

EFA FTI GRA thematic paper on out-of-school children First consultation

Comments by UNESCO (Education Sector, UIS and IIEP)

1. Introduction

The present document is a response by UNESCO to the thematic paper on out-of-school children for the first round of consultations.

2. Review of thematic paper on out-of-school children

The first part of the document assesses the thematic paper from the perspective of UIS and describes activities of UIS linked to out-of-school children. The thematic paper on out-of-school children examines three related areas: data, policy and management. The comments that follow focus on data, the area of expertise of UIS.

Definition of participation

The thematic paper points out data gaps on out-of-school children and claims that these are partly due to “faulty data collection” (p. 3). The paper also states that “the issue of which children can be counted as out of school is heavily debated” but only mentions a UIS publication from 2005 as reference (UIS 2005) (p. 4). No reference is provided for the claim that “there has been insufficient consensus on whether dropouts can be considered out of school” (p. 4).

In fact, UIS has been engaged in the standardization of indicators of (non-) participation in education for the ten years. For example, since 2002, the UIS has convened an annual meeting of an interagency group which includes all agencies involved in data collection (e.g., UNICEF, World Bank, Macro International, etc.). This group has met annually to harmonise the questions used to collect education data from household surveys. This group also compiled and published a *Guide to the Analysis and Use of Household Survey and Census Education Data* (UIS 2004). UIS also contributes to harmonizing approaches to data collection through its membership in the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) and its contributions to the Paris21 funded questionnaire information bank, which collects examples of best practices in questionnaire design, and is hosted by the IHSN.

Moreover, there is a clear consensus on dropouts - UIS has always counted dropouts as out of school and the same is true for international survey programs like the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

In addition, international indicators are continuously refined and expanded. As an example, UIS recently began to publish estimates of the number of out-of-school children of lower secondary age (UIS 2010a).

At the national level, indicators of school participation are less standardized, for example due to differences in the treatment of data on frequency of attendance during a

school year. As a result, national estimates of the out-of-school population often vary with the data source. To address this issue, UIS and UNICEF launched in 2009 a joint *Global Initiative on Out-of-school Children* – which is mentioned in the thematic paper – with 25 participating countries, including nine FTI countries: Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mozambique, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, and Zambia (UNICEF and UIS 2011). One component of this initiative is an inventory of national sources of data on children out of school to document differences in measurement as a first step towards further standardization.

Data sources

The thematic paper describes the two main sources of data for the calculation of out of school rates, administrative data and household surveys, including their advantages and disadvantages (p. 4-5). With administrative data, out of school rates are calculated from a combination of enrolment records and population estimates, but both are subject to error. In enrolment records there may be over- or undercounts and the ages of pupils are not always reported correctly. One possible source of error is that administrative records typically do not cover schools outside of the formal education system and may therefore underestimate participation in education (p. 4). One important issue mentioned only in passing is that administrative records of enrolment contain no information on children out of school, in contrast to household surveys, which collect information on all children, both in or out of school.

Measurement of dropout

While the relatively brief description of administrative data is broadly accurate, the same cannot be said of the description of household survey data. The thematic paper highlights one alleged problem, the fact that “dropouts during the school year are not always properly captured” (p. 4). At present, dropouts are typically identified by comparing data on attendance in the current and previous school year. A child who was in school in the previous year but not in the current year is counted as a dropout. This approach can miss children who left school during the current school year.

Although not explicitly mentioned in the thematic paper, FTI staff have proposed to introduce new questionnaire modules which add questions on dropout during the current school year to household surveys to address the possible undercount of out-of-school children. UIS believes that such a question would not solve the problem that it tries to address because it would miss dropouts between the time of the survey and the end of the school year. To capture all children who dropped out during the year, the survey would have to be implemented at the end of a school year. However, it is not possible to time surveys so that they coincide exactly with the end of the school year because survey data are always collected over a period of several months and because the timing is affected by other factors, for example the climate or availability of human and financial resources.

Age data

More importantly, UIS considers the issue of dropouts less relevant than other potential problems, for example the reporting of ages, which is also mentioned in the thematic

paper (p. 4). Surveys collect the age of children at the time of the survey and data collection can take place at various times of the school year, but this does not imply that “the age of each child at the beginning of the school year is not known” (p. 4). Some surveys collect the date of birth of each child and where this is not available, the ages can be adjusted to the beginning of the school year, depending on when a survey took place. International survey programs like MICS routinely make such adjustment to arrive at more precise estimates of attendance rates and out of school rates (UNICEF 2006).

