



INCLUSION: Counting and Accounting for Out-Of-School Children

Occasional Paper #5

Educate A Child
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FOREWORD

This Occasional Paper series is intended to prompt thoughtful, reflective consideration of issues that impact education, particularly those for whom the opportunity is restricted. Educate A Child (EAC) was founded on the promise of an education for each child on the planet. Making good on that promise is hard fought and laden with a myriad of difficulties. But to put it in perspective, none of the difficulties a programme faces in trying to reach marginalised children is as profound as the situation these children find themselves through no fault of their own. When organisations commit to a mission, it is by definition aspirational. With EAC's aspiration to reach children at the primary level who are limited in their access and engagement in foundational learning, this mission is approached with zeal. All one has to do is meet a child who is denied their right to an education, witness the restrictive situation where they seek to have a meaningful life, and the passion and commitment to do something positive is activated.

EAC, in its short history, building on the vision set by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, has secured more than 10.4 million commitments and enrolled over 7.5 million children, providing educational opportunities in over 50 countries. Research combined with experience of partners in the field has led EAC to contemplative examination of issues faced when searching for solutions to complex, necessarily situational and even adversarial barriers. *Inclusion: Counting and Accounting for Out-of-School Children*, offers reflections on identifying, enrolling and tracking progress of marginalised children, examples of strategies used in the field, and modifications of existing protocols to improve the processes in accounting for the paths these children take.

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INTRODUCTION

How do we find children who are not in school? How do we count them? What do we do to ensure they have education opportunities? How do we know if they participate and progress in an education programme offered to them?

These questions are complicated when applied to a marginalised population of primary level out of school children (OOSC) who face challenges and barriers, often compounded and unique to the local context, culture, socio-economic conditions and other circumstances beyond their control. This Occasional Paper examines issues surrounding inclusion, including identification and tracking of OOSC, as they apply to the global Educate A Child programme of the Education Above All Foundation.

Context

Though considerable progress in reducing the number of children excluded from educational opportunities has been made since 2000¹, still UNESCO estimates 64 million primary school-aged children in the world are not participating in education programmes². The Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, articulated in commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³, places an emphasis on the importance of relevant and reliable data in education. It remains a challenge to determine who the OOSC are, where they are located, what barriers they face, what interventions will ensure their participation, and how to track their progress in an education programme.

Educate A Child Programme

Launched in November 2012, by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Educate A Child (EAC) is a global programme of the Education Above All Foundation (EAA). The programme aims to significantly reduce the number of children worldwide who are denied their right to education. EAC and its partners are committed to reaching children who are not in a primary level education programme, and ensure through appropriate interventions that children have an opportunity for a basic education. Inclusion, for EAC, is about identifying children who are often invisible to the system at large, marginalised due to situations beyond their control, and facing barriers that are difficult to overcome. Assuring these children are visible by including them in quality education programmes and offering a different life trajectory forms the focus for EAC to identify, count enrolment, and account for their progress through the system.

COUNTING OOSC

There are many challenges in obtaining accurate data on OOSC. For example, the measurement of enrolment linked to pupils who are registered might differ from the actual situation on the ground in three ways:

- Underreport enrolment by missing children who attend school without being registered;
- Underreport when the enrolment is counted at the beginning of the school year while some children register later in the school year; and

¹ UNESCO (2015) EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015. Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges. Paris: UNESCO.

² UNESCO (2017). Global Education Monitoring Report 2017-18. Accountability in Education: Meeting our Commitments. Paris: UNESCO

³ Resolution 70/1 of the United Nations General Assembly [1] (2015): "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- Overstate enrolment by counting registered children who actually never attend school.

EAC's approach sets clear definitions and guidance on counting OOSC in the following sections.

Dimensions of Exclusion

Guidance on determining who is excluded from education is outlined in the Out-Of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) led by UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). The five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE)⁴ are shown in the following box illustration.

UNICEF-UIS Five Dimensions of Exclusion

Out-of-school children

Dimension 1: Children one year younger than the official primary-school entrance age who are not in pre-primary or primary school.

Dimension 2: Children of primary-school age who are not in primary or secondary school.

Dimension 3: Children of lower-secondary-school age who are not in primary or secondary school.

Children at risk of dropping out

Dimension 4: Children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out.

Dimension 5: Children who are in lower-secondary school but at risk of dropping out.

