

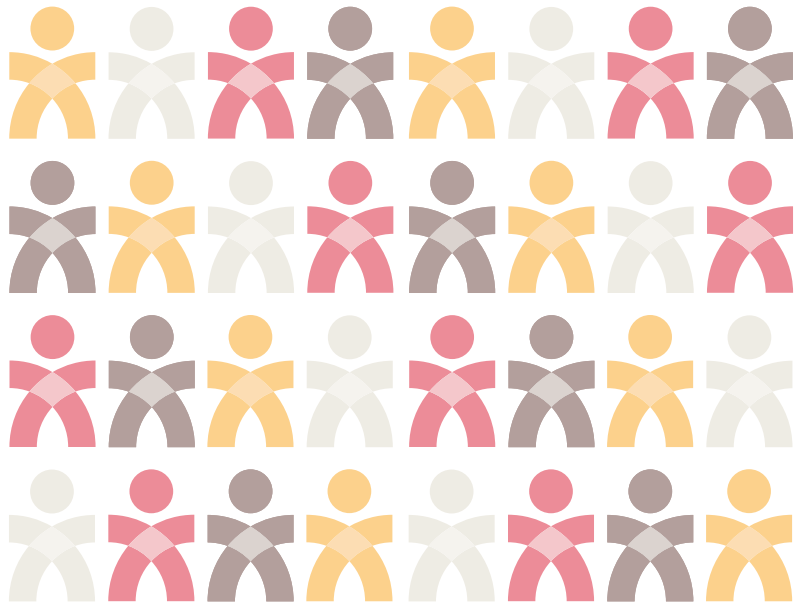
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LEVERAGING REGIONAL COLLABORATION TO ENHANCE IMPACT:

A Case Study on the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening
Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth





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FOREWORD

Educate A Child (EAC) is committed to providing substantive discourse concerning the issues surrounding access and engagement of children at the primary level who are out of school (OOSC). Since EAC was launched in 2012, 74 projects were jointly funded in 51 countries. An examination of projects, processes and practices in the field provides insight into the interventions designed to effectively and efficiently reach OOSC. To that end, a series of case studies have been commissioned and published on the EAC website to encourage reflection and dialogue about the efficacy of the myriad of approaches utilised in the field.

This current offering, a case study on the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) policy and programme, is somewhat of a departure from previous case studies focussed solely on identifying, enrolling and educating OOSC. While these factors are addressed in the ASEAN project, an additional focus on policy development in a regional context is different from our earlier case studies. Therefore, EAC is pleased to offer a case study that provides insight into the policy development process in ten countries, resulting in a Declaration for reaching OOSC that was developed, signed and ratified by each country. This case study also provides details on the mitigation efforts in three of the ASEAN member countries to reach over 50,000 OOSC and provide education programmes for these children.

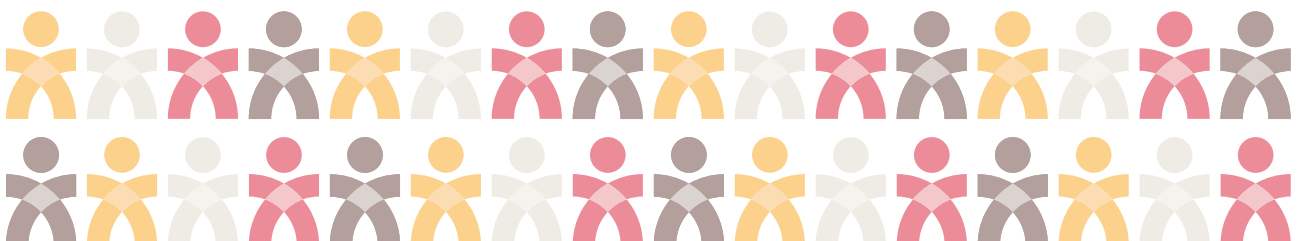
The experience gained in the three countries of focus for reaching OOSC with education programmes, Thailand, Lao PDR and Myanmar, included training on and scaling up flexible-learning strategies designed by UNESCO Bangkok. This strategy may yield lessons for similar work in other countries, as well as the need, benefit and opportunity for multi-country or regional approaches to addressing OOSC policy and programme issues.

EAC is pleased to share this publication with you. We hope it provides “food for thought” and further consideration on reaching OOSC with the education they deserve. Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Mary Joy Pigozzi, PhD

Executive Director, EAC

October 2020







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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMS:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations Member States
ASEAN:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EAC:	Educate A Child
Lao PDR:	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MoE:	Ministry of Education
NGO:	Non-governmental Organisation
OOSC:	Out of School Children
OOSCI:	Out of School Children Initiative
OOSCY:	Out of School Children and Youth
R4D:	Results for Development
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAMEO:	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SOM-ED:	ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education
The Declaration:	The ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out of School Children and Youth
UIS:	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO:	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF EAPRO:	United Nations Children's Fund East Asia and Pacific Regional Office

SECTION I:
INTRODUCTION



Although significant progress has been made in reducing the number of out of school children and youth (OOSCY) in Southeast Asia, millions of primary and secondary school-aged children remain out of school in the region.¹ To address the diverse barriers facing out of school children (OOSC) in the region, Educate A Child (EAC) and UNESCO Bangkok partnered to support enrolling and retaining OOSC in ten Southeast Asian countries through research, policy advocacy, capacity development and the scaling up of flexible-learning strategies.² As part of this partnership, the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth (the Declaration) was drafted with inputs from the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states, and subsequently endorsed by all ten member states at the 28th ASEAN Summit in September 2016, becoming one of the first regional commitments to focus on OOSCY. Since its endorsement, the ASEAN member states have mounted regional and country level efforts to uphold the regional commitment to improve access to education and reduce the number of out of school children and youth.

In order to contribute to the body of global knowledge on OOSC, EAC commissioned Results for Development (R4D) to conduct an in-depth case study to document and analyse ASEAN's regional approach to addressing OOSC.

More specifically, the objectives of this study are to distil and document the following:

1. The extent to which the Declaration impacted regional and country-specific policies, strategic planning and practices around OOSC in ASEAN member states, with specific focus on:
 - a. Innovative and effective actions and approaches;

- b. Improvements in monitoring, reporting, data and information management systems on OOSC; and
 - c. Progress and results achieved to date.
 2. The contextual factors resources and aspects of the Declaration's development and implementation process that stimulated or hindered its impact;
 3. Possible lessons the Declaration's development and implementation hold for other regions; and
 4. The role EAC, UNESCO and other partners' support played in enabling the impact of the Declaration.

The case study is structured around the four study objectives as follows. Section II describes the study methods R4D used and the scope and limitations of the study. Section III presents the background and describes the condition of OOSCY in Southeast Asia and within ASEAN member states, highlighting common characteristics of OOSCY and their barriers to education. Section IV describes the Declaration, situates it within the broader EAC-UNESCO Bangkok partnership, and explains the key stakeholders and events that contributed to the Declaration's development and implementation. Section V presents the impact of the Declaration since its endorsement (Objective 1). Section VI discusses the factors that enabled the Declaration's development and implementation, challenges and limitations faced in the process, recommendations for continued progress and lessons the Declaration's approach holds for other regions (Objectives 2, 3 and 4). Finally, Section VII describes EAC's role in enabling the Declaration's development and subsequent impacts (Objective 4). Annexes include references, a list of individual interviews and a copy of the Declaration.

¹ UNESCO Bangkok. "Situation Analysis of Out-of-School Children in Nine Southeast Asian Countries." 2017.

² UNESCO Bangkok defines flexible-learning strategies as alternative-educational programmes targeted at reaching those most marginalised. Flexible-learning strategies can take many forms, but are equivalent to formal or vocational education. UNESCO Bangkok. "Flexible Learning Strategies for Out-of-School Children (OOSC) and Youth." Website. Accessed 20 March 2020. <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/flexible-learning-strategies-out-school-children-oosc-and-youth>



SECTION II:
**CASE STUDY METHODS
AND LIMITATIONS**



The study draws on a combination of qualitative methods, including desk review, semi-structured individual and group interviews, and direct observation. Documents in the desk review included existing reports and programmatic documents. A full list of references can be found in Annex 1. Semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted during a two-week field visit to three ASEAN member states in September 2019. The research team consulted 40 stakeholders, including representatives from seven ASEAN member state ministries of education, regional organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donors. Annex 2 contains an anonymised list of interviews.

The consulted stakeholders were selected using purposive sampling methods based on the availability of key stakeholders and feasibility of travel. Care was taken to include diverse stakeholders from different countries, organisations and departments who could speak to various aspects of the Declaration's development and implementation process at the regional and country levels.

Qualitative data was captured through interview notes, coded and analysed based on the four case study objectives. The research team also reviewed key programmatic documents, existing reports and pre- and post-Declaration ASEAN meeting notes for supplemental data.

Several limitations were encountered in the research, analysis and writing of this case study.

First, representativeness of the data may be limited due to (1) the use of purposive sampling, (2) the relatively small number of stakeholders who were involved in or were familiar with the development and implementation of the Declaration, (3) regular turnover within ASEAN member state governments and organisations in the region which limited the pool of stakeholders that were accessible to the research team. The researchers have mitigated issues of representativeness where possible by diversifying the stakeholder sample and triangulating data within and across stakeholder interviews and key documents. It should be noted that impacts and results may not be comprehensive for this reason.

Second, impacts and results surfaced through research were often linked to many factors and influences, creating challenges in drawing causal relations to the Declaration alone. To mitigate against assumed causation, the researchers have noted other influences that may have contributed to impacts in Section V and VI and clearly stated the views of consulted stakeholders on the nature of the Declaration's contribution to impacts.

Third, the research was conducted in 2019, only three years after the Declaration was endorsed. More time is needed for the full extent of the Declaration's impact to develop. This case study provides a snapshot of the perceived impacts and contributing factors at the time it was written.



³ Regional Organisation Staff 5; Regional Organisation Staff 6

SECTION III: **BACKGROUND**



Millions of children and youth are out of school in Southeast Asia. Because comprehensive data on OOSCY remains a challenge in many countries, most available numbers are estimations and vary widely by source. At the lower end, UNESCO estimates 6.8 million primary and secondary school-aged children are out of school in Southeast Asia while recent data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) suggest the number could be significantly higher.

The number of OOSCY also varies widely across the ten ASEAN member states. Figure 1 shows the number of OOSCY of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary age in each ASEAN member state based on available 2017 UIS data. Countries such

as Indonesia and Myanmar are home to millions of OOSCY, while others like Singapore and Brunei Darussalam have lower numbers. Figure 1 also indicates the percentage of children and youth of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school age who were out of school in 2017. The data suggest in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Indonesia, larger proportions of primary school-age children remain out of school, while, in Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, smaller percentages of the same age group are out of school. While data on rates of OOSCY are more sparse at the secondary level, the data suggests a trend of larger proportions of OOSCY at higher levels of education than at the primary level that is similar across many countries.

Figure 1: Number and percentage of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school age children and youth who are out of school in ASEAN member states⁶

ASEAN Member State	Number of Primary School-Age OOSCY	% of Primary School-Age Children Out of School	Number of Lower Secondary School-Age OOSCY	% of Lower Secondary School-Age Youth Out of School	Number of Upper Secondary School-Age OOSCY	% of Upper Secondary School-Age Youth Out of School
Brunei Darussalam	145	0.4	-	-	6,126	17.7
Cambodia	180,125	9.2	-	-	-	-
Indonesia	1,402,639	5.1	-	-	3,313,247	23.9
Lao PDR	57,256	7.5	128,190	22.2	163,762	38.3
Malaysia	10,381	0.4	205,877	13.1	605,422	36.8
Myanmar	112,231	2.3	974,518	23.7	958,782	46.4
Philippines	424,228	3.2	893,558	10.7	-	-
Singapore	72	0.0	50	0.1	73	0.1
Thailand	-	-	290,395	11.1	-	-
Viet Nam	-	-	-	-	-	-

⁴ UNESCO Bangkok. "Situation Analysis of Out-of-School Children in Nine Southeast Asian Countries." 2017.