Adjustments of household members’ ages depending on the timing of the survey are only effective if the reported ages are indeed correct. In reality, the age distribution in household survey data from developing countries is often characterized by significant age heaping. The underlying problems, for example lack of birth registration systems, cannot be solved through modification of household survey questionnaires but must be addressed separately. Errors in age data exist in data from administrative records and household surveys and are one of the most important sources of errors in estimated attendance and enrolment rates.

Reasons for non-attendance

The thematic paper suggests that more surveys should collect information on the reasons why children do not attend school, so that such information can guide policy interventions (p. 5). There are numerous examples of surveys that collected such data, including several DHS EdData surveys (Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ORC Macro 2002; National Statistical Office [Malawi] and ORC Macro 2003; Central Statistical Office [Zambia] and ORC Macro 2003; National Population Commission [Nigeria] and ORC Macro 2004). However, the utility of the collected data is not clear. The number of possible answers in surveys is usually limited and the most frequent responses tend to be similar, for example “school too far” or “lack of interest”. The last response is particularly non-informative and appears to be a common catch-all answer that hides possible other reasons for non-attendance.

Instead, UIS recommends using data on the characteristics of children and their households to build detailed profiles of out-of-school children, as described in the framework for the Global Initiative by UNICEF and UIS. Such profiles, mentioned on pages 6 and 7 of the thematic paper, can be used to identify children that are excluded from education in order to draft appropriate policy responses.

3. Planned activities by UIS

As part of its regular activities, UIS continues its efforts towards better measurement of participation in education, through improve data collection, use of more precise indicators, and in-depth data analysis. In particular, UIS plans to extend the work on out-of-school children from the 25 countries that participate in the Global Initiative to additional countries, with the help of UIS staff at headquarters in Montreal and in the field. Among the possible activities UIS plans to undertake:

- Carry out an inventory of national data on children in and out of school.
- Compare estimates of school participation in primary and lower secondary education from administrative and survey data.

- Review inconsistencies between national enrolment statistics and population estimates by the UN Population Division (UNPD 2009).
- Study the effect of timing of household survey data collection on estimates of children out of school.
- Explore different methods for the adjustment of ages of household members during the calculation of attendance or enrolment rates.
- Study national trends in school participation and detect and explain outliers.
- Compare household survey questionnaires, assess the effect of wording on the collected data and propose standardized questions on education, in collaboration with the International Household Survey Network (IHSN).
- Produce new estimates of the percentage and number of out-of-school children, drawing on data from different sources.
- Generate detailed statistics on out-of-school children, disaggregated by age, sex, area of residence, household wealth, and other characteristics.
- Generate statistics on exposure to education by out-of-school children (left school, will attend, will never attend).
- Explore alternative indicators for the monitoring of the MDG and EFA goal of universal primary education, for example the primary completion rate.
- Study related indicators, for example intake and transition.
- Link data on enrolment or attendance to data on learning outcomes, with the help of the *Assessment of Learning Outcomes* project at UIS.

UIS can build on previous work for its planned activities. The report *Children out of school: measuring exclusion from primary education* introduced a typology of out-of-school children and proposed the adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER) or adjusted net attendance rate (ANAR) as a standard measure of school participation of children of primary school age (UIS 2005). The methodology was subsequently applied to children of lower secondary age (UIS 2010a) and further refined as part of a Global Initiative of UIS and UNICEF (UNICEF and UIS 2011). Countries that UIS considers to study further include:

- FTI countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Benin, Bhutan, *Burkina Faso*, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Djibouti, *Ethiopia*, Gambia, Georgia, *Ghana*, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, *Kenya*, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, *Niger*, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, *Senegal*, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Viet Nam, *Yemen*, Zambia (countries in italics are among the 20 countries with the largest number of primary-age children out of school in 2009).
- Countries with the largest primary-age out-of-school populations in 2009: Nigeria, Pakistan, India, Ethiopia, United States, Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Kenya, Yemen (>1 million out of school each; worldwide 67 million in 2009).
- Countries with the largest secondary-age out-of-school populations in 2009: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Indonesia, Myanmar, Niger (>1 million out of school each; worldwide 72 million in 2009).

