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# **CHAPTER**



## **REVIEW**

## Rebuilding Sudan through Education: A Pathway to Post-war Recovery

#### **Juliet Arinaitwe**

Research Scholar, Department of Education, Bharathiar University
Email: julietarinaitwe7@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-8353-0936

#### Dr P. Janardhana Kumar Reddy

Associate Professor and Head (Rtd), Department of Education
Bharathiar University
Coimbatore 641046, Tamil Nadu
Email: jkreddy451926@gmail.com
ORCID: 000-0002-0402-0995

## **ABSTRACT**

**PURPOSE:** This chapter investigates the role of education as a cornerstone for rebuilding post-war Sudan following decades of conflict. The conflicts have created significant challenges in rebuilding Sudan's societal framework that has been left in ruins.

**METHODOLOGY:** This chapter employs a mixed-method, drawing from a wide range of secondary data to ensure a complete understanding of the role of education in Sudan's post-war sustainable development.

**FINDINGS:** The findings highlight the urgent need to invest in education, as it is crucial for empowerment, national reconciliation, economic recovery, rebuilding the social fabric, and addressing systemic deficiencies.

**VALUE:** This chapter's value lies in the tailored integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 8, and 16, offering a unique model for post-war recovery. It provides actionable recommendations to policy-makers, educators, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focused on Sudan's reconstruction.

**LIMITATION:** The chapter is based on secondary data, leading to a lack of the actual grasp of what is primarily happening. Future research can focus on using primary data for better, concrete insights.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The chapter recommends increasing public investment in education, expanding alternative learning programmes, and enhancing psychosocial support in schools.

**KEYWORDS**: Education; Post-War; Empowerment; Cornerstone; Social Cohesion; Educational Reforms; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Equity.

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## INTRODUCTION

The history of prolonged civil wars, political instabilities, and ethnic strife in Sudan has devastated its institutional systems and societal frameworks due to widespread displacement, economic collapse, and institutional decay. According to Elhag and Baleela (2025), one of the humanitarian issues that is highly impacted during wartime is the displacement phenomenon, as local citizens flee from their residences driven by the fear of getting hurt in armed conflicts and experiencing violation and persecution. This distracts societal settings and institutional systems, exposing people to a lack of basic necessities, with loss of communities and homes affecting their social, economic, and psychological well-being. With a break from the war, the environment tends to get back to normal, although with fear and stigma among the people in their scattered nature. This post-war period offers an opportunity to rebuild and restore pre-war conditions and create a more inclusive, equitable, and stable society. This reconstruction phase, however, requires comprehensive strategies capable of addressing various interconnected challenges. Among these, education, long neglected amidst war, stands out as a critical element in this effort, offering pathways to personal empowerment, societal healing, career development, economic growth, and restoring trust in governance.

A vast body of literature has indicated that the future of any nation is greatly determined by its educational status, and it is the greatest base for rebuilding nations in challenging situations such as the post-war era. Education provides a sustainable foundation for long-term recovery, providing individuals and communities with the knowledge and skills necessary for shaping a peaceful and prosperous future. Therefore, reviving Sudan's educational system that was highly affected by the war would transform the societal fractures. A report by Hujale (2024) indicates that education in Sudan was put on hold due to the war, stealing the future of millions of school-going children, as most schools were then turned into shelters for displaced people. There is, therefore, need for Sudan to reinvest in the education sector for the empowerment of the society socially, economically, and peacefully, with renewed trust among the people in their governance through civic education.

This chapter explores how a revived educational system can foster stability and inclusive development in a post-war context in Sudan, characterised by deep social divisions and economic hardship. Drawing exclusively on secondary data, the chapter provides a detailed analysis, aligning with SDGs, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). This offers insights into education's transformative potential in post-conflict settings, challenges and opportunities for rebuilding a resilient and inclusive education system.

