



LUGA AQUILA

CHILD LABOUR, EDUCATION AND COMMODIFICATION IN SOUTH SUDAN



Rift Valley Institute
MAKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WORK

XCEPT
CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT
EVIDENCE / POLICY / TRENDS

LUGA AQUILA

CHILD LABOUR, EDUCATION & COMMODIFICATION IN SOUTH SUDAN



Rift Valley Institute
MAKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WORK

XCEPT
CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT
EVIDENCE / POLICY / TRENDS


ukaid
from the British people

Child labour, education and commodification in South Sudan

Luga Aquila

Rift Valley Institute

Cover image: © Isaac Billy 2016 – A makeshift school at the UN Tomping

Luga Aquila is a researcher with the Rift Valley Institute in South Sudan.

This report is a product of the FCDO's Cross-Border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT) programme, funded by UK aid from the UK government. XCEPT brings together leading experts to examine conflict-affected borderlands, how conflicts connect across borders, and the factors that shape violent and peaceful behaviour. The programme carries out research to better understand the causes and impacts of conflict in border areas and their international dimensions. It supports more effective policymaking and development programming and builds the skills of local partners. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

The Rift Valley Institute works in Eastern and Central Africa to bring local knowledge to bear on social, political and economic development. Copyright © Rift Valley Institute 2021.

This work is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

CONTENTS

Summary	7
----------------	----------

Introduction	9
Research methods	10

Children’s work and education in South Sudan: A review of the literature	12
---	-----------

How child labour became a commodity	19
Children’s work and education under the old system	19
‘Best meal’: the old way of rewarding child workers	21
Education and socialization: mothers and fathers as teachers	22
The end of the old system	23
Links to the markets of East Africa	24
Bicycle tubes and labour commodification	25
Girls’ experiences of the new labour system	26

How education became a commodity	27
The first mission schools and education-for-work	27
School fees in the 1940s and 1960s	28
Educational expansion in the 1970s	29
The educational marketplace changes child labour systems	30
Fees at public and private schools	32
The growing demand for education	33
The spread of money and the rise of piece work	34

My schooling in Yei	39
----------------------------	-----------

Child labour, non-enrolment and drop-out	42
Child labour and non-participation in education	42
South Sudanese enrolment and survey data	43
Time burdens and girls' participation in education	44

Conclusion	47
-------------------	-----------

Bibliography	49
---------------------	-----------

SUMMARY

- The commodification of labour – particularly the growth in paid work – and education in South have gone hand-in-hand during the first two decades of the twentieth century. This report examines the connection between the demand for education and the spread of paid work in South Sudan, specifically Central Equatoria and the Bahr el-Ghazal region.
- During the long wars of the twentieth century in southern Sudan, conflict related displacement exposed many families to new challenges, including the erosion of traditional community-based systems of production, and many saw formal education as a way of navigating the new market-oriented economy and the society it was producing.
- At the end of Sudan's second civil war, in 2005, the number of schools in southern Sudan was already increasing. At this point, they were mostly supported by the labour contributions of the local community, particularly the children enrolled there, rather than by paying school fees. However, this would soon change.
- Around 2005, a trend emerged of private schools – requiring fees to be paid in money – being opened. Many of these were started by South Sudanese returnees from neighbouring countries, particularly Uganda, Sudan and Kenya, who brought back with them the system of private education, financed through cash-based work that they had often participated in during their displacement. At this time, government schools also started to require payment for children's education, further entrenching its rapid commodification.
- Southern Sudan also, gradually, developed links with the cash-based trading economy of eastern Africa, helping to spread money and accelerating the pace of commercialization.
- At the same time, there was a huge increase in the amount of money in circulation in South Sudan. This was related to the establishment of a new government in the south after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, which was financed from oil revenues and saw an expanding cohort of government employees spread across the country and being paid a regular salary. Remittances also flowed into the country from diaspora populations across the world.

- The increase in money supply promoted the spread of commercial farming and agricultural markets. This stimulated a trend towards children working on farms to obtain the money needed to pay for their education, often with the aspiration of obtaining a well-paid government or NGO job in the future. Many children who would previously have contributed towards household labour now work for money on commercial farms so that they can pay school fees.
- While boys may have in some ways benefited from the educational possibilities that the new labour and education markets have produced, girls are often left with a much heavier burden than before – still having to carry out more domestic duties, as well as working to pay their own school fees (and go to school).
- Child labour in South Sudan today is a complex reality. While the requirement to work can disrupt a child's learning, the requirement to pay school fees has stimulated a need for children to work to facilitate their own education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for the support they provided during the writing of this paper. Firstly, to Dr Eddie Thomas and Ms Loes Lijnders who used their extensive experience to guide me through the writing process. Secondly, to Br. Bruno Dada (PhD) who also supervised and coached me. Thirdly, to Anna Rowett and all the Rift Valley Institute's staff in Juba, South Sudan, who gave me the opportunity to do this work, and to staff in the Nairobi and London offices, who have always been very supportive. Fourth, to the paper's peer reviewers, whose excellent comments helped improve the text significantly. Fifth, to my fellow RVI researchers in South Sudan for your support, especially Deng Kuol Nyol, Joseph Diing Majok, Elizebath Nyibol Malou, Jimmy Pitya Lado, Jovensia Uchalla and Machot Amoun. Finally, to all the participants in the research in Central Equatoria and Western Bahr el-Ghazal who gave their precious time to take part in the study.

INTRODUCTION

Until the latter part of the twentieth century, South Sudanese boys and girls grew food on household farms for their families to eat. Under this system, children's work and education were hard to distinguish: labour was a way of learning to be a productive member of their family and society. Today, many boys and girls work for money outside of their household farm and use the money to support their education in schools. This process is sometimes called commodification – education and labour are now bought and sold.

The commodification of education has prompted boys and girls to sell their labour, instead of working for their families' sustenance. Aspirations are changing: boys and girls want education because they believe it might help them to escape the unpredictable and hungry new world of buying and selling labour and food. Education gives them a chance to achieve the life of an educated person with a salary. Even at a time when many salaries are not being paid, children, young people and families are changing the way that they live and work in order to get an education.

South Sudan's 2011 Transitional Constitution and 2012 Education Act made primary education compulsory and free of charge. However, families still must contribute to 'school development funds', pay examination fees, and for uniforms, materials, and other hidden costs. Even though education is now an expensive commodity, government schools cannot accommodate the increasing number of children coming for enrolment, and private schools with even higher fees and charges are growing every year.

This study argues that education fees and other related costs are a factor behind the commodification of labour for parents and children in South Sudan. It looks at changing patterns of boys' and girls' work over time, in both rural and urban settings, and how these changing patterns affect gendered and generational divisions of labour. Now that education and work have been separated into two distinct activities, the working lives of girls, boys, and adults have changed. Formal education requires money, and the need for money has pushed children and their parents to sell their labour. Hence the demand for labour and demand for formal education go together in South Sudan, as the commodification of education results in parents, girls and boys commodifying their labour across South Sudan. This has increased the time and labour burdens for everyone, particularly girls.

The International Labour Organization recognizes that some forms of boys' and girls' work can help personal development, but it uses the term 'child labour' to describe work that is harmful and that interferes with children's schooling.¹ This study accepts this distinction, but it addresses a complex South Sudanese reality, where the demand for education is leading boys and girls to work for money. Children who are poor – in South Sudan that often means children who are living in displacement or who migrated to urban areas – have to sell their labour in order to pay for school fees. Children's paid labour interacts with schooling in unexpected ways. This paper connects the commodification of children's work in South Sudan to the commodification of education.

Research methods

This paper is based on an extensive review of literature relating to the history of child labour and its commodification, and to the history of education and its commodification in South Sudan and the wider region – part of a wider move towards markets in South Sudan. The paper is one of a series based on a multi-year study of gender and generational changes in agricultural production, conducted by the Catholic University of South Sudan and Rift Valley Institute.² It draws on themes from the Rift Valley Institute's research project on South Sudan's economic transition, and its consequences, conducted as part of the X-Border Local Research Network.³ It develops themes, particularly on the commodification of labour in South Sudan, found in the work of Dr Edward Thomas, especially *Moving Towards Markets: Cash, commodification and conflict in South Sudan*.⁴

The importance of education as a driver of labour migration, particularly from South Sudan's borderland regions, is also explored by Joseph Diing Majok and Dr Nicki Kindersley in their

-
1. International Labour Organization, *Child Labour: A Textbook for University Students*, Geneva: ILO, 2004.
 2. Other papers in this series include: Luga Aquila, 'You Can Now Get Engaged': Meanings of cassava among the Pojulu of South Sudan', Rift Valley Institute, April 2020; Elizabeth Nyibol, 'Migrating with seeds: Women, agricultural knowledge and displacement in South Sudan', Rift Valley Institute, April 2020; Deng Kuol, 'Grains as life: The value of sorghum and millet amongst the Abyei Dinka', Rift Valley Institute, April 2020; Jovenisa Uchalla, 'Trading grains in South Sudan: Stories of opportunities, shocks and changing tastes', Rift Valley Institute, October 2020; Edward Thomas, 'South Sudan's changing tastes: Conflict, displacement and food imports', Rift Valley Institute, June 2020.
 3. The X-Border Local Research Network is a component of the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office's Cross-Border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT) programme. The X-Border Local Research Network carries out research to better understand the causes and impacts of conflict in border areas and their international dimensions. It supports more effective policymaking and development programming and builds the skills of local partners. For more information see: <https://xcept-research.org/>.
 4. Edward Thomas, *Moving towards markets: Cash, commodification and conflict in South Sudan*, London/Juba: Rift Valley Institute, June 2019.

report, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands: Understanding migrant pathways from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, South Sudan, and Monetized livelihoods and militarized labour in South Sudan's borderlands*.⁵

The research was conducted in two phases across two locations: Western Bahr el-Ghazal and Central Equatoria State. The first phase of the study was conducted between July 2019 and September 2019 with face-to-face interviews and focus groups. Phase two was conducted in 2020, with participants in Yei and Juba (Central Equatoria) and Wau (Western Bahr el-Ghazal). Because of COVID-19 restrictions, phase two used telephone interviews.

Researchers from the Catholic University interviewed one hundred farm workers and key informants in Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal State, as well as conducting nine focus group discussions. Interviewees were identified through the community leaders in Baggari Jeddidi, Agok, Marial Baai and Udici plus Khor Malang by the Catholic University of South Sudan Juba and Wau campus researchers. Researchers combined questionnaires with open-ended interviews and focus group guides, complemented with observations of working lives. They interviewed young women, older women, young men, older men, people working in the ministry of agriculture, education and the displaced population in Wau, which generated in-depth qualitative data.

I was one of the researchers interviewing people in Wau, and in addition, I conducted six interviews with people living in, or coming from, Central Equatoria State. This study also uses auto-ethnographic techniques, drawing on my family and personal experiences of child labour and education in South Sudan. This auto-ethnographic method emerged during the process of writing as the Wau study reflects my own childhood experiences. Throughout this paper, I interweave the auto-ethnographic reflections with theoretical arguments and with the empirical data collected in Wau, Yei and Juba.

Primary data generated was analysed through a series of team discussions. Members of the research team then decided which findings they wanted to write about. These team discussions identified the central role of education in changing working lives in Wau and in Central Equatoria, which has shed light on wider gendered and generational changes in agricultural production.

