

Case study: Southern Sudan

Education for children in Southern Sudan is almost non-existent, due to over two decades of war between the southern SPLA (Sudanese People's Liberation Army) and the northern government of Sudan.

More than 1.5 million people have been killed and about four million forced to flee to the north or to other countries, many of whom have still not been able to return to their homes. Although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in January 2005, what education system and infrastructure there once was has been totally destroyed.

Over the last ten years in Southern Sudan, ad hoc education programmes have been set up by local communities, NGOs and faith-based organisations. The Secretariat of Education and newly emerged Ministry of Education have been run by experienced individuals on a mainly voluntary basis. Teachers are generally untrained (7 per cent have formal training) and to date unpaid, although the government of Southern Sudan should soon be in a position to start paying teachers. Only 6 per cent of all teachers are female. Currently 400,000 children attend schools with a capacity for 339,200, and most study under trees - an extra 5,829 classrooms are needed

Mary's story

Mary lives with her father and her sister near Rumbek in Southern Sudan.

"When I was younger I wasn't allowed to go to school because I could be attacked by the enemy. There was only one school and it was closed for many hours. My uncle was shot and killed during the war, and his children were taken by the enemies. I've never seen them since. Life was terribly bad - I couldn't go out and play. There was nothing I could hope for.

Since I have gone to school my life has changed. It is bad because I have come to school late, so I'm not learning with other children the same age as me. But education will give me a future. I know how to keep my clothes and myself clean, and how to use cooking utensils, and I've taught my father about these things too. I learned about children's rights - that children have freedom of speech and freedom to be in school.

At school I like to play skipping rope and volleyball. I like spelling games too. I have friends who play with me. It's good to have friends. Children who go to school will help by being doctors or teachers."



Mary, 12, at school in Rumbek, Southern Sudan.

Source: Save the Children