⁵ According to available UIS 2017 data accessed on 13 December 2019.

⁶ Data are based on available UIS 2017 data accessed on 13 December 2019.

While millions remain out of school, significant progress has been made in reducing the number of OOSCY in the region. Increased access to education in the ASEAN region has resulted in decreasing numbers of OOSCY at all levels of basic education.⁷ According to ASEAN documents, from 2000 to 2017, the number of primary school-aged OOSCY decreased from 4.1 million to 3.3 million.⁸ A similar trend at the secondary school level saw the number of lower secondary school-aged OOSCY decrease from 9.9 million to 4.1 million and the number of upper secondary school-aged OOSCY drop from 16.1 million to 7.1 million.⁹

OOSCY in the ASEAN region span many demographic, geographic and socio-economic characteristics. These children and youth also face a variety of barriers in accessing education. Children with disabilities and children from ethnic or linguistic minorities are less likely to be in school, in many cases because of inadequate facilities, teacher knowledge and resources. This group may also face language challenges or social norms that

keep them out of school. Similarly, children and youth living in rural or remote areas, on isolated islands, or in poor urban areas tend to face greater challenges in accessing appropriate education facilities due to distance, poor infrastructure, a lack of transportation, limited number of teachers and irrelevant curriculum. Children and youth from poor households are also more likely to be out of school; many may be engaged in paid or household labour, unable to afford hidden education costs, or meet registration requirements. In addition, migration is common in the ASEAN region in part due to financial needs and climate change. Migrant children often have difficulty accessing education in their mother tongue, may face discrimination in their host country and encounter financial or documentation barriers. While gender parity has almost been achieved in the region, it varies by country. Boys and girls face different challenges in accessing education at various levels in different countries, including social norms, child labour, early marriage, teenage pregnancy and household responsibilities.¹⁰



⁷ UNICEF EAPRO. "Children in ASEAN: 30 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child." November 2019.

⁸ Ministry of Education Thailand, UNESCO Bangkok, UNICEF EAPRO, UNICEF Thailand, SEAMEO and ASEAN Secretariat. "ASEAN Thailand 2019: Advancing Partnership for Sustainability - ASEAN Conference on Out-of-School Children and Youth (OOSCY)." Conference booklet distributed at the ASEAN Conference on Out-of-School Children and Youth. 16-17 September 2019.

⁹ Ibid

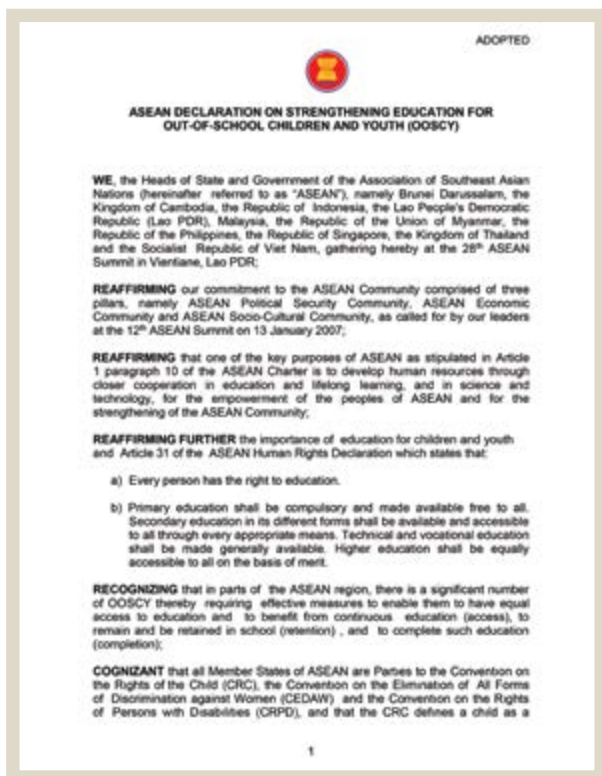
¹⁰ UNICEF EAPRO. "Learning Against the Odds: Evidence and Policies to Support All Out-of-School Children and Adolescents in East Asia and Pacific." August 2019.

SECTION IV:
**OVERVIEW OF THE
PROGRAMME MODEL**



Barriers to enrolling and retaining OOSCY in the ASEAN region are complex and span geographic borders. Regional solutions are needed to ensure these children and youth have access to inclusive, equitable and quality education. A multipronged approach taken by ASEAN aimed to address the issue of OOSCY at both the regional and country levels. The approach built partnerships for regional accountability, dialogue and collaboration through development and endorsement of the *ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth (OOSCY)* and furthered country level progress on OOSCY with direct support to governments to implement policies and programmes pursuant to the Declaration.

Description of the Declaration



The *ASEAN Declaration for Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth* is a flexible, non-binding agreement that aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all disadvantaged and vulnerable children and youth in ASEAN through various regional and country level activities.¹¹ Developed based on existing ASEAN instruments and principles, the Declaration consists of nine sections addressing the following themes: (1) dimensions of OOSCY in the region, (2) key principles to guide implementation of relevant policies and programmes and (3) aspirational improvements in key areas impacting educational opportunities for OOSCY.¹² The Declaration was endorsed and adopted by all ten ASEAN member states¹³ in 2016. A copy of the Declaration is provided in Annex 3.

EAC-UNESCO Bangkok Partnership

The development of the Declaration was one component of a larger UNESCO and EAC project entitled *Strengthening Education Systems for OOSC*. Born out of a series of conversations between UNESCO Bangkok, the Government of Thailand and Educate A Child, the project aimed to enhance institutional capacity of education systems in the ASEAN region to provide learning opportunities for OOSC regardless of citizenship.¹⁴ A main component of the project was to enrol 50,000 OOSC in three ASEAN member states.¹⁵ Beginning in 2014, implementation of the three and a half year project included the following key activities¹⁶:

1. Analytical research to support evidence-based policy-making, which included an in-depth review of current legislation, policies and programmes for OOSC in the nine target countries and a costing study on the economic implications of OOSC.

¹¹ UNESCO Bangkok. "Summary Record of the 1st Technical Experts Meeting for the Development of ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children (OOSC)." 11 February 2016.

¹² ASEAN. "ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out of School Children and Youth." Vientiane: ASEAN. 6 September 2016.

¹³ ASEAN member states include Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Thailand, Singapore and Myanmar

¹⁴ Educate A Child and UNESCO Bangkok. "Project Execution Agreement: Strengthening Education System for Out of School Children." Executed between Educate A Child and UNESCO Bangkok, 8 September 2014.

¹⁵ Ibid. The original Project Execution Agreement aimed to reach 50,000 OOSC in eight ASEAN countries (Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia) and East Timor. However, the project support was later modified to target three countries (Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand).

¹⁶ Ibid

2. Development and implementation of the *ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth* as a tool to advance policy advocacy and collective action on OOSC in the region.
3. Development of the Asia Regional Network on OOSC as a platform to disseminate knowledge and deliver capacity building activities for country governments and NGOs, including networking events, workshops and one regional summit to showcase innovative programmes on OOSC.
4. Direct implementation support to selected countries to improve and expand their ongoing flexible-learning strategies through nonformal equivalency programmes, which aim to provide alternative pathways to formal education for OOSC.

UNESCO Bangkok oversaw development and coordination of activities and provided direct support to government officials in Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand and in some cases also partnered with local implementing NGOs. The activities supported were unique to each context, but all focussed on advancing the use of flexible-learning strategies to provide education to OOSC. At least 50,000 OOSC were expected to be reached through the application of these flexible-learning strategies. In addition to providing monetary support, UNESCO also imparted technical assistance and organised opportunities for knowledge sharing to support governmental and implementing partners.¹⁷

The *Strengthening Education Systems for OOSC* project was co-funded by EAC and UNESCO Bangkok with follow-on support from other regional partners.¹⁸ This case study focusses on components 2 and 4 around the development of the Declaration

and direct country implementation support to Lao PDR, Thailand and Myanmar.

Key Contributors

Several key stakeholders contributed to the development of the Declaration and continue to support its implementation. UNESCO Bangkok served as the facilitating organisation by providing technical support, as well as facilitating country level implementation support, and liaising and reporting to EAC. The government of Thailand spearheaded the Declaration and introduced the initiative through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to ASEAN member states. They were a member of the first drafting committee and volunteered to host subsequent working group meetings. Communication to ASEAN member states was coordinated through the ASEAN Secretariat. Other key partners included Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, the law professor and human rights expert who drafted the Declaration, UNICEF EAPRO, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), interested donors and ten ASEAN member states who endorsed the Declaration: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Background on ASEAN

Promoting intergovernmental cooperation, ASEAN is a regional intergovernmental organisation comprised of ten countries in Southeast Asia.¹⁹ ASEAN's activities are structured under three pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.²⁰ The ASEAN Secretariat manages the coordination of ASEAN bodies and is responsible for ensuring effective implementation of ASEAN projects and activities.²¹

¹⁷ UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: July 2018." Submitted to Educate A Child, July 2018.

¹⁸ Educate A Child and UNESCO Bangkok. "Project Execution Agreement: Strengthening Education System for Out of School Children." Executed between Educate A Child and UNESCO Bangkok, 8 September 2014.

¹⁹ ASEAN. "About ASEAN." Website. Accessed 20 November 2019.

²⁰ UNESCO Bangkok. "Summary Record of the 1st Technical Experts Meeting for the Development of ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children (OOSC)." 11 February 2016.

²¹ ASEAN. "About ASEAN." Website. Accessed 20 November 2019.



In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and through the ASEAN Blueprint *ASEAN 2025*, ASEAN is focussing its efforts on building a more inclusive community, promoting equitable opportunities to quality education and advancement of universal access to education.²² Adopted in 2016, the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016-2020 consists of six goals. One component of the work plan was for ASEAN to lead the development of the Declaration and for all member states to subsequently endorse the agreement.²³

Key Milestones of the Declaration Development and Implementation Process

Similar to other ASEAN Declarations,²⁴ the *ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth* was developed through a consultative, multi-stage process.

The Declaration development process is indicated in Figure 2 and includes the following:

- **January 2016:** A committee was established to prepare a first draft of the Declaration, which

included Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, a law professor and human rights expert, representatives from UNESCO Bangkok and the government of Thailand.²⁵

- **February – March 2016:** Two consultative technical meetings with ASEAN member states were held to review and discuss content of the draft Declaration, led by the Thai Ministry of Education, UNESCO Bangkok and the ASEAN Secretariat, and attended by SEAMEO and UNICEF EAPRO. Both meetings were co-funded by EAC and UNESCO Bangkok.²⁶
- **April 2016:** The ASEAN Secretariat presented a finalised draft of the Declaration at the Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM-ED) in Malaysia for approval. Heads of state from ten ASEAN member states endorsed the Declaration.²⁷
- **May – August 2016:** The Declaration underwent ASEAN internal approval processes.²⁸
- **6 September 2016:** The Declaration was adopted at the 28th ASEAN Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR.²⁹

²² Ministry of Thailand. "ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Education Perspective." March 2017; AMS Representative 4; Regional Organisation Staff 6

²³ Ministry of Thailand. "ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Education Perspective." March 2017.

