



Conflict-Sensitive Teacher Education: Viewing EDC's Experience with the South Sudan Teacher Education Project through a Conflict-Sensitive Lens

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# CONFLICT-SENSITIVE TEACHER EDUCATION: VIEWING EDC'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE SOUTH SUDAN TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT THROUGH A CONFLICT-SENSITIVE LENS

LAINIE REISMAN AND CORNELIA JANKE

*Using the USAID-funded South Sudan Teacher Education Project (SSTEP) as a case study, this paper examines the emerging guidance on the conflict-sensitive design and implementation of teacher education policy and programming in conflict-affected environments. We refer in particular to the guidelines and conceptual frameworks provided by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) in its 2013 “INEE Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education (CSE)” and “Minimum Standards for Education,” which were contextualized specifically for South Sudan. These works provide a conflict-sensitive lens through which to view the SSTEP design and implementation.*

*It is important to note that this is a retroactive analysis. SSTEP, which was implemented by Massachusetts-based Education Development Center from 2011 to 2014, was designed and largely implemented before the INEE published its CSE guidance documents. This perspective allows us to review how events actually unfolded, and to speculate whether and how they might have been different had the CSE teacher training guidance been applied. More specifically, it allows us to consider what the outcome might have been had a full and robust conflict analysis been undertaken before initiating SSTEP. This paper is intended primarily for policy makers, practitioners, program designers, and researchers who are working to improve education in fragile and conflict-affected environments.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Using the USAID-funded South Sudan Teacher Education Project (SSTEP) as a case study, this paper examines the emerging guidance on the conflict-sensitive design and implementation of teacher education policy and programming in conflict-affected environments. We refer in particular to the guidelines and conceptual frameworks provided by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) in its 2013 “INEE Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education (CSE)” and “Minimum Standards for Education,” which were contextualized specifically for South Sudan. These works provide a conflict-sensitive lens through which to view the SSTEP design and implementation. In reviewing recommended conflict-sensitive strategies from the perspective of a teacher education project that was, at that time operating within a “conflict recovery” environment, we highlight the following:

- The ways the initial program design can affect the applicability of recommended conflict-sensitive education strategies
- The roles that decisions by donors, implementing partners, and ministries play in facilitating, or undermining, the application of recommended conflict-sensitive teacher education strategies
- The extent to which the recommended conflict-sensitive strategies are realistic and effective when applied to existing dynamics

It is important to note that this is a retroactive analysis. SSTEP, which was implemented by Massachusetts-based Education Development Center (EDC) from 2011 to 2014, was designed and largely implemented before the INEE published its CSE guidance documents. This perspective allows us to review how events actually unfolded, and to speculate whether and how they might have been different had the CSE teacher training guidance been applied. More specifically, it allows us to consider what the outcome might have been had a full and robust conflict analysis been undertaken before initiating SSTEP. This paper is intended primarily for policy makers, practitioners, program designers, and researchers who are working to improve education in fragile and conflict-affected environments.

## BACKGROUND

South Sudan is a nation seriously affected by ongoing conflict, both with the North and among the South Sudanese themselves. The Republic of Sudan's recent history has been dominated by two civil wars, from 1955 to 1972 and 1983 to 2005, and culminating in South Sudan's independence in 2011. The conflict is rooted in an identity clash between the mostly Arabic-speaking and Muslim North and the mostly English-speaking and Christian sub-Saharan South, and in the South's struggle to gain equal access to mineral resources, political influence, and government services. This longstanding conflict has created formidable obstacles to South Sudan's ability to develop critical governance, economic and social institutions, and infrastructure.

In January 2005, southern Sudan, represented by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with Sudan that granted the South regional autonomy and guaranteed its representation in a national power-sharing government. After the CPA was signed, southern Sudan's government institutions began to focus on developing their human and administrative capacities; however, after five decades of civil conflict, virtually no governance systems existed. The dual tasks of institution-building and basic service delivery required massive resources (time, human, financial); the limited resources at hand were doled out carefully, with political and security considerations taking precedence. Support from neighboring countries (Sudan in the north, Kenya and Uganda in the east) and international donors did allow South Sudan to develop some institutions and limited service delivery, but such support was not sufficient to meet the extensive needs of the education sector and other social sectors.

In January 2011, in a formal referendum on independence, 99 percent of southern Sudanese voted to split from Sudan, and the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) has been recognized since then as an independent nation. Nevertheless, the country remains embroiled in internal conflict and in ongoing disputes with Sudan over border areas, oil, and citizenship issues. In 2011, oil disputes with Sudan led the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GOSS) to shut down its oil wells, which had provided around 98 percent of the nation's revenues. This severely constrained cash flow to the GOSS and resulted in drastic austerity measures, that severely limited funding for social services, including education. It took more than a year to get oil revenues back on track, and even then, most were diverted to pay for security. Oil disputes between Sudan and RSS are ongoing, and they threaten both nations' political and economic stability (DfID 2013).

New challenges arose in December 2013, when a “clash of political egos” between GOSS president Salva Kiir, who belongs to the Dinka ethnic group, and his vice president, Riek Machar, who belongs to the Nuer group, sparked an ethnic conflict that resulted in thousands of deaths. The hostilities between the Dinka and the Nuer (which also involve other smaller tribes) are based on longstanding grievances and cultural divides, including ethnic violence during the two civil wars. What seems to have begun as a political confrontation between Kiir and Machar quickly deteriorated into an ethnic conflict that reflected the deep divides within South Sudanese society. The root causes of this current conflict echo those that fueled the past 50 years of unrest: ethnic and cultural tensions, exclusion from decision making, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, and the normalization of violence.

South Sudan will remain among the least-developed nations in the world for the foreseeable future. Its average per-capita GDP as of 2013 was \$1,081, and the World Bank estimated that the current conflict would result in a loss of up to 15 percent of potential GDP in 2014. Moreover, an estimated 15 of every 100 children will die before their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable diseases, and 73 percent of South Sudan’s population is illiterate (World Bank 2015).

### EDUCATION STATUS

**Educational context, pre-comprehensive peace agreement.** Between 1989 and 2005, most of the international assistance provided in southern Sudan’s war zone was coordinated through Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), a consortium of UN agencies and 35 NGOs. Made possible by an agreement negotiated between the UN, the government of Sudan, and the SPLA, OLS was organized to address the combined effects of famine and long-term conflict by providing food and humanitarian aid. Throughout this period, OLS also gradually increased its support for education. By 2002, 14 OLS NGO partners were supporting 1,486 schools, while an additional 23 local NGOs provided education without OLS support, bringing the estimated number of functioning schools to between 1,600 and 1,700, meant to serve a primary school-aged population of approximately 1.4 million (UNICEF 2003; IRIN n.d.).

Most schools not supported by OLS were run either by the Catholic Church, relatively successfully, or by local NGOs and community-based organizations, with little monitoring or support from international agencies. The instruction offered in these schools depended on their location. Schools in the states of Juba, Wau, and Malakal were controlled by the North; as a result, instruction was in Arabic,

known locally as the “Arabic pattern.” Schools in many of the southern rural areas were controlled by the SPLA, and thus followed a missionary-influenced English-language pattern. Meanwhile, in disputed states such as Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Abyei, schools depended on whatever instruction was available and acceptable to those providing the education. The nature of instruction also depended on the school’s distance from active conflict zones at the front lines or near a border. Those in such locations often used a combined approach, such as the Sudanese national curriculum taught in either Arabic or English; the SPLA curriculum taught in English, Ugandan, or Kenyan; a curriculum from a neighboring country taught in English; or they simply had no coherent curriculum (UNICEF 2007, 78).