Defining Out of school Children

EAC's programme focuses explicitly on Dimensions 2 and 3, highlighted in yellow, with additional clarification on the definitions and categories of out of school children in terms of their exposure to education. The definition of OOSC implies there is a group of children that should be in school but is not. This provides the basis for determining which children are excluded from education. The following definitions assist in guiding assessments of OOSC.

Primary Education⁵: Primary education provides learning and educational activities typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy), and to establish a sound foundation for learning core areas of knowledge and personal development, preparing for lower secondary education. It aims at learning at a basic level of complexity with little if any specialisation. EAC uses both primary and basic education to refer to the full cycle of grades 1-8, excluding pre-primary and lower secondary education, depending on specific country contexts.

Primary school age range⁶ for children refers to the official age for primary level education based on specific country education system requirements, e.g. if primary starting school age is six, that should be

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNICEF (2015). *Global Out-of-School Children Initiative Operational Manual*

⁵ Primary Education refers to the level of education that is classified by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1) or as recognised by the national system of classifying educational levels and corresponding age ranges.

⁶ Definition of a Child – A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. [Article 1 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989]

counted as the age-appropriate entrance to enrol in first grade. Children in some countries start primary education at age six, while others start at age five, seven or eight. Thus, a six-year-old child could be considered out of school in one country and too young to start school in another. This also applies for children beyond the ending age of primary education, which would be between nine and 13 years of age, depending on the educational system.

OOSC as defined by EAC

OOSC are children of the official primary school age-range or older, usually below the age of 18 years, who are not participating in primary or secondary level education programmes. Informed by over six years of monitoring projects in 50 countries, EAC has refined its definition and key terms related to OOSC. The EAC working definition of OOSC builds on the UNESCO Dimensions 2 and 3 of out of school children, expanded to include the following groups or types of OOSC:

- Children who **do not have access** to a school: These children will never attend unless they gain access.
- Children who have access to school but who are **not enrolled**: These children either never enter school or will **enter school late**.
- Children who have access and have enrolled in school but who do **not attend**.
- Children who have **dropped out** of the education system.
- Children who are in **emergency and/or crisis situations** and not participating in any organised education program. These children may be displaced and in temporary living conditions with no schools or organised educational opportunities available.

EAC further adopts the following definitions to the terms related to the definition of OOSC:

- **Access** refers to: (a) a school/learning site available for children to attend within 3 km or less; (b) reduced opportunity costs so children can go to school; and (c) lack of discrimination or other barriers.
- **Enrolled** refers to individuals officially registered in a given educational programme, or stage or module thereof, regardless of age.
- **Attendance refers to** being present to participate in activities of a learning program in school or learning site on regular basis with no more than 30 consecutive learning days of unexcused absence
- **Dropout refers** to students who leave a school/education programme definitively in a given academic year.
- **School/Learning Site** refers to a service point that provides instructional or education related services to a group of pupils.

Identification of OOSC

The children targeted by EAC partners are, by definition, among the most marginalised and hardest to reach. They are often “invisible” or semi-invisible to government systems and communities. EAC requires partner projects to establish clear OOSC identification and enrolment strategies, adapted to the context and systems in which the projects are implemented. The methods or approaches that partner projects use are to identify children as: (1) OOSC in line with EAC definitions, (2) eligible for project interventions, and (3) able to enrol in the programme. To determine the population of eligible OOSC in a given area, EAC partner projects use various methods that fall under the following two broad categories:

- a. **Mapping**, to identify children who should be in school but are not, usually takes place well before enrolment period or implementation of project interventions. Such exercises also collect background and demographic information on each child and their household. Some of the common mapping exercises include but are not limited to *household surveys, child-tracking surveys, door-to-door campaigns, baseline surveys*.
- b. **Screening** is another way to determine if any of the children, who are enrolled, were actually 'out of school' as per EAC definitions related to OOSC. Prior to such screening, some sort of mobilisation, sensitisation, communication or awareness activities take place to encourage parents to enrol their children. At the time of enrolment, besides completing a school registration or admission form, a screening profile is administered for each enrolled child using set criteria, such as a profile of the child, to identify OOSC.

Enrolment of OOSC

Enrolment refers to individuals officially registered in a given educational programme, or stage or module, regardless of age. UNESCO-UIS definitions used for international data collection emphasise that the unit of measurement is pupils enrolled, meaning that children registered more than once should be counted only once and that registration is linked to a pupil.

