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Abstract:
This paper has dealt with risks and vulnerability facing primary education in Sudan at micro and macro levels. Sudan is exerting great efforts to achieve a good progress in primary education system as indicated by GER, however, the system is still facing weakness in different ways. The pupils in Sudan suffer from different kinds of risks and vulnerable that our communities have failed to handle; at home (parents, adults, etc.), at school (teachers), and at community level (laws, policies, etc.). The paper has also shown that for children, the experience of risk, vulnerability at micro and macro levels is shaped by four broad characteristics. Multidimensionality, changes over the course of pupils, relational nature, and voicelessness.

Keywords:
risk, vulnerability, primary education, Sudan

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Introduction:

Primary education is a crucial component in development; and it’s an important factor in economic growth and alleviating poverty in developing countries. Raising human capital and eliminate vulnerabilities and risks factors are typically focal points of development efforts settings by both the public policy and households levels.

The term vulnerability is commonly used, but often with different meanings by different practitioner\(^2\), it is complex concept to define; population in different groups are exposed to different risks, and they have different capacities to respond to forces based on the availability, ability, and effectiveness of their response options.

The concept of vulnerability has been used in a variety of related but different meanings. Vulnerability “refers to exposure to contingencies and stress, which is defenclessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss”\(^3\). Vulnerability is often used in a sense different from its definition, namely that of weakness or defenclessness, and typically used to describe groups that are weak and liable to serious hardship” such as pupils, older, disabilities ...etc. \(^4\)

Vulnerability is a basic feature of people at risk. It is multidimensional, multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral and dynamic. It is defined here as a function of exposure, sensitivity to impacts and the ability or lack of ability to cope or adapt. The exposure can be to hazards such as drought, conflict and violence or economic reforms, and also to socioeconomic, institutional and environmental conditions. The impacts not only depend on the exposure, but also on the sensitivity of the specific unit exposed (a household, community and country) and the ability to deal with\(^5\).

According to the last population census of the Sudan it is noticed that children (age 0-14) are statistically significant, comprising of more than 43% of the Sudan population, thus they cannot be ignored,


moreover pupils have very limited ability at their disposal, and there are limits to what can be done due to lack of strength, lack of skills, and exposure etc. Here we are trying to add advantages; people may experience risks and vulnerability as a scale through a series of lifecycle stages, having adverse implications on the nation’s future. The threats that pupils are currently exposed to serious in their own sense such as; lack of quality education (at macro level), or/and poor households- income insecurity (at micro level).

The main objectives of this paper are to focus attention on primary education system in Sudan with emphasis on the risks and vulnerability that pupils are currently exposed to at micro (family, households, schools, community) and macro levels (government), and to explore the factors that influences the primary education in Sudan, to identify the policy-level changes that primary education sector must face that have implications for vulnerable children.

This paper divided into two main parts: the first part; salient features of Sudan’s primary education system and the second part about risks and vulnerability exposed pupils in Sudan.

The main features of Sudan economy and primary education:

Sudan, officially Republic of the Sudan, 967,494 sq mi (2,505,813 sq km), the largest country in Africa, according to the 2009 population census Sudan was inhabited by some 39 million people with annual growth rate of 2.3 per year, 51% male and 49% female 29% lived in urban areas and 3% were nomads. Divided among 600 tribes and ethnic groups who speak some 100 languages and dialects. 6, per capita GDP (PPP) was US$ 2,200 in 2009 up from US$ 2,100 in 2007 with high GDP rate of growth 10.2% in 20077 (Annex I).

Sudan facing longest lasting civil war in Africa, and it has paid a heavy charge on human lives and property, not to mention the war’s radical effect on socioeconomic performance. Moreover, the war in South and now in Darfur has directly disadvantaged the basic services and

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caused widespread trouble to social, economic and administrative activity, basic education has suffered the most.

Judging by Human Development Index (HDI), human development is low in Sudan. In 2009, Sudan ranked 150, with HDI equal 0.531 and life expectancy at birth 57.9 years, the human poverty index (HPI-1) equal 0.34 and the difference between HDI in 1975 and HDI in 2009 is equal to 0.161 this indicating a progress in human development in Sudan.8

Primary Education in Sudan consists of eight years; followed by three years of secondary education, it is free and compulsory for children at the age between 6 to 13 years. The primary language at all levels is Arabic.