An education baseline study conducted by USAID in mid-2003 across a representative sample of primary schools in southern Sudan’s four regions (West Equatoria, East Equatoria, Bahr El Ghazal, and Upper Nile) offers useful benchmarking data for that period. Against a backdrop of gross primary school enrollment of 25 percent, the study found that 70 percent of all enrollees sampled attended primary grades 1 through 4 (10 percent of those enrolled in each grade were repeaters), while only 30 percent attended primary grades 5 through 8. Of every 100 children enrolled in first grade, only 50 made it to grade 4, and only 31 percent continued to grade 7. Meanwhile, 59 percent of children in grade 3 tested at the mean or above in reading; 36 percent did so in numeracy.

Nationwide, boys represented 70 percent of enrollees, and the gender gap in the sampled regions ranged from 28 percentage points difference to 72 percentage points difference, with boys always overrepresented. Focus group discussions revealed different challenges for male versus female enrollment. The most common factors discouraging boys from enrolling in school included poverty, insecurity, and their involvement in cattle-rearing; the factors for girls included poverty, early marriage, the workload at home, and pregnancy. In 2003, fewer than 20 secondary schools existed in southern Sudan. Most of them went only through primary grades 7 or 8, used Ugandan or Kenyan curricula and teachers, and allowed students with the means to travel to sit for exams and continue their education in those countries (CARE 2003, 28).

**Educational context, CPA-present.** Primary school enrollments in southern Sudan approximately doubled between 2000 and 2005, from 0.3 million to 0.7 million. Despite this progress, the gross primary enrollment was still at only 60 percent by 2005, lower than in most other countries in the region. Moreover, only 66 percent of each primary grade 1 class reached grade 5, and only 22 percent of

youth aged 15 to 24 could read and write. Southern Sudan also had the world's lowest ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary school: three times as many boys as girls attended school, and the literacy rate of females ages 15 to 24 was only 15 percent (World Bank 2012, 19).

The CPA brought hope that hostilities would soon cease, creating a more promising environment for education. Donors increased their support for education, and thousands of individuals displaced by the war began to return. For these reasons, access to education improved dramatically by 2009, with 3,400 primary schools and 196 secondary schools in operation. Total primary school enrollments had risen to 1.4 million, representing a 51 percentage point increase in the enrollment rate from 2000, to 72 percent.

However, the primary school completion rate was 26 percent, the average pupil-to-classroom ratio was 129:1, and there was one textbook available for every four pupils. Many children were still out of school, and over-age students made up 85 percent of all primary school enrollees (World Bank 2012, 25; DFID 2012b, 6). Four years later, in 2013, more than 70 percent of adults in South Sudan were still unable to read and write, and 90 percent of primary school students dropped out before completing grade 8. Fifty-eight percent of primary school-age children were out of school, and over-age students made up 87 percent of all primary school enrollees. In 2013, the net primary school enrollment rate was 42 percent (South Sudan 2013). These disappointing statistics obscure the fact that South Sudan's National Education Ministry, with support from the international education community, had worked hard for more than a decade to improve education. When civil conflict erupted again in 2013, the ministry had made slow but steady gains in education policy, systems, and capacity development at the central and state levels.

CONFLICT-SENSITIVE TEACHER EDUCATION

Table 1: Basic Education Indicators, South Sudan, 2013

<b>Total pupils enrolled in primary school</b>	1,311,467
<b>Gross primary school enrollment rate</b>	61.9% (boys: 71.7.4%; girls: 50.9%)
<b>Net primary school enrollment rate</b>	41.5% (boys: 47.1%; girls: 35.4%)
<b>Percentage of over-age pupils</b>	87.3% (boys: 87.7%; girls 86.7%)
<b>Net primary grade 1 intake rate for six-year-olds</b>	11.9%
<b>Enrollment in the Alternative Education System</b>	208,570 (57.1% male; 42.9% female) 88.8% age 16 and over 84.2% enrolled in Accelerated Learning Program
<b>Primary school teachers</b>	27,709 (male 87.4%; female 12.6%)
<b>Primary school teacher status and qualifications</b>	Paid 72.2%; unpaid: 25.8% Completed primary: 34% Completed secondary: 61.9% Completed university: 4% Trained: 39.8%; untrained 59.9%

Source: Government of the Republic of South Sudan (2014)

Table 2: Average Growth in Student Enrollments, by Level, 2000-2013

Level	Average Annual Enrollment Growth (%)							
	2000	2005	2009	2013	2000-05	2005-09	2000-09	2009-13
<b>Primary Education</b>	331,000	669,000	1,380,580	1,311,467	15	20	17	-5
<b>Secondary Education</b>	7,740	17,465	44,027	46567	18	26	21	5.45
<b>Higher Education</b>	15,102 (2002)		23,968					
<b>Vocational Training</b>	724		2,760					

Source: World Bank (2012); Government of the Republic of South Sudan (2014)



This improved access to education has highlighted complex issues related to school quality, and to teaching skills in particular. South Sudan currently faces an extreme teacher shortage, difficult teaching and learning conditions, and a low level of education and skill among its teachers. The pupil-to-teacher ratio is far from ideal; with 1.6 million children enrolled in school and only 17,000 teachers on the government payroll in 2011, the teacher-pupil ratio was roughly 80:1. An additional estimated 10,000 “volunteer” teachers lowered the ratio to 50:1 (Goldsmith 2011, slide 10).

Volunteer teachers are typically members of the community who have completed a basic level of schooling but have not had any teacher training. They may receive some form of compensation from their local government or their community, but they are not government employees. Their volunteer status raises a number of serious concerns, such as how and by whom the volunteers were selected, what training they received, and what support the government provided them, if any. The answers to these concerns vary by state, by school, and by time period; accessible records of these decisions do not exist.

Conservative estimates are that 1.8 million children, at a gross enrollment rate of 70 percent, will be enrolled in primary school in South Sudan by 2016. Maintaining the existing 50:1 teacher-pupil ratio would require 35,000 teachers—8,000 more than there were four years earlier (Goldsmith 2011, slide 10). Providing adequate education for a rising number of students entails overcoming many obstacles, not least of which is finding—and paying—these additional teachers.

This raises further questions about the qualifications and training of the teachers who will fill this gap. One complication is the low level of education of most teachers, particularly those in the primary schools. According to a 2012 World Bank Report, 46 percent of teachers have only a primary school education and 45 percent have a secondary education; only 40 percent have any sort of professional training. Of the volunteer teachers, a large majority have completed no more than eight years of primary school (119). Given the poor quality of the schools they attended, many primary school teachers are unlikely to fully understand the content, let alone the pedagogy, of the curriculum they must teach. There also are questions about the systems for testing and certifying both primary and secondary school graduates, as numerous cases of false certification have occurred. Finally, for teachers who live in the north of the country and have been schooled in Arabic, English literacy is a tremendous challenge. Primary and secondary school graduates in these regions might have no English-language

skills at all, yet they may be tasked with teaching the national curriculum, which is in English.

In addition to the shortage of trained teachers, there is no real system in place for managing and supervising teachers, the parent teacher associations and communities participate little in school governance, teaching materials are inadequate, and there is a lack of basic school infrastructure. These conditions are exacerbated in some states by a continuing influx of refugees and internally displaced persons, many of whom have different educational backgrounds and learning needs; their presence in the classrooms often creates interethnic tension. Budget austerity measures imposed in 2012 heightened these challenges, as the government cut support for state-run teacher education colleges and significantly reduced education service delivery (resulting in school closures and failure to pay teachers). Many teachers went months with no pay, which led to more teacher attrition and exacerbated the cycle of poor school quality and high dropout rates.

