

## EFA FTI Global and Regional Activities Program Stakeholder Consultation

### Thematic Area: Out of School Children

#### General comments

The three gaps identified provide a comprehensive overview of the cycle necessary to identify, implement and monitor interventions to increase access to education for out of school children. The interconnections between these gaps are made throughout the paper and generally the issues raised in the background section are appropriately addressed in the proposed activities.

Overall the paper could be strengthened if the gaps and proposed activities to address them were grounded in a common conceptual framework and understanding of the types of out of school children and the reasons behind their exclusion. This could be focused on the demand and supply reasons for children not accessing education (which are not explicitly addressed in the paper) or through the different characteristics of out of school children.

#### Comments on content and proposed activities

##### II Background

##### A. Data gaps

This section provides a useful overview of the data collection and methodological challenges, both for EMIS and household survey data.

The suggested area of work that calls for a clearer conceptualisation of terms (“enrolment” and “in-school”) is commendable but this needs to build upon work already undertaken by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) on defining these concepts and focus on building consensus on use of terms and approaches to national reporting. The scope of this area of work needs to extend beyond clarifying these terms to how they can be measured. This is picked up in the proposed activity related to this gap but the point could be strengthened in the initial discussion.

##### B. Policy gap

This section of the paper could be strengthened by distinguishing between the demand and supply side obstacles, acknowledging that out of school children include those who are yet to enter the school system, those who enrol late and those who have dropped out. This would help focus the discussion on appropriate policy responses.

As mentioned in the paper, existing research on out of school children presents a complex issue, with multiple reasons for children to remain outside the school system, and the problem is not so much an absence of data and evidence on interventions to address out of school children’s needs, but the ability to use this data and apply the learning. The proposed policy work needs to remain balanced between assessing whether or not FTI countries have appropriate policies in place to address the out of school problem and how the FTI partnership can support policy-making and response, with an emphasis towards the latter rather than the former – see comments below on the proposed policy activity.

##### C. Management or implementation gaps

This section would benefit from a clearer introduction establishing the types of management or implementation gaps that are needed.

It is generally recognised that the hardest-to-reach out of school children need targeted interventions and support to overcome the multiple disadvantages and barriers that lead to their exclusion from schooling. Greater attention should be paid to the management difficulties and

cost burdens of such interventions, because the management approach may be different and the unit costs of delivering education may rise to reflect the delivery model. As such the discussion should also include a focus on the management and implementation of specific interventions to target out of school children, as well as the broader management issues already raised. It is important to recognise that good policy needs to be supported by effective management but the discussion of management issues related to inputs that can generally limit enrolment and attendance (such as construction and textbook procurement) could be shortened.

The focus on central management issues and school/district-level issues is welcome.

It would be useful to make the links back to data gaps and include discussion of use of data in targeting interventions, and monitoring and evaluation.

The discussion of financing instruments to address poverty aspects underlying reasons behind out of school children is interesting and should be a separate paragraph. One of the management difficulties can be linking initiatives such as conditional cash transfers to social protection and actors beyond the Ministry of Education. Similarly discussion of special education needs and disabilities consideration needs to be given to how this links to the health sector, as well as to school-level management and teacher training.

Additional discussion of the management and implementation challenges of scaling up effective pilot interventions would be useful.

### Section III Proposed activities

#### 1. Data

It is essential that the instrument designed can be aligned with national data collection processes and builds upon the work of UIS in this area rather than replicating efforts. To ensure this takes place UIS could be considered as a partner to undertake such activities.

In addition to the development of tools, consideration needs to be given to use of data. The proposed activities could include a stronger component of training and skills development to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for data collection, management and application.

#### 2. Policy

Greater clarity is needed in this section to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between assessing the current state of policy, and technical assistance to improve policy and identifying ways to ensure that the policy process is evidence-based and results in appropriate strategies to support out of school children.

Within this activity it would also be useful to examine instances in which policies to address out of school children are not producing expected results and why this is occurring. In addition the 'source book' and workshops should provide a platform to highlight learning from effective policy responses.

The approach should include dialogue with ministries and stakeholders beyond the education sector, particularly social protection and health.

The suggested source-book needs to build upon the reasons behind different types of out of school children within a country and provide guidance on accompanying strategies to address, so that it brings together research and existing evidence in a user-friendly format that will enable more efficient use of data and experience to inform policy.

### 3. Management

The timing of activities within this area of work need to be examined alongside the previous two proposed activities, for example the literature of good practice in addressing out of school children needs to feed back into the policy activity.

This section could be more usefully focused on how to design an appropriate response (based on a common conceptual framework as discussed above and linking to policy) and then how to manage and monitor this (feeding back to data).

There's a need to distinguish between general barriers/obstacles across the education sector that if addressed will improve access and quality of education for all learners (eg expansion of school infrastructure, improved school supplies, teacher training) versus targeted interventions to meet the needs of specific groups of out of school children, as discussed above. Within the literature review a clearer focus on the costs of interventions and difficulties in managing and targeting interventions to reach the most disadvantaged children would be useful.

Lastly, it is assumed that the pilot countries will remain the same for all proposed activities for consistency and so that each of the proposed activities will build upon each other. The involvement of FTI partner countries as pilot countries in the UIS/UNICEF Global Initiative on out of school children should be considered when making final country selection.