khartoum. Indeed, the case of southern Sudan reveals the magnitude of the international humanitarian regime's inability to adequately address fundamental educational needs in times of war.

To be sure, this statement must be put into proper context, as it is an undeniable fact that some war zones are far too unstable to even countenance much educational support. Furthermore, the failure to provide sufficient education to all war-affected children is not for lack of effort and dedication by those who support and carry out education in emergency situations. Indeed, some of these efforts are remarkably effective. At the same time, it is also the case that co-ordinating Southern Sudanese education efforts were (until recently) consistently deficient and advocacy for Southern Sudanese education proved to be woefully insufficient. Moreover, Southern Sudanese children and youth in western Equatoria, Sudan's capital city and still other areas, were, for many of the latter war years, viable candidates for far more support than they ever received.

But it was not to be. Government restrictions and intimidation, donor fatigue, disastrous humanitarian situations and limited access, instability, poor infrastructure – a multitude of reasons could be underscored to explain just why education for most Southern Sudanese remained so undersupported. Nonetheless, despite all of these very significant reasons, the will to address the right of Southern Sudanese children and youth to education remained inconsistent and, on the whole, conspicuously inadequate.

In addition, the warring parties – most prominently the government of Sudan and its principal adversary in the current civil war, the SPLA – have by turns undervalued, limited or simply prevented access to education. While the lion's share of responsibility for this state of affairs continues to rest at the feet of the government of Sudan, given the sheer numbers of Southern Sudanese who have existed within the areas they have controlled and the areas they have destabilized, it must be said that reports of extreme human rights abuses carried out (or allowed, or tacitly tolerated) by the Sudanese government have taken place in the context of a vicious civil war, and against Southern Sudanese rebel groups whose leaders have been seeking to establish a separate political entity. In addition, such reports have, at times, overshadowed significant abuses carried out by Southern Sudanese militaries, including the most prominent actor: the SPLA.

Support for war-affected Southern Sudanese was complicated by the fact that one actor in the civil war, the Government of Sudan, maintained a powerful hold over a significant portion of humanitarian action. At various times, the SPLA and other Southern military outfits limited humanitarian action as well. Among the rights that were severely impeded by both sides was the right to education. The dominant player in this regard was the Government of Sudan, which employed its international recognition as the seat of the Sudanese government to great effect. It was an advantage that the SPLA could not match. While it is not entirely clear how much international agencies could have limited the degree of their necessary acquiescence in the Sudanese government's dictates, it should also be noted that the OLS' creation of dual offices, in Khartoum and in Kenya, to address the punishing humanitarian emergency from both sides of the war divide was an important achievement which often helped minimize what was clearly a perplexing situation. This flexibility was something that many donor agencies did not achieve. At the same time, the virtual evacuation of UN agencies, and some of their donor support, from areas where IDPs resided in Khartoum, remains a noteworthy and unfortunate event.

Peace for southern Sudan, despite its immense significance, cannot soon replace the educational disaster that many decades of war and an entire century of extensive neglect have created. A poorly educated Southern Sudanese populace has surely demonstrated astonishing resilience. But that resilience cannot replace the simple fact that Southern Sudanese still have, at this point in their history, exceedingly limited education and training capacity.

This situation comes at a time when many tens of millions of dollars of aid are earmarked for Southern Sudanese education if and when the era of peace finally arrives. But who is prepared to absorb and efficiently apply such investments? Experienced and well outfitted international agencies? Without question. The Government of Sudan, for those Southern Sudanese who remain in areas controlled by the north, and indigenous agencies, including the Diocese of Torit? Probably to some degree. The emerging Southern Sudanese education system? Only partially at the outset, given its limited capacity at the dawn of post-war southern Sudan in the face of enormous challenges. Hopefully that will soon change, although it appears likely that the legacy of dependence, and the impassioned debates

that still encircle it, may cast a shadow over policies, resource allocations and programme implementations that will address Southern Sudanese education during the early post-war years.

A growing shadow darkens the prospects of post-war reconstruction in southern Sudan. The plight of Darfur and its endangered people has taken place while steps towards peace in southern Sudan were being taken. The similarities between the two conflicts are chilling. Again, the Government of Sudan has been accused by a wide range of observers of staging a massive onslaught against some of its citizens, and what many consider a genocide. Again, government figures are distancing themselves from growing accusations and evidence that they have actively supported local militias who have carried out the lion's share of appalling atrocities and human rights violations. Again, the government has met such accusations and evidence with much more indignation and denials than positive action. And again, the international community has largely proved able to do little more than provide a humanitarian band-aid to a political and military manoeuvre directed at, apparently, the permanent displacement and suspected elimination of truly unfortunate civilians.

