



LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION COUNTRY PROFILE

South Sudan

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ABBREVIATIONS

AET	Africa Education Trust
CEC	County Education Centre
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
EGIDS	Expanded Intergenerational Disruption Scale
EGR	Early Grade Reading
GESP	General Education Strategic Plan
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IRL	Institute for Regional Languages
L1	First Language
L2	Second (or additional) language
LOI	Language of Instruction
MoGEI	Ministry of General Education and Instruction
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
REEP-A	Research for Effective Education Programming–Africa
SSTEP	South Sudan Teacher Education Program
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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INTRODUCTION

Enhancing reading skills in the early grades is a key education priority for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Despite some improvements in access and learning in sub-Saharan Africa, literacy levels in the early grades remain low, and progress has been slow. Efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early grades have led to an increased focus on the role of the language of instruction (LOI). Recent research has demonstrated that mismatches between the LOI and the language that students and teachers speak and understand best, can hamper effective teaching and learning (University Research Co., 2019). Thus, it is critical to understand the LOI policy and linguistic context of a country when trying to design programs to improve literacy and learning outcomes.

Currently, USAID supports **Early Grade Reading (EGR) initiatives in 19 countries across sub-Saharan Africa**. Many policies in these countries have recently shifted toward adopting the mother tongue as the language for initial literacy acquisition, and then transitioning to a second or additional language, such as a regional, national, or international language, as the subsequent LOI.

Government policies and strategies related to teachers and LOI reflect country priorities, approaches, and objectives for early grade literacy. During the design-phase of donor-funded reading programs, decisions are made regarding the manner and extent to which national policies are incorporated into project design, and when alternative approaches or additional elements need to be considered. However, government policies on LOI, and other information relevant for informing design, are often difficult to find and are not easily accessible.



The LOI country profiles aim to address this need. The profiles will allow the USAID Africa Bureau, USAID Missions, and partner organizations to quickly understand the country's linguistic and policy context in order to design an approach that most effectively helps improve EGR outcomes. These profiles, designed for each of the 19 countries with current or upcoming USAID EGR initiatives, aim to clearly and succinctly describe and illustrate the country's linguistic landscape and official LOI policy. This country profile in particular provides information on language policy and practice in South Sudan.

LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

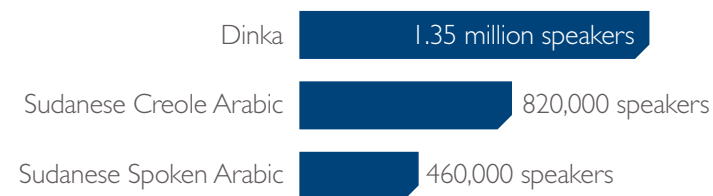
According to *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, published by SIL International, there are 70 languages spoken in South Sudan. Further, 59 of the living languages are indigenous and 11 are non-indigenous; of these 13 are institutional, 24 are developing, 15 are vigorous, 11 are in trouble, and six are dying (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020). For more information on how languages are categorized on the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), please see Table 1.

Following independence from the Republic of Sudan in 2011, South Sudan selected English as its official language; however, there are almost no people that speak it as their first language (L1). (Eberhard et al., 2020).

Widely spoken non-indigenous languages in South Sudan include Sudanese Creole Arabic and Sudanese Spoken Arabic. Sudanese Creole Arabic, also known as 'Juba Arabic' is the unofficial lingua franca for communication in local government, trade, and in urban areas. It has approximately 820,000 speakers, of whom 20,000 speak it as their L1 and 800,000 speak it as their second language (L2). (Eberhard et al., 2020). Sudanese Spoken Arabic is the de facto language of national identity, and recent estimates indicate that there are approximately 460,000 speakers primarily in the northern regions of South Sudan (Eberhard et al., 2020).

While both Sudanese Creole Arabic and Sudanese Spoken Arabic are used for wider communication, approximately 60% of the 12.5 million people that live in South Sudan speak Dinka, Bari, Nuer or Zande as their first language (Spronk, 2014). Dinka, a macrolanguage, has over 1.35 million speakers in South Sudan. It is comprised of five distinct dialects categorized by their geographic location including: Northeastern Dinka (320,000 speakers), Northwestern Dinka (80,000 speakers), South Central