### TEACHER EDUCATION

Until 2012, South Sudan's National Teacher Education Strategy, first developed in 2006 and amended periodically, provided for both pre- and in-service teacher training. The strategy stated that pre-service training should be provided by experienced tutors (with a teaching background) at a Teacher Training Institute (TTI) in each state and two County Education Centers (CECs) in each county, for a national total of 10 TTIs and 158 CECs (Goldsmith 2011, slide 10). This teacher-certification framework called for the TTIs to provide a two-year pre-service training program for candidates with a secondary degree and a four-year residential training program for those who had completed primary grade 8 through secondary 3. Active teachers were to participate in a four-year in-service training program through distance learning and face-to-face instruction at CECs, and certification would be granted to all teachers who passed a common teacher exam, which was administered at the end of each training cycle.

According to the Teacher Education Strategy, overall policies and standards for the teaching force were to be established and monitored by South Sudan's National Education Ministry. While many policies and standards are still pending, those that have been approved were to be implemented by the state education ministries. Each state was expected to do the following:

- Prepare budgets for teacher salaries and benefits, based on projected demand (enrollments, new schools, pupil-teacher ratios, qualifications structure)
- Apply educational and teacher standards when managing the teaching staff
- Register, appoint, grade, post, supervise, support, and discipline the teaching staff
- Ensure that teachers' salaries and allowances are paid on time and according to scale
- Assess and promote staff based on in-service training, performance, and criteria specified by a teacher career ladder
- Monitor progress in meeting education-sector objectives for teachers in each state (Hartwell 2012)

These expectations were unrealistic, given South Sudan's poor teacher training infrastructure, a lack of management skill at the central and state levels, insufficient funding, and the dearth of existing or prospective teachers who met the minimum education requirements. Not unsurprisingly, neither the National Education Ministry nor the states met these expectations.

South Sudan's General Education Bill, passed in 2012, represented an important step forward in updating the strategy and clarifying basic elements of the education system structure. However, the bill failed to adequately address a number of critical areas of education policy, including teacher education. Several policies were under development in late 2013 when South Sudan entered its latest period of crisis, but due largely to a lack of technical capacity at the ministry and infighting between ministry officials, there were few structured teacher education policies in place as of 2014.

While education policy is determined at the national level, the ministry suffers from a lack of qualified education experts. Moreover, there is limited implementation of policies that exist at the state level. In short, many states simply do not comply with national policy, and some operate independently and in clear violation of approved policies. This is largely due to the regional nature of South Sudanese governance, to ethnic and language differences between the remote northern states (which were historically aligned with Khartoum) and the southern states, and the geographic isolation of state education administrators. With a large portion of scarce national resources used for defense, state ministries often make do on their own and maintain only a tenuous link to the National Education Ministry.

### **THE SOUTH SUDAN TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT**

SSTEP grew directly out of the Sudan Basic Education and Technical Assistance Projects, which were operated previously with support from USAID and other donors, such as the South Sudan Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF-SS), the Basic Services Fund (BSF), and the Education Rehabilitation Project. The project was initially conceived in the years of optimism following the signing of the CPA, and in 2011 USAID awarded EDC \$30 million over a three-year period to implement SSTEP. The idea was that SSTEP would pick up where the other projects had left off in terms of teacher training activities, particularly those begun with funds from MDTF-SS and BSF. The objectives of this initiative were to work closely with the National Education Ministry and ten state education ministries, and through the TTIs and CECs, to (1) improve policy frameworks and management systems to professionalize teaching and ensure the delivery of effective, good-quality education services; (2) improve teacher performance; and (3) increase access to curriculum-based teaching and learning materials. EDC proposed to achieve the following:

- Five policies relating to HR, affirmative action, accreditation, teacher certification, and an Education Support Network, and five standards relating to head teachers, TTI tutors, CEC tutors, inspectors, and supervisors
- A unified pre- and in-service curriculum
- In-service tutor and student materials for five subjects
- Pre-service tutor guides and student teacher materials for five subjects

- Renovated or new resource centers at each of the 12 to 15 institutions in the Education Support Network
- 4,751 teachers on the path to certification
- 115 TTI and CEC tutors trained in and using the new unified curriculum
- 5,300 head teachers, inspectors, and officials trained in the new curriculum and in other critical areas
- 246,830 learning materials developed or acquired and distributed (Education Development Center 2011)

However, by the time the project began in October 2011, it was already clear that the education sector still faced many challenges. Within a few months, EDC staff were forced to evaluate which of their program objectives and design elements seemed unfeasible, and they began working with the ministry and USAID to adjust the program's focus and activities to set feasible objectives. The specific conditions that affected SSTEP's implementation within the first year were as follows:

- **No operational budgets for the Curriculum Development Center, the TTIs, and the CECs.** Under the austerity measures resulting from oil disputes with North Sudan, the government was not able to provide adequate funding to any of the teacher preparation institutions SSTEP had planned to work with.<sup>1</sup>As a result, only one government TTI and a limited number of CECs were operational during this time. In-service training through the ministry training structures was thus severely limited.
- **A lack of tutors for the in-service training model.** With the closing of the TTIs and consequent lack of teacher trainers, SSTEP turned to government-paid tutors who were linked to the CECs or the state ministries to deliver in-service training and support. The state tutors typically were retired teachers linked to an operational CEC and tasked with training, coaching, mentoring, and supervising teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> While specific data on actual budget figures are hard to obtain, SSTEP estimated that only 30 percent of the ministry budget was allocated in FY2012-2013. Roughly 10 percent of the overall FY2012-2013 austerity budget of 6.7 billion South Sudanese pounds (USD 1.3 billion) is allocated to education. Following this logic, an estimate of total funding for education in South Sudan for 2012-2013 is in the range of USD 40 million.

Unfortunately, the government tutors in many states were unavailable, unqualified, or simply not working, since they were not being paid. With many CECs nonoperational, the tutors were left unsupervised and without clear roles and responsibilities. To address the dearth of tutors, SSTEP hired a modest number of trainers to staff its field offices, which added unforeseen costs to the project. With limited financial resources, SSTEP was not in a position to hire the high number of trainers needed to ensure quality in-service training in each state.

- **The departure of a large number of teachers who had been trained through the MDTF-SS and BSF.** Although more than 1,600 teachers were enrolled in the MDTF-SS, SSTEP was only able to locate and re-enroll approximately 900. The reasons for the high dropout rate ranged from teachers finding other (paid) jobs, including in the police force or the army, to a loss of interest in the teaching profession, which was related to delays in being paid. As a result, to maintain its commitment to USAID to train a large number of teachers, SSTEP had to work with the state ministries to recruit more teachers.
- **A lack of established systems to regulate the teaching profession.** While SSTEP was committed to improving policy frameworks and management systems to professionalize teaching, progress was slow due to delays in passing and then implementing the education bill. Teacher professional development, including certification, remained a pending issue on the agenda. There was a lack of agreement within the ministry about the minimum education level required to enter a TTI or CEC, or to attend in-service training. Some in the ministry believed that teachers should have at least a grade 8 education, whereas others (along with SSTEP staff) believed that all interested candidates should be eligible for some teacher training program. This disagreement made it difficult for SSTEP to offer appropriate training to teachers with a broad range of education and skill levels.
- **The lack of sufficient experienced curriculum developers among the ministry staff to complete and revise the existing teacher training curriculum.** While SSTEP had anticipated leading a curriculum review process and supporting the development of materials, it had envisioned that the ministry would conduct the majority of the work. Unfortunately, due to various factors, including the budget, the Curriculum Development Center at Maridi was largely dysfunctional.