Examples from the field

EAC's goal is to provide out of school children (OOSC) with a quality primary education. The following five EAC project descriptions illustrate the variety of methodologies to identify children as OOSC who are eligible for project interventions and include strategies for enrolment.⁷

Aprendiz, Brazil

The main purpose of Aprendiz' "Aluno Presente" project was to ensure access to basic education for children and adolescents from the ages of 6 to 14, by identifying and reintegrating OOSC into the municipal public network. Aprendiz Brazil implemented the project from 2013 to 2016 with EAC support; they identified 23,753 OOSC and enrolled 22,131 of them. Their enrolment exceeded the 21,000 OOSC target.

Identifying OOSC

The project started with an initial diagnosis to map OOSC in the city of Rio de Janeiro. This enabled Aprendiz to classify the communities in terms of possible high populations of OOSC. Several methodologies were employed by the project to identify individual children:

- **Indication from local institutions:** Partners, including schools, healthcare units, CRAS (Social Assistance Reference Center), CREAS (Social Assistance Reference Specialised Center), Neighbourhood Associations, Child Protective Services, and civil society organisations provided Aprendiz with information on children that were out of school. Additionally, every two months, City Hall provided Aprendiz with lists of up-to-date information on children who were not attending or had dropped out of school;

⁷ See EAC website www.educateachild.org.qa Our Partners-Projects

- **Home visits:** Lists from the government agencies served as a guiding instrument for the active search for OOSC around the city. Based on the provided information, local coordinators undertook home visits to find the children. In the process of canvassing neighbourhoods to locate the children on the lists, the staff were also able to find additional children the government system was not tracking. Local coordinators visited 773 slums, in search of children out of school;
- **Community mobilisation:** The daily work of field liaisons in different areas of the city, promoting the project and providing information to people, community leaders, institutions, families and the general population, provided 'advertising' for the project. Due to this, Aluno Presente Project became a reference and received additional information regarding cases of children out of school.

Enrolment of OOSC

Once the children out of school were identified and located, enrolments of OOSC were conducted through:

- Follow-up actions and referral of children to the institutions responsible for ensuring school enrolment, and providing other services as necessary. Follow up actions included contact (visit and/or telephone) with family for digital enrolment, contact with school unit, and sending information of OOSC cases to partner institutions;
- Awareness and collaboration with professionals in the municipal education system for creating specific strategies for the enrolment of all children in schools.

Identification and enrolment of OOSC were supported by a database that enabled monitoring the status of each child identified and those OOSC that were enrolled in school.

British Council, Pakistan

The "ILMPOSSIBLE: Take a Child to School" (TACS) project conducted by British Council Pakistan targeted the enrolment of 185,000 OOSC in primary schools. This project was successfully completed April 2016 and enrolled 189,987 OOSC. Volunteers were responsible for conducting household surveys and enrolling identified OOSC.

Identification and enrolment of OOSC

Via conducting household surveys in the target communities, young adult volunteers identified children who were not attending school. These volunteers then helped the individual children to enrol in school if parents were in agreement to have their children attend. Each volunteer was expected to identify and enrol 10 OOSC.

Data System

Each volunteer had a profile created on the Ilm Information System (IIS) and he/she input unique identifying details of each child identified as out of school. Each implementing partner had a designated Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and District Coordinator who were responsible for facilitating volunteers in reporting identification and enrolment of OOSC online, and verifying the information

provided. The ‘means of verification’ designed to help cross check information provided by volunteers and partners on the IIS and were as follows:

1. Hard copies of Household Surveys were maintained and delivered to FAFEN (Free and Fair Election Network);
2. Three mandatory documents were signed and stamped by the head teacher/teacher of the school at the time of child’s enrolment. These documents provided key identifying information of the child and the volunteer that enrolled the child. These enrolment means of verification were:
 - a. Enrolment certificate
 - b. List of enrolled children in the school by the project
 - c. School records;
3. Field visits and physical verification of those enrolled in schools was carried out by FAFEN (British Council’s implementing partner hired specifically for data verification). FAFEN conducted extensive field monitoring of the implementing partner activities to ensure that each reported enrolment could be tracked and linked to project volunteers and the Community-based Committee’s advocacy and efforts. It was through FAFEN and British Council’s field visit that data authenticity was confirmed. For each enrolled child reported on the IIS, FAFEN’s Monitoring Coordinators conducted field visits to verify:
 - a. Child’s details (e.g. Enrolment dates, date of birth, Father/Guardian’s name and enrolment number of student)
 - b. Whether the child was enrolled by British Council Volunteers or his/her parents or teacher
 - c. Child’s attendance record, and promotion/retention status;
4. Additionally, the British Council’s project team members also conducted spot visits during trainings, and in schools to verify information provided on the IIS and as reported by FAFEN.