Most widely-spoken languages in South Sudan

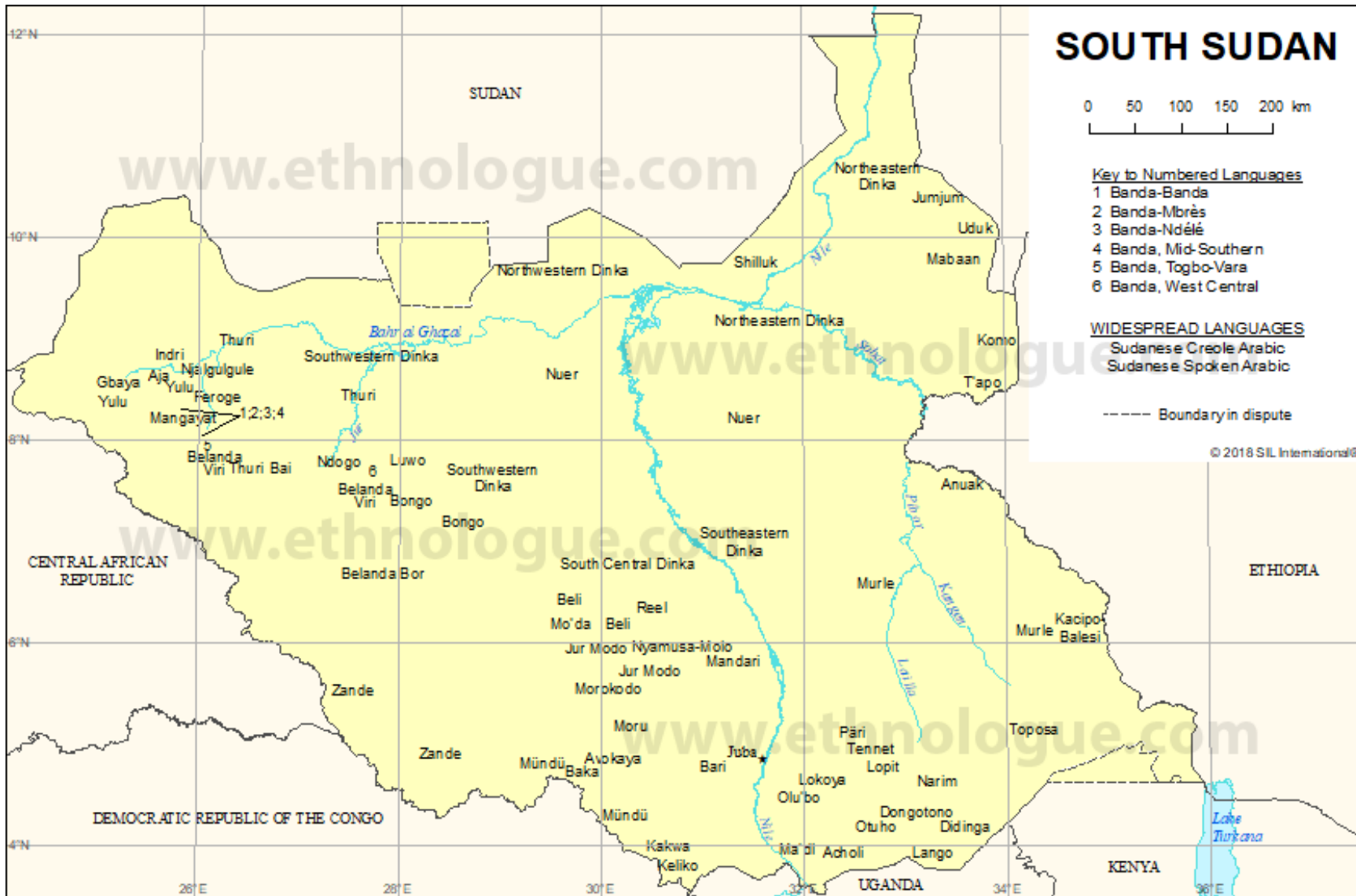


Source: Eberhard et al., 2020.

Figure 1. Map of South Sudan



Figure 2. Linguistic Mapping



Source: Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

Dinka (250,000 speakers), Southeastern Dinka (250,000 speakers) and Southwestern Dinka (450,000 speakers). Bari, a regional language, has 595,000 speakers, of whom 420,000 are L1 speakers and 175,000 are L2 speakers. Additional regional languages include Zande with 420,000 speakers, of whom 350,000 are L1 speakers and 100,000 are L2 speakers and Nuer, with approximately 740,000 speakers, most of whom speak it as their first language (Eberhard et al., 2020).

