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FIRST PRINCIPLES:

DESIGNING EFFECTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

COMPENDIUM



Credit: American Institutes for Research

This *First Principles: Designing Effective Education Program for Underserved Populations Compendium* provides an overview and guidance for designing and implementing programs that support marginalized and disadvantaged populations. The principles, steps, and indicators are primarily meant to guide program designs, including the development of requests for and subsequent review of proposals, the implementation of program activities, and the development of performance management plans, evaluations and research studies. The *First Principles* are intended to help USAID education officers specifically, as well as other stakeholders— including staff in donor agencies, government officials, and staff working for international and national non-governmental organizations— who endeavor to bring educationally marginalized populations into school and achieve true education for all. The guidance in this document is meant to be used and adapted for a variety of settings to help USAID officers, educators and implementers overcome the numerous challenges in reaching the hardest to reach populations. The last section provides references for those who would like to learn more about issues and methods for supporting the education of the underserved. This *Compendium* version provides greater depth for those who are interested to know more about supporting education for underserved populations. There is a shorter companion piece called a *Digest*, which is a brief to quickly provide basic information on this topic.



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ACRONYMS

AIR	American Institutes for Research
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CFS	Child Friendly School
DME	Deprivation and Marginalization in Education
EFA	Education for All
EMACK	Education for Marginalized Children in Kenya
EQUIP	Educational Quality Improvement Program
FPE	Free Primary Education
IBEC	Basic Education in Cambodia
INEE	Network for Education in Emergencies
IRI	Interactive Radio Instruction
LWG	Local Working Groups
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SAG	School Assistance Group
SMC	School Management Committee
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
7 Key Principles for Providing Quality Education to Underserved Populations	5
Principle 1: The sociopolitical context needs to be conducive to providing education for underserved groups.	5
Principle 2: Focused and targeted programming is needed to reach educationally marginalized populations.	5
Principle 3: Working in partnership with existing local institutions often yields the best results.	6
Principle 4: Participatory program planning that allows flexible, local approaches is required.	7
Principle 5: Schools must be affordable and accessible, and demand for them may need to be enhanced.	7
Principle 6: Inclusive learning environments must be developed to meet the special needs of the educationally marginalized and to combat marginalization more generally.	9
Principle 7: Educational interventions should be linked to national programs that address deprivation in other sectors.	10
10 Steps for Providing Quality Education to Underserved Populations	12
Step 1: Conduct a situational assessment.	12
Step 2: Identify implementing partners and government “champions.”	12
Step 3: Select target areas and target communities by establishing reliable data management systems.	12
Step 4: Establish or form partnerships with local committees, partners, and working groups.	13
Step 5: Conduct program planning locally, using participatory processes.	14
Step 6: Select target children.	14
Step 7: Provide training and technical assistance for implementation.	15



Step 8:	Install quality control measures.	15
Step 9:	Set up links to government and other development agencies.	16
Step 10:	Implement activities to document the program and disseminate program results and lessons.	17
Challenges and Limitations		20
Suggested Indicators of Success		21
Essential Reading		24
References		25

INTRODUCTION

Substantial progress has been made toward universalizing primary education in developing countries in the past decade. Net enrollment in these countries increased from 80% of the primary school-aged population in 1999 to 86% in 2007. In Sub-Saharan Africa, where the gains were the largest, enrollment increased during this period from 56% to 73%. In the same time period, the number of school-aged children out of primary school in South and West Asia was halved (UNESCO, 2010). Although these achievements are laudable, progress in many countries is still too slow to achieve the targets set by the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000.¹ In many instances, enrollment gains at national levels have not automatically trickled down to bring large numbers of children from marginalized populations into school. Data from many countries clearly show that significant subnational inequalities exist in school enrollments and that out-of-school children disproportionately come from poor households in poor, rural areas (Hartwell, Wils, & Zhao, 2006). These subnational disparities should inform policymakers interested in achieving Education for All (EFA) in their respective countries. Indeed, in many countries, EFA has now become a matter of “reaching regions and populations that are persistently underserved and attaining levels of equity and demonstrable learning that traditional education systems have failed to meet” (Destefano, Moore, Balwanz, & Hartwell, 2007, p. 14).

The educationally underserved invariably are marginalized groups.² UNESCO’s 2010 EFA *Global Monitoring Report* defines marginalization in education as “a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities.” These groups of people are educationally marginalized, and thus underserved, for three overarching reasons: *relational* (who they are and how they relate to society at large and/or to the dominant groups), *locational* (where they reside), and *situational* (their conditions), as described in Table 1.

Membership in multiple marginalized groups has a compounding effect, because these groups constitute additional layers of disadvantage. For example, although twice as many poor in

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Yemen (ages 17–22) have less than 4 years of schooling when compared to the national average, *three* times as many poor women have less than 4 years of schooling compared to poor men. Similarly, rural poor Nigerians average less than 4 years of schooling, but the rural poor Hausa people of Nigeria average less than 1 year. The average rural Hausa woman attends almost no school. So although average enrollment in Nigeria has grown in recent decades, national average figures mask serious disparities—some subgroups receive almost no schooling and others (e.g., children from wealthy families attend, on average, nearly 10 years of school).

