

Mid-Term Review Report for South Sudan EiE Upper Nile

CATHERINE JOHNSTON, ANDREA COSTA AND KABIRA NAMIT

Norad Collected Reviews

10/2022

The report is presented in a series, compiled by Norad to disseminate and share analyses of development cooperation. The views and interpretations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.



South Sudan EiE Upper Nile



Mid-Term Review REPORT

Catherine Johnston, Andrea Costa and Kabira Namit, April 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The MTR team was led by Catherine Johnston and included Andrea Costa and Kabira Namit.

The MTR team wishes to acknowledge, with gratitude, the wonderful support we received from ADRA Norway and the EiE Upper Nile ADRA country office. Special thanks go to Elidon Bardhi, Derek Glass, Øystein Kolstad, Jonathon Telfer and Erik Eriksen from ADRA Norway for their valuable support and contributions throughout all phases of the MTR.

The EiE MTR was made possible thanks to the dedication and diligent work of EiE Upper Nile ADRA country office. We are indebted to the ADRA country office focal points who coordinated and led the field research for the MTR, and generously shared their perspectives and insights on the context in their countries. Special thanks go to: Siana Charity and Yakata Joseph. The MTR is made all the richer by being informed by their deep knowledge and experience.

Most of all, we are grateful to the participating schools and thank the head teachers, teachers, students, parents, community members and education authorities who generously gave their time to share their knowledge and thoughts and complete the learning assessments.

NORAD funded the EiE Upper Nile MTR.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements | 2 |
| Figures and Tables | 5 |
| Executive Summary | 7 |
| 1.1 Summary of main findings | 7 |
| 1.1.1 Relevance | 7 |
| 1.1.2 Coherence | 8 |
| 1.1.3 Efficiency | 8 |
| 1.1.4 Effectiveness | 8 |
| 1.1.5 Impact | 8 |
| 1.1.6 Sustainability | 9 |
| 1.2 Lessons learned | 9 |
| 1.3 Recommendations | 10 |
| 2 Background | 12 |
| 3 Summary of methods and sample | 14 |
| 3.1 Methods | 14 |
| a) Desk review | 14 |
| b) Consultations with ADRA Norway and partners | 14 |
| c) Surveys and assessments | 14 |
| 3.2 Analytical framework | 16 |
| 3.3 Schools visited | 16 |
| 3.4 Final sample | 17 |
| 4 Findings | 17 |
| 4.1 Summary | 17 |
| 4.2 Relevance | 19 |
| 4.3 Coherence | 20 |
| 4.4 Efficiency | 21 |
| 4.5 Effectiveness | 21 |
| 4.5.1 Outcome 1 (access to learning for girls, children with disabilities etc.,) | 22 |
| 4.5.2 Outcome 2 (inclusive and safe learning environments) | 23 |
| 4.5.3 Outcome 3 (teaching) | 30 |
| 4.5.4 Outcome 4 (parent, community and other stakeholder engagement) | 34 |
| 4.5.5 Outcome 5 (civil society influence & policy change) | 37 |
| 4.6 Impact | 38 |

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------|----|
| 4.7 | Sustainability | 44 |
| 4.8 | Cross Cutting Issues..... | 45 |
| 5 | Lessons learned..... | 46 |

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures:

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: OECD DAC Criteria (Source: OECD EvalNet (2020) Better Criteria for Better Evaluation) .. | 16 |
| Figure 1: Teacher responses to the question – during school closures, what activities were you able to support? | 24 |
| Figure 2: Teacher's response to question - has this improved the quality of education children receive? | 25 |
| Figure 3: Teacher's response to question - how has e-learning improved the quality of education children receive?..... | 25 |
| Figure 4: Headteacher's response to - what things were done to help children return to school safely? | 26 |
| Figure 5: Headteachers response - what things were done to encourage girls to return to school? | 27 |
| Figure 6: Headteachers response - what things were done to encourage children with disabilities to return to school? | 27 |
| Figure 7: Headteachers response - what do you do to respond to safety concerns like these when they occur? | 29 |
| Figure 8: Headteachers response - are there protection mechanisms and reporting channels available at your school?..... | 29 |
| Figure 9: Professional development activities that ADRA supported before and during COVID-19 as reported by teachers. | 32 |
| Figure 10: Professional development activities that teachers found most valuable..... | 32 |
| Figure 11: Ways in which the project was promoted disability inclusion according to teachers. | 33 |
| Figure 12: Things that have been done to support teachers social and emotional wellbeing according to teachers..... | 34 |
| Figure 13: Activities that parents have been involved with at the school as reported by parents. | 35 |
| Figure 14: Parent's perspective on the effectiveness of the project's engagement with parents in promoting the return to school..... | 36 |
| Figure 15: Things the school could do to strengthen engagement as reported by parents. | 36 |
| Figure 16: Things the school could do to improve learning outcomes as reported by parents. | 37 |
| Figure 17: Pooled literacy scores by gender for grade 4 students | 39 |
| Figure 18: Comprehension and listening subtests for Grade 4 by gender..... | 40 |
| Figure 19: Pooled numeracy scores by gender for Grade 4 students. | 40 |
| Figure 20: Subtraction and interpreting graphs subtest scores for Grade 4 by gender. | 41 |
| Figure 21: Maths word problem scores for Grade 4 students by gender. | 41 |
| Figure 22: Pooled literacy scores for grade 7 students by gender. | 42 |
| Figure 23: Reading and literacy passage subtests for grade 7 students by gender..... | 42 |
| Figure 24: Pooled numeracy scores for grade 7 students by gender..... | 43 |
| Figure 25: Numeracy scores for grade 7 students by gender..... | 43 |
| Figure 26: Pooled literacy scores for Grade 10 students. | 44 |
| Figure 27: Pooled numeracy scores for grade 10 students. | 44 |

Tables:

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Percentage of students who achieved over 50 percent in the literacy and numeracy learning assessments | 9 |
| Table 2: Summary of sub-test items for literacy and numeracy assessments | 14 |
| Table 3: Sample schools | 17 |
| Table 4: Total number of participants in the MTR..... | 17 |
| Table 5: Outcome achievements against baseline and milestones..... | 21 |
| Table 4: Number of out of school children enrolled in the ALP..... | 22 |
| Table 5: Number of educational personnel trained | 23 |
| Table 6: Number of classrooms constructed or rehabilitated..... | 25 |
| Table 7: Number of referrals to health, safety and/or protection services..... | 28 |
| Table 8: Number of schools where PTAs/SMCs have implemented activities on child protection, inclusive education and peace education..... | 30 |
| Table 9: Percentage of headteachers meeting expected standards for managing supported educational institutions..... | 30 |
| Table 10: Percentage of teachers in supported education institutions who meet expected standards in effective teaching practices..... | 31 |
| Table 11: Number of parents of learners in supported educational institutions participating in family strengthening activities..... | 35 |
| Table 12: Number of civil society fora and networks that are created or strengthened to influence education for marginalised groups..... | 37 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children in the Education in Emergencies (EiE) Upper Nile project area have not escaped the devastating impacts of COVID-19 and school closures on their education, health and wellbeing. The picture that has emerged from global studies on the impacts of COVID-19 and school closures on children's learning is bleak. Learning losses are profound and inequitable, with large disparities being seen both within and across countries. At the same time, the fundamental role of school in protecting children and supporting their health and wellbeing has become abundantly clear as children face increased protection, health and wellbeing risks because of the profound impacts of COVID-19 and school closures.

South Sudan has also faced additional challenges. Alongside navigating the COVID-19 crisis, internal conflicts and disasters have disrupted education services and caused widespread displacement of populations since the project began. Despite the formation of the unity government in February 2020, the context has remained insecure with sporadic intercommunal conflict occasionally disrupting project activities.

This MTR provides ADRA with an independent evaluation and reflection on the progress of the EiE Upper Nile project and provides recommendations on how ADRA can rise to the significant challenges that continued state fragility and COVID-19 has placed on education services in South Sudan.

The requirements of the Terms of Reference (ToR) were to assess the progress and achievements of the EiE programme in Upper Nile, South Sudan. The MTR assessed progress against each of the project's objectives and targets and has identified areas to strengthen.

The MTR paid close attention to different stakeholder perspectives, including the perspective of children, parents, teachers and education authorities. A total of 535 individuals were interviewed as part of the MTR, including 286 males and 249 females. The MTR assessed student learning in literacy and numeracy using adapted ASER assessment instruments from the initial baseline study. A total of 284 students made up of 146 male students and 138 female students were assessed from Grade 4 and Grade 7 with 2 students from Grade 10. Several limitations concerning the assessments were noted, which may have limited student's capacity on the day of the assessment. These have been noted in the limitations section.

The evaluation studied the extent to which ADRA's whole school approach was contributing to improvements in the quality of education services in Upper Nile, where the EiE project was implemented. Due to the harmful impact of COVID-19 and school closures on learning continuity, the evaluation needed to consider how the project had been reorientated to support the physical, social and emotional safety and wellbeing of learners. The evaluation also responded to key evaluation questions that had been framed according to the OECD DAC evaluation criteria, covering project relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

A summary of the main findings and recommendations follows.

1.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

1.1.1. Relevance

The EiE Upper Nile project is highly relevant to supporting the education needs of conflict affected children in the Upper Nile State counties of Nasir and Maiwut in South Sudan, including out of school children and youth (OOSCY), girls and children with disabilities. The project response to COVID-19 was highly relevant to meeting the education needs of children in the target areas, where mentors were recruited and deployed to target communities to support learning continuity through the government initiated 'Education on Air' radio program. Interventions to meet the education needs of OOSCY in the target areas were also highly relevant with the initiation of an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) in 2021.

1.1.2. Coherence

The MTR found that the EiE Upper Nile project is aligned with several national education policies and priorities, including the Education Policy (2017 - 2027), GESP 2017 - 2022, Inclusive Education Policy (2014) and Girls' Education Strategy (2018 - 2022), which all give focus to equitable access to education and creating quality, conducive and safe environments for all children to learn. Most education authorities reported that ADRA has supported the implementation of Education for all, gender equity and inclusive education policies and the implementation of COVID-19 response plans.

1.1.3. Efficiency

Timely delivery of results

The COVID-19 pandemic and continued state fragility caused disruption to the efficient delivery of the EiE Upper Nile project, and this was beyond ADRA's control. Conflict dynamics and COVID-19 travel restrictions caused delays in project implementation, particularly at the start of the project, and had a negative impact on budget efficiency, with the price of goods and services affected by disruptions to supply chains. Delays in government clearance for project activities also impacted implementation plans, with activities at times needing to be rescheduled.

Project management

According to EiE Upper Nile partners, the projects were professionally managed, cost effective, project activities were conducted in a timely manner, and most partners felt they received good support from ADRA. According to project staff, ADRA finance and procurement policies and procedures do not provide the flexibility needed to respond efficiently or effectively in times of emergency. Procurement and finance policies and procedures were seen as more suited to development rather than humanitarian programs.

1.1.4. Effectiveness

Progress is evident in most outcome areas except for Outcome 5 which has been hampered due to COVID-19. Targets have been exceeded under Outcome 3, which is an important outcome linked to quality education support. The most recent ETLE assessment conducted and reported in July 2021, noted improvements in school leadership, teacher quality, parental engagement and SMC management. Several areas were identified for improvement including supporting school leaders to ensure schools run smoothly, teachers turned up each day to teach, school rules are followed, and learning is a focus of the school culture. Regarding teachers, improvements are needed in lesson planning, providing feedback to students on progress and promoting independent learning among the students. Less than 50 percent of schools encourage participation of learners which is an area for further improvement.

1.1.5. Impact

Student learning

Table 1: Percentage of students who achieved over 50 percent in the literacy and numeracy learning assessments

| Grade / Gender | Literacy Assessment | Numeracy Assessment |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Grade 4 Overall | 65% | 64% |
| Grade 4 Males | 77% | 71% |
| Grade 4 Females | 53% | 56.5% |
| Grade 7 Overall | 55% | 2.5% |
| Grade 7 Males | 59% | 4.5% |
| Grade 7 Females | 50% | 0% |
| Grade 10 Overall | 100% | 0% |
| Grade 10 Males | 100% | 0% |
| Grade 10 Females | - | - |

Students performed well in the Grade 4 literacy and numeracy assessment. Over 50 percent of girls scored above 50 percent on the literacy and numeracy assessment and three quarters of male students achieved this level. The difference between the literacy and numeracy scores were not significant at this level. In the higher grades however, a stark difference is noted. It seems likely that students did not engage in the numeracy assessment at the higher levels. The students may not have understood the questions, were unfamiliar with the type of questions asked or did not understand the presentation of the problems. Further testing would be required to determine whether there are competency gaps in mathematics to address.

1.1.6. Sustainability

In the original design document, ADRA had defined the parameters for sustainability; to increase organisational commitment, capacity at all levels, strengthened systems, and lasting knowledge assets for education. The program planned to bring about this change through capacity building activities directed at institutional, organisational and individual levels of the education system. According to the approach, this would encourage actors to work together under a common purpose and would subsequently lead to increased government commitment toward the education system, greater availability of resources from the community, private sector and donors toward education services and more effective inclusive education and TVET reforms. It was noted in the design that the strengthening of civil society would create sustainable change that could hold the government accountable for inclusive and quality education policies, practices, plans and budgets.

1.2 LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons in relation to the administration of learning assessments have been learned. The assessment methodology was not familiar to students and may have been the reason many failed to complete subtest items, especially for numeracy. Greater orientation and discussion with students prior to the assessment to address their fears and concerns would be valuable, ensuring that the consent process is also an opportunity for discussion on the assessment process.

