

# 2016 ASEAN DECLARATION ON STRENGTHENING EDUCATION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUTH (OOSCY)

*Adopted in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 6 September 2016*

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## 2016 ASEAN DECLARATION ON STRENGTHENING EDUCATION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUTH (OOSCY)

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**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 nondiscrimination, 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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-centered 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.