²⁴ Regional Organisation Staff 5

²⁵ UNESCO Bangkok. "Declaration Roadmap." Internal document; Regional Organisation Staff 6

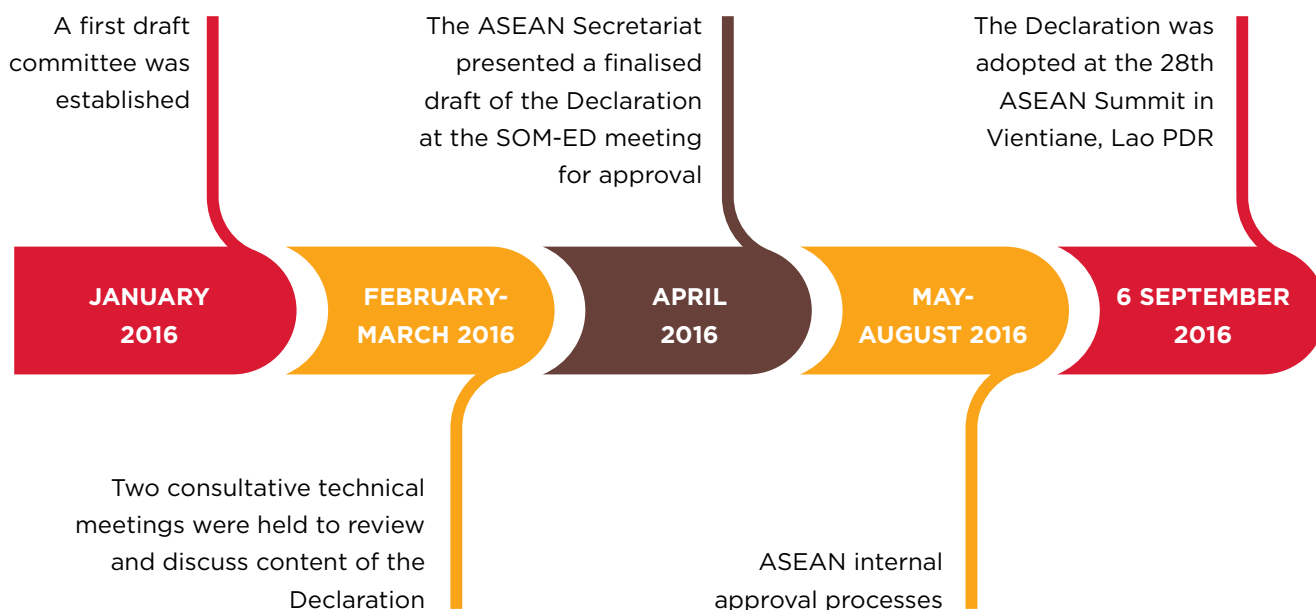
²⁶ UNESCO Bangkok. "Process So Far." Internal document; Regional Organisation 6

²⁷ UNESCO Bangkok. "Declaration Roadmap." Internal document; Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 4

²⁸ UNESCO Bangkok. "Process So Far." Internal document; Regional Organisation Staff 6

²⁹ UNESCO Bangkok. "Declaration Roadmap." Internal document; Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 4; Regional Organisation Staff 5

Figure 2: Timeline of the Declaration Development Process



After the Declaration was adopted in 2016, cooperation mechanisms were put in place to promote increased regional collaboration and to monitor progress of implementation, including (1) technical meetings to develop country level implementation plans and (2) development of three regional proposals to tackle some of the most difficult cross-border issues related to OOSCY in the region.³⁰ In 2019, technical meetings shifted to formalised bi-annual working group meetings to encourage member states to regularly collaborate and report progress on their national and regional level plans to other member states, with the ultimate goal of building greater accountability.³¹ Additional details on the regional proposals are discussed in Section V.

The Declaration implementation process is indicated in Figure 3 and includes the following:

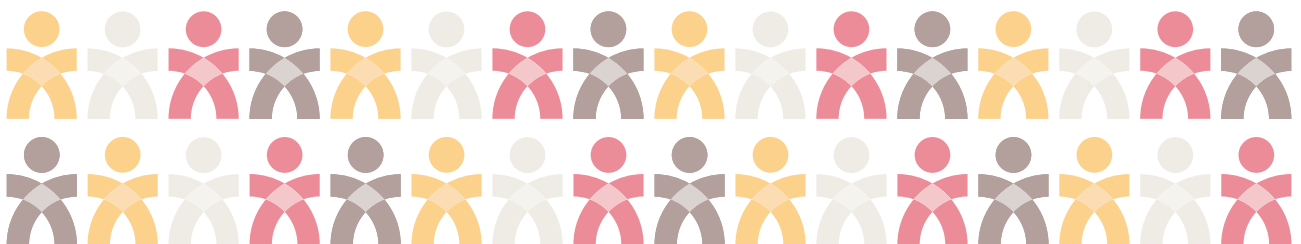
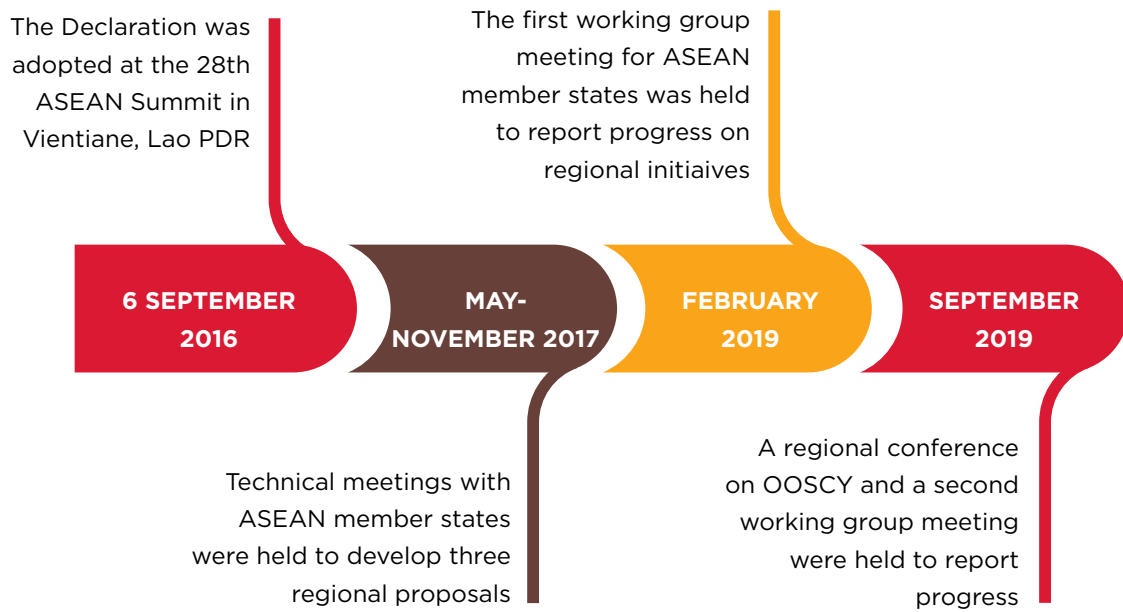
- **6 September 2016:** The Declaration was adopted at the 28th ASEAN Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

- **May-November 2017:** Technical meetings with ASEAN member states were held to develop three regional proposals. The proposals were endorsed by SOM-ED in December 2017.
- **February 2019:** The first working group meeting for ASEAN member states was held to report progress on regional initiatives. The meeting was hosted by the Thai Ministry of Education in partnership with UNESCO Bangkok and the ASEAN Secretariat, and attended by ASEAN member states, UNICEF EAPRO and SEAMEO.
- **September 2019:** A regional conference on OOSCY and a second working group meeting were held to report progress on regional and country level initiatives. The conference was hosted by the Thai Ministry of Education in partnership with UNESCO Bangkok and the ASEAN Secretariat, and attended by almost all ASEAN member states, UNICEF EAPRO and SEAMEO.

³⁰ Regional Organisation Staff 5; AMS Representative 3; AMS Representative 4; Regional Organisation Staff 6

³¹ Regional Organisation Staff 6

Figure 3: Timeline of the Declaration Implementation Process to Date



SECTION V: IMPACT AND RESULTS



This section highlights the key achievements reached by the Declaration and country level implementation support to date. It includes regional and country-specific policies, strategies and approaches adopted by ASEAN member states to address OOSCY, including innovative approaches to OOSCY data monitoring, reporting and information management. It also includes contributions to the enabling environment, which, alongside impact and results, are summarised below.

The Declaration elevated OOSCY from an isolated national issue to a shared regional concern

ASEAN pre-Declaration technical meetings and subsequent working group meetings around the development and implementation of the Declaration provided a formal platform for ASEAN member states to discuss and elevate OOSCY issues from just a national issue to a regional issue. Stakeholders noted that, following open discussion of OOSCY issues through ASEAN, it became apparent that OOSCY was a shared problem across borders and

countries needed to work together to address the issue.³² After the Declaration, for instance, Malaysia began working more closely with Indonesia and the Philippines to address education for migrant OOSCY in its border regions. One stakeholder expressed that this would not have been possible without the regional conversation.³³ Although other regional forums existed, open and consistent regional discussion around OOSCY had not arisen prior to the Declaration.³⁴

“Before, we were looking at OOSCY as our problem but now we are looking at it as a regional problem.” – AMS Representative³⁵

Increased regional dialogue allowed ASEAN member states to discuss sensitive OOSCY topics, such as migrant children, created better understanding between countries around the topic, and opened opportunities to work together.³⁶



³² Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 2; AMS Representative 8; AMS Representative 11; AMS Representative 14; International NGO Staff 1; International NGO Staff 2; International NGO Staff 3; International NGO Staff 4

³³ AMS Representative 14

³⁴ International NGO Staff 4

³⁵ AMS Representative 11

³⁶ AMS Representative 14



The proposals are at an early stage of development, so it is too early to determine the extent of their impact. However, stakeholders expressed confidence in their ability to meaningfully impact OOSCY in the region if they continue to be supported and are executed well.⁴² For example, the *Evidence and Statistical Capacity Enhancement for OOSC and Youth in ASEAN* proposal addresses the need for higher-quality data on OOSCY in countries. Poor data on OOSCY is a common issue across the region; even countries with objectively strong education data systems like Malaysia face challenges in obtaining data on OOSCY in their countries.⁴³ Stronger data systems and better use of data for planning could help reduce inequity in education,⁴⁴ guide more effective investments directed at OOSCY,⁴⁵ and help reduce OOSCY and dropouts.⁴⁶

While it is too soon to see the regional proposals' direct impact on OOSCY, they have enabled opportunities for shared leadership on OOSCY in the region. Assigning different country leads to each of the three proposals helped expand the scope of leadership beyond the initial country champion – Thailand – and the facilitating organisation – UNESCO Bangkok.⁴⁷

The proposals also created opportunities for donors to increase involvement in the region. For example, the government of Norway pledged support to the advocacy-focused regional proposal⁴⁸ and through the regional data strengthening proposal, UNICEF expanded its existing relationship with the Malaysian government.⁴⁹ The “ASEAN Conference on Out-Of-School Children and Youth” and “Unleashing the Power of Data for Equity and Equality of Education in ASEAN” conferences financed by these two donors were amongst the largest gatherings on OOSCY in the region.⁵⁰ The involvement of donors also allowed attendance to broaden beyond ASEAN member states,⁵¹ increasing the scope of knowledge sharing and potential collaboration.⁵²

Stakeholders familiar with these proposals agreed that the Declaration was the driving force for collaboration around the regional proposals, without which they would not have been developed.⁵³ However, stakeholders also stressed the need for continued involvement and collaboration between ASEAN member states, donors and other stakeholders for the proposals to reach fruition.⁵⁴ Recommendations for enhancing the sustainability of these proposals are offered in Section VI.

⁴² Regional Organisation Staff 5; Regional Organisation Staff 6; International NGO Staff 1

⁴³ AMS Representative 3; AMS Representative 8; AMS Representative 10; AMS Representative 13; AMS Representative 14; International NGO Staff 1; International NGO Staff 3

⁴⁴ AMS Representative 7; International NGO Staff 4

⁴⁵ International NGO Staff 4

⁴⁶ UNESCO Bangkok. “EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: January 2018.” Submitted to Educate A Child, January 2018.