I.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

I. For support to students

- a. Explore the opportunity to adapt the 'Education on Air' program and small tutor groups for pastoralist children who travel with their parents throughout the year and for OOSC who may be able to attend ALP to re-engage in education.
- b. Develop targeted interventions/responses to address challenges that some children and youth, such as teenage child mothers and children living in extreme poverty, face in returning to school. MTR respondents highlighted the need for a school feeding program, which ADRA could support through linkages to existing food programs by WFP and/or other agencies.
- c. Whilst interventions to re-engage girls appears to be effective, the strategies used to re-engage children with disabilities are less clear and schools still felt ill equipped to support children with disabilities. A deeper analysis of the issue preventing children from disability accessing schools needs to be undertaken to determine the most suitable intervention. Evidence suggests that a response should be 'whole school,' and involve school leaders, teachers, students, parents and disability support services. Learning from the TOFI project is encouraged to create linkages and ensure best practice is considered and applied. It is encouraging that there is a desire to establish DPOs in Nasir and Maiwut countries.
- d. Undertake further analysis of learning gaps in literacy and numeracy to identify a suite of interventions that can support students to strengthen the areas where there is weakness. From this assessment, it appears that listening and reading comprehension requires attention as do most strands of numeracy. A closer look at the gender dimensions is important and observations on how girls respond to assessments is necessary. Evidence suggests that high intensity tutor groups can be beneficial to address learning gaps.
- e. Continue to strengthen social and emotional learning (SEL) and psychosocial support for students. Head teachers and teachers were committed to do more to support children's wellbeing, suggesting peer groups and counselling were appropriate support for children.
- f. Continue to strengthen the referral mechanism and engagement with parents regarding child safety as the concerns raised by teachers about children's safety remain concerning.
- g. Investigate refugee / IDP student school transfer mechanisms to identify and address issues that may be preventing the enrolment of returnees. SMC members commented on how the lack of report cards meant that students returned to Ethiopia to continue their education.

II. For parents

- a. Review parent teacher meetings and work with teachers to ensure they are regularly providing feedback to parents on their child's progress.
- b. Review engagement with parents and consider expanding cultural events and ceremonies to encourage parental participation. Parents highly value this.
- c. It is evident that parents face significant challenges supporting their children to attend school. Besides the financial burden, almost 50 percent of parents reported difficulty motivating their children to attend school. Parents may need assistance on strategies they can use to motivate and encourage their children to persist with their education.

III. For teachers

- a. The role of counsellors and mentors for teachers appear to be highly valued by teachers. As well as continuing to strengthen activities that promote social emotional wellbeing of teachers, advocacy is needed to address salary concerns. ADRA should continue to lead coordination and engagement with the MoGEI on this important issue.
- b. Continue efforts to scale up mentoring and coaching as an effective TPD strategy but explore opportunities to improve the system to ensure teachers are improving their practices and addressing pedagogical gaps. This might mean more systematic lesson observations are conducted, more formal performance reviews are undertaken, or more coaching curriculum is developed. Ideally, teacher learning circles should be integrated with mentoring and coaching to maximise learning opportunities for teachers. Ensure that teacher's views are considered in the process of refining the approach. In a conducive environment, collaborating with teachers to map their competencies against the teacher competency framework (TCF) and developing a program that addresses gaps should be considered.
- c. Strengthen and scale up collaboration with teacher training institutions and other providers in support of TPD in EiE Upper Nile target schools, ensuring that the modality of delivery (e.g., distance learning and face to face learning) is carefully considered.

IV. For SMC

- a. Most SMC members would like training and support on how to support the education of girls and children with disabilities as well as training on financial management, leadership and governance.

V. Project improvement

- a. Ensure the sustainability approaches are reviewed regularly and progress begins in developing the architecture for the exit strategy. This takes time and significant consultation with stakeholders.
- b. Document and share project successes to support scale up and sharing of good practices. This could include documenting the mentorship program and the approach to gender transformation in relation to traditional gender norms around early/forced marriage.
- c. Ensure there is action (if not already) based on the recommendations put forward in the Education Conference held in late 2020 with education stakeholders in Nasir and Maiwut, including:
 - i. The need for education services to be extended beyond the current target areas
 - ii. The establishment of youth centres for skills training for youth to reduce criminal activities, cattle raiding and revenge killing
 - iii. Support for school feeding to retain primary school aged children in school
 - iv. The establishment of secondary schools in Maiwut and Nasir for students completing grade eight
 - v. Strengthening the enactment of local bylaws to protect girls from harmful practices such as early/forced marriages
 - vi. Strengthening engagement with all stakeholders in project activities to ensure ownership and sustainability

2 BACKGROUND

Education in Emergency (EiE) in Upper Nile, South Sudan (2020-2023) is implemented by ADRA Norway in partnership with ADRA South Sudan.

The main objective of the EiE Upper Nile program is that all learners, regardless of background, ability and gender, equitably access, engage in and learn in inclusive educational institutions. The program targets the areas of Maiwut and Nasir in the Upper Nile. Education services within the target areas have been significantly disrupted due to conflict and are seeing significant refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) returns, despite continuing instability. The project, with a learner-focus and conflict-sensitivity approach, develops education pathways for conflict affected children, girls, Out of School Children (OOSC) and children with disability to access quality, relevant and inclusive education, addressing barriers for access to education and concentrating on quality, equity, inclusion, protection, psychosocial support and participation. The primary beneficiaries targeted by the project include 9,507 conflict-affected children, 175 members of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) /School Management Committee (SMCs), 450 parents, 228 Teachers, head teachers and other government and community representatives.

The project began in April 2019, initially as a one-year project focused on improving school infrastructure, strengthening the capacity of teachers and school administration and harnessing community support for education. At the time, it was estimated that at least 2.2 million children in South Sudan were out of school and girls were more likely than boys to be excluded from education, with the gender parity index (GPI) for primary, 0.71 and for secondary, 0.54 (UNESCO, 2015). According to data from the South Sudan Attendance Monitoring system (SSAMS), Upper Nile had the lowest enrolment in the country (SSAMS, 2018).

Traditional concepts of gender influence family and community investments in children's education and girls face many barriers to attendance, including security, domestic chores, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and early marriage. Although females are being disproportionately impacted, males are also victims of SGBV. Other disadvantaged groups are children with disabilities, children affected or displaced by conflict, and children living in rural and remote areas. The major barriers in children with disabilities access to education include negative attitudes against children with disabilities, distance to schools, lack of teacher qualifications, poverty, inaccessible school facilities for children with disabilities, cultural norms that portray any form of disability as shameful, insecurity, and lack of assistive devices. The vulnerability of children, particularly girls, has increased as the traditional protection mechanisms of families and communities have been disrupted by war. The persistent conflict has had severe negative effects on civilians, with women and children suffering the most from physical harm (including sexual violence), loss of livelihoods, disruption of learning, destruction of property (including learning facilities), deaths, displacement and psychosocial problems.

The Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) in South Sudan had pledged to enrol all children of school age over the next five years, in line with implementation of the General Education Sector Plan (GESp), 2017-2022. The government emphasized permanent education facilities and strengthening of the education system as part of the GESp, but the protracted conflict and insecurity continue to impact achievements. The education cluster was supporting education in temporary facilities and IDP sites. The clusters' humanitarian response plan (HRP) for 2019 highlighted the immediate needs for IDP communities, while encouraging investment in permanent structures and systems to manage the influx of returnees into urban areas.

The Upper Nile region has been a hotspot for fighting between government military and opposition forces since 2013. Under the control of the opposition, the territory had been starved of resources for education. There were and continue to be high numbers of OOSC in the territory. The government did not pay teacher salaries in opposition held territories, and between 2014 – 2018 children had not sat for primary leaving exams. Since 2019, children have been able to sit exams.

Maiwut county had 15 operational schools before government soldiers took over from the opposition forces in July/August 2017. As a result of fighting between government and opposition forces, the population of Maiwut fled to remote parts of the county and across the border to Ethiopia. All the schools in Maiwut closed and many were damaged. By 2018, the situation had stabilised and there was greater access for Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) to provide support.

In August-September 2019, 4 months after the project began, conflict once again broke out between opposition forces in Maiwut country, forcing the evacuation of ADRA staff and the temporary suspension of activities until the security situation improved. After consulting with the Norwegian Embassy and Norad, ADRA expanded some activities to 10 schools in Nasir county where there was relative stability while waiting for the situation to improve in Maiwut. By October, project activities in Maiwut could resume. The situation continued to stabilise with the formation of the Revitalized Government of National Unity on 22 February 2020 and the state government for Upper Nile in March 2021. The number of community level security incidences, such as revenge killings and cattle raiding, has also reduced.

The year 2020 saw major disruptions to education due to COVID-19 through school closures and restrictions to travel and gatherings, but also through secondary effects on food security, security and the economy, further exacerbated by flooding. The project moved from its one year emergency response to a multiyear program mirroring the outcomes and ambition of the SEAQE 2 project, implemented in other parts of South Sudan. The project needed to adapt activities to promote continuity of learning and engagement of education stakeholders and the community, despite school closures. By the 28th of September 2020, the MoGEI announced the phased reopening of schools, starting with the resumption of classes for the primary eight (P8) and senior four (S4) candidate classes on 5 October 2020.

Throughout 2021, intermittent and isolated conflicts disrupted activity planning in Nasir county while reports of cattle raiding and political disquiet between party factions were closely monitored but did not disturb project activities. Additionally, heavy rains disrupted some construction planning during July – November. The second wave of COVID-19 struck the country in early 2021, and a partial lockdown was announced by the government for two months from February to April. This delayed schools from opening apart from primary eight students who were allowed to sit their Certificates of Primary Education in mid-February and senior four students in late April. By May 2021, schools had re-opened across South Sudan, including project target schools.

The World Food Program, implemented by World Vision and Samaritan's Purse delivered food packages during the months of May, September and November in Nasir and Maiwut counties and this alleviated some of the food security concerns faced by families. This together with ADRA South Sudan's engagement with community leaders through peace dialogues and trainings on human rights and conflict resolution has begun to show promising signs with community leaders opting to mediate and resolve conflicts before they escalate.

In the final months of 2021, the National Ministry of Education through National Teacher Training Institute (NTTI), Rombur and Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS) organised In-service and Continues Professional Development (CPD) teacher training program in both Maiwut and Nasir counties, which benefited teachers in the project areas.

3 SUMMARY OF METHODS AND SAMPLE

3.1 METHODS

a) Desk review

A comprehensive document review of available information about the EiE Upper Nile project was undertaken drawing on core documents provided by ADRA Norway. These included project design documents, the theory of change, results framework and risk assessments, the baseline report, progress reports and documents detailing COVID-19 risks, mitigation measures and program adjustments and adaptations. The review informed data collection planning and tool development.

b) Consultations with ADRA Norway and partners

During the inception phase, remote consultations were held with the ADRA Norway management team and key ADRA partner country staff. These meetings enabled the MTR team to refine the MTR scope and priorities. Discussions on the COVID-19 and conflict situation in the target areas allowed the MTR team to finalise the sampling strategy and agree the modality for data collection.

c) Surveys and assessments

To ensure data captured for the MTR could be triangulated and verified, the MTR team selected a range of quantitative and qualitative surveys for students, teachers, head teachers, parents, SMC members and education authorities. This enabled the evaluation team to consider each question from the perspective of key stakeholders involved in the EiE project. We were especially interested in the perspectives of students and their experiences of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Literacy & Numeracy Assessments

A summary of sub-test items is presented in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of sub-test items for literacy and numeracy assessments

| Grade level | Literacy | Score | Numeracy | Score |
|---------------|--|-----------|--|-------|
| 4 | Word identification | /10 | Part 1:Operations (+ and -) | /3 |
| | Reading fluency - number of words read correctly | /30 words | Part 2: Operations (x and ÷) | /3 |
| | Reading comprehension | | Part 3:Word problems | /3 |
| | Listening comprehension | /4 | Part 4: Data representation | /3 |
| | | /5 | | |
| 7 (also TVET) | Word identification | /10 | Part 1:Operations (whole and part numbers) | /3 |
| | Reading fluency - number | /62 words | | |

| | | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| students) | of words read correctly Reading comprehension Listening comprehension | /4 /5 | Part 2: Word problems Part 3: Simple linear equations Part 4: Data representation | /3 /3 /3 |
| 10 | Word identification Reading fluency - number of words read correctly Reading comprehension Listening comprehension | /10 /117 words /4 /5 | Part 1: Operations Part 2: Word problems Part 3: Algebra Part 4: Data representation & statistics | /3 /3 /3 /3 |

KII / FGD survey questionnaires

The following surveys were administered: Students (KII), Teachers (KII), Parents (FGD), Education authorities (KII), Head teachers (KII) and SMC members (FGD).

Each survey aimed to gather different perspective in the following areas:

- *Inclusion with a specific focus on girls and disability*
- *The impacts of Covid-19, including:*
 - *School disruption,*
 - *Teaching and learning,*
 - *Home learning opportunities,*
 - *Challenges in returning to school*
 - *Efforts to address learning losses*
 - *Support for student and teacher wellbeing*
- *Impacts of EiE Upper Nile project on girls, boys and children with disabilities, learning and wellbeing*
- *Factors that have inhibited and contributed to program results*
- *Changes in child protection issues because of contextual factors, including Covid-19 and conflict dynamics*
- *Program gaps, areas for further improvement and focus in the future*

Additionally, a survey questionnaire for CSO partners and a reflection workshop for ADRA country staff were undertaken to obtain program management results and lessons learned.

The reflection workshop for ADRA country staff focused on the following areas:

1. The relevance of the whole school approach for the EIE Upper Nile project and the assumptions that underpin the program
2. The most significant change/s in the program

3. Factors that have enabled and/or inhibited progress
4. The suitability of approaches introduced to address COVID challenges to address the needs of OOSC
5. Lessons learned and areas for improvement in the remaining years of the EiE Upper Nile project.

3.2 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The OECD DAC evaluation criteria was used to frame analysis of data from qualitative and quantitative surveys undertaken in the MTR. Gender transformative and disability inclusion considerations were integrated in all evaluation criteria, including the impacts of Covid 19 and subsequent access to distance learning and support when students return to school.