UIS plans to study data from administrative records and household surveys. For administrative data, UIS can rely on its annual collection of data on education statistics. For household surveys, UIS will examine data from DHS, MICS, Living Standards Measurement Studies (LSMS), and other survey programs.

The planned output of the activities is a summary report of the findings, a list of recommended indicators for the measurement of school participation, and a database with disaggregated data on children out of school. The findings can be used by policy makers to develop interventions aimed at increased enrolment and attendance.

4. Summary and recommendations

The thematic paper by the EFA FTI Secretariat proposes four responses to the data gap on out-of-school children: (a) a standard definition of enrolment or attendance, (b) improved measurement with administrative records and household surveys, (c) harmonization and analysis of data from all possible sources, and (d) “linking data for policy ... with data utilization for localized management action on enrollment and attendance” (p. 6).

The meaning of the last item is not clear but the first three items are already addressed through well-organised efforts by UIS and other organizations. Instead of launching new activities, which the FTI would be better advised to support existing initiatives. Problems of measurement can be addressed through joint work with UIS, the main international agency for standard setting in the field of education statistics, or through commissioned research by the Interagency Group on education data from household surveys. Questionnaire design can be discussed in the same group and in the IHSN. The FTI can also work with UIS and others to develop detailed profiles of out-of-school children to guide education policy aimed at universal primary education. Lastly, linking data with policy is a key goal of the UNICEF-UIS Global Initiative on Out-of-school Children.

Joining forces with other organizations and focusing on the most important problems in the area of out-of-school children is more likely to yield results and would allow the FTI to make more efficient use of its resources.

References

- Central Statistical Office [Zambia], and ORC Macro. 2003. *Zambia DHS EdData survey 2002: Education data for decision-making*. Calverton: Central Statistical Office and ORC Macro.
- National Population Commission [Nigeria], and ORC Macro. 2004. *Nigeria DHS EdData survey 2004: Education data for decision-making*. Calverton: National Population Commission and ORC Macro.
- National Statistical Office [Malawi], and ORC Macro. 2003. *Malawi DHS EdData survey 2002: Education data for decision-making*. Calverton: National Statistical Office and ORC Macro.

- Uganda Bureau of Statistics, and ORC Macro. 2002. *Uganda DHS EdData survey 2001: Education data for decision-making*. Calverton: Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ORC Macro.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). 2004. *Guide to the analysis and use of household survey and census education data*. Montreal: UIS.
- . 2005. *Children out of school: Measuring exclusion from primary education*. Montreal: UIS.
- . 2010a. *Out-of-school adolescents*. Montreal: UIS.
- . 2010b. *Measuring educational participation: Analysis of data quality and methodology based on ten studies*. Montreal: UIS.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2006. *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey manual 2005: Monitoring the situation of women and children*. New York: UNICEF.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). 2011. *Global initiative on out-of-school children: Conceptual and methodological framework (CMF)*. New York and Montreal: UNICEF and UIS, March 16.
- United Nations Population Division (UNPD). 2009. *World population prospects: The 2008 revision*. New York: UNPD.

Thematic Area: Out of School Children

Comments on Policy and Management or Implementation Gaps

By the Division for Basic to Higher Education and Learning (ED/BHL)

Education Sector, UNESCO

S.Rahman@unesco.org

I. General comments :

The objective of this global initiative is to lift barriers for out-of-school children to ensure that every child has an opportunity to enrol and succeed in school. However before planning future actions, particularly targeted interventions towards out-of school children, it is important to take stock of the existing knowledge, experience, achievements and the constraints. It is therefore opportune to take into account the following lessons learned:

