

“BREAKING BARRIERS TO GIRLS’ EDUCATION BY BREAKING CYCLES OF POVERTY”¹ CASH TRANSFERS IN SOUTH SUDAN: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines UK Aid-funded cash transfers made as part of the Girls’ Education South Sudan programme, focused on improving girls’ access to education by offsetting or reducing economic and social barriers.

Evidence from a unique fully disaggregated near real-time national dataset on school enrolment and attendance in South Sudan (see: <https://ssams.org/ct/profile.php>) shows the impact of cash transfers on enrolment and attendance, in particular through drawing back girls who had dropped out of school midway through their primary education.²

Evidence from survey data shows the effects of these cash transfers on the economic empowerment of girls and women, and as part of a wider programme of attitudinal and behavioural change.

This paper examines possible reasons for the effectiveness of the programme, despite the relatively low value of the cash transfers and the challenging context in which the programme was implemented. It also examines the transferability of learning to other fragile and conflict affected states, specifically highlighting the lessons related to remote programming and low unit cost approaches.

¹ Quote from a Cash Transfer recipient at St Kizito Primary School Juba, South Sudan

² See: Crawfurd, L. (2017), *The effect of financial aid from UK AID Girls’ Education South Sudan Programme and EU IMPACT programme to education in South Sudan in 2017*. Juba: Girls Education South Sudan and Crawfurd, L. (2016), *Cash Grants for Schools and Pupils Can Increase Enrolment and Attendance Despite Ongoing Conflict: Findings in South Sudan*. Juba: Girls Education South Sudan.

Author and declarations of interest

Naomi Clugston is one of the 2017 cohort of Charlie Goldsmith Associates Fellows; she joined the team in South Sudan in 2017. Charlie Goldsmith Associates is the member of the Girls' Education South Sudan consortium leading on cash transfers, capitation grants, the South Sudan Schools Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS - www.sssams.org) and knowledge, evidence and research. Girls' Education South Sudan is funded with UK Aid from the UK government and run by a consortium led by BMB Mott MacDonald/Cambridge Education, working with Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI), South Sudan. This paper does not necessarily reflect the views of the programme, UK Aid or MoGEI.



Students making notes in a classroom in Lainya County, South Sudan. Photo: Andreea Câmpeanu.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The cash transfer component of the Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) programme was implemented in the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) at a time of high insecurity and economic collapse. It was implemented in a context where social and cultural norms and economic constraints mutually reinforce to reduce the priority given to girls' education by poor families. It provided CTs of a relatively low value compared to those provided in other relevantly similar programmes. Despite the low values, research suggests that the cash transfers contributed to an increase in the proportion of girls enrolled in school from less than 40 percent in 2014 to 44.4 percent in 2017.³ This increase occurred in the context of a 63 percent overall increase in reported enrolment between 2014 and 2017.

This paper considers three possible explanations for the impact of the GESS CT programming.

Firstly, interviews conducted with CT recipients across RSS demonstrate that some of the most prominent barriers to girls' education are economic. In particular, they cite the cost of shoes, uniform, fees and learning materials as barriers to access. This paper argues that, because the GESS CTs were specifically designed to cover the cost of such items, they have been able to improve access to education for girls from families that could not afford them. This paper also recognises that GESS CTs were not able to incentivise all out of school girls to enrol in school, suggesting that there may be factors other than limited purchasing power that prevent some girls from enrolling.

Secondly, at the time of implementation, RSS faced substantial and ongoing economic decline. During this time very few families in RSS enjoyed regular access to funds and many had suffered recent negative economic shocks. As a result, this paper posits that the relative value of the CTs increased, enabling them to provide a stronger incentive for action than might have been expected given their absolute size or had a similar programme been implemented in a more 'steady' context.

Finally, the impact of the cash transfer component, despite the context of high insecurity, was possible due to the system used to administer it; the South Sudan Schools Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS - www.sssams.org). This is a near real-time data management information system, which gathers information on the enrolment of individual pupils by name, and tracks pupil attendance using an SMS reporting system. It is designed for fragile contexts, where physical access is difficult, and recipients have limited resources and low connectivity.

This paper concludes by reflecting on lessons learned, recognising some of the limits of the programme, and offering recommendations for future CT programming. It also argues that, given the relative complexity of the context in which the GESS programme was implemented, the tools and techniques used during this programme could likely be transferred to other challenging contexts with success.