With this in mind, and with dramatic changes in store for Southern Sudanese, there is much to learn from the past 21 years of education, or lack of education, that has been available to Southern Sudanese. Most of this period encompasses deficiencies, although, as has here been described, sparkling exceptions have surfaced as well. What follows are conclusions drawn from research in this book, which concerns itself with education for Southern Sudanese since 1983.

#### *The co-ordination failure*

Among the most staggering failures in the case of education for Southern Sudanese since 1983 has been the widespread and alarming deficiency in the co-ordination of education policies and practices. Across more than two decades of civil war, there has been poor co-ordination of education activities in just about every way imaginable. There has been virtually no co-ordination of education concerns for Southern Sudanese between refugee agencies in neighbouring countries, between refugee agencies and those working within southern Sudan, among those working within southern Sudan (for the most part and until recently), within the same agencies working with the same Southern Sudanese population in

northern and southern Sudan, between agencies working with IDPs in Khartoum and other areas controlled by the Government of Sudan – and, of course, between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM’s Secretariat of Education. On issues as basic as teacher payments and the curriculum, co-ordination has, for nearly all of the past 21 years, ranged between flawed and nonexistent. Small wonder, then, that atomized ‘islands of education’ have surfaced.

To be sure, it has certainly been the case that, as the war dragged on for years and then well beyond a decade, it did not really seem that peace would ever arise. To some degree, then, the lack of co-ordination is understandable. But in the broader context it is inexcusable. Many of the reasons underlying the scarcity of co-ordinated educational efforts emerged more from institutional tendencies than the plight of Sudanese. The case of UNHCR’s educational activities in both Kenya and Uganda is an instructive example of this. Since its arrival on the Southern Sudanese education scene in these two countries in the early 1990s, agency operations have focused on developing quality education – but in virtual isolation. UNHCR staff in Kenya and Uganda were unable to visit, and thus gain first-hand knowledge about, southern Sudan. UNHCR in Sudan, meanwhile, was unable to visit the south from its Khartoum perch and did not, according to accounts in East Africa, facilitate visits to the south by its colleagues based in neighbouring countries. Regarding education, neither UNHCR in Uganda nor Kenya made much effort (UNHCR in Uganda reported that they had made no effort at all) to co-ordinate their work with their OLS counterparts working on education with the very same population inside southern Sudan. Political and curriculum concerns involving the SPLM and refugees in Uganda, in addition, have not been addressed. Nor was the issue of how the impressive corps of teachers and other educated refugees, those in Uganda in particular, will be integrated into education plans for the southern Sudanese region. All of this took place for a decade before UNHCR commenced plans to repatriate refugees to southern Sudan, which was underway by 2003.

The UNHCR example of a powerful international institution essentially working with components of southern Sudan’s population, with little active recognition of their connection to the wider community of Southern Sudanese, also applies, to some degree, to a great many other international agencies. Officials with Save the Children UK and UNICEF, to name two examples, explained that relations between agency offices



working with Southern Sudanese in Khartoum and southern Sudan had had little communication for years. This institutional tendency did not appear to be unusual. It has begun to change.

*The paucity of donor resolve*

Notwithstanding a handful of promising recent breakthroughs, no greater indictment of donor policies and resolve may exist regarding education for the war-affected than the case of Southern Sudanese. The case of education for Southern Sudanese exposes an alarming lack of connection between stated commitments to the Education for All declaration and sufficient support for education in times of war. Examples of unfortunate donor actions and inactions, some of which have been covered here, are voluminous. The results of the underfunding of education for Southern Sudanese has created negative results. As Duffield *et al.* suggest, leaving populations undereducated can help perpetuate conflict and undermine the impact of relief aid:

“The fact that an entire generation of southern Sudan has grown up without education jeopardises the rest of the aid operation, not just because of the lack of local counterparts with appropriate skills but also because a large proportion of young southerners are deprived of the informed perspectives that could help them seek a solution to the conflict” (2000: 45).

Most fortunately, there are hopeful signs that donor resistance to funding education during emergencies is, at least in some quarters, beginning to soften.