See Figure 2 above for detailed information on languages and populations that speak them.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION POLICY

Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, English replaced Arabic as the official LOI (UNICEF, 2016). However, the General Act of 2012 stipulates that instruction for early childhood development and the lower primary grades (Grades 1-3) should occur in the local language (Republic of South Sudan Ministry of Justice, 2012). Then, beginning in Grade 4, the LOI policy stipulates that the LOI should shift to English. However, the local language continues to be taught as a subject through Grade 8 (Republic of South Sudan Ministry of Justice, 2012).

Implementation of the LOI policy has been challenging given the country's linguistic diversity in addition to both human capital and financial constraints (Winrock International, 2017a). Despite many schools reporting that they are implementing local language instruction in the early grades, the South Sudan Room to Learn project found that students' first language is often not used as the LOI in practice. Furthermore, the project found that many schools are still providing instruction in either English or Arabic in the early grades (Montrose, 2016).

CLASS TIME

The South Sudanese education system is organized into three distinct levels: (1) two years of early childhood education followed by; (2) eight years of primary school; and (3) four years of secondary school divided into two 2-year blocks, lower secondary and upper secondary. Following independence, the Ministry of General Education and Instruction¹ (MoGEI) with support from the United Kingdom Department for

¹ The Ministry of General Education and Instruction was formerly named the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Table 1. Assessing Language Vitality: EGIDS Scale

Institutional	The language is used by institutions beyond the home and community
Developing	The language is in vigorous use and with literature in a standardized form
Vigorous	The language is not standardized but it is used among all generations
In Trouble	Intergenerational transmission is breaking down
Dying	Only fluent users, if any, are middle-aged or older
Extinct	The language is not used

Source: SIL International, n.d. For more information, please see: www.ethnologue.com/about/language-info

International Development (DFID), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) developed a new curriculum framework. The curriculum framework outlines key thematic areas as well as core student competencies that cut across all grades and school subjects. Key thematic areas include citizenship, literacy and numeracy, enterprise and the environment, while core student competencies include critical and creative thinking, communication, co-operation and culture and identity (Republic of South Sudan MoGEI, 2015).

The curriculum for lower primary is organized into eight subjects, each of which is allocated between three and seven 35-minute periods each week. As shown in Table 2, primary grade learners receive five periods a week dedicated to developing literacy skills in national languages. To support local language literacy instruction, the MoGEI has also developed National Language Teaching Guides in five languages including Bari, Dinka, Toposa, Nuer, and Zande.²

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR LITERACY

According to the General Education Act, primary school teachers are expected to have a secondary school certificate or diploma in addition to a teaching qualification from a government-recognized Teacher Training Institute (TTI) (Republic of South Sudan Ministry of Justice, 2012). However as of 2015, only 38% of all primary school teachers met these minimum qualification requirements (Republic of South Sudan MoGEI, 2017). Furthermore, Room to Learn found through its baseline study conducted in 2016 that 21.7% of classroom teachers only had a primary education (Winrock International, 2017b). Recognizing these gaps, the MoGEI outlined its intentions to improve and expand pre-service and in-service teacher training programs in the General Education Strategic Plan (GESP), 2017- 2022. Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) have the mandate to provide both pre-service and in-service training, however, currently only a few are functioning in South Sudan (Global Partnership for Education, n.d.). According to the MoGEI, student teachers who have completed Grade 8 are expected to complete a three-year pre-service teacher training, while those that have completed secondary school may complete a two-year program (Republic of South Sudan MoGEI, 2021).

² Please see the Ministry of General Education and Instruction's Learning Resources section for more information at: <http://moge.org/learning-resources/>.

Table 2. Number of periods allocated per subject in the early grades

Subject	Grades 1 - 3	Grade 4
National Language	5	5
English	7	7
Maths	6	6
Science	4	5
Social Studies	4	5
The Arts	3	4
Religious Education	3	4
Physical Education	3	4
Total	35	40
Time per lesson	35	40

Source: MoGEI, 2015.

Unfortunately, very little information on the pre-service curriculum is publicly available. However, the GESp indicates that the pre-service curriculum needs to be revised in order to ensure it aligns with the recently introduced curriculum framework, especially in relation to the introduction of local language instruction to support literacy skills development (Republic of South Sudan MoGEl, 2017). The USAID-funded South Sudan Room to Learn project developed training materials focused on early grade literacy instruction, and some TTI staff were trained with the idea that the training manuals and other materials would be integrated within existing pre-service teacher training structures. However, as of May 2019, the MoGEl had developed drafts of pre-service teacher training modules, but they had not been finalized or shared with the USAID Mission to South Sudan (J. Namadi, personal communication, May 20, 2019).