³ See: www.girlseducationsouthsudan.org and www.sssams.org

2. INTRODUCTION

Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) is a programme dedicated to eliminating barriers to girls' education and promoting gender equality throughout the South Sudanese education system.⁴ The GESS programme ran for five years and, as it was drawing to its conclusion, we sought to address two key questions:

- What was the impact of the cash transfer (CT) component of the GESS programme in terms of girls' access and participation in education?
- And crucially, why was this the case?

These questions are important because finding effective and cost-efficient methods of getting hard-to-reach children into school is key to laying the foundations of sustainable development. In countries suffering from conflict-fatigue, where a state of humanitarian emergency has become the norm and where barriers to peace and economic growth remain, this need is particularly acute.

In light of these questions, this paper is divided into two parts:

The first considers the impact of the CT component of the GESS programme by examining interviews with CT recipients and their communities, and data collected from a unique fully disaggregated near real-time national dataset on schools' enrolment and attendance in South Sudan. Analysis of these sources suggests that the CT programming was able to improve girls' enrolment in school despite the context of high insecurity in which it was implemented and the relatively low value of the CTs available.

The second explores the question of why this improvement was possible and reflects on the limits of the programme's impact. It concludes that:

- The CTs were designed to alleviate the specific economic barriers that had previously prevented CT recipients from accessing education.
- In the context of the economic crisis faced by South Sudan, CTs were able to cover the cost of more items than would have been possible under more favourable economic circumstances and thus have an exceptional impact relative to their monetary value.
- The system used to administer the GESS CT component was built to withstand the challenges that the context posed.

⁴ GESS is an initiative of the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS). It is funded by UK aid from the UK government. MoGEI is supported by a consortium led by BMB Mott MacDonald/Cambridge Education, including BBC Media Action, Charlie Goldsmith Associates and Winrock International. GESS works at the local level through six state-based NGOs, referred to as State Anchors.

2.1 Research methodology

2.1.1 Understanding the impact of GESS cash transfer programming

To answer the questions posed by this research paper, GESS used qualitative and quantitative techniques to better understand the impact of the programme from the point of view of those it was intended to support. Interviews and surveys were conducted with recipients, their families, their fellow students and their teachers at regular intervals over the course of the programme. These research activities took place face-to-face with recipients in their language of choice. This technique enabled participants to articulate their experience of the impact of GESS in the way they felt most confident.

Over 521 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with female CT recipients, male learners and teachers in 20 individual schools across all the 10 former states of South Sudan.⁵

GESS conducted these interviews at broadly 6-month intervals from 2015 throughout the duration of the programme. Participants were selected randomly within the categories of "CT recipients", "Male learners" and "Teachers" in order to ensure a diversity of informed perspectives. GESS also conducted quantitative surveys with recipients across 179 randomly selected schools in South Sudan every 12 months, to better understand what the transfers were used for. Finally, GESS conducted quantitative analysis of a uniquely disaggregate near real-time dataset of individual pupil enrolment and attendance data from between 2013-2018, building on previous work done by the GESS programme and by Lee Crawford.

The number of interviews conducted were relatively limited due to the challenges associated with travelling throughout the country and in order to reduce survey fatigue among participants. As a result, opinions gathered from these surveys provide a snap shot of those across the country and cannot be used to draw hard conclusions about the views of all CT recipients.

2.1.2 Putting GESS cash transfer programming into context

In order to improve understanding of GESS in the context of other CT programming, a comparative document review of the value amounts of all known CT programming that was similar in terms of educational aims was conducted. This research was also informed by a discussion that followed a presentation made by Patricia Stephenson of Charlie Goldsmith Associates at the Gender and Cash Based Assistance Symposium held in February 2018.⁶

It is recognised that the comparison with similar CT programming may not have been exhaustive and so it is difficult to draw hard conclusions from it but, despite the limitations, the review did produce some useful findings.

“Given the extreme poverty levels and food insecurity experienced by the South Sudanese population, it is unsurprising that during interviews with our cash transfer recipients, the most commonly cited barriers preventing children from accessing education were economic.”

⁵ Since the start of the programme, South Sudan has introduced a 32-state system, but the programme was designed to function in the 10-state system and has continued to do so.

⁶ The Gender and Cash Based Assistance Symposium was organised by CaLP, Women's Refugee Commission, NRC, Adeso and Oxfam.

3. THE IMPACT OF GESS CTS ON GIRLS' ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE ACROSS SOUTH SUDAN

3.1 An overview of the context in which the GESS programme was implemented

Since before the implementation of the GESS programme in 2013, South Sudan has faced civil conflict and economic decline. Both of these have deteriorated significantly over the course of the programme and had a direct impact on the ability of children to access education.