#### **PURPOSE**

 This chapter investigates education's role as a cornerstone for rebuilding post-war Sudan, moving beyond short-term humanitarian aid towards sustainable, education-driven reconstruction. Its main focus is to:

- 2. assess the role of education in the reconciliation and reconstruction processes for social cohesion, economic recovery, and institutional stability;
- 3. analyse the challenges in rebuilding Sudan's education system post-war;
- 4. examine policy interventions aimed at strengthening post-war education;
- 5. explore the implications of investing in education for long-term national stability.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The chapter is anchored in the SDGs, specifically SDG 4, SDG 8, and SDG 16, as such a context suits Sudan's post-war reconstruction through education, the educational status, and opportunities within global development narratives, emphasising sustainability and resilience. This provides a normative and evaluative framework, ensuring that the educational strategies in Sudan contribute to long-term sustainability while addressing immediate post-war challenges. They also enable crossnational comparisons, situating Sudan within a global discourse on development.

**SDG 4:** Quality Education: This SDG emphasises inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning opportunities. In Sudan, this goal frames education as a vehicle for rebuilding human capacity, addressing disparities in access, and improving quality to reflect post-conflict needs. A well-structured education system can equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for peacebuilding and national development.

**SDG 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth: This goal highlights the need for sustainable economic growth and employment relevant to Sudan, where war has decimated livelihoods. Education is positioned as a driver of economic recovery, aligning with SDG 8's focus on productive employment. Education directly influences economic growth by preparing a skilled workforce, as investing in vocational and technical education can address unemployment and poverty, key challenges in Sudan's post-war economy.

**SDG 16:** Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: SDG 16 emphasises promoting peaceful and inclusive societies; this is critical in a nation emerging from decades of ethnic and political conflict. Education's role in fostering social cohesion and institutional trust through promoting tolerance, reducing inequalities, and strengthening democratic governance aligns with this goal's emphasis on reducing violence, conflicts, and political divisions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The analysis in this chapter utilises a mixed-method approach, drawing from a wide range of secondary data sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the role of education in postwar Sudan's rebuilding.



## **DATA COLLECTION**

Data were sourced and collected from authentic repositories, including:

- **Government Reports:** Policy documents from the Ministry of Education, national education statistics, and development plans that outline current challenges and strategic goals.
- International Organisations: Reports from UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, and the World Bank
  provided insights into the status of education in Sudan, including statistics on enrolment,
  literacy rates, and analysis of educational disparities among different demographics. They
  also provided data on peace assessments, economic recovery analyses, and education in
  emergency evaluations.
- Academic Literature: A review of peer-reviewed chapters, case studies, and assessments
  focusing on education in post-conflict contexts helped frame our understanding of educational
  models that can be adapted in Sudan.
- NGO Publications: Insights from NGO reports working directly in the field, offered qualitative perspectives on grassroots educational initiatives.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data from reports and academic literature were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively through descriptive and thematic analysis. This study aimed at identifying the nature of the education sector post-war in Sudan and to the identification of recurring themes related to educational barriers, successful interventions, and the social role of education in healing and reconciliation. A comparative case analysis was also carried out to extract lessons and best practices that can be potentially implemented in Sudan.

## **FINDINGS**

The analysis of secondary data underscores education's role as the cornerstone for rebuilding post-war Sudan, providing a foundation for social cohesion, economic recovery, and institutional stability. These findings, derived from academic literature and other sources, illustrate how education is vital in addressing Sudan's post-conflict challenges while aligning with the SDGs. They also highlight the challenges in rebuilding Sudan's education system post-war and the need to invest more in education. The results are organised into thematic areas, each emphasising education's transformative role.