TEACHER LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY/LANGUAGE SPECIFIC TRAINING

Given the language of instruction prior to independence was Arabic, many teachers were taught in Arabic themselves and have had few opportunities to become literate in English or local languages (Winrock International, 2017a). To fill this gap, the Department of National Languages has begun providing pedagogical training to teachers to support local language instruction (Spronk, 2014). In addition, several donor-funded education programs have conducted language-specific training to support primary school teachers' English language skills, such as the South Sudan Teacher Education Program (SSTEP). However, according to the GESp, additional programming to support teachers' literacy skills in local languages is critically needed. As of 2017, the MoGEl launched the initial phase of implementation of its Human Resources Information System³, which informed the establishment of the Teacher Development and Management System (J. Namadi, personal communication, May 20, 2019). The recently established Teacher Development Management Services will be responsible for coordinating teacher professional development initiatives.

3 For more information, please visit: <https://www.hrisrss.org/index.php>.

TEACHER IN-SERVICE

Working in close collaboration with TTIs, the Teacher Development and National Management Services within the MoGEl will oversee in-service teacher training initiatives. As of 2015, less than one in five teachers (16.6%) had received in-service training (as cited in Montrose, 2016). Recognizing this gap, the MoGEl outlines in the GESp its intention to implement three- or four-year in-service certification program in which teachers participate in three to four week in-person training during school holidays, followed by self-study activities coordinated with support from County Education Centres (CEC) (Republic of South Sudan, 2017). As of 2015, very few CECs were functional, but according to the GESp, the MoGEl intends to re-establish one CEC in every county nationwide in order to expand in-service training support to teachers (Republic of South Sudan MoGEl, 2017).

The MoGEl has no specifically defined approach for strengthening literacy skills within in-service programming (J. Namadi, personal communication, May 20, 2019). However, under the USAID-funded SSTEP program, three literacy training modules and associated readers were developed and distributed to State Ministries of Education to support on-going in-service training after the project period of performance ended in 2014 (Education Development Center, 2016). Additional materials, developed under the South Sudan Room to Learn project, are also being utilized to support in-service teacher training initiatives (J. Namadi, personal communication, May 20, 2019). These include: (1) a Teacher Training Intervention Manual, which supports the implementation of a five-day foundational literacy skills training; (2) accompanying key information cards, which provide visual cues for low-literate teachers to support the teaching of reading skills in the early grades; and (3) A Teacher Professional Development for Basic Literacy Skills Trainers' manual, which supports teachers' knowledge and implementation of new pedagogical techniques to support literacy instruction⁴. Unfortunately, there is little publicly available information on how the MoGEl may be utilizing these resources currently to conduct in-service teacher training activities.

4 For more information on these materials, please visit: <https://winrock.org/project/room-to-learn-south-sudan/>.

USAID READING PROGRAM APPROACH AND ONGOING PROGRAMS

In alignment with the Mission to South Sudan's Strategic Framework, 2020 – 2024, USAID's overall approach to education focuses on providing children living in conflict with access to quality basic education and psychosocial services (USAID/South Sudan, 2021). Currently, USAID does not have any active early grade reading programs in South Sudan. However, prior USAID education programs with a focus on early grade reading include the Integrated Essential Emergency Education Services (IEEES) Project, the South Sudan Room to Learn project, and the South Sudan Teacher Education Program (SSTEP).

The three-year **Integrated Essential Emergency Education Services (IEEES) project** was implemented by UNICEF from 2017 – 2020. It aimed to improve resilience and to support the recovery of South Sudanese children, adolescents/youth and their families through linkages with other sectors and the provision of psychosocial support. Specifically, it intends to: (1) provide expanded support to safe learning environments and teaching and learning materials for out-of-school boys and girls; (2) improve the quality of education including literacy and numeracy skills through intensive teacher training programming; and (3) improve recovery and resilience by linking education with child protection services and psychosocial support. By the end of 2020, IEEES intended to reach over 170,000 learners with its primary level reading programming (UNICEF, 2019).

In October 2013, USAID launched the **South Sudan Room to Learn project** (2013 – 2016), which was implemented by Winrock International alongside its partners, FHI360 and Plan International. The project aimed to improve literacy outcomes through the following key activities: (1) assessment of existing early grade literacy resources used by alternative and formal education systems; (2) develop new contextually relevant literacy materials and methodologies; (3) train primary grade teachers using the developed resources and methodologies in addition to providing on-going mentoring to

support classroom implementation; and (4) assess student learning outcomes through baseline and endline early grade reading assessments (Brown, 2015). While, the project was originally intended to be implemented for five years, due to on-going conflict and a breakdown of law and order in late 2015, the project was terminated early. Despite these implementation challenges, the project reached 329,529 children in 388 schools and 112 Accelerated Learning Programs across six states (Winrock International, 2017b).