Figure 1: OECD DAC Criteria (Source: OECD EvalNet (2020) Better Criteria for Better Evaluation)

The TOR provided a comprehensive list of evaluation questions and sub-questions against the DAC criteria. The MTR team underwent a comprehensive process to develop the survey tools based on the evaluation questions put forth in TOR.

The process included 1) developing survey questions against each of the DAC evaluation questions, 2) consolidating questions according to core program learning priorities (e.g., barriers to access, remote learning opportunities, return to school strategies etc.) and the specific focus of the MTR (e.g., program challenges and gaps); and 3) allocating and adapting survey questions for each stakeholder group (see Annex: MTR Evaluation Matrix). The findings section follows the organisation of the evaluation matrix assigning topics such as Covid-19 to the sections of relevance, coherence and effectiveness.

3.3 SCHOOLS VISITED

Data was collected in a total of nineteen schools, 18 were primary and one was a secondary school. In

the first week, data collection was conducted in Maiwut county and in the second week, Nasir county.

Table 3: Sample schools

| School Name | | Location | School Name | | Location |
|-------------|------------------|----------|-------------|----------------------|----------|
| 1 | Kulong Primary | Maiwut | 11 | Nyiengok Primary | Nasir |
| 2 | Gainen Primary | Maiwut | 12 | Lueth Primary | Nasir |
| 3 | Jekow Primary | Maiwut | 13 | Kurenge Primary | Nasir |
| 4 | Pagak Primary | Maiwut | 14 | Torpuot Primary | Nasir |
| 5 | Biyen Primary | Maiwut | 15 | Mandeng Primary | Nasir |
| 6 | Pinythor Primary | Maiwut | 16 | Benytik Primary | Nasir |
| 7 | SDA Primary | Maiwut | 17 | Torkech primary | Nasir |
| 8 | Jotome Primary | Maiwut | 18 | Stephen Duol Primary | Nasir |
| 9 | Malek Primary | Maiwut | 19 | Maker Primary | Nasir |
| 10 | Secondary School | Maiwut | | | |

3.4 FINAL SAMPLE

A total of 535 individuals were surveyed including 286 males and 249 females. Of this number, a total of 284 students were assessed from Grade 4, Grade 7 and Grade 10, including 146 males and 138 females.

Table 4: Total number of participants in the MTR.

| | Total | Males | Females |
|-----------------------|---|-------|---------|
| Students | G4 – 263 G7 – 19 G10 - 2 Total – 284 | 146 | 138 |
| Teachers | 41 | 31 | 10 |
| Headteachers | 16 | 16 | 0 |
| Parents | 90 | 34 | 56 |
| SMC | 88 | 43 | 45 |
| Education authorities | 14* | 14 | 0 |
| Partners | 2 | 2 | |
| Total | 535 | 286 | 249 |

*The survey did not differentiate authorities for SEAQE 2 and EiE. ADRA South Sudan reported that from the total of 18 education authorities interviewed, 4 were from SEAQE 2 target areas and 14 were from the Upper Nile. Regarding partners, of the three partners interviewed from South Sudan, 1 was a SEAQE 2 project partner (CDSS) and 2 (TADO and UNKEA) were connected to the EiE project.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 SUMMARY

Several high-level findings have been extrapolated. These are:

- Learning Assessments
 - For Grade 4 Numeracy subtests - children performed well in some subtests (listening passage, reading comprehension, subtraction and interpreting graphs) whereas in other subtests (word identification, reading and word problems in mathematics) they struggled to answer the questions. This suggests that coverage of a range of curriculum areas may have been limited. This could also be an effect of extended school closures which limited coverage of the curriculum. Absenteeism may also be the explanation to explain the learning gaps in some areas. The reading and listening comprehension scores showed a notable difference between girls and boys.
 - Grade 7 – Numeracy was once again a struggle for the students, especially girls. Students performed better in literacy but very few scored above 80%. The strongest areas were in reading and listening comprehension.
 - Grade 10 - There were only a few male students who answered questions. The students scored high in literacy and between 0-20% in numeracy.
- School attendance is low because children participate in livelihood activities with / for their families. Financial barriers to education in the target area is high and has increased due to COVID-19.
- In relation to teachers - many shared their difficulties conducting home visits and supporting learners when schools were closed but showed great commitment setting up and supporting tutor groups and the 'Education on Air' radio program.
- The teachers were supportive of the 'Education on Air' radio program and felt that it helped students learn and that their grades improved. They reported mostly positive impacts but also some negative ones regarding social emotional wellbeing and missed opportunities for social interaction.
- Teachers thought it would be helpful to establish peer clubs in schools to support children's social and emotional wellbeing.
- Teachers would value more support in assessing students' learning loss and adjusting the curriculum.
- Teachers raised concerns about the welfare of boys, girls and children with disabilities. Teachers tended to report issues to the head teacher and tried to resolve the issues on their own. They demonstrated knowledge of protection issues and how they might be addressed through the referral mechanism, which most schools have established.
- Like SEAQE 2, parents would like to have more frequent meetings with teachers, and more feedback on their children's learning.
- Parental engagement is achieving local ownership of schools and contributing to school improvements, with parents contributing to the school feeding program, school security and supporting return to school efforts.
 - Within the EiE program, this is having a positive impact on school attendance as parents from pastoralist communities are seeing the value in education and more regularly sending their children to school.
- Finance and procurement policies hinder implementation in an EiE context. ADRA policies seem designed for development not humanitarian projects.

4.2 RELEVANCE

The EiE Upper Nile project is highly relevant to supporting the education needs of conflict affected children in the Upper Nile State counties of Nasir and Maiwut in South Sudan, including out of school children and youth (OOSCY), girls and children with disabilities.

South Sudan has some of the worst education and gender indicators in the world. The Net Enrolment Rate in South Sudan is 32 percent and only 40 percent are girls. The number of OOSCY in the target areas are high. The Out of School Youth study conducted by ADRA South Sudan (December 2020) found that 68 percent of female youth were out of school because of early and forced marriages. The legacy of the prolonged civil war in South Sudan has also had a significant impact on education, with 25 percent of youth interviewed in the target areas identifying the civil conflict and displacement as the reason for dropping out of school and 7 percent identifying financial barriers. A lack of access to education is compounded by the lack of schools, particularly secondary schools, in the target area. Other barriers to education include poverty, a lack of parental support for their children's education and a lack of perceived value of education, as well as children being responsible for domestic and livelihood tasks. The population in the target area includes pastoralist communities that are regularly on the move and who are mostly illiterate and traditionally have placed little value on education. According to MTR respondents, child protection risks in the target areas are significant, with child labour, forced marriage, neglect, SGBV, domestic violence, security issues, child trafficking and conscription into armed forces / militia groups all cited as risks to boys, girls and children with disabilities.

The EiE Upper Nile project commenced on 1 April 2020 following the government's introduction of COVID-19 prevention measures, including the closure of schools on 20 March 2020 and travel restrictions between states. Schools remained closed until 5 October 2020 (7 months), at which time a phased reopening of classes commenced, starting with primary eight (P8) and senior four (S4) candidate classes. All schools, including target schools, were reopened by 3 May 2021 (14 months after they were initially closed).

The project response to COVID-19 was highly relevant to meeting the education needs of children in the target areas. Mentors were recruited and deployed to target communities to support learning continuity through 'Education on Air' - the government initiated COVID-19 education response that provided lessons via radio. The project collaborated with other stakeholders and donors, including UNICEF and USAID, to record and store lessons on memory sticks and provide equipment (speakers) so that mentors and teachers could facilitate small group classes under trees during school closures. At the same time, the project organised 69 COVID-19 awareness sessions in churches, schools, water points and border points to disseminate COVID-19 awareness and prevention messages.

Once schools reopened, the project supported schools to conduct back to school campaigns and comply with COVID-19 operational procedures. This included conducting COVID-19 awareness at 16 target education institutions, providing hand washing stations and distributing jerry cans and constructing / rehabilitating toilet stances to improve WASH facilities. To support children to catch up on lost learning, catch up classes were introduced.

Interventions to meet the education needs of OOSCY in the target areas were also highly relevant. The project undertook an Out of School Youth study in December (2020) to identify and engage OOSCY to determine appropriate and relevant education options. The study highlighted the need for an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), which the project initiated in 2021. The study also

highlighted the need for life skills training, psychosocial support and vocational education, which have also become a focus for the project.

The strategies employed by the project to support teachers were highly relevant and effective. Teachers in the target schools are typically under qualified and not on the government payroll. The project provided stipend support during school closures and a teacher training and mentor program to improve teaching practice and reinforce professional ethics and code of conduct. Mentors also worked alongside head teachers and deputy head teachers to improve effective school management. According to EiE Upper Nile project staff, the mentor program has been instrumental in raising the capacity of head teachers and teachers in the target schools and has improved school governance, the attendance and motivation of teachers, as well as teaching practices.

The provision of teacher stipend support is highly relevant to supporting the retention, attendance and motivation of teachers. EiE Upper Nile project staff noted a high teacher turnover as undermining efforts to improve the capacity of teachers. Advocacy to increase teachers' salaries and benefits was identified by 87.5 percent of SMC members as a key strategy for improving teacher wellbeing in the coming years.

Community and parent engagement strategies have strengthened community ownership and improved parental support for education. Strategies have included parent and caregiver education events and sensitisation meetings, the mentoring of PTA representatives on promoting the involvement of learners and communities in decision making and supporting student leadership structures in the schools and training of PTA/SMC members on psychosocial support, child protection, child rights and GBV. According to EiE Upper Nile project staff, this has resulted in a significant improvement in parent and community engagement and support for the schools and has resulted in better school attendance by children.

4.3 COHERENCE

The MTR found that the EiE Upper Nile project is aligned with several national education policies and priorities, including the Education Policy (2017 - 2027), GESP 2017 - 2022, Inclusive Education Policy (2014) and Girls' Education Strategy (2018 - 2022), which all give focus to equitable access to education and creating quality, conducive and safe environments for all children to learn. Most education authorities reported that ADRA has supported the implementation of Education for all (100 percent), gender equity (83 percent) and inclusive education (83 percent) policies and the implementation of COVID-19 response plans (67 percent).

ADRA South Sudan has a strong relationship with education authorities at all levels and this is bearing fruit in relation to sharing good practice and informing national policy and program reforms. For instance, the benefits of the mentorship program are being shared with the MoGEI and efforts are being made to gain government buy-in to scale this program up nationally in cooperation and collaboration with MoGEI and other education sector partners.

The EiE Upper Nile program is part of ADRA South Sudan's education portfolio, which includes the Norad funded SEAQE 2 and TOFI programs. The EiE Upper Nile program leverages these programs and ADRA leads cooperation and collaboration among education stakeholders on important reform issues, such as teacher incentives and teacher professional development reforms. It is evident that ADRA South

Sudan is a key education sector partner that is actively involved and has influence within education reform processes.

4.4 EFFICIENCY

The COVID-19 pandemic and continued state fragility caused disruption to the efficient delivery of the EiE Upper Nile project, and this was beyond ADRA’s control. Conflict dynamics and COVID-19 travel restrictions caused delays in project implementation, particularly at the start of the project, and had a negative impact on budget efficiency, with the price of goods and services affected by disruptions to supply chains. At the same time, the Upper Nile is far from markets, necessitating the transportation of materials via charter flight from Juba, which were disrupted during COVID-19, causing implementation delays. Delays in government clearance for project activities also impacted implementation plans, with activities at times needing to be rescheduled.

ADRA South Sudan sought to ensure budget efficiencies and implemented cost saving measures. For instance, a budget review was undertaken to address adaptations to project priorities and implementation costs because of COVID-19. The EiE Upper Nile project is implemented out of ADRA’s office in the Upper Nile, which is co-funded by other ADRA projects, and the project benefits from infrastructure support from the Latter-Day Saints Charities through ADRA International.

According to EiE Upper Nile project staff, ADRA finance and procurement policies and procedures do not provide the flexibility needed to respond efficiently or effectively in times of emergency. Procurement and finance policies and procedures were seen as more suited to development rather than humanitarian programs.

4.5 EFFECTIVENESS

Outcome achievements

Table 5: Outcome achievements against baseline and milestones

| Outcome | Indicator/s | Baseline | Milestone | MTR |
|---|---|----------|---|--|
| | # and % of learners in supported educational institutions achieving expected standards of quality, inclusive and effective learner-friendly education environments % and # of learners (f/m) enrolled in supported educational institutions that remain in the educational institution the following year (disability) (Norad indicator 1.2) | 0% | 25% 70% (5749, of which 3123 M, 36 MWD, 2626 F, 35 FWD) of 8214 learners | TBD |
| Outcome 1: More marginalised children and youth access and participate in inclusive education | % and # of out-of-school children (f/m) enrolled in supported educational institutions that remain in the learning institution the following year. | 0 | 200 450 | 0 (2020) 700 (2021) (168M, 532F) |
| Outcome 2: More children and youth learn in safe, protective and healthy education institutions | # of learners (f/m) enrolled in supported educational institutions | 5394 | 8,624 learners (M= 4685, MWD = 55, F= 3939, FWD =53) | 11788 |
| Outcome 3: Learner’s benefit from improved | % reduction in gender disparities in learning achievements in end-of-school exams | 1.04 | 2% | 3.4% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|------------|-----------|-------------|
| quality teaching and relevant learning | 3.1.1: % of head teachers (f/m) meeting expected standards for managing supported educational institutions and strengthening systems (ETLE) | 38% (2020) | 25% | 38% of 16 |
| | 3.1.3: % of supported educational institutions where SMCs/PTAs meeting expected standards in managing and strengthening supported educational institutions (ETLE) | 38% (2020) | 25% | 38% |
| | 3.2.1: % of teachers (f/m) in supported educational institutions who meet expected standards in effective teaching practices (ETLE) | 44% (2020) | 20% | 46% (44/95) |
| Outcome 4: Learners, parents, communities and other stakeholders are more positively engaged with educational systems | # and % of supported educational institutions that meet the expected standards for participation of learners, parents and employers | 0% | 35% of 16 | 69% of 16 |
| Outcome 5: Strengthened civil society influences education policies and practices | # of research and advocacy documents developed by civil society | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | # of policies, plans and budgets developed/ revised to include quality, equitable, safe and/or inclusive education and/or protection for marginalised groups | 0 | 1 | 0 |

Progress is evident in most outcome areas except for Outcome 5 which has been hampered due to COVID-19. Targets have been exceeded under Outcome 3, which is an important outcome linked to quality education support. The most recent ETLE assessment conducted and reported in July 2021, noted improvements in school leadership, teacher quality, parental engagement and SMC management. Several areas were identified for improvement including supporting school leaders to ensure schools run smoothly, teachers turned up each day to teach, school rules are followed, and learning is a focus of the school culture. Regarding teachers, improvements are needed in lesson planning, providing feedback to students on progress and promoting independent learning among the students. Less than 50 percent of schools encourage participation of learners which is an area for further improvement.