As fighting across the country escalated and deepened in complexity, the number of internally displaced people and the number of refugees in neighbouring countries increased. In May 2018, these numbered 1.74 million and 2.47 million respectively.⁷ It is estimated that the majority of these are children, for whom displacement often leads to a disruption in education.⁸ Interviews conducted with students across the country support this view, suggesting that in areas where violence is rife students are less likely to go to school either because staying at home is deemed safer or because proximity to the fighting causes their families to move different areas.⁹

The economic crisis faced by South Sudan has also had a direct impact on children's ability to attend school. This is because families often live in extreme poverty, limiting the availability of funds that could be used to send children to school. According to the World Bank, the rates of extreme poverty across South Sudan have risen to 65.9 percent, with the ongoing conflict and economic decline contributing to severe food insecurity for six million people and the declaration of famine in 2017.¹⁰ Given the extreme poverty levels and food insecurity experienced by the South Sudanese population, it is unsurprising that during interviews with our CT recipients, the most commonly cited barriers preventing children from accessing education were economic.¹¹

Against the backdrop of ongoing conflict and economic collapse, the education system has struggled to operate. South Sudan continues to have one of the highest estimated rates of school-age children out of school in the world, with at least 2.2 million school-aged children estimated to be out of school.¹² According to estimates from Charlie Goldsmith Associates, calculated using population projections from census data from the National Bureau of Statistics, 68.6 percent of school-age children in South Sudan remain out of school.

3.2 An overview of the GESS CT programming:

Between 2014 and 2018 the CT component of the GESS programme supported at least 284,601 individual girls in years Primary 5 (P5) to Senior 4 (S4) across all of the 10 former states of the Republic of South Sudan, providing them annually with unrestricted CTs that were lightly conditioned on enrolment and attendance in school. The CT programming focused on girls because, at the time of the programme's conception, they were considered the most at risk of exclusion from school. A desk review of other CT programming that also focused on improving educational access revealed that the GESS CT values were lower than many other relevantly similar programmes (Figure A). It was not possible to find details of the transfer value for each of these programmes, but where the values were available, GESS CTs were consistently lower.

⁷ UN OCHA (May 2018), *South Sudan humanitarian bulletin*. Reliefweb [online]. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180523_OCHA_SouthSudan_Humanitarian_Bulletin%235.pdf (Accessed 15 July 2018)

⁸ <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/south-sudan>

⁹ GESS. (2017, forthcoming), Longitudinal qualitative survey summary report: Round 3. Juba: GESS.

¹⁰ World Bank (2018), Overview. *The World Bank in South Sudan* [online]. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southsudan/overview> and UN OCHA (October 2017), *South Sudan humanitarian bulletin*. Reliefweb [online]. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SS_171010_OCHA_SouthSudan_Humanitarian_Bulletin15.pdf. (Accessed 23rd March 2018)

¹¹ GESS. (2017, forthcoming).

¹² UNESCO. (2018), *Global initiative on out-of-school children - South Sudan country study*. Paris: UNESCO.

Figure A

Name of Programme	Country	Cash Transfer Amount	Distributed to	Focused on
Girls Education South Sudan ¹³ (2013-2018)	South Sudan	£18/year (approx. \$24/year)	Girls	School enrolment and attendance
Keep Girls in Education ¹⁴ (2012-2018)	Malawi	5,000 MK/per term (approx \$9/term)	Girls	School enrolment and attendance
Orphans and Vulnerable Children (part of the Hunger Safety Net programme) ¹⁵ (2008-2011)	Kenya	\$20/month	Households	School expenditure Health expenditure Food expenditure
Girls' Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Project ¹⁶ (2015-2020)	Zambia	\$198-\$396/year	Schools	Covering the cost of school fees
VAS-Y Fille! ¹⁷ (2013-2016)	Democratic Republic of the Congo	\$30/year \$20/year \$9/year	School Girls Examination board	School fees School-related items Exam fees School enrolment and attendance
Zomba Cash Transfer Programme (2008-2009) ¹⁸	Malawi	\$4-10/month \$1-5/month	Parents Girls	School enrolment and attendance
Tayssir Programme ¹⁹ (2008-2010)	Morocco	\$8/month/child in grades 1 & 2 \$13/month/child in grades 5 & 6	Households	School enrolment and attendance
Progresa-Oportunidades ²⁰ (1997-2001)	Mexico	\$10/month (Grade 3 Primary) \$37/month (Grade 3 Secondary)	Households	School enrolment and attendance

