

Country Programme Evaluation for South Sudan

Type of Evaluation: **Country Programme Evaluation**

Evaluator: **Forcier**

Time of the Evaluation: **December 2018**

Executive Summary:

Since 2010, Finn Church Aid (FCA) has established a presence in South Sudan, prior to the country's independence. Throughout various areas of South Sudan, FCA has been working primarily in the three thematic areas on Right to Quality Education (R2QE), Right to Peace (R2P) and Right to Livelihoods (R2L), in line with its yearly global strategies.

An evaluation was commissioned to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of FCA's South Sudan Country Programme from 2013 – 2017, focusing on a set of evaluation questions measuring the relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of FCA's programming in South Sudan. This study included a comprehensive literature review of FCA's country and global programming documents, as well as qualitative fieldwork, inclusive of 6 remote key informant interviews (KIIs) via Skype, 24 field-level KIIs, and field-level eight focus group discussions in the three target locations of FCA's implementation – Pibor, Mingkaman, and Mundri.

This evaluation focused primarily on measuring the key objectives of FCA's three thematic areas (from 2013 – 2017), as follows:

- R2P: Local communities in disaster affected or otherwise fragile contexts have enhanced capability to prevent and resolve conflicts promoting the respect of human rights with the active participation of women and youth.



- R2P: Religious and traditional leaders and possible other non-formal structures are positively contributing to conflict prevention, mediation, conflict resolution and peace and actively promote human rights.
- R2L: Local communities, in disaster-affected or otherwise fragile contexts have strengthened their assets and capability to develop their livelihoods in sustainable ways.
- R2L: Local communities (women and men and youth) have strengthened their resilience and capacity to respond to shocks including natural and man-made disasters and the effects of climate change that negatively impact their livelihoods.
- R2QE: Women, men and youth in disaster-affected or otherwise fragile contexts with limited educational background have access to quality vocational training/skills development.
- R2QE: Girls and boys living in disaster (both natural or man-made) affected communities have equal, uninterrupted access to quality education and safe and protected learning spaces through the preparedness and response capacity of communities, including authorities.

Evaluation Findings

Since 2013, FCA has made significant strides in improving the lives of the communities it serves in South Sudan. Livelihoods programming, focused on training for increasing farming skills and agricultural techniques, provision of inputs such as seeds and agricultural tools, and creation of and support for farmer groups, have all increased the capacity of farming and other livelihood activities in the target areas.

Education-related activities expanded upon the training above and included both vocational training activities, as well as primary and secondary school programming, with a focus on education in emergencies. In all three target locations, education programming focused on teacher training, supporting PTAs and SMCs, construction of temporary learning spaces, and provision of school supplies. Community awareness campaigns were also initiated to encourage parents and children to register their children for school, and thus increase school enrolment and retention.

Peacebuilding activities were conducted largely in Pibor and focused on establishing and supporting community peace committees, leading games for peace, and training local traditional and religious leaders on conflict mitigation and resolution.

The most significant challenge facing all three thematic areas has proven to be the persistence of conflict throughout the country. Residents' difficulty to settle in one place has had a substantial impact on the viability of programming, as beneficiaries and other relevant actors continue to be uprooted, both permanently and temporarily, as conflict breaks out. This makes it difficult to provide tangible inputs to beneficiaries, such as seeds, fishing equipment, and school supplies, and also makes it difficult to build strong

relationships with local partners and community members, as communities remain fluid and malleable.

Recommendations

The following key recommendations are suggested for on-going FCA programming in South Sudan:

General

- FCA should consider an integrated approach to its programming so as to establish a link between the activities being implemented under the various thematic areas. To be more precise, as noted by some of the respondents, there is a need for an integrated approach when implementing peacebuilding and education programmes because conflict remains one of the main barriers to access to education.
 - One recommendation regarding this point is to consider the implementation of psychological and psychosocial services in schools and vocational training centres for survivors of violence and traumatic experiences.
 - Further, FCA should conduct needs assessments in the relevant areas to assess why children are not attending school and what FCA or other organisations can do to mitigate those reasons, i.e. train community volunteers to walk children to school who do not feel safe to walk on their own.
- Regarding project sustainability:
 - Consider having future project leaders and staff shadow FCA and their current partners on their work and learn from as they go on project management, leadership, and programme implementation.
 - Prior to project completion, conduct working groups in the target thematic areas to discuss with key actors how to redistribute responsibilities once the FCA programme is completed.

Right to Peace

- Conduct needs assessments, as relevant, and focus on establishing peacebuilding initiatives wherein local attitudes indicate that there is a willingness for the relevant actors and community members to engage in peace talks and be receptive to receiving conflict mitigation support from external parties.
 - As certain key informants and community members indicated that local actors were engaged in peace talks, but ultimately demonstrated that they were not prepared to take any significant action in this regard. This could be avoided in the future by speaking to and surveying local leaders and



community members prior to peace talks to gauge their interests, goals, and expectations.

- [In combination with R2QE] Look into finding solutions to violence affecting children going to school. For instance, through training volunteers to accompany children to school.

Right to Livelihood

- Particular focus should be placed on women, especially female heads of householdss who are still largely unable to work. Consider including the provision of start-up capital for women who are trained in various livelihood activities.
- In implementation areas that are particularly prone to conflict, focus programming on in-depth training, to complement the distribution of inputs such as seeds, such that, in the event of an outbreak of violence, beneficiaries are still able to use the services they were provided within the long-term.
- In areas that are assessed are more secure and suitable for permanent vocational activities, as opposed to the above point, vocational training should always include a component of start-up capital or start-up kits. Several focus group respondents indicated that after their training, they were ready to open businesses based on their training, but were unable, due to lack of access to relevant materials.
- Another strategy that can be explored to expand on the sustainability of FCA's impact is through local capacity building, possibly through programming such as VSLAs or other money saving and lending mechanisms.

Right to Quality Education

- As FGD participants noted that children find it difficult to learn in temporary learning spaces without walls between classrooms, future TLS' should have walls in between classrooms to make the environment more conducive for learning.
- Due to external factors, such as regional instability and conflict, FCA should continue to focus and expand the focus on teacher training. By focusing on increasing knowledge, the training will give trainees knowledge that they can take with them and implement to various locations. Training for teachers should further include and focus on how to integrate peacebuilding goals, such as conflict mitigation, as part of their overall teaching strategy.
- Further training should be added on not only academic subjects for teachers, but also on school management for governmental education officials, SMCs, and PTAs. Trainings on school management should be provided to school staff, as well as Ministry of Education officials, so they can develop a deeper understanding of how to support schools, and how to provide for the specific needs of the schools in their community.

- Education programming in particular should focus more on building a strong relationships with local and regional government actors and non-governmental organisations. Most of the challenges that the evaluation respondents indicated were facing their communities are problems that are likely to be exacerbated without continuous external funding (i.e. paying teacher salaries, providing textbooks, providing food to children in school, etc.). These are problems likely to be faced by governing authorities or other local actors after the project phase-out. Therefore, coordination with these actors prior to project completion on creating budgets, managing budgets, and fundraising will be necessary.