⁴⁷ International NGO Staff 4

⁴⁸ Norway recently co-funded the “ASEAN Conference on Out-Of-School Children and Youth” hosted by Thailand MoE in September 2019. Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 4

⁴⁹ UNICEF provided funding for “Unleashing the Power of Data for Equity and Equality of Education in ASEAN,” a regional conference on data strengthening hosted by Malaysia in October 2019. International NGO Staff 4

⁵⁰ International NGO Staff 4

⁵¹ Country government officials, NGO representatives and youth groups from non-ASEAN member state were invited to attend the “Unleashing the Power of Data for Equity and Equality of Education in ASEAN” conference in Malaysia. Similarly, a limited number of NGO representatives were invited to the “ASEAN Conference on Out-Of-School Children and Youth” in Thailand. International NGO Staff 4

⁵² International NGO Staff 4

⁵³ Regional Organisation Staff 5; AMS Representative 3

⁵⁴ International NGO Staff 4



The Declaration furthered government initiatives around OOSCY

Since its adoption in 2016, the Declaration has been used to support policies and initiatives on OOSCY in ASEAN member states. There are a number of examples in which the diverse uses and influences of the Declaration at the country level can be seen (noting, importantly, that other factors have concurrently influenced the status of OOSCY).

For example, in Thailand, the Declaration, in connection with other factors, helped prompt a quality review of the government’s data on OOSCY. Prior to the Declaration, reliable data on OOSCY was unavailable, with the Thai government and NGOs reporting significantly different figures.⁵⁵ Government sources reported approximately 5,000

OOSCY at the primary level while NGOs estimated approximately 250,000.⁵⁶ With their independent data collection efforts, NGOs had been advocating for increased data accuracy on OOSCY in Thailand for some time. However, it was not until the Declaration’s endorsement that the Thai government conducted an internal review of its data on OOSCY. One stakeholder purported that the Declaration served as a “trigger” for the government’s data review⁵⁷ with other factors, such as advocacy by NGOs and government stakeholders and elevation of the issue by news media, at play.⁵⁸ Since then, the government’s data on OOSCY has become more reliable and the government continues to scale up OOSCY data collection efforts.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ AMS Representative 4; AMS Representative 5; AMS Representative 7
⁵⁶ AMS Representative 7
⁵⁷ AMS Representative 5
⁵⁸ AMS Representative 7
⁵⁹ AMS Representative 5; AMS Representative 7

The Declaration also played a role in justifying the creation of Thailand's Equitable Education Fund (EEF), an innovative cross-sectoral initiative to reduce and prevent OOSCY. The EEF's multi-pronged approach uses conditional cash transfers, teacher training, systematic policy research, partnerships and a strong data system to locate OOSCY and address inequities in education.⁶⁰ To justify and pass the Equitable Education Act of 2018 that established the EEF, policymakers referenced Thailand's commitment to the Declaration along with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and national level commitments.⁶¹ One stakeholder explained, "The Declaration played an important role because it laid the groundwork for policymakers to make a claim based on their commitment to the Declaration. Linking EEF to an international commitment like the Declaration may decrease the likelihood its budget will be cut. Because there is this commitment, it is more likely to be supported."⁶²

In Lao PDR, government officials are referencing the Declaration in policy and planning discussions. Notably, policymakers are using the Declaration as support for including OOSCY terminology in the country's 9th National Education and Sport Sector Development Plan (2021-2025).⁶³ While the current education sector plan refers to some groups of OOSCY dropouts, it does not mention OOSCY directly.⁶⁴ One stakeholder explained that the adoption of "OOSCY" terminology would expand the overall definition of OOSCY and include "OOSCY in every way." It would also mean that every education department would have to take responsibility for OOSCY and include them in their annual department plans.⁶⁵

In Malaysia, the Declaration helped accelerate a more favourable atmosphere toward non-Malaysian and migrant OOSCY. Previously, the issue of non-Malaysian and migrant OOSCY was sensitive and difficult to discuss in the country, but at present, there is greater awareness and openness from the government to talk about such issues.⁶⁶ The government is making an active effort to increase quality education access for non-Malaysian and migrant children in several ways.⁶⁷ First, children born to one or more Malaysian parents who lack documentation are now permitted to enrol in schools, with a two-year window to obtain proper documentation.⁶⁸ Second, while non-Malaysians cannot enrol in government schools, the MoE is more openly collaborating with other governments and NGOs who serve non-Malaysian populations with alternative-education opportunities.⁶⁹ In the Sabah and Sarawak states, for example, the government now works more closely with NGOs from the Philippines and Indonesia who run schools in the border areas.⁷⁰ Third, the MoE is also developing guidelines for proper management of community learning centres and considering ways to capture more data on the centres and their OOSCY populations.⁷¹ The magnitude of the Declaration's contribution is difficult to quantify as other factors such as recent political leadership changes, UNICEF's Out of School Children Initiative (OOSCI) study conducted in collaboration with the Sabah provincial government⁷² and the government's Zero Reject policy likely also played a role.⁷³ However, stakeholders asserted that although the above-referenced changes may have occurred without the Declaration, they would have been slower to come about.⁷⁴

⁶⁰ The EEF has benefited 5,000 children and youth in its first year of implementation. It hopes to reach 670,000 OOSCY and 569,000 impoverished primary and secondary school students. The Thai government has also made a larger investment in data around OOSCY through the EEF. AMS Representative 7; Equitable Education Fund. "Equitable Education Fund." Website. Accessed 20 November 2019.

⁶¹ AMS Representative 7; International NGO Staff 1

⁶² AMS Representative 7

⁶³ AMS Representative 8; AMS Representative 9

⁶⁴ AMS Representative 8; AMS Representative 9; AMS Representative 10; International NGO Staff 3

⁶⁵ AMS Representative 8

⁶⁶ AMS Representative 13; AMS Representative 14; International NGO Staff 1

⁶⁷ AMS Representative 13; AMS Representative 14

⁶⁸ AMS Representative 14

⁶⁹ AMS Representative 14

⁷⁰ AMS Representative 14

⁷¹ AMS Representative 13

⁷² This study will be discussed in more detail in Section VI.

⁷³ AMS Representative 14; International NGO Staff 4

⁷⁴ AMS Representative 13

The Declaration strengthened advocacy efforts

In addition to supporting changes within governments, the Declaration has also supported NGO and intergovernmental agency OOSCY advocacy efforts directed at governments. Staff from one international NGO noted the importance of the Declaration in furthering their advocacy strategy and policy work around OOSCY in Thailand, citing several reasons how.⁷⁵ First, the Declaration serves as a point of reference for dialogue and legitimises stakeholders working on the subject. Among governments and civil society, the Declaration is a well recognised and understood way of talking about OOSCY in the region. Second, the Declaration is valued by ASEAN member state governments and thus serves as a point of mutual accountability and potential collaboration. ASEAN member state governments value their participation in and commitment to ASEAN. ASEAN Declarations also seem to be more meaningful to governments compared to other international or national commitments, possibly because of their close ties to minister-to-minister relationships and the higher frequency of ASEAN meetings. In the case of Thailand, the country serves as the current chair of ASEAN and introduced the Declaration to ASEAN member states. Thus, referencing the Declaration has allowed NGOs to highlight a place of mutual interest with governments to collaborate and build on existing efforts and create a semblance of accountability when there are gaps in addressing OOSCY.⁷⁶

The Declaration was also recently referenced in high level advocacy efforts by UNICEF, UNESCO, the EU ambassador, the UN special coordinator and others to counter the closing of migrant learning centres in one ASEAN member state due to labour law violations – an action that would have affected 3,000 OOSCY. Stakeholders shared that, although

the situation is a provincial issue, it was brought to the national stage by referencing the Declaration and the government’s commitment to reducing OOSCY.⁷⁷

Direct country level activities increased short-term support to OOSC



In the two years following the Declaration’s endorsement, UNESCO Bangkok with EAC support provided country level support to three countries – Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand – to enable them to act on their commitment to the Declaration. Across the three countries, 54,751 OOSC were enrolled in education programmes and 2,068 teachers, facilitators, school personnel and other stakeholders were trained on flexible-learning strategies.⁷⁸ In some cases, governments have continued to support programmes, which may contribute to reaching more OOSC in the longer term.

⁷⁵ International NGO Staff 2

⁷⁶ International NGO Staff 2

⁷⁷ International NGO Staff 2

⁷⁸ Regional Organisation Staff 8

In Myanmar, the project supported OOSC to attend a nonformal primary education programme in 12 provinces. Activities included provision of stipends to students; trainings for facilitators, township monitors and programme implementers; and monetary support for facilitators and monitors.⁷⁹ The programme supported a total of 11,997 OOSC and 1,057 stakeholders including facilitators, township monitors and programme implementers.⁸⁰

In Thailand, support was used to enrol OOSC in schools and migrant learning centres and provide capacity building trainings to teachers, government officials and local organisations on topics, such as flexible-learning strategies, basic language skills to teach non-Thai students and development of teaching materials for non-Thai students.⁸¹ Spanning seven provinces, the programme supported 27,696 OOSC and trained 886 teachers, government officials and other stakeholders.⁸² There is limited evidence to suggest that the government has continued to fund these programmes to some extent, but the researchers were unable to obtain direct confirmation from the government.⁸³

In Lao PDR, support helped expand the implementation of the after-school Primary Education Equivalency Programme and nonformal education programmes.⁸⁴ It also built teacher and government capacity to identify and reintegrate OOSC into school. Activities were realised in 15 provinces and included enrolment of primary school dropouts and over-aged learners into nonformal

programmes, capacity development of teachers and government officials, development of teaching and learning materials, and completion of field visits and surveys of OOSC.⁸⁵ The programme supported 14,808 OOSC and 125 teachers and government officials.⁸⁶ During the programme, the government provided additional funding to expand the programme to additional districts and provinces⁸⁷ and after the programme's conclusion, the government continued to support some of the programme's nonformal education and teacher training components.⁸⁸

Stakeholders shared that one result of coupling country level support in Lao PDR and the Declaration was a greater understanding of responsibilities between MoE divisions regarding OOSCY. Previously, the MoE only targeted OOSCY ages six to fourteen through formal channels, with nonformal channels focussing on children below the age of six and youth above the age of fifteen. Now, nonformal channels work in unison with formal channels to target OOSCY in the six to fourteen age range using flexible-learning strategies.⁸⁹ Discussions to include programme components into the government's upcoming 9th National Education and Sport Sector Development Plan (2021-2025) are also underway.⁹⁰ Within the discussions, stakeholders are sharing the Declaration with colleagues to raise awareness on the need for these OOSCY-focussed programmes.⁹¹

⁷⁹ UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: January 2017." Submitted to Educate A Child, January 2017.

⁸⁰ UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: January 2019." Submitted to Educate A Child, January 2019.

⁸¹ UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: January 2018." Submitted to Educate A Child, January 2018; UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: January 2019." Submitted to Educate A Child, January 2019.

⁸² Regional Organisation Staff 8

⁸³ Regional Organisation Staff 6; Regional Organisation Staff 7; AMS Representative 8

⁸⁴ The Primary Education Equivalency Programme was previously funded by Australia, the Global Partnership for Education and the World Bank and reached 7,000 OOSCY in poor and isolated villages using mobile teachers. However, the programme halted in 2014 after funding ended. EAC support allowed Lao PDR to modify and continue the programme with a broader base of OOSCY and to pilot other flexible-learning strategy approaches. AMS Representative 8; UNESCO Bangkok. "Proposal to Educate A Child (EAC) 3rd Draft: Strengthening Education System for Out of School Children (Regional Project)." Submitted to Educate A Child, 5 May 2014.

⁸⁵ UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: July 2018." Submitted to Educate A Child, July 2018; UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: January 2019." Submitted to Educate A Child, January 2019.

⁸⁶ UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: January 2019." Submitted to Educate A Child, January 2019.

⁸⁷ UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: July 2018." Submitted to Educate A Child, July 2018.