¹³ <http://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/>¹⁴ Forum for African Women Educationalists in Malawi (FAWEMA). (2015), Keeping Girls in School Cash Transfer Project Implementation Success Story: Cash transfers lights Priscilla's vision. Lilongwe: Forum for African Women Educationalists in Malawi. Available online: <http://www.fawema.org/Priscilla.pdf>¹⁵ Centre for Global Development. (2015), Kenya's social cash transfer program. Washington, DC: Centre for Global Development. Available online: <http://millionssaved.cgdev.org/case-studies/kenyas-social-cash-transfer-program>¹⁶ World Bank. (2015), Project appraisal document on a proposed credit in the amount of SDR47.2 million to the Republic of Zambia for a girls' education and women's empowerment and livelihoods project, 12. Available online: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/881811467991985986/pdf/PAD1304-PAD-P151451-IDA-R2015-0104-1-Box371422B-OUO-9.pdf>¹⁷ Unpublished information¹⁸ Baird, S.; McIntosh, C.; & Ozler, B. (2010), *Cash or Condition? Evidence from a cash transfer experiment*. Paper is funded by the Knowledge for Change Program (KCP), Impact Evaluation series; no. IE 45, Policy Research working paper; no. WPS 5259. World Bank. ©World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/3988> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.¹⁹ Benhassine, N. et al. (2015), Turning a Shove into a Nudge? A "labelled cash transfer" for education. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 7(3): 86-125²⁰ Reimers, F. et al. (2006), *Where's the "education" in conditional cash transfers in education?* Quebec: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 14 Available online: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/where-is-the-education-in-conditional-cash-transfers-in-education-06-en_0.pdf

3.3 Evidence of Impact

3.3.1 Increased enrolment and attendance

Both the research conducted directly by GESS and independent impact analysis from Lee Crawford, document the positive impact that the CT component of the GESS programme appears to have had. In particular, it has contributed to improving gender equality within schools by increasing the enrolment and attendance of girls in P5-S4 across South Sudan. Since the launch of the GESS programme the national total enrolment recorded by the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) through the South Sudan School Attendance and Monitoring System (SAMS) has risen from 928,000 in 2014 to almost 1.7m in 2018.²¹ Further, girls now make up 46.06 percent of pupils, up from less than 40 percent in 2014.²² According to a rigorous difference-in-differences analysis undertaken by Crawford on the impact of GESS between 2014 and 2016, GESS CTs and capitation grants made schools more likely to remain open, increase their enrolment numbers, and increase attendance rates despite the prevalence of substantial ongoing levels of violence and conflict.²³



Female students at a school in Lainya County, South Sudan, where the GESS programme was implemented. Photo: Andreea Câmpeanu.

²¹ www.sssams.org

²² Ibid.

²³ Crawford, L. (2016)



Two girls outside their school in Lainya County, South Sudan. Photo: Andreea Câmpeanu.

3.3.2 Increased back-to-school figures

As well as increasing the enrolment and attendance of girls in school, GESS CTs also seem to have drawn out-of-school girls back into education. As Figure B illustrates, the number of girls in P5 is higher than the number of girls being promoted. This is not the case for boys in the same way that it is for girls. Although this could have been caused by girls being promoted to P5 early in order to receive CTs, Figure C illustrates that girls and boys are dropping out of school at a consistent rate in the younger years. This suggests that the higher number of girls in P5 than those being promoted is a consequence of out-of-school girls re-joining the education system rather than being promoted early.