Current efforts in many countries will be insufficient to bring all children from marginalized populations into school by the Dakar Framework’s 2015 deadline. The goal will not be achieved simply by stepping up these efforts—through increased funding to, and expansion of, conventional education delivery systems—because these systems are inadequate to the task. Reaching these underserved groups constitutes what economists call the “last mile problem,” which is a persistent challenge experienced

1 The Dakar Framework states as its second goal: “Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.”

2 In this compendium, it is assumed that groups are underserved primarily because of some form of marginalization. “Underserved” can also be considered “educationally marginalized,” and these two terms are used interchangeably.

TABLE 1: TYPOLOGY OF EDUCATIONALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Reason for Marginalization	Type of Marginalized Group	Examples of the group and the percentage of the population aged 17–22 who are educationally impoverished* (compared with total population)
Relational (who the people are)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion • Ethnicity/culture • Language • Caste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic Kurds in Turkey: 30% < 4 years of education (5% for total population) • Speakers of Jaua in Mozambique: 90% < 4 years of education (33% for Portuguese speakers)
Locational (where they reside)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote rural • Informal urban (slum dwelling) • Migrant (seasonal or permanent) • Nomadic/pastoral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents of Chiapas, Mexico: 26% < 4 years of education (11% for total population) • Karamojong pastoralists in Uganda: 85% < 2 years of education (17% for total population)
Situational (their conditions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor • Orphaned/affected by HIV&AIDS • Physically/intellectually challenged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poorest 20% of people in many nations have < 4 years of education at double the rate of the overall national population.†

* Less than 4 years of education, unless indicated; adapted from 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010 (UNESCO, 2010); data for latest available years

† For example, Cambodia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Yemen.

by a group (in this instance, the underserved) that is unsolvable by traditional approaches. Its solution requires flexibility and innovative approaches that can be sustained over time, which in turn depend on political will and resources.

One of the better known approaches for providing education for the underserved is that of complementary schools (Destefano et al., 2007). Over the past few decades, millions of underserved children have received good-quality educations through locally designed and run schools that are complementary to the formal system and that aim to put children and youth on tracks toward formal school enrolment or to provide an equivalent, alternative education. These schools are typically run by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), in close coordination with local government schools and systems, and with high levels of local participation and volunteered inputs. Many of the teachers are locally recruited and trained volunteers. Although these complementary school systems start small and are highly responsive to local needs, some notable examples, including BRAC in Bangladesh and Escuela Nueva in Colombia, have grown quite large. To date, BRAC schools have graduated more than 2.5 million students, and Escuela Nueva operates 20,000 schools that serve about half of rural Columbia.

Complementary schools, however, are not the only approach to reaching the educationally marginalized. Some might argue that these approaches introduce parallel systems and thus may not constitute a sustainable solution. It is also evident that these cases, which have reached large numbers of beneficiaries, were initiated prior to the EFA movement³ (Escuela Nueva in 1975 and BRAC in 1985), a time when government-run schools were far less accessible than they are in most countries today. There is also evidence that a wider range of approaches have proved able to reach marginalized groups and have resulted in their improved educational access and achievement. The first category of such approaches directly addresses accessibility and affordability factors and includes constructing new schools in underserved areas or setting up mobile schools; abolishing school fees and/or removing indirect schooling costs; providing direct incentives to targeted families; establishing equivalency programs, or “bridging” schools, that facilitate school reentry for children who had never attended school or had dropped out; and allowing for flexibility for seasonal scheduling, setting daily timetables and student composition of classrooms and schools. Multigrade classrooms – where children of different ages and grade levels are taught in one classroom – are a common example (UNESCO, 2010).

3 The first EFA conference was held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990.

Credit: World Education



A second category of approaches focuses on improving the learning environment. These approaches include deploying teachers to the most underserved areas; providing incentives for skilled teachers to work in marginalized areas; recruiting and training teachers from marginalized groups; providing additional budget and technical assistance to schools with large numbers of marginalized children; developing and enhancing curricula to increase content relevance; providing intercultural and bilingual education; and training teachers on inclusive education (UNESCO, 2010). All successful education models for underserved groups employ some combination of these approaches. Teacher training, cooperative learning, multigrade teaching, and innovative curricula, for example, are essential components of Escuela Nueva.⁴ Destefano and colleagues (2007) consider the focus on learning outcomes (through innovative curricula, improved instruction, and appropriate scheduling) to be a central feature that accounts for the success of complementary schools around the world.

The third category of approaches, entitlements and opportunities (UNESCO, 2010) broadly addresses the roots of educational marginalization through such policies as employing poverty reduction strategies, addressing early childhood deprivation, drafting and implementing anti-discrimination legislation, providing social protection such as conditional cash transfers or employment programs to help poorer families weather shocks to financial security, and, reallocating national budgets to poorer or marginalized groups and regions. There is substantial evidence that such strategies, by effectively reducing the cost of attending school or improving the health of poor children, have led to increases in school enrollment in many countries (Poverty Action Lab, 2005).