To address these conditions and others, EDC submitted a change in approach to USAID in December 2012 that it outlined in a “master plan,” which was shaped in consultation with the ministry and USAID. The main elements of the plan, which detailed the first major shift in approach, were as follows:

- **Reduce the number of teachers and increase the number of tutors to be trained.** Due to the lower than anticipated number of teachers who re-enrolled in teacher training and the ministry’s lack of funds to maintain the minimum infrastructure for in-service training at the state level, the overall target for the number of teachers undergoing training was reduced. Realizing that the emphasis would be on in-service training moving forward, and understanding both the critical role and the low capability of government tutors, support and training were expanded to reach more tutors with an in-depth training program.
- **Focus on early primary grade teachers and propose a lower primary provisional certificate.** Given the high number of lower primary teachers with little to no training, SSTEP proposed a two-year in-service training model whereby teachers would receive a lower primary provisional certificate and have five years to upgrade to a full primary teaching certificate. SSTEP, USAID, and some in the ministry viewed this as a cost-effective and efficient way to upgrade the skills of thousands of teachers in a relatively short time. The same delivery model would continue, which included three weeks of face-to-face training three times per year, cluster meetings, and community-based studies. Following this pattern, teachers could obtain the lower primary provisional certificate in two years and the full certificate in four years.
- **Emphasize reading.** Recognizing the importance of literacy in South Sudan and the lack of materials and methods for teaching reading and writing, SSTEP proposed (1) to integrate this teaching into the English syllabus of the unified teacher training curriculum, (2) to design new literacy training materials, and (3) to train a core group of tutors as trainers. This was related to USAID’s guidance on emphasizing reading. Since the language of instruction in South Sudan is emphatically English, with little political interest in mother-tongue instruction, there is a critical gap in the English literacy skills of teachers and students alike.

- **Expand the number of SSTEP offices based in the states.** SSTEP staff initially worked from one office in Juba. In response to the challenges the ministry faced in terms of the number and qualifications of tutors, SSTEP expanded its field presence to provide more direct support to tutors and teachers alike. Offices eventually opened in all ten states, with five staff positions each: three technical and two operational.

By December 2013, SSTEP had trained close to 3,000 teachers and tutors; however, none of them had completed the four-year in-service training program and few were likely to complete it during the project's life cycle. Furthermore, the in-service model agreed to by all stakeholders had proven difficult to implement, due to the widely dispersed teachers, limited TTI and CEC technical and delivery capacity as well as resources, and difficulty selecting and training tutors. With what it cost annually to support the in-service model, SSTEP would have run out of funding without any certainty that the teachers enrolled in the program would be formally recognized (e.g., certified) by the GOSS.

SSTEP had been advocating all along for the lower primary provisional certificate, which would have enabled its trainees to take a certification exam during the life of the project. Despite significant efforts by SSTEP, the ministry had not made any progress toward approving the certificate, largely due to disagreements over whether it was worth training teachers who lacked a secondary school degree. Given these obstacles and the arrival of new USAID staff in South Sudan, SSTEP embarked on a new round of modifications with USAID and the ministry in December 2013. The major emphasis of this shift in approach included the following changes:

- **Expand work on policy and teacher training curriculum development.** To lay the foundation for future teacher professional development in light of the challenges noted previously, it was agreed that SSTEP should focus its remaining resources on foundational elements of policy and curriculum development.
- **Suspend in-service training activities at the state level.** It was argued that, with more resources devoted to policy and curriculum, continued training for a few thousand teachers was a lower priority, particularly given the question of whether these teachers would be formally recognized.



- **Accelerate implementation of a residential teacher training program, beginning with the one functional TTI.** Recognizing the limitations of the in-service model in South Sudan, stakeholders agreed that residential training, whereby teachers would reside at a teacher training institution for two years, should be prioritized in order to continue training teachers who were close to finishing the full curriculum.
- **Pilot an alternative afternoon in-service model in one state.** SSTEP agreed that it would be important to pilot a new service delivery model for in-service teachers that released teachers early to attend afternoon training sessions.
- **Provide intensive support to key CEC and TTI tutors in all states.** Recognizing the key role of tutors, SSTEP planned to build their capacity rather than deliver in-service training directly.

USAID, EDC, and the National Education Ministry concurred with this approach. The rationale was that the effect on South Sudan's education system would be greater if they made more strategic, foundational investments in policy and curriculum than if they continued to invest in a small percentage of the overall teachers who required training (the 1,900 teachers enrolled at that point in time represented less than 10 percent of the teaching force). In sum, while aware of the frustrations of teachers who would not be able to complete their training, the stakeholders concurred that the priority should be given to foundational work.<sup>21</sup>

## CONFLICT-SENSITIVE EDUCATION

Education is not immune from conflict, which can visibly affect the quality and delivery of education. However, education also can mitigate or exacerbate conflict, directly or indirectly. A growing body of evidence has led education policy makers and practitioners who are active in conflict-affected environments to reexamine education programming, planning, and financing using a conflict-sensitive lens (INEE n.d.).

In their 2011 review of the literature relating to peacebuilding education in postconflict contexts, Smith, McCandless, Paulson, and Wheaton describe three

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<sup>21</sup> Soon after reaching SSTEP's newest agreement, South Sudan's most recent round of inter-ethnic hostilities erupted. All international SSTEP staff were evacuated from South Sudan in December 2013, and in early February 2014, USAID terminated the project.

major ways education can have an impact on conflict (Smith et al. 2011, 19). First, education can be understood and used as a tool to promote ideology, either in service of a general civic education or, in a more extreme sense, as political indoctrination. Second, education can be used to convey knowledge and skills that help build citizens' social and economic capabilities and skills. Third, education can help to transmit social and cultural values from generation to generation, which can either enhance or undermine social cohesion, depending on what values are conveyed.

Given the central role education plays in political, sociocultural, economic, and personal life, it is helpful, if not imperative, that educators and those who support them be aware that any education activity may directly or indirectly contribute to—or mitigate—conflict. Smith, McCandless, Paulson, and Wheaton, among others, assert that most education programming—whether in emergency or transitional settings at the policy, systems, professional development, or service-delivery level—does not take education's potential role in conflict into account, either during the planning stages or once education activities are underway:

There is...a tendency, for education interventions to be framed in technical and apolitical terms, operating as if relatively insulated from broader ideological, political and economic influences acting on and within the sector. There is a significant gap in both academic and programming literature about geopolitical influences and political economic factors that operate on and within post-conflict societies, and how these affect the implementation of education programmes. (Smith et al. 2011, 43)

These authors, as well as many other academics and practitioners, recognize that improving understanding of education's role in conflict requires a broad and concerted effort, including more research and stronger evidence of the role education plays in conflict and peacebuilding. It also necessitates conducting a more intentional analysis and raising awareness of the specific challenges and strategies for taking the conflict context into account before, during, and after education activities of all kinds.