Figure B

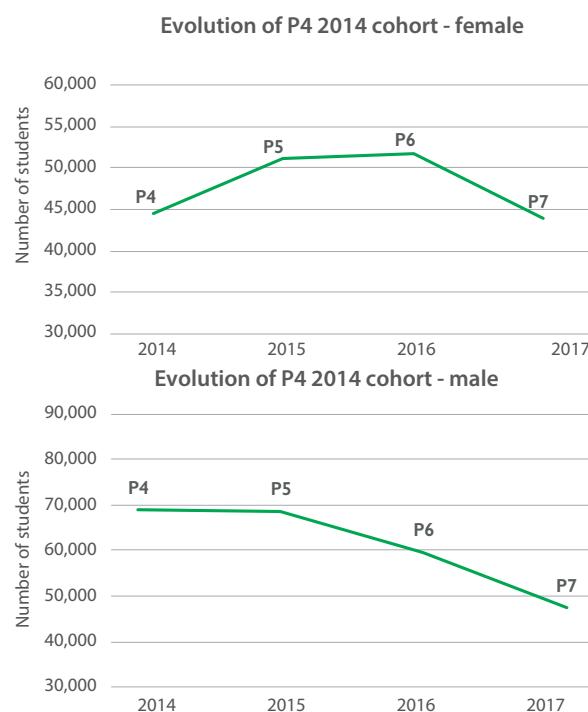
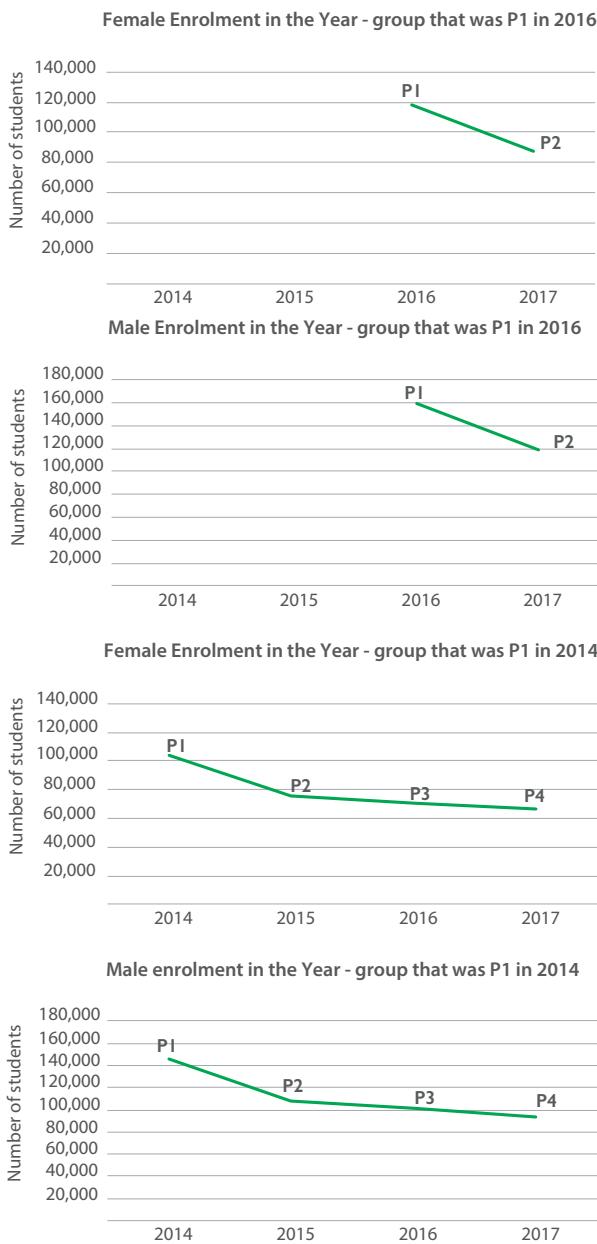


Figure C

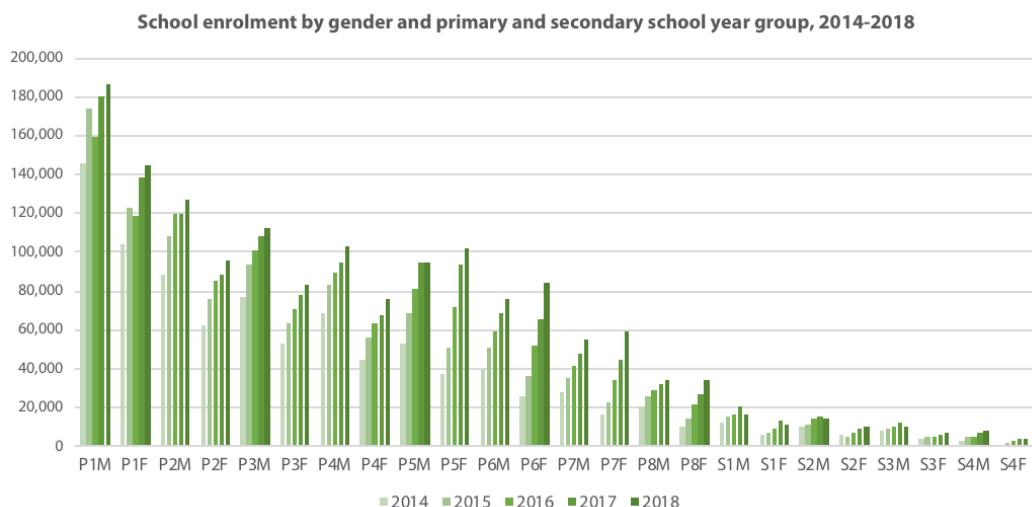
3.3.3 GESS as the only major programme focused on increasing girls' enrolment and attendance in school

Finally, over the course of the programme, GESS has been one of the only major programmes supporting the education system, with £60m funding over five and a half years. The other two major funders of the Republic of South Sudan's education system during this time have been the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS), which has suffered from severe budgetary constraints, and UNICEF. UNICEF's main education-focused programme is the "Back to Learning Programme", which is focused on education in emergencies and in particular on education in Protection of Civilian (POC) sites. Along with the evidence provided by analysis of data collected on SAMS and research conducted by Crawfurd, the fact there were no other major programmes focused on increasing girls' enrolment supports the view that the GESS programme was heavily responsible for the increase in girls' enrolment witnessed over the course of the programme.