The rest of this compendium lays out principles, steps, and challenges and limitations that should be considered by governments, donors, and civil society groups who endeavor to implement education programming to bring underserved children into school and achieve education for all. The experiences of three education programs that exemplify the range of proven approaches to meeting the educational needs of underserved children illustrate these principles. The first is the Improving Basic Education in Cambodia (IBEC) program, implemented by World Education, which targets educationally underserved children from various marginalized groups: Cambodian Muslims (the Cham), the very poor, and those from remote, ethnic-minority hill-tribe areas. This project does not set up complementary, alternative schools but works within the formal education system and directly targets about 250 formal primary and lower secondary schools. Access to education by children from these groups is addressed by providing school grants for scholarships, class repairs, school latrines and safe water, and other enrollment-boosting activities. The quality of the children's learning environment is addressed through interventions focusing on improved curricula in life skills, teacher education, and school management. IBEC began in 2009 and is a 5-year project funded by USAID, although it is based on similar USAID-funded programming that began in 2004.

The second illustrative program is Save the Children-US in Bangladesh, known as SHIKHON—Learning Alternatives for Vulnerable Children. This project, which ran from 2006 to 2010, increased basic education competencies among vulnerable and excluded children by providing complementary schooling. In total, the project targeted 105,000 vulnerable children, including out-of-school children with no or limited education. They were from remote rural areas and landless families and from disaster-prone areas of coastal belts, marshes,

⁴ See more information at <http://www.escuelanueva.org/pagina/index.php?codmenu=2&idioma=2>.

Credit: World Education



chars (temporary land masses), eroding river banks, and tidal basins. Children from ethnic minorities were reached by taking into account their special language learning needs and cultural traditions. The program was implemented by three local NGO partners and worked with local communities to set up locally managed, alternative schools in areas with no formal education services and used a specially developed curriculum that drew on accelerated learning methodologies.

The third illustrative example, the Education for Marginalized Children in Kenya (EMACK) project, worked with formal schools and alternative community schools to expand preschool and primary school opportunities for children living in the Coastal and North Eastern Provinces of Kenya. It was implemented from 2004 to 2006 by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR), with

funding from USAID. Marginalized by chronic impoverishment, cultural practices, water scarcity, and recurrent famine, these children had traditionally fared more poorly than others in terms of their educational outcomes. In the North Eastern provinces, the project targeted children from traditional nomadic and sedentary pastoralist populations. EMACK worked with local NGOs and provincial governments to promote these marginalized children's access to quality education by training preschool and primary teachers; involving parents and communities in their children's education; training school management committees for schools built by the community; providing support for mobile schools; providing school grants; and, addressing the health of children through school feeding and de-worming so that they could take advantage of existing educational opportunities.

7 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION TO UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

This section presents key principles that are essential for successful programming in this area. These principles are based on tested interventions that have been effective in providing a quality basic education to underserved groups. These principles were generated through a consultative process among field practitioners, academicians, and NGO program officers and are also supported by scholarly literature. Each principle is illustrated using the case study projects described above, along with additional examples.

Principle 1: The sociopolitical context needs to be conducive to providing education for underserved groups.

Although most countries are committed officially to the goals of EFA, the political will and official and societal commitment to meet these goals varies by country and with respect to different educationally marginalized groups within countries. Given that concerted efforts and allocations of resources are required to reach underserved populations, levels of government commitment might differ with regard to certain groups, for example, groups who currently are or have been in conflict with these governments over issues related to citizenship, governance, official recognition of languages and religions, and so on. Conversely, even where government commitment and resources are provided, some communities might seek to avoid government provided education, e.g., as an act of political resistance or due to fears of cultural erosion. Governments may also prioritize differently the need to educate all girls or members of certain subgroups. Given these potential sensitivities, external agencies should be circumspect about investing time, energy, and political capital into reaching every marginalized group. A thorough situational assessment is needed to ascertain that target groups are not educationally marginalized because of other forms of marginalization (cultural, political, and religious) that are too sensitive or too impractical for external agencies to address. The situational analysis should also help program planners to understand the policy environment as well as the educational delivery structures operational in the given context. It is critically important to understand which structures are centralized, which are decentralized and how resources get allocated.

Credit: James MacNeil/World Education



Principle 2: Focused and targeted programming is needed to reach educationally marginalized populations.

Educational development programs should target their inputs directly to the educationally marginalized groups. Areas with concentrations of marginalized groups who are underserved must first be identified. Effective identification requires data systems that disaggregate along appropriate indicators that characterize the marginalized groups. Some of these indicators are routinely used in most countries' data collection, such as gender and poverty status (whether the family is below the nationally defined poverty line). Other indicators that might be overlooked or be considered controversial include language spoken in the home, religion, and ethnic group.

Successful education programs for marginalized children often find that their starting point is assisting government departments to establish and maintain these data systems. It is best to understand what indicators the country currently uses, examine how these indicators overlay educational marginalization, and then build on this system. Typically, countries collect data on group membership that will indicate

eligibility for social services or entitlements, for example, whether a family is a member of an indigenous group or a Dalit group in India.⁵ It is essential to bear in mind that governments of some countries may purposefully avoid including some indicators that are considered sensitive or private matters by the population or that the governments fear would arouse negative sentiments toward the group if data showed the group performing one way or the other.