Two cautionary notes are necessary, however. While SBEP’s commitment of US\$20 million and recent support to education inside southern Sudan from DFID are both promising indications of a change in major donor support for education during emergencies, the rise of such assistance is mostly recent and only begins to address a monumental task. Nor does it account for the inability of donors to co-ordinate their work effectively. The U.S. government case involving the State Department and USAID, where both agencies began developing teacher training capacities for Southern Sudanese without any knowledge of the other’s activities (USAID in southern Sudan, the State Department in Kakuma, Kenya; see Sommers, 2002: 5) strongly suggests that much more could

have been done to co-ordinate education support between those funding refugees and those funding IDPs and others in southern Sudan. Again, the inability to co-ordinate information, activities, planning and support for members of the same population located in different contexts (such as refugees in Kenya and Uganda, IDPs in Khartoum and those inside southern Sudan) stands as a glaring weakness of those who have supported and implemented educational activities for Southern Sudanese between 1983 and 2004.

### *Teachers and quality education*

Quality education is tied to many things, but none more so than teachers who are reasonably well paid. This is a controversial issue, and it should be: Paying teachers costs money, which implementing agencies usually do not have in sufficient amounts. It also sets a precedent that some agencies shirk from, since paying teachers places education agency actors in a role that government education ministries should properly assume. It is additionally thought to endanger the development of community responsibility for, and ‘ownership’ of, schools. Yet the southern Sudan case exposes the significant problems that underlie such concerns, all of which are directly connected to the simple fact that quality education cannot be achieved without good, dedicated teachers.

Widespread stories of unpaid Southern Sudanese teachers who, after receiving training, immediately use their new training certificates to seek paid jobs elsewhere, illustrate the problem. A Sudanese official at the county education level in southern Sudan explained this situation and the involvement of international agencies in this trend in the following way:

“Teaching in southern Sudan has become a waiting place. It’s not a profession. Teachers just teach when they have nothing else to do. But when an opportunity comes, they leave. Actually, the most qualified teachers change their profession. They go and work with NGOs. As soon as they get an opportunity, they shift.”

Not mentioned here is the finding that teachers were prime targets for recruitment into the military during the current civil war. Those teachers who have remained behind in the teaching profession may have had inferior qualifications, low morale and poor motivation, which may have resulted in their attending classes irregularly and investing little energy in their

work when they do show up. None of this should be construed as a particular criticism of the teachers themselves: teaching effectively is hard work, requiring dedication, energy and considerable skill. The brunt of responsibility for quality education, often in the face of extraordinarily difficult circumstances, should not fall on teachers who are poorly supported. A larger question is for governments and other donors, and the implementers of education programmes: Why is funding not provided to adequately pay teachers?

Even if most teachers in southern Sudan are not being paid, there are examples of teachers in other areas who are being compensated fairly well. The Diocese of Torit achieved a reputation for providing high quality education (to a relative few) in large part because they could hire and retain good teachers. The refugee education programmes in both Kenya and Uganda paid teachers regular amounts as well. Enhancing education in the Nuba Mountains called for the recruitment of qualified teachers, which required considerable investment. CEAS in Bor County hired away refugee teachers from Kakuma to populate its education programme with competitive salary and benefits packages.

In more than a decade spent researching and writing about education during emergencies and reconstruction, no issue surfaces more regularly during field research than the issue of teacher salaries or – in the favoured international agency terminology – ‘incentives’. While the issue is usually first raised by teachers themselves, it regularly surfaces during conversations with education officials, since the consequences of low or nonexistent teacher payments reverberate across many other pressing education concerns. A central finding of this research is that not paying teachers has a direct and negative impact on educational quality.

### *Education and war's aggressors*

Teachers and their students have been targets of military groups during Southern Sudan's civil war in a variety of ways. They have been recruited, and sometimes forced, to enter armies. They have been abducted. They have been forced to serve military groups in various ways and for different amounts of time. School facilities have been attacked, razed, bombed and bulldozed. In addition, military officers have played active and even leadership roles in the management of education, as the cases of refugee education in Ethiopia and Kenya illustrate.

None of these actions suggest an appreciation of or respect for the rights of children, including, of course, their right to education. It might be argued that SPLA officers who are actively involved in the management of refugee education might constitute an exception. They do not. The impact of military officials managing education for children has led to serious human rights offences, such as the documented case of the SPLA education managers also training children in Ethiopian refugee camps. Military men remain in position of authority in refugee education. And that role is, in terms of the rights of children, potentially, and sometimes demonstrably, dangerous.