In 2013, the INEE responded to this growing awareness through collaborative efforts by its working groups on Minimum Standards and Education in Fragility, and by publishing a “resource pack” to aid in the design and implementation of conflict-sensitive education. INEE describes CSE as an iterative process through which education professionals strive to understand the context in which education

takes place; analyze the two-way interaction between this context and all aspects and stages of education programs; and act to minimize the negative and maximize the positive influences education policies and programming have on conflict within an organization's given priorities (INEE 2013, 7).

The INEE resource pack provides a set of documents designed to introduce CSE guidance to policy makers, planners, and practitioners. These documents provide information to help throughout the program design process. The pack's one-page summary presents six foundational principles for incorporating CSE into education proposals, policies, investments, and programs. A 12-page tool also offers questions for designers and implementers to consider about conflict dynamics and potential CSE approaches as a guide to ensure that conflict sensitivity is integrated into education at all stages of the program cycle. The most in-depth document is a longer CSE Guidance Note, which offers strategies, reflection questions, and background information for developing and implementing conflict-sensitive education programs and policies.<sup>3</sup> These are organized according to the five education domains put forward in INEE's (2010) core guidance document, "Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery": (1) Foundational (community participation, coordination, analysis), (2) Access and Learning Environment, (3) Teaching and Learning, (4) Teachers and Other Education Personnel, and (5) Education Policy.

For the present case study on teacher education in South Sudan, EDC referred primarily to the CSE Guidance Note because it provided more information about what conflict-sensitive education would look like within the teacher education subsector than either the "Principles" or the "Reflection Tool." EDC also drew from the South Sudan Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies (SSMS), which contained distilled and contextualized information from the more global Minimum Standards by the South Sudan Education Cluster (INEE 2012). EDC referred in particular to the domains that related to teachers—numbers 3, 4, and 5. Table 3 combines and summarizes the most relevant strategies (CSE Guidance Note) and standards (SSMS).

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<sup>3</sup> The 2010 edition of the INEE Minimum Standards already integrated conflict-sensitive education principles throughout all the handbook's domains and standards and offers a useful and a foundational orientation toward conflict sensitivity. In fact, the CSE Guidance Note built on these revised standards to provide additional guidance and can therefore be seen as a supplement to the baseline guidance, already provided in the Minimum Standards.

*Table 3: INEE CSE Strategies and South Sudan Minimum Standards Most Relevant to SSTEP*

<b>INEE Minimum Standard Domain</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Domain 3: Teaching and Learning</b>	Standard 2: Training, Professional Development, and Support	Teachers and other educational personnel receive periodic, relevant, and structured training according to their needs and circumstances.
<b>Domain 4: Teachers and Other Education Personnel</b>	Standard 1: Recruitment and Selection	A sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers and other education personnel are recruited through a participatory and transparent process, based on selection criteria that reflect diversity and equity.
<b>Domain 4: Teachers and Other Education Personnel</b>	Standard 2: Conditions of Work	Teachers and other education personnel have clearly defined conditions of work and are appropriately compensated.
<b>Domain 4: Teachers and Other Education Personnel</b>	Standard 3: Support and Supervision	Support and supervision mechanisms for teachers and other education personnel function effectively.
<b>Domain 5: Education Policy</b>	Standard 1: Law and Policy Formulation	Education authorities prioritize continuity and recovery of quality education, including free and inclusive access to schooling.

It is important to note that both the CSE Guidance Note and the South Sudan Minimum Standards are “aspirational” by design: both present the ideal scenario that education partners should work for, but with the implicit understanding that, given the challenging and fragile contexts where this guidance would be applied, these goals are not necessarily attainable all at once and/or across all domains and standards.

### **CONFLICT-SENSITIVE TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE SSTEP EXPERIENCE**

An initial observation—and in our opinion a pivotal one—about the INEE CSE teacher education guidance is that it assumes the full and active participation of a functional government structure, including the National Education Ministry and other key government bodies, as well as a government-wide commitment to prioritizing education. Unfortunately, in South Sudan the governance system

simply does not meet the basic requirements for implementing the CSE guidelines. These realities raise a number of questions for donors, implementing partners, and education officials, not only in South Sudan but in other in conflict-affected areas that wish to adhere to the CSE principles:

- What is an acceptable timeframe for addressing the various CSE guidelines?
- Given that not all guidelines can be addressed at once, how should the strategies be prioritized and who will determine this?
- Given that governments face a serious shortage of funds and experienced personnel, what milestones and benchmarks are acceptable when developing a progressive, conflict-sensitive teacher education and support system that governments, donors, and implementing partners can use as a guideline while they work toward the long-term goals and desired standards? How might the role of the government, donors, and implementing partners evolve as the teacher education and support system is constructed over time?
- If the government is not able to collaborate in developing conflict-sensitive teacher education and support, what parts of the CSE Guidance Note (and the resource pack more broadly), if any, can nongovernmental actors still apply, and what sort of impact could they have?
- What role can or should teachers' perspectives play in applying the principles of CSE? In a context like South Sudan, where there are few if any collective teacher bodies, how can meaningful consultations take place?

The following sections review how the CSE guidance could have influenced SSTEP's design and implementation experience, evaluate its applicability in an extremely challenging conflict-affected environment, and assess how the program design and decisions made by donors, implementing partners, and the National Education Ministry affected this applicability. Following the review, we offer recommendations and lessons learned for how to make the CSE Guidance Note more operational, using the above questions as a guide.

Before diving into the analysis, two observations regarding South Sudan, and SSTEP in particular, seem important. First, as noted above, South Sudan is

not only recovering from decades of war (and may be sliding back into it), it is also a new country that needs to implement laws and policies, most of which must be created from scratch. In theory, the country should and could follow the standards set out in the CSE Guidance Note to develop its education system, but doing so in practice will be difficult because of the extreme lack of technical expertise, human resources, and budget available to the National Education Ministry. Second, the National Education Ministry was represented within SSTEP by a technical committee and a policy committee, which often disagreed with each other. These disagreements and the fact that the ministry was acting from a severely under-resourced position often meant that SSTEP leadership lacked a strong counterpart within the ministry, and that key deliverables that relied on ministry leadership were either delayed or stymied.

**DOMAIN 3, STANDARD 2: TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT<sup>4</sup>**

**INEE guidance.** This minimum standard states that “teachers and other education personnel receive periodic, relevant, and structured training according to needs and circumstances” (INEE 2013, 11). The CSE Guidance Note describes professional development as inclusive and nondiscriminatory, with special attention given to refugee teachers. Training should be provided by qualified trainers who are aware of the dynamics of a particular conflict. In terms of content, the CSE strategies suggest that training include human rights, responsible citizenship, reconciliation, conflict dynamics and transformation, identity issues, nonviolent alternatives, and historical memory. The South Sudan Minimum Standards lay out specific goals for trainings on emergency issues and the need for subject-specialist trainers.