Targeting communities

Save the Children's SHIKHON project in Bangladesh worked to provide alternative or complementary education to children from remote, coastal, and river areas where seasonal flooding prevents adequate formal schooling. Within the project districts, communities were chosen through a multistep process. First, communities were preselected by obtaining preliminary data from District Education Officers on primary school enrollments and dropouts to identify communities and areas where children have little or no access to primary school. Then, community and education profiles were developed by partners for each community to facilitate final community selection. These profiles included population demographics; ethnicity and cultural strengths and barriers; numbers of children of preschool and primary school age; and those with and without access to formal or non-formal school. Partners prepared an education profile for each target community, which provided the rationale for community and beneficiary selection.

Principle 3: Working in partnership with existing local institutions often yields the best results.

Successful education programming for marginalized children builds partnerships among governments, local NGOs, and communities so that their complementary strengths can enhance the impact of the interventions. The key is to build on and complement, rather than replace, existing systems and structures. Locally managed and inter-sectoral approaches can be very efficient (in terms of allocation of personnel, materials, and resources) as well as sustainable. Effective local management of programs, however, depends firstly on complementarity with national policies as well as with those systems that need to be

centrally managed. Secondly, appropriate local structures and processes need to be developed and adequate support needs to be provided. These structures and processes may need to be deliberately organized and given a consistent structure across different target areas, and thus require a certain level of central coordination and oversight.

Setting up structures to facilitate local partnership building

World Education's IBEC project in Cambodia targets educationally excluded children from various marginalized groups in different areas of rural Cambodia. To meet the goals of providing quality education to marginalized children, the project deliberately established local structures to facilitate the formation of partnerships. These structures, known as local working groups (LWGs), built on precedents established in Cambodia and used existing institutional frameworks (based around school clusters) that were sanctioned by the government.⁶ LWGs may be headed jointly by a senior official at the provincial or district level and a representative from the relevant project. LWGs generally receive capacity building in planning, conducting a problem analysis, using "activity menus," budgeting, requesting and disbursing school grants, and monitoring and reporting.

⁵ Officially referred to in India as "Scheduled Tribes" and "Scheduled Castes," respectively.

⁶ Examples of institutional frameworks around the world include school clusters (e.g., Cambodia), school committees (e.g., Indonesia), parent-teacher associations, parent associations (e.g., Mali, Guinea, Benin), boards of trustees (e.g., Egypt), local government councils, and other government bodies.

Principle 4: Participatory program planning that allows flexible, local approaches is required.

Appropriate national government policy and political will are necessary preconditions to expanding access to educationally marginalized populations. Ideally, national-level policy should entail a flexible project design that enables local stakeholders to develop some portion of their own programming content that is based on local needs. With technical support, local stakeholders can determine what they need to change in their schools and communities and how they can effect these changes. When educational development is stakeholder driven in this way, it ensures local ownership and engagement in programming, which in turn increases the likelihood for sustainability once external program support is phased out. Such changes, however, need to be in keeping with national education policies, performance standards and curriculum frameworks, as well as conforming to laws that ensure equal rights and protection for all students and citizens.

Local strategies to address educational exclusion based on local contexts

Recognizing the widely different context of each targeted population, the IBEC project in Cambodia adopted a flexible program design, and a system of open-ended school grants and activity menus was developed to cater to different groups and schools. The project implementation cycle thus started out with workshops with individual schools in which they learned to identify their particular school development needs, set objectives, and create school improvement plans in which they choose from a menu of activities that are linked to objectives. As a result, the project has schools from ethnic Cham communities, for example, that are using their school grant to implement cultural life skills interventions to address the major barrier to educational participation posed by parents' perceptions that formal school does not relate to their own values and culture. Schools from remote hill-tribe areas have selected activities such as bilingual classroom assistants, multigrade classrooms, and the construction of temporary classrooms to address the barriers experienced by their minority group.

Local development of curricula that reflect local conditions and meet felt needs

Many countries have policies that allow local school districts to modify a portion of the national curriculum to reflect local culture and history, environmental conditions and to meet locally expressed needs. The allocation of curriculum that may be modified ranges from 15 to 25% in East and Southeast Asia, for example. In some countries, such as Laos, an allocation of 20% is recommended, with a focus on local knowledge and practical life skills. In Vietnam, 15% of the curriculum - focusing on local traditions of production, history, and geography - may be locally developed. The provision to enable local development of curricula is an important feature of countries with high levels of ethnic and linguistic diversity, such as the Philippines and Indonesia. In all instances, local modifications to curricula need to meet certain guidelines and cannot detract from the teaching of the core national curricula.⁷

Principle 5: Schools must be affordable and accessible, and demand for them may need to be enhanced.

Because of the nature of a group's marginalization (e.g., poverty, remoteness, language barriers; see Table 1), school participation among the underserved is low and problematic. Program designs that aim to address low participation rates thus need to consider both supply-side and demand-side needs within the education sector. Solving the supply problem (e.g., constructing schools, increasing the number of teachers, improving public transportation) is essential for expanding access for the underserved. Expanded access alone, however, will not guarantee increased school participation if the demand for education is low (owing to opportunity costs, cultural traditions, attitudes toward girls, etc). To address demand-side factors, then, interventions such as subsidies for direct educational costs and greater cultural sensitization to the educationally marginalized group's needs are required.

