

# Teacher Compensation in Crisis Contexts

## Problems & Paradoxes for Paying Teachers in South Sudan

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### Executive Summary

Teachers are essential to upholding the right to quality education for children in crisis and displacement contexts, yet they often experience delayed, irregular, or insufficient compensation, leading to demotivation, absenteeism, and destabilization of educational systems. Challenges for paying teachers arise due to resource shortages, inadequate management structures and payroll systems, bureaucratic and logistical complications, and the devaluation of the teaching profession.

To understand how these challenges manifest in South Sudan, this qualitative study examined the current state of teacher compensation among primary education teachers. Drawing on interviews with donors, policymakers, practitioners, and teachers, it identified the challenges and opportunities for improving teacher payments and providing adequate and timely compensation. The study also examined how different and often overlapping and persistent humanitarian crises affect teacher compensation practices and the ability of the education sector to move across the humanitarian-development nexus.

Different profiles of teachers are paid through different systems: 1) government teachers on the government payroll; 2) volunteer teachers paid by the Education Cluster; and 3) volunteer or refugee "incentive" teachers working in refugee camps/settlements paid by UNHCR, NGOs, and/or other entities.

Unfortunately, the education system in South Sudan is facing a crisis as government teachers have not been paid in over a year (at time of

publication), and no teachers (government, volunteer, or incentive) earn a livable wage when they are paid that allows them to cover even the most basic expenses due to rampant hyperinflation. One study participant stated: "*I think a teacher is the most disadvantaged person in the entire workforce of South Sudan.*"

The inter-related causes of this situation include: low budget execution and limited technical capacity by the government, budgetary shortfalls attributed to reduced oil revenues as a result of the ongoing conflict in neighboring Sudan, limited banking systems, and lack of political will, to name a few.

The precarity of this situation carries numerous implications for the education system, including teacher attrition, demotivation of current and future teachers, and deprofessionalization of the teaching profession. It can also lead to school closures, student attrition, low student learning outcomes, and an increase in child protection risks inside and outside of school.

Teacher compensation in South Sudan is further framed by a number of paradoxes. One, the majority of teachers are not on the government payroll. Two, most teachers have been unable to acquire the minimum qualifications to teach the education level they were hired for, which carries



implications for both their teacher development and short- and long-term earnings. Three, volunteer teachers (South Sudanese and refugee alike) typically earn more than their government counterparts. And four, the tensions around responsibility-sharing between a government unable to cover teacher compensation and donors who are reluctant to assume responsibility for recurrent teacher payments result in an education system increasingly buttressed by parents, families, and communities. To address these issues, it is imperative for governments to prioritize fair teacher compensation and develop sustainable payment mechanisms through effective education and financial planning.

In order to hold the government accountable, a number of efforts are currently being pursued by donors and other education actors in South Sudan. The detailed recommendations that emerged from this study reinforce many of these efforts and further point to differentiated responses for the diverse teacher profiles and related payment systems. To address systemic challenges that align with the needs of various teacher profiles—government-paid, cluster partner-supported, and UNHCR-supported—and restore the mistrust and broken social contract between the government and its teachers, this study recommends a multi-pronged approach (see Tables 6-8 at end of report for detailed recommendations):

### Immediate Reconciliation of Salary Arrears

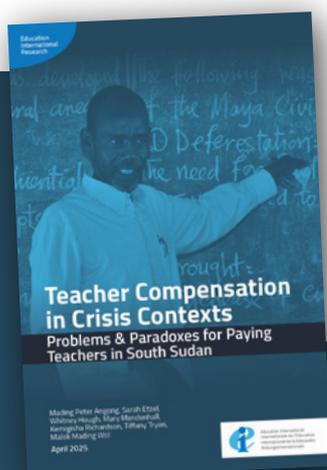
- Clear outstanding salaries for teachers on the government payroll.
- Improve coordination between the *Ministry of General Education and Instruction* (MoGEI), the *Ministry of Finance and Planning* (MoFP), and donors to ensure salary arrears are distributed effectively.

### Short-term Interventions

- **For Government-Paid Teachers:** Resume payments promptly and progressively increase wages to a living standard.
- **For Cluster Partner-Supported Teachers:** Harmonize wages across implementing partners and ensure timely monthly payments, adjusting for inflation.
- **For UNHCR-Supported Teachers:** Provide consistent wages aligned with experience and qualifications, and establish mechanisms for salary harmonization across sectors.
- Implement pension and insurance programs across all profiles to enhance financial security.
- Streamline digital and manual payment systems to ensure equitable and timely salary disbursements.

### Long-Term Solutions

- **For All Teacher Profiles:** Develop an *Education Management Information System* (EMIS) and *Refugee Education Management Information System* (REMIS) to track payroll, qualifications, and placements.
- **For Volunteer and Refugee Teachers:** Expand certification pathways, allowing experienced teachers to formalize their roles and integrate into government systems.
- **For Unionized Teachers:** Strengthen the teachers' union and facilitate broader stakeholder collaboration to optimize resources, advocate for teachers' needs, and build long-term sustainability.



The full research paper, in English, can be downloaded by clicking the image or the link or scanning the QR-code.

<https://eiie.io/2025SouthSudan>



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