Reporting Verified Information

Field visits sometimes highlighted cases where “incorrect information” had been entered in the IIS of children who were enrolled in schools under TACS. The incorrect information included cases such as students’ names were misspelt, a wrong date of birth was recorded or the father’s CNIC was incorrect. These findings were then immediately shared with the implementing partners and they were given a deadline to upload correct information against each entry tagged as “incorrect information” on the portal. After implementing partners rectified the information, FAFEN monitored data authenticity of these very entries again through field visits.

Additionally, in cases where a child was enrolled as per the IIS, but verification through school records and field visits indicated the child was not attending, the child was tagged as “not enrolled”. All “not enrolled” children were deleted from the system. As a follow up, relevant partners investigated with the volunteer(s) responsible, to establish the reason for non-enrolment including fake entries, and to work on correction strategies with individuals that were not reporting accurate enrolments on the IIS.

By the end of this particular project, there was a significant drop in the number of “not enrolled” and “incorrect data entries” due to a strong follow up by FAFEN and British Council staff. Additionally, over

time, partners developed a higher level of comfort with the IIS and data collection forms leading to greater accuracy in data collection and reporting.

Educate Girls, India

Educate Girls (EG) is an NGO in India that has partnered with EAC on three projects (currently active) to support the enrolment of 460,500 OOSC—mainly marginalised girls in poor rural areas in Rajasthan⁸ and Madhya Pradesh⁹ states in the Northern region of India. For girls, the problem of education in India involves poverty, early marriage, hygiene issues, and poor safety. Girls often must stay home to care for younger children or spend hours a day on household chores. Low quality of education and shortage of teachers creates a disincentive for parents in rural areas to send their daughters to school. EAC partners with Educate Girls (EG) to enrol girls in seven Districts of Rajasthan and one District in Madhya Pradesh state. To achieve their objectives, the following methods are used to identify and enrol OOSC. So far, Educate Girls has enrolled 184,644 OOSC.

Identification of OOSC

In India there is a periodic Child Tracking Survey (CTS) provided by state governments with different indicators including information on out of school children. However, Educate Girls found that the data on which CTS is based, is often outdated and inaccurate for various variables like age, gender, count, and duplication of records. Thus it was difficult to get the correct data on the OOSC by age and gender and more so in the hard to reach hamlets. To overcome this, EG undertakes its own data collection. The first step in each new district is to conduct a comprehensive door-to-door survey to identify the out of school girls (and boys), who are often not documented/invisible to the government statistics. To conduct these door-to-door surveys, EG recruits the *Team Balika*, a group of educated youth volunteers (mainly female) from the local community who are trained on data collection methods and identification of OOSC. EG is able to accurately capture the demographics in a given village and identify those children who are of school going age but not enrolled in school.

Beyond collecting better data, though, the door-to-door survey is Educate Girls' first opportunity to engage the community. The door-to-door survey serves as a diagnostic tool to create a baseline understanding of girls' education and the community's attitude towards it in a given village. From the data, a Field Coordinator and *Team Balika* in each village plot the location of out of school girls in a village map and profile, indicating the roads, infrastructure, and households of the village, and note which households are more or less supportive of girls' education.

Enrolment of OOSC in school

Once the *Team Balika* identifies a household with OOSC, a member of the team is assigned to follow up with the family and the child. They talk to the parents and children in order to get to know why the child is not in school. They also take time to explain to the parents, the government policy on school enrolment. For example, they inform them that under the Government of India's Right to Education (RTE) Act, elementary education in India is free and compulsory for all children. The parents are also

⁸ Rajasthan State-Jalore,Sirohi, Ajmer, Rajsamand, Bundi, Udaipur, and Jhalawar Districts

⁹ Madhya Pradesh State-Jhabua District

counselled on the benefits of education to the child and to the society at large. They are also informed that there is no direct or indirect cost to be borne by the parent as the government provides books, teachers, and school uniforms. After several visits by the *Team Balika* and constant reassurance, many parents agree to allow their children to enrol in the nearby school. The *Team Balika* member then links the identified child to the school for enrolment and the child gets registered. The school also provides them with a set of uniforms and books before they start classes. The *Team Balika* member keeps in regular touch with the child and the family over six months ensuring that the child attends school regularly.

