

Child Rights and Legal Commitments

Schools must remain safe spaces for children in South Sudan, especially when there is insecurity and violent conflict in the area.

- Children's right to education is protected in South Sudan's 2008 Child Act and the Transitional Constitution.
- Attacks on education and the occupation of schools are strictly forbidden under international law, including UN Security Council Resolutions 1612 and 1998.
- Teachers and pupils must be protected and schools treated as strictly weapons-free zones.

The Impact on Education

The occupation of schools by armed forces has significant impacts on the education system and on the opportunities for South Sudan's children and future leaders:

- Children and teachers cannot access school facilities that are occupied, learning is disrupted or stopped completely
- School buildings, including facilities such as latrines, water sources and stores, are damaged or destroyed
- Teaching and learning materials are damaged or destroyed
- Schools can become targets of attack or mining if rebel groups suspect they are being used by soldiers as barracks

Costs: Rehabilitating a primary school with eight classrooms after a period of occupation costs approximately 200,000 SSP (replacement windows, doors, furniture, learning materials, and re-dug pit latrines). In 2011 it is estimated that damage of 2,400,000 SSP has been caused.

Occupation of schools in South Sudan in 2011

Nationally, **16 schools** have been occupied by armed forces in 2011, affecting around **10,000 children** in 5 states:

Jonglei

Four schools in Jonglei have been occupied by armed forces this year for an average of 2 months. Three of these schools were in Fangak and Piji Counties during the early months of the year when the SPLA was moving north to deal with insecurity from the George Athor's rebel group. The school in Twic County was affected during the ethnic clashes that have been an ongoing issue in the State throughout 2011. Advocacy was done in State, through discussions with the County Commissioners, State Minister of Education and in the Humanitarian Coordination Forum. The issue was also raised at Juba level by the National Education Cluster, UNICEF, and OCHA.

Lakes

Five schools have been occupied in Lakes State in 2011. 3 were occupied for 1-2 months from July this year, during a disarmament process and have since been vacated. One UNICEF-constructed school in Cueibet has been occupied by the army since 2009. Learners in this school have been attending a Temporary Learning Space 1km away from the school site. Yirrol Secondary School has also recently been reported as occupied, however more data is being sought to verify the information and determine why the school is occupied.

Advocacy was done at multiple levels regarding the school occupations this year, with the Director General for Basic Education visiting several of the sites. The SSRRC and Governor have also been informed of the ongoing occupation in Cueibet.

Unity

Two schools in Mayom, Unity State have been occupied this year. The situation was sparked by the rebel activity in the County in June, when Cholgeah and Kuerboani Primary Schools were occupied by armed forces. The situation of Chilgeah has since been resolved and children have returned to school. The situation in Kuerboani Primary School is ongoing. It has been noted that there is a serious protection risk, as soldiers are occupying the school during the night, and children are using the same facilities during the day. Child Protection staff saw classrooms with weapons and grenades being used by children. Advocacy has been done on multiple levels by Child Protection and Education actors including discussions with the County Education Commissioner and in Juba there was high level advocacy with the Minister of Education and the Minister of SPLA Affairs.

Warrap

Four schools were occupied in Warrap State for approximately 1 month, due to disarmament processes. The schools are now vacated as the disarmament has been completed. No formal advocacy was undertaken.

Western Equatoria

Two schools in Ezo County have been occupied by the army since 2009. The armed forces originally came to the area to protect communities from LRA, and have since been occupying Andari Primary School and Mambangau Primary School. Children from Andari are learning in Temporary Learning Spaces on a nearby plot of land that has been lent by a community member; however they are not allowed to build latrines on the land, so sanitation is a concern. Children who were attending Mambangau Primary School now have to travel to four other schools in alternative locations in the area.

Advocacy has been done on multiple levels and in different forums to address this issue. The Education Cluster in Western Equatoria has raised it at the Humanitarian Coordination Forum as well as during the Partner Meeting with the Governor of the State. The SSRRC has also communicated with the County Commissioner, however no dedicated mission has been made to Ezo to meet with the County Commissioner or other local officials yet. The Ministry of Education at national level has also been briefed on this situation previously.

For full details, including the exact number of children affected in each incident, the school names and occupation and vacation dates, please see the attached table.

Monitoring and Reporting on the Occupation of Schools in South Sudan

The State Education Clusters, led by State Ministries of Education in all 10 states monitor the occupation of schools in their area, with support from NGO partners and UNICEF. The State Education Cluster reports incidents to the National Education Cluster in Juba, who shares relevant information with the Ministry of Education, OCHA, and Child Protection Colleagues.