⁸⁸ AMS Representative 8

⁸⁹ AMS Representative 8

⁹⁰ AMS Representative 8; AMS Representative 9

⁹¹ AMS Representative 9

SECTION VI: **DISCUSSION**



Drawing from programmatic successes and challenges, this section presents findings in relation to the second and third objectives of the case study and offers lessons for others that aim to support OOSCY. It highlights the lessons learned, strategies, processes, institutional mandates, resources and actors that have contributed to the Declaration's successes, as well as those which have inhibited success, with an emphasis on lessons with regional or global relevance.

Factors that have contributed substantively to the impacts and results of the ASEAN Declaration include the following;

An existing culture of collaboration and mutual respect within the region helped encourage ASEAN member states to develop and adopt the Declaration. Since ASEAN was first established in 1967, ASEAN member state governments have shared a common slogan and an existing commitment to partnership.⁹² Historically, regional collaboration on education issues has been constructive, marked by mutual respect between governments, particularly regarding individual government policies and regulations.⁹³ SEAMEO, an institutionalised mechanism for cooperation between ministers of education, was also in place 50 years before the Declaration was developed.⁹⁴ Encouraging ASEAN member states to engage in a collective initiative on OOSCY was easier because the approach aligned with the 'ASEAN Way'.⁹⁵

Existing policies and initiatives in ASEAN member states created an enabling environment for the Declaration to be adopted. The Declaration was part

of a larger ecosystem of policies and initiatives by governments, NGOs and other stakeholders.⁹⁶ Prior to the Declaration, ASEAN member states expressed a commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including aspirations to achieve SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable education.⁹⁷ In some countries, inclusive education policies were already in place. The Lao Ministry of Education and Sports, with support from UNESCO, was developing a draft concept for a Lifelong Learning Decree, which referred to expanding educational opportunities for OOSCY, when the Declaration was adopted.⁹⁸ In 2005, Thailand passed a Cabinet Resolution that stated all non-Thai children were eligible to access basic education in public Thai schools.⁹⁹ Together with Thailand's 1999 National Education Act B.E. 2542, the Cabinet Resolution was used as context to draft the Declaration, as there was an interest in replicating the commitment to education in other countries.¹⁰⁰

Before the Declaration, there was also an active presence of international, regional and non-governmental organisations in the region. Many of these stakeholders were already running OOSCY programmes and advocating for more government involvement. Save the Children was providing technical assistance to operationalise Thailand's National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999), while implementing a migrant education programme.¹⁰¹ UNICEF was conducting studies on OOSC in eight ASEAN member states.¹⁰² The work of governments, and these international, regional and non-governmental organisations proved to be mutually reinforcing¹⁰³ and helped to further progress.

⁹² Regional Organisation Staff 3; AMS Representative 14

⁹³ AMS Representative 14; International NGO Staff 1; International NGO Staff 4

⁹⁴ Regional Organisation Staff 4; Regional Organisation Staff 6

⁹⁵ AMS Representative 4

⁹⁶ International NGO Staff 1

⁹⁷ AMS Representative 4; Regional Organisation 6; AMS Representative 7; AMS Representative 14

⁹⁸ AMS Representative 8

⁹⁹ AMS Representative 4; International NGO Staff 2; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹⁰⁰ International NGO Staff 2; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹⁰¹ International NGO Staff 2. Implemented in Thailand's Migrant Learning Centres, Save the Children's REACT project aims to ensure migrant children can access a quality basic education; Seiden, Jonathan, Siripen Ungsitipoonporn, Mayuree Thawornpat, Kate McDermott, Khem Krairit, Rung Nuchsuwan and Kaewta Sangsuk. "REACT Thailand Mae Sot, Phob Phra, and Tha Song Yang - Baseline Equity Study 2018." Save the Children, February 2018. <https://idela-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/REACT-Thailand-Mae-Sot-Phob-Phra-and-Tha-Song-Yang-Baseline-Equity-Study-2018.pdf>

¹⁰² International NGO Staff 4; International Staff 1; International NGO Staff 3; Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 4; AMS Representative 14

¹⁰³ International NGO Staff 3; International NGO Staff 4



“To what extent [the Declaration had an impact on changes] is difficult, it would be an assumption. It was a confluence of things, to pin it down to one thing would be difficult. There was the Zero Reject Policy, UNICEF’s OOSCI studies, ASEAN, data – together that created an enabling environment for things to happen.”
– International NGO Representative in Malaysia¹⁰⁴

Political will amongst government leaders enabled successful adoption of the Declaration and is an enabling factor for continued momentum. Prior to the Declaration, ASEAN member states noted an emergence of more ‘open-minded’ ministers of education and heads of state; leaders who wanted to invest resources in inclusive education.¹⁰⁵ The King and Princess of Thailand were proponents of education, which influenced political will among the rest of the Thai government.¹⁰⁶ A government change in Malaysia resulted in greater government involvement and buy-in to UNICEF’s OOSCI study.¹⁰⁷ An ongoing political commitment among government leaders will be necessary for successful implementation of the Declaration in the years to come. At the regional level, continued political will from members of the working group may help reinforce and sustain the commitment of ASEAN member states over time.¹⁰⁸

Evidence generation by international and regional organisations contributed to greater awareness and political will. Prior to the Declaration, international and regional organisations were generating global evidence on the magnitude and scope of OOSCY in ASEAN member states.¹⁰⁹ Amongst those studies were the OOSCI studies conducted by UNICEF in partnership with governments in eight ASEAN member states¹¹⁰ as well as two studies funded by EAC: a report on the economic cost of out of school children in seven Southeast Asian countries¹¹¹ and a situational analysis of OOSC in nine Southeast Asian countries.¹¹²

This evidence played an important role in country and regional discussions about OOSCY before the development of the Declaration, and it continues to contribute to the dialogue. UNICEF’s OOSCI studies, for example, were conducted in partnership with policymakers, which created opportunities to foster government buy-in, generate dialogue and build government capacity. In addition, the aforementioned research funded by EAC, a report entitled the *Economic Cost of Out-of-School Children in Southeast Asia*,¹¹³ created new links between OOSCY and economic growth, which caught the attention of policymakers in Thailand and broadened the motivations for addressing OOSCY.¹¹⁴ The economic argument for getting children back into school was reinforced during the first and second consultative meetings during the Declaration development process as well as in other fora.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁴ International NGO Staff 4

¹⁰⁵ AMS Representative 3; AMS Representative 13

¹⁰⁶ Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹⁰⁷ International NGO Staff 4

¹⁰⁸ Regional Organisation Staff 5

¹⁰⁹ AMS Representative 1; AMS Representative 11; AMS Representative 3; AMS Representative 8; International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation 6; International NGO Staff 4; International NGO Staff 1; International NGO Staff 3

¹¹⁰ International NGO Staff 1; International NGO Staff 4; UNICEF’s Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) aims to support countries in their study and analysis of out-of-school children and children who are at risk of dropping out by using innovative statistical methods to develop comprehensive profiles of excluded children, linking these profiles to the barriers that lead to exclusion. Within ASEAN, OOSCI studies have been conducted in Lao PDR, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Viet Nam and Thailand; UNICEF. “Global Out-of-School Children Initiative: Operational Manual.” New York: UNICEF. April 2015. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247531>

¹¹¹ “The Economic Cost of Out-of-School Children in Southeast Asia” was a study conducted by Results for Development (R4D) and UNESCO Bangkok; Thomas, Milan and Nicholas Burnett. “The Economic Cost of Out-of-School Children in Southeast Asia.” Paris: UNESCO and UNESCO Bangkok. 2015. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233993>

¹¹² “Situation Analysis of Out-of-School Children in Nine Southeast Asian Countries” was a study conducted by UNESCO Bangkok; UNESCO Bangkok. “Situation Analysis of Out-of-School Children in Nine Southeast Asian Countries.” Paris: UNESCO and UNESCO Bangkok. 2017. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000252749>

¹¹³ Thomas, Milan and Nicholas Burnett. “The Economic Cost of Out-of-School Children in Southeast Asia.” Paris: UNESCO and UNESCO Bangkok. 2015. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233993>

¹¹⁴ AMS Representative 7

¹¹⁵ UNESCO Bangkok. “Summary Record of the 1st Technical Experts Meeting for the Development of ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children (OOSC).” Bangkok: ASEAN. 11 February 2016.; UNESCO Bangkok. “Summary Record of the 2nd Technical Experts Meeting for the Development of ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children (OOSC).” Bangkok: ASEAN. 8 March 2016.

“People didn’t believe it would be that costly to leave OOSC out of school. When combined with GDP growth, people really saw that OOSC was an important issue for us [ASEAN].”¹¹⁶
– AMS Representative

The influence and organisational structure of ASEAN was a key enabler to achieving government buy-in to the Declaration and subsequent regional activities. The selection of ASEAN as the host organisation for the Declaration was strategic, as ASEAN has a comparative advantage in convening regional country governments.¹¹⁷ Because ASEAN facilitates direct minister-to-minister relationships in an effort to accelerate economic growth and social development, government leaders have a desire to be a part of ASEAN and therefore invest in the relationship.¹¹⁸ In the years leading up to the Declaration, ASEAN was generating momentum. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was established in 2015 as a way to promote economic integration of the seventh largest economy in the world.¹¹⁹ Country governments were increasingly engaging with one another, particularly around economic issues, making the timing ideal for an ASEAN-led OOSCY initiative.¹²⁰

Organisational processes within ASEAN were instrumental to securing political commitment from ASEAN member states, helping to ensure that the Declaration was a truly regional initiative. Decision-making within ASEAN is based on

consensus;¹²¹ all member states provided input on the draft Declaration and endorsed it before it took effect.¹²² Because the Declaration was an ASEAN-led initiative, the highest members of government endorsed it – a process that elevates issues within ASEAN member states.¹²³ ASEAN also has the resources, technical expertise and political clout to address OOSCY as a multi-sectoral issue.¹²⁴ Under ASEAN’s aforementioned pillars, education is only one small part of ASEAN’s focus.¹²⁵ The organisation facilitates collaboration between entire governments and maintains a network of external dialogue partners and donors.¹²⁶ Lastly, ASEAN is chaired by an individual country every year, meaning ASEAN member states drive the agenda. Governments are well positioned to bring economic, security and social issues, including the Declaration, to the ASEAN platform.¹²⁷

Without a strong country champion, a sustainable partnership between ASEAN member states would not have been possible.¹²⁸ As one international NGO explains, “Thailand pushed the agenda.”¹²⁹ UNESCO Bangkok and the government of Thailand were already working together in the years leading up to the Declaration, so co-leading the Declaration process was a natural partnership.¹³⁰ Thailand also had a history of inclusive education policies and political influence in the region.¹³¹ Thailand helped develop the first draft of the Declaration, hosted the working group meetings in Bangkok, co-funded and hosted the September 2019 “ASEAN Conference on Out of School Children and Youth,” and is leading one of the regional proposals.¹³² Their leadership enabled a quick adoption of the Declaration by ASEAN member states and continues to help generate progress at the regional level.