5. Dr Nicki Kindersley and Joseph Diing Majok, *Breaking Out of the Borderlands: Understanding migrant pathways from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, South Sudan*, Juba/London: Rift Valley Institute, November 2020.

CHILDREN'S WORK AND EDUCATION IN SOUTH SUDAN: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study looks at how money is changing the experience of children's work and education in South Sudan. This is a somewhat uncharted topic. There is plenty of literature on children's work and on children's education in South Sudan, but not much material on how money is turning work and education into commodities. This section briefly reviews literature on children's work and on education.

Much recent work on child labour in South Sudan is produced by humanitarian organizations using official demographic data. UNICEF describes child labour as 'endemic' to South Sudan.⁶ The country's 2008 census found that 45.6 per cent of children aged 10–14 were engaged in work, with 60.2 per cent of them in agriculture.⁷ Certain groups of children are more likely to work. Nearly all street children in Juba are involved in some form of child

labour. According to a 2006 household survey, orphaned children are much more likely to be out of school.⁸ In their report, 'Labour Market in South Sudan', Guarcello, Lyon and Rosati note that South Sudanese children's economic activities are concentrated in the agricultural sector, often working on family farms.⁹ Berenger and Vidier-Chouchane's study, 'Child Labour and Schooling' uses census and survey data to show that rural girls are more likely to work than any other group.¹⁰ This literature presents child labour as an obstacle to children's participation in formal education, and as a violation of children's rights.

-
6. UNICEF, 'Situation Assessment of Children and Women in South Sudan', New York: UNICEF, 2015: 133.
 7. 'Population and Housing Census 2008, Sudan', Central Bureau of Statistics, Southern Sudan Commission for Statistics and Evaluation, 2008. (<https://catalog.ihnsn.org/index.php/catalog/4216>)
 8. SSCSE [Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation], 'Statistical Yearbook for Southern Sudan 2009', Juba: SSCSE, 2009: 44.
 9. L. Guarcello, L.S. Lyon, F.C. Rosati, 'Labour market in South Sudan: Country Report', Rome: Understanding Children's Work Programme, 2011.
 10. V. Berenger and A. Vidier-Chouchane, 'Child Labour and Schooling in South Sudan and Sudan: Is There a Gender Preference?', *African Development Review*, 28/2 (2016).

Older ethnographic literature presents children's work in different ways. Evans-Pritchard's 1940 study, *The Nuer*, suggests that children's work has a socializing function.¹¹ More recently, in *The Dinka of the Sudan*, Francis Mading Deng considers the function of children's work in the socialization of Dinka boys and girls, and describes the unequal gendered burdens that are placed on girls.¹² Perner's book *The Anyuak* describes how the work of rural Anyuak girls and boys in Akobo, Jonglei, in the 1970s, socialized them and inducted them into complementary gendered roles that were part of a complex system of production and exchange.¹³ Andretta's 1985 study – 'Group Cohesion among the Murle of Southern Sudan' – describes how the work of Murle girls and boys trains them for adult roles in production and reproduction.¹⁴ For many parents, the educative and socializing functions of children's work remained very important until recent times, when money has become more important.

Scholars studying children's work in neighbouring countries have analyzed the way that commercial pressures on subsistence economies are changing children's working experience. In 'Changing Livelihoods, Changing Childhoods', Abebe argues that Ethiopian export-oriented commercial agriculture has forced adults to migrate towards off-farm employment, increasing pressure on children to engage in multiple reproductive and income-generating roles, affecting their ability to pursue formal education.¹⁵

Katz's respective studies, 'Sow what you know: The Struggle for Social Reproduction in Rural Sudan'¹⁶ and *Growing up global: economic restructuring and children's everyday lives* offer a similar account of children's work in Sudan.¹⁷ Child labour helps the maintenance of the subsistence economy and also contributes to the cash-based export economy. Katz argues that changes to household production and new labour burdens are reshaping childhood in Howa, a pseudonymous village on an export-oriented agricultural scheme in central Sudan. These changes alter the nature and content of their socialization and may be leading to a

-
11. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
 12. Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka of the Sudan*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.
 13. Conradin Perner, *The Anyuak – Living on Earth in the Sky*, Basel: Schwabe, 2016.
 14. Elizabeth Hain Andretta, 'A Reconsideration of the Basis of Group Cohesion among the Murle of Southern Sudan', PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1985.
 15. T. Abebe, 'Changing Livelihoods, Changing Childhoods: Patterns of children's work in rural Southern Ethiopia', *Children's Geographies* 5/1 (2007).
 16. Cindi Katz, 'Sow What You Know: The struggle for social reproduction in rural Sudan', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81/3 (1991).
 17. Cindi Katz, *Growing up global: economic restructuring and children's everyday lives*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

disharmony between what children are learning from daily life, and the skills and knowledge that were likely to be useful in their adulthoods.¹⁸

Tuttle's studies, 'Narrating History, Belonging and Common Place' and 'Play, childhood, and playthings' consider play, work and learning from the perspective of children in Bor, Jonglei. This was partly an attempt to expand discussions about children, to take their perspectives more seriously, and to see them as thoughtful actors in their own right. Drawing on Katz and Tuttle's contributions also complicates discussions of children's labour – some activities, like building a house, are 'simultaneously playful and workful.'¹⁹

Like earlier scholars, Tuttle views work and playing as part of socialization. However, Tuttle's studies recognize that children's work is moving towards markets – an observation that is absent from earlier ethnographic accounts of child labour. For instance, Tuttle points out that children form friendships with market traders, help out in shops and stalls, provide translation work in the market (and elsewhere), and also do an abundance of work that maintains social relations between households (by carrying charcoal and messages). Other children work as fare collectors on taxis, and so forth. While semi-autonomous 'street children' around Bor are sometimes seen as a nuisance (or as evidence of absent parents), they are much more commonly seen as a source of help, or even inexpensive labour – they could be sent off to fetch things, help around shops and households, and so on. 'The gendering of children's work in Bor and its conceptual separation (by adults) from play was most pronounced in the town's central market.'²⁰ Tuttle's work helps explain how the move towards markets is changing children's experiences of education, socialization and work in South Sudan. This paper builds on his work, which reconceptualizes connections between child labour and socialization.

This paper connects the commodification of children's work in South Sudan to the commodification of education – the need to pay school fees. There is not much historical discussion of the spread of school fees in South Sudan. Sanderson's study, 'Education in the Southern Sudan' is the main source for information about education in the colonial period.²¹ Her work describes the relationship between missionary schools and the government

18. Katz, *Growing Up Global*, 2004.

19. Brendan Tuttle, 'Play, childhood and playthings in Bor, South Sudan, 2009–2010,' *International Journal of Play* 7/2 (2018), 8.

20. Tuttle, 'Play, childhood and playthings,' 16.

21. L.P. Sanderson, 'Education in the Southern Sudan: The Impact of Government-Missionary-Southern Sudanese Relationships upon the Development of Education during the Condominium Period, 1898–1956', *African Affairs*, 79/315 (1980).

until the time when missionaries were asked to leave in 1964.²² In those days, students and parents sometimes made labour or other in-kind contributions to schools. However, Sanderson's study does not describe payment systems. In contrast, Ga'le's memoir, *Shaping a free Southern Sudan*, describes in great detail the experience of struggling to pay school fees in mission schools through money earned from wage labour in Eastern Equatoria in the 1940s – a time when some mission schools were not asking for money.²³

Ga'le's work covers the time when mission schools began to ask for money in exchange for education. The reason was to finance church activities, especially school programs, which were one of the pastoral missions of the church. According to one church educator interviewed for this paper, when the missionaries were expelled from the Sudan in 1964, most of the mission schools began asking students to pay school fees since financial support was not coming to Southern Sudan.

In any case, during the colonial period, formal schooling was a rarity. Drawing on colonial sources, Duany, Lorins and Thomas's 2021 article 'Education, Conflict, and Civicness in South Sudan' notes that at the end of the Anglo-Egyptian period, South Sudan had 263 pre-primary village schools, 44 primary schools (11 for girls), and six post-primary schools.²⁴ Often, these schools emphasized practical skills, labour, discipline, and religious instruction. Few children wanted this kind of education. In the early days, colonial officials sometimes reported that parents were reluctant to send children to school, and sometimes the missionaries only taught small numbers of poor children, or children forced to learn after being 'rounded up' by colonial officials.²⁵

After Sudan's independence in 1956, the Khartoum government simultaneously fought a civil war in its southern provinces and expanded education there. Duany et al. argue that wartime educational expansion, which favoured the construction of Islamic institutes over secular schools, turned schools into a cultural battleground and brought sharp declines in enrolment.²⁶ But after the first civil war ended in 1972, a major new expansion of Southern Sudanese education provision began, led by a new Southern Regional Government in Juba.

22. Sanderson, 'Education in the Southern Sudan'.

23. Severino Fuli Boki Tombe Ga'le, *Shaping a free Southern Sudan, Memoirs of our Struggle 1934—1985*, Loa: Loa Catholic Missions Council, 2002.

24. Julia Duany, Rebecca Lorins, and Edward Thomas, 'Education, Conflict, and Civicness in South Sudan', London: London School of Economics, and Juba: South Sudan Studies Association, 2021.

25. Duany et al. 'Education, Conflict, and Civicness in South Sudan', 9.

26. Duany et al. 'Education, Conflict, and Civicness in South Sudan'.

Information on education financing during this period comes from new sources: education ministries in Juba and Khartoum, international organizations such as the World Bank, and South Sudanese education scholars who began producing doctoral dissertations. Duany's study, 'Sudanese Women and Education' points out that, officially, primary and secondary schooling was free in this period: the 1973 constitution promised free education at all levels.²⁷ But local communities contributed significantly to education costs, particularly in rebel areas. World Bank reports indicate that in the 1960s, the *Anyanya* rebel movement set up about 200 'bush schools' in areas under its control, which were built and supported by local communities.²⁸

Katoro-Beninyo's article, 'Evaluation of the Educational Policies in Sudan', discusses education financing in this period.²⁹ After the 1973 peace agreement, the central government devolved much of the responsibility for education financing to local governments.³⁰ Following 1983, when Sudan's second civil war began, the whole country was convulsed with a debt crisis, causing government financing for education to sharply contract. In 1990, a new government in Khartoum pushed responsibility for education financing on to NGOs and schools.³¹ The SPLM published an education policy in 2002, which envisaged the community management and financing of schools.³²

Sommers's 'Islands of Education: Schooling, civil war and the Southern Sudanese (1983—2004)' is one of many studies during this period examining the effect of displacement on South Sudanese people's education. Duany et al. sum up key findings: the second Sudanese civil war led to the widespread destruction of rural settlements and infrastructure, and turned some schools into garrisons.³³ Many children could not access schools in South Sudan, and moved towards schools in northern Sudan, and real or imagined schools in the rear bases of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/SPLM). Many of these migrating students, seeking education in SPLA camps in Ethiopia in the 1980s, or

27. Julia Aker Duany, 'Sudanese Women and Education: The Struggle for Equal Access and Participation', PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1996.

28. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), 'Report of a Special Mission on the Economic Development of Southern Sudan', Washington DC: IBRD, 1973: 44—45.