Carefully designed interventions address both supply- and demand-side factors simultaneously. Using locally recruited and locally trained community teachers is a case in point and has

⁷ For more details, see the conference report on *Building the Capacities of Curriculum Specialists for Educational Reform* (Vientiane, Lao PDR, 2002) at www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/buildingcurriculum/

Credit: World Education



been a common strategy across much education programming for underserved children. Employing locally recruited teachers who have less formal training and fewer credentials is a cost-effective way to remove the supply barrier typically caused by a reliance on centralized systems of recruitment, training, and deployment. Locally recruited teachers speak local languages and understand the cultural norms. This approach thus addresses demand-side issues associated with linguistic preferences and perceptions that formal school is unrepresentative of local culture.

Program planners should consider the tradeoffs when opting for local recruitment of community teachers. One issue of concern is how community teachers assimilate into the formal system and/or eventually gain official accreditation. Effectiveness in the classroom should also be considered. While community teachers certainly are cost effective compared with regular, professional teachers, their relative effectiveness as instructors might vary by country context and grade levels. A recent synopsis of research studies from India did find, however, that learning achievement of students was similar for those taught

by community teachers⁸ and regular teachers (Kingdon and Sipahimalani-Rao, 2010). Part of the reason that community teachers could perform on par with regular teachers (despite lower pay and credentials) could be that the community teachers' attendance was higher than that of regular teachers. Their familiarity with local customs and dialects could also make a difference. In general, experience from India and other countries suggests that recruiting teachers from marginalized groups - whether community teachers or fully credentialed professionals - can promote positive identities amongst students, combat discrimination, and give children who do not know the dominant or official languages an opportunity to get a strong start in their education.

Interventions tackling demand-side barriers among those marginalized due to poverty

Many schools participating in the IBEC project in Cambodia have chosen to implement local scholarships to reach the children who remain out of school because of extreme poverty. Local scholarship committees were formed and trained, and surveys were conducted to identify children seeking schooling opportunities. At the primary school level, a scholarship package consists of two uniforms, stationery (writing books and pens/pencils), and shoes. The scholarship package for secondary school students (if the student lives 5 km or less from school) includes a bicycle, uniforms, stationery, and tutoring support. Students living farther from school receive the same items plus room and board support with a local female teacher. As part of scholarship programming, IBEC has also instituted school-community outreach activities to teach vulnerable scholarship beneficiaries specialized life skills that will help them and their families become more financially self-sufficient and achieve food security. The objective behind these activities is to address some of the opportunity costs that cause students to leave school before they complete the basic education cycle.

⁸ They are referred to as “para-teachers” in India. They are also known as “contract teachers” in India and elsewhere. Contract teachers are typically appointed to work in primary and upper primary levels, work on a contract basis (not permanent or tenured), have no teaching credential (at the outset), have less formal teacher training than regular teachers, and they tend to reside in the communities in which they teach.

Credit: American Institutes for Research



Interventions tackling supply-side barriers among those marginalized because of geographic remoteness

Given the inadequate provision of formal schooling in the target areas, the SHIKHON project in Bangladesh assisted communities in constructing temporary buildings made of local materials (mainly thatch and bamboo covering a wooden frame). These one-room classroom structures enabled educational services to be offered within a very short period of time, and were entirely community managed. In combination with the selection, training, and ongoing supervision of community teachers and community mobilization activities (to address demand), the program found that it was able to reach a large number of children in a short time. These locally built and managed alternative schools generated a local culture of school attendance and eventually put these areas on the radar screen for more-formalized school construction by government or international development banks. The construction of classrooms, therefore, can jump-start an important process leading to expanded educational opportunities in these remote areas.

Principle 6: Inclusive learning environments must be developed to meet the special needs of the educationally marginalized and to combat marginalization more generally.

The problems that hinder educational access and hamper classroom performance are multidimensional and include extra-classroom factors (poor health and nutrition, poverty, social stigma, discrimination) and classroom factors (language barriers, cultural norms, relevance of curricula, learning and physical disabilities). Building inclusive learning environments is essential to overcoming the classroom-based factors and should be developed with an appreciation of the barriers confronting the child outside the classroom. For example, inclusive classrooms comprise not only skilled teachers and appropriate pedagogy and materials but also some teachers (professionals or volunteers) who can communicate with children in their language and understand their cultural mores.

Building inclusive learning environments requires holistic programming that recognizes that the learning environment of children, especially the underserved, is multidimensional. Projects that focus on only one aspect of a child's learning environment to the exclusion of others often have muted impacts. A well-trained teacher, for example, will still have a limited impact on learning if children come to school hungry or if parents do not provide support for homework at home.

One approach that has applied a holistic approach to educational development is the child friendly school (CFS) programming model. CFS has become the main model through which UNICEF promotes quality education worldwide, and it has proved to be very effective in promoting learning, including among educationally marginalized children. UNICEF defines the CFS model as one that "promotes healthy and protective environments for learning and strives to provide quality basic education" (UNICEF, 2006). CFS is an important feature of the IBEC project.

