

# **Recycling poverty in Sudan: the Statuses of Basic Education in Sudan during Oil Decade (2000-2010)**

Ali M. Osman Aliraqi

King Saud University

## **Abstract**

This paper examines the impact of oil export on education sector, especially basic schools in Sudan. In spite of the steady growth in GDP and increase in public spending on education, but basic education gross enrollment rate (GER) does not compare favorably, the average for SSA & MENA countries. The pattern of education public spending deepens the regional disparity and poverty severity.

## **Introduction:Literature review**

Much of the theoretical debate about the role of education in development and economic growth has focused on whether education is productive? There is much evidence that levels of schooling amongst the population are highly correlated with levels of economic growth .But whether the former has helped cause the latter, or whether causality runs from income growth to educational expansion, remains debatable. The earnings by age of the more educated not only start at a higher level ,but increase more rapidly to a peak –which happens later in life- than is the case with the earnings profiles of the less educated.Indeed,those with no education tend to have earnings profiles which remain pretty flat throughout their life. These patterns indicate not just that education makes people more productive but also it enhances the ability to learn, productivity, and thus earnings, to increase at a faster rate than for those with less education. The fact, however, that the profiles peak and then decline beyond a certain age suggests that the skills created by education are prone to obsolescence and that their productive value declines when technology has outpaced them.

Examining the relationship between student performance and family income over the past 50 years, Reardon(2013) found that, the reading achievement gap between those from high-income families and those from low-income families was about 0.9 of a standard deviation, this gap in standardized test scores roughly 1.25 standard deviation 40% larger than the gap several decades earlier.

Human capital theory draws links between poverty and education in terms of education as a means of poverty reduction; another significant linkage runs the other way-i.e. the effect of macro and micro level poverty on levels of education. At the macro-level, it is generally that levels of enrollment correlate with GNP. (Oxaal, 1999). Poverty affects the educational achievement in three dimensions, the first one is from resource- side (learning and financial resources), second one is the generation of such social pressures which utilizes the mindset of poor student and lastly when poverty grabs any institution, it deteriorates the teaching standards (Masood,2011).

Studies found that there is direct linear relationship between education and earning. In Pakistan, for example, it has been found that monthly earnings of individual worker increased by 7.3% with an additional year of schooling (Masood,2011), in India the analysis suggests that illiteracy, literacy and primary education are positively related with poverty rates.

With broader scope, Rawls (1971) integrates the utilitarian approach of development, he offers a critique of its aggregative nature, and then presents a tailor- made approach to understanding poverty for a particular people. Rawls's landmark contribution acknowledges that " citizens do not a rise from position of social, economic and political equality". According to Sen (1992: 40), capabilities constitute a person's freedom, that is, a person's real opportunities to achieve well-being. He describes education as a basic capability, part of centrally important being and doings that are crucial for well-being.

Since poverty is seen as the deprivation of some minimum fulfillment of elementary capabilities, it becomes easier to understand why poverty has both an absolute and a relative aspect. Robeyns states that the capability approach evaluates policies according to their impact on people's capabilities (2003:6). This includes whether people have access to high quality education, to real political participation

and to community activities that help them cope with struggles in daily life. The capability approach can then be seen as comprehensive and integrative since it links material, spiritual and social well-being.

Sudan has had a decade of its longest and strongest growth episode since independence benefiting from the advent of oil in 1999. The size of its economy, measured by nominal gross national product, has grown fivefold from 10 billion US dollar in 1999 to 53 billion US dollar in 2008, but did this successful decade reflect in primary education, in term of public spending and education quality?.

**Sudan: Socio-economic Profile**

Since independence in 1956 Sudan economy has been relying heavily on mono-cropping culture for export (cotton) has set on turbulent course reflecting fluctuating pattern of growth which necessitated the introduction of economic measures to mitigate pitfalls. As back as 1970, Sudan initiated the first wave of economic reforms to address economic deterioration. The measures agreed upon were not fully implemented and a second were took place under the umbrella of the salvation program, which was merged with the National Comprehensive plan of 1992-2002. Also This program was not successful and there was a deterioration in balance of payments, escalating inflation rates and persistent macroeconomic imbalances. Another reform program was introduced 1997-2001 with a sharpened focus on macroeconomic and price stabilization.

Sudan population grew fourfold from 10.3 million in 1956 to 39.2 million in 2008 as shown in table 1.

Table 1

item	1956	Growt	1973	Growt	1983	Growt	1993	Growth(per	2008(mill
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	(million)	h (percent)	(million)	h (percent)	(million)	h (percent)	(million)	cent)	ion)
Total population	10.3	2.2	14.8	3.7	21.3	1.9	25.6	2.9	39.2

Source: CBS, Khartoum.

In spite of steady growth of GDP during oil decade, almost 46% of population below poverty line according to household survey which took place in 2009.

