



*Left: With help from an Italian-funded project, girls in Lakes and Eastern Equatoria states now have access to improved educational facilities, making them less likely to drop out of school.*

*Photo: UNOPS*

## PARTNER

Government of Italy

# PROMOTING PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR GIRLS IN SOUTH SUDAN

More girls from Lakes and Eastern Equatoria states of South Sudan can now stay in school because they have access to better educational facilities.

UNOPS managed an Italian-funded project to build and renovate schools, train teachers and local workers, raise awareness, and engage communities, benefiting more than 6,000 local students.

The country has one of the lowest primary school completion rates in the world, at less than 10 percent in 2009 (Education Management Information System). Girls are faced with the most challenging obstacles to regularly attending school, including early marriage and other issues.

The new facilities, including 14 equipped schools, boreholes with fresh drinking water, and separate toilets for girls and boys, help to create a safe and clean learning environment for children and teachers. Local workers were hired and trained in the construction and maintenance of these facilities and up to 200 teachers received training in child-friendly teaching methods.

In order to improve food security for families in the region, vegetable gardens were created on available land at the schools and continue to provide meals for

students and teachers, as well as additional income. Local communities were engaged throughout the project, in order to ensure that the project created the most positive, long-term outcomes and addressed community concerns. For instance, access to affordable hygiene products was identified as a key driver for keeping girls in school. In order to address this need, a large community of local women were trained in the production of sanitary napkins, which are provided to girls for free or at a reduced cost.

Another highlight of the project was the launch of a magazine encouraging girls to be leaders in their communities, as well as the creation of girls' clubs, parent-teacher associations, and health and hygiene workshops for female students and their mothers.

Through the integration of a multi-faceted approach to address underlying issues of low school attendance, especially of girls, the project has helped cut the rate of girls dropping out of school before grade eight by 39 percent in the target areas. The overall school attendance has increased by more than 30 percent. Students in Lakes and Eastern Equatoria states now have access to improved facilities and parents are more willing to send their children to school.