



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Japan
Funds-in-Trust

Flexible Learning Strategies

FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL
CHILDREN
AND YOUTH

1 | Why Flexible Learning Strategies?

In 2012, 61 million children of primary school age and 71 million of lower-secondary-school-aged children were out of school over the world. Without bold and sustained action, global commitments to universal primary education will not be realized if current trends continue, leaving millions of children out of school and denied their right to education.

Flexible Learning Strategies (FLS) represent a shift away from a piecemeal approach to provision for the educationally excluded towards more systematic, flexible and rights-based/inclusive interventions, appropriately designed to match their needs and circumstances. The objective of FLS is that, regardless of mode, duration and place of study, excluded children can acquire solid basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as the competencies and life skills required to live safe and dignified lives.





One key lesson from past EFA initiatives is the need to plan for interventions for excluded groups on the basis of a broader understanding of access and exclusion beyond the narrow indicators of school enrolment rates. Patterns for non-enrolment, drop-out, low attendance and low achievement are complex and have implications for the design of initiatives to meet their needs. These patterns also reveal that barriers for these children are partly a question of school supply, partly of school quality, and partly, for some, the inappropriate and inflexible nature of the formal school model itself.

Typically, it is the marginalised, poor and remote rural populations, and those affected by conflict and discrimination, who are denied access to school. Poverty and vulnerable livelihoods are overarching, cross-cutting factors in exclusion from school. Most poor and vulnerable children come from identified groups but often belong to more than one category, resulting in multiple disadvantage and marginalization. There are factors within society that create differential demand for education and differential ability to take advantage of educational opportunities.

2 | Five Main Concepts of Flexible Learning Strategies



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INTENSIVE QUALITY LEARNING

Past EFA initiatives have shown that despite great achievements in improving access to basic education, not enough attention was given to its quality, whether delivered via formal or non-formal modes. In consequence, it has contributed to large-scale drop-out and low attainment. Many children leave school and non-formal provision without sufficient literacy or numeracy skills.

FLS focus on the learning needs of children who have never enrolled or who have dropped out of school. Many need to catch up with age-appropriate learning. FLS are often, but not always, conducted over a shorter time period than formal education programmes. Through intensive lessons with scaffolding, children can be helped to achieve their full potential in literacy and numeracy.



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REACHING THE UNREACHED

FLS are implemented for children who are out of school or did not start school at the right age. They are specifically aimed at marginalised and disadvantaged groups including children in poverty, girls, ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, refugees, children living in post-conflict settings, and immigrant/internally displaced children. FLS are designed in response to these children's specific contexts and needs and are managed and owned by local communities with external support from governments and NGOs.

FLEXIBILITY

FLS are flexible in terms of time, period, curriculum, pedagogy, venue, and languages. These aspects can include mother-tongue instruction, adopting different teaching methodologies, such as mobile teaching, multigrade teaching, activity-based learning, and specific approaches for any disadvantaged children such as children with disabilities, in poverty, from ethnic minorities, and under post conflict. FLS can respond to the diverse contexts and needs of excluded children, e.g. bringing the schooling to the students rather than getting students to the school. Existing examples of successful flexible places of study include home-based learning, community learning centres, mobile teaching, weekend and night schooling, tutoring, schools in camps, and use of ICT and mobile devices. Other 'flexible' aspects might include having flexible hours appropriate to the student's living or work conditions and designed to maximize contact time between teachers and learners.

EQUIVALENCY TO FORMAL EDUCATION

Basic education delivered in different organizational forms with FLS are formally recognised and supported as equivalent to formal education under national education policies, where legitimate recognised education is associated with a common framework of learning outcomes, assessment and certification, and a range of basic





quality criteria. When children successfully complete FLS programmes, they are qualified to enter lower secondary and secondary schools alongside their formally-educated peers.

FLS programmes do not necessarily have alternative learning content/curriculum, it is their strategy which is alternative and flexible. A national system of certification needs to be established in order to create a bridge between FLS programme and formal education. All FLS programme graduates should have the opportunity to take any existing national examinations or have an equivalent system of assessment created for them.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG LEARNING

FLS do not just follow examination-oriented education, they facilitate children to become lifelong learners. In other words, all children in FLS should learn how to learn. In addition, global citizenship topics such as living together, environmental issues and innovative thinking for problem solving are key learning components. Through this, FLS learners will be encouraged to become global citizens who can make positive changes in their societies. Usually, 70% of the FLS curriculum is the same as formal primary education. In addition, 30% will be allocated for contextualised and practical activities on global citizenship and how to become lifelong learners.



3 | Lessons Learnt from Country Experiences in Asia and Pacific

There are a number of FLS initiatives taken place in countries in Asia and Pacific for the last decade. These programmes have been called equivalency programmes, certified NFE programmes, accelerated learning programmes, flexible schooling programmes, complementary programmes, alternative learning programmes and etc. Lessons are learnt from these initiatives and some good cases are introduced here with their summaries. Three are government-led initiatives, two NGO-led, but all aim to ensure transition to formal education or to receive learning and accreditation which is recognised as equivalent to it.

One clear message is that there is no single solution for meeting the needs of these children and that countries need to look at what works well within their context and how they can build on this.