Interactive radio instruction (IRI) is another approach that can be useful in reaching marginalized learners—particularly those in remote areas—with quality instruction. Relying on the simple technology of radio, teachers can use IRI's daily 30-minute broadcasts to promote active learning in the classroom. A recent Education Development Center (2009)

study using data from IRI projects (2003–2007) around the world showed that the use of IRI was associated, on average, with higher student achievement in diverse classrooms, including those in marginalized areas, in fragile states, and with high concentrations of vulnerable children.

A focus on establishing inclusive learning environments is not solely about ensuring the learning achievement of the marginalized. It is about combating marginalization by challenging the stereotypes and the invisibility that sustain it. Curricula, methodologies, and school management can reinforce gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes that limit the horizons of many children. Teachers, staff, and program implementers need training to challenge their attitudes to the marginalized and to equip them to appropriately deal with children from diverse backgrounds (UNESCO, 2010). For instance, under the EMACK project in Kenya, early childhood and primary school teachers were trained in approaches for promoting understanding, tolerance, and acceptance of people affected by HIV and AIDS, disabilities, poverty, and other characteristics that make people different.

Principle 7: Educational interventions should be linked to national programs that address deprivation in other sectors.

Educational marginalization is partly a result of mutually reinforcing sources of deprivation, which include extra-classroom factors such as poor health and nutrition, poverty, social stigma, and discrimination. There are limits to how much of this deprivation can be tackled by education systems alone. There is thus a need to coordinate with national programs to meet these basic development needs of marginalized groups and to address the underlying factors perpetuating their marginalization. These efforts include those centered on early childhood, the time when trajectories of disadvantage are established. Programs for improved nutrition, maternal and child health, and early childhood care and education are crucial. Other national programs that can have a positively impact on reducing marginalization include cash transfers, employment, and livelihood schemes to tackle poverty; school feeding programs to improve nutrition; and legal reform such as legislation about early marriage or birth registration. The latter can be fundamental for ensuring that families have the right documentation for enrolling children in school, claiming benefits, and voting.

Fostering cross-sectoral linkages

The EMACK project in Kenya for children from marginalized pastoralist communities targeted both pre-primary and primary schools and collaborated with the Ministry of Health to provide health checks and school feeding programs, the latter providing the only daily meal some children routinely enjoyed.

National programs tackling reinforcing aspects of marginalization

Over the past 15 years, conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs that target the poor, such as Bolsa Família in Brazil, have simultaneously reduced income inequality by providing cash payments to poor families, increased school attendance among the poorest by requiring 85% school attendance for beneficiaries of the cash transfers, and improved maternal and child health by requiring beneficiaries to visit health clinics and get immunized (Soares et al., 2007). CCT programs have affected millions of families in the early adopting countries of Brazil, Mexico, and Bangladesh, and the model has been adopted throughout Latin America and in several other Asian and African countries. Although the CCT approach varies from country to country, a few essential elements are observed in all: the ability to effectively identify poor families, deliver the benefits to those families, and monitor their compliance with the conditions of the CCT, such as school attendance and health checkups (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009).

Increases in school enrollments have been attributed to CCT programs throughout the world and have been most salient in places with low baseline enrollment levels at the outset of the CCT program. CCTs in some countries, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Turkey, also have helped reduce the gender gap in school attendance (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009).

Credit: American Institutes for Research



10 STEPS FOR PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION TO UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

This section outlines the steps to implement educational programming for marginalized groups based on the principles above.

Step 1: Conduct a situational assessment.

If the existence of disparities in educational access among different groups has been determined and the external agency, such as USAID, has decided that reaching these underserved groups might become a programmatic priority, the first step is to conduct an assessment of the situation as it relates to the potential target groups. The essential questions include the following:

- Does the political will exist in government partners to allocate resources and focus energies on addressing the educational gaps?
- What are the implications of targeting particular groups?
- If sensitivities exist, does the agency believe that it is positioned to ameliorate the situation, and is it part of the mission of the agency to take on such challenges?
- What are the educational delivery structures that need to be harnessed to reach the target groups? Which are centralized and which are decentralized, and how are resources allocated along these structures?

It is helpful to use a framework to guide the situational analysis, such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) or similar tools. Secondary sources of information include the government's data on education enrollments and country reports that are prepared and submitted to EFA.⁹ Primary sources of information include officers of the agency that focuses on the education sector and related sectors; UN agencies such as UNICEF; personnel of NGOs who have had a long presence in the country and likely have had experiences with the target groups; and officers at Ministries of Education (and related Ministries that deal with human resources development, such as Manpower, Labor, and Health). As with all situational assessments, triangulating among various sources of information is essential to generating a complete picture.

⁹ Available on UNESCO's website at <http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/country.html>

Step 2: Identify implementing partners and government “champions.”

The choice of implementing partner agencies (both nongovernmental and governmental) is the foundational step. Local partners should be credible among the target communities and preferably provide genuine representation of the target communities' voice. For instance, in Cambodia, NGO partners from local Cham (Cambodian Muslim) communities were selected by World Education for the IBEC project. However, consideration also needs to be given to the current capacity and openness to further learning of the NGOs. Rapid organizational assessment tools can be helpful in this regard—assessing a wide range of elements from financial systems and personnel to strategic planning, board operation, and staff professional development. At the same time, early efforts should be made to identify influential program champions within government departments who believe in the program goal and will provide an entry point to later efforts to establish official links and government endorsement.