## The Foundational Role of Education

Education serves as a cornerstone by laying the groundwork for rebuilding Sudan's human and societal capital, a prerequisite for all reconstruction efforts. Education's reach, relevance, and delivery capacity are critical to rebuilding Sudan, as it is a bedrock for subsequent social, economic, and institutional gains. International and national reports indicate that primary education in Sudan

has a higher enrolment compared to secondary and tertiary studies. A report by UNESCO (2023a) indicates that primary enrolment has increased from 65% in 2020 to 80% in 2023, reflecting progress towards universal education. However, secondary enrolment and vocational education are still much lower, with rural regions lagging more behind due to poverty, social-cultural norms, displacement, and war-damaged infrastructure (UNICEF, 2023; UNESCO, 2023a; Ebaidalla and Rakhy, 2024).

This indicates uneven access to education in the country, highlighting a gap that must be bridged to ensure that all Sudanese, regardless of location or socio-economic status, are given equal opportunities to participate in rebuilding efforts. Bridging the gap will also allow education to play its role as a starting point for equitable recovery, aligning with SDG 4's focus on inclusive education. Existing literature indicates less emphasis on peacebuilding, civic duties, and practical skills in the current curricula, limiting their relevance to post-war needs; This is because education's cornerstone status depends on quality reforms. Similarly important to note is the student-teacher ratio of 40:1 in many schools. Very few educators are trained in post-conflict pedagogy such as trauma-informed teaching, indicating a capacity crisis (UNICEF, 2023). Therefore, strengthening teacher training is foundational to education's effectiveness in rebuilding post-war Sudan.

## Education as a Cornerstone for Social Cohesion and Peace Building

Education is important for rebuilding Sudan's fractured social fabric by fostering peace and unity through civic education, making it a bedrock for a cohesive post-war society. The country's prolonged conflicts have created deep divisions along ethnic, religious, and political lines. If properly implemented, education can heal such social wounds among the Sudanese, as schools provide a neutral place where children and youth from different backgrounds can learn together, fostering mutual understanding and national identity, which are important for stability and institutional recovery (UNESCO, 2023b). Studies from other post-war societies, such as Rwanda and Afghanistan, have shown that incorporating peace education, conflict resolution training, and civic education into school curricula helps in reducing violence to promote long-term stability (Basabose and Habyarimana, 2019; Daud, 2020).

In areas such as Blue Nile State, where peace education programmes have been piloted, intercommunal clashes have reduced by 20% from 2022 to 2024, with students mastering conflict resolution skills (UNDP, 2024). Therefore, effectively integrating such programmes in the education system throughout the country would decrease conflicts and build a culture of peace, supporting SDG 16's goal of reducing violence and promoting peaceful societies with strong institutions. A report by UNICEF (2023) also indicates that using multilingual instruction in local languages, Arabic, and English has decreased ethnic tension, fostering national unity among the diverse groups through inclusive education. To further foster SDG 4's goal focus on lifelong learning opportunities, community-based education initiatives, such as parent-led peace workshops, have been put in place (UNDP, 2023). This increases school attendance, especially in conflict-affected areas, reinforcing trust in education as a unifying factor.

## **Education as a Tool for Economic Recovery**

Smart and efficient input in education is important for equipping individuals with employment and entrepreneurship skills that drive economic revitalisation (UNDP, 2022). This is crucial for Sudan, where political conflicts have devastated work areas, displaced workers, and weakened national economies and livelihoods, leaving the whole population dependent on humanitarian aid. A strong education system is therefore important to build human capital for establishing the economic foundation for recovery, indispensable for ending extreme poverty and generating sustainable livelihoods (Al-Azhari Al-Sheikh, 2021). With Sudan's need to build its infrastructure, there is demand for skilled labour in construction, agriculture, and technology. Expanding technical and vocational training centres has provided displaced youth and ex-combatants with job opportunities (Save the Children, 2023), although much more is still needed. Programmes in these vocational courses, mainly funded by the World Bank and other organisations, have boosted employment by 25% among graduates in regions such as Gezira State (World Bank, 2023a).