¹¹⁶ AMS Representative 7

¹¹⁷ International NGO Staff 4; International NGO Staff 2; Regional Organisation Staff 5; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹¹⁸ International NGO Staff 2; International NGO Staff 4; International NGO Staff 1

¹¹⁹ ASEAN. “About ASEAN.” Website. Accessed 20 November 2019. <https://asean.org/>

¹²⁰ Regional Organisation Staff 5; Regional Organisation Staff 6; International NGO Staff 2

¹²¹ Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 5; International NGO 1

¹²² Regional Organisation Staff 4; Regional Organisation Staff 5; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹²³ Regional Organisation Staff 6; Regional Organisation Staff 5; International NGO Staff 1

¹²⁴ Regional Organisation Staff 5; Regional Organisation Staff 6; EAC Staff 1

¹²⁵ Regional Organisation Staff 5; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹²⁶ Regional Organisation Staff 5; Regional Organisation Staff 6; ASEAN. “About ASEAN.” Website. Accessed 20 November 2019. <https://asean.org/>

¹²⁷ AMS Representative 5; International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 7

¹²⁸ Regional Organisation Staff 6; Regional Organisation Staff 5; International NGO Staff 1

¹²⁹ Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹³⁰ AMS Representative 4; International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 7

¹³¹ AMS Representative 4; International NGO 2; AMS Representative 7; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹³² Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 4

Dedicated leadership from UNESCO Bangkok

increased stakeholder engagement in the development of the Declaration and contributed to the expansion of flexible-learning strategies for OOSCY in Thailand, Myanmar and Lao PDR. Historically, UNESCO Bangkok has had a positive reputation for working with ASEAN member state governments and other stakeholders in the region. The organisation is also highly regarded for its technical expertise on OOSCY.¹³³ According to one ASEAN member state representative, UNESCO Bangkok fully understood why the region needed the Declaration and mobilised partners to make it happen.¹³⁴ Leveraging the expertise of various regional stakeholders and NGOs, UNESCO Bangkok's efforts around the Declaration were consistent and stable.¹³⁵ They undertook significant leg work to secure funding for the Declaration, including lengthy negotiations with EAC, investing their own resources and staff time, and identifying opportunities for collaboration with local implementers through various mechanisms, such as cost-sharing of teacher training and salaries.¹³⁶ And they actively encouraged country governments

to take on leadership roles in developing and implementing the Declaration.

UNESCO Bangkok also provided country level support to the governments in Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand. Communicating regularly with governments in the three countries, UNESCO Bangkok worked directly with ministries of education and implementing NGOs to expand programmes for OOSC.¹³⁷ At the regional level and within countries, UNESCO Bangkok facilitated a participatory process, which will likely help promote greater sustainability of the Declaration and its impact.

Catalytic funding from Educate A Child (EAC) and UNESCO Bangkok as well as follow-on support from UNICEF

greatly contributed to the development and impact of the Declaration, including results seen at the country level. Development of the Declaration would not have been possible without EAC funding.¹³⁸ EAC provided resources to conduct background research that informed the Declaration's content, supported



¹³³ EAC Staff 2; International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 5; AMS Representative 5; International NGO Staff 4; Regional Organisation Staff 3

¹³⁴ AMS Representative 5

¹³⁵ International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 3

¹³⁶ EAC Staff 2; Regional Organisation Staff 6; Regional Organisation Staff 8; International NGO Staff 1

¹³⁷ AMS Representative 9; Regional Organisation Staff 6; EAC Staff 1

¹³⁸ Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 7

regional convenings to draft and endorse the Declaration, and contributed to subsequent press releases and reports to disseminate the Declaration among various stakeholders once it was endorsed. While part of EAC's financial support went towards developing the Declaration, much of the funding was directed towards implementation of flexible-learning strategies in Myanmar, Thailand and Lao PDR.¹³⁹ This direct country-level support contributed to the creation and expansion of initiatives providing direct benefits to OOSC.¹⁴⁰

“Without this country-level support, the government wouldn't have been able to see the benefits from the programme we had with OOSC.”¹⁴¹ –

Regional Organisation Staff Representative

The majority of the regional meetings following the Declaration's development were hosted by leveraging funds from UNICEF and other stakeholders.¹⁴² When asked about financing models for similar initiatives, regional partners and ASEAN member states recommended that donors find a balance between regional and country level support – both components are necessary to achieve longer-term impacts.¹⁴³

Foreseen and unforeseen challenges of the Declaration development and implementation process, and their implications for continued progress

Several challenges were faced in the development and implementation of the Declaration, which could hinder long-term progress, including:

Political sensitivity around migrant children may constrain governments' ability to pursue significant policy change in support of OOSCY. Migrant, often undocumented, children comprise a large percentage of the OOSCY population in some ASEAN member states, yet not all policymakers and constituents in these countries support the provision of government services to non-citizens.¹⁴⁴ Governments must balance the demands of taxpayers with their ambition to implement policies and programmes pursuant to the Declaration.¹⁴⁵ Despite the political challenge, governments have found creative solutions. Some ASEAN member states continue to support OOSCY but are thoughtful about when and how they publicly share that information.¹⁴⁶ Others rely on NGOs to generate objective evidence that could sway public opinion¹⁴⁷ and provide alternative forms of education.¹⁴⁸

Lack of sufficient funding and bureaucratic barriers

inhibit successful implementation of OOSCY programmes at the country level and threaten sustainability of regional initiatives. These barriers prevent country governments from implementing changes based on regional collaboration. For example, policymakers might be interested in integrating their data systems to better support OOSCY but do not have sufficient domestic resources to fund the initiative.¹⁴⁹ As one ASEAN member state representative explains, “government budgets are limited, so we have to wait for donors to support additional actions.”¹⁵⁰ Likewise, the Declaration aims to frame OOSCY as a multi-sectoral initiative to promote inter-ministerial collaboration within countries, yet many government stakeholders emphasised the challenge of getting government ministries to work together.¹⁵¹

At the regional level, while Educate A Child's support was catalytic to developing the Declaration,

¹³⁹ Regional Organisation Staff 6; EAC Staff 2

¹⁴⁰ Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 8; AMS Representative 9

¹⁴¹ AMS Representative 9

¹⁴² Regional Organisation Staff 6; International NGO Staff 1

¹⁴³ Regional Organisation Staff 6; International NGO Staff 1; AMS Representative 7

¹⁴⁴ International NGO Staff 1; AMS Representative 7; AMS Representative 11; International NGO Staff 2; AMS Representative 14, AMS Representative 9; AMS Representative 7; International NGO Staff 1

¹⁴⁵ AMS Representative 11

¹⁴⁶ AMS Representative 7

¹⁴⁷ International NGO Staff 4; International NGO Staff 1

¹⁴⁸ AMS Representative 13

¹⁴⁹ AMS Representative 8

¹⁵⁰ AMS Representative 6; AMS Representative 8

¹⁵¹ AMS Representative 8; AMS Representative 9

securing sustainable funding to continue regional activities is difficult.¹⁵² For instance, while UNICEF supported the government of Malaysia to host the October 2019 regional convening on data strengthening, no additional funds have been committed yet.¹⁵³ The regional proposals developed under the Declaration show promise but implementation of those proposals will require resources from donors. Countries struggle to mobilise domestic resources for a regional project and regional organisations face high levels of bureaucracy around resource allocation.¹⁵⁴ Potential foreign donors were invited to participate in regional convenings as dialogue partners in the hopes they would commit funds to support implementation but to date, only one of the three regional proposals has successfully secured funding from one of those donors.¹⁵⁵

Leadership changes within country governments and ASEAN are both an enabling factor and a challenge to successful implementation of the Declaration. As one regional stakeholder made clear, political change affects the discourse around out of school children.¹⁵⁶ Many country governments have experienced turnover since the Declaration was adopted, which has, in some instances, affected their commitment to the Declaration and their ability to enact national policies to address OOSCY¹⁵⁷. As observed during conversations with ASEAN member states at the September 2019 OOSCY Conference, knowledge of the Declaration and its role in government planning is not widespread. This could be because delegates who attend the regional convenings and working group meetings are not always the actors driving change at the country level.¹⁵⁸ Leadership changes within ASEAN also affects progress and collaboration at the regional level.¹⁵⁹ For example, one ASEAN member state submitted a proposal to ASEAN to

host a regional conference on data strengthening for OOSCY; it was stalled for over a year due to staffing changes within the ASEAN Secretariat.¹⁶⁰

Limitations of the Declaration

The Declaration was a significant regional achievement for ASEAN member states, yet limitations remain. The Declaration is aspirational in nature and not legally binding, meaning ASEAN member states are not legally obligated to carry out the terms of the Declaration. Regional partners hope to foster stronger accountability through the bi-annual working group meetings, but member states' participation and reporting is voluntary.¹⁶¹ Progress pursuant to the Declaration is dependent on ASEAN member states feeling invested in the process.

In addition, the Declaration cannot change government structures. Although heads of state endorsed the Declaration, implementation decisions within countries are ultimately subject to the national political systems, laws, regulations and norms, of each individual country. Successful implementation of the Declaration at the country level may require policy change, which takes considerable agreement amongst political leaders. As one regional stakeholder describes, "contextualisation and localisation [of the Declaration] are important, but we need to recognise that they could also be a challenge; outcomes depend on what member states feel comfortable doing."¹⁶² The diversity and political autonomy of ASEAN member states also limits how governments drive progress at the regional level. For example, the regional proposal on developing a regional equivalency framework has been slow moving due in part to differing cultural, linguistic and political priorities among ASEAN member states.¹⁶³

¹⁵² Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹⁵³ International NGO Staff 4

¹⁵⁴ International NGO Staff 1

¹⁵⁵ AMS Representative 4; International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹⁵⁶ International NGO Staff 1

¹⁵⁷ Regional Organisation Staff 6; International NGO Staff 2

¹⁵⁸ International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹⁵⁹ International NGO Staff 1; International NGO Staff 4

¹⁶⁰ International NGO Staff 4

¹⁶¹ Regional Organisation Staff 5; International NGO Staff 2; International NGO Staff 1

¹⁶² Regional Organisation Staff 5

¹⁶³ AMS Representative 3

Recommendations for Continued Progress

While the Declaration has contributed to progress around OOSCY, its existence alone will not guarantee OOSCY will remain on the policy agenda. As numerous stakeholders emphasised, the Declaration is simply a piece of paper.¹⁶⁴ Additional supports will be needed. Based on the enabling factors and challenges mentioned above, below are a set of recommendations to sustain momentum.

1. Continue building and supporting sustainable mechanisms for continued collaboration and accountability at the regional level

Sustainable progress will require institutionalising and strengthening existing collaboration mechanisms within broader ASEAN activities.¹⁶⁵ The Declaration and subsequent working group meetings have already established a formal platform for both regular collaboration and progress reporting.¹⁶⁶ Thailand has also stepped up to host working group meetings.¹⁶⁷ Described as a “healthy kind of competition and collaboration,”¹⁶⁸ working group meetings act as an accountability mechanism and keep ASEAN member states focussed” on progress being made.¹⁶⁹ Consistent funding and stable leadership and representation from ASEAN member states are needed to institutionalise this platform. This will require stakeholders to develop a sustainable funding model, including the possibility of leveraging private sector funds and domestic resource mobilisation within ASEAN member states. Likewise, stakeholders should develop a concrete plan for leadership turnover to maintain strong champions as ASEAN member state representatives will undoubtedly change.

2. Develop a measurement framework to build greater accountability at the country level

A measurement framework to measure success of the Declaration may help ASEAN member states

track progress towards key outcomes pursuant to the agreement. To date, few ASEAN member states have set a clear goal for addressing OOSCY.¹⁷⁰ This could be because a measurement framework – a systematic way of measuring outcomes of the Declaration – was not developed at the outset.¹⁷¹ The Declaration lays out a long-term vision, but does not clearly outline short-term and medium-term results that countries can aim to achieve, both at the country level and at the regional level. By developing a measurement framework for monitoring progress, country governments may be more likely to set a target goal for themselves and then define a clear set of actions to achieve it.