Step 3: Select target areas and target communities by establishing reliable data management systems.

Reliable data management systems need to be in place to identify target areas with high numbers of marginalized children who remain outside formal schooling. Data requirements for target area selection should include data disaggregated by

- age, grade, and gender of children,
- socio-economic status of families,
- ethnicity/caste,
- other demographic factors,
- number of children out of school,
- number of schools per population,
- distance of family to nearest school, and
- basic education indicators (pupil-teacher ratios, rates for drop out, promotion, enrollment, and completion).

Credit: Cassandra Jessee/AIR



Local and central government departments, NGOs, and representative from the marginalized groups should be involved in selecting the target areas. Data to assess the interest and readiness of communities to bring about increased participation in education can be gathered through site visits, meetings, and focus group interviews by using tools that are custom developed for the task and standardized for replication where appropriate.

Step 4: Establish or form partnerships with local committees, partners, and working groups.

Executing programs at the local level requires establishing structures and processes for implementation. Substeps here include holding orientations, forming inter-sectoral community-level working groups, and gaining official recognition and government links for these community groups. Roles and responsibilities are then formalized and basic initial training is provided.

Forming local implementation groups

The SHIKHON project in Bangladesh illustrates these substeps well. Local committees, known as school assistance groups (SAGs) were formed to manage the implementation of the new community schools. SAGs were not officially formed at program start up, but in effect, nascent groups came into being from the time of initial discussions between the NGO partners and each village. Through a series of meetings held with villagers by program organizers to assess the community's interest in and commitment to having the program, a group of community members began to form that focused on the education issues in their village. Over time, these groups performed tasks such as organizing the location for the community school site and mobilizing community contributions toward building or rehabilitating it. Through this process, these groups gradually gained a more-formal structure until they became formally designated bodies with defined responsibilities.

Each SAG had 7 to 13 members, 30% of whom were women. Members included village leaders, religious leaders, and parents. Their tasks included the following:

- Visiting the new community schools regularly to monitor children's attendance, teachers' attendance, and class performance of children
- Conducting regular house visits and meetings with parents to encourage them to send their children to school regularly
- Raising financial or in-kind support for the school's infrastructure
- Establishing linkages with the government primary schools to facilitate children's later formal school reentry by inviting schools teachers and school directors to visit the community school
- Using data to make improvement plans for their community school

For all these tasks, initial training and ongoing support were given by the partner NGO. The fact that these implementation groups are local has proved invaluable for mobilizing the community around the education of vulnerable children and for bringing long-term, community-level changes in attitudes and practices toward securing a quality education for all children. The program is developing the capacity of SAGs not only to better manage the schools but also to advocate and bring change on the wider education issues in their community.

Step 5: Conduct program planning locally, using participatory processes.

This process should begin by providing support to the working groups as they conduct situational analyses to understand why underserved groups are not accessing education. Using these analyses, working groups identify key issues, set objectives, and choose activities that aim to expand access to quality education for the target groups. Once familiar with the approach and the benefits of this process, working groups and communities become better able to design, in collaboration with schools, quality interventions for the underserved.

Using participatory processes

The IBEC project in Cambodia conducts a 5-day workshop for cluster school directors, school management committee (SMC) leaders, and other personnel that effectively assigns to school managers and community leaders both the ownership and the planning of interventions to improve the quality of the education for the underserved.¹⁰ Sessions cover problem analysis, problem tree techniques, how to set objectives, planning, and how to use activity menus. Training is later given on using local grants, including grant requests, disbursement, and reporting.

¹⁰ School clusters are groups of schools that are geographically related and share administrative and educational resources. By clustering, schools typically are able to achieve efficiencies in conducting joint events or programs such as teacher professional development or, in this case, in administering a grants program.

Step 6: Select target children.

Successful programs recognize that local working groups require training or orientation to ensure that adequate attention is paid to the targeting of children. Careful and transparent targeting is crucial if programs are to reach the most marginalized children. Various tools and strategies have proved effective, such as mapping, accessing school and local government records, and making house visits. Underlying all of these is the need for selection processes and criteria to be locally endorsed. To ensure transparency and accountability, community representatives from all target communities should be involved and play a role in shaping the selection criteria.

Selecting target children

Under the IBEC project in Cambodia, a scholarship management committee is set up in each target school that has chosen scholarship support as one means to promote underserved children's participation in school. The committee comprises the commune chief, the chairperson of the parent association, the school director, village chiefs in the school catchment area, parents, and teachers. One of their first tasks is to determine the criteria for selecting scholarship beneficiaries. Criteria are chosen that will help identify the children who are at high risk of dropping out and school-age children who are not enrolled in primary school.

These criteria include children who are affected by HIV and AIDS, have a high number of siblings, are orphans, have only one parent, live with their relatives, are from landless families, have a history of dropping out, are frequently absent, are in danger of dropping out of school owing to a lack of educational materials, are poor and handicapped, are from families of low socioeconomic status, and have parents who are old or infirm. After deciding on criteria, a house visit/interview tool is created on the basis of these criteria, with a formal scoring system to facilitate objective selection decisions. IBEC has developed a well-publicized appeals process by which families can query selection decisions, thus ensuring further transparency.

