



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Sustainable
Development
Goals

Bangkok Office
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau
for Education

Flexible Learning Strategies

FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN & YOUTH



Background

Despite tremendous efforts to ensure access to quality education for out-of-school children (OOSC) since 2000, data and analyses indicate an increase in the number of OOSC in recent years. Between 2012 and 2014, the number of primary-aged OOSC increased by more than half a million globally. This data highlights the serious challenge of reaching the rest of OOSC across the globe. Millions of stateless and migrant children are undocumented, and thus are invisible in statistics.

Numerous barriers and constraints prevent children from attending school. Barriers often include, but are not limited to: gender and racial discrimination; cultural prejudice; geographical distance or obstacles; lack of accessibility; inadequate support for children with disabilities; school costs; lack of support for localized languages (including minority languages); and emergency situations caused by conflicts, natural disasters, statelessness, and migration. These challenges are often intertwined to make the situation of OOSC more complex and difficult to address.



Dimensions of OOSC

We recognize four distinct circumstances that classify a child who is “out-of-school.” One or more may apply, and can overlap during the course of a lifespan. The term is inclusive of: children who

- (1) do not have access to a school in their community;
- (2) have not yet enrolled, despite the availability of a school;
- (3) have enrolled, but do not attend school or are at risk of dropping out
- (4) drop out of the education system

What is Flexible Learning Strategies?

Flexible Learning Strategies (FLS) is an umbrella term for a variety of alternative educational programmes targeted at reaching the most marginalized OOSC. FLS represents a shift away from a fragmentary approach to provision of education for the educationally excluded towards more systematic and flexible interventions designed to match the needs and circumstances of OOSC.

The objective of FLS is to ensure that, regardless of mode, duration, and location or whether delivered in a formal or non-formal system, excluded children can acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills. Additionally, FLS will provide OOSC with the competencies and life skills required to live safe and dignified lives. FLS is to put inclusive education into practice.

Why Flexible Learning Strategies?

In Asia and the Pacific, many countries have large populations and low literacy rates and lack the resources required to expand the formal education system to include children who do not enroll in school, or drop out early due to various barriers. Traditional schooling therefore is not enough to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

For this reason, it is necessary to provide education not only through formal delivery systems, but also through flexible non-formal means.

Furthermore, economic loss of OOSC in Southeast Asia represents a major failure – an underinvestment in human capital that results in significant income gaps. Thus enrolling OOSC would generate returns that could surpass the annual aid to basic education for these countries.

What are the characteristics of Flexible Learning Strategies?



Equity & Inclusivity

Reaching the Unreached is the primary principle of FLS. They target and respond to the specific contexts and learning needs of children who are most marginalised: unable to access formal educational systems through traditional schooling delivery, out of school or at risk of dropping out, or those who are overage due to different barriers.

Equivalency

Equivalency aims to bridge formal and non-formal education, while helping learners who once failed to keep the right track find their way back into parallel mainstream education. This equivalency mechanism offers second chances for those who may otherwise fall through the cracks and be overlooked.

Flexibility

Flexibility is the foundation of FLS, which responds to the diverse contexts and needs of excluded children by bringing education to students rather than getting students to school. FLS are flexible in terms of time, age, pace, curriculum, geographical locations, and languages.

Flexibility is also applied to teaching methodologies such as mother-tongue instruction, multi-grade teaching, activity-based learning, and specific approaches for the physically disabled or special needs children. Examples of flexible places of study include home-based learning, community learning centers (CLCs), weekend and night schooling and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) such as mobile devices for distance learning. Other 'flexible' aspects may include flexible hours appropriate to the learner's living or work conditions and designed to maximize interaction between teachers and learners.

Intensive Quality Learning

FLS are usually conducted over a shorter period through intensive instruction in contrast to formal education programmes, as they are designed to help children who dropped out of school or have never enrolled to catch up with age-appropriate learning. Through intensive lessons with scaffolding, children can reach their full potential and acquire both literacy and numeracy skills, thus giving them the chance to reenter age-specific formal education.

Global Citizenship and Lifelong Learning

Emphasis on Global Citizenship and Lifelong Learning is what distinguishes FLS from traditional education programmes. Although some FLS may follow national curricula, a significant portion of the curriculum is allocated for practical and contextualized activities with global citizenship topics such as living together, sustainable development, and innovative thinking for problem solving. Through this, FLS learners are encouraged to become global citizens who can make changes in their societies.