29. Ben Katoro-Beninyo, 'Evaluation of the Educational Policies of the Sudan, 1972—1992: Impact and Implications on Educational Development in the Southern Sudan', PhD dissertation, Leeds University, 1996.

30. Permanent Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, 1973: 53.

31. Katoro-Beninyo, 'Evaluation of the Educational Policies of the Sudan', 1996: 115.

32. SPLM Secretariat of Education, 'Education Policy of the New Sudan and Implementation Guidelines.' Yei/Himman: SPLM, 2002: 7.

33. Duany et al. 'Education, Conflict, and Civicness in South Sudan'.

in refugee camps in Kenya in the first decade of the war, were boys. In other countries like Uganda, the gender balance in refugee camps was fairer.

When the second civil war ended in 2005, enrolment rates across South Sudan were low, particularly for girls. In rural areas, many education costs were borne by communities, who built village schools and fed teachers from their own production. But, there was also a huge cohort of displaced and migrant students who were accustomed to paying school fees in order to secure their education. School fees began to affect family lives and livelihoods in South Sudan too. Duany et al. argue that South Sudan's expanding education sector was an important factor behind the rapid pace of urbanization after 2005 as oil revenues dramatically increased the amount of money in circulation, and monetization led more families to invest in education.³⁴ Many new schools were built by private investors or by non-government organizations with little state support. School fees became a part of life.

Since 2005, there has been a significant expansion in academic and policy literature on education in South Sudan. This literature covers education statistics,³⁵ child labour and education,³⁶ education and citizenship, education and peace building,³⁷ education and gender,³⁸ education and language,³⁹ history education and violence,⁴⁰ education and poverty.⁴¹

34. Duany et al, 'Education, Conflict, and Civicness in South Sudan', 15.

35. MGEI [Ministry of General Education and Instruction], 'Education Statistics for the Republic of South Sudan 2013', Juba: MGEI, 2014.

36. Berenger and Vidier-Chouchane, 'Child Labour and Schooling in South Sudan and Sudan', 2016.

37. Gabrielle Daoust, 'Education and the Critique of Liberal Peacebuilding: The Case of South Sudan', PhD dissertation, Sussex University, 2018.

38. Halla B. Holmarsdottir, Ingrid Birgitte MøllerEkne, and Heidi L. Augestad, 'The Dialectic between Global Gender Goals and Local Empowerment: girls' education in Southern Sudan and South Africa', *Research in Comparative and International Education* 6/11 (2011).

39. Jacqueline Marshall, 'Literacy, Language, Non-Formal Education and Alternative Learning Opportunities in Southern Sudan', Hamburg: UNESCO Institute of Education, 2006; Rob Kevlihan, 'Beyond Creole Nationalism? Language Policies, Education and the Challenge of State Building in Post-conflict Southern Sudan', *Ethnopolitics*, 6/4 (2007); Tanya Spronk, 'Addressing the challenges of language choice in the implementation of mother-tongue based bilingual education in South Sudan', *Multilingual Education* 4/16 (2014); Edward Yakobo Momo, 'The Language Policy in South Sudan: Implications for Educational Development', London: London School of Economics, and Juba: South Sudan Studies Association, 2021.

40. Anders Briedlid, 'Sudanese Images of the Other: Education and Conflict in Sudan', *Comparative Education Review* 54/4 (2010); Yosa Wawa, 'Civicness in South Sudan secondary school curriculum', London: London School of Economics and Juba: South Sudan Studies Association, 2021.

41. Abebe Shimeles and Audrey Verdier-Chouchane, 'The Key Role of Education in Reducing Poverty in South Sudan', *African Development Review* 28/2 (2016).

This literature reflects the spread of education in the post-2005 period. Duany et al. demonstrate that enrolment and school construction rates were increasing after South Sudan's independence in 2011 as there were 3,766 primary schools in.⁴² UNICEF'S 2015 'Situation Assessment of Children and Women in South Sudan' describes a positive trend in school enrollment of children between 2005 and 2013, but a drop in 2015, especially in primary schools.⁴³ South Sudan still has one of the highest proportions of out-of-school children in the world, but enrolment is still much higher today than it was during previous wars. In 2018, the Ministry of General Education and Instruction reported that primary school numbers rose to 3,848 and primary enrolment to 1.6 million: 42.9 percent of enrolled primary school children were.⁴⁴

Although studies of education in South Sudan are expanding, the literature reviewed here pays little attention to the role of families and children's paid work in funding education. A major World Bank report on education in 2012 said:

There are still primary school fees in some states, but not much is known about fees, or about whether parents are funding the many volunteer teachers. In the most recent household survey, parents reported fairly moderate amounts of yearly education spending. More information is needed to determine whether school fees are limiting access to school for some children.⁴⁵

This paper addresses a major gap in the literature on education in South Sudan. Many children and young people are entering education, and they and their families have to pay for it, because education has become a commodity in South Sudan. Finding ways to pay for education is changing the working lives of children and parents and turning their labour into a commodity too.

42. MGEI, 'Education Statistics for the Republic of South Sudan 2013', 17–18.

43. UNICEF, 'Situation Assessment of Children and Women in South Sudan,' New York: UNICEF, 2015.

44. MGEI, 'Education Statistics for the Republic of South Sudan 2013'.

45. World Bank, 'Education in the Republic of South Sudan: Status and Challenges for a New System,' Washington DC: World Bank, 2012: 109.

HOW CHILD LABOUR BECAME A COMMODITY

In the second half of the twentieth century, South Sudan moved from household-based systems of production and education to monetized and often market-based systems of production and education.⁴⁶ This multi-dimensional process of change happened during long conflicts, and followed an uneven trajectory. In some places, conflict inhibited this process of change, and in other places, it accelerated it. Despite this asymmetrical geography and tempo, a broad shift is observable from a somewhat idealised ‘old system’, towards one where money is changing every social relationship.

Children’s work and education under the old system

Under the old system, labour was mobilized through social networks, or directly from family members. No money was involved in this system: children helped parents on their farms in what can be seen as an informal education. Children not only worked on their family farms, but would often also accompany their parents for *nafir*, a system of collective, reciprocal labour where community members combine their labour to work on the farms of their close relatives and neighbours, during busy periods of land clearance, digging and harvest. People would receive food and local beer in exchange for their labour. This would ensure that there was enough food in the household for at least one year in the household – communal work formed an important component of food security. Families largely depended on their agricultural harvest and only accessed markets for clothes and food items which were not cultivated in South Sudan, like sugar and salt.

The Pojulu community is an agrarian community centred around Lainya, a fertile area near Yei in Central Equatoria State.⁴⁷ It is an area of dense, tropical forest which falls within the Equatorial rain-belt where people plant twice a year, in April and August, and harvest twice, in July/August and November/December. The land is very fertile. Pojulu girls and boys participated in cultivation and their work contributed to family production. Families who were able to mobilize more labour from girls and boys, and to produce more food, were

46. See Thomas, *Moving Towards Markets*.

47. For more on the Pojulu community of Central Equatoria, see Aquila, “You can now get engaged”.

recognized as successful and wealthy. The security of their labour supply resulted in active participation on their farms and abundant production.

For many communities, family production levels were a key part of social recognition and respect. During the 1960s to 1970s, family reputations were built through agricultural productivity in the Pojulu community. Their wealth in livestock was also mainly managed by boys and girls. This recognition was very important to Pojulu and other communities. Families were identified with the best things that they produced, or the economic activities they excelled at. For example, families could gain a reputation as great farmers by cultivating large pieces of land and producing abundant food. Families could gain a reputation as great hunters if they caught a lot of game, and the most productive honey harvesters gained social recognition from abundance. The labour of girls and boys helped families to win family reputations. As a result, many parents taught girls and boys farm work and trained girls in unpaid domestic work. Their labour was essential to production and also to local, non-market systems of exchange.

In this period – the 1960s to 1970s – family reputation was important in the marriage process. Parents accepted marriage partners for their children from families regarded as great and wealthy in food and livestock. Many men in the Pojulu community had several wives so they could produce many girls and boys, whose contributions to family farming, hunting, fishing and craft economies were very significant. Girls and boys helped raise the status of the family name in the community and, as a result, they themselves married into highly recognized families. Farmers with few or no girls and boys had to keep labouring hard as their physical capacity decreased. Such farmers looked old when they reached fifty. Polygamous families with many children, in contrast, had large farms and produced more food with their large labour force of girls and boys. In the Pojulu community, families with more wealth – in terms of large farms with different kinds of crops, as well as domestic animals like goats, sheep and chickens – have the reputation of being better marriage partners. Moreover, men from wealthy families have higher chances of becoming married to more women because they have the means to settle dowry payments for multiple wives. More wives generally implies more children, and more children implies a higher labour contribution.

Like Pojulu children, previous generations of children in the Balanda community in and around Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal had helped to build their families' reputations. They contributed to the family economy through their participation in farming, fishing, hunting, livestock keeping and domestic work. A 60-year-old woman who was born in the 1960s, grew up in Wau, and later went to Khartoum, described how important children were in the Balanda community for raising the family name through high levels of household production.

Traditionally in the Balanda community, boys worked with their fathers on cultivating the farms, and sometimes went to perform activities outside the homestead, like hunting, fishing, and harvesting honey. Girls, on the other hand, worked with their mothers in household domestic chores like cooking, fetching water, cleaning, washing utensils as well as assisting their mothers on farms, in work such as clearing, planting, weeding, and harvesting crops at the end of the season.⁴⁸

The process and age of introducing boys and girls to work was the same for many communities in South Sudan. Pojulu communities of Equatoria, and Balanda and Dinka communities of Bahr el-Ghazal all introduced a child to work around the same age – whether in the farm or taking care of the livestock. Some of the duties girls and boys performed at the age of six to seven years included the grazing of domestic animals like goats and sheep, which required taking livestock to grasslands and to water points. In the Pojulu community, boys were required to help care for livestock such as sheep, goats, and even cattle. Girls were needed for domestic work in many communities, such as fetching water and firewood, cooking, cleaning and taking care of siblings and the elderly. At the same time, girls contributed to agricultural work, which sometimes involved taking care of cattle or livestock.

‘Best meal’: the old way of rewarding child workers

Commonly, children who were very active during the second half of the twentieth century in the Pojulu community were not paid money in return for the work they performed on the farm or in the household. Instead, boys and girls who worked very hard were respected and sometimes given special food to eat. In the 1960s the payment for hard-working Pojulu boys and girls in the household farm was in form of a ‘best meal’. In these instances, the family head, the father, would ask the boys to slaughter a goat or sheep, and invite neighbours to join in and recognize the hard work and virtue of the child. For example, at the age of seven, my mother introduced me to cultivation and taking care of chickens, goats and sheep. By age 12 – 15 years old, I was guided in building grass thatched houses and my elder sisters helped by cutting grass for roofing.⁴⁹

From the narration of this 65-year-old man from the Pojulu community, and my own experience, the system of rewarding children’s work through recognition and the preparation of special meals continued until the late 1990s, although other means of payment like the use of money were taking place in some parts of the Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan. The majority of boys and girls who grew up in the Pojulu community in the

48. Telephone interview with 60-year-old woman, Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, 13 August 2020.

49. Telephone interviews with 65-year-old man, Yei, 2 August 2020.

1990s possess knowledge and skills of cultivation, hunting, fishing, honey harvesting, and keeping domestic animals like goats, sheep and chickens. They were taught by their parents. Those whose parents were soldiers, and away from home, were taught by uncles and aunts.

