

EFA FTI Global and Regional Activities Program (GRA)

THEMATIC AREA: OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Comments from UNICEF

The paper proposes a GRA Program for addressing the problem of out-of-school children (OOSC) linked to three gaps on data, policies and management. The following comments are structured in three parts: (i) general comments on the paper, (ii) a note on the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI), led by UNICEF in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), and (iii) some remarks on the way forward.

(i) GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE PAPER

- The paper proposes “**new**” **measurement instruments** and approaches that will provide improved ways for counting OOSC and assessing their characteristics. This however does not take into account ongoing efforts in this regard, specifically by UIS and within the framework of specialized interagency collaboration, and on which one needs to build.
- **The issue of drop-outs:** There is still not a clear (and standardized) understanding on when a child is considered a drop-out. Our experience within the framework of the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) underlines the need to further unpack this phenomenon and to contextualize our approaches. For instance for the longest time in the Indian context a child had to be absent for 90 days consecutively in order to be considered a drop-out and technically if a child attended school on the 89th day even for just that day, the clock would get reset and s/he could again be absent continuously without being considered a drop-out.
- **The issue of “dropout risk”:** In a related way, there is also a gap in measuring the characteristics of children “at risk of dropping out”, what constitutes such risk, and the relative importance of risks. Measurements rely more on drop-out rates; alternative approaches to calculate risk factors remain problematic from a methodological point of view and need to be studied deeper.
- **Characteristics of OOSC:** The heterogeneity of the OOSC population should not be only captured in terms of socio-economic characteristics and location but also in terms of cognitive development and learning needs.
- **Education levels:** The paper addresses the problem of OOSC only for the primary school level. However, we need to think larger now for addressing this problem because of the intrinsic linkage and dependence between primary education and pre-primary and lower secondary education.
- **The complexity of barriers:** Our preliminary work within the framework of OOSCI also indicates that this is not a straightforward issue and is not well captured by MICS or other large surveys. We know we need to factor issues of “perception”, local contexts, hidden reasons, etc. Here too, more localized and participatory approaches and methodologies need to supplement national scale data and surveys.
- **The use of data:** We also think that capacities need to be built for the use of collected data to inform planning at the local level. Most of the time, data is collected to send to the

next level for aggregation as opposed, to its use as a resource for local level planning and work.

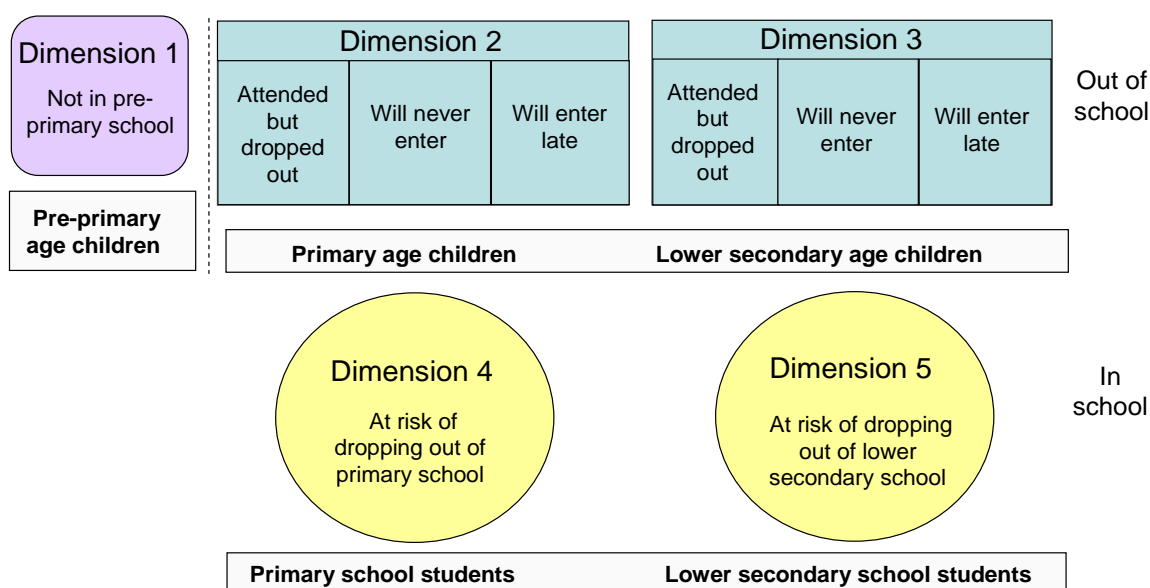
- One major concern in the paper is that it proposes **three standalone sets of activities**: (i) profiling OOSC with causes of exclusion, (ii) analysis of plans, policies and good practices that address the problem of OOSC, and (iii) analysis of best practices that address barriers (this last activity is unclear and overlaps with the first two). However, the main objective of such a GRA is to achieve results on the problem of OOSC, that is, to ensure that OOSC access school and remain there. This cannot happen through dispersed activities. The three identified gaps in the paper are linked and they therefore require converged action.
- The paper mentions the UNICEF/UIS global **Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI)**. However, it reduces the objectives of this Initiative to a “data” effort on the numbers of OOSC. This is not accurate. In fact, the OOSCI aims at addressing all three gaps that the paper is highlighting and treats them in a systematic and interlinked manner. The second section of these comments describes the work of OOSCI and the third proposes the need for partners to collaborate, within the FTI framework, to strengthen the work already undertaken within this OOSC Initiative.