4.5.1 Outcome 1 (access to learning for girls, children with disabilities etc.,)

This outcome is focused on OOSC, girls and children with disabilities access to education.

Indicator 1.1.1: # of out-of-school children (f/m) supported to enrol into an appropriate level of education (disability) (Norad indicator 1.1.1) (cumulative)

Table 6: Number of out of school children enrolled in the ALP.

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| Targets | 200 | 450 | 540 | 630 |
| Achieved | 0 | 700 | | |

The project conducted an assessment between November and December 2020 and were able to identify 356 (225M , 131F) OOSCY to enrol in the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) program in 2021. The assessment identified the demand for life skills training, psychosocial support and vocational training. The assessment also captured the reasons for drop out. Amongst females, drop out was mostly due to early or forced marriage and one in four youth dropped out due to the civil conflict, were vulnerable to recruitment into armed groups and exposed to traumatic experiences. Such youth were traumatised and did not consider education a priority in their lives. The study found that 65% of youth respondents were

willing to join ALPs, while 21 percent preferred to re-join the normal primary school cycle classes, even if they were over-age, and 15 percent of youth preferred the option of functional adult literacy (FAL). This number increased to 700 students (168 M, 532F) by mid-2021 and remained stable for the remainder of the year. Female enrolment was higher compared to the males as early marriage and forced marriages are common and limit girls access to mainstream schools.

The out of school youths learning centres were established in both Nasir and Maiwut Counties of Upper Nile. The seven learning Centres established were; Kurengke, Mandeng, Jikmir, Nyiengok in Nasir County and Maiwut, Pagak and Jekow in Maiwut County. Most of the learners are teenage parents, who have responsibilities of doing house chores, most especially the female learners who reported being irregular in attending classes due to their responsibilities at home.

Indicator 1.2.1.: # of educational personnel (f/m) trained to support and respond to inclusive education (level of education, type of education personnel)

Table 7: Number of educational personnel trained

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| Targets | 207 | 228 | 228 | 228 |
| Achieved | 224 | 273 | | |

In 2020, training was provided to 224 (27 f; 197 m) educational personnel, 40 (2 f; 38 m) local education officials, 168 (25 f; 143 m) teachers and 16 (16 m) head teachers on child protection, psychosocial support, SGBV, and disaster risk reduction. This supported the development of school action plans to implement what was learnt.

In 2021, 273 education personnel (248 M, 25 F) were trained, including 16 (15 M, 1 F) education officials, 39 (38 M, 1 F) head teachers and their deputies, 24 (22 M, 2 F) ALP facilitators and 194 (173 M, 21 F) teachers. The training was provided by the mentors and covered how to promote inclusive education in schools, how to provide gender sensitive education in schools and understanding child friendly education environment, school inspection and supervision. The increase in the number trained was attributed to the change in training modality from school based mentoring and training to In-service and continuous professional development, where teachers gathered in a training centre for a two week intensive program ran through school holidays.

ADRA and local education authorities conducted joint school inspection and supervision visits as part of the monitoring to observe the conduct of the teachers and head teachers in relation to the code of conduct in the schools and check teachers attendance records, visitors record books, student attendance registers, store records and the school rules and regulations forms. They recommended that the head teachers form children’s leadership committees and children be represented in school decision making processes. As a result of these visits, student governing bodies were set up in the project supported schools and each school posted the rules and regulations on the wall as a reminder of the expectations for teachers and students. Additionally, the head teachers displayed school records, student data and lists of teachers, PTAs and SMCs in their offices.

4.5.2 Outcome 2 (inclusive and safe learning environments)

This outcome is focused on establishing safe, inclusive and healthy learning environments for students and covers gender sensitive infrastructure (classrooms, electricity, toilets, and safe drinking water), inclusive policies and linkages to health and protective services.

Outcome indicator 2.1: # of learners (f/m) enrolled in supported educational institutions (disability) Target: 8,214 Achieved: 5,394 (2,638 f, 16 females with disability, 2,756 m, 31 males with disability)

Based on the baseline study, 8,214 students (3,752 f, 50 females with a disability; 4,462 m, 52 males with a disability) were enrolled in the target schools in 2019. School closures came into effect in March 2020 and whilst ADRA was unable to support schools directly, the project was able to support learning continuity through “Education on Air” and small group learning. This support managed to reach 5,394 (2638 f; 2756 m) students. ADRA was able to address some of the barriers that students experienced accessing the radio program by using pre-recorded lessons on MPS speakers when there was no radio coverage and households lacked radios. ADRA collaborated with the MoGEI on the development of lessons and worked to establish two to four tutor groups per school in 10 schools in Nasir county and 1 school in Maiwut county. “Education on Air” in the other target schools in Maiwut was supported by the BRES project (ADRA South Sudan’s DANIDA funded project).

The MP3 speakers and flash disks included recorded lessons in English, mathematics, science, and social studies for primary grades three to eight. Mentors guided the teachers to prepare and record lessons in literacy and numeracy for lower grades. According to the 2020 Annual report, attendance patterns showed children regularly attended the tutor groups.

Teachers interviewed for the MTR described the activities they were able to support during school closures, including home visits, the distribution of resources and small tutor groups. Almost 64 percent of teachers were able to provide support via small tutor groups.

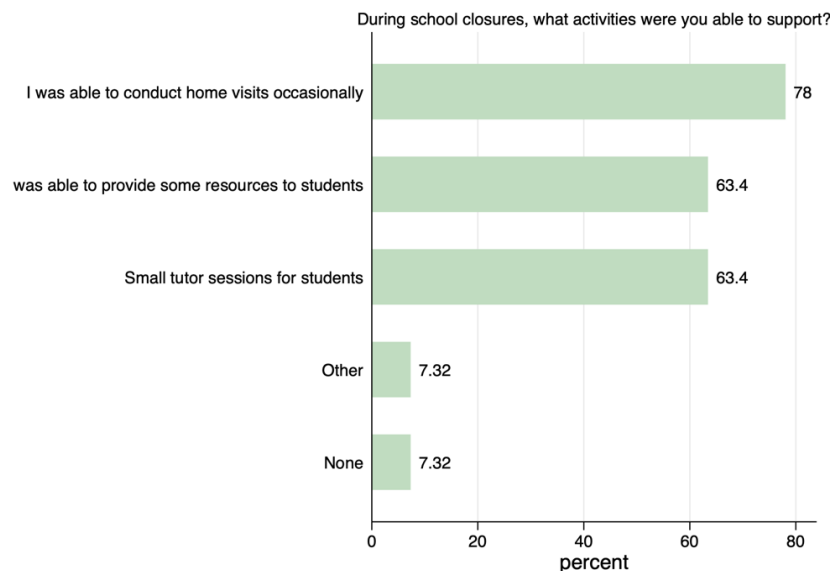


Figure 2: Teacher responses to the question – during school closures, what activities were you able to support?

The project supported 95 (27 f; 68 m) candidate students from primary grade 8 to resume classes in October 2020 and prepare for examinations.

As reported in the 2020 Annual report, the effect of these programs would be evident when schools re-opened, it was hoped that these initiatives would reduce dropout rates. All teachers interviewed in the MTR reported that the program had improved the quality of education children received.

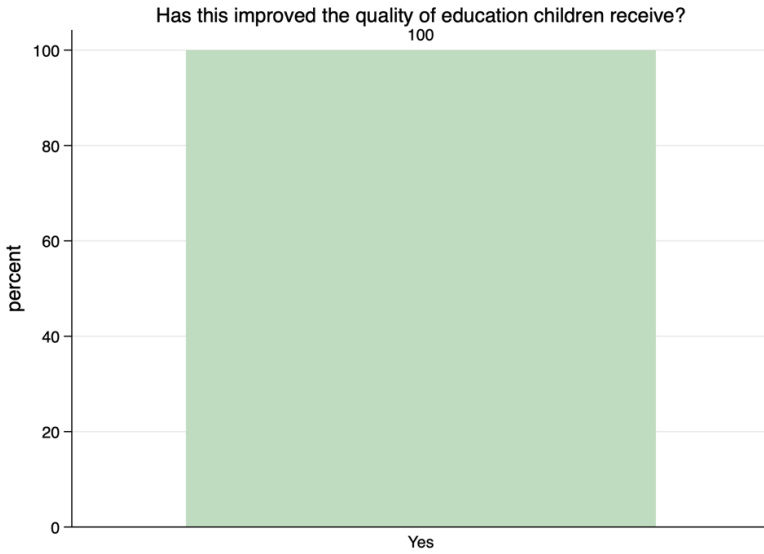


Figure 3: Teacher's response to question - has this improved the quality of education children receive?

When teachers elaborated this, they reported that students understanding of the topics improved, their grades improved, and students were more alert.

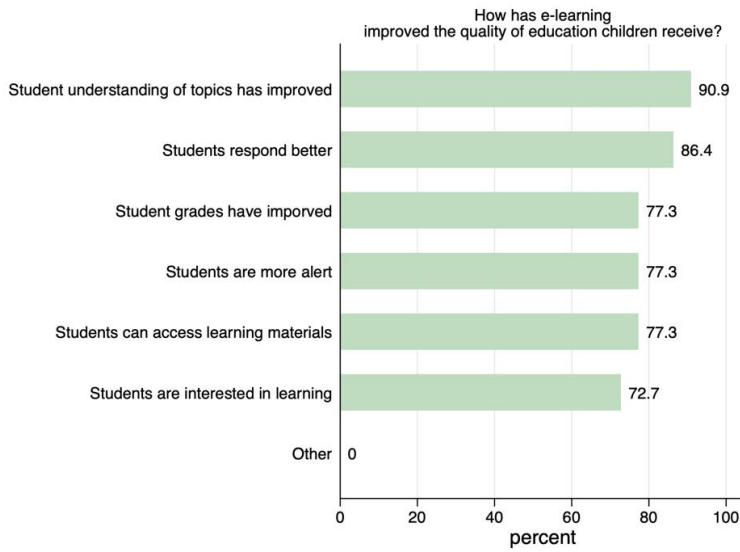


Figure 4: Teacher's response to question - how has e-learning improved the quality of education children receive?

Indicator 2.1.1: # of classrooms constructed or rehabilitated (type of learning space, constructed/rehabilitated) (Norad core indicator 2) (cumulative)

Table 8: Number of classrooms constructed or rehabilitated.

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Targets | 26 classrooms | 35 classrooms | 40 classrooms | 45 classrooms |
| Achieved | 30 classrooms | 23 classrooms | | |

Despite school closures in 2020, ADRA was able to complete many of its construction plans. In 2020, the project supported the construction/rehabilitation of 30 classrooms in Nasir and Maiwut, which was five more than planned. The number of toilets and water stations established was lower than targeted but addressed significant gaps, especially concerning female facilities. In 2021, 23 more classrooms were constructed. The cumulative figure of the classrooms renovated/constructed has reached 53 which is above the project target.

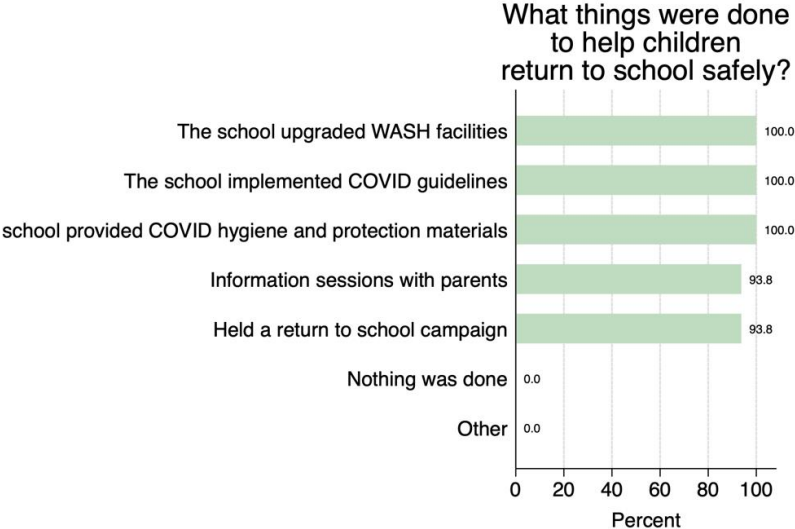


Figure 5: Headteacher's response to - what things were done to help children return to school safely?

The head teachers reported how the upgraded WaSH facilities, which included the construction of change rooms for menstruating girls, helped children return to school safely, as did the implementation of COVID-19 guidelines and provision of personal protection equipment (PPE) and dignity kits. Schools also undertook actions that encouraged girls and children with disabilities to return.