Education and socialization: mothers and fathers as teachers

Historically, boys and girls in the Pojulu community worked with their parents and learned from their work. During this process, household production increased due to the contribution of girls and boys. In the Pojulu community in Lainya, boys began looking after domestic animals like goats, sheep, cattle, ducks and chicken from the age of six or seven. Then, at the age of seven, boys would be introduced to cultivation, performing light farm work until they became used to it. At the age of 12 to 15, boys were introduced to the hunting of wild animals, as well as being allocated a place within their father's compound to build a small grass thatch house. By the time the boy reached 18 years of age, he would be capable of performing all economic activities by himself without being told what to do: this was the time that a grown boy could get married. Girls started work at the age of five – taking care of younger siblings through playing. At the age of seven, girls worked with their mothers in the farm, especially cleaning and clearing, planting, weeding and harvesting of the crops. Besides these tasks, girls cooked food, fetched water and firewood, washed the utensils and also cleaned and swept the compound. Simultaneously, at the age of 12 to 15, girls went to the bush to cut grass for roofing the houses which their brothers were building for the first time.⁵⁰

Many authors, and participants in the surveys on which this paper is based, have argued that boys learn farming skills from their fathers because fathers introduce boys at the age of 6 to 7 years to farming and other outside agricultural activities. However, in my own experience, women play a significant role in the informal education of boys and girls. I was born and brought up in the 1990s, in an area of Lainya County called Mukaya (some maps spell it Makaia). Mukaya is the name of a hill in Lainya county near the east bank of the River Yei about 30 kilometers north of Yei town, and the hill gives its name to the surrounding area. My mother introduced me to farming when I was 6 years old.

My mother cleared a piece of land of 20 by 40 metres, readied it for planting, and said: 'Luga, this is your farm but you have to plant maize here.' I planted the maize with her support and the maize grew so tall that everyone appreciated it. The following year I cultivated a 20 by 40 metre piece of land alone, without being told by my mother. From that time until today I am happy about cultivation because I have never been forced to work in the farm;

50. Telephone interview with 65-year-old man, Yei River County, Central Equatoria, 2 August 2020.

my willingness is based on the gains I got from cultivation. In the 1990s I was not working for money due to the conflict, which made access to money difficult, and because, at the time, schools in the area were not demanding cash payment but rather payment in kind. As I was young, I did not understand why we had to work on teachers' farms and did so without questioning my teachers or parents. Payment in kind in this case meant using labour in the school or teacher's home as way of paying school fees. In the Pojulu community of Mukaya, many people were offering goods and their labour instead of cash since it was difficult to access money. And above all there were no commercial farms in the area.

The end of the old system

In 1997, a change in the SPLA/M's fortunes – particularly its capture of Yei River County in Central Equatoria State – meant that the greater Yei area became more closely linked to the markets of East Africa. The circulation of money increased, and people began working for money on land they did not own. In the process, children's experience of work and learning changed dramatically.

In his studies, 'Sow what you know' and *Growing up global*, Katz looked at how commercial agriculture was changing children's play and work in rural northern Sudan in the late twentieth century.⁵¹ Commercial agricultural and labour commodification had been changing northern areas of Sudan for a long time, while southern areas were battling with civil war and insecurity. When children in Lainya were still working on household farms, girls and boys in rural northern Sudan were already working for money: they picked cotton or collected wood in return for money payments, which they contributed to household budgets. The shifts in children's work had consequences for the relationship between work and play. Toy shops and toy trucks modelled from the debris around them were added to a play repertoire that was once focused on games of 'fields' and 'house,' where boys and girls rehearsed traditional working activities. Parents recognized that formal schooling was needed for children to participate in new commercial systems, in addition to the environmental, agricultural, and social knowledge which they acquired in homes and household farms.⁵²

A similar process was underway in Western Bahr el-Ghazal but evolved differently because Wau remained under the control of the Sudan Armed Forces until the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. New approaches to farming began in the 1970s, when international humanitarian organizations set up farms to supply

51. See Katz, 'Sow what you know' and *Growing up global*.

52. Katz, 'Sow What You Know', 103–113.

markets. Sometimes, these farms were set up to help disadvantaged groups – such as people with leprosy – to become self-reliant. A German leprosy centre in Agok, near Wau town, cultivated tomatoes, watermelon, okra and other vegetables to supply Wau town. The farm at the leprosy centre was set up in the 1970s, during a period of peace in South Sudan, but international support for commercial farming ceased during the civil war which began in 1983. However, as South Sudan's civil war came to an end in the early twenty-first century, Darfurian entrepreneurs began to acquire leaseholds and grow food for markets, using hired workers.⁵³

Links to the markets of East Africa

During the civil war in the 1990s, when I was growing up, Yei was a garrison of the Sudan Armed Forces, and traders in the town mostly used the Sudanese dinar. But most people lived outside the money economy. Before 1997, when the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) captured major Equatorial towns like Lainya and Yei from the Sudan Armed Forces, there was little money in circulation and it was difficult for commercial agriculture to emerge. Boys and girls in conflict areas were working mainly for old agricultural systems aimed at increased production in the household, building family identity and reputation, and ensuring food security at a time of great socio-political insecurity.

In the Pojulu community in Equatoria, the incorporation of boys and girls into labour markets proceeded more slowly than it did in northern Sudan. At the time, boys and girls were contributing to household production. The civil war in southern Sudan limited the commodification of agricultural labour; many men, women and children continued working for household consumption and continued processes of production taught by one generation to the next.

Children also acquired a little formal education through attending volunteer bush schools. Many communities, especially the Pojulu, kept up their traditional education: all the other systems and processes of introducing a child to work on and off the farm. Many girls and boys were cultivating as early as six years old, through assisting the parents in seed preparation, clearing, digging, planting, weeding, harvesting, and bird scaring. They worked independently or as assistants, for the purpose of increasing household production.

The SPLA's capture of Yei brought the area into contact with the trading economies of East Africa, spreading money and changing the pace of commercialization. Children's play reflected this transition. Children were drawn into the money economy slowly, and unusual

53. Interview with commercial farmer in Agok, Wau, 10 August 2019.

incentives were sometimes used. In the Pojulu community in the late 1990s, girls worked in domestic farms and also helped their mothers in small off-farm businesses. Boys worked on household farms, but they also liked to play in the forest, shooting birds with slingshots. The slingshots were made using the inner tubes of the bicycles. Inner tubes soon became a form of wages.

Bicycle tubes and labour commodification

After the SPLA's 1997 capture of major Equatorian towns, farmers and local traders began to access transportation means like bicycles and motorcycles. Easier transportation led to more money entering many rural areas, which in turn promoted labour exchange for money. At the time, I lived in Mukaya, Lainya County, and when Yei, Kaya, Lainya, and other towns were captured, local business people and farmers had easier access to money, which began to spread through villages. Business people and farmers were able to access transportation: bicycles were the main means of transportation and were in high demand among farmers and local traders in Mukaya. Farmers and local traders who had access to money bought bicycles with their own money, and those with no money went to Juba to visit their relatives, demanding that they give them bicycles before going back to the village. Some refugees who returned from the camps in Uganda, Kenya and northern Sudan also brought bicycles which they had acquired from foreign lands.

The commodification of boys' labour began in an unusual way in the Pojulu community. Bicycles, and the inner tubes of bicycle tyres, played an unexpected role in the process. Bicycles were in high demand among businesspeople and farmers, because they used them for transportation of local agricultural products: cassava flours packed in sacks and sent to Yei. Boys began to use the inner tubes of bicycles for their play. The local traders with bicycles acted as middlemen between farmers and wholesalers in Yei. In the process of using the bicycles, the inner tubes were damaged. But the bicycle owners in the area did not throw the damaged inner tubes away, because there was high demand among boys for the inner tubes. The farmers who owned bicycles exchanged the inner tubes with boys for labour on their farms, to increase their farm production for tubers, like cassava, and grains, like maize, which were at high demand in the 1990s in towns like Yei and Juba. In Central Equatoria State, especially in Lainya and Yei where I grew up, boys were employed in return for the damaged inner tubes of bicycles, which they used for making catapults or slingshots (*libina* in local Arabic). The slingshot is used for boys' farm-work of killing and scaring birds in the farms. Killing birds was also a part of boys' play in the Pojulu community, and many boys enjoyed playing in the forests killing birds using slingshots and then roasting the birds and sharing them amongst themselves: it was the way boys socialized.

As money spread across Equatoria after the SPLA's capture of major towns in the late 1990s, a new kind of compensation for boys' labour emerged in the Yei area. Boys were often prompted by the payment of an inner tube to re-consider the value of their work and to feel cheated by the owners of the farms, saying that the rubber tube was an inadequate 'payment' for their work. Many boys complained that the work they performed on the farm was more valuable than the inner tube that was given to them, because some farmers cut the inner tube too short for a group of boys to divide. Once the compensation for boys' work could be measured, reckoned, and divided in this way it was easy to think of compensation in terms of cash.

I first went to school after the SPLA captured the major towns. In 1999, I was nine years old and still in the first years of primary education. My four friends and I cultivated a quarter feddan for one round inner tube of a bicycle. The inner tube was not enough to divide amongst us and it brought some chaos and quarrels among us. From that time, I felt the employers paid us too little. The agreement for work was done verbally and the inner tube was given only after the completion of work, when the farmer checked his farm to confirm the work had been done by me and my friends.

Girls' experiences of the new labour system

The inner tubes taught me and my friends that labour merited compensation for ourselves. But our sisters were learning a different lesson: they gave their earnings to their mothers, and it became part of the wealth of the household. At the time, many girls did domestic chores and sold fruits in the market, such as mangos, lemons (oranges), and guava. Girls also helped their mothers in the making and selling of *tamia* (a fried patty like *falafel*, made from cassava and beans). For instance, in 1999 my mother was making and selling *tamia* in the Yondoru market in Mukaya of Lainya County. My elder sister, who was 15 years old, used to help her take the *tamia* to the market. My sister was not paid for the work because she was considered to be working for the household and the small business belonged to our mother. Also, during the fruit season, my sister collected fruits with her friends and took them to market. The girls sold fruits and gave the money to their mothers, who used some of the money to buy clothes for them in Yei town, which was the only main business centre in Greater Yei. This was a common duty for many girls in South Sudan, where many girls worked with their mothers, as we will see later in the story of a 14-year-old girl in Khor Malang Wau.

HOW EDUCATION BECAME A COMMODITY

The first modern schools in South Sudan were run by missionaries, who sometimes charged fees or demanded labour contributions: this section highlights the role of the Catholic Church in creating a demand for education and also financing education from local contributions. After Sudan's independence in 1956, education was provided for free. But during Sudan's second civil war, people began paying for education, either with in-kind contributions for teachers or with money. When that war ended in 2005, a new educational marketplace sprang up, just as children and parents were beginning to sell their labour. The commodification of children's labour and education took place during a complex, multi-dimensional transition which has increased time burdens on children and on girls in particular.