(ii) THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN INITIATIVE (OOSCI)

- **Objectives:** In early 2010 UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) launched a Global Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI); it has expanded mid-2010 to include other education partners, specifically Understanding Children’s Work (UCW), working on the child labor components, and the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) to facilitate integration in education sector reforms. The Initiative aims at working with countries to
 - improve statistical information and analysis on OOSC,
 - scrutinize factors of exclusion from schooling,
 - develop effective policies related to enhanced participation, and
 - guide and mobilize concrete education sector reforms in this regard.It is hoped that through this work a renewed impetus for urgent action on the problem of OOSC will be achieved at country, regional and global levels. See attached flyer.
- **Participating countries:**
 - 25 countries from 7 regions are presently engaged: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Sri Lanka, North and South Sudan, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkey, and Zambia.
 - 10 of these countries are FTI countries and around 5 are in the FTI pipeline. Several have already integrated the work of OOSCI with FTI country level processes.
 - The work will be rolled out to more countries in 2012.
- **Deliverables** include
 - national studies on profiles of OOSC, and barriers/bottlenecks and policies/strategies related to these profiles;

- 7 regional studies building on the country studies and providing regional overviews;
 - a global study building on the country and regional work; and
 - a Guidance document for roll out in other countries.
 - Final versions of the studies will be finalized and launched end of 2011/beginning 2012. The launches aim at influencing education sector reforms and mobilizing action and resources. The Guidance will be published in September/October 2011.
- **The OOSCI framework of analysis and action:** The OOSCI proposes an innovative Framework for analyzing and acting on the problem of OOSC through a “package” of systematic and interlinked interventions that respond to the data, analysis, and policy gaps. This is an “initiative”, NOT a research program, in the sense that it aims at linking research to action and reforms, at bringing dispersed efforts together, at ensuring country-led participatory approaches, at encouraging learning and sharing resources between countries, and at mobilizing resources for equity in access to education.
 - **The analytical framework:** A Conceptual and Methodological Framework (CMF) has been developed with the participating countries to guide the studies at the country level and it will be further refined into a “Guidance” for addressing the problem of OOSC based on the experience of countries with the CMF. The CMF supports a more systematic linkage between three main components: (i) **PROFILES** of excluded children capturing the complexity of the problem of OOSC in terms of numbers, categories and multiple disparities; (ii) **BARRIERS AND BOTTLENECKS** to clarify the dynamic and causal processes related to the diverse OOSC profiles; and (iii) **POLICIES AND STRATEGIES** to address the barriers and bottlenecks within education and beyond (looking at social protection systems).
 - **Profiles of OOSC:** The CMF introduces a new model for developing sophisticated profiles of OOSC through “Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE)” that capture OOSC from pre-primary to lower secondary school age and across a wide range and multiple layers of disparities, including location, income, gender, child labor, social groups, etc. (see figure). These Five Dimensions also capture the diverse experiences of OOSC in terms of their exposure to education (three categories: drop-outs, late entrants, no chances for enrolment) as well as children in school “at risk” of dropping out (including the risk of over-age). This is done through two approaches: one through the study of children who already dropped out and the second through the definition of risk factors for dropouts and the examination of children in school who are subject to these risks. An effort is also made to capture and appreciate OOSC who are