1. Despite marked advances in primary school enrolment in the past decade and significant reduction in out-of-school numbers, over 67 million primary school age children were not in school in 2008¹. More than one third of these children lived in low income countries and girls made up of 53% of the out-of-school population. Moreover, as the drive towards universal primary education (UPE) continues, successful progress to date has resulted in greater pressure on secondary education systems. An additional 74 million children of lower secondary school age were out of school in 2008². The problems related to education of this group of out-of-children have so far been overlooked.³The need to better monitor exclusion from lower secondary education becomes increasingly important. Adequate data and information on out-of-school children of higher secondary school age are not available. The need to examine the exclusion of children across different levels of education is necessary to find appropriate solutions for their inclusion in educations systems.
2. Despite international and national efforts to achieve UPE, the success in expanding access has not been met by comparable progress in addressing inequalities in education and improving quality and relevance. Also, international and national assessments revealed marked disparities in learning achievements (GMR -p.9) with exceptionally low levels of learning achievements in many developing countries⁴. As a result, high proportions of children complete primary education without having acquired basic literacy. Efforts undertaken to accelerate

¹ Global Monitoring Report, 2011. Education for all. The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education, UNESCO, Paris. p-5

² UNICEF- UIS, 2011, All children in school by 2015. Global initiative on out-of-school children. p-1

³ Global Monitoring Report, 2010. Education for all. The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education, UNESCO, Paris. p-6

⁴ Global Monitoring Report, 2011. Education for all. The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education, UNESCO, Paris. p-9

the process of getting children into schools have often failed due to insufficient attention paid to measures to ensure retention and completion.

3. The out-of school children, as defined by UIS include “all primary school age children not enrolled in either primary or secondary school”. They represent heterogeneous groups consisting of those who were previously enrolled in primary school but dropped out; those who have not yet enrolled but are likely to do so later; and those who will probably never enroll. The UIS/ UNICEF report on out-of-school children⁵ further highlighted the following common background characteristics of children out of school by examining data from household surveys involving 80 countries:
 - Mother’s education: a mother’s lack of education increases the probability of a child being out of school.
 - Gender: more girls are out of school than boys
 - Place of residence - more children are out of school in rural than urban areas
 - Household wealth - children from the poorest households are more likely to be out of school than children from the wealthiest.

In addition, as stated in the EFA/FTI paper, disability, poor health and nutrition, child labour, being part of linguistic and ethnic minorities, cultural factors and living in fragile or conflict areas are also barriers which prevent them from enrolling or participating in school. Moreover, the out-of-school children represent diverse conditions and the differing needs of each group cannot be addressed through a single strategy. The majority of out-of-school children are those who enrolled but have subsequently dropped out before completion for various reasons⁶. However, the policies and interventions required to reintegrate drop-outs need to be differentiated from the actions to be taken to reach out to those who have no access to schooling. Understanding the complex and multifaceted factors which vary from country to country and prevent children in enrolling to school is a prerequisite for the design of targeted interventions for equality of access and quality education for all.

4. Research on access, equity and transition in education argues that instead of access being narrowly interpreted as enrolment, it should be broadly defined to include high attendance rates, progression, indicators of learning outcomes confirming that basic skills are being mastered and opportunities to enter and complete lower secondary schooling⁷.
5. Non-government organisations played an important role in extending alternative learning opportunities to hard to reach populations, including out-of-school children and there is evidence non-formal pathways can achieve results even in most trying environment.⁸ Synergies between formal and non formal programmes

⁵ UNESCO-UIS, 2005. Children out of school: Measuring exclusion from primary education. UIS Canada

⁶ Lewin, M. Keith, 2007. Improving Access, Equity and Transition in Education: Creating a Research Agenda. Create Pathways to Access, Research Monograph No.1. CREATE, University of Sussex. United Kingdom p- 6

⁷ Ibid, pp 33-36

⁸ Global Monitoring Report, 2010. Education for all. The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education, UNESCO, Paris. p-12

with quality control mechanisms and formal recognition of competencies acquired can ensure continued learning for children outside the formal sector.

5. Finally, universalising access to primary schooling can not be achieved in isolation. Equal access to quality education requires action at household, community, school, national, and international levels. The issue of out-of-school children needs to be examined within an inclusive education framework which is relevant, equitable and effective and which addresses the diverse needs of all children. Given that pre-school access is an important consideration in addressing primary entry, transition to secondary level opens opportunities for learning at higher levels and literate parents facilitates the education of their children, programme and policies on out-of-school requires intervention and investment at other levels and settings of education. It requires a holistic approach, working across all levels of education and in all settings formal, non formal and informal, with inclusive education policies and practices.