In Khartoum, extensive and longstanding government intimidation and dominance, in both direct and indirect forms, has had an invasive effect on learning for IDP students. For teachers and school administrators as well as students, the determined efforts required to both educate and learn in an environment of harshness were striking, including their efforts to simultaneously resist central elements of a curriculum considered a cause of civil war while having to use it.

#### *Girls, youth and access to education*

Despite generally strong and persistent efforts by international and Southern Sudanese educators, it has not been easy for Southern Sudanese girls and female youth to gain access to school and then stay there. Nor has it been easy to attract and retain many women to the teaching profession. These are consistent, and troubling, findings across all contexts studied here. The focus on separate primary schooling, and even pre-schooling, for girls within parts of southern Sudan is an unusual and perhaps extreme response to this problem. Is it necessary to isolate girls from boys so early in their educational development? Despite prospects for enhancing girls' enrolment, the implications of achieving this outcome through separation may yield unfortunate results as well. Furthermore, the Akon case suggests that the most important time to separate girls from boys in school is after they reach puberty, not before. The impact of this approach does not yet seem to have been extensively examined.

The Accelerated Learning Programme is a promising, if limited, response to the truly vast educational needs of out-of-school, Southern Sudanese youth. The need for them to gain access to appropriate vocational training is similarly huge.

*Capacity – and dependence*

Extensive commentary has been invested in the challenges of dependence borne of relief aid. A weakness in much of this discussion is derived from its narrowness. Shifting from reliance to self-reliance – and, indeed, towards independence – cannot easily be accomplished if the dependant population is profoundly undereducated. An additional result is that Southern Sudanese in many quarters are disempowered and so naturally express feelings of being overlooked and unrecognized by agency officials that have come to serve them.

*Reflecting on the ‘islands’ approach*

The education ‘islands’ approach is a product of history (southern Sudan has never known anything else), geography and profound underfunding. The island-like examples illustrated in this case study underscore how determined efforts to provide a degree of education to at least some Southern Sudanese can, to some degree, succeed. Additionally, in nearly all cases, the educationalists at the forefront of these efforts – Sudanese and foreigners alike – were faced with considerable constraints. Many were engendered by the instability, violence and sheer unpredictability caused by the long civil war. This factor affected everyone everywhere: inside southern Sudan, in Khartoum and other parts of the North and in the refugee camps. Others were logistical: getting to places like Akon, in northern Bahr el Ghazal, is always difficult and expensive. And in nearly all cases, limited funding hampered educational efforts.

In addition, the cases of Akon Payam and Narus illustrate how efforts to enhance educational quality can diverge. In Akon, Save the Children UK attempted to enhance quality and access (particularly for girls) at the same time. The results were mixed, but that was partly due to the fact that they were the only outside support for schooling in the area. Given the pioneering aspect of their work and the limited funds they had on hand, their efforts were bound to be challenging. At the same time, it was a start, and its initiation of the ALP stands as a significant innovation for southern Sudan. In Narus, DOT achieved educational quality in large part because access was severely limited and investments, given the context, were unusually high. They also paid teachers on a very competitive scale.

In the end, both models yielded some success, but not of the same kind. The Akon case appeared better able to advance educational access, and enhance educational quality relative to other schools in the area. It also appeared to be making strides in organizing and developing local capacities to manage schools. The Narus case, on the other hand, could not really be considered community-based (a statement that similarly applies to Diocese of Khartoum schools). The Diocese of Torit's educational approach was much more inward-looking, focusing on developing high educational standards for finite numbers of students and developing a lower tier of 'bush schools' of decidedly lesser quality in nearby areas. The level of educational quality in the 'modern schools' was unquestionably and significantly higher than in any school in Akon (or, probably, just about anywhere else in southern Sudan), but only for the small numbers able to study there.

#### *Towards an education system in southern Sudan*

The SPLM's Secretariat of Education is a promising institution whose reach, capacity and influence remains limited. This finding must be considered in context. Southern Sudan has lacked a viable education system across the entire length of this war. Indeed, evidence of an operating education system of any reach has proven, at best, sporadic throughout its history. This makes the SOE's role for southern Sudan essential, including: enhancing the capacity of its staff working in communities; expanding its curriculum development work across the primary, ALP, vocational and secondary levels (and beyond); and reaching out in an inclusive way to those who have had no contact with them in the past and may be wary of accepting their supervision. This last point is important, as the case of Southern Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda, many of whom have been distant from and perhaps suspicious of the SPLA, suggests. Involving such groups, as well as the mammoth IDP population in Khartoum and similarly detached populations elsewhere, is critical, because these populations contain significant levels of educated and trained personnel, particularly in the field of education, that post-war Sudan will require.