To support important education policy reforms following South Sudan's independence, USAID launched the **South Sudan Teacher Education Program (SSTEP)** in 2011. SSTEP worked in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education & Science and Technology, later renamed the MoGEL, to develop the National Professional Standards for Teachers, which laid the foundation for subsequent education reforms. In addition, SSTEP also designed a new Teacher Training Curriculum and then used it to train approximately 3,000 teachers and 255 tutors across 10 states within South Sudan. As a result of these trainings, teachers improved their English language skills enabling them to more effectively deliver the primary school curriculum. Finally, SSTEP procured and distributed books and readers to trained teachers to support early grade literacy outcomes (Education Development Center, 2014).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN USAID PROJECTS

According to USAID/South Sudan's Strategic Framework (2020 – 2024), all USAID programming should foster community engagement and ownership of the delivery of health, education, and food security services in order to support sustainability and resilience (USAID/South Sudan, 2020). While there are no current active USAID early grade reading programs in South Sudan, previous projects implemented a variety of activities to support community engagement in order to achieve this mandate.

For example, under the Integrated Essential Emergency Education Services (IEEES) project, implemented by UNICEF, the project supported the establishment of Parent

Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs), and provided training to community members to improve their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. As a result, there was an increase in ownership among PTAs and SMCs to support improvements in the school learning environment, student outcomes as well as increased transparency between the community and school-level staff (UNICEF, 2019).

The South Sudan Room to Learn project (2013-2016), implemented by Winrock International, worked in close collaboration with community stakeholders, including PTAs and other local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to identify school needs, assess current assets, and develop a school development plan (SPD) to set short- and medium-term goals. To support communities to achieve their SPD, the South Sudan Room to Learn project then provided grants to directly to PTAs and NGOs. In addition, the project also conducted training and other workshops with teachers and PTAs to strengthen their capacity to support reading outcomes (Winrock International, 2017b).

OTHER DONOR FUNDED READING PROGRAMS

Alongside USAID, several other organizations are involved in implementing projects to support literacy skills across South Sudan, which are described below.

UNICEF: Responding to COVID-19's Adverse Impact on education in the Republic of South Sudan

To support the education sector's response to COVID-19 in South Sudan, GPE awarded UNICEF a \$7 million dollar grant in August 2020. The 18-month project, working in coordination with DFID and USAID, has three primary areas of focus: (1) support continuity of learning during the closure of schools; (2) support the reopening of schools and prepare them to address learning gaps resulting from the disruptions; and (3) support effective monitoring and implementation. To achieve these goals, UNICEF will work with the MoGEI, TTIs and CECs to deliver learning packages including stories, math and science materials for self-directed learning to support children's ability to learn

in remote and hard to reach areas. In addition, UNICEF will work with PTAs and SMCs to implement community awareness campaigns to encourage parental support for learning at home (Global Partnership for Education, 2020).

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): Capacity Development for Education, Education on Air

Working under the Capacity Development for Education CapED programme and in close collaboration with the MoGEI, UNICEF, Save the Children, and the United Mission of South Sudan, UNESCO launched the "Education on Air" program in May 2020. The program broadcasts daily primary and secondary school lessons focusing on English, science and mathematics. Prior to the roll out of the program, UNESCO trained teachers to strengthen their capacity to deliver quality education through radio broadcasts. The training focused on developing teachers' skills in producing interactive, gender-responsive and socially inclusive lessons. Education on Air programming is broadcasted across two radio stations, South Sudan Broadcast and Radio Miraya to reach students nation-wide (UNESCO, 2020).

Africa Education Trust (AET)

AET has worked in South Sudan since 1998 and was one of the few organizations which remained operational throughout the war and on-going conflict. AET, now as part of Street Child, supports two literacy related activities in South Sudan. First, AET established the Yambio Community Library in Western Equatoria, which became the first community library in the state. The library provides over 5,000 books to students, teachers, MoGEI staff, and the larger community. In 2013, the library was visited by at least 75 people daily, and lending records show that over 4,000 people had taken books home for further study. In addition to the Community Library, AET implements teacher training programming in South Sudan. Its program works in collaboration with the Catholic University of Juba and combines distance learning with local mentorship to support teachers to upgrade their qualifications (AET, n.d.).

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