The first mission schools and education-for-work

Missionary schools provided some of the first experiences of formal education based on European models in South Sudan. In 1903, the new Anglo-Egyptian government divided up South Sudan into different mission spheres of influence, and missionaries built a network of village schools, with a handful of elementary and intermediate schools, which at the end of the colonial period served about 25,000 students, most of them in Equatoria.⁵⁴

Wau and Yei, two areas where research for this paper was conducted, were early centres of missionary education. The first colonial schools were set up in Wau during the late 1870s by the Ottoman-Egyptian governor Romolo Gessi. They were aimed at the children of enslaved or formerly enslaved troops.⁵⁵ During the Anglo-Egyptian colonial period, Catholic missions pioneered their educational work in Wau, setting up an industrial school for local apprentices in 1905 and an elementary 'academic' school in 1906. The government set up one of South Sudan's first intermediate schools in Wau in 1927, but because of low government investment, the school was taken over by the Catholic mission a few years later.

54. Southern Development Investigation Team, 'Natural Resources and Development Potential in the Southern Provinces of the Sudan,' London: Sudan Government, 1955: 153.

55. Romolo Gessi, *Seven Years in the Soudan*, London: Sampson and Low, Marston and Co. 1892: 424, 429, 444.

The first mission school in Yei was set up by Anglican missionaries in 1917, and in the 1940s the mission set up the first school in Lainya.⁵⁶

Missionary schools in the colonial period often emphasized practical skills and manual labour over intellectual development. The missionary schools saw this as a way of bringing about social change. They saw a lot of economic potential and, wanting people to understand how to use it, believed that technical training was needed by people to make fuller use of the region's potential. They also wanted to teach people to work to benefit themselves – to work for private profit. This would also encourage people to pay tithes to the church and taxes to the government. In the process, people with technical skills supplied new things, which others would want to acquire, creating an impetus for exchange and markets. They also learned to obey orders. For all of these reasons, missionaries mobilized children to carry out agricultural work at school. This work was not commodified, but it was a precursor to the commodification of education today.⁵⁷

School fees in the 1940s and 1960s

Missionaries began to commodify education quite early. Severino Fuli Boki Tombe Ga'le wrote a memoir of his schooling in Eastern Equatoria in the 1940s. At the time, there were nine intermediate schools in the country, serving about 1,000 pupils. Three intermediate schools were run by the missions. His school, Sacred Heart Intermediate in Okaru, in present-day Eastern Equatoria, first introduced school fees in 1940. The fees increased as children progressed: children in the first class paid 10 Egyptian piasters, in the second 25 piasters, the third 35 piasters, fourth 45 piasters, fifth 55 piasters and sixth, 65 piasters. These fees remained constant until the early 1950s. Severino was not able to raise enough money to pay for his school fees and he persuaded the headmaster to let him work for his fees instead. He got 5 piasters for carrying 100 bricks to building sites, a distance of over a mile, and he got half a piaster for delivering firewood to the kitchen of the Catholic Sisters. This is an early example of the commodification of children's work for the purpose of education.⁵⁸

After Sudan's independence, Khartoum governments invested in education in South Sudan. Initially, the focus of investment was on Islamic education centres. But government

56. Lilian Passmore Sanderson and Neville Sanderson, *Education, Religion And Politics In Southern Sudan 1899–1964*, London: Ithaca, 1981: 60, 63, 133, 155.

57. Sanderson, 'Education in the Southern Sudan,' 162–168.

58. Ga'le, *Shaping a Free South Sudan*, 162–168.

education was different from mission education because costs – including living costs – were covered by central or local government. A World Bank report from this period said:

All primary and secondary education is provided free of charge. This includes food and hostel accommodation where it is provided, transportation at beginning and end of term, books and, in some cases, clothing. Virtually all pupils at intermediate and secondary levels as well as about 30 percent of primary pupils are boarders.⁵⁹

According to one study, during the 1960s, primary enrolment in Equatoria was reported as high – about half of boys and a fifth of girls attended school in the province in the 1963–64 school year.⁶⁰ But as Sudan's first civil war spread in the 1960s, government schools emptied. In 1973, the World Bank estimated there were 200 teachers and 25,000 children in 'some 200 Anyanya schools in the 'bush'.⁶¹ These schools were constructed by local communities, and it seems likely that local people made other in-kind contributions to schools.

During Sudan's first civil war, the need to generate income from fees for mission schools became much more pressing. That year, the government of Sudan expelled foreign missionaries, believing them to be implicated in the civil war which was intensifying at the time. Without outside support, the schools needed new sources of income. In an interview, Brother Bruno Amori Dada, the vice-chancellor for academic affairs at the Catholic University of South Sudan, said that after the missionaries were expelled there was no more financial support for education. Brother Bruno said that education is a pastoral mission of the Catholic Church and, while not intended for any profitable gain, the payment of money for school fees started in 1964, so that the people that missionaries trained would be able to run some of the schools when the missionaries left.⁶²

Educational expansion in the 1970s

In 1973, a peace agreement ended Sudan's first civil war and established the Southern Regional Government – the first government run by South Sudanese. Sudan's 1973 constitution made education a right and committed the government to 'strive to make it universal and free.' (Article 54). The government in Juba adopted a policy of universal, free primary education, but failed to finance the policy adequately. A 1983 study found that

59. IBRD, 'Report of a Special Mission', 44.

60. IBRD, 'Report of a Special Mission', Table C, 3.

61. IBRD, 'Report of a Special Mission', 52.

62. Interview with Brother Bruno Amori Dada, Juba, 2020.

two-thirds of men and one-third of women in Yei had attended school, and that government-funded schools were closing down for lack of resources:

Even in the most highly monetarised part of the rural economy, in Yei district, the educational system has been sadly neglected: Of the three secondary schools in Yei district, one lacks furniture and equipment, another has no buildings, while a third has been closed because there is no food for the pupils... Schools in general are of the most basic construction; most are short of accommodation and several have to share buildings; they lack staff, particularly trained staff, furniture, equipment and teaching aids. Children do not start until the age of seven while most receive only 5 months schooling per annum due to shortage of teachers. The people of Yei equate schools with development. The present standard of education is, however, a constraint to the future development of the area.⁶³

Local communities in Yei continued to build ‘self-help’ schools in this period.⁶⁴ During Sudan’s second civil war, the role of communities in financing education expanded. The government in Khartoum cut education budgets severely, and across Sudan, students in government schools began paying fees and other charges, putting government education out of reach of poorer students.⁶⁵ The SPLM made no investment in education: its 2002 education policy said that school construction and running costs were the responsibility of communities.⁶⁶ Some international agencies made small investments in community schools, often refusing to offer to pay teachers, most of whom were volunteers.⁶⁷ In most areas controlled by the SPLA/M, families and communities contributed money and labour to build and maintain local schools and pay teachers.

At the end of the twentieth century, South Sudan’s schools depended on contributions from local communities, often in-kind. Children also made in-kind contributions. During the 1983–2005 war, parents and students would cultivate in teachers’ farms to compensate for teachers’ time.

63. Quoted in William J. House, ‘Population, Poverty and Underdevelopment in the Southern Sudan,’ *Journal of Modern African Studies* 27/2 (1989): 222.

64. Katoro Beninyo, ‘Evaluation of the Educational Policies of the Sudan’, 110.

65. Marc Sommers, ‘Islands of education: Schooling, civil war and the Southern Sudanese (1983–2004)’, Paris: UNESCO, 2005: 227.

66. SPLM Secretariat of Education, ‘Education Policy of the New Sudan’, 7.

67. World Bank, ‘Sudan: Stabilization and Reconstruction: Country Economic Memorandum, Volume 1: Main Text’, Report No. 24620-SU, Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2003: 125.

The educational marketplace changes child labour systems

From the early days of mission education, students mandatorily worked on school farms, the harvest of which was used for school feeding programmes and to remunerate teachers. This tradition of exchanging work for education continued during the wars and financial crises of the post-independence period. The exchange of work for education was a precursor to the present-day system. Now, children at mission, government, and private schools all have to contribute to the costs of their education. Rather than exchanging labour for education, they earn money and pay school fees in cash. In part, this change has taken place because more and more schools are in towns, where people do not have large farmlands to support them. They need money to function. But money has changed the dynamics of these systems. Agricultural labour is no longer sufficient to be exchanged for education. Labour needs to be commodified in order to settle the money demands involved in accessing education today. Mission schools, and missionary ideas about the cost of formal education, played an important role in this long process which by the beginning of the twenty-first century, turned education into a commodity too.

Sudan's second civil war changed the way South Sudanese people produce and the way they learn for two important reasons. First, the government stopped investing in education, which meant most schools had to be financed from locally generated fees. Second, war led to massive displacement. Displacement also increased mobility: displaced people who moved to refugee camps saw how education could help refugee families survive. And education also changed aspirations, when parents saw the advantages that educated people enjoyed in refugee camps.

The role of money was changing too. Refugees needed money and moving to far away towns brought access to it. More money came into Southern Sudan too: the capture of major Equatorian towns like Yei, Morobo, and Lainya meant that people returned from refugee camps, bringing money and new commodities with them. In 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) brought an end to the war between the Khartoum government and the SPLA and established the autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (the predecessor of today's government), financed from oil revenues. South Sudan then witnessed a huge increase in money supply. The government set up a huge military and civil payroll, and it became much easier to send remittances into the country. Mobility increased as battle lines disappeared, and girls and boys from rural areas began to leave the countryside for the towns where better schools were found. Towns grew, the demand for food commodities increased, the harvested area increased significantly, and the nature of labour, including children's labour, began to change.

Many factors – oil, war, displacement, urbanization, aspiration – changed the way that children worked and learned. The increased circulation of money helped turn food and agricultural labour into commodities, and new opportunities fostered a demand for education. Mobility increased dramatically: many boys and girls moved to towns to get education. Children and families, who needed money to pay for education, could easily sell their labour. The spread of money, formal education and paid children's labour in the 2000s went hand in hand.

Several people interviewed for this study said that their first experience of paid labour in South Sudan was motivated by the need to pay school fees. The simultaneous commodification of education and of labour is an important factor in the decay of the household-based systems of production and education.

Fees at public and private schools

The Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (2005, Article 33) required the government to 'ensure free and compulsory education at the primary level' – a commitment repeated in the 2011 constitution and the 2012 General Education Act.⁶⁸ But education was not free. People had got used to the idea of paying for education, and education had become expensive. During the second Sudanese civil war, the Khartoum government and its rebel adversaries in the SPLA had abandoned the notion of free, universal education. Public authorities provided some education, but public schools levied fees and other charges on students, and in any case, they were under-resourced.

Private schools were a sign that public schools could not meet demand, and they intensified the commodification of education. Non-government schools – schools owned by communities, NGOs, religious organizations and private individuals, and dependent on fees and direct contributions – were an important part of the process turning educational provision into an educational marketplace. In 2007, the new ministry of education in Juba conducted the first survey of schools. It identified 2,417 primary schools, of which 70 per cent were government-owned. 117 secondary schools were identified with 60 per cent government owned.⁶⁹

Over the course of the second Sudanese civil war, private schools had become more prestigious. Dr Edward Momo, the late dean of the education faculty at Juba University,

68. See the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (2005, Article 33) and 2011 Constitution and General education act of 2012.

69. See MOEST 2008: 17.

undertook most of his schooling in Uganda in the 1960s and 1970s. He said that in those days, public schools were seen as better than private ones, but today, private schools are seen as better in both Uganda and South Sudan.