II. Comments on Policy and Management or Implementation Gaps.

Policy Gaps

Policies with regard to out-of-school children lack a holistic perspective. They are generally taken into consideration under the broader theme of UPE. The out-of-school children who do not fall in the primary age group continues to be neglected. Moreover, while policies from country to country vary to respond to country specific contexts, most national education plans to date focused on increasing enrolment and did not consider the drop out problem. Clear policies are lacking not only on the thematic issue but also on delivering mechanism (related to management gaps) with roles identified at various levels for effective use of limited time, budget and human resources. As enrolment increased countries faced the challenges of equitable and inclusive access to quality education. Lack of adequate measures with regard to retention, progress, completion and transition made it difficult to redress the problems of dropout. Also, questions are increasingly being raised on issues such as the number of trained teachers, school performance and child-friendly and gender-sensitive learning environment, relevant curriculum as well as learning which is taking place outside formal schools are.

In assessing what the factors are that keep children out of school, there are some factors relating to the circumstances of the child (pull factors) and others that relate to the nature of the school (push factors). Identifying both sets of factors is crucial because together they help to explain the full range of 'out-of-school' children, including those that may be in school but not learning anything or very little, which, as the document says, leads to a very ambivalent assessment of who is really in school and who is not

In the FTI document, attention is concentrated largely, but not entirely on the circumstances of the children – poverty, distance from school, lack of funds for uniforms, books, etc, situations of conflict/instability – and therefore on supply-side solutions. The document mentions also the quality of education in terms of relevance, language and so on, but there is more to look at here. For example, the presence/absence of teachers is a critical factor in whether parents and children consider it valuable to attend school; the

physical school environment (latrines for boys and girls, play areas, clean compound, etc), the way the school is managed, the overall morale of the school and its personnel, etc. The school as a community institution in which parents and the community as a whole has confidence is a critical dimension.

Policy gaps to date needs to be reviewed within a comprehensive and long-term perspective of inclusion in education, respecting diversity and differences while ensuring quality and continuity. NGOs play have been playing an important role in extending access to learning to the most vulnerable and hard to reach children. It is crucial to take into account the alternative provision through non formal pathways which succeed in creating community-based flexible learning spaces with relevant programmes for children who remain out side formal schools. Consultation with NGOs and other civil society organisations are necessary to integrate NFE into national education strategy and plans, in view of providing professional support in curriculum development, training of teachers, monitoring and evaluation creating effective routes from non formal to formal schools and thereby ensure continued learning opportunities, particularly for marginalised children.

Finally, given the fact that factors external to education sector affect inclusion and quality cooperation with other sector and cross-sectoral planning is important.

Management gaps

Despite numerous existing policies, many countries struggle with the management and implementation of programmes due to the lack of a common vision of inclusion as well as the lack of understanding of the complex situation as well as diversity and differences of needs of the out-of school children. There are few capacity development opportunities for staff at different levels who are involved in planning and programme design and those involved in programme delivery at the school level such as teachers, directors, head teachers. Also, adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess inclusion and quality are not available, particularly at local levels, for example, to identify children at risk of dropping out or to identify conditions which influence non participation and non attendance.

One area that must be examined in looking at the reasons why children are not in school is school management and leadership. This does not figure prominently enough in the FTI proposal. The role of the principal/head teacher is critical to the good functioning of the school – in terms of teacher motivation and performance, of pedagogical approach, of governance and relations with committees, of relations with the parents and the wider community, and of the values (respect, fairness, belief in potential, etc) that the staff of the school communicates. Inputs and environment may be ample and conducive to effective learning, but they will not produce the best results unless good management and leadership are in place. Obviously, training of school leadership and supportive monitoring must be integral to addressing the out-of-school problem.

While decentralisation is widely promoted as an appropriate mechanism to enhance progress towards UPE, preparatory work is required to have clarity about what is to be

decentralised. School governance is very different from curriculum development or text book production, or selection examinations. Decentralised school financing requires local capacity to manage funds. It may also fail to improve services where bottlenecks exist in disbursement, checks and balances are ineffective and administrative capacity weak. Local authorities may or may not share national priorities and the micro politics of local power structures may be exclusive rather than inclusive.