#### *A look ahead: lessons and recommendations*

It is a painful and inescapable reality that the educational situation for many Southern Sudanese has only marginally improved since the pre-independence era. Many of the most significant problems echo back to the

beginning of formal education in southern Sudan a century ago. What follows are some lessons arising from this case study, and recommendations for advancing education for Southern Sudanese as the new post-war era unfolds:

- The need to co-ordinate educational action during humanitarian emergencies increases over the life of a conflict (Sommers, 2004). Co-ordinated action necessarily entails the inclusion of primary actors in the relevant region. It does not ultimately matter whether the affected population is refugee, internally displaced or has never left a war-affected home area. What matters is the population's shared place of origin; in this case, southern Sudan. Central educational matters, such as the appropriate curriculum and teacher compensation, should be addressed, beginning early in a humanitarian emergency and then monitored over time. Leadership for such activities would naturally fall to, where appropriate and possible: the main education authority (or authorities); UN agencies (UNICEF and UNHCR in particular; UNESCO if relevant); the primary local and international NGOs; and donor agencies;
- The largest corps of well-educated Southern Sudanese is in Uganda and Khartoum. The education and other sectors urgently require such educated personnel in post-war southern Sudan. To do this, however, significant challenges must be given high priority. Many of the refugees in Uganda expressed both distance and distrust with regard to the SPLA/SPLM. The SOE, refugee leaders, UNHCR, UNICEF, JRS and other relevant actors should energetically address differences. For IDPs based in the north, a central educational challenge is to learn a new language of instruction and curriculum. Efforts in support of this need are underway and should be awarded greater prominence;
- All teachers engaged in education during and following emergencies (in Sudan and elsewhere) should be compensated for their work. Regulated, broadly co-ordinated policies should be negotiated and carried out whenever possible (Sommers, 2004: 74-77; Nicolai, 2003: 69-70; Sinclair, 2002: 54-55);
- UNHCR should address the serious shortcomings of its inability and resistance to co-ordinate educational action on regional terms. Educational action needs to be co-ordinated among UNHCR country

offices that support refugees from the same country of origin (or, in the case of southern Sudan, the same region of the country) as well as with major education actors operating within the refugees' country of origin;

- The assertion that “peace must come before investing in education”, as stated by a DFID official (DFID, 2002: 5), is unsupported by the findings in this book. War makes educational investments both more challenging and more significant. Failing to adequately support education during wars does not only deny the right of many school-age children and youth to education. Waiting to deliver significant education funds to Southern Sudanese until peace arrived – some 21 years – contributed to the mounting educational disaster and severely limited the use of education as a protection and peacebuilding tool. It will also make the process of post-war reconstruction much more difficult because it will take place in the context of generally extremely low levels of educational achievement among Southern Sudanese. Support for investing in education during conflict has been expressed by members of both the Government of Sudan and the SPLA/M (DFID, 2002: 5).

Accordingly, revisions in the policies and approach of many major donors towards supporting education during emergencies and early reconstruction are required. Priority should be equitably given to war-affected children regardless of their location. USAID's Sudan Basic Education Program, which provides an example of how donors can support education on the non-government side of a civil conflict, did not begin until the war had been going on for well over a decade. USAID and other bilateral and multilateral donors should adopt such policies and approaches soon after the onset of conflict.

They should also collectively reconsider the decision to limit support for the development of an education system in southern Sudan. The weak state of the Secretariat of Education is due, in part, to this determination;

- Along similar lines, the case of UN agencies exiting the internally displaced camps and settlements in Khartoum State calls for a re-assessment of UN policy and practice in situations such as Sudan, where agencies face significant government intimidation and control, resulting in structural acquiescence. Such concerns must be balanced



alongside agency mandates, the rights and protection needs of the displaced, and funding support. This troubling situation persists in the Sudan and similar cases are likely to reappear elsewhere. Preparations for future contingencies are thus in order, for UN as well as international NGOs and donor agencies;