**Observation:** *With limited teacher education capacity and resources, the ministry prioritized a focus on core subjects over more conflict-sensitive ones, such as peacebuilding and human rights. No substantial effort was made to integrate CSE into the core subjects during the curriculum revisions.*

As noted above, South Sudan has a severe teacher shortage and currently relies on a large percentage of volunteer and untrained teachers for whom the only training option is in-service. Substantive face-to-face in-service training is limited

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<sup>4</sup> The CSE Guidance Note is organized according to the five education domains put forward in INEE’s (2010) core guidance document, “Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery”: (1) Foundational (community participation, coordination, analysis), (2) Access and Learning Environment, (3) Teaching and Learning, (4) Teachers and Other Education Personnel, and (5) Education Policy.

to 9-12 weeks per year. With limited physical infrastructure to house teachers and transportation challenges, the cost of conducting face-to-face training is very high and thus not sustainable by the GOSS. Given these realities, the ministry expected SSTEP to focus its teacher training resources on basic curriculum content and pedagogy in the five core subject areas—English, math, social studies, science, and professional studies. Other elements of the curriculum, such as physical education, music, and art, were, in SSTEP's experience, never covered in in-service teacher training. In an environment where neither core nor non-core curriculum topics were given adequate coverage, there was no discussion of adding topics such as peacebuilding, education in crisis and emergency situations, or ethnic identity issues. Donors and implementing partners might argue that knowing how to help manage crises and emergencies should take priority over curricular content, but this was not the priority of the fledgling South Sudan government or of SSTEP, whose mandate was to work with and through the ministry, and who struggled just to provide quality support for core subject training. Furthermore, due to the challenges regarding the revision of teacher training curriculum and materials, CSE topics were not adequately integrated into the core subjects.

**Observation:** *The National Education Ministry's supply of teacher trainers (tutors) was insufficient in both number and quality to deliver training in core subjects and basic pedagogy, let alone conflict-sensitive approaches to education.*

With the closure of the TTIs and CECs as a result of government austerity measures due to the oil dispute with Sudan, the limited teacher training that did take place in South Sudan was conducted by tutors from the state ministries, who more often than not were retired government teachers. The tutors' role was to support learning and the CECs, and to direct teacher support and supervision. The number of tutors, as well as their suitability, knowledge, skills, and reliability, varied greatly from state to state. In many cases, the tutors were older teachers who could not get around easily in the difficult physical conditions of rural South Sudan, which made monitoring and supervising learning content difficult. Furthermore, while many tutors were listed on state teacher rosters, they often were not working and/or not being paid. And while SSTEP did provide significant tutor training, the project had little influence over their deployment and was unable to monitor how effectively teacher training was delivered. Within this context, it is difficult to imagine whether, and with what degree of quality, the critical and difficult topics of conflict dynamics and transformation, identity issues, and reconciliation would be delivered to teacher trainees.

**SSTEP Lesson Learned:** Given the critical importance of conflict sensitivity in teacher instruction in South Sudan, topics such as crisis management, conflict history, and peace building should have been explicitly discussed, negotiated, and included as part of the “most basic/critical” elements of SSTEP’s curriculum design support to the National Education Ministry.

**Recommendations for CSE:**

- In cases where donors and implementing partners are directly collaborating with the National Education Ministry to determine and deliver teacher training, the parties should identify and agree on a limited number of core conflict-sensitive messages and approaches to be emphasized in teacher training. They should then work with training designers and master trainers to build these concepts into training protocols, materials, and evaluations, even if the training is focused on pedagogy or subject matter—in short, CSE messages should be integrated into these topics.
- In cases where donors and implementing partners are working independently of the National Education Ministry to determine and deliver teacher training—for example, where NGOs have programs independent of the government, or in camps for refugees or internally displaced persons—identify core curricular knowledge that teachers and students must know in order to progress in formal education at each grade level, then deliver curricular content within a broader, conflict-sensitive training plan that is specifically designed to be delivered in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
- Provide all master trainers with solid training in CSE principles and teacher education approaches.
- Consider alternative delivery mechanisms to give teachers access to conflict-sensitive topics. For example, South Sudan has received thousands of radios that could be used for easy delivery of information on sensitive topics.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As part of the USAID-funded and EDC-implemented South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction Program, radios were distributed and programs developed to support delivery of the primary school curriculum, as well as English-language and civic education programs for youth and adults.



**DOMAIN 4, STANDARD 1: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF TEACHERS**

**INEE guidance.** This minimum standard states that “a sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers and other education personnel are recruited through a participatory and transparent process, based on selection criteria reflecting diversity and equity” (INEE 2013, 11). The CSE Guidance Note refers to job descriptions, selection guidelines, selection committees, HR and payroll systems, and deployment policies. The South Sudan Minimum Standards emphasize a 50:1 pupil-to-teacher ratio, define three tiers of teachers, advocate for the hiring of other highly qualified education personnel, and stress the need for transparent and equitable recruitment that balances ethnicity, gender, and language. They also set the goal that women represent 25 percent of the teaching staff.

**Observation:** *Teacher recruitment and selection varied by state and locality, and the processes were not transparent to external observers.*

SSTEP’s experience with the recruitment and selection of teachers is that policies and practices varied greatly from one area to another, and that there was little to no transparency in the process. Moreover, there was no unified teacher registry in South Sudan. Some teachers were on the government payroll and thus fulfilled certain conditions of educational attainment, but the large majority were so-called volunteer teachers, who may have received some compensation from the community and/or local education authorities. How these volunteers were recruited, trained, supervised, supported, and monitored was both varied and difficult to ascertain.

Further complicating the scenario were widespread nepotism (often along ethnic lines) and corruption within the system. Officials at both the national and state levels were often appointed based on their past affiliation with the Sudan People’s Liberation Army rather than on their qualifications or skills. This attitude trickled down to the state and *payam* (lower administrative) levels, where the reward of a salaried position was provided to loyal activists. False transcripts and education certificates were not uncommon, so potential teachers’ true level of schooling and knowledge was hard to determine. This situation was further exacerbated in the north, where most teachers were trained in Arabic-pattern teaching and had poor English-language skills, which made testing their knowledge difficult.

SSTEP's trainee cohorts came from two sources. The initial cohort consisted of teachers who had previously been trained under the Multi-Donor Trust Fund. SSTEP therefore had no say in teacher recruitment or selection for this group. When this first cohort proved insufficient and SSTEP shifted strategies to recruit new trainees, it shared its selection criteria with the state ministries, which handled the actual recruitment and selection.

This was one of the biggest challenges SSTEP faced. Most of the teachers presented to SSTEP for training did not meet the selection criteria. Faced with the choice of rejecting them or proceeding, SSTEP chose to train all teachers who presented for training. Its rationale was that all teachers would benefit from training, and that the time and cost of beginning a new recruitment process with no guarantee of a different result would not make the process worthwhile.

The scenario was further complicated by the difficulty of administering entrance exams for the training programs, an experience that was costly in terms of mobilizing the students and difficult in terms of engaging the state ministries. For example, when SSTEP administered the entrance exam in one state, all the teachers failed. Refusing to train these teachers would have implied eliminating this state from the program. After consulting with USAID, SSTEP decided that the teachers should stay in the program.

According to SSTEP staff, suspicion of sitting for entrance exams pervades the country's culture. As a result, many teachers are frightened away because of the entrance examination; their fears may be related to their own perception of their skills and performance.

**SSTEP Lesson Learned:** Unless government mechanisms for teacher recruitment and selection include community and/or third-party observers, along with clear entrance examinations, CSE recruitment and selection standards will be difficult to enforce or monitor, and participants' backgrounds will be difficult to verify.

### **Recommendations for CSE:**

- Through a CSE assessment, determine key teacher characteristics and selection approaches to ensure equity and diversity in this context. Also gauge teacher demand and likely supply in the relevant geographic areas, and for those that meet each relevant characteristic.

In cases where government and implementing partners are directly collaborating to deliver teacher training:

- Jointly agree on a selection process and a minimum percentage of teachers to be recruited and selected in each context-relevant CSE category and geographic region (ethnicity, gender, education level, language ability, etc.).
- If necessary, agree on the number of extra slots that can be filled by any candidate, as long as they meet basic eligibility criteria.
- If possible, over-recruit and over-select in each relevant CSE category to allow for attrition and no-shows.
- Administer entrance exams to ensure that teachers meet minimum standards.
- Budget for and assign neutral selection monitors at each selection site who will work with the local selection team to ensure that criteria are adhered to and verified.
- Include appropriate incentives to reward adherence to selection criteria; for example, cohorts that meet the selection criteria will receive extra teacher supplies.