The Education Cluster also responds to the education needs caused by the occupations to ensure children's access to education can continue, through the provision of temporary learning spaces, emergency school supplies and emergency teacher training on protection and psychosocial support and other lifesaving skills.

Next Steps: Ending Occupation of Schools - Joint Policy and Advocacy

The Education Cluster recommends that the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Defence issue a joint Policy Directive outlining the facts around the illegal use of schools by armed forces and strongly discouraging the practice. The Education Cluster is ready to provide assistance and support as necessary. The Ministry of Education should also advocate that the costs of any damage caused by the armed forces should be absorbed by the Ministry of Defence.

List of schools reported as occupied by Armed forces

Data correct as of: 27/02/12

STATE	County	Date of incident	School level	Name of school affected	Educational Access	Estimated total of children affected
Jonglei	Canal (Khorflus)	17-01-11	Primary	Chuei Primary	School was vacated on 30-Apr-11. Children did not attend school during closure.	752
		08-02-11	Primary	Nyinthok	School was vacated on 30-Apr-11. Children did not attend school during closure.	342
	Fangak	18-02-11	Primary	Abdalla Chuol Primary	School was vacated on 30-Apr-11. Children did not attend school during closure.	683
	Pibor	28-12-11	Primary	Kondako Primary School	School vacated 26-Feb-12. Children did not attend school during closure.	518
			Secondary	Kondako Secondary School	School vacated 26-Feb-12. Children did not attend school during closure.	321
	Twic East	03-09-11	Primary	Puongborong Primary School	School vacated on 30-Apr-11. Children did not attend school during closure	965
Ayod	12-12-11	Primary	Buoth Diew Primary School	School vacated. Used as barrack for Soldiers, used for one night only. No disruption of	321	
Jonglei Total						3,902
Lakes	Cueibeit	01-01-09	Primary	Bargel Primary School	Not Vacated since 2009. Children attending TLS 1km from School	515
		Rumbek Centre	01-07-11	Primary	Abin-Ajok Primary School	School vacated August 2011, Soldiers used the school at night, school continued to op
	Primary			Ayei Primary School	School vacated October 2011. Soldiers used the school at night, school continued to o	429
	Yirol West	22-03-11	Primary	AGER GUM PRIMARY SCHOOL	Not vacated. Four out of 8 classrooms occupied. Likely to affect the reopening of scho	1,032
			Secondary	Yirol Secondary School	Not vacated. Soldiers used the school at night, school continued to operate during the	203
	Rumbek East	01-07-11	Primary	Bar-Aliap Primary School	School vacated August 2011. Soldiers used the school at night, school continued to op	1,618
		31-01-12	Primary	Mabordoung	Not vacated. Information passed over to UNIMISS, OCHA and MoE. Follow up action t	373
Lakes Total						4,991
Unity	Mayom	15-04-11	Primary	Cholgeah Primary School	Not vacated. Soldiers used the school at night, school continued to operate during the	939
		15-06-11	Primary	Kuerboani Primary Schools	School vacated 15-Jun-11. Children did not attend school during closure.	611
Unity Total						1,550
Warrap	Tonj East	15-10-11	Primary	Palaal Primary School	Not vacated. Children learning under trees in the same compound.	453
			Secondary	Romic Secondary	School vacated 15-Nov-11. School closed for 7 days, and reopened under trees	143
		28-01-12	Primary	Makuac	Not vacated. Four classrooms occupied.	463
	Tonj North	18-07-11	Primary	Paweng	Not vacated.	255
				Alabek	School vacated 15-Nov-11. School closed for 7 days, and then reopened under trees.	583
				Akhot Primary School	School vacated on 15-Nov-11. School closed for 7 days, and then reopened under tree	321
Tonj South	01-01-10	Secondary	Tonj Secondary School	Occupied since 2010. Only some classrooms used by soldiers.	141	
Warrap Total						2,359
Western Equatoria	Ezo	01-01-09	Primary	Andari Primary School	Not Vacated since 2009. Children are learning under trees in a nearby field.	183
				Bagura/Mangbangau	Not vacated since 2009. Children are attending other schools in the area.	321
Western Equatoria Total						504
Eastern Equatoria	Ikotos	(blank)	Primary	Lamura	School now vacated. Date of vacation to be confirmed.	321
Eastern Equatoria Total						321
Grand Total						13,627

Dates not specified where information from reports do not indicate specific date

Where enrolment figures for schools are not available, number of affected children is the national average school enrolment: 321.