Table 2

Indicator/key Figure	Unit and measure	total	Northern region	Eastern region	Khartoum region	Kordofan region	Central region	Darfur region
Population of population below poverty line	percent	46.5	33.7	46.3	26	52.7	45.4	62.7
Employment ratio to population (15 years and above)	percent	41.4	35.9	39	37	48.5	41.3	45.3
Net enrollment rate in primary education	percent	67	83	57	85	60	67	62

Source: CBS, Khartoum

Table 2 tells us that the low level of average per capita income masks wide regional disparities in economic and social development. Educational levels are low, health conditions are poor, and the burden of disease is heavy and wide spread. It seems that stabilizing the economy during the 1990 was largely achieved by cutting public expenditure, particularly public expenditure on such basic social services as health, education and domestic water supplies and sanitation; this seriously undermined the development of human capital. (World Bank, 2003, vol.1: 107)

Oil has taken a corner stone position within Sudanese economy since its exploitation started in 1999, before 1999, the petroleum sector contribution to the

GDP was negligible. Prior to that date, the shortage of petroleum products was a permanent handicap impeding the economy with all its negative implications especially on production and growth (Gadkarim, 2010). Official reports confirmed the steady growth of oil contribution in GDP from 2% in 1999 to 21% in 2007 and average of 9% afterwards, in other words the structure of the economy has been changing from dominance of the agricultural sector towards that of the petroleum sector. Many researches argued that petroleum sector has not contributed largely to the development of the other sectors, in the contrary, it facilitated to the continuation of neglecting the productive sectors –agriculture and manufacturing (Gadkarim, 2010; Siddig, 2012). The contribution of the petroleum sector was more than 90% of exports during 2005-2010 implying that the economy is becoming highly dependent on the exports of one product. Moreover, this, as well, indicates that oil has not played a positive role in the development of basic services such as health and education.

### **Basic Education & Oil: is there positive relation?**

Basic education gross enrollment rate (76%) does not compare favorably to the average gross enrollment rate (GER) in Lower-middle-income Sub-Saharan African countries (105%) and Lower-middle-income Middle East & North African countries (106%). The GER for Sudan is higher only than that for Eritrea and comparable to that for countries such as the Central African Republic & Chad.

Spending on goods and services by the government low, and particularly so far basic education. This situation means that households have to contribute to a school running costs, such as maintenance, water & electricity and supplementary teacher payments. The average estimated out-of-broket spending by households each year on operating costs was 15 Sudanese pounds (SDG) per student in 2008-09, higher than the SDG12 in public spending per student on such costs. Whereas the official policy of the government is free basic education, the available data suggest that households pay a large share of school running costs in addition to other costs, such as uniforms, textbooks & meals (World Bank, 2012).

Although government spending on education has increased, it remains low compared with other countries, particularly for basic education. Between 2000 and 2009, there was a substantial increase in education spending- from SDG 660

million in real terms to SDG 2.4 billion- . The share of gross domestic product (GDP) allocated to education doubled to 2.7% over this period, but Sudan still spends less on education compared with similar Lower-middle-income countries in Africa & the Middle East. Furthermore, average spending on basic education as a share of total education spending, that is, 37%, is lower than that in Egypt, Kenya & Morocco, which allocate 40%, 55% & 46% respectively (World Bank, 2012).

Government spending on goods and services in the education sector has been low, particularly for basic education, where goods and services account for only 5% of total recurrent spending. This relatively small share of public spending is offset by households spending on school recurrent costs, as we mention above, (EU,2008), which in 2009 were estimated to be an amount average of SDG 84 per person among urban households and SDG 24 per person among rural households (World Bank,2012).

Table No. 3

Indicator	2000	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Nominal education spending(current SDG million)	319	556	902	1,010	1,527	1,966	2,509	2,714
Recurrent	317	466	846	941	1,446	1,845	2,288	2,469
Development	2	90	56	69	80	121	221	245
Real education spending(constant 2008 SDG million)	660	1,037	1,335	1,332	1,892	2,276	2,509	2,404
Recurrent	656	869	1,252	1,242	1,792	2,136	2,288	2,187
Development	4	168	83	91	100	140	221	217
Education spending as a percentage of total public spending	8.1	9.2	7.1	7.3	10.2	11.2	13.2	12
Education spending as a percentage of GDP	1.3	1.8	2	1.9	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.7

Table 3 shows complete picture when we read it with table 2, there is huge disparity in the development indicators between the best and worst performing

states in Sudan. For example in 2006 the attendance rate in basic schools in the best performing states was 91% while in the worst performing states it was 4%.

The education sector shows weak learning outcomes, a student learning assessment administered in 195 schools across 3 states (Kassala, North Kordofan & Blue Nile) in 2009 found that student learning outcomes were generally weak: the average male student in the sample answered only 35% of the mathematics questions correctly and 38% of the reading questions compared to 37% & 41%, respectively, for the average female student. Recent studies confirmed that Sudan does not currently have a system to continuously assess student learning in order to determine whether public investments in basic education translate into the provision of quality education and learning for all students (World Bank, 2009; 2012; UNDP, 2006).

Regarding above information, the main question arises, are there any positive impacts for oil on education sector, especially basic schools? Our argument there are no positive impacts on human development indicators; Sudan HDI rank deteriorated from 132 to 154, Moreover underweight children under five rose from 34 in 1997 to 41 in 2007 (UNDP, 2010). The low public spending on basic education means that access of poor people may have minimized at least in relative terms and possibility in absolute terms. Household income might therefore influence enrollment, the need for additional household current income might require the children work and thus raises the opportunity cost of enrollment.

## **Conclusion:**

Education is a corner-stone in building human capital and widening opportunities. In spite of steady growth in Sudan economy during oil decade (2000-2010), the performance in basic education was weak, in terms of spending & education outcomes. This indicates that pattern of growth and revenues allocation deteriorates households capacity instead of improving it. Commitment is a vital factor in human development & poverty reduction, especially in Sudan, where 46% of population is below poverty line. Achieving high ranking in human development requires influencing policy to prioritize education, at least in terms of spending, at federal, state and local levels.

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