The document proposes to address the data gap by developing more nuanced instruments to be administered from national level. There is a problem with this – the reasons why children are not in school relate to their local circumstances and so there will be variation by context, and even from one family to the next. A statistical analysis requires that categories be established, and, at national level, these will inevitably mask the variation in reasons why children are not in school at all or are not attending consistently.

From the start, it would be more advantageous to set the data gathering process in the context of the local community and to work to engage them in the process of identifying the children not in school and why. After all, they know who is not in school and probably have a good idea why! Embedding the process in the community would give an emphasis on the qualitative dimension – which is where the reasons will be found. Thus the whole data gathering exercise should start with the school and its management/governance committees – taking the responsibility to discover who is not in school and why, and, as a spin-off, to compile the numbers for the provincial and national data needs. The approach should not be one of naming and shaming, of policing or of blame, but one which works to encourage parents to send their children to school, and – this is where any FTI measures come in – where the school and its committees can call upon resources as necessary where resource issues are a pertinent factor.

In addition to monitoring children's enrolment and attendance, the same bodies can monitor teachers' presence and performance, in a way that is supportive to them and the school. If the community is fully engaged in gathering data, they will also be involved quite naturally in seeking to remedy individual situations, as part of their concern for the community's children and their pride in the school as a community institution.

In a given country it will be useful to examine schools where enrolment and attendance are very high, if not 100%, to see why this is the case, both in terms of pupil profile and, crucially, in terms of the school and its quality. Good schools are known as such and may attract children from outside the natural catchment area, with parents/children preferring to choose a distant but good school rather than a poor one close by.

In summary, all these points argue for an approach to out-of-school children that is closer to the ground than that envisaged by the FTI document and one which mobilizes the community to take a keen, active and abiding interest in the education of their children. There are, of course, many other ways in which a community can be involved in their school, and those mentioned above relate only to the issues of enrolment and attendance – the out-of-school problem.

III. Proposed Activities

Strengthening non formal pathways for expanding basic education opportunities for out-of-school children.

Given the size of out-of-school children to date, it is imperative to strengthen and further develop alternative educational pathways with innovative out-reach programmes and flexible structures for accelerating the process of providing quality basic education to all children, particularly those who are hard to reach. Over the past decades, non-government organizations have played an important role in extending access to education to out-of-school children. However, if integrated within a holistic inclusive education system, provision through non formal pathways could be supported by national education plans with adequate policies for firm Government commitment to:

- clear policy framework to guide and regulate various players providing NF
- capacity development and training for NFE personnel, particularly educators/teachers
- quality curriculum, teaching/learning materials and physical facilities
- monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and capacity
- synergies between formal and non formal pathways of learning with appropriate accreditation mechanisms for ensuring continued learning opportunities and transition to higher levels.
- favourable societal attitudes towards NFE
- Better use of open educational resources (OERs) buttressed with distance and open learning facilities

This proposal involves redressing data, policy, planning, programming, delivery and management gaps in NFE. It therefore fits in well with the three activities proposed in FTI paper. However, the approaches in the proposed activities have to be adapted to the NFE context and accordingly the expected deliverables have to be modified.

UNESCO, with its experience and its multi-sectoral approach to NFE, is ready to take the lead in this activity.

IV. Conclusion and recommendation

UNESCO strongly recommends that future policies and programmes related to out-of-school be developed within an inclusive education framework which proposes “a shift from seeing the child as the problem to seeing the education system as the problem”⁹. This requires improving:

- Educational and social frameworks to respond to new demands in education structures and governance.
- Inputs, processes and environments to foster learning both at the level of the learner and at the system level to enhance the entire learning experience.

UNESCO is supporting its Member States to reorient their education systems to ensure inclusion, quality and relevance in education, cross the sector and in both formal and non formal setting, from early childhood care and education through to primary and secondary education as well as higher education and research. This involves structural transformation to introduce new values and educational practices and quality institutional functioning which are required for eliminating all forms of discrimination, respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the learners and communities.