UNICEF DRC

EAC and UNICEF signed a grant agreement on April 2014, to enrol and retain 1,482,196 OOSC in primary schools over five years. As of Dec 2018 1,479,472 OOSC have been enrolled. Dilapidated school infrastructure, long distances between schools and communities, overcrowded classrooms, non-payment of teachers' salaries, and affordability of learning materials are the major supply side determinants of schooling. On the demand side, in addition to the low household income status, socio-cultural barriers and level of parents' education are key determinants of educational participation. Project activities include: a door-to-door campaign to raise awareness and enrol children, construction and rehabilitation of classrooms, allocating learning materials to schools, working with community structures, training teachers/school administration, and developing Education Management Information System (EMIS) capacity.

UNICEF's approach to identify and enrol OOSC is to first conduct a mass enrolment campaign (Back to School campaign). After the campaign, registrations at the schools are checked. Then between 2 and 4 weeks after school registration ends, a door-to-door campaign is conducted to identify households with children who have not enrolled. Volunteers work with the households to encourage them to enrol their children. The school registers are then checked to determine how many children enrolled after the door-to-door campaign. The schools keep records of these children and note that they were previously out of school at the time of enrolment.

Enrolment campaigns

The main activities in the project that lead to the enrolment of children out of school are:

- The communication campaign, which includes messages to be communicated through media and parental education on the importance of enrolling primary school children, and involves women's associations and other community groups to help encourage parents to enrol their children. The "Back to School" campaign focuses on age-appropriate enrolment;
- The door-to-door campaign, which takes place approximately three weeks after the start of the school year/after school enrolment has closed. During the door-to-door campaign activity, members of the community (head teacher, one teacher, village chief, and other community member) identify children who are not in school and encourage their parents to enrol these children in the nearest school;
- School/classroom construction to ensure adequate space to accommodate new enrollees.

The provision of “social protection measures” such as paying school fees and remedial classes, classroom/school construction, and the distribution of learning materials to children enrolling in the first year of primary school and identified as vulnerable also contribute to increased access to education.

Registration in the data system

The data collection process for the door-to-door campaign is part of the broader back-to-school campaign and is managed through the ministry of education. The system collects data at the community/school level and then aggregates these data at the site level (approximately 10 schools), the sub-division level, and the division level. Children enrolled through the door-to-door campaign are late enrolments, and are therefore registered in the system as OOSC. The aggregated data from the division is sent to the national level and compiled into a report on the campaign results.

UNICEF, Kenya

UNICEF in Kenya implements a seven-pronged strategic intervention “Operation Come-to-School” project. The enrolment target is 300,000 OOSC and 270,936 have been enrolled so far. Whether it is within Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) areas or urban slums, children are often not attending school due to (i) low interest by school community members with cultural and religious beliefs devaluing education (ii) parental apathy or (iii) perceived irrelevance of education to nomadic communities.

Identification of OOSC

UNICEF conducts multiple county-level enrolment and attendance drives, thereby improving demand for education. The following are methods for identifying and enrolling OOSC.

1. Conduct a baseline survey to identify all OOSC in each of the target 9 counties and ask why children are out of school (or have dropped out) to create a reasons map for OOSC.
2. Sensitise community leadership – political, religious, traditional, professional, and government officials - to undertake a door-to-door advocacy campaign to identify and enrol school-aged children who are not in school.
3. Enlist children (through UNICEF and KEPSHA’s successful national children’s government initiative) to identify OOSC through Child-to-Child enrolment drives.
4. Connect families of OOSC with different social protection measures (i.e. food rations, cash-transfers, and/or social safety net funds) to increase the return and retention of children in school.
5. Influence local behaviour and attitude towards education, particularly for girls, through local vernacular radio programming and an integrated strategic approach with the community.

Data System

UNICEF has developed M&E tools, including a “Digital Attendance Application”, for OOSC and also those enrolled in school, along with a teacher and school profile. This results in a list of OOSC with qualitative reasons for being out of school. Moreover, at the time of enrolment, the project completes a pupil registration profile with a unique ID code for each child enrolled. In addition to the baseline list of OOSC, the information of the pupil profile is used to verify and establish if the child being enrolled is (or is not) an eligible OOSC as per EAC’s definition or criteria of OOSC. Then UNICEF Kenya only reports the number

of verified OOSC enrolled by the project. This data collection and reporting system helps the project provide accurate, organised, and specific data of OOSC in each of the nine target counties.