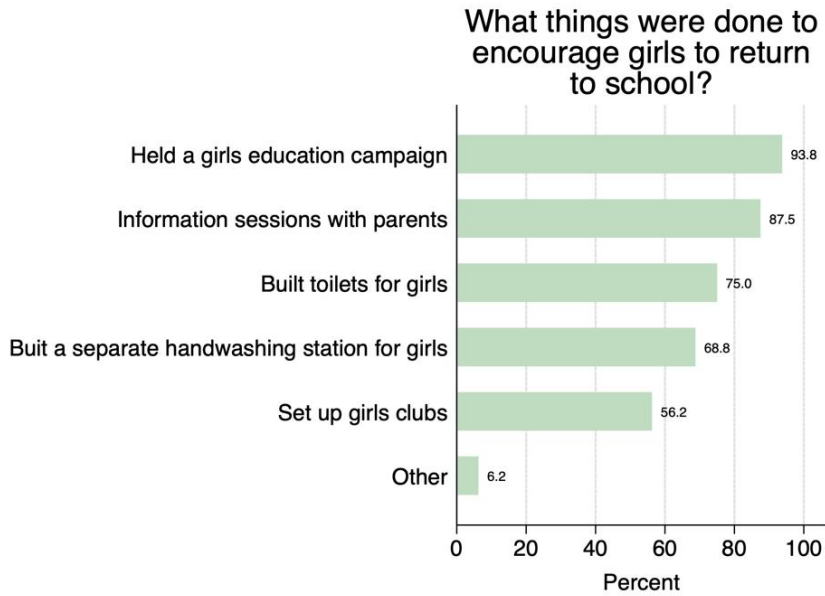


Figure 6: Headteachers response - what things were done to encourage girls to return to school?

Over 50 percent of head teachers reported holding girls’ education campaigns and information sessions with parents, building toilets for girls and separate handwashing stations and setting up girls’ clubs. The provision of 1,200 dignity kits was a key feature of the support provided to girls.

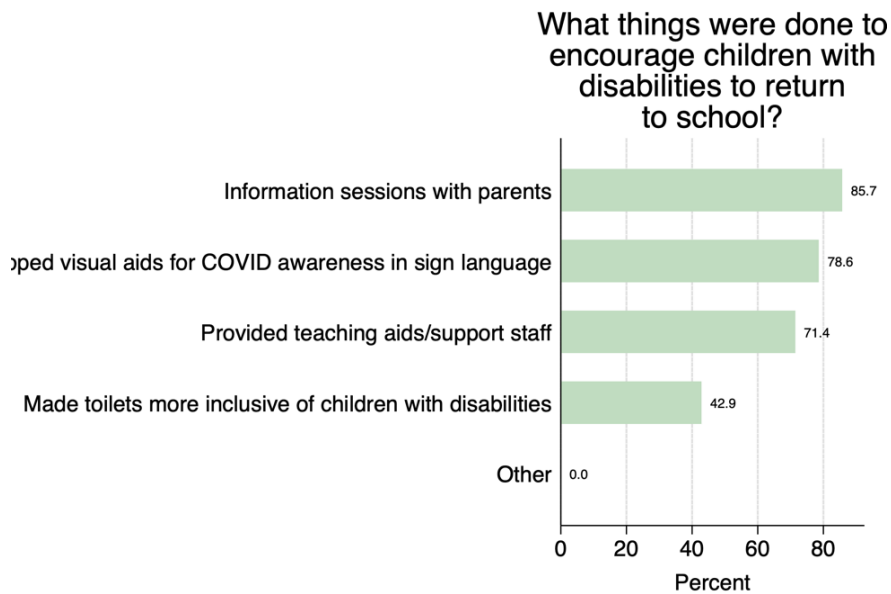


Figure 7: Headteachers response - what things were done to encourage children with disabilities to return to school?

To encourage children with disabilities to return to school, head teachers reported holding information sessions with parents and in 78.6 percent of cases created COVID-19 prevention messages in sign language and in less than 50 percent of cases, disability inclusive toilets were provided.

The Upper Nile EiE project has been actively continuing its support to strengthen referral mechanisms in schools and has focused on child protection training, strengthening school counselling and establishing partnerships with referral services. In 2020, the project trained 278 (127 f; 151 m) child protection actors (education personnel, teachers, parents, community leaders, religious leaders, CBO representatives) on basic concepts of child protection, psychosocial support, SGBV, child rights, inclusive education and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Indicator 2.2.1: # of referrals to health, safety and/or protection services (sex)(cumulative)

Target: 100 Achieved: 664

Table 9: Number of referrals to health, safety and/or protection services.

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| Targets | 100 | 200 | 300 | 400 |
| Achieved | 664 | 850 | | |

In 2020, 664 (343 F; 321 M) children and youth were referred/ provided support by the child protection officers, local counsellors and volunteers in the targeted school communities. This far exceeded the target, which according to the 2020 Annual Report, was due to school closures that left children at home without education and more exposed to protection risks, such as neglect, early/forced marriage and child labour. The focus on establishing the referral mechanism has enabled increased cooperation and action by teachers, education officials, PTAs and community representatives in schools on practices of child labour, abuse, early/forced marriage and inclusion of children with disabilities.

In 2021, 850 (455 M, 395 F) children were referred to relevant services. The increased number of children referred to services has been attributed to the support provided to UNKEA by ADRA South Sudan through supply of drugs to the health facilities within the targeted school communities in Nasir County.

According to the MTR, teachers reported acting when issues regarding students safety was raised. Most (88 percent) teachers that were interviewed reported issues of concern to the head teachers and 81 percent were confident with the requirements for reporting. Many (85 percent) tried to resolve the issues by talking to the students, indicating their confidence to use their psychosocial skills to sensitively speak with the student. According to post training reports, 77 percent (134 of 175) teachers demonstrated awareness of the referral mechanism and knew how to produce reports.

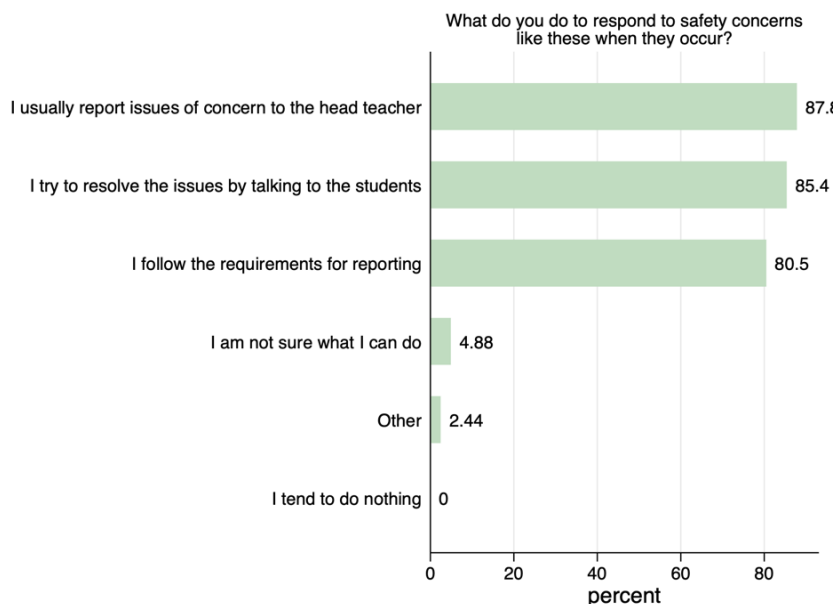


Figure 8: Headteachers response - what do you do to respond to safety concerns like these when they occur?

The protection mechanism was also reported by head teachers during the MTR. Most head teachers (82 percent) reported that their schools had established protection and referral mechanisms to support children at risk.

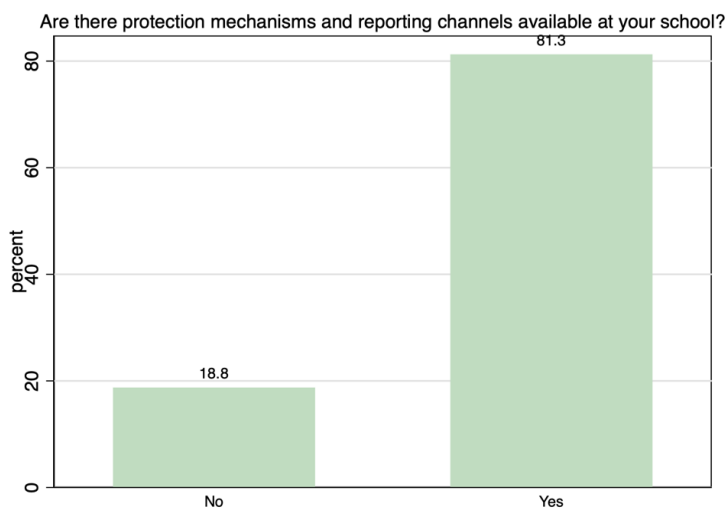


Figure 9: Headteachers response - are there protection mechanisms and reporting channels available at your school?

The headteachers reported how this was addressing protection risks and providing support to students through referral services. It is evident that the role of counsellors in schools is becoming especially important. In the 2020 Annual report, it was noted that the counsellors reported referral challenges in certain cases e.g., when handling reports concerning parental negligence, for locations where health services were far, where caregivers were not able to leave the home to take children to health centres, for single mothers, children living in foster care, or living with elderly persons. With these cases the counsellors recommended additional support to the children/household to address children's needs.

An important finding was an increase in sexual exploitation of girls. In the project target areas, 290 schoolgirls (218 Maiwut, 62 Nasir) who had enrolled at the beginning of 2020 became pregnant during COVID-19 school closures. Based on records from the health centres, a further 214 out-of-school school aged girls also became pregnant during this period. ADRA noted that the proportion of girls becoming pregnant was less in areas where education continuity was supported, such as in areas where 'Education on Air' and tutor groups were held.

Whilst COVID-19 has contributed to this increase, the 2020 Annual report also associates the additional awareness raising efforts as pivotal to this change. In 2020, ten community dialogues were conducted in school communities by child protection actors to discuss issues related to child rights, child protection, child abuses, early and forced marriages and mobilisation of children to come to school. ADRA noted that there was an increase in reported cases of abuse after these events.

Indicator 2.2.2: # of schools where PTAs/SMCs have implemented activities on child protection, inclusive and peace education (cumulative)

Table 10: Number of schools where PTAs/SMCs have implemented activities on child protection, inclusive education and peace education.

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Targets | 9 schools | 11 schools | 13 schools | 16 schools |
| Achieved | 13 schools | 16 schools | | |

In 2021, the PTAs/SMCs conducted mass awareness in the school communities on prevention and dangers of child marriages, early marriages, corporal punishment, and the importance of peaceful co-existence in the school communities.

4.5.3 Outcome 3 (teaching)

This outcome is focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning and aims to strengthen school governance structures and systems, improve teacher capacity and practice, provide effective and relevant teaching and learning materials and more relevant knowledge, attitudes, values and life skills for learners.

Indicator 3.1.1: % of head teachers (f/m) meeting expected standards for managing supported educational institutions and strengthening systems (ETLE)

Table 11: Percentage of headteachers meeting expected standards for managing supported educational institutions.

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| Targets | N/A | 35% of 16 | N/A | 70% of 16 |
| Achieved | 38% | 44% of 16 | | |

During 2020 and during COVID-19, the project employed mentors to facilitate community and school level activities, adapting to the restrictions on public gatherings and adhering to social distancing requirements. The mentors were deployed in the school communities for a period of three months, from September 15 to December 15, 2020. They provided training and mentoring to 32 school managers (16 head teachers and 16 deputy head teachers) on effective school management and their roles and responsibilities in the management and development of the school system. The head teachers were mentored on school administration, management, filing systems, record keeping, school development planning, and resource mobilization for the school, storeroom and assets management.

The mentors reported that 38 percent (6 of 16 head teachers from the targeted schools) were able to meet standards of effective school management. In 2021, this had increased to 44 percent.

The head teachers demonstrated an ability to collaborate with their school communities to develop school teaching and learning goals and align school activities in the timetable with the school goals. They managed the school timetable, ensuring school schedules were followed and monitored teacher records. These achievements were attributed to the capacity development provided by the project to head teachers and their deputies on school management and administration.

Indicator 3.2.1: % of teachers (f/m) in supported educational institutions who meet expected standards in effective teaching practices (ETLE)

Table 12: Percentage of teachers in supported education institutions who meet expected standards in effective teaching practices.

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Targets | 20% of 100 | 30% of 100 | 40% of 100 | 60% of 100 |
| Achieved | 42% | 46% of 100 | | |

To retain teachers and education staff during school closures, the project provided incentives to 177 (22 f; 155 m) (111 Nasir, 66 Maiwut) teachers and 16 education officials for effective supervision. This enabled the project to engage teachers in project activities for the ‘Education on Air’ program, training activities and community level activities. The 177 (22 f; 155 m) teachers were provided with training and mentoring to develop their skills and knowledge in classroom management, lesson planning and delivery, development of work schemes, professional ethics and the teachers’ professional code of conduct. In 2020, mentors reported that 42 percent (74 of 177) of teachers who were mentored through the school-based mentoring program demonstrated skills in effective teaching practices, lesson planning and development. This is promising, although more work is needed considering many of the teachers are volunteers and hence lack fundamental training. Teachers also participated in the ‘Education on Air’ program to support learning continuity while adhering to COVID-19 restrictions regarding number of people gathering, social distancing and hygiene practices.

In 2021, the percentage of teachers meeting expected standards of effective teaching practice reached 46% (44/95), which was higher than the previous year and higher than the expected target.

Before school closures, teachers mostly received mentoring and coaching support (85 percent) with some peer learning (46 percent) and In-service training provided. During COVID-19, 39 percent of teachers were exposed to distance learning and more teachers (95 percent) accessed mentoring and coaching sessions. This shows how the coaching and mentoring program was successfully adapted to the restrictions placed on gatherings.