People in Uganda came back with the concept of education as a commodity, and a commodity that was much needed in South Sudan. Most of the private schools in South Sudan were opened by people who had been in Sudan and Uganda.⁷⁰

Today, school fees for children are increasing in mission schools, private schools and public schools, especially in urban areas. However, one group of South Sudanese children have access to free education: the children displaced to Protection of Civilian (PoC) camps, set up around United Nations bases, where hundreds of thousands of people fled for safety after the outbreak of conflict in 2013. Parents of children in these camps can choose to keep their children in the volunteer schools within the camps. Nevertheless, some parents in the camps choose to send their children to private schools outside the camp which they believe provide the best education for their children. Parents living as refugees in Uganda sometimes also choose to pay for their children in non-government schools for the same reason. For example, in Uganda many refugee children study in non-government owned schools. Though some people are receiving support from NGOs, some parents have to come out of the camp and work for money in order to pay the schools fees of their children.

The growing demand for education

The increased supply of both money and education occurred simultaneously to the rising demand for formal education. At that time, too, there were a lot of new opportunities with NGOs, and government jobs were also available, but there were few qualified personnel available to fill these roles. As a result, formal education became an important motivator of many parents to send their children to schools so that they could occupy future positions in the Government.

Since 2005, following the signing of the CPA, several studies have shown an increase in the number of children in schools. A World Bank review of household and education surveys showed that between 2005 to 2009, the number of children enrolled in primary school doubled, from about 700,000 to about 1.4 million children.⁷¹ In 2018, that figure reached

70. Interview with Dr Edward Momo, Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Juba, October 2020.

71. World Bank, 'Education in the Republic of South Sudan,' 145.

1.6 million children.⁷² According to the education ministry, net primary enrolment rates have remained stable: about 40 per cent of primary-age children are in primary school. Secondary enrolment has increased more significantly. In 2008 the education ministry indicated that there were 25,144 students in secondary school: ten years later, there were 84,562, or about 3.5 percent of secondary age children and youth.⁷³

The spread of money and the rise of piece work

This section discusses the changes to the lives of boys and girls which resulted from the dramatic expansion of South Sudan's money economy at the start of the twenty-first century. The increase in school numbers, including d private schools, came with sharp increases in tuition fees. Educational opportunities were concentrated in towns, and many children moved to towns where government salaries and remittances from overseas funded an expansion of demand for paid work. Children and parents from low-income families began taking up paid work opportunities to pay for school fees. This section argues that education fees are a factor behind the commodification of labour in South Sudan, and that the demand for labour and the demand for formal education go together after the CPA was signed in 2005.

Education is a factor in cross border labour migration too. Shortly before and after the CPA, displaced people began to return from the camps in Uganda, Kenya and Congo and wanted to enroll their children in formal education. Parents were used to having to work for money to send their children to school, which was how they had accessed education while displaced outside of South Sudan. Additionally, South Sudanese who had been displaced into rural areas during the civil war also began to move closer to major towns like Yei after the CPA was signed, often with the aim of accessing education for their children.

Government salaries, paid from a huge new government wage bill which emerged after 2006, were a major source of the money that began to circulate through communities. The emergence of salaried employment also led many parents and families to stop cultivating, send children to school, and hire waged workers to do the work of adult and child family members. Often, the people they employed were using their earnings to pay for education too. In Western Bahr el-Ghazal in 2019, some government officials owned large farms which employed many people. The Commissioner of Marial Baai, for example, started cultivation in

72. Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MGEI), 'National Education Census Booklet – 2018 (Extract of Key Indicators)', Juba: Republic of South Sudan. 2019: 17.

73. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), 'EMIS Education Statistics 2008', Juba: Government of Southern Sudan, 2009: 47; MGEI, 'National Education Census Booklet – 2018,' 32.

1986. During the conflict he became a soldier, and when he came back to his ancestral area, he found it bushy and empty. The soils were still fertile because of bush manure. After the signing of the CPA, he started a farm with 20 feddans and gradually expanded, until he was farming 510 feddans in 2019. He has built houses for his labourers, and they lay bricks in the summer.⁷⁴

Another source of money which flowed into wage labour and education fees was remittances. Some people with close relatives in major towns or abroad, in places like Australia, received money which they use to hire people in their farms to expand the cultivated area or to lease more land. A 63-year-old woman from Agok, near Wau, said: ‘my two sons working in the town send me money which I used for hiring people to work in my farm. One of my sons works in Rumbek and the other stays in Juba and all of them are graduates.’⁷⁵ Also, a 53-year-old woman from Marial-bai said: ‘my two daughters are living in Australia but they send money which I use to hire land and labour’.⁷⁶

People on the government payroll were not the only ones sending their children to school when money began to spread widely. People without salaries also wanted to school their children, and new commercial farms offered them a way to earn money. In Western Bahr el-Ghazal State, commercial farmers came from Darfur to fertile areas like Agok and Khor Malang, on the outskirts of Wau, seeking the opportunities of peace as their home region was engulfed by war. These commercial farmers leased land there and offered people piece work on their commercial farms. Piece work is a form of work where an individual performs a specific task for money. For example, a hired labourer clears a piece of land measured 10 by 10 metres and is paid a set amount for the completion of this specific task. A focus group of displaced older women in Wau recalled that their first experience of piece work was when they started taking their children to school, because they needed money for fees.⁷⁷

Piece work is not a new word in South Sudan. Many South Sudanese have been wagedworkers since the 1960s. There is long tradition of people (mostly young men) from the Bahr el-Ghazal region migrating for seasonal paid agricultural labour – termed *Jongo* or *Ijor* (work paid daily) – since the mid-twentieth century. This enabled them to accumulate money, which can be used for various purposes, including education. In this paper, ‘piece work’

74. Interview with a man in Marial Baai, Wau, 13 October 2019.

75. Interview with a woman in Agok, Wau, 22 July 2019.

76. Interview with a woman in Marial Baai, Wau, 24 July 2019.

77. Focus group with older women, Wau, 14 August 2019.

largely refers to people taking on agricultural labour locally to cover costs that have become payable through money, including education.⁷⁸

Children and parents whose labour was diverted away from household production towards work on commercial farms where they could earn money to pay school fees were part of a bigger reorganization of family farms. Labour shortfalls in household production sometimes prompted a demand for paid labour on household farms. And when the commercial farms were not hiring, people started looking for piece work on household farms. As education spread, households with boys or girls going to school needed to mobilize more labour. Their children could only work weekends, and they started hiring people searching for piece work, to compensate for absent boys and girls. The rising demand and supply for paid labour and education were interlinked, and were generating their own momentum.

Many interviewees in Wau emphasized that the need to raise money for education fees was a key motivation for their participation in paid farm work. Many interviewees in Wau, who were involved in piece work, were raising money to pay for their children's education. A 48-year-old woman who was in Khartoum for 17 years but is currently living in Agok Wau as a farmer said:

I was working at the household farm but I sometimes went for piece work to earn money which I used for settling school fees and their medical bills.⁷⁹

A 28-year-old woman from Udici and mother of three children said:

I spent 32 hours on cultivation in one week on farms to pay school fees for the children, pay medicine bills and buy sugar and salt which is much needed by the family.⁸⁰

A 60-year-old-man from Alel Chok who came from Khartoum said that he was 'working to get money for my three sons in school.'⁸¹

Displaced women who took part in a focus group in Wau in 2019 described the replacement of communal work with a new system of piece work paid in money and measured in metres, which is called *borochot* (from the French word parachute). They associated the coming of piece work with the need to pay school fees.

78. Field observation in Khor Malang, Wau, July 2019.

79. Interview with a woman in Agok, Wau, 22 July 2019.

80. Interview with a young woman in Udici, Wau, 25 July 2019.

81. Interview with a 60-year-old man in Alel Chok, Wau, 24 July 2019.

Before there was nothing like piece work but there was communal work where you call people in your area like 10 to 12 to cultivate for you. Then you prepare alcohol and enough food and people will cultivate for you about a hectare of land in one day for free but only cook a meal for them but now elderly people still go for piece work then paid in money so that you can buy sugar and pay school fees for children.

Other parents raised money from off-farm paid work in order to raise money for school fees. A 37-year-old man and a 26-year-old man both said that they use the harvest from their household plot to feed children and the income from paid labour on commercial farms, and charcoal collection for paying school fees and health fees for the children.⁸²

Sometimes the need to work to pay for education goes beyond the ‘school-age children’ group. In an interview with a 24-year-old man in Wau, he said that he works in a commercial farm in Wau and uses the money ‘for paying my school fees.’⁸³ One 20-year-old man, who worked in a commercial firm in Khor Malang as security guard, used the money earned from this work to pay school fees. A 24-year-old participant who is a student at the Catholic University of South Sudan but completed his secondary school in the Wau Church School, said:

my paternal uncle was paying my school fees but my colleagues, who were displaced from the neighboring villages in Wau in 2015, were working in farms cultivating to earn money which they used for paying their school fees since there were no people supporting them in school like me. All my colleagues are now in the University and they continued to support themselves through working.⁸⁴

Children who grew up in rural areas hire out their labour on farms because they can commodify the farming skills they learned in their early lives. Children who do not receive financial support from their social networks, especially displaced children and orphans and unaccompanied children in urban areas, are also commodifying their labour to pay for education. A 21-year-old-girl who is a senior three student in New Apostolic secondary school in Juba works as a fruit seller in the Suk Militia Market in Munuki. According to her, the money she is earning during the COVID-19 holidays will be used to pay her school fees. ‘There is nobody supporting me and my sister here but when we were in the Uganda refugee camp, we used to study in refugee school where less money was required,’ she said.⁸⁵ Her

82. Interview with 37-year-old man; 26-year-old man, Marial Baai, Wau, 24 July 2020.

83. Interview with young man in Agok, Wau, 22 July 2019.

84. Telephone interview with 24-year-old man from Wau, 5 August 2020.

85. Interview with 21-year-old woman, Suk Militia, Juba, August 2020.

16-year-old sister, who is currently in senior one, works in a tea place in the same market to get the money she needs to support herself in school. She said:

We believed that by working, we will earn the money required as school fees and we will be able to reach a higher level of learning. For me and my sister, work is important and we are not going to dropout from school due to involvement in work. But work will help us continue with our education.⁸⁶

86. Interview with a 21-year-old woman, Suk Militia, Juba, August 2020.

MY SCHOOLING IN YEI

In the next section, I describe my own experience as a child worker who migrated from rural Mukaya in Lainya County at the age of 15 years in search of better education in Yei. My work in agricultural paid labour helped me to pay for my tuition and the remaining balance was used to start a small retail business that financed my education to an advanced level.

In Mukaya, where I grew up, there were no secondary schools until 2005 (there is one there today). Boys and girls who completed primary leaving examination in the Mukaya area of Lainya County had to go to towns like Yei and Lainya where public, mission and private schools were abundant. These schools all charged fees, and travel to the towns brought other costs, which were often borne by boys and girls, who worked to earn money for education. A 65-year-old inspector of schools in Yei River County said that some children are working on farms and pay their school costs using the money they earn from paid agricultural work.