Summary

From these few examples, it is apparent that context is essential to determining where OOSC are, who they are, and what strategies are appropriate to identify and enrol them. The uniqueness of each location and situation complicates the ability to find marginalised children and engage them in a quality primary education programme. Yet creative approaches tailored to the needs of a particular community are succeeding in finding, enrolling and counting hundreds of thousands of OOSC. The adherence to agreed upon definitions and criteria for who is counted, and the integrity of data collected and reported, is essential for trust in the accuracy and validity of the data. Transferring these strategies, mechanisms, and data management to the system at large for sustaining identification and enrolment of OOSC into the future is an ongoing effort. EAC projects typically work closely with government education officials, including them in strategy development, monitoring activities, capacity building, and system modifications.

ACCOUNTING FOR OOSC PROGRESS

Finding, counting and enrolling OOSC is one side of the coin. Tracking and accounting for OOSC participation and engagement in an education programme is the other side. It can't be assumed that once access is solved, education is assured. Concerted efforts to keep children in their education programme and continuously learning is the purpose of identifying these children in the first place. Numerous factors impede participation in education such as dangerous conflict situations, destructive natural disasters, poverty, or social/cultural traditions. Advocating for these children, both for their interests and in the interest of the family, community and country, is foundational to the EAC programme. The EAC processes for monitoring, collecting data on progression, and reporting are addressed in this section.

Monitoring

EAC has a series of Quality Assurance (QA) mechanisms and tools for monitoring progress of OOSC in partner projects (see table below). EAC partners utilise strategies consisting of a combination of internally and externally conducted processes. Some promising technologies, such as mobile phone data collection with Educate Girls in India, and e-tablet protected student ID and monitoring data with Care Haiti, are used in the field. Some education systems in the developing world are still using paper records in classrooms along with photographs and stories to document the OOSC they reach. Many use student ID numbers to identify and track individuals. Project designated Monitoring and Evaluation coordinators in the field ensure data are accurate and complete and manage the integrity of the data.

The high confidence level of EAC data on OOSC identification, enrolment and progression is buttressed by redundancy in quality assurance. As shown in the graphic below, before an EAC project is awarded, a series of steps is activated to inform decisions about the efficacy of a proposed programme. Rigorous technical reviews of proposals, validation site visits, and due diligence appraisals form the basis for recommending partnerships. Once underway, EAC projects are monitored through regular reporting by partners, monitoring site visits by EAC, data verification procedures and data quality assessments. On a

regular basis, projects are monitored by third party review as well as internal EAA and EAC project oversight. Individual projects also conduct their own internal and third party reviews for mid-course correction and identification of anomalies. External final evaluations of projects may be contracted by project partners or conducted through EAC/EAA.

<p>Foundation Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAC 5 Year Strategic Plan (December 2013) • EAC Monitoring & Evaluation Plan (May 2013) • EAC Performance Monitoring Plan (May 2013) 	<p>EAC Quality Assurance Mechanisms</p> <p>These activities take place in two phases of project implementation.</p>		
	<p>Pre-project Implementation Phase</p>	<p>Project Implementation Phase</p>	
	<p>Opportunity Assessment Activities</p> <p><i>to determine country context, potential partners, MOE national education sector plans</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expression of Interest and Proposal Reviews— Review by EAC technical team members of Expressions of Interest & Proposals • Validation Visit— Site visit by EAC team to record technical operations of the proposed partner project and observe field operations • Due Diligence— Appraisal of proposed partner’s finances, operations, management, technical programme, and reputation 	<p>Monitoring Activities</p> <p><i>to track progress</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-annual partner financial, technical, and indicator reports – Reports submitted by all implementing partners and reviewed by EAC team • Monitoring Visits (purposeful sampling)— Site visits to monitor progress as well as review project’s programmatic, financial, and monitoring & evaluation systems and data collection • Stakeholder consultations--- periodic communication with project management to assess progress and resolve issues • OOSC Data Verification Visits—Verification by a third party of the reported number of out of school children (OOSC) reached by EAC programming • Audits: Internal (IAD) and external--independently verify numbers of OOSC • Data Quality Assessment (DQA)— A comprehensive DQA on specific projects, conducted by DQA specialists 	<p>Evaluation Activities</p> <p><i>to assess project outcomes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Studies—Detailed study of projects that show promising practices and innovative interventions • Formative Performance Monitoring—Internal assessment to provide formative feedback on EAC’s progress in meeting its goals • External Evaluation of EAC projects---TOR issued and consultant contracted to provide assessment of project achievements • External Evaluation of EAC programme operations----TOR issued and consultant contracted to review EAC programme functions, capacity, and compliance with EAA procedures and regulations