#### **DOMAIN 4, STANDARD 2: CONDITIONS OF WORK**

**INEE guidance.** This minimum standard states that “teachers and other education personnel have clearly defined conditions of work and are appropriately compensated” (INEE 2013, 11). The South Sudan Minimum Standards note the need for a safe environment, office space, ongoing professional development, and compensation according to a standardized salary scale or agreed-on terms and conditions.

**Observation:** *South Sudan lacked selection, deployment, compensation, and management policies that would address the conditions of work, and teacher work conditions therefore varied widely across the country.*

SSTEP was designed to work through the existing ministry teacher support system and to build it at the same time. In fact, neither the rudiments of this system nor the ministry's human and infrastructural capacity were sufficient to build on, let alone work through. As a result, SSTEP, like the ministry, had little to no influence on the working conditions of the teachers who were trained through the project, and the degree to which these conditions were conflict sensitive was highly variable and generally low. While SSTEP did actively engage the ministry on issues of certification, differing opinions within the ministry resulted in no action being taken. Like many institutions in South Sudan, the National Education Ministry was plagued by conflict between leaders. In the case of SSTEP, the decisions made by the technical committee were often overturned by the steering committee, or vice versa. Given the difficulty of engaging directly with the ministry to make a final decision, much was left in limbo. SSTEP made tremendous efforts to build consensus among the various government stakeholders, but a culture of conflict and obstinacy prevailed, exacerbated by threats of violence and by ethnic and regional divisions and disparities. For example, conflicts often arose when some officials spoke in Arabic. With the ministry unable to come to a consensus, it was not possible to begin discussions with the other government agencies involved.

**SSTEP Lesson Learned:** If donors and implementing partners are committed to working through a government to improve teacher working conditions, they are limited to goals and strategies that acknowledge and accommodate the pace and priorities of that government.

**Recommendation for CSE:**

- In cases where donors and implementing partners are committed to work with government to improve teacher working conditions, they should build in leverage points and design contingencies to ensure that certain critical conflict-sensitive conditions are met. Possible strategies include the following:

**Systems Development Level:** List the various teacher working conditions to be addressed and include such information as:

- the existing baseline status of each condition and a description of the appropriate conflict-sensitive target status for it;
- the capacity development needed to reach the target status;

- the costs of getting to the standard;
- the political challenges to overcome;
- the time required; and
- the relative importance of this component within the larger teacher support system.

Use this matrix to come to a consensus with the National Education Ministry on a short list of the most critical teacher work conditions to be addressed, then design an approach to make it happen.

### **Implementation Level:**

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of the National Education Ministry and implementing partners to ensure that minimum conditions are established for all targeted teachers, the costs and timing needed, and the indicators that will be used to demonstrate that they have been achieved.
- Build in clear carrots and sticks to encourage progress while establishing minimum standards, and follow through if progress isn't made.
- Consider working with nongovernmental partners engaged in teacher training to advocate collectively for ministry adherence and support.

### **DOMAIN 4, STANDARD 3: SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION**

**INEE guidance.** This minimum standard is defined as “support and supervision mechanisms for teachers and other education personnel to function effectively” (INEE 2013, 11). The South Sudan Minimum Standards address the need for mentoring, counseling, training, formative supervision, classroom observation, and continual learning, among others.

**Observation:** *As noted, the infrastructure required for the effective support and supervision of teachers simply did not exist in many parts of South Sudan. In many states, tutors were poorly qualified or not incentivized (i.e., paid) to*

*do their work. Security, transportation, and logistical challenges hampered attempts to make regular school visits to support teachers. Schools were often far apart, making even a cluster approach difficult to implement, given the distances involved and the lack of transportation.*

SSTEP was designed to build system capacity and at the same time rely on it for delivery of teacher support. Given the lack of infrastructure available at the decentralized level to support teachers and the need to hire additional staff to fill in the gaps that existed due to the lack of government structures, there was effectively no system for SSTEP to use. While there were a handful of nongovernmental teacher training institutions, the government was reluctant to allow SSTEP to provide support to nongovernmental agencies. SSTEP was therefore limited to training tutors who would conduct the face-to-face study and cluster meetings and monitor teacher assignments. As noted, the tutors were not SSTEP employees, nor did they have any reporting or other responsibilities vis-à-vis the project. In order to ensure quality, delivery of in-service training, and support for the number of teachers SSTEP was committed to train, a massive supervision network would have had to be put in place, either one parallel to the government's own semi-functional tutor structure or one built for the government. However, the resources to do so, both financial and human, simply did not exist.

**SSTEP Lesson Learned:** In conflict-affected environments, it is risky to build government infrastructure and, at the same time, rely on it to deliver critical inputs. In general, the design should have explicitly included flexible timeframes and delivery targets, based on regular “rapid assessments” of the context and the National Education Ministry’s capacity.

**Recommendation for CSE:**

- If necessary in conditions of acute need for both teacher training and mobilization in response to a general need for improved systems capacity, separate programs for these two goals. Plan to provide services through nongovernmental organizations while simultaneously continuing to build government capacity. Define criteria for conditions that must be in place before service delivery can be merged back into the government system, and work with the National Education Ministry to develop approaches to make that transition.

- Where there is a dual objective to build systems and deliver teacher support services, design (and agree with the National Education Ministry on) contingency mechanisms that allow delivery to occur independently through nongovernmental organizations, should systems development timelines be delayed.
- Limit donor or implementing partner targets to what can be achieved under prevailing conditions.

### **DOMAIN 5, STANDARD 1: LAW AND POLICY FORMULATION**

**INEE guidance.** This standard states that “education authorities prioritize continuity and recovery of quality education, including free and inclusive access to schooling” (INEE 2013, 11). The South Sudan Minimum Standards detail recommendations for a wide range of education sector actors and the importance of advocacy for policy reform, along with free and inclusive schooling.

**Observation:** *During SSTEP’s implementation period, the GOSS was focused more on maintaining security than on anything else. Funding for education and policy reform virtually ground to a halt.*

In a context of political turmoil, citizen insecurity, and budget austerity, education authorities did try to maintain free access to schooling. However, their ability to advocate for the “continuity and recovery of quality education” was stymied by deeply divergent views within the government regarding the core elements of quality education, not to mention a funds shortage so severe that teacher training colleges remained shuttered and many teachers were simply not paid. Furthermore, there was a dearth at all levels of qualified education officials who might have known enough about quality education to advocate for it effectively. There were no teachers unions, and functional PTA and school management committees were few and far between. So, while external agents (donors, implementing partners, NGOs) were perhaps the loudest voices advocating for quality education, there was a limited technical structure or powerful domestic political base that could push this agenda, given the existing security and budget distractions. In all fairness, SSTEP did manage to support the development of several key policies and policy notes. However, even if the National Education Ministry had succeeded in producing more policies, it is unlikely, given the larger governmental crises at play during SSTEP’s period of implementation, that a National Education Ministry proposal requiring added funding would have been accepted by the other structures of government.

**SSTEP Lesson Learned:** Advocacy for and action on education policy reform is easily stymied by security considerations, budget austerity, political infighting at the National Education Ministry, and lack of education advocates at all levels.