Yei was one of the oldest education centres in South Sudan, and at the start of the twenty-first century, when I moved there, it was becoming a centre of private education. School surveys in 2007 show that Yei had one of the highest numbers of private primary schools in the country.⁸⁷ In 2008, Yei County had six secondary schools, twice as many as the entire state of Jonglei.⁸⁸ Education had grown with the spread of money: the areas around the newly oil-rich capital of Juba and along the Ugandan border were much better provisioned.

I became a worker so that I could meet the costs of my education, where school fees were increasing as more families from as far as Jonglei brought their children for better education there. Enrolment was increasing, and school owners kept increasing the fees for their educational service.

I was trained by my mother Gladys Galaka Lasu at the age of eight in Mukaya-Lainya through unpaid agricultural labour, planting maize, sorghum, and vegetables. At the age of 15 years, in 2005, I used those skills, which I learned from my mother, when I moved to Yei town in search of schooling. Her training helped me to work in nursery beds where tomatoes, cabbages, egg plants, and carrots were planted before being transplanted to land

87. MOEST, 'EMIS Education Statistics 2007.' Juba: Government of Southern Sudan, 2008: 9.

88. MOEST, 'EMIS Education Statistics 2008.' Juba: Government of Southern Sudan, 2009: 48.

located in the banks of the Yei River. I used the money I earned from this work to pay my primary school fees. Some of the most difficult jobs that I performed in the farm included the removal of trees, but I was paid well for it. I was paid 1,000 Ugandan shillings to remove one tree in Yei in 2005 which was good money: five trees could pay my primary school fees. The Ugandan shilling was the most widely used currency in Greater Yei before the Sudanese pound was introduced in 2007.

When I left Mukaya for Yei, I went to live with my maternal aunt and I worked to pay my way through school. I did not have to use my earnings to contribute to her household, although most days I would tell her what work I had done, and how I was using the money. My sister also moved to Yei to study and she was living with my aunt. She bought groundnuts in nearby villages, cleaned and processed them, and sold them in Yei market. She used the money she made to pay school fees too. My mother persuaded my aunt to feed and shelter us without payment. So we, as children, were not contributing labour to our aunt's household, but we were benefiting from her. It was a sign of how the old system was changing.

At the age of 15 I decided to work on my own in agricultural paid labour because my father was not willing to pay for my schooling, despite my unpaid contributions to agricultural labour in the household. Agricultural paid labour helped me pay school fees in primary school in Yei town. In 2006, I decided to use the money I made from agricultural paid labour to start a small business buying and selling Eveready batteries, which I expanded into selling Indian charcoal-heated clothes irons that I bought in boxes of twelve. I decided to move into the retail business because the time burden of agricultural paid labour was a heavy one, and I had a lot of schoolwork. The change from agricultural paid work to running my own business helped me to better balance my school and work time. I understood that both work and school were important to me as there was nobody supporting my school in terms of paying fees and buying scholastic materials.

The business I created through the money earned from agricultural paid labour enabled me to complete my Primary Leaving Certificate, Uganda Certificate of Education, and Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education. Hence agricultural paid labour saved my life and has made me great today. After graduating from secondary school, I taught in primary schools in Yei as a way of generating income. I also paid my university fees working as a secondary school teacher and cashier in a hotel. Since my late teens, I have not engaged in paid agricultural labour, but I continue to help my mother on her farm during holidays. Child labour can make children creative and help them to work hard to pay for their schooling and the progress of their education. Today people who have done hard, physical work as children in order to pay for education, and have succeeded in their education, are examples or role-models for their communities

This is not a universal experience for South Sudanese children. Some child workers may be cheated out of their wages, or otherwise exploited. Some child workers may try to use their earnings to pay for their education, but without family support they may be forced to drop out of school. Some child workers have to support their families, using their earnings to help feed their parents and other children. These children may not be able to use their earnings for creative personal development.

CHILD LABOUR, NON-ENROLMENT AND DROP-OUT

This section discusses literature which presents children's work as a cause of non-participation in education, contrasting it with this study, which provides a more complex picture of how children manage time burdens. It focuses on the experience of girls, who have bigger time burdens and are less likely to participate in education.

Child labour and non-participation in education

Many people who participated in this study described a complex relationship between children's work and education – particularly the fact that work helps some children to complete education. This is at odds with some of the international literature reviewed for this paper, which sometimes sees child labour as a cause of non-enrolment and dropout. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF produce global child labour reports which show the negative effects of child labour on schooling. The 2021 report found that globally, more than one third of all children in child labour are out of school.⁸⁹

These UN bodies estimate that 28 per cent of children aged 5–11 and 35 per cent of children aged 12–14 are out of school, and that children engaged in hazardous labour are even less likely to attend school. Some studies which interpret household expenditure surveys through economic models have questioned the view that child labour comes at the expense of schooling.⁹⁰ The ILO and UNICEF, however, have found that children who work while studying struggle to balance competing demands: children who must combine child labour with schooling generally lag behind non-working peers in grade progression and learning achievement, and are more likely to drop out prematurely.⁹¹

89. International Labour Organization and UNICEF, 'Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward, Geneva/New York: ILO and UNICEF, 2021.

90. Martin Ravallion and Quentin Wodon, 'Does Child Labour Displace Schooling? Evidence on Behavioural Responses to an Enrollment Subsidy,' *The Economic Journal*, 110/462 (2000).

91. International Labour Organization and UNICEF, 'Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward, Geneva/New York: ILO and UNICEF, 2021: 47.

South Sudanese enrolment and survey data

Available South Sudanese enrolment and survey data does not give a clear picture of the number of children balancing work and school. Enrolment rates are low. In 2018, net primary enrolment was 42 percent and net secondary enrolment was 3 percent. Net enrolment rates show the proportion of children of school-age who are enrolled in school, and these figures indicate that the majority of primary-school age children, and nearly all secondary-age children, are not in school. Data from annual education censuses suggest that enrolment rates remained unexpectedly stable over the years between 2012 and 2018, despite the conflict which began in 2013.

Child labour may be a reason for non-enrolment. Data from the Northern and Southern National Baseline Household Survey 2009 looked at reasons for Sudanese and South Sudanese children under 16 not attending school. Among South Sudanese children, the main reasons for non-attendance were lack of money (24 per cent of boys and 43 per cent of girls) and ‘other’ (40 per cent of boys and 38 per cent of girls). Children not attending school may have been working.⁹²

Berenger and Verdier-Chouchane used the same survey data to classify Sudanese and South Sudanese children aged 10–14 according to four main activities: school only, work only, school and work, and neither school nor work. They found that among South Sudanese children, about 10 per cent of children fell into the categories of ‘work only’ and ‘school and work.’ Almost half of all children aged 10–14 were in school (rural girls were the least likely to be in school). And 44 per cent of all children came into the ‘neither school nor work’ category. These findings suggest that there may have been some confusion about the ‘neither school nor work’ category among survey respondents. Nonetheless, the survey data, along with data from the education census, raise questions about the relationship between child labour and participation in formal education. Relatively few respondents said that children aged 10–14 were engaged in ‘work only.’ The majority of children were engaged in ‘school and work’ or the unclear ‘neither school nor work’ category. This may mean that a lot of out-of-school children were involved in some kind of paid or unpaid work.

Another indicator of educational participation is the dropout rate. The education ministry in Juba defines dropouts as students who have withdrawn (for any reason) from the school system without completing a given grade in a given school year, and dropouts are considered to no longer be in the system at all (MGEI 2017: 15).⁹³ Although most school-age children in South Sudan are not enrolled in school, few children who enroll drop out. In 2018, the

92. Berenger and Verdier-Chouchane, ‘Child Labour and Schooling in South Sudan and Sudan’.

93. MGEI, ‘The National Education Statistics Booklet, 2016, of the Republic of South Sudan,’ Juba, 2017.

education ministry found that a total of 60,103 children dropped out of primary school – about 3.7 per cent of total primary enrolment. 4,605 children dropped out of secondary school, about 5.4 per cent of total enrolment. It seems likely that child labour, along with other factors, contributes to non-enrolment and dropout. But child labour also appears to be supporting many children in school.

Time burdens and girls' participation in education

Girls' non-enrolment in education, and dropout rates, are higher than boys' in South Sudan. This may reflect the heavier time burdens that girls bear. For this section, I draw on the work of my co-researcher Elizabeth Nyibol who studies women and the commodification of agricultural labour. She argues that women are experiencing a triple burden, combining unpaid household work and agricultural work on family farms with paid work on other people's farms. I argue that education has added a fourth burden to school-going girls.

Education is regarded as an investment for the future of children. But education also represents a new time-burden. Girls, who already have greater time-burdens than boys, may struggle when they have to work on commercial farms and attend school, as well as carrying out agricultural tasks on household farms and domestic chores such as cooking, fetching water and firewood, and caring for their siblings. All this work leaves girls with little time and feeling very tired at the end of the day. Girls and boys were doing work in the farms, but girls were also doing domestic work in the house, making it different and difficult for many girls as they struggled and commodified labour and education added to their daily routine.

For example, when I went to secondary school in Yei, between 2005 and 2007, I went to school and worked on a commercial farm, later switching to sell consumer goods in the market. My sister was also in Yei. She went to school, worked on the household farm, did domestic chores, and also sometimes sold groundnuts in the market. So I had two activities and she had four.

Interviews conducted for this research project in Western Bahr el-Ghazal State in 2019 found that girls continue to face multiple time and work burdens. A 14-year-old girl in Khor Malang, near Wau, said that she had been displaced from Getty, an area controlled by opposition forces at the time. Like children of many displaced families, she had to work. She said:

I am a student at primary seven. I go to school from Monday to Friday while on Saturdays and Sundays I went for work in commercial farms and harvested okra from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 am with my mother. After harvesting the okra with my mother in the commercial

farm, I participate in our household farms with my father and mother. I also have two of my sisters who are younger than me and we all participate in the cultivation together with my mother. I am the eldest child of my parents. My other sisters are twelve and ten years. I and my two sisters are involved in the cultivation. Our family worked in more than one farm, like on Saturdays and Sundays, I and my mother come very early at 6:00 am to work in commercial farms up to 9:00 am and then move to our household farms. We were paid money not food. So if we harvested one basket of okra the farm owner pays us SSP 100. The ones that practice cultivation are five people out of thirteen people in the household. On Saturdays and Sundays we spend 6:00 to 9:00 am working in commercial farms. From 10:00 am working in household farm. At 2:00 p.m. I do domestic work like cooking. From Monday – Friday 8:00 am to 3:30 pm, I am at school.⁹⁴

Girls have many time burdens. This is particularly so for girls who come from poor families where both the father and mother are not working for cash but relying heavily on agriculture, which doesn't yield much produce in some seasons. This forced this 14-year-old girl and her mother to work in commercial farms for money to provide food for the family of thirteen people.

Girls have been carrying extra burdens for years, but the wide spread of education and the commodification of labour have added another burden which has occupied girls throughout the day and week. Boys often have two or three activities: work on the household farm, work on commercial farms, and going to school. But girls have to do non-commodified domestic work, non-commodified labour on the household farm, commodified labour on someone else's household farm, commodified labour on a commercial farm, and education. Child labour is heavier for girls than for boys because girls perform all of the household domestic work, like cooking, collecting firewood, fetching water, as a way of helping their parents.