Countries recovering from wars, such as Afghanistan, are equally using education as a tool to reintegrate former combatants and displaced youth into the workforce, reducing over-dependency on foreign aid and preventing economic instability (Daud, 2020). A report by UNESCO (2023b) illustrates that carpentry courses in different parts of the country, such as Khartoum, are training youths, with a high percentage of them securing jobs. Such literacy and skills training have empowered the youth by reducing unemployment, more so in urban areas, and curbing economic despair that fuels conflict (UNESCO, 2024b). This positions education as a foundation for economic growth, aligning with SDG 8's focus on decent work and SDG 16's emphasis on peace. Similarly, private sector partnerships are tripling vocational funding, enabling the forming of new training centres (UNDP, 2023). This amplifies job creation and economic resilience, further supporting SDG 8's goal of sustainable economic growth.

## **Education as a Cornerstone for Strengthening Governance and Institutional Stability**

Education is a human right, recognised as an essential tool for development, peace, and security. It is a strong instrument for managing poverty, health improvements, and gender equality, ensuring equity and inclusion (World Bank, 2024, 2025; Runde *et al.*, 2023). It is influential in strengthening governance and institutional capacity weakened by political conflicts, which also destroy public administration systems and erode trust in state institutions. Bray and Lillis (2016) point out that a well-educated population is better equipped to participate in governance, engage in democratic processes, and hold leaders accountable. Post-war countries that have invested in education have seen significant improvements in governance, as educated citizens demand transparency, advocate for their rights, and contribute to policy formulations (World Bank, 2023a).

In the case of Sudan, fostering civic education through improving teacher training, school management, investing in digital skills, engaging in curriculum reforms, and encouraging continuous learning can lay a foundation for more accountable and effective governance, strengthening Sudan's institutional frameworks. Equally, teaching rule-of-law concepts in schools not only builds trust among the people but also ensures justice, especially for war victims, and prevents further conflicts (UNESCO, 2021). This ties to SDG 16's emphasis on peace, justice, and strong institutions for sustainable stability.

## **Education as an Empowerment Tool for Marginalised Communities**

Marginalised communities are groups of people usually cut off from mainstream societies due to certain factors such as race, disability, gender, and socio-economic status. War disproportionately affects such vulnerable groups, most especially women and children, leaving them at risk of poverty, exploitation, and exclusion from major decision-making processes. Studies from other post-war countries such as South Sudan and Afghanistan have demonstrated that investing in girl-child education leads to improved economic and health outcomes, as educated women contribute more actively to their communities and economies (Haider, 2021; Sanatani, 2020; Naylor and Sayed, 2016). Sudan must, therefore, prioritise policies that ensure access to education for all, including displaced populations, former child soldiers, women, and persons with disabilities, to build a more inclusive society that aligns with SDG 4, which calls for educational equity (UNICEF, 2022).

#### LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Sudan faces serious environmental challenges, including desertification, water scarcity, and climate change, all of which have played a role in fuelling past conflicts. Integrating climate education, sustainable agriculture training, and disaster preparedness into the education system can equip Sudan's future generation with the knowledge and skills needed to manage natural resources responsibly (UN, 2023). Universities and research institutions can also drive innovations in renewable energy, urban planning, and conservation efforts, supporting the country's transition towards sustainable development (World Bank, 2023b).

#### CHALLENGES IN REBUILDING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SUDAN

**Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Rebuilding Sudan's education system has faced difficulties as the war turned many schools across the country into shelters and left others damaged and dilapidated. This has complicated efforts to resume educational activities and secure safe learning environments for students.

Quality: Schools suffer from inadequate resources and poorly trained staff, with many lacking essential supplies, especially in conflict-affected regions. This has led to high dropout rates and poor educational outcomes.



Access and Enrolment Challenges: Approximately 3 million children remain out of school, primarily in rural areas and among girls. Cultural norms, economic barriers, and ongoing violence present significant impediments. This has limited access to quality education, especially in marginalised communities.