3. Continue to engage diverse stakeholders to support implementation

The ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN member states, and supporting partners can drive progress by continuing to engage diverse stakeholders in the implementation of the Declaration. The Asia Regional Network for OOSC, which has been engaging stakeholders with knowledge and guidance on reaching OOSC through component 3 of the UNESCO-EAC collaboration, could help facilitate these connections. As one international NGO representative explains, “it takes multiple stakeholders to move the agenda.”¹⁷² Activities by NGOs and other stakeholders pre-Declaration demonstrated how mutually reinforcing stakeholder efforts are needed to sustain momentum.¹⁷³ Because both international and local NGOs are often the stakeholders working directly with OOSCY, it is important for the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN member states to build and maintain a positive, collaborative relationship with these actors.¹⁷⁴ It will be equally important to engage diverse donors to support implementation efforts.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁴ AMS Representative 7; International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹⁶⁵ International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹⁶⁶ AMS Representative 13; Regional Organisation Staff 3

¹⁶⁷ AMS Representative 4

¹⁶⁸ International NGO Staff 4

¹⁶⁹ AMS Representative 13; International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 6

¹⁷⁰ AMS Representative 7

¹⁷¹ Regional Organisation Staff 5

¹⁷² International NGO Staff 4

¹⁷³ International NGO Staff 4; International NGO Staff 1; Regional Organisation Staff 3

¹⁷⁴ AMS Representative 7

¹⁷⁵ Regional Organisation Staff 6

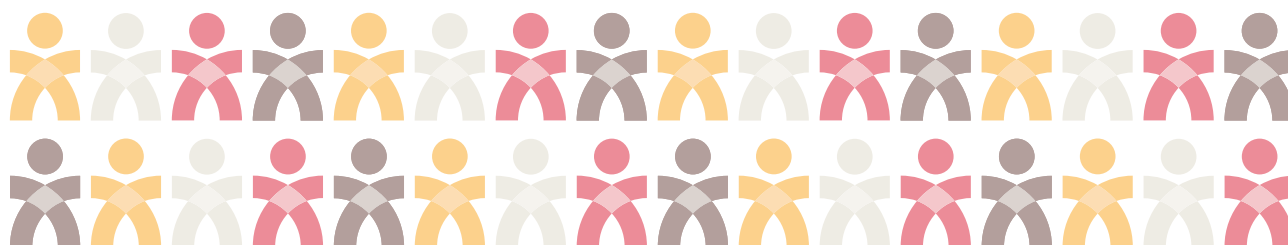
SECTION VII:
**EAC ROLE AND
VALUE ADDED**



EAC support to the *Strengthening Education System for OOSC* project was critical to the Declaration's development and its subsequent impacts shared in Section V. EAC provided USD 2.6 million in co-funding over three and a half years to launch the project, under which the Declaration development and country level support were provided and the Asia Regional Network for OOSC was established.¹⁷⁶ Technical consultations between EAC and UNESCO Bangkok also helped shape the project activities.¹⁷⁷

Although many AMS representatives were unaware of how EAC supported the Declaration and implementation activities, as described in Section VI of this case study, EAC's financial support spurred the development of the Declaration. Their contributions supported evidence generation on OOSC in the ASEAN region, regional convenings

to draft and endorse the Declaration, and follow-on activities related to its launch and wider dissemination. EAC's support also enabled subsequent regional collaboration related to implementation of the Declaration and expansion of flexible-learning strategies in Thailand, Lao PDR and Myanmar.¹⁷⁸ These activities reached 54,251 OOSC who would not otherwise have received an education.¹⁷⁹ In addition, EAC's support enabled 2,028 teachers, government officials, NGO staff and other stakeholders to receive training on flexible-learning strategies to continue supporting OOSC.¹⁸⁰ While EAC's country level support has enabled short-term changes in some countries, the nature of EAC's support to the regional Declaration's development and its implementation has been essential and catalytic for this unique regional initiative.



¹⁷⁶ Regional Organisation Staff 6; Educate A Child and UNESCO Bangkok. "Project Execution Agreement: Strengthening Education System for Out of School Children." Executed between Educate A Child and UNESCO Bangkok, 8 September 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Regional Organisation Staff 6; EAC Staff 1; EAC Staff 2

¹⁷⁸ Regional Organisation 6; AMS Representative 5; International NGO Staff 1

¹⁷⁹ Regional Organisation Staff 6; AMS Representative 9; UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: January 2019." Submitted to Educate A Child, January 2019.

¹⁸⁰ UNESCO Bangkok. "EAC Partner Semi-Annual Technical Report: January 2019." Submitted to Educate A Child, January 2019.

ANNEX 1



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ANNEX 2



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2. EAC Staff 2. Virtual interview with EAC staff, 20 August 2019.

Regional Organisation Staff

1. Regional Organisation Staff 1. Virtual interview with regional organisation education staff, 28 June 2019.
2. Regional Organisation Staff 2. Virtual interview with regional organisation education staff, 14 August 2019.
3. Regional Organisation Staff 3. In-person interview with regional organisation leadership, 16 September 2019.
4. Regional Organisation Staff 4. In-person interview with regional organisation leadership, 16 September 2019.
5. Regional Organisation Staff 5. In-person group interview with regional organisation leadership, Bangkok, 17 September 2019.
6. Regional Organisation Staff 6. In-person group interview with regional organisation education staff, 19 September 2019.
7. Regional Organisation Staff 7. Virtual group interview with regional organisation education staff, 23 October 2019.
8. Regional Organisation Staff 8. Virtual written consultation with regional organisation education staff, 14 February 2020.

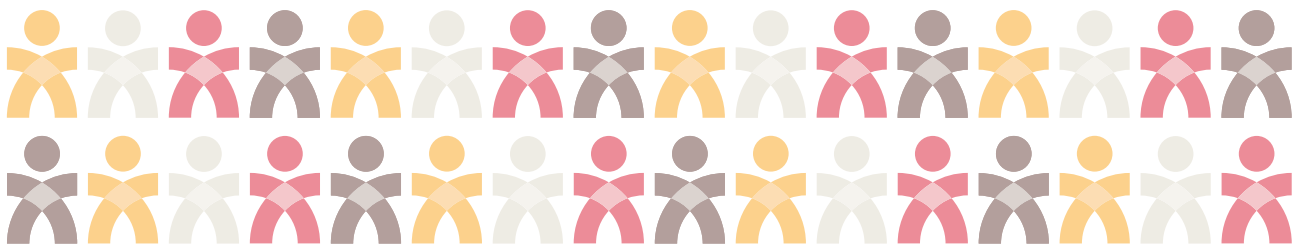
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2. AMS Representative 2. In-person group interview with Ministry of Education officials from Country 2, 16 September 2019.
3. AMS Representative 3. In-person interview with Ministry of Education official from Country 3, 16 September 2019.
4. AMS Representative 4. In-person interview with Ministry of Education official from Country 4, 16 September 2019.
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6. AMS Representative 6. In-person group interview with Ministry of Education officials from Country 5, 17 September 2019.
7. AMS Representative 7. In-person interview with government official from Country 4, 18 September 2019.
8. AMS Representative 8. In-person group interview with Ministry of Education officials from Country 6, 20 September 2019.
9. AMS Representative 9. In-person group interview with Ministry of Education officials from Country 6, 23 September 2019.
10. AMS Representative 10. In-person interview with Ministry of Education official from Country 6, 23 September 2019.
11. AMS Representative 11. In-person group interview with Ministry of Education officials from Country 7, 25 September 2019.
12. AMS Representative 12. In-person group interview with Ministry of Education officials from Country 7, 25 September 2010.

13. AMS Representative 13. In-person group interview with Ministry of Education officials from Country 7, 25 September 2019.
14. AMS Representative 14. In-person group interview with Ministry of Education officials from Country 7, 26 September 2019.

International NGO Staff

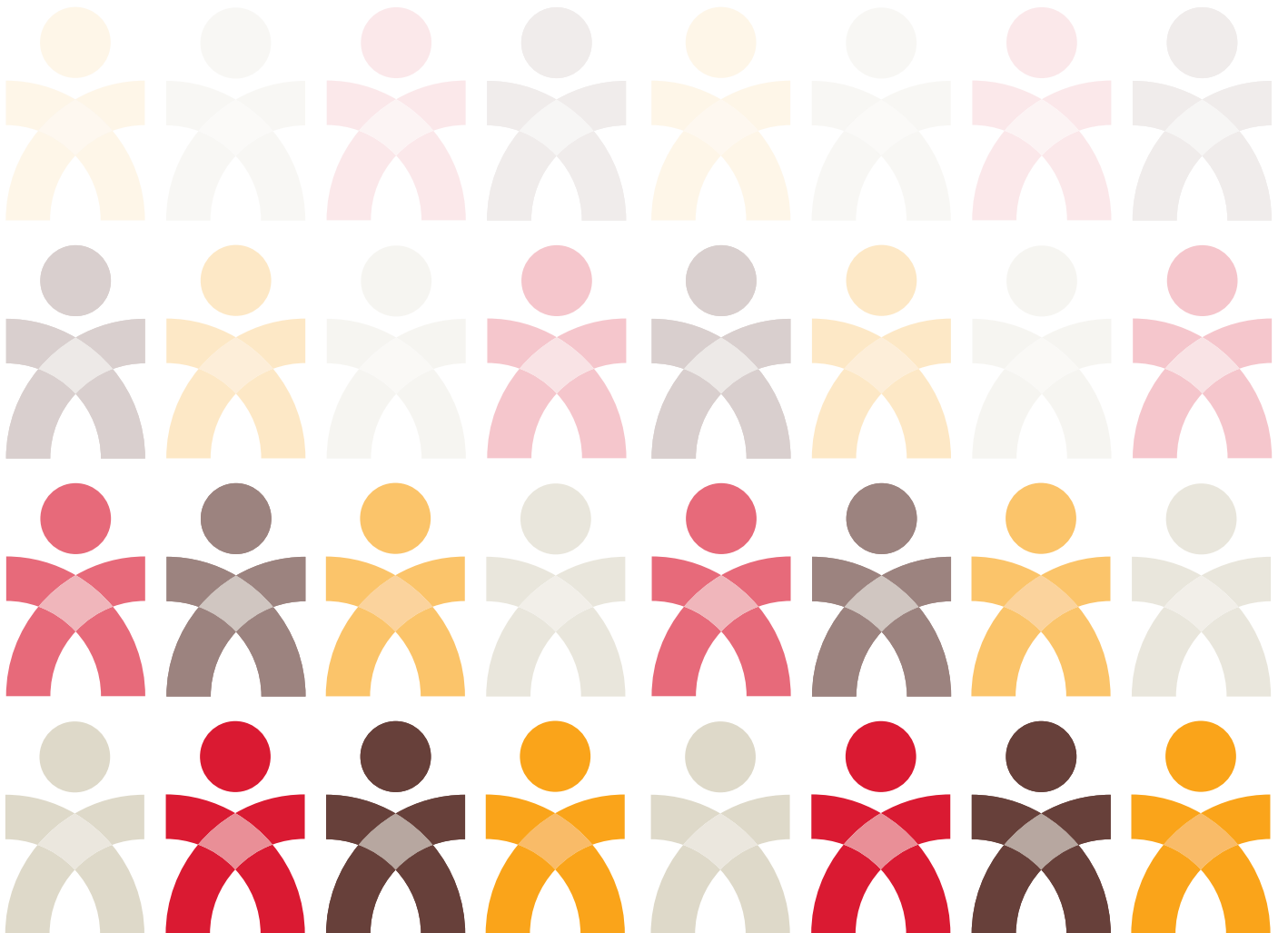
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2. International NGO Staff 2. In-person group interview with international NGO leadership and staff from Country 4, 19 September 2019.
3. International NGO Staff 3. In-person interview with international NGO staff from Country 6, 23 September 2019.
4. International NGO Staff 4. In-person interview with international NGO staff from Country 7, 26 September 2019.