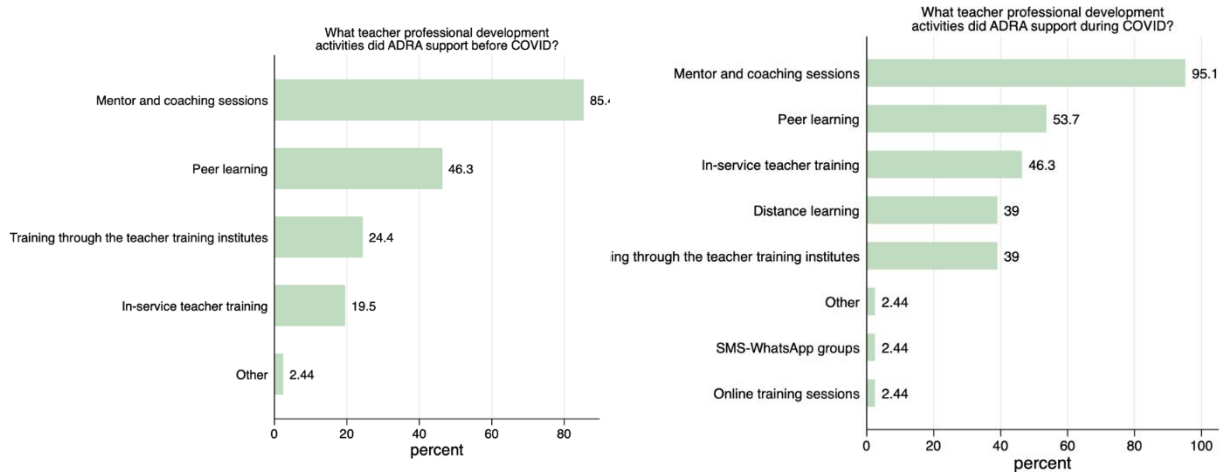


Figure 10: Professional development activities that ADRA supported before and during COVID-19 as reported by teachers.

Over 90 percent of teachers value mentoring and coaching above other forms of professional development. Teachers do not value the online learning opportunities, because of technological barriers and limited access and availability of resources. It is also unlikely a preferred option as it limits teacher interactions which are preferred by teachers. This may also be due to the capacity of the teachers. The online learning was provided by teacher institutions and due to the low education level of most teachers, the training may have been pitched at a higher level above what volunteer / underqualified teachers could grasp.



Figure 11: Professional development activities that teachers found most valuable.

According to teachers interviewed in the MTR, 78 percent reported having received gender inclusive teacher training. Head teachers verified this, all of whom (100 percent) reported that the program had provided gender inclusive teacher training. Most head teachers (87.5 percent) reported some

improvement in gender inclusion in the school and most (56 percent) reported some improvement in gender inclusive teacher practices. All head teachers (100 percent) thought that this has helped improve girls learning outcomes and helped change attitudes toward girls education. According to teachers interviewed in the MTR, 75 percent reporting having receive disability inclusive teacher training. The same proportion (75 percent) of head teachers reported the provision of disability inclusive training. Head teachers reported that the EiE project provided support to disability inclusion through communication materials and in monitoring disability inclusion in classrooms. Most (62 percent) of the head teachers reported how project contributions were making some changes in how disability was addressed at the school. Most teachers (75 percent) felt that this training had helped them improve their teaching practices.

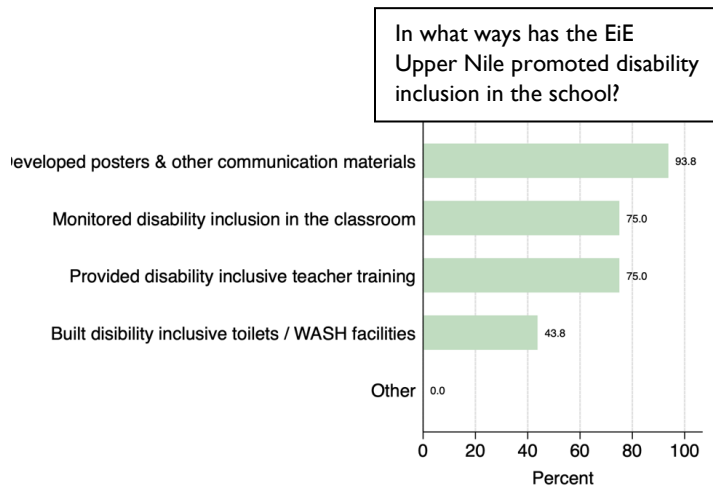


Figure 12: Ways in which the project was promoted disability inclusion according to teachers.

Support for teachers’ social and emotional wellbeing was carefully considered by the project and pleasingly, very few teachers (2.4 percent) and head teachers (6.2 percent) reported that no extra activities were done to support the social and emotional wellbeing of teachers.

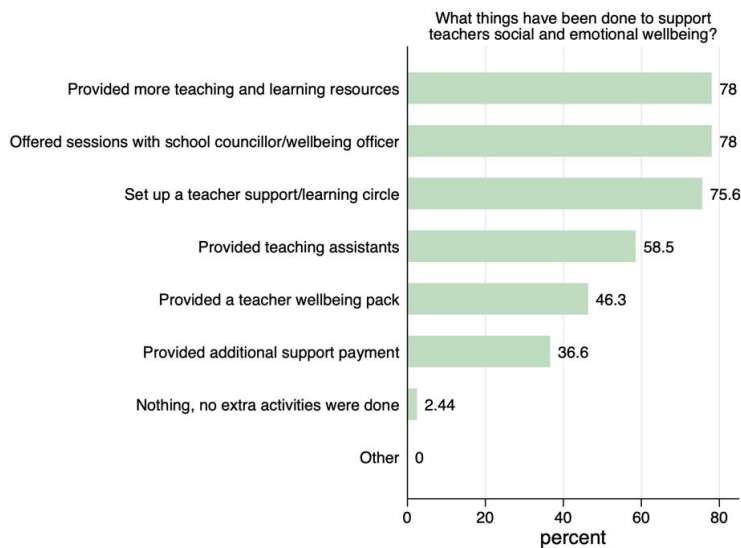


Figure 13: Things that have been done to support teachers social and emotional wellbeing according to teachers.

From the teachers perspective, teachers reported that they received teaching and learning resources, were offered sessions with the school councillor and engaged in teacher support/learning circles as key actions that helped their wellbeing. An additional support payment was paid to some (36.6 percent) teachers. Head teachers reported offering sessions with the school councillor (78 percent) and setting up teacher learning circles (75 percent) as the two most common actions that supported teacher wellbeing.

When asked what support should be provided for teachers' social emotional wellbeing, 93 percent of head teachers thought that offering more sessions with a school councillor and setting up teacher learning circles should be provided. SMC members thought that more teaching and learning resources (94 percent), advocacy to increase teacher salaries and benefits (87.5 percent) and more teacher professional development (87.5 percent) should be a focus for the EiE program in the next two years to improve teacher wellbeing.

4.5.4 Outcome 4 (parent, community and other stakeholder engagement)

This outcome is focused on improving the engagement of learners, parents and communities to strengthen schools and children's learning and development. This outcome includes efforts to strengthen partnerships between TVET centres and the private sector to improve the TVET sector.

A total of 278 (151M: 127F) parents and caregivers participated in the education events and sensitization meetings organised in the school communities. During monitoring visits to the schools, 30 percent of PTA members reported positive engagement with the school, evidenced by their involvement in building dikes around the schools for flood protection and other school initiatives. PTAs were also engaged in sensitizing the communities on the importance of education, child protection, girl's education and inclusive education, addressing discrimination and challenging cultural norms, with a particular focus on protection and dignity. This resulted in parents sending their children to school, especially female children. This is seen in the enrolment figures during 2020, where the enrolment of girls in the 'Education on Air' and tutor groups in the second quarter of 2020 was 2,135, while in the third quarter the enrolment of girls had increased by 503 to 2,638.

Indicator 4.2.1: # of parents (f/m) of learners in supported educational institutions participating in family-strengthening activities

Table 13: Number of parents of learners in supported educational institutions participating in family strengthening activities.

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Targets | 120 parents | 300 parents | 450 parents | 450 parents |
| Achieved | 68 parents | 496 parents | | |

In 2020, the project worked with 68 (36 f; 32 m) parents and caregivers of learners from the 16 primary schools through family strengthening activities, provision of guidance and counselling, and advice on positive parenting, roles of parents towards their children and roles of children in the family. The participants were PTA members, SMC members, religious leaders and caregivers selected from the community to attend the sessions. The indicator was underachieved due to flooding in the target areas, causing community member to focus on protecting their homes and to move family members and livestock to safer locations.

In 2021, 496 (293 M, 203 F), participated in family strengthening activities. According to the annual report, parents were able to provide guidance and counselling, and advocate for the rights of the children. They were also able to give support to children in the school. The increased participation of parents is attributed to the trainings provided by the project staff to the parents.

Overall, parental engagement in the target schools is high. Most parent respondents (between 87.5 – 93.8 percent) reported meeting with the teacher, participating in clean up days, attending PTA meetings and supporting back to school campaigns.

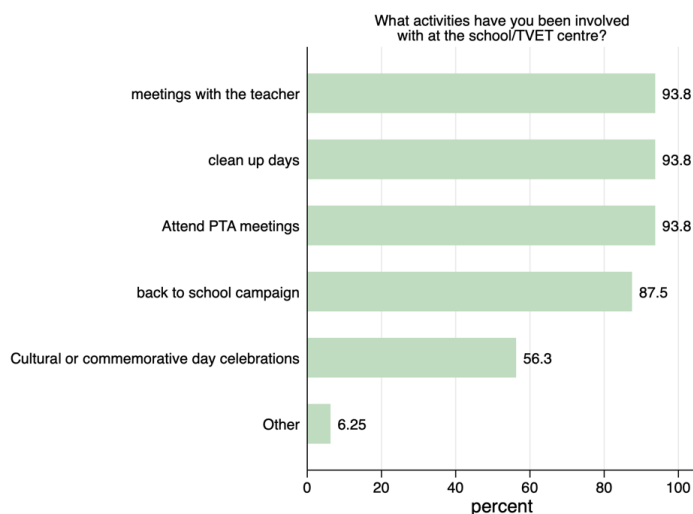


Figure 14: Activities that parents have been involved with at the school as reported by parents.

Regarding COVID-19 and return to school activities, most parents (50 percent) felt they were effectively engaged to support children’s safe return to school, with some (37.5 percent) reporting that engagement was effective and fewer (12.5 percent) that engagement was highly effective.

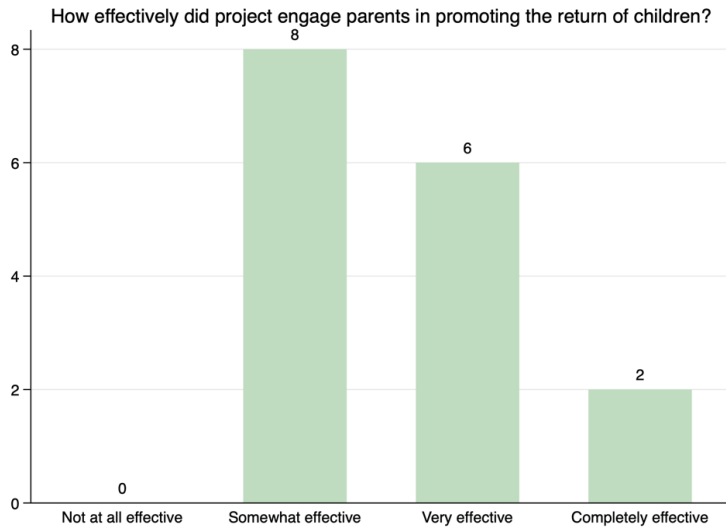


Figure 15: Parent's perspective on the effectiveness of the project's engagement with parents in promoting the return to school.

Parents felt that engagement could be improved by more frequent discussions with teachers (93.8 percent) and more information about their child's learning progress (81.3 percent). The same proportion of parents (81.3 percent) felt that it would be wonderful if there were more events showcasing student achievement and performance.

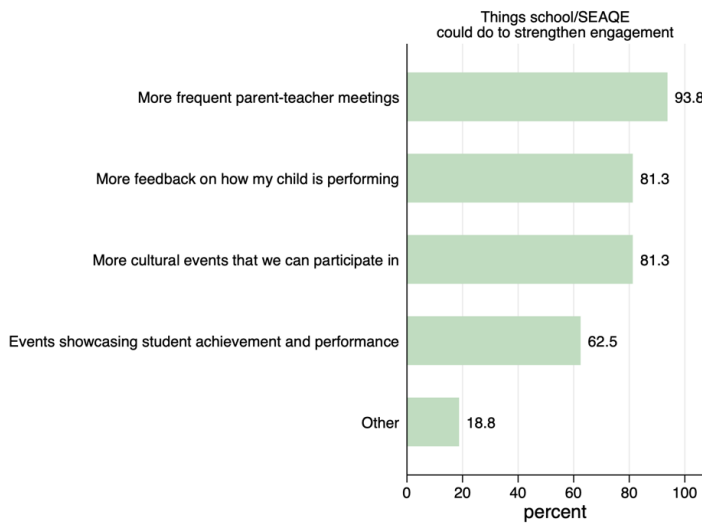


Figure 16: Things the school could do to strengthen engagement as reported by parents.

Parents also felt that more could be done to improve student outcomes. Their ideas included providing rewards and encouragement to students, providing extra resources, training for staff and catch up classes for students who needed extra support.

