



CONCEPT NOTE FOR PREPARATORY MEETING

DRAFTING THE CALL FOR ACTION: INCLUDING ALL CHILDREN IN QUALITY LEARNING



23-24 October 2013
Eskisehir, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

A 1.5-day **Preparatory Meeting** will be organized in Eskisehir, Turkey prior to the Ministerial Conference in October 2013 to prepare and validate the Call for Action and to mobilize and coordinate partner contributions to the follow up to the Call for Action. The Meeting will bring together national experts from all countries in the region and international experts from the region and beyond.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Although national enrolment rates are high in the CEE/CIS region and universal education/MDG2 is often assumed to be achieved, many children drop out of school soon after primary education and many graduate from school without basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Around 2.5 million children of primary and lower-secondary school age and 1.6 million children of pre-primary school age are out of basic education, and thus out of learning. At the secondary level, more than 12 million adolescents are estimated not to be in school. There are many more children, perhaps millions, from the most marginalized communities, that are excluded from national data collection



procedures and thus are invisible in national education indicators. In particular, there are an estimated 5.1 million children with disabilities in the region, the majority of who are likely to be out of school.

A close look at the profiles of these children out of school¹ shows that specific groups of children from the most socially, culturally and economically marginalized communities continue to be excluded from basic education – either never enrolling in school, enrolling but not learning or enrolling but dropping out before the end of basic education. Indeed children from ethnic and/or linguistic minorities (such as the Roma), children with disabilities, children facing gender discrimination, children from poor families, young children without access to preschool and adolescents that have been “pushed out” of school make up the largest sub-groups of children out of school in the region.

The children and adolescents from marginalized communities that manage to stay in school often experience barriers to learning. Learning outcomes across the region are already worryingly low, with about half of 15 year olds failing to master basic reading and mathematics skills, according to the 2009 PISA learning assessment. For the most marginalized children, learning levels are the lowest; there are severe equity gaps in learning outcomes across the region between children and adolescents from marginalized communities and their peers from majority and wealthier backgrounds. Children with low levels of learning become more likely to leave school early and to be **excluded from more advanced learning and employment opportunities**.

The **key barriers and system bottlenecks** leading to children’s exclusion from education include discrimination, stigma and violence, poorly implemented policies, inadequate budgets, data gaps, poor quality teaching/learning processes, poverty, social and cultural barriers, inadequate social protection mechanisms, and lack of critical system inputs.

The middle-income status of most countries in CEE/CIS means they have the capacity to close equity gaps in education. In addition governments’ responsibilities for human rights, economic growth and the pursuit of social cohesion, CEE/CIS countries have the obligation to act as models for less developed economies, showing them that equity is possible and desirable and paving the path to achieving equity. This region has a key role to play in the Post-2015 global discussions.

Thus, in response to the urgency of the crisis in education equity, the Government of Turkey and UNICEF are launching a Call for Action to accelerate reforms to tackle the challenges that leave marginalized children out of school and out of learning. The Call for Action will be launched by the Minister of Education of Turkey in a Ministerial Conference in December 2013.

The aims of the Call for Action and the Ministerial Conference are to:

1. Accelerate the political momentum around **equity in access to and completion of basic education and secondary education** in CEE/CIS, and reduce the number of children out of school - particularly among young children and adolescents - by launching a call for action that will put in motion a regional initiative to include all children in quality learning ;

¹ CEE/CIS Regional Report on Out-of-School Children



2. Promote the importance of the **quality and relevance of education** as a way to improve learning outcomes, reduce equity gaps in learning and increase completion rates in basic and upper-secondary education in the region;
3. Promote an **inter-sectoral approach** to education inclusion, and in particular to the issue of out of school children;
4. Provide an opportunity and a forum to allow learners - particularly **adolescents and youth** – to get their voice heard, regarding the quality and relevance of the education they are offered.

In order to ensure the success of the Call for Action, the Ministerial Conference and its follow up, the way forward must draw from international expertise and be built on partnerships between governments and between international organizations.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Preparatory Meeting is to bring together national and international experts from every country in the region to:

- Draft and validate a Call for Action that will mobilize governments and partners in the region to accelerate their efforts to close equity gaps in education participation and learning
- Coordinate partners' contributions to the Ministerial Conference and its follow up
- Discuss and apply recent research on equity in education access and learning

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- 1) The **Call for Action** will be drafted with inputs and validation from national and international experts. The following steps will structure the development of the Call for Action:
 - A youth consultation was held to gather youth perspectives on education in the region and to develop a regional youth statement on education. This statement will contribute to the Call for Action and the Ministerial Conference.
 - A literature review of national and international reports will compile recommendations from a wide range of education actors.
 - A draft Call for Action document will be drafted by the MONE of Turkey and the UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS based on the literature review and the youth statement on education.
 - The draft will be shared with all Ministries of Education in the region, partner organizations and all invitees to the Ministerial Conference for comments; all comments will be incorporated before the Preparatory meeting.
 - The draft will be discussed in detail at the Preparatory Meeting and will be revised and validated by the group.
 - The final draft will then be shared again with all Ministers of Education for their support.



- The final Call for Action document will be launched at the Regional Ministerial Education Conference (10-13 December)
- 2) The Preparatory Meeting will provide a forum **for reflecting on research and identifying partner contributions** to the regional Ministerial Conference and subsequent follow-up initiative and areas of potential collaboration between partners.

FORMAT AND CONTENT

The Preparatory Meeting will be of a technical nature. The meeting's duration will be 1.5 days. It will consist of four thematic roundtable discussions focused on the key messages of the Call for Action. Tentative themes of the sessions will be:

- (1) Equity in school access: Including out of school children (Presentation of UNICEF's regional and country OOSC reports and other related research from partners);
- (2) Learning for All: Improving equity in learning outcomes (Presentation of UNICEF CEE/CIS PISA analysis and research on Teacher quality;
- (3) Starting Early: Improving Equity and Learning
- (4) Improving Education Governance for Equity

Adolescent and Youth inputs will be prepared prior to the Preparatory Meeting, during the Youth Consultation which was held in 2-6 September 2013.