



Impact of the Support to Quality Basic Education Programme in South Sudan



Intervention

Having been burdened with a history of civil war, more than half of the South Sudanese live under the poverty line. Unlike their neighbors in Western and Eastern Africa, the population has strikingly low access to basic services and education. Despite having only half of all children currently enrolled in primary schools, the average student-teacher ratio in South Sudan is 134 to 1.

To improve access to a quality education, especially for girls who are most vulnerable, BRAC used a unique model of delivering lessons in a more child-friendly manner. BRAC South Sudan implemented the *Support to Quality Basic Education Programme* between 2014 and 2017. It operated around 620 schools serving 18,600 students in 15 counties in Central Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Lakes and Jonglei state in 2017.

These schools offered a second chance at primary education for children out of school through a one-classroom model with flexible timing and low-cost learning materials. Located in the community, schools followed a participatory learning approach. With a class size of no more than 30, students received equal attention from typically female teachers recruited locally. The curriculum was in English and condensed to provide accelerated learning for over-aged children to complete four years of learning in three years. Other activities included study clubs, teachers training, sensitisation of communities on girls' education.



Research

Endline of BRAC Implemented Support to Quality Basic Education in South Sudan Programme (Kabir and Kadigo, 2018, Juba: [BRAC IERC](#))



Method

A *difference-in-differences* (DID) estimate was applied with the early grade reading assessment (EGRA) and early grade mathematics assessment (EGMA) at two levels to evaluate the learning outcomes of the students. A total of 1,101 children (615 female) from Juba city were followed to the endline, the majority of whom were in the fourth grade. The sample consisted of (i) students in BRAC schools (584) and two comparison groups - (ii) students in government schools (209) and (iii) out-of-school children (308).



▲ **4.7**
unfamiliar wpm
pronounced

▲ **1.6**
answered correctly
at level 1
comprehension test

▲ **48**
% answered correctly
at comprehension
level 2.

▲ **4.21**
circles more per
minute

▲ **1**
pp female students
answered correctly at
comprehension tests

BRAC schools had a significant positive impact on learning outcomes of the children. Half of them had books or other reading materials at home by endline – a 19 percentage point (pp) increase from baseline levels. And despite initially lagging behind their peers, as the BRAC students moved to a higher grade, their scores in EGRA and EGMA improved to a great extent.

For instance, the average baseline EGRA score in each subcomponent except for letter recognition was below one with above 95% of children scoring zero. At the endline, however, opposed to 18 words per minute (wpm) scored at reading fluency level 1 by students in government schools, BRAC students scored 29 wpm. They were able to pronounce **4.7** unfamiliar wpm more than out-of-school children. Similarly, their performance was better at level 1 comprehension tests as **38%** answered correctly or **1.6** and nearly 1 times more than out-of-school and children in government schools respectively. While 65% students in government school had zero scores at comprehension level 2, only 52% of BRAC students answered incorrectly.

In terms of EGMA scores at the baseline, BRAC students performed worse than children in comparison groups. However, by the endline they managed to catch up and even **count 4.21 circles more per minute** than students in government schools. Both students in BRAC and in government schools scored 13 correct additions and around 11 subtractions per minute at level 1. Out-of-school children expectedly had the lowest scores across the EGMA tests.

By putting a special focus on female students, their scores improved as much as of their male colleagues despite their worse performance at the baseline. Both female and male students scored 22 wpm and 6 wpm at reading fluency level 1 and 2 respectively. About **1 pp more** of female BRAC students answered correctly at both comprehension levels, as opposed to their male classmates. Despite male BRAC students having slightly higher overall EGMA scores, their female counterparts did better in the counting test by one additional circle in a minute.

➤ Way Forward

The study found BRAC's Education programme effective in creating quality education opportunities for marginalised and even children out of school. Given the special focus on female students and the positive impact on their performance, this programme has the potential to push forward women's socio-economic empowerment in the long run. Future interventions could focus on actively engaging parents to increase their support and ensure students' higher attendance. Greater financial and educational support for female students, especially in mathematics could, similarly, improve their learning outcomes.