Progression

Progression refers to enrolled OOSC – *in a given primary education programme, in a given education cycle* – who are successfully going through the academic cycle in which they have been enrolled, and entering the beginning of the following cycle, to continue with the education programme. This indicator measures the retention capacity and internal efficiency of an education system. It illustrates the situation regarding survival of students over the years in schools and informal education programmes. Conversely, it also provides useful data on the magnitude of dropouts, repeaters, promoted and graduated among the cohorts being tracked.

A cohort is defined as a group of pupils who enter or are enrolled in a primary education programme in the same education cycle. In traditional education, an education cycle is considered the school year. For alternative or accelerated education programmes it may be differently defined.

Progression data is a compilation of the cohort of OOSC (originally enrolled in a given school/academic year) who are either promoted or who repeat an education cycle. For tracking the cohorts of enrolled OOSC overtime, partner projects collect individual student data.

EAC requires partner projects to report on progression where applicable, which is presented as a percentage of newly enrolled OOSC who remain in the primary education programme from one year to the next (survival rate). Some of the projects do not include interventions that enable the calculation of annual survival rates. EAC sets a standard of at least 80% average annual survival rate for all projects. However, EAC partners' focused retention strategies frequently result in significantly higher project-specific survival rates.

The EAC programme has, since its inception in late 2012, expanded in volume, number of partnerships, and geographic scope, bringing with it a whole range of intricacies in data and information management. In response to this, EAC's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) unit has established and maintains an Information System for storing, managing, analysing, and reporting programme data, gathered from EAC partner projects across the globe. The data are reported by EAC partners based on a selected number of education indicators relevant to EAC's programme objectives. The M&E unit has continuously sought to improve the system in coping with the growing demand for data to inform programmatic and strategic planning in the changing dynamics of the EAC programme portfolio. The initial focus of the Information System was to manage enrolment data from EAC partner projects on an integrated platform. As the programme continued and OOSC participated in these programmes over time, the database expanded and included tracking individual status of the enrolled OOSC and their progression in the education system.

The practice of tracking individual children, and in this specific case for EAC, tracking OOSC, is an ambitious undertaking. EAC is consistent with standard data collection practices used by other global organizations that track subsets of children who are in supported programmes. For EAC, that subset is OOSC. With organizations seeking system indicators, aggregated data for the general population of children are reported at the school, district, national and international levels on promotion, completion, repeaters and dropout rates¹⁰.

¹⁰ See for example, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Nov 2009, Education Indicators: Technical Guidelines; USAID, June 2016. Analysis of Indicators Used in USAID Education Projects in Crisis and Conflict Environments.

Despite considerable efforts by EAC and its partners to improve the availability of, and access to quality monitoring OOSC data, there remain significant gaps particularly concerning progression data. Education sector stakeholders including governments, the UN and other national and international agencies have put tremendous effort on leveraging Integrated Computer Technologies (ICT) to improve the way education data are captured, managed and reported. Significant improvement (more so within the formal education system) is achieved through the use of modern technology. However, even as these advancements are applied, OOSC as a special interest group still faces the eminent challenge of invisibility. This invisibility mainly manifests in the form of:

- OOSC data either not being comprehensively mapped, monitored and included in the official counts and national statistics; or
- OOSC data are included in the aggregated estimates and generalised statistics. This exposes OOSC to the risk of losing accurate reporting of individual status and by extension, dedicated attention as a special category of children.

Progress toward available and accessible quality data on enrolment, progression and other education indicators related to OOSC may be accelerated by:

- Leveraging digital data gathering technology and,
- Collecting and managing individual-level student data.

This would ensure enrolled OOSC are uniquely identified in a database. Lessons learnt from reviews of existing systems indicate that through such databases, and data gathering processes, the existing limitations in tracking cohorts of enrolled OOSC and accurately reporting their progression status over time is improved.