3.3.4 Higher impact in primary schools than secondary schools

As illustrated by Figure D, the GESS CT component had its greatest impact with girls in years P5-P8. Over the course of the programme years P5-P8 saw an increase in enrolment of 173 percent, a figure substantially higher than that for girls in S1-S4, where the programme saw an increase in enrolment of 44 percent.²⁴

Figure D



Possible reasons for this include:

- **GESS CTs were not high enough to offset the direct costs of secondary education.**
The direct costs of secondary education, which include the cost of textbooks and learning materials, are higher than those of primary education. The flat rate of CTs across all years may have meant they were not set at a level high enough to cover the cost of secondary education.
- **GESS CTs were not high enough to offset the opportunity or perceived opportunity costs of sending girls to secondary school.**
Some communities may face higher opportunity or perceived opportunity costs when sending their girls to secondary school than when sending them to primary school. This reflects the way societal roles, responsibilities and expectations placed on girls often increase as they get older. For example, research conducted by UNICEF showed that 9 percent of girls in RSS were married by the age of 15 but that 52 percent were married by the age of 18.²⁵ This implies that between the ages of 15 and 18, the pressure to get married increases significantly. This pressure could stem from, among other factors, the desire to move a girl into an environment that is perceived as safer than the one her family can provide, the idea of bringing pride to one's family, or because the size of the potential dowry offered if the girl gets married outweighs the benefits of an annual CT. GESS CTs may have had a lower impact on improving enrolment and attendance in secondary schools because the value of the CTs for secondary school girls was not set high enough to offset the increasing opportunity and perceived opportunity costs of sending girls to school as they get older.

²⁴ This is notable because most evidence to date regarding the impact of CT programming in Sub-Saharan Africa, relates to support for girls in secondary school. However, in Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS) in Sub-Saharan Africa – notably South Sudan, DRC and Somalia, for which there is in any case less research – there are substantial numbers of out-of-school girls at primary level. Primary-level focused CT programming might therefore be more appropriate for these contexts.

²⁵ UNICEF. (2018), *The State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a digital world*. Available online: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2017/>

- **The limited supply of secondary schools across South Sudan means that even if the demand for secondary school had increased, the supply was not able to meet it.**

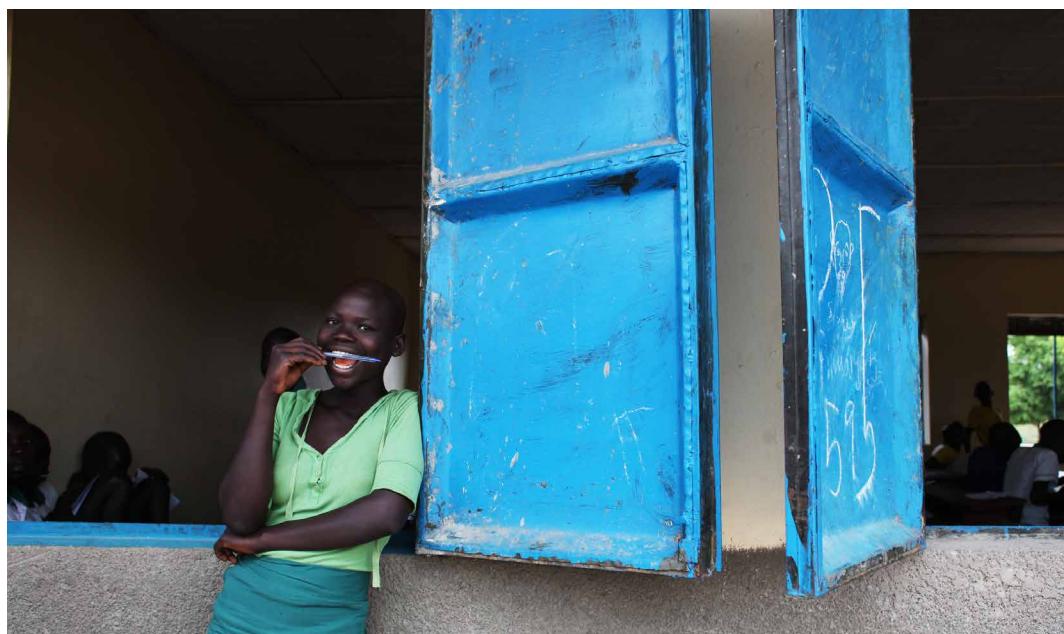
According to the South Sudan Schools Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS - www.sssams.org), although there are over 4600 primary schools nationally, there are fewer than 400 secondary schools. These tend to be situated in urban areas, which makes access to secondary education particularly challenging for children from rural communities. Limited investment in secondary school infrastructure and teachers means that even if the demand had increased, the supply has not been able to meet it. Investment into secondary school education is needed to ensure it is a genuine option for primary school leavers.