In this regard, *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* developed by UNESCO provides a broadened concept of inclusive education, to enable countries in strengthening the focus on inclusion in their strategies and plans for education. It highlights the areas that need particular attention to promote inclusion and strengthen policy development.¹⁰

⁹ UNESCO, 2009. *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*, Paris, UNESCO; p - 6

¹⁰ Ibid p-7

References

Ahmed, M, Ahmed K.S, Khan, N.I, Ahmed R, 2007. Access to Education in Bangladesh. Country Analytic Review of Primary and Secondary Education. CREATE, University of Sussex. United Kingdom

Lewin, M. Keith, 2007. Improving Access, Equity and Transition in Education: Creating a Research Agenda. Create Pathways to Access, Research Monograph No.1. CREATE, University of Sussex. United Kingdom

UNESCO, 2009. Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, Paris, UNESCO

UNESCO, 2011. EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011. Education for All. The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education. Paris, UNESCO

UNESCO-UIS, 2005. Children out of school: Measuring exclusion from primary education. UIS Canada

EFA FTI Global and Regional Activities Program (GRA)

Thematic Area: Out of School Children

Comments by IIEP

Contact: a.de-grauwe@iiep.unesco.org

General

The three identified gaps are pertinent as well as the description in each of them. There are indeed problems with gathering data, designing and implementing policies in this topic.

There may be a need however to better define the concept of “out-of-school” children. This group could include three sub-groups: those who have never attended school; those who have dropped out; those who are enrolled but are regularly absent. The analysis of causes and responses may differ for each group.

Data gaps

With relation to gathering data, the design of a specific module to measure the out-of-school children that could be included in the household survey is a good strategy. And, for different purposes, it has been developed in the past in some Latin American countries. Nevertheless, the agreement of governments and financial resources are required. One might anticipate that there could be no problem with the first one, but could be much more pessimistic with the second one. This topic should be raised in the strategy and in the proposed activities.

Two ways of data collection are identified: EMIS and household surveys. A third data collection method could be mentioned: at local level, around schools, increasingly community groups undertake a survey of children who do not come to school and use this survey as an awareness-raising activity to convince parents to send their children to school. While such data are rarely aggregated at national level, the data collection method remains very useful at local level, in particular when local factors are causing non-enrolment or non-attendance. Among examples can be quoted the “LokJumbish” school mapping work and the “mothers’ groups” in many African countries.

It is useful to keep in mind that the purpose of EMIS is not to collect data on out-of-school children.

Policy gaps

With relation to policies: the analysis is proposed mainly on ESP, but different programs / projects on out-of-school children might be found even if they are not part of the ESP. So, the scope of the analysis could be broadened in order to include this.

It may be also better to analyze the causes for out-of-school children along a supply – demand framework. This has been done by several authors and remains a useful framework as it allows distinguishing between factors more under the control of the education authorities (supply) and those less or not under their control (demand).

Precisely because several reasons for being out-of-school are not purely educational (in particular issues of culture, poverty and conflict), there may be a need to move from an education sector perspective to a wider perspective integrating also many socio-economic factors.

Surprisingly, the school feeding policy, which is among the most successful ones to attract children into school and to keep them enrolled, receives no attention.

The first paragraph under Policy Gaps is somewhat simplifying. It is not correct to say that “Education Sector Plans, particularly in the past, have tended to identify school construction and teacher training as the key means for addressing the out-of-school problem”. Many plans have also included for instance community awareness-raising and school feeding.

Management – implementation gaps

It is somewhat of a simplification to believe that data gaps and policy gaps are the most important ones. In many countries, sufficient data are available and the necessary strategies are known and might be in the education plans. The constraint is related to a country’s political economy: the groups demanding more attention to out-of-school children have less of a voice and less control over budgets than those who represent children in school.

It is useful to realize that, for schools and their leaders, there are incentives to increase enrolment (as budgets and numbers of teachers are based on enrolment) and to worry less about attendance (as schools and classes with lower attendance are easier to manage and as in any case those who attend irregularly may not go far). Some discussion on how these incentives can change could be useful.

Furthermore the emphasis is put on limitations associated either with poverty factors or other inputs. Some attention should also be paid to policies that focus on systemic and pedagogical strategies, which should be understood as changes and innovations in "la formescolaire". This includes: organization of space and time, distribution of students, pupil-teacher ratio, promotion and progression in each educational level, etc. Even if a policy could solve every external and internal limitation, a pedagogical response should be addressed, linked to the enrolment and completion of children going into and out of the educational system, repeaters and overage pupils.