**Recommendation for CSE:** In cases where donors and implementing partners are committed to work with government to develop education policies, consider the following:

- When designing a project and writing a proposal to implement it, analyze in as much detail as possible the human, financial, and institutional resources available to reach anticipated project goals, and adjust those goals to be in line with the government resources available.
- Create a priority matrix like the one described under Domain 4, Standard 2, above, then work with the National Education Ministry to determine a realistic set of priority policies.
- In cases of acute need for service delivery in the absence of finalized policies, negotiate with the government to allow nongovernmental organizations to deliver services, based on minimum CSE criteria for quality education.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Viewing SSTEP through the CSE guidance lens, three major conclusions and recommendations emerge.

First, the CSE Guidance Note's strategies for teacher education and support were both too general and too optimistic about the government's capacity and will to implement CSE, and thus could not have provided the detailed and context-appropriate guidance SSTEP needed to function well in South Sudan's conflict-affected environment. The guidance strategies were too broad and too aspirational to significantly help SSTEP prioritize and negotiate with USAID and the National Education Ministry for a teacher education and support approach that was sensitive to real and ultimately destructive conflict dynamics.



To be useful in the area of teacher education and support, the CSE guidelines should be complemented with more operationalized tools that suggest specific pathways, timeframes, milestones, or steps for helping education ministries affected by conflict develop a conflict-sensitive teacher education system. For example, such guidelines could specifically recommend that a workshop be held with curriculum design teams to discuss integrating conflict issues into curriculum development. The guidelines could also offer practical suggestions for ministries or implementing partners to improve the conflict sensitivity of teacher recruitment practices.

Second, SSTEP's initial design did not adequately reflect or respond to South Sudan's conflict dynamics, nor did it take into account the principles of conflict-sensitive education. As noted previously, the SSTEP design, and most of its implementation, predates the publication of the CSE Guidance Note. Had this approach been integrated into the design, a different program might have emerged. The design also misjudged the existing capacity and/or will within the National Education Ministry and the GOSS as a whole. SSTEP's scope and many deliverables were not appropriate for South Sudan's conflict context. Its inflexible design made it impossible to meet key deliverables because it made the accomplishment of tutor and teacher training (a critical output) dependent on a delivery system that was largely nonfunctional. This design also made it difficult to adopt a number of important conflict-sensitive teacher education strategies retroactively.

Using conflict-sensitive approaches even before a program is designed would allow designers to do the following:

- **Identify the tension** between immediate teacher training and broader systems development goals, and either choose one or design a way to address both that takes the conflict setting into account.
- **Closely analyze** the government's capacity to provide education services and design a project that recognizes those assets and constraints.
- **Clearly define** the ethnic and/or other underlying conflicts that can lead to (or have already resulted in) violence, determine the relative priority or mix of conflict-related versus academic content, and identify ways to redefine the purpose of schools in these contexts: namely, to help prevent, reduce, and mitigate violent conflict.

- **Work with government** to determine the critical policy or systems design priorities related to teacher education and support.

Even such guidance, however, would not have enabled SSTEP planners to foresee all future challenges. For this reason, CSE guidance should also include more specific strategies for undertaking a risk analysis, rolling assessments, and contingency planning, not only for the teacher education and support domain but for all CSE domains.

Third, the National Education Ministry and the GOSS itself had neither the capacity nor, perhaps, the will to adequately address CSE planning and implementation. Given South Sudan's capacity challenges and recent history, it is not surprising that some within government either didn't see, or didn't want to act on, many conflict-related challenges to teacher education, particularly if articulating and/or addressing them would jeopardize their own self-interests or upset the precarious ethnic and power setup that existed post-CPA.

Applying the INEE CSE guidance for Domain 1, Conflict-Sensitive Analysis, Participation, and Coordination, could have helped USAID and the National Education Ministry identify and apply the following while designing SSTEP: (1) the ethnic tensions that existed from the school community to the national level and ultimately erupted into massive violent conflict; (2) the government preoccupation with security, which reduced the likelihood of a broad government commitment to and allocation of resources for education; and (3) the ministry's inability to provide the physical and human resources necessary to achieve SSTEP's initial objectives. Completing such an assessment before the initiation of SSTEP might have allowed for a more frank and balanced dialogue between USAID and the National Education Ministry, and have resulted in a more realistic agenda for both ministry capacity-building and the delivery of teacher training.

In addition to the SSTEP-related observations above, EDC offers the following more general take-aways:

- **The CSE guidance should be better understood and adopted by all development partners, specifically by the education ministries, and particularly at the planning stage.** In fact, the current INEE CSE resource pack is probably best used to provide introductory or foundational information to build awareness and promote broad acceptance throughout the education sector. Used this way, the pack's generally broad and aspirational guidance can provide a model

for what CSE can and should be. INEE can advocate with donors and implementing partners that the use of CSE tools and concepts (whether presented through this package or others) be explicitly included in education program planning in conflict-affected or fragile environments. Alternatively, the CSE Guidance Note could be revised and expanded along the lines of another INEE publication, the Resource Pack on Teaching and Learning. In addition, future iterations of the CSE Guidance Note should include an orientation for those facilitating the conflict-sensitive education planning process. It should include an explanation of how the issues around conflict and education can be promoted, prioritized, and understood more effectively by government and nongovernmental counterparts in developing countries.

- **Current CSE guidance (as well as country-level adaptations of the minimum standards) should be complemented by future materials that provide more specific planning and prioritization tools, steps to operationalize guidelines, interim CSE guidance milestones that are adapted to country situations, and more specific risk analysis and contingency planning guidance.** These tools should be designed with the particular audience (planners, implementers, education ministry representatives, researchers) in mind, and could be included as part of a CSE resource pack to accompany the CSE Guidance Note.
- **Development partners (donors, implementing partners, governments, NGOs, etc.) in conflict-affected areas should establish a small set of priority goals or desired outcomes to be achieved, but they should make room for a variety of ways to achieve them.** They should build a maximum degree of flexibility into programs in terms of delivery strategies, implementation partners, roll-out, performance targets, funding, etc., which will allow alternative means of achieving the same goal or outcome when conditions change (as they most certainly will) over the life of the program.<sup>6</sup>
- **In a transition from humanitarian to development support, development partners and host-country governments should openly discuss and plan for the right balance between foundational development (in the case of SSTEP, policies and curricula) and**

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<sup>6</sup> The authors understand that the INEE Guidance Note and Resource Pack on Teaching and Learning includes sample tools, teaching materials, and case studies, which can be useful resources to help adapt the Guidance Note to country-specific contexts.

**immediate needs (in the case of SSTEP, training thousands of teachers), as well as a commitment to longer term funding mechanisms and maximum flexibility to respond to changing conditions.** Without ensuring the timing and phasing of support, outcomes can be risky.

The current conflict in South Sudan is evidence of fundamental and historical tensions that, if not addressed adequately, will continue to erupt in the future. Understanding the roots and manifestations of the conflict and addressing historical grievances will be key to the future development of South Sudan. While these dynamics (and their redress) are deeper and broader than the education sector, teachers, as a primary influence on young people outside the home, must understand how to address them in their classrooms and communities. For this to happen, South Sudan's fragile education system, in particular its support for teachers, must continue to develop. Conflict prevention and mitigation should be among the sector's core mandates. While active crisis makes on-location systems development work challenging, progress always can be made. One key element is a continuing dialogue about and awareness of the importance of CSE at all stages and all levels of education programming.

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