- **Limited employment prospects may have limited the perceived value of secondary education**

Limited employment prospects for individuals regardless of their education level means that the perceived value of secondary education may have been too low to be offset by the value of the CT.

This paper recommends that future programmes which aim to increase the enrolment of girls in secondary schools, should conduct research into the specific barriers that girls face to secondary school access. This will support such programmes to develop efficient strategies that overcome these secondary school-specific challenges.

“GESS CTs may have had a lower impact on improving enrolment and attendance in secondary schools because the value of the CTs for secondary school girls was not set high enough to offset the increasing opportunity and perceived opportunity costs of sending girls to school as they get older”



Students at work at a school in Lainya County, South Sudan. Photo: Andreea Câmpeanu.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GESS CT PROGRAMMING

This paper identifies three main explanations for the level of impact achieved by the GESS CT programming despite the context of conflict and the low-value of the cash transfers.

GESS CTs were designed to cover the cost of school-related items. This enabled parents with educational aspirations for their children but insufficient funds to cover the cost of these items, to send their girls to school.

Over the course of the programme, GESS conducted interviews with CT recipients from each of the 10 former states of South Sudan. A 2017 summary report of these interviews found that financial barriers were the most commonly cited barrier that learners faced to accessing quality education.²⁶ The report also suggests that CT recipients across the country often came from families who had educational aspirations for their girls but faced financial barriers that prevented them from sending them to school. For these families, CTs were used to help ensure girls were able to purchase the education-enabling items that they needed to access education.

"Part of the reason [girls] stay at home is because of the costly barriers to entry; school fees and school clothes...Cash Transfers are very important as they contribute to reducing these costs." (Female student, Yabongo Evening School, WES).²⁷

As the value of the GESS CTs were designed specifically with the aim of covering the cost of education-enabling items – a lack of which CT recipients cited as one of the main barriers to education – this paper suggests that they were able to improve girls' access to education despite being relatively low in comparison to other similar programmes.

Despite the impact of the GESS CT programming on some families, there are an estimated 63.8 percent of school-age girls who are still not enrolled in school.²⁸ It remains unclear why the GESS CTs have not been able to incentivise these girls to enrol. Potential reasons include:

- The value of the CTs was not high enough to offset the direct, opportunity, or perceived opportunity cost of sending these girls to school
- These girls live in areas where physical access to school is difficult or dangerous
- Social factors prevented girls from enrolling. For example, since only girls in P5 and above were eligible for GESS CTs, CTs would not have been able to incentivise enrolment for girls who had not attended lower primary. In such cases older out-of-school girls may have preferred to stay out of school rather than to go to lower primary with children much younger than themselves, especially in areas where they were not able to access Accelerated Learning Programmes.²⁹ Since the age profile of primary school girls in South Sudan is often much higher than in many comparable countries, with 18 years old being a relatively common age for girls to complete primary school, this factor may be particularly relevant.

²⁶ GESS. (2017, forthcoming)

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ According to estimates by Charlie Goldsmith Associates, calculated using population projections from census data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

²⁹ Accelerated Learning Programmes were run by GESS to enable older girls to cover the Primary School Syllabus at an accelerated rate with other girls of similar ages.

Further research is needed to better understand the factors that prevent girls from accessing school in South Sudan. Improved understanding would support projects to develop tools and techniques that encourage more out-of-school girls to enrol in or return to school. In order to prevent an increase in enrolment being too great for the education system to cope with, it is important that any such initiative be implemented in tandem with one that acts to support the education system's response to an influx of learners.

Due to the economic crisis, CTs were able to cover the cost of more items than would have been possible under more favourable economic circumstances and thus had exceptional impact relative to their monetary value.