Ministry of General Education (MoGE) determinate the main objective of Sudan’s educational system is to prepare the youngsters for effective participation in socio economic and political life. The primary education system is structured as two lever; Basic (2 to 6 years) and Secondary Education Level (6 to 8 years).

In 2009, MoGE estimated that primary enrolment was 66% of eligible pupils and 59.6 % in 2003. The estimates for 2009, the literacy rate in adults aged 15 years and older were 61% (69 % for males, 46 % for females) Fig.1.

Fig .1: Primary Education in Sudan Indicators, 2009

![Graph showing Primary Education Indicators](image)

Sources: MoGE, World Bank, UNAIDS, ILO, Household Surveys, IMF, Country, 2009 (annex1)

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The latest enrolment figures available for all of the states are for the year 2008/2009. Total enrolment in basic education was 5,800,829 i.e. 3,125,351 boys and 2,675,478 girls. The gross enrolment rate (GER) was estimated as 66% in the northern.

Sudan had shown a very high rate of progress between the 2009 and late 1990s. Indeed data show that in 1994, the GER in Sudan was only 37%.

Appendix II shows that within the northern part of the country, disparities are appearing among states. Using 2009 figures, the GER in the River Nile and ElGazira states, which were the highest at 89%, was close to three times as high as that of the Red Sea state with only 36%. Three states in particular had enrolment rates below 50% indicating that in those states, access to an educational service is very much a privilege for a minority of children. Among the states with the most problems in that respect were those of South Darfur 40% (due to the conflicts) and Kassala 45% (cultural attitudes) which clearly require most particular attention.

Generally speaking, the enrolment rate is the result of two distinct processes: intake into school and retention there. The low level of the gross enrolment rate in Sudan can be accounted for mostly by the low intake rates even if the retention rates are also rather low.\(^\text{10}\)

This contextual framework reflects the challenges facing the development of primary education system. These challenges can be summarized in the following: The provision of quality education for all, and at the same time impart the kind of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, behaviours and mode of thinking that are needed in this rapidly changing. Moreover, the development of education that is capable of equipping the learner with ethical and moral values which contributes to peace and development and to practice them in order to build a tolerant society in the post peace period, living in harmony. To secure enough funds for education where most of the resources were depleted by a three-decade of devastating civil war coupled with poverty and displacement. Lack of qualified administrative and technical staff and lack of adequate learning facilities manifested in a low level of retention.

\(^9\) Education Statistics Dept, MoGE, Sudan, 2010
\(^{10}\) Sudan Basic Education Sub Sector Study Country Report, UNESCO and UNDP, 2001
Sudanese pupils school with risks and vulnerability:

a) Primary education risks and vulnerability at Micro Level (home, school):

Recently, in 2007 Sudan has been established National Council for Child Welfare, under the national action plan to address violence against children where the codification of a number of communications in the face of a number of defendants for violating the Criminal Code and the Children's Act 2004 in particular acts of sexual harassment and rape in addition to causing harm to the child abuse and child endangerment. There is no recorded report of child prostitution, the sale of children, and child pornography. The total number of cases have been reported to the Family Protection Unit (FPU)\(^\text{11}\) in 2007 around 105 cases, through analysis of data and information most of this cases are on the accused and abused showed the following: 90% of all sexual assaults, 5% negligence, 2% of sexual assault, 3% other types of abuse, including psychological abuse, 90% of the aggressor’s relatives or neighbours of the victims, and 6% of victims suffered from various degrees of mental retardation.

However, the above mentioned does not reverse the actual figures (which actual figures?) . In fact children in Sudan suffer from different kinds of risks and vulnerable that our government, societies and communities have failed to handle at different levels; (home, school, and community).