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OTHER KEY LESSONS INCLUDE THE NEED TO DEVELOP:

- Approaches which are based upon the belief that education programmes must adapt to the needs and circumstances of all children and young people
- Close partnership between Government and NGOs which allows for the creativity and community-based approach of NGOs within an overriding government framework and supportive government legislation
- Equivalency of accreditation
- Ease of transition between alternative and regular education provision through credit transfer
- Potential for accelerated curriculum and also a curriculum which allows children and young people to gain educational skills alongside more functional learning
- Flexible delivery which can adapt to the life patterns of the children and young people, and also the ability to make use of multiple modes of delivery where appropriate
- Community-based approach, recruiting teachers from the community and training them to work holistically supporting social as well as educational aspects of children's lives and also facilitating change in community attitudes

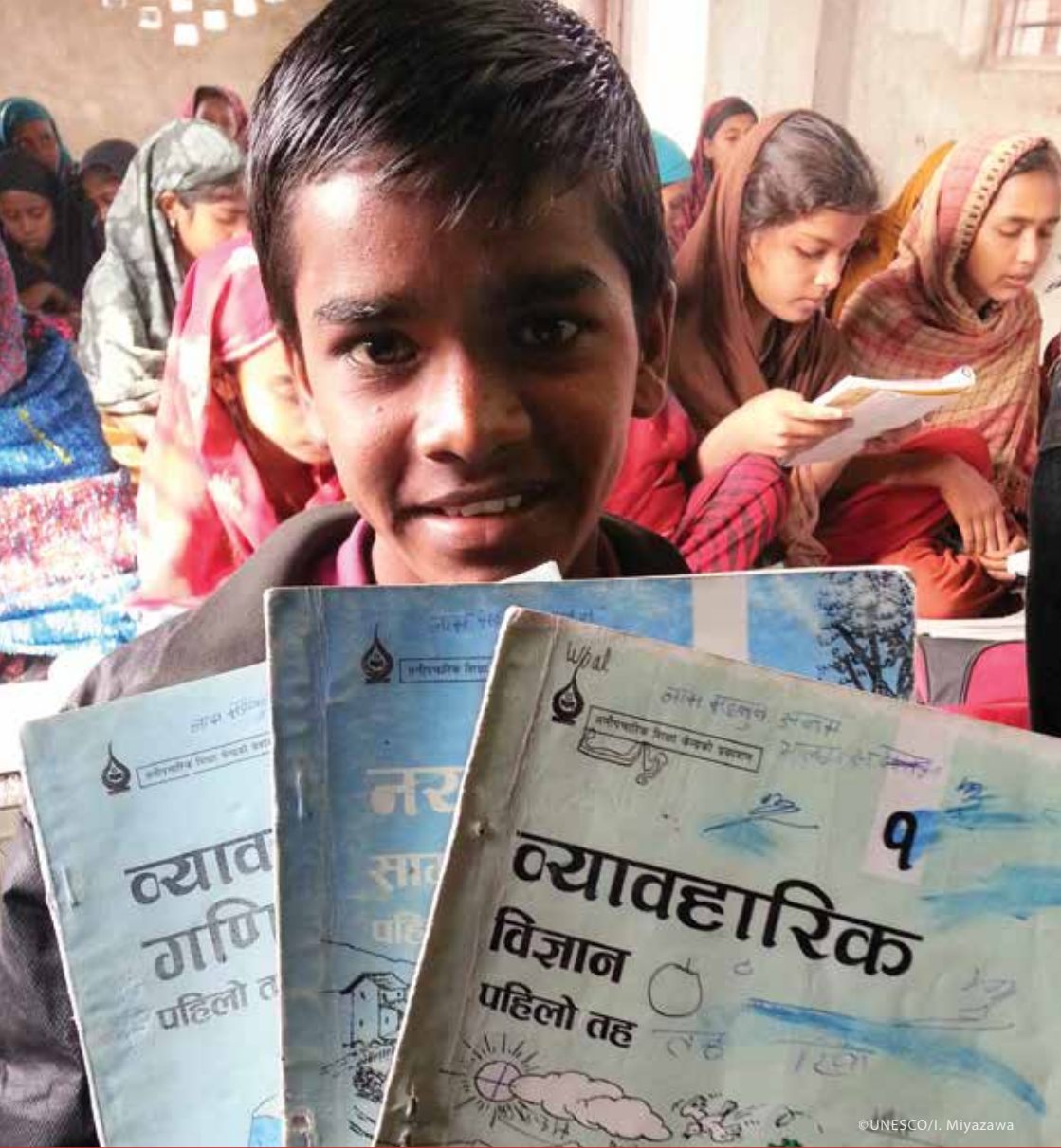
Country	Target	Period and Time	Curriculum
Bangladesh	Out-of-school children (8-10 years old)	Every week day for 4 years	BRAC – Core subjects, social values, human rights, financial education
India	Out-of-school children (over 10 years old)	Every week day, Catch up varies between 6–18 months	MV Foundation – Academic and vocational subjects
Myanmar	Out-of-school children (10-14 years old)	Every week day for 2 years	Skills-based curriculum covering Myanmar, English, Mathematics and General Studies and training on quality of life improvement focusing on income-generating activities and integrative workbook
Indonesia	School-age children who have dropped out of or have been unable to enroll in a regular programme)	Once or twice a week, 2 years	Packet a, b and c 1. Morale-building and academically-oriented subjects 2. Life skills oriented subjects in addition to basic subjects
Philippines	Out-of-school youth (11 years old and above)	Once or twice a week, 10 months or 800 hours	1. Communication skills 2. Problem-solving and critical thinking 3. Sustainable use of resources/ productivity 4. Development of self and a sense of community 5. Expanding one's world vision



	Place	Accreditation/certification
	BRAC community school	Students who finish primary schooling from BRAC transfer to formal secondary schools
	MV Foundation – Residential Bridge School	Closely working with the State Government and graduates are eligible to join formal schools in the State
	Primary school	Level 2 completion certificates are recognized as the completion of primary education. NFPE graduates are eligible to join the secondary level of formal education
	Packet A – Community Learning Centres (CLCs), e-learning, mobile classrooms	Examination certificate issued by government
	Home/CLC	A national certification examination conducted once a year

More and more country cases are presented at www.alp-edu.net





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