Millions left behind

Basic education is now more accessible than ever in developing countries throughout Asia-Pacific and the commitment in this region to ensuring that all the children have access to schooling is reflected in the substantial strides made towards universal primary education.

However, over the past decade, data show that progress towards the goal of Education for All has stalled. As of 2012, as many as 58 million children globally and 18 million in Asia-Pacific were not enrolled in either primary or secondary school. A key challenge for governments then becomes ensuring that these millions of children, many of whom cannot be served by formal school systems, still have access to education.

58 million Primary-aged children are out of school

1/3 in Asia Pacific

18M

58 million

19 million of these children have a disability

31 million of these children are girls

Out of school children (OOSC) in Southeast Asia:

Cambodia: 28,581
Indonesia: 1,335,753
Lao PDR: 29,694
Malaysia: 93,743
Myanmar: No data available
Philippines: 1,469,175
Thailand: 243,883
Timor-Leste: 16,117
Viet Nam: 121,992

“Out of school, not out of reach”

Eradicating obstacles

In response to this challenge, UNESCO Bangkok has launched the project, “Strengthening Education Systems for Out of School Children”, with the support of Educate a Child (EAC), a global initiative that aims to ensure all children have access to basic education.

The project, launched in 2015, seeks to spur collaboration among Southeast Asian countries to eradicate any obstacles, both in policy and practice, that would prevent OOSC from accessing education, and to ensure that all of our region’s youth have learning opportunities.
Four Main Components of the Project

1. Research
   - Conducting research on current policy and legislation
   - Analysing current learning programmes and challenges
   - Profiling OOSC and disadvantaged children

2. Regional Policy Advocacy
   - Seeking regional political commitment and cooperation
   - Developing an ASEAN Declaration on Education for OOSC and Disadvantaged Children
   - Reviewing national policy and legislation
   - Developing effective media advocacy tools

3. Regional Capacity Development
   - Disseminating information on innovative and effective approaches through a regional network
   - Organising innovative education summits in the region
   - Supporting the development of M&E system for OOSC on Non-Formal Education (NFE)/Flexible Learning Strategies (FLS)/Alternative Learning Strategies (ALS) or other relevant programmes
   - Developing Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) on innovative education for disadvantaged children

4. Flexible Learning Strategies
   - Improving and expanding NFE/FLS/ALS programmes in Southeast Asian countries
   - Organising regional and national consultations to develop national capacities

Reaching the unreached in Southeast Asia

The project will target OOSC, including those born into poverty, the disabled, migrant and stateless children, girls, those living in remote areas and ethnic minorities in nine Southeast Asian countries: Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia and Timor-Leste. Over the longer term, the project aims to benefit nearly 3 million OOSC.