Currently, ICT for Education is a global phenomenon with a number of pioneering innovations contributing to improved data collection, management and reporting. A number of key stakeholders, including national and international organisations, government and non-governmental agencies, currently implement information management systems including mobile solutions. However, these solutions sometimes fall short in capturing the right data at the point of enrolment of individual OOSC so these data can be more reliably used for tracking attendance, transfer, promotion, dropout, completion, graduation and other key indicators. EAC advises partner projects regarding suitable ICT solutions that include modules for:

1. A comprehensive data capture module with the ability to account for all the key parameters that would allow unique identification of individual OOSC enrolled, while maintaining confidentiality of personal information based on internationally recognised best practice protection standards.
2. An information system module that will store data for and track the enrolled OOSC. The key functionalities of this module have the ability to:
 - a. Encrypt all personal information and provide only unique identification codes for purposes of data security and child protection;
 - b. Employ comprehensive and dynamic access control systems for different levels of authority as may be deemed appropriate;
 - c. Run a unique identification algorithm to eliminate the possibility of double entry/counting of any single OOSC even when they happen to transfer from the learning centre of initial enrolment;
 - d. Run logical and predetermined specific set of checks for data cleaning;

- e. Run different analytical queries and present analysed information on interactive dashboards and simple reports at different reporting levels (school, subnational, national and regional) in a simple-to-use manner;
- f. Ultimately, contribute to supply of globally comparable data on OOSC and related education indicators.

Reporting

EAC collects data through implementing partners' semi-annual reporting. Every implementing partner is required to report to EAC against set indicators twice a year. Data are reported to EAC through an online reporting tool. Narrative/technical and financial reports are also submitted at the same time.

While EAC requires projects to report on progress towards all project objectives and results indicators, EAC's principle indicator is the number of former OOSC now enrolled in primary education programmes. EAC requires that all partners report on the total number of OOSC who are enrolled in primary level education programmes. These enrolment data are disaggregated by gender, grade, and geographic location for all OOSC enrolled through the project with both EAC and partner funding. EAC's second level indicators for OOSC, once the project has operated for at least two cycles, include tracking OOSC once they return to the education programme the following enrolment cycle. EAC partners are expected to report on:

- Number of previously OOSC enrolled through the project who **remain** in the primary education programme from one cycle to the next;
- Number of previously OOSC enrolled through the project who **dropout** or leave education from one year to the next;
- The number of previously OOSC enrolled through the programme who have **completed** a full cycle of the education programme.

EAC expects partner projects to go to reasonable efforts to collect individual-student data. However, given the marginalised OOSC population, and the potential for extenuating circumstances, it sometimes necessitates submitting data estimates. In high risk, dangerous, or crisis situations (e.g., natural disaster, political upheaval), or where data collection processes are so complex and difficult as to be cost-prohibitive (often in conflict-affected situations), EAC staff work closely with the partner to develop a plan for using estimates for OOSC enrolment along with a schedule for verifying data. Depending on the circumstances of the project and the agreement that is made between the partner project and EAC, these estimates could either serve as adequate data in an extreme situation or could be used as an acceptable placeholder for actual data until such a mutually agreed time that the project can gather more precise data. If there is not a plan in place using estimates with EAC prior to reporting, estimated data are not accepted. In any case, estimated data from EAC partner projects is not considered a permanent solution or a replacement of the actual precise data. All possible efforts to increase confidence in the reported data are encouraged. For example, other data sources may be collected to increase confidence that the estimates are accurate. Supporting documentation might include National EMIS data, third party verified data, sample studies, proxies, and pre- and post-evaluation studies. Additionally, the partner and EAC may create a plan for future verifiable data collection.

CONCLUSION

Educate A Child (EAC), since its inception in 2012, seeks to reach marginalised children who are not participating in primary education. Honouring the vision set forth by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, EAC is fighting for the rights of children to open doors to their future. This Occasional Paper on *Inclusion* examines the ways in which children who are not in primary education are identified and encouraged to participate and progress in education.

Marginalised children are not in school for various reasons; barriers to their participation include social, cultural, economic, and survival conditions. These obstacles are not easy to overcome and strategies to address these barriers are often labour intensive and expensive. Yet, with creativity and commitment, EAC partners around the world are finding ways to reach these children and offer educational opportunities.

It is through concerted effort and committed resolve that dedicated professionals face these challenges and create ways to overcome them that lead to a positive trajectory for these children, their families and communities. The challenges faced are not insurmountable, previously invisible children can become visible, and issues around the details of counting and tracking progress of children previously excluded can be resolved. To that end, EAC continues its work with dedicated partners across the globe to ensure access and participation in quality primary education for all children.

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