participating in diverse forms of non-formal education (that are not “recognized” and “counted” officially). A detailed methodology for data collection and analysis is introduced through data tabulation plans (that include education as well as child labor data). The methodology addresses the enrolment/attendance gap as proposed by UIS as well as the issue of standardization of indicators through the development and analysis of an inventory of national sources. Finally, more localized surveys and qualitative approaches are used to complement the statistical profiles. For example, with the support of the FTI Secretariat, Cambodia has introduced a two-phased methodology to track OOSC with disabilities. The methodology involves screening and clinical assessments and is administered at the household level using a sample of 20.000 children and a school mapping infrastructure.

Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE)



- **Barriers and bottlenecks:** A second step in the work of countries is the analysis of barriers and bottlenecks that are linked to the specific OOSC profiles that have been identified at the country level. A set of questions have been identified to guide the work; they are linked to sociocultural and economic demand side barriers, supply side barriers, as well as barriers and bottlenecks related to political, governance, capacity and financial issues. The proposed methodology is based on the use of existing evidence as well as small scale, locally based quantitative and qualitative research and participatory approaches.
- **Policies and strategies:** A similar approach is undertaken for the identification of policies and strategies that address the barriers and bottlenecks. Preliminary analytical work is undertaken aiming at identifying the programs that are targeting the specific identified profiles of OOSC, followed by a detailed policy analysis on how effective these programs are in addressing the identified barriers and bottlenecks. One innovative aspect of the approach is the mapping and analysis of social protection programs undertaken beyond the education sector and that have an impact on education outcomes. The methodology also introduces a set of guiding questions to support the assessment of the effectiveness of coordinated and cross-sectoral approaches and to explore the conditions under which education as well as social protection “systems” can best operate to address the problem of OOSC.
- **The action framework:** The work of OOSCI is not limited to research and analysis. The analytical framework described above is embedded in efforts of capacity development related to the collection and management of education statistics and to policy analysis and strategy development. Country teams, led by government partners, have been constituted to undertake the work and are constituted of diverse stakeholders (agencies and organizations working in education), including research institutions and experts. Wherever relevant, the work has been integrated in the tasks of local education groups and education sector planning and review processes (for FTI countries) and has been building on or integrating related efforts. This will be more systematized following

the launches of the studies beginning of 2012. A global communication strategy has been finalized to support the countries in advocacy, sharing of good practices (electronic portal) and in the mobilization of resources.

(iii) WAY FORWARD

Within the framework of the FTI GRA and the proposed program on out-of-school children, we suggest to build on the efforts of OOSCI, strengthen the ongoing work in the 25 countries and support the roll-out to more.

- The FTI can support more systematic use of the Guidance document produced by OOSCI for education sector planning, reform and review processes and for the mobilization of resources for the programs that countries develop in this regard.
- Within the GRA, the following can be done to improve the methodologies at the country level: refine and standardize approaches to reach out to OOSC with disabilities; strengthen approaches to identify children at risk of dropping out; strengthen approaches to identify children not in pre-primary education and children in non-formal education; develop simulation models to identify cost-effective strategies based on OOSC profiles.