Examples include: Sudanese children facing risk of not attending school because of domestic or income-earning responsibilities or lack of household income to pay for school related costs, school fees, and materials cost. There are Particular issues for Sudanese girls as a tribal cultural in Sudan are not prioritised for investment in education/domestic responsibilities/vulnerability to sexual exploitation when attending school. The abuse of children – particularly sexual abuse and harassment – is a serious concern to many due to high age variation between pupils at the same school yards, (6-13years). The issue is hugely complicated by a lack of data, by inhibitions and denial, and by a lack of capacity of victims and those at risk. Physical abuse, including corporal punishment, is also a significant concern – particularly as it still forms part

of the ‘tradition’ of schools, the judicial system and the home. The children with disabilities are seen by many respondents to be especially vulnerable, despite the fact that so little is known about them and not enough is done for them. Voicelessness,\(^{12}\) due to lack of voice within the household or/and community, children are always supposed to obey not to question; Lack of advocates, Age-based prejudices therefore excluding them systematically, and lack of adequate social connections. Moreover, there are different types of risks facing pupils; of traffic and accidents while pupils going to school and back through commitment, children social exclusion; (race, ethnicity, origin of tribes, place where live). Moreover there are high risk of kidnapped during school day or after return home, children with disabilities; children affected by armed conflict; children who are sexually exploited and/or abused; working children; Infants whose mothers are in prison; children in very poor households; and children diseases which probably affected most of pupils.

b) Primary education risks and vulnerability at macro Level (community, government policy and implementations):

Poverty in Sudan is the major obstacle to accessing nominally free social services, like primary education. Poverty is very much associated with the war in Sudan: for the peace dividends to be evident to the Sudanese people, the transition will have to deal with a wide range of needs and expectations (as well as with a macro-economic structural reform). Inconsistencies in the definition of a child, anachronistic laws and procedures, and a lack of appropriate facilities and training for the police, judiciary and legal profession all appear to be contributory factors. There are very limited protections for pupils in local level governance against abuse (parents, schools, communities etc). Sudan’s primary education system suffers from sluggish formal primary school intake and coverage. The present enrolment rate remains very far from the expectations despite the progress achieved in the nineties Generally speaking; the enrolment rate is the result of two distinct processes: intake into school and retention there. The low level of the gross enrolment rate in Sudan can be accounted for mostly by the low intake rates even if the retention rates are also rather low. Sudan is at the same time vulnerable to

\(^{12}\) Term has been borrowing by: Jone N. (2007), Does Mixed Methods Research Matter to Understanding: Childhood Wellbeing? Working paper 40 Bath, UK
external shocks, recurrent natural events, a high burden of tropical diseases, epidemics, including the recent resurgence of malaria, meningitis, and the new pandemic of AIDS.

The provision of quality education for all that can preserve the unique identity of the Sudanese nation in its contextual setting, and at the same time impart the kind of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, behaviours and mode of thinking. The development of education that is capable of equipping the learner with ethical and moral values which contributes to peace and development and to practice them in order to build a tolerant society in the post peace period, living in harmony. To secure enough funds for education where most of the resources were depleted by a three-decade devastating civil war coupled with poverty and displacement. Lack of qualified administrative and technical staff and lack of adequate learning facilities manifested in a low level of retention.

Towards minimize primary education risks and vulnerability:

MoGE should provide material support with school fees and bursaries – such as providing information to children and caregivers on how to access bursaries or fee exemptions; school uniforms – such as donations of old uniforms, collecting uniforms from pupils who are leaving school, etc (Restricted (in)direct Cash Transfer Programme). MoGE and FPU should establish systems of support related to direct responsibilities, such as education, including alternative/flexible education, counselling and psychosocial support, after-school supervision, protection from discrimination and recreation as well as support related to more indirect responsibilities, such as facilitating referrals for shelter, food, clothing, healthcare, access to social security, protection from exploitation, and skills-building and income-generation. MoGE should provide education support to: help children catch up with school work following any long absences, create alternative learning situations for infected and affected children who cannot participate in normal schooling. MoGE and FPU should collaborate with agencies offering services and support to children by: finding out about other organizations in the area that help vulnerable children and their families; keeping contact details of organizations easily accessible to children; inviting
organizations to deliver talks at the school, explaining what services they offer and how they can be reached. MoGE should ensure that all artificial barriers such as the need for uniforms and payment of levies that deny entry into schools, are removed.