Women and girls do most of the work in the community such as cooking, grazing, cultivating, grinding, milking, feeding children, preparing beds and fetching water and firewood. Men and boys take cattle to graze, visit the market to meet with peers, cut trees for firewood and provide security for their families and community.

However, work burdens may not be the same for girls whose parents are working for government or private sector salaries, or who own semi-commercial or commercial farms. These girls may only have to work on domestic chores and unpaid household farms for limited hours, leaving them enough time to study. Children whose parents are displaced and

94. Interview with 14-year-old girl, Khor Malang, Wau, 20 July 2019.

poor, like the 14 – year-old girl quoted above, are more likely to work – whether they are in urban or rural areas. They need work to survive and also support themselves in school.

CONCLUSION

In the old days, South Sudanese parents worked together with their children in agrarian areas. This was one way that children were socialized and trained for adult roles. In South Sudan's old system, children were trained for household production. In many parts of the country, this system survived the years of conflict and displacement which began during the war years of the 1980s.

This paper considers some of the ways that money spread into production systems, and how the spread of money has influenced ideas about education. The SPLA's capture of major Equatorian towns in the late 1990s, the signing of the CPA in 2005, and the referendum in 2011 all increased the demand for formal education, and in the process, oriented the work of girls and boys towards money. The signing of the CPA made towns and money more easily accessible, because civil servants received their salaries and people with relatives abroad started to receive money from their relatives in Australia and other parts of the world. They used this money to hire people especially women, girls, and boys to work in their farms.

The increase in money supply and urbanization at the start of the twenty-first century led to the emergence of commercial farms to meet the massive demand for food items across major towns. In response, some boys and girls began working for money in commercial farms. The commodification of boys' and girls' work increased as access to cash spread with the opening of major roads after the signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.

At the same time, demand for education by parents for their children was also on the rise. During the long wars of the twentieth century, displacement exposed many families and communities to new challenges, and many saw formal education as a way of dealing with those challenges. At the end of Sudan's second civil war, in 2005, schools were spreading across South Sudan. Educational aspirations began to change and people began to believe that modern education was necessary to survive the new money economy. The popularization of formal education and the understanding of many parents about the importance of this kind of education to the future of their children and families prompted both parents and children to work long hours to earn money to pay tuition fees.

Before the spread of money, schools were supported by labour contributions from the local community and from teachers. But in the twenty-first century, school fees became the main

mechanism to fund education, particularly in non-governmental and private schools, where fees were higher than those in government schools. In the years just before the CPA, and after it, many private schools were opened across South Sudan, often by returnees from Uganda, Sudan, Kenya and many other countries. Fees and costs increased every year across all types of schools.

Hence the demand for children's labour and the demand for formal education went together, and each generated momentum for the other. The commodification of education results in parents, girls, and boys commodifying their labour across the country. In addition to contributing to household labour, children undertook piece work, called *barachot*. Many children who were contributing to family labour now work for money in order to support themselves in school, which is likely to lower household agricultural productivity, making households more dependent on markets for basic consumption needs.

With labour and education commodification in South Sudan, girls felt new and greater labour burdens than boys. This is because girls perform all the unpaid domestic chores, unpaid household agricultural labour, paid agricultural labour, as well as spending time on their education.

After 2013, conflict and a global pandemic changed things. The South Sudanese civil war which began in 2013, and was greatly aggravated in 2016, ended the educational hopes of many rural children. Schools continued in urban areas. But the global COVID-19 pandemic has closed both urban and rural schools. Many boys and girls left school and have gone back to agricultural paid labour, because they need money to survive. The situation was most difficult in towns like Juba, where many families had paid tuition fees one year in advance and were now left wondering whether they could afford to pay for another year's tuition.

This paper challenges universal definitions of child labour, like that of the International Labour Organisation, and offers a more multi-layered and locally grounded understanding of why many children in South Sudan work. For many children, agricultural paid work makes access to education possible and as such we cannot term the work children do as 'child labour' but instead term it as children's participation in paid work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abebe T. 'Changing Livelihoods, Changing Childhoods: Patterns of Children's Work in Rural Southern Ethiopia.' *Children's Geographies* 5/1 (2007).

Andretta, Elizabeth Hain. 'A Reconsideration of the Basis of Group Cohesion among the Murle of Southern Sudan.' PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1985.

Berenger, V. and Vidier-Chouchane, A. 'Child Labour and Schooling in South Sudan and Sudan: Is There a Gender Preference?' *African Development Review* 28/2 (2016).

Briedlid, Anders. 'Sudanese Images of the Other: Education and Conflict in Sudan.' *Comparative Education Review* 54/4 (2010).

Daoust, Gabrielle. 'Education and the Critique of Liberal Peacebuilding: The Case of South Sudan.' PhD dissertation, Sussex University, 2018.

Deng, Francis Mading. *The Dinka of the Sudan*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1972.

Duany, Julia Aker. 'Sudanese Women and Education: The Struggle for Equal Access and Participation.' PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1996.

Duany, Julia, Rebecca Lorins, and Edward Thomas. 'Education, Conflict, and Civiness in South Sudan.' London: London School of Economics, and Juba: South Sudan Studies Association, 2021.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.

Ga'le, Severino FuliBokiTombe. *Shaping a free Southern Sudan, Memoirs of our struggle 1934 – 1985*. Loa: Catholic Missions Council, 2002.

Gessi, Romolo. *Seven Years in the Soudan*. London: Sampson and Low, Marston and Co., 1892.

Guarcello, L, S. Lyon, F. C. Rosati. ‘Labour market in South Sudan: Country Report.’

Rome: Understanding Children’s Work Programme, 2011.

Holmarsdottir, Halla B., Ingrid Birgitte Møller Ekne, and Heidi L. Augestad. ‘The Dialectic between Global Gender Goals and Local Empowerment: Girls’ education in Southern Sudan and South Africa.’ *Research in Comparative and International Education* 6/11 (2011).

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). ‘Report of a Special Mission on the Economic Development of Southern Sudan.’ Washington DC: IBRD, 1973.

International Labour Organization (ILO). *Child labour, a textbook for university students*. Geneva: ILO, 2004.

International Labour Organization and UNICEF. ‘Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward’. Geneva: ILO and New York: UNICEF, 2021.

Katoro-Beninyo, Ben. ‘Evaluation of the Educational Policies of the Sudan, 1972—1992: Impact and Implications on Educational Development in the Southern Sudan’. PhD dissertation, Leeds University, 1996.

Katz, Cindi. ‘Sow What You Know: The Struggle for Social Reproduction in Rural Sudan. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81/3 (1991).

—. *Growing up global: economic restructuring and children’s everyday lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Kevlihan, Rob. ‘Beyond Creole Nationalism? Language Policies, Education and the Challenge of State Building in Post-conflict Southern Sudan’. *Ethnopolitics* 6/4 (2007).

Marshall, Jacqueline. ‘Literacy, Language, Non-Formal Education and Alternative Learning Opportunities in Southern Sudan.’ Hamburg: UNESCO Institute of Education, 2006.

MOEST [Ministry of Education, Science and Technology]. ‘EMIS Education Statistics 2007.’ Juba: Government of Southern Sudan, 2008.

MGEI [Ministry of General Education and Instruction]. ‘Education Statistics for the Republic of South Sudan 2013 final’. Juba: MGEI, 2014.

—. ‘The National Education Statistics Booklet, 2016, of the Republic of South Sudan.’ Juba: MGEI. 2017.

—. The National Education Statistics Booklet, 2018, of the Republic of South Sudan. Juba: MGEI. 2019.

Momo, Edward Yakobo. ‘The Language Policy in South Sudan: Implications for Educational Development.’ London: London School of Economics, and Juba: South Sudan Studies Association, 2021.

Oxfam. ‘South Sudan gender analysis: A snapshot situation analysis of the differential impact of the humanitarian crisis on women, girls, men and boys in South Sudan March–July 2016.’ Oxford: Oxfam, 2017.

Perner, Conradin. *The Anyuak – Living on Earth in the Sky*. Basel: Schwabe. 2016.

Ravallion, Martin, and Quentin Wodon. ‘Does Child Labour Displace Schooling? Evidence on Behavioural Responses to an Enrollment Subsidy’. *The Economic Journal* 110/462 (2000).

Sanderson, L. P. ‘Education in the Southern Sudan: The Impact of Government-Missionary-Southern Sudanese Relationships upon the Development of Education during the Condominium Period, 1898–1956.’ *African Affairs* 79/315 (1980).

Sanderson, Lilian Passmore, and Neville Sanderson, *Education, Religion And Politics In Southern Sudan 1899–1964*. London: Ithaca, 1981.

Shimeles, Abebe, and Audrey Verdier-Chouchane. ‘The Key Role of Education in Reducing Poverty in South Sudan.’ *African Development Review* 28/2 (2016).

Skårås, Merethe, and Anders Breidlid. ‘Teaching the Violent Past in Secondary Schools in Newly Independent South Sudan.’ *Education as Change* 20/3 (2016).

Skårås, Merethe, Tami Carsillo & Anders Breidlid. ‘The Ethnic/Local, the National and the Global: Global Citizenship Education in South Sudan’. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 68/2 (2020).

Sommers, Marc. ‘Islands of Education: Schooling, civil war and the Southern Sudanese (1983–2004)’. Paris: UNESCO, 2005.

Southern Development Investigation Team. ‘Natural Resources and Development Potential in the Southern Provinces of the Sudan.’ London: Sudan Government, 1955.

SPLM Secretariat of Education. ‘Education Policy of the New Sudan and Implementation Guidelines.’ Yei/Himman: SPLM, 2002.

Spronk, Tanya. ‘Addressing the challenges of language choice in the implementation of mother-tongue based bilingual education in South Sudan.’ *Multilingual Education* 4/16 (2014).

SSCCSE [Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation]. ‘Statistical Yearbook for Southern Sudan 2009’. Juba: SSCCSE, 2009.

Thomas, Edward. *Moving towards markets: Cash, commodification and conflict in South Sudan*. London/Juba: Rift Valley Institute, June 2010.

Tuttle, Brendan. ‘Life is Prickly. Narrating History, Belonging and Common Place in Bor, South Sudan. PhD dissertation, Temple University. 2014.

—. ‘Play, childhood, and playthings in Bor, South Sudan, 2009–2010’. *International Journal of Play* 7/2 (2018).

UNICEF. ‘Situation Assessment of Children and Women in South Sudan.’ New York: UNICEF, 2015.

Wawa, Yosa. ‘Civicness in South Sudan secondary school curriculum.’ London: London School of Economics and Juba: South Sudan Studies Association, 2021.

World Bank. ‘Education in the Republic of South Sudan: Status and Challenges for a New System’. Washington DC: World Bank. 2012.

Until the latter part of the twentieth century, South Sudanese boys and girls grew food on household farms for their families to eat. Under this system, children's work and education were hard to distinguish. Today, however, many boys and girls work for money outside of their household farm and use the money to support their education in schools. *Child labour, education and commodification in South Sudan* examines why this change took place and the effect it has had on children's education and the wider processes of commodification and marketization that have taken place in the country.

This report is a product of the FCDO's Cross-Border Conflict Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT) programme, funded by UK aid from the UK government.



Rift Valley Institute
MAKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WORK

XCEPT
CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT
EVIDENCE / POLICY / TRENDS