التعليم | education
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ANNEX 3



ASEAN DECLARATION ON STRENGTHENING EDUCATION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUTH (OOSCY)

WE, the Heads of State and Government of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (hereinafter referred to as “ASEAN”), namely Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, gathering hereby at the 28th ASEAN Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR;

REAFFIRMING our commitment to the ASEAN Community comprised of three pillars, namely ASEAN Political Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, as called for by our leaders at the 12th ASEAN Summit on 13 January 2007;

REAFFIRMING that one of the key purposes of ASEAN as stipulated in Article 1 paragraph 10 of the ASEAN Charter is to develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and lifelong learning, and in science and technology, for the empowerment of the peoples of ASEAN and for the strengthening of the ASEAN Community;

REAFFIRMING FURTHER the importance of education for children and youth and Article 31 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration which states that:

- a. Every person has the right to education.
- b. Primary education shall be compulsory and made available free to all. Secondary education in its different forms shall be available and accessible to all through every appropriate means. Technical and vocational education shall be made generally available. Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

RECOGNIZING that in parts of the ASEAN region, there is a significant number of OOSCY thereby requiring effective measures to enable them to have equal access to education and to benefit from continuous education (access), to remain and be retained in school (retention), and to complete such education (completion);

COGNIZANT that all Member States of ASEAN are Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and that the CRC defines a child as a person under eighteen years of age and emphasizes the principles of non-discrimination, the right to life, survival, and development, the best interests of the child, and respect for the child’s views.

STRESSING that the right to education based on non-discrimination is underlined by the CRC, the CEDAW and the CRPD and that by Article 28 of the CRC: “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- a. Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
- b. Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child and youth, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
- c. Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

- d. Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children and youth;
- e. Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates;

RECALLING the commitment by all States to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), advanced further by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in New York, USA, in September 2015 of which Goal 1 is to “End poverty in all its forms everywhere” and Goal 4 is to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by the year 2030 of which, among others, a key target is “4.1) By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes” and another target is “4.2) By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”;

EMPHASIZING that these developments have been supported strongly at other levels, including the Incheon Declaration on Education 2030: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All adopted by the World Education Forum in Incheon, the Republic of Korea, in May 2015 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action adopted by the 38th United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference in Paris in November 2015;

RECALLING the Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation on Education to Achieve an ASEAN Caring and Sharing Community, adopted at Cha-Am Hua Hin, Thailand on 24th October 2009, and the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Higher Education, adopted at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 21st November 2015;

RECALLING also that the issue of education is an essential component of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint targeted for implementation

by 2025, advanced further by the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016-2020, with additional opportunities to integrate the CRC, the Education 2030 Framework for Action and SDGs into the ASEAN region;

DO HEREBY AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

DIMENSIONS OF OOSCY

1. The term “Out-of-School Children and Youth” (OOSCY) encompasses children and youth in one or more of the following four key situations:
 - a. Children and youth who do not have access to a school in their community;
 - b. Children and youth who do not yet enroll at a school, despite the availability of a school;
 - c. Children and youth who have enrolled but do not attend school or are at risk of dropping out;
 - d. Children and youth who drop out of the education system.

These situations also reflect population flows and ethnic diversity.

Key Principles

2. We strive to ensure implementation of the following principles in accordance with the domestic laws and policies of ASEAN Member States and adapted to the different contexts of ASEAN Member States, and in conformity with international standards and obligations, strengthened by the aforesaid Incheon Declaration: Education 2030 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action:
 - a. **Inclusivity:** Education is a human rights and every child and youth, including OOSCY, is entitled to have access to education premised on non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all;
 - b. **Equity:** Strong commitment and specific support and resources are required to address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access to education, participation and learning outcomes;
 - c. **Accessibility:** Access to education is a priority to ensure optimal benefits for all

children and youth irrespective of gender, nationality, ethnicity, disability, geographic location, religion, belief, culture, social origin and other origins;

- d. **Continuity:** Continuous education, particularly to enable children and youth to access school, remain and be retained in school without dropping out, reduce repetition rates, and complete (not less than) a full course of primary education, needs to be guaranteed;
- e. **Quality:** Quality education is paramount and this involves a variety of factors, including effective teachers, curriculum, methodology, pedagogy, educational materials, evaluation, facilitation, and child and youth participation in cooperation with families and communities;
- f. **Flexibility:** Lifelong learning and individual empowerment call for flexible learning strategies and different pathways of learning for OOSCY, both formal and non-formal, academic and vocational skills, especially for those who are disadvantaged or marginalized;
- g. **Sustainability:** Access to education needs to be sustained so that the children and youth are able to enjoy education in a continuum and as part of a lifelong dynamic, a cornerstone for human development, respect for the planet, and the quest for prosperity, peace and partnership.

LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

- 3. In affirming that it is the primary responsibility of the Government of every ASEAN Member State to implement the rights to education, we strive to adopt comprehensive measures, including, among others, legislation, policies and related action plans to ensure the following:
 - a. Education based on inclusivity (inclusive education) in accordance with the CRC, the CEDAW and the CRPD, complemented by realization of the goals set by the Education 2030 Framework for Action and SDGs, to strengthen the educational system for children and youth, including

OOSCY, bearing in mind the challenges of gender, geography, ethnicity, diversity, poverty, migration, status and statelessness, language, marginalization, disability, emergency (such as conflict and natural disaster) and vulnerability;

- b. Accessibility to the educational system and access by children and youth to education, their retention in education, and their completion of education, with view of advancing their education at other levels, based on key principles stated;
- c. Development and implementation of operational guidelines and action plans, including the promotion of awareness of ASEAN as a caring and sharing community and as a people-centred and people-oriented region.

PROGRAMMES AND PRACTICES

- 4. We strive to establish programmes and practices to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, through but not limited to the following measures:
 - a. Assistance to children and youth and their families to address the impact of poverty on the right to education, targeting the eradication of poverty, including social protection systems to help the poor and the vulnerable, reduction of school fees and related costs for children and youth and their families, grant of scholarships and cash transfer to help those in need;
 - b. Incentives to enable all girls and boys to complete (not less than) free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes and to advance to other levels of education;
 - c. Provisions for all girls and boys to have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education;
 - d. Flexible learning strategies and activities to enable children and youth to have

opportunities to be educated out of school and bridge between formal and non-formal education, and between the world of work and learning, with safeguards against child labour;

- e. Framework for equivalency arrangements on basic education within the country and at the regional level, including the recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills, qualifications and competencies acquired, and possible credit transfers between recognized educational institutions and countries;
- f. Minimum standards of inclusive and quality education provision in respect of learning environment, teaching and learning, materials, and information and communication technology (ICT) that is accessible to all;
- g. Minimum standards of accessibility to physical environment, to information and communications, and to other facilities and services available in schools and academic institutions, for all children and youth to enjoy fully their right to education;
- h. Encouragement of voluntary and outreach work to help disadvantaged or marginalized groups in ASEAN to foster inclusive education.

MECHANISMS AND PERSONNEL

5. We strive to improve mechanisms and personnel to help implement the right to education, including the following measures:
 - a. Identification and strengthening of national coordination mechanism on inclusive education and OOSCY to provide advice in each country and as a link with ASEAN and relevant organs/organizations;
 - b. Capacity building programmes for personnel and teachers to develop and implement strategies which address the needs of OOSCY; to instill positive attitudes among them; to assist teachers involved in helping

children and youth with special needs; and to help personnel in charge of data collection and management;

- c. Activities to strengthen and implement standards on teacher quality, training, knowledge sharing, exchange and networking of teachers within ASEAN and other support to deliver inclusive education.

INFORMATION AND MONITORING

6. We strive to develop and strengthen information on OOSCY; to establish a monitoring and reporting system for information, statistics and data (disaggregated and gender sensitive) in order to accurately identify and track OOSCY and to support the monitoring of education programmes and related implementation based on inclusive and quality education. This is inspired by the need for transparent assessments and accountability.

MATERIAL AND NON MATERIAL RESOURCES

7. We strive to provide adequate resources to implement the rights to education and related programmes, including the following means:
 - a. Increase equitable allocation of national and sub national budgets and related resources to ensure sustained commitment for the OOSCY;
 - b. Promotion of partnership with the private/ business sector for contribution through creative means and related incentives intended for the OOSCY;
 - c. Promotion of non-material resources, such as pro bono work, local participation and a community of volunteers to help children and youth;
 - d. Generation of development assistance from a variety of sources, including international and regional, through strong advocacy and in a spirit of enhanced partnership.

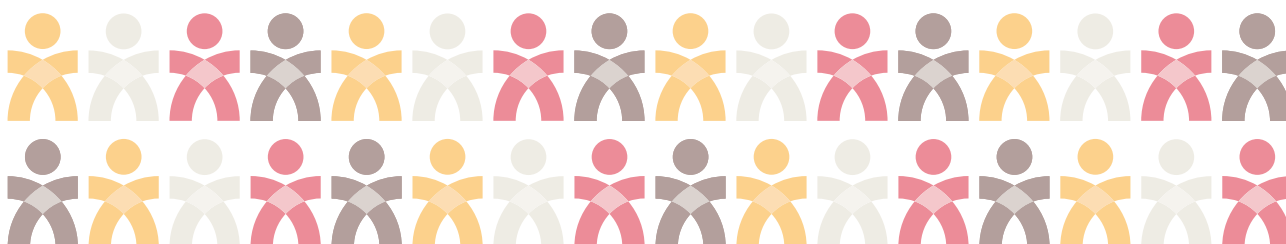
COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

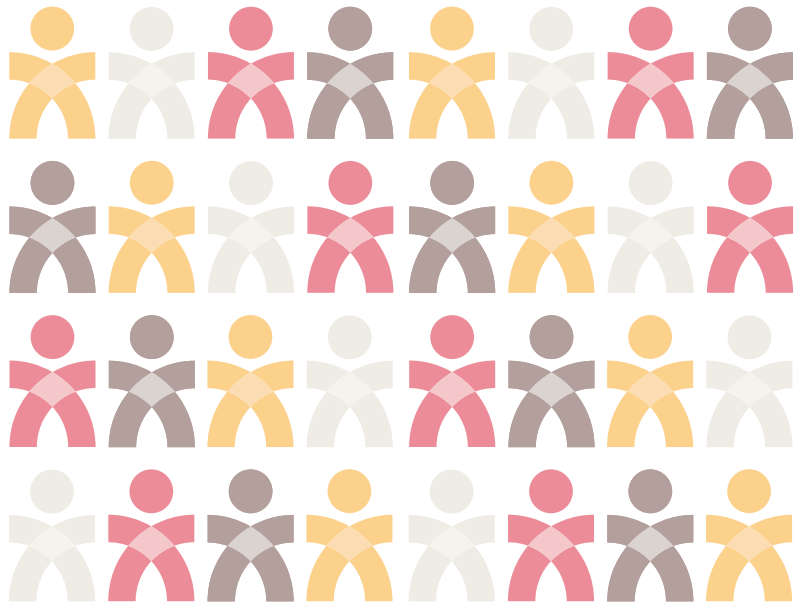
8. We strive to strengthen regional cooperation and sustainability of actions anchored on the understanding that long term equitable investment in education yields economic and other benefits for sustainable development, with the following measures:
 - a. Support for stronger links among and between ASEAN Ministers of Education and other relevant Ministers;
 - b. Activities to build the capacity of government officials, educators, civil society organizations for effective coordination and response to help OOSCY;
 - c. Encouragement to ASEAN Member States to share their technical and financial resources on the issue of OOSCY;
 - d. Involvement of ASEAN sectoral bodies in promoting the rights to education for all;
 - e. Possible accession to international conventions related to the promotion of wider inclusive quality education for all;
 - f. Expansion of cross sectoral cooperation through participatory approach involving a variety of stakeholders and contributors including children, youth and families, teachers and principals of educational institutions, civil society, national and community leaders, non-governmental organizations/community-based organizations, the private/business sector, and media;
- g. Deepening of cooperation with Dialogue Partners and other stakeholders (including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, and with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and other international organizations);
- h. Alignment of SDGs with priorities and programmes on OOSCY.

RESOLVE AND COMMITMENT

9. We pledge our resolve and commitment to this Declaration to ensure its effective implementation and to realize an ASEAN Community of Opportunities and a People-oriented and People-centered ASEAN Community.

ADOPTED in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, this 6th day of September in the Year Two Thousand and Sixteen, in a single original copy, in the English language.





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