In 2014, South Sudan suffered an acute economic collapse, which has only deepened since. This has had a devastating impact on the population, with the UNDP estimating that at least 80 percent of the population are living on an equivalent of less than US\$1 per day.³⁰ While unemployment remains high, even those with jobs often experience an acute lack of income. Over the course of the programme GESS worked with civil servants, including teachers, across South Sudan who experienced periods of over six months without receiving their salary. In many cases, the value of these salaries had been reduced to single digit US Dollars per month. In such a context, where poverty levels have risen and access to funds is limited, it follows that a lower-value CT would be able to cover the cost of more items than would have been possible under more favourable economic circumstances. As a result, the GESS CTs were able to have an exceptional impact relative to their monetary value, which may not have been achieved in other contexts. This is particularly the case since the behavioural change upon which access to the CT was conditioned, was relatively low cost to the recipient.

4.1 The GESS CT programming was implemented using a system resilient to the challenges of South Sudan

The GESS CT programming was implemented using data on individual pupils collected through the South Sudan's School Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS - www.sssams.org). This is a near real-time data management information system that was designed and rolled out by the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) and GESS. It is used by national, state and county officials, partners and schools themselves, to support the management of schools and the allocation of resources. SAMS supported the successful implementation of the GESS programme in two specifically useful ways:

1. It was designed to adapt to the challenges posed by fragile contexts where recipients have limited resources and low connectivity. For example, data could be sent using multiple tools via multiple channels. The preferred method of communication was via SMS, using basic, feature or smart phones but in cases where there was low connectivity or a lack of resources, hard copies of the documents required to receive payment could be sent via state partners operating in the area. This enabled the programme to overcome geographical barriers to reporting and participation.
2. It promoted and supported behavioural change. By requiring enrolment and attendance reporting, SAMS contributed to ensuring schools focused on registering students, and managing attendance. As such, it was able to promote a culture in schools where enrolment and attendance are considered important by both students and teachers.

³⁰ UNDP (2018), "About South Sudan". UNDP in South Sudan [online]. http://www.ss.undp.org/content/south_sudan/en/home/countryinfo.html.

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper argues there are three key reasons that the GESS CT programming was able to improve girls' enrolment in school, despite the context in which it was implemented and the low value of the CTs relative to other relevantly similar programmes.

- The CTs were able to alleviate the economic barriers that had previously prevented recipients from accessing education.
- The economic crisis faced by South Sudan enabled the cash transfers to cover the cost of more items than would have been possible under more favourable economic circumstances and thus have an exceptional impact relative to their monetary value.
- The system used to administer the GESS CT programme was built to withstand the challenges that the context posed.

However, while acknowledging the increase in the proportion of girls enrolled in school from 40 percent of pupils in 2014 to 46.06 percent in 2018,³¹ future projects with similar aims would benefit from conducting research in the following areas:

- Specific barriers that girls face to enrolling in and attending secondary-school. These barriers might require either a larger CT or the use of other techniques to incentivise secondary school enrolment for girls.
- Other non-economic barriers to education that prevented the GESS CTs incentivising enrolment for the remaining 63.8 percent of school-age girls who did not enrol in school over the course of this programme.

Based on the evidence presented here, it seems reasonable to believe that similar techniques to those used during the GESS programme, with adaptations based on findings from the suggested research, would likely succeed in achieving similar aims in other fragile and conflict affected states. The transferability of the techniques used in this programme seem high due to the following:

1. The disaggregated reporting system and cash-led programming used by GESS has a comparative advantage in contexts where the costs of monitoring and non-cash/on-site activities are high.
2. The administrative system used by GESS is designed to function in contexts where access is costly or arduous, and where SMS or paper-based reporting can 'leap over' access constraints. In contexts where potential recipients of a CT programme face similar challenges around resources and connectivity, a programme of this nature is likely to be resilient.
3. The GESS programme used existing institutions and structures to ensure efficient implementation and points of access for recipients. Schools are uniquely cost-efficient points of contact for reaching large numbers of people. By focusing on and encouraging investment in education, such programmes combat current and future expected poverty levels by increasing the likelihood of future employment. Further, education-focused CT programming provides clear opportunities to address other goals such as social protection and humanitarian assistance in a cost-efficient way.
4. The GESS CT programming was designed to work in contexts with constrained financial services. The cost and ease of implementation for a programme of a similar nature is likely to be much more favourable in contexts where systems such as Mobile Money or other less constrained financial services are present.

³¹ www.sssams.org

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