- The work of the Jesuit Refugee Service providing education on both sides of the Uganda-Sudan border is a model that should be replicated and supported elsewhere. JRS should enhance its co-ordination with the SOE and others involved in providing education within southern Sudan;
- All educational approaches have shortcomings. Those developed by Save the Children UK in Akon and the Diocese of Torit in Narus appear to be complementary, but only if such approaches are co-ordinated and collaborative. Both approaches, and others as well, require extensive evaluation to ensure that their shortcomings are appropriately addressed;
- The southern Sudan case exposes a lack of priority, focus and co-ordinated action by UNESCO. Its involvement with Southern Sudanese, to date, has been limited at best, UNESCO officials admitted. Just why this chronic state of affairs has persisted proved difficult to establish. It stands as a significant missed opportunity for the agency to contribute to improving a situation of dire and longstanding educational need;
- The representation of girls in school and, even more, women as teachers and education system officials, is alarmingly low. The dire situation vividly depicted by both Obura and Fitzgerald in 2002 is only very slightly less disturbing in 2005 (Obura 2002b, Fitzgerald 2002). The situation must improve, and swiftly. This is an issue that international agencies are signalling and trying to address, and the SOE has also listed as a priority. This is heartening, but much more needs to be done. Girls-only pre-primary and primary schools should be carefully evaluated. The protection needs of girls should be separated from cultural constraints and directly addressed. More women must be recruited, trained and paid to contribute as teachers and education system personnel. These and related efforts should be evaluated and co-ordinated, and support should be expanded;

- Engaging active military officers who are directly involved in managing education systems during periods of war should be strongly resisted. This applies even in situations where their influence appears to be positive and it is particularly significant in situations where children are exploited for war purposes, as in southern Sudan;
- The SPLA's record of respect for and appreciation of education is, on the whole, unacceptable. Encouraging developments involving the SPLM's Secretariat of Education in Nairobi are countered by the story recounted in *Chapter 3* of SPLA troops apprehending students in Akon Payam and forcing them to haul food for soldiers. This was the only example of disrespect for the rights and protection of children directly observed by the author. But the high prevalence of child soldiers in SPLA ranks, and the SPLA's dual involvement in child exploitation and education for children, as illuminated in the story of the Lost Boys, is much more troubling. An immediate reversal of such behaviour is urgently required;
- One compelling lesson that can be derived from the case of IDPs in Khartoum is that government intimidation facilitates its control of displaced populations. In this case, the intent appeared to be a combination of isolating, controlling, and allowing limited and provisional support to IDPs. The limited helpful aspects of the government's involvement in IDP education declined over time; outside support for and involvement in education (as well as other rights of the displaced) was deficient throughout the civil war period; co-ordinated international action to pressure the government on issues such as IDP education proved deeply insubstantial and the bulldozing campaigns (characterized as urban replanning) and other forms of state intimidation wreaked havoc over IDP lives. In addition, the departure of United Nations agencies in the latter civil war years constituted a failure to provide assistance and protection to internally displaced civilians. This case also illuminates the tragic limits of international action in the face of determined governmental resistance.

Beyond stating such elements of a troubling situation, it is strongly recommended, in this new era of peace for the south (but not in Darfur), that the Government of Sudan swiftly work to remove this deplorable legacy of intimidation and actively support the rights of all displaced Sudanese, including those from the south and Darfur;

- It is gratifying that significant outside increases in the support of education for Southern Sudanese are finally on their way. Support is clearly required to address a diversity of needs, including: dramatically enhancing the breadth and capacity of the Secretariat of Education; recruiting qualified Southern Sudanese into the education system; providing adequate and regular compensation for their efforts; enhancing teacher training and certification activities; dramatically expanding the Accelerated Learning Programme and providing other non-formal and vocational education opportunities to youth; improving and expanding the New Sudan curriculum; and opening up investments for quality primary, secondary, vocational, relevant non-formal and even tertiary education. It is obviously a long list of needs, given the extensive wartime past, and such a list is necessarily incomplete.

All of this work is difficult, urgent and necessary, and should be carried out not just in a co-ordinated way, but also with a careful eye on the legacy of dependency and the power relationships they trigger. In terms of capacity and humanitarian action, international agencies have long been in the driver's seat. That will, of course, need to change. If qualified Southern Sudanese from Uganda, Kenya, Khartoum and other endpoints of the diaspora are swiftly recruited and appointed, the much-needed shift in power will gather some momentum.



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