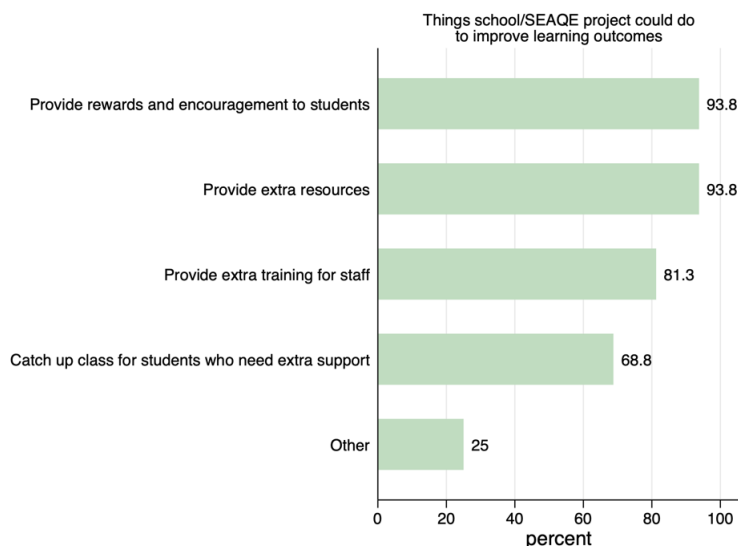


Figure 17: Things the school could do to improve learning outcomes as reported by parents.

4.5.5 Outcome 5 (civil society influence & policy change)

This outcome is focused on strengthening civil society influence on education policy and practice through improved capacity to track, monitor and advocate for inclusive education and the education rights of children who experience marginalisation. This outcome focuses on strengthening civil society fora and networks to support dialogue more effectively between civil society and governments.

There were limited activities conducted under this outcome in 2020 and most activities, including the establishment of networks and development of policy related products, are scheduled for 2021 onwards. Some initial work was conducted with CSOs.

Indicator 5.1.1: # of advocacy initiatives undertaken by civil society and non-governmental organisations

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| Targets | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Achieved | 0 | 0 | | |

In 2021, whilst policy related work did not progress, training for the emerging civil society networks in Nasir and Maiwut was undertaken to raise the capacity of CSO members in advocacy. The education actors were trained on how to advocate for inclusive education, identifying challenges facing the education sector in the counties and the state.

Indicator 5.2.1: # of civil society fora and networks that are created or strengthened to influence education for marginalised groups.

Table 14: Number of civil society fora and networks that are created or strengthened to influence education for marginalised groups.

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| Targets | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Achieved | 0 | 2 | | |

In 2021, one civil society association was engaged to establish a disabled people organisation (DPO) in Maiwut and Nasir Counties. The Umbrella Union of People with disability established three groups of disabled associations in Nasir and Maiwut counties: people with hearing impairment, people with visual impairment and people with physical impairment. Each group was structured with 7 executive members (chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, vice secretary, treasurer, vice treasurer information officer). The purpose of forming the disabled persons' associations was to advocate for the rights of people living with disabilities to get equal access to information and services from partners organisations, Government institutions, community-based organisations, and local community structures. In addition to the DPOs formed in Maiwut and Nasir Counties, Nasir Women's Association conducted advocacy on Peace and Security in Nasir County. The number of people reached through the advocacy was 291 (150 F, 141 M) persons and 64 (41 F, 23 M) youths and children in Nasir County.

According to EiE partners interviewed for the MTR, ADRA coordinated and partnered well with other NGOs and civil society groups. Two partner respondents agreed, and one respondent strongly agreed with the statement. Additionally, EiE partners agreed that the program was having a positive impact on government policies and programs.

4.6 IMPACT

Learning Assessments

The learning assessments are important indicators of effectiveness. Initiatives such as teacher professional development and/or an inclusive learning environment are often evaluated based on their contribution to student learning outcomes. The surveys and assessments provided the following by way of evaluation.

- Slightly more males (95.1 percent) than females (91.3 percent) love coming to school.
- Most male and female students have positive associations with school, they value their education, because they want to learn and become pilots, doctors, pastors, pharmacists, and further their education.
- Most students (80.8 percent male, 74.6 percent female) feel that their teacher is good at helping them learn and understand the lessons.
- Most students (92.5 percent male, 91.3 percent female) stated that children were not hurt at school. Only 2 percent of students reported that children were hurt at school. Of those, responses indicated that students were hurt from caning by the teacher and from student fighting. It was not readily reported, which implies corporal punishment is not a major issue in schools supported in the EiE Upper Nile project.
- Many students (63.7 percent male, 55.1 percent female) stated that they were not asked their opinion. This indicates that some students may not be given the opportunity to voice their concerns or speak out on issues that affect them.
- Most students (70.5 percent male, 74.5 percent female) that reported being asked their opinion, stated that their teachers would act. On these occasions, this has led to improvements in teaching practice, greater support to learners, books for reading, teaching and learning resources and sport materials.

The results indicate that students had a positive association with their school and feel they are listened to, and improvements are being made to the school learning environment as a result.

Student learning results

Grade 4

Similar results were found for students in literacy and numeracy with some notable gender differences.

Literacy

Male students were more likely (24.8 percent) to obtain scores above 80 percent in the literacy assessment and less likely (6.02 percent) to struggle answering questions. Very few female students (8.46 percent) scored above 80 percent and one in ten scored below 20 percent. The gender differences were statistically significant with a p value $P \leq 0.001$.

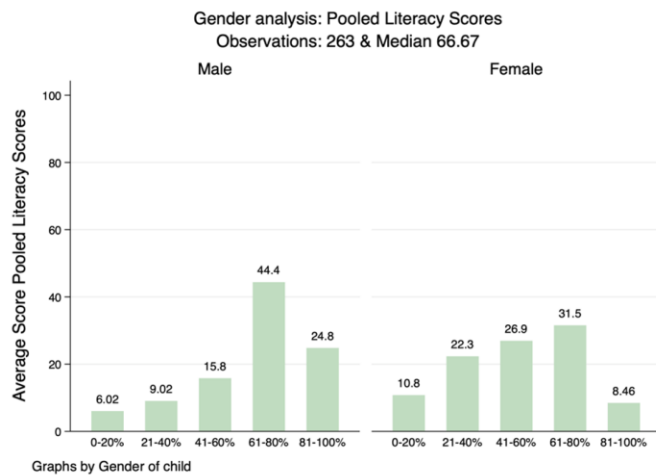


Figure 18: Pooled literacy scores by gender for grade 4 students

Students found the comprehension subtest the most difficult and 28.5 percent of female students compared to 12.8 percent of male students were unable to answer any comprehension tasks. This differs from the listening comprehension task, which female students perform better in. This task required them to listen to the enumerator read the story and then answer some questions which had been read to them. It implies students have developed listening skills but reading for meaning remains a challenge for some. This is a trend that is often seen in students who are developing their reading proficiency. Generally, speaking and listening skills are developed before reading and writing skills.

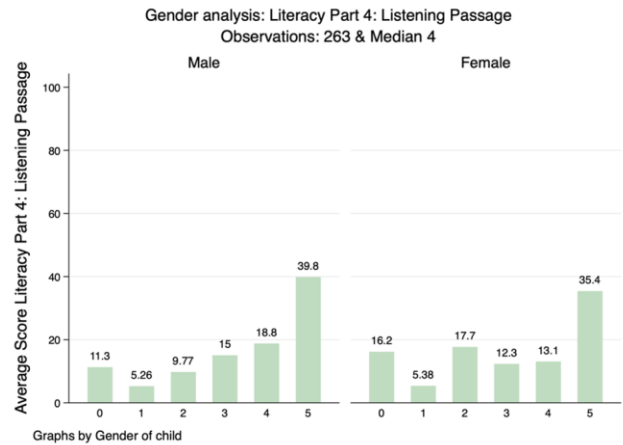
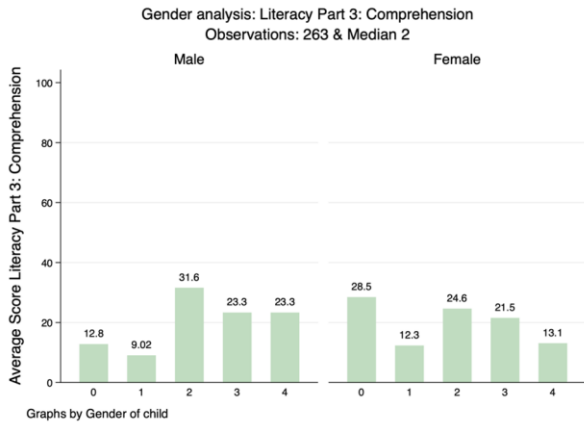


Figure 19: Comprehension and listening subtests for Grade 4 by gender.

Numeracy

Once again gender differences are statistically significant but with a p value $P \leq 0.01$, which is not as probable as the literacy results. One third of male students compared to only 18.5 percent of female students scored above 80 percent in the numeracy assessment. The variation in results suggests a diverse range of learners in classrooms that the EiE Upper Nile project is supporting. During the validation exercise, it was explained that a lot of pastoralist children attend EiE target schools and often miss school when they move with their parents. This could explain the variation in the class. It suggests that the pastoralist children are scoring lower than other children because they miss significant periods of school.

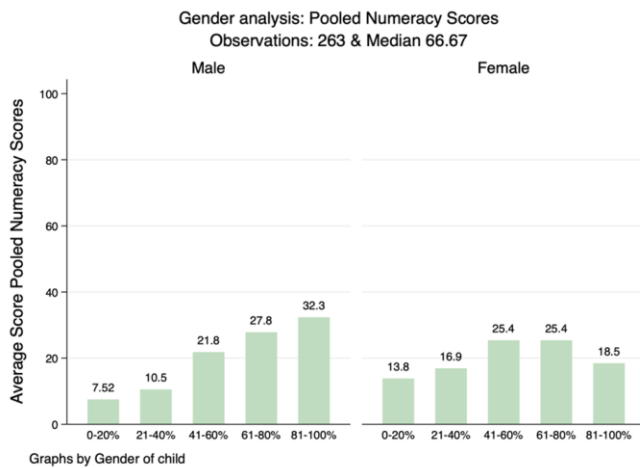


Figure 20: Pooled numeracy scores by gender for Grade 4 students.

Students scored well in subtraction (subtest 1) and interpreting graphs (subtest 4)

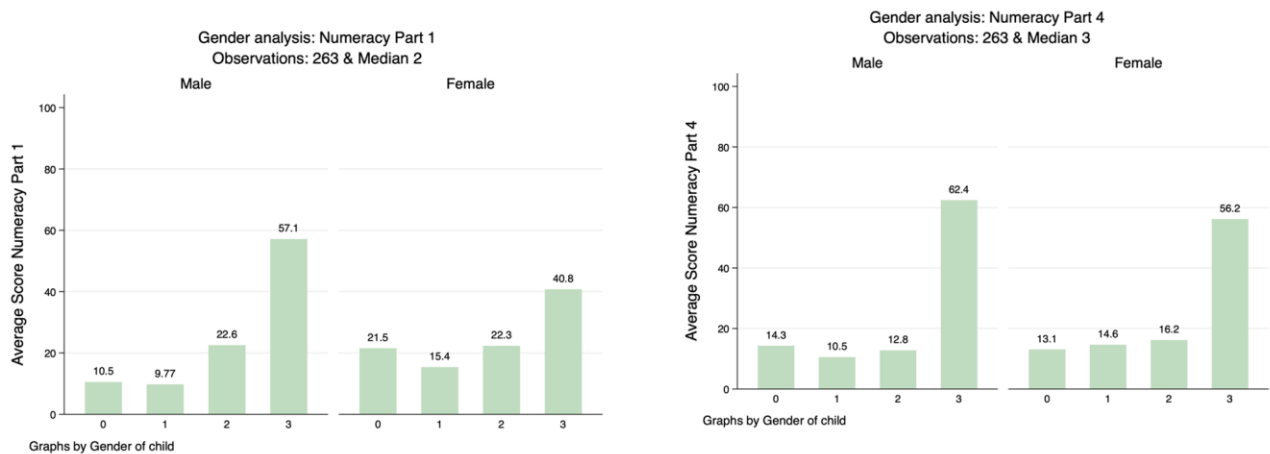


Figure 21: Subtraction and interpreting graphs subtest scores for Grade 4 by gender.

In these examples, almost 50 percent of students were able to answer all the questions on these subtests. This varies with word problems (subtest 2), where most students were unable to answer any questions.

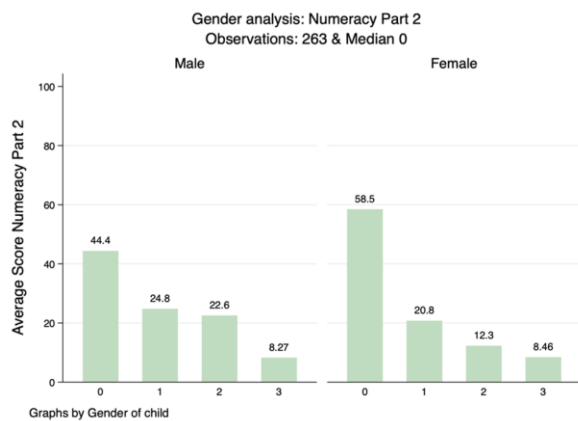


Figure 22: Maths word problem scores for Grade 4 students by gender.

It suggests students have difficulties understanding the presentation of word problems and being able to create and solve simple operations. Students may not have been given much practice in this Mathematics skill or are less familiar with its expression.

Grade 7

With only 19 assessments, it is not possible to form conclusive findings for literacy and numeracy learning outcomes among Grade 7 students, but some observations are worth noting. Students overall have performed better in the literacy assessment compared to the numeracy assessment. When the validation exercise was undertaken, there were suggestions that female students may not have answered the questions due to shyness and a fear of responding verbally to questions. This may have contributed to the gender differences visible in the Grade 4 assessments as well as Grade 7, but further investigation is required to verify the plausibility of this suggestion.

Literacy

Very few students (only 10 percent of male students) were able to score above 80 percent in the literacy assessment. Most students (45.5 percent of male, 50 percent of female) scored between 41 percent and 60 percent in the literacy assessment.