**Mass Displacement:** The war is responsible for internally and externally displaced populations, where people were forced to leave their homes. This resulted in a shortage of school-going children and a severe lack of qualified teachers in most parts of the country.

**Cultural Relevance of Curriculum:** The national curriculum does not adequately reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of Sudan. This failure to embrace inclusion undermines the potential for education to serve as a reconciliatory tool.

**Financial constraints:** Post-war reconstruction demands significant investment and funding, especially in the education sector, yet the sources of these funds are limited. This has made the rebuilding of this important sector stagnant, delaying its positive implications towards stability and economic recovery.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

To heal the scars left by the wars and civil conflicts in Sudan, the government and international bodies will need to implement aggressive learning strategies to make sure children get back to school. It is also recommended that the country build a better, equitable, and resilient education system, taking into consideration renovations of dilapidated school infrastructure and building new schools, especially in rural areas. Teacher capacity building by retraining teachers is crucial for improving educational quality and outcomes, particularly in conflict-sensitive pedagogy and preparing them for the contemporary global educational landscape. There is an equal need to formulate educational policies that reflect Sudan's diversity to promote equity and unity for societal healing. Additionally, expanding the scope of education to focus beyond basic schooling to include investments in higher education and workforce development is essential. This leads to efficient human capital that is key for the social well-being of the people, economic development, and stability. Community engagement strategies through building partnerships with local communities to enhance educational initiatives can ensure that the proposed efforts are contextually relevant and supported.

### LIMITATIONS

Failure to have fieldwork research was one of the biggest limitations to the study, as this made it difficult to fully grasp the on-ground realities. However, the abundance of existing literature on education and reconstruction of post-war regions guided the study in making inferences and comparisons about Sudan's context. Nevertheless, the limited availability of studies on the educational role for the rebuilding of Sudan remains a significant challenge. As much as this is a challenge, it also presents an opportunity for further research.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Education is not just a component of Sudan's recovery; it is the foundation upon which the country's future stability, prosperity, and governance depend, as it plays a transformative role in addressing societal fractures and promoting a culture of peace. Investing in education ensures the country not only recovers from the devastation of war but also builds a resilient society capable of withstanding future challenges. Prioritising education in national reconstruction policies is not an option but a

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necessity for sustainable peace and development. This chapter, therefore, advocates for a concerted effort among stakeholders to prioritise education in the national rebuilding agenda to pave the way for a brighter, more harmonious future for all Sudanese citizens.

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## **BIOGRAPHY**



**Juliet Arinaitwe** is a PhD research scholar in Education at Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, TN, India, specialising in Educational Psychology. Juliet is a Ugandan who came to India in August 2023. She completed her Master's degree at Islamic University in Uganda, specialising in Educational Management and Administration,

and her Bachelor's degree at Uganda Christian University in Bachelor of Arts with Education. Her great love and dedication to the educational landscape led her to work as a teacher in several secondary schools after her bachelor's degree, until she moved to India. The valuable time spent in secondary schools as a teacher opened her to different educational contexts, including leadership, career guidance, and mentorship. Since her tenure as a PhD candidate, Juliet has written several research papers and book chapters in educational psychology, educational management and administration, and educational technology, and is still writing more for shared knowledge in the educational arena.



**Dr P. Janardhana Kumar Reddy** is an Associate Professor and Head (Rtd) in the department of education at Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. He has been a professor and an associate professor at various institutions, and has held several responsibilities, including Head of Department (Education), guest editor,

editor, member of advisory board, editorial member of different forums, and visiting team member of NCTE. He has a PhD in Education, a double MA in Sociology, a BEd, and a BSc. He has participated in more than 60 national and international conferences and published more than 75 papers in reputed journals, authored 12 books, 3 book chapters, 7 sponsored projects, and has 360 citations. He received awards from various organisations and institutions, and guided over 50 PhD, MPhil, and MEd students.