The role of teachers can be sensitized and trained to support vulnerable children; create safe spaces for children to; talk to teachers, do homework, and access peer support. Create and institutionalize a system of vulnerability identification that includes the following: Agree on definitions and signs, for example: children who have lost a parent/primary caregiver; children with a sick parent/primary caregiver; children dropping out of school (or in and out of school); school work deteriorating; appearance that is changing/ worsening; no school lunch; teasing/targeting by peers; psychological or behavioural problems. The schools should establish records of children’s home circumstances, such as: who is caring for the child; where is the child living; current parental status of the child, or knowledge of the parents; whether the child getting a meal every day; whether the child feels safe with the current caregiver; whether they have a choice of who they live with; who would they like to live with? Teachers should have positive respond to the following warning signs: hunger; dirty, unkempt appearance; falling asleep; withdrawal.

Concluding Considerations:

This paper has dealt with risks and vulnerability facing primary education in Sudan at micro and macro levels. Sudan is exerting great efforts to achieve a good progress in primary education system as indicated by GER, however, the system is still facing weakness in different ways. The pupils in Sudan suffer from different kinds of risks and vulnerable that our communities have failed to handle; at home (parents, adults, etc), at school (teachers), and at community level (lows, policy, etc).

The paper has also shown that for children, the experience of risk, vulnerability at micro and macro levels is shaped by four broad characteristics. Multidimensionality, changes over the course of pupils, relational nature, and voicelessness.
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Appendixes:

Annex 1: Sudan Socio-economic Context, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Economic Context</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP Per Capita (US $ PPP)</td>
<td>2200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (millions)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Growth Rate (%)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Ages 0-14 (millions)</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Ages 0-14 (% of total population)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Prevalence Rate, ages 15-49 (%)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-5 Mortality Rate (per 1,000)</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Literacy Rate (%) [M/F]</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Annex I1: Number of Pupils (000), GER, and GBR according to different Stats, 2009

| State     | Al Shat | Northern | River Nile | Khartoum | Blue Nile | Sennar | White Nile | N. Kerma | S. Kerma | N. Darfur | S. Darfur | Wilf | Kordofan | El Fasher | Darfur | Beir | Kassala | Budug | 10      |
|-----------|---------|----------|------------|----------|-----------|--------|------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|      |        |          |        |      |        |        |        |
| Bors      | 3125    | 57       | 97         | 432      | 354       | 68     | 124        | 172      | 292      | 149       | 187       | 243  | 158     | 62       | 105    | 122  | 166     |
| Girls     | 2675    | 54       | 86         | 429      | 312       | 53     | 103        | 148      | 237      | 123       | 159       | 181  | 124     | 48       | 76     | 99   | 141     |
| Total     | 5800    | 112      | 183        | 862      | 667       | 122    | 228        | 320      | 529      | 273       | 346       | 424  | 233     | 110      | 182    | 222  | 308     |
| GBR       | 86%     | 95%      | 99%        | 89%      | 88%       | 83%    | 85%        | 86%      | 81%      | 83%       | 85%       | 74%  | 78%     | 77%      | 72%    | 81%  | 83%     |
| Bors      | 67%     | 85%      | 91%        | 92%      | 94%       | 70%    | 85%        | 89%      | 83%      | 86%       | 67%       | 42%  | 94%     | 34%      | 46%    | 75%  | 51%     |
| Girls     | 65%     | 85%      | 86%        | 85%      | 85%       | 74%    | 80%        | 71%      | 71%      | 76%       | 63%       | 37%  | 79%     | 39%      | 44%    | 64%  | 46%     |
| Total     | 66%     | 85%      | 89%        | 94%      | 89%       | 64%    | 79%        | 85%      | 77%      | 81%       | 66%       | 40%  | 86%     | 36%      | 45%    | 69%  | 49%     |

Source: MoGE, 2010, minor difference due to fraction
Annex Primary Education Enrolment by different States, Sudan 2009

Source: Annex II

Annex VI:
Proposed Macro and Micro Vulnerability Chain with related to Primary Education