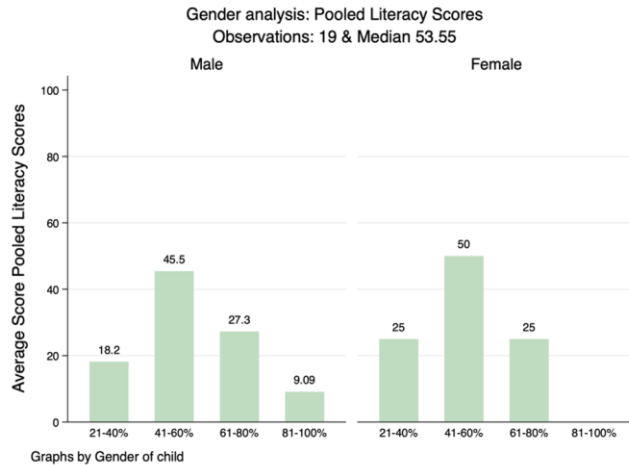


Figure 23: Pooled literacy scores for grade 7 students by gender.

Students scored highest in the reading subtest, which required them to read a passage with fluency. All students scored above 61 percent on this subtest. This varied with the listening comprehension task, where most students were only able to answer two of the four questions.

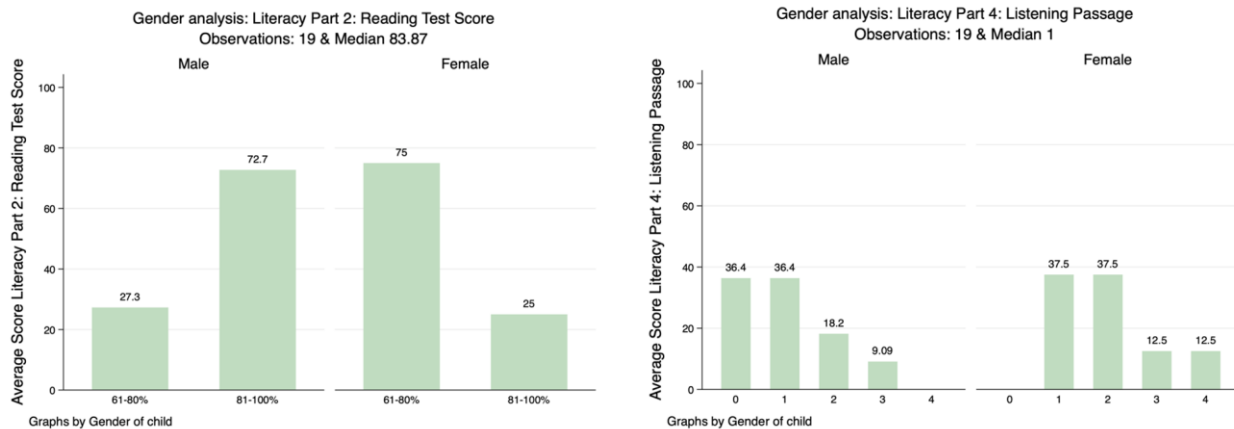


Figure 24: Reading and literacy passage subtests for grade 7 students by gender

Numeracy

Unlike literacy which shows some positive results obtained by students, very few students (9.09 male students only) scored between 41- 60 percent. Most (81.9 percent male, 62.5 percent female) scored below 20 percent. Due to the sample, despite the gender differences, these differences are not statistically significant.

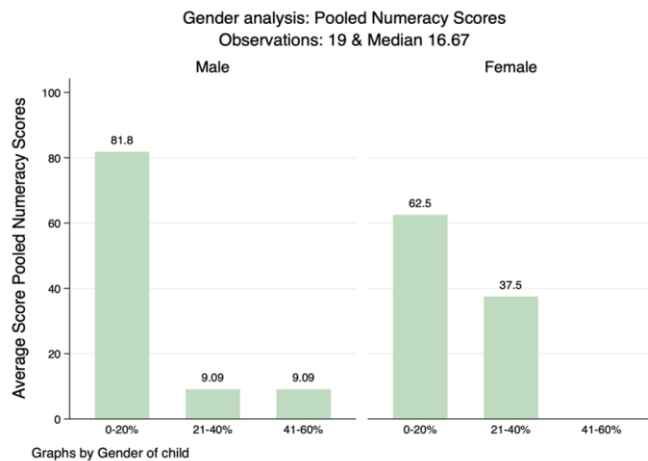


Figure 25: Pooled numeracy scores for grade 7 students by gender.

In understanding what gaps in Mathematics may exist, the subtests revealed a remarkably similar pattern. In Numeracy subtest 3 for example, most students either were unable to answer the question or were only able to answer one of the three questions correctly. The results imply that all numeracy skill areas, including operations, word problems, data representation and basic algebraic expressions, need support.

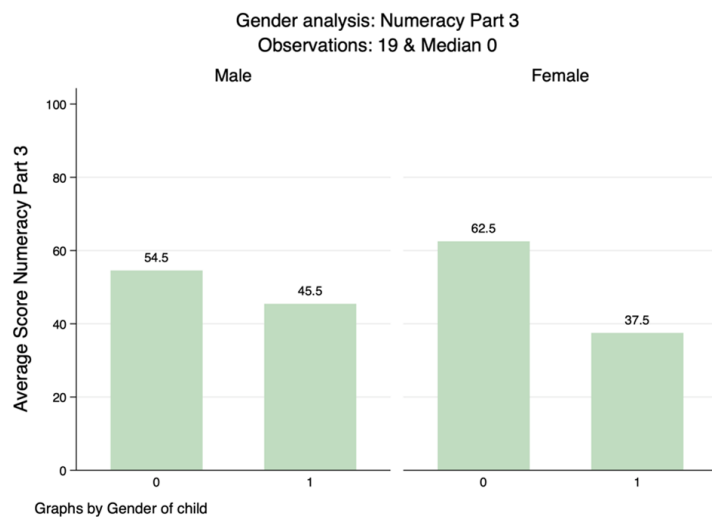


Figure 26: Numeracy scores for grade 7 students by gender.

Grade 10

With only two students undertaking this assessment (both were males), we cannot draw any conclusions from these results although as shown in the earlier grades, numeracy may be an area for support in the higher secondary grades.

Literacy

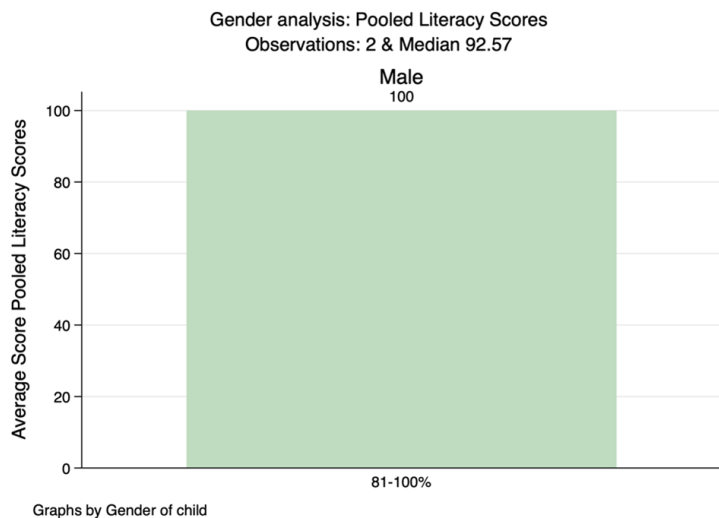


Figure 27: Pooled literacy scores for Grade 10 students.

Numeracy

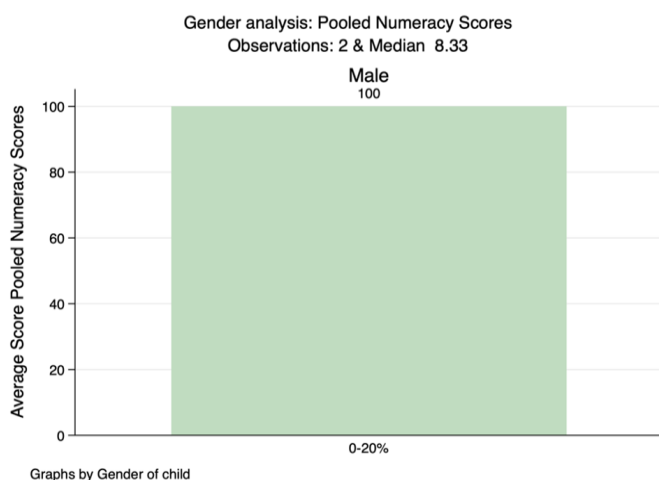


Figure 28: Pooled numeracy scores for grade 10 students.

4.7 SUSTAINABILITY

According to the sustainability strategy presented in the proposal, the project planned to build on previous education programming in Nasir and Maiwut counties and strengthen the capacity of communities, local authorities and civil society and contribute to changes in education access and quality. ADRA worked closely with local education authorities, chiefs and communities to design the project and reported a strong sense of ownership among the stakeholders. During project implementation, ADRA planned to engage education authorities in joint planning and monitoring with the hope that the experiences and lessons would remain with them after the project ends.

Teacher professional development was a feature of the sustainability strategy, providing a pathway for improving teacher competency, raising education quality and contributing to raising student learning outcomes.

It was envisaged that the school infrastructure improvements would be handed over to the government and communities, with maintenance plans developed that clearly show the roles and responsibilities of community and appropriate local authorities. The support provided to strengthen PTAs/SMCs would also ensure the community focuses on maintaining their school.

It was also envisaged that ADRA would endeavour to foster linkages with other education initiatives to enable the target schools and communities to access ongoing education system support, for example from the Girls Education South Sudan (GESS) and IMPACT projects.

COVID-19 impacted progress regarding these strategies. The two partner organisations provided their reflections on sustainability. (note – one other partner for the SEAQE 2 project in South Sudan responded. It was not possible to differentiate all questions). Partner respondents agreed that they know about the program's sustainability strategy. This is encouraging and indicates that sustainability is discussed among ADRA partners.

The two partner respondents also agreed that ADRA had coordinated and partnered well with other NGOs & civil society groups, which reflects positively on ADRA efforts to foster linkages to other education initiatives in South Sudan that may be able to provide support to education services in Upper Nile.

Two respondents agreed that the benefits of the project would last beyond the life of the program. Head teachers shared this positive result. Fifteen out of 16 head teachers (or 94 percent) thought that progress made would remain after the project ends. Interestingly, 7 out of 16 head teachers (43.75 percent) have shared approaches with other schools, which is a positive sign and indicates an intent by schools to share ideas and self-propagate promising practices.

Respondents thought that approaches used in COVID-19 could be used to support education for children who experience marginalisation. Almost one half of head teachers (43.75 percent) thought that the distance learning program could be expanded to support OOSC, suggesting there is some doubt in the relevance and applicability of the distance learning program for OOSC. This may be due to the limited availability of resources at home to support distance learning and/or a lack interest / motivation for self-learning among OOSC.

There are also promising signs that the support to teacher professional development will be integrated into the government system, with all three partner respondents noting agreement in the progress being made. All (3 partner respondents) felt that the child protection mechanism established can continue without ADRA's ongoing support with three doubting this at present.

Investment in capacity development of all stakeholders, PTAs, teachers and education authorities is leading to improved community ownership of schools, improved teaching practice and improved oversight and support for inclusive education by government authorities. This is a key element of ADRA's sustainability strategy in the Upper Nile and South Sudan more broadly and appears to be progressing well based on the feedback provided by partners and Head teachers.

4.8 CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

Child protection

The protection risks faced by children, including boys, girls and children with disabilities, in the target areas are profound. Violence against children in target schools and communities remains widespread.

According to 70 percent of teachers, boys face safety concerns in school, with high rates of violence (90 percent), bullying and harassment (90 percent) and shaming (62 percent) all reported. Similarly, 70 percent of teachers reported that girls face safety concerns at school, with GBV (97 percent), bullying and harassment (90 percent) and shaming (86 percent) identified as safety issues. 68 percent of teachers also reported safety concerns for children with disabilities at school, with discrimination (86 percent), bullying and harassment (87 percent), shaming (75 percent) and violence (64 percent) all cited. According to the 2020 Progress Report, an increase in sexual exploitation of girls during COVID-19 school closures was noted, with 290 girls enrolled at the start of 2020 and 214 out of schoolgirls reported as having fallen pregnant. Interestingly, it was noted that the proportion of girls falling pregnant in areas where distance learning was available was much less.

The project has made a significant effort to identify, respond and address the child protection issues faced by children in the target communities and schools. The project has trained stakeholders, including local authorities, head teachers, teachers, PTAs/SMCs, community and religious leaders and representatives of civil society groups on child protection, child rights, GBV, psychosocial support, inclusive education and Disaster Risk Reduction and supported the develop of action plans. The action plans articulate how stakeholders with work together on child protection and child safeguarding and the methods for mitigating child abuse and SGBV in the community. The project has also strengthened referral mechanisms between the target schools and relevant health and child protection service providers.

These efforts have resulted in an increase in the number of child abuse cases being report in target schools and communities, illustrating that the child protection mechanisms established are working. In 2020, a total of 664 (343 f, 321 m) cases were reported. These included 121 (78 f, 44 m) child protection cases (neglect, early / forced marriage and child labour), 342 (166 f, 176 m) referrals for psychosocial support and counselling, and 200 (99 f, 101 f) referrals to health services.

Furthermore, focused stakeholder engagement on specific child protection issues, such as early and forced marriage, have resulted in locally relevant solutions. Following education conferences held in December 2020, local stakeholders recommended the enactment of bylaws to protect girls from harmful practices, such as early/forced marriage.

5 LESSONS LEARNED

- The strategies used to support distance learning in the Upper Nile, namely pre-recorded lessons provided to small groups of children in locations outside of the school, could be replicated to support the provision of education for pastoralist children on the move.
- Investments in strengthening the capacity of PTA and local authorities has led to more than expected support for project implementation.
- Flexibility, an open mind and adaptation were instrumental in responding to COVID-19 and the education needs of children during the pandemic.