Successful Cases

Various FLS initiatives have taken root throughout countries in Asia and the Pacific to provide flexible education and to facilitate integration of society. Interventions are either government or NGO led, but all provide opportunities for children to either return to formal education or receive learning leading to accreditation which is recognized as equivalent to formal education.

The table highlights examples of various strategies and programmes for OOSC, both in formal and non-formal education settings, which have been implemented in this region.

Even though various kinds of programmes are available, target groups often do not fully enjoy the potential benefits of these services due to the low quality of implementation. Additionally, monitoring of such programmes are still lacking.



Good cases by theme

Area	Programmes	Objectives
ICT	Non-formal education for OOSC (Myanmar)	To help OOSC learn basic computer skills and others so that they can acquire basic life skills and develop a sense of confidence for better employment in the future
Disabilities	Intergenerational Deaf Education Outreach Project (IDEO) (Viet Nam)	To provide online sign language learning videos, sign language vocabulary, games, and other materials on deaf education for deaf children and their families, educators and the public
Migrant	Mobile Literacy for OOSC Project (Thailand)	To enhance the basic literacy and numeracy skills of the thousands of migrants, ethnic minority and stateless children in Thai-Myanmar border areas through the use of ICT devices
Gender	Flexible and gender-sensitive equivalency programme (EP) (Lao PDR)	To gain equivalent qualifications to formal education and support their reintegration into the formal education system
Mother Tongue	Cambodian Consortium for Out-of-School Children (CCOSC) & Ethnic Minority Children project	To increase equitable access to education through improving the quality and cultural appropriateness of state schools in ethnic minority communities and expanding foundation and in-service teacher training, as well as build capacity of schools and community leaders and undertake advocacy and research
Access	'Second Chance' Education for Children in Bangladesh	To provide disadvantaged children in primary education an opportunity to complete grade 5 and transition to secondary education
Beyond Primary - Vocational Training	Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA) programme	To promote the development of life skills (including income-generating skills) among Afghans in order to combat poverty and encourage social empowerment
Policy	Home School Education Programme (Pakistan)	To assist the national efforts to improve literacy

Good cases by country

1. BRAC community school, Bangladesh

Period: Every week day, 4 years

Target Age: 8-10 years old

Curriculum: BRAC -Core subjects, social values, human rights, financial education

Accreditation: Students who finish primary schooling from BRAC transfer to formal secondary schools

2. MV Foundation – Residential Bridge School, India

Period: Every week day, 6–18 months

Target Age: Over 10 years old

Curriculum: MV Foundation – Academic and vocational subjects

Accreditation: Graduates are eligible to join formal schools in the State

3. Primary school, Myanmar

Period: 6 days a week, 2 years

Target Age: 10-14 years old

Curriculum: Myanmar, English, Mathematics, General Studies, training which focuses on income-generating activities and integrative workbook

Accreditation: Level 2 completion is recognized as the completion of primary education. Graduates are eligible to join the secondary level of formal education

4. Packet A – Community Learning Centres (CLCs), e-learning, mobile classrooms, Indonesia

Period: Once or twice a week, 2 years

Target Age: School age

Curriculum: Packet a, b and c (Morale-building and academically-oriented subjects, Life skills oriented subjects in addition to basic subjects)

Certification: Examination certificate issued by government

5. Home/CLC, Philippines

Period: Once or twice a week, 10 months or 800 hours

Target Age: 11 years old and above

Curriculum: Communication skills, Problem-solving and critical thinking, Sustainable use of resources/ productivity, Development of self and a sense of community, Expanding one's world vision

Certification: A national certification examination conducted once a year

Resources

Daily News Flash

Most resourceful website in Asia-Pacific which includes a wide variety of information on OOSC, data, and stats
Visit our website: www.flexlearnstrategies.net



Newsletters on innovative educational news all over the world
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Apps on Education News Database



Booklets



(Left) Innovative Financing for Out-of-School Children and Youth

(Center) Country Case Report

(Right) News Flash: 100 Innovative Education Cases, Researches & Findings



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A programme of **education above all**