



Asia Summit on Flexible Learning Strategies for Out-Of-School Children

Innovate. Include. Impact.

24-26 February 2016, Bangkok, Thailand

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Despite the substantial strides made towards achieving universal primary education and the commitment to providing basic education in developing countries, data show that progress towards providing education for all has stalled in the past decade. As of July 2015, reports indicate more than 59 million children worldwide were not enrolled in primary and secondary schooling, and as many as 18 million children remained out-of-school in the Asia-Pacific region (UIS). Thus, a key challenge for governments in the region is how to ensure that out-of-school children (OOSC), who often cannot be served by formal school systems, are provided with, and have access to learning opportunities.

Though constitutional and legal provisions are in place to provide education for all children and improve their socio-economic situation, more than 3 million OOSC remain in Southeast Asia (UIS, 2015). It should be noted that this number does not include OOSC in Vietnam and Myanmar, as official figures are unavailable for those countries at this time. In addition, there are a number of stateless, migrant and undocumented children who are out-of-school in this sub-region. According to one estimate, there are several million stateless children in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand (UNHCR, 2010). Thus, the situation of stateless children remains serious, as those without national identification and citizenship will often not have access to education.

Therefore, with generous funding and support from Educate a Child (EAC), UNESCO Bangkok has begun implementing the project *Strengthening Education Systems for Out-of-School Children* to assist nine Southeast Asian Countries that continue to face challenges in addressing the educational needs of out-of-school children (OOSC). These countries are: the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Timor-Leste. The main goal of the project is to enhance the target countries' institutional capacities and education systems in order to better address the educational needs of OOSC, regardless of their nationality and ethnicity, by utilizing flexible learning strategies (FLS) across contexts. Furthermore, this project has been expanded to include all Asian sub-regions, so that collaboration and greater cohesion of efforts for FLS and OOSC may result across Asia. Thus, a three-pronged approach is incorporated into this project and includes regional policy advocacy, regional capacity building, and flexible learning strategies. This holistic approach will seek to ultimately lead the region to success in providing and sustaining quality learning opportunities for OOSC in Asia.

To ensure the quality and equality of learning for all, as well as increase regional technical and financial cooperation in addressing the situation of OOSC, UNESCO Bangkok, in collaboration with its partners, will organize a regional event entitled, the “Asia Summit on Flexible Learning Strategies for Out-of-School Children”, in order to provide a forum in which policy makers, practitioners, private partners and academics can share their creativity, innovation, and experience in education so as to enhance the situation of OOSC in the Asian region. Due to the large number of children in the South and Southeast Asian regions, in particular, who remain out-of-school and face difficulties in access to education, multiple policymakers and practitioners have attempted to address the issue by providing different methodologies and resources to support learning opportunities for these children. Thus, there are several promising practices and innovative educational initiatives for OOSC that will be shared with colleagues and partners who serve in various capacities across the Asian region.

Objectives

Objectives of the Asia Summit on Flexible Learning Strategies for Out-of-School Children are as follows:

- To Serve as a platform for presenting and disseminating innovative programs related to education for OOSC;
- To Provide an excellent opportunity to build and foster networks and partnerships on education for disadvantaged children and youth;
- To Create technical collaboration and share innovative financing practices for education for OOSC; and
- To Develop a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) by using information and data derived from the Summit.

Participants: Approximately 500 partners and colleagues from Asian member states will participate.

- 200 Government officials and UN staff from 35-40 countries
- 150 NGO/CSO/NPO/Research institutions
- 150 Private Sector

Financial support for participants

UNESCO Bangkok will provide financial support to approximately 200 government representatives.

Co-organizers and Project partners

- UNESCO Bangkok
- UNICEF EAPRO
- UNICEF ROSA
- International NGOs
- Local NGOs
- Private companies
- IT companies
- CSR Asia Global Business Coalition for Education