Credit: World Education



Step 7: Provide training and technical assistance for implementation.

Successful education programming for reaching marginalized children depends on the capacity building of service providers. Training teachers, facilitators, project coordinators, and SMCs are basic examples. Programs for ethnic minority groups, for instance, can require training bilingual assistants or providing technical assistance in developing more-relevant curricula. Training on the use of child-centered teaching and learning methodologies is a common feature of programs for marginalized groups. Such methodologies are often new among target marginalized communities, which explains the low education outcomes and the muted educational demand. For instance, community teachers in the alternative classrooms set up under the SHIKHON project in Bangladesh for children from inaccessible and remote areas receive considerable initial training and ongoing support in new accelerated-learning techniques such as educational games, learning aids, local resources as learning materials, and group learning arrangements.

Training for teachers to respond to emergent needs

Effective projects address the real and immediate needs of teachers and learners. The EMACK project in Kenya provided training in formal schools to tackle the effects of the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya in 2003. With out-of-school pupils of various age groups flooding back to school, the strain on resources led to reduced teaching quality and learning outcomes. In response, EMACK developed training on handling large classes: the Over-Enrolled School Initiative and Cooperative Learning strategy.

Another common step found in effective programs (including IBEC, SHIKHON, and EMACK) is setting up structures and systems such as Beacon Schools, study visits, and teacher forums to promote cross-learning between schools and communities, thus encouraging skill building and communities of learners that will remain long after the program interventions stop.

Step 8: Install quality control measures.

All successful educational programming for underserved children has built-in systems for ongoing technical support, supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of progress along defined indicators, and program implementation can be refined on the basis of this evidence. Supervision and support systems should be given adequate attention in budget allocation, staffing, and scheduling. Such attention recognizes that marginalized groups tend to live in areas of low human resource development. For instance, in communities where community teachers are used, local partners and local implementing groups are the key and can often succeed where central ministry programs of in-service training and school supervision have faltered.

Credit: World Education



Setting up systems to monitor quality

The SHIKHON project in Bangladesh established a robust supervision system for its community teachers, who lacked formal credentials and were less educated than professional teachers. In addition to having village-based committees of community members who regularly visited the classes to check resources and the attendance of teachers and children, the program relied on a cadre of program organizers for technical support to the teachers. Program organizers were based at the district level and had the responsibility to conduct class visits, model instructional practices, and provide on-the-job mentoring for the 7 to 10 teachers under their charge.

Setting up systems to monitor quality

Successful programs consider quality control as an ongoing feature even for communities or schools that may no longer be targeted by interventions. For instance, in Kenya, EMACK partners followed up with the schools that had already “graduated” from the program (i.e., had received community capacity building and teacher training for 2 years and had passed minimum criteria) and identified those that were performing poorly. The partners then provided support to deal with low enrollment, lack of current records, and inadequate learning materials. Other graduated schools were helped to conduct SWOT analyses and to reach consensus about needed changes.

Step 9: Set up links to government and other development agencies.

Successful programs targeting the underserved do not work in isolation. Collaboration exists at the level of central government, provincial and district governments, commune councils, local communities, and international and local NGOs. Close working relations at all levels can be established right from the start through official program launches and orientations. The IBEC project in Cambodia ensured national-level collaboration by setting up a Consultative Working Group that has representation from all relevant departments, such as the Department of Curriculum Development, the Secondary Education Department, the Primary Education Department, and the Teacher Training Department. Setting up Provincial Working Groups is another useful step and strategy, which gives government representatives from the provincial level roles in the school or community selection process, approval of school or community program plans, and class monitoring, for instance.

Credit: Cassandra Jessee/AIR



Establishing community-teacher boards or parent-teacher associations, made up of local education officials and community representatives, can be useful for overcoming objections commonly found in this type of programming about using teachers who do not have the same education qualifications as formally credentialed teachers. These boards can be given the responsibility for supervising the selection, payment, and monitoring of community teachers in collaboration with program staff. For complementary education programs, links to the formal education system are essential if children are to be reintegrated into the formal system or if their learning attainment in nonformal schools is to be officially recognized.

Teachers and schools can be used as vehicles to ensure that the underserved children use and benefit from other government services. In addition to organizing school feeding and health checks at schools, for example, the EMACK project in Kenya partnered with the Ministry of Health to provide 1-week teacher training on family care practices in collaboration with

UNICEF. Recognizing their roles as messengers and opinion leaders, teachers learned about key family care practices and services, birth and death registration, child protection (and rights), and immunization and growth monitoring services.

Another way to link interventions to broader government services/programs that has proved successful in World Education's work in Nepal's Dalit communities has been to use change agents. Locally influential people have been identified and invited to be involved in a facilitated process where they learn more about the needs of the marginalized group in their locality by designing and conducting their own action research. They are then assisted in using their data to formulate lobbying messages and strategies that have resulted in local governments' using their existing budget on extending education, health, or food security services to these underserved groups.

Very often, links to other government services are best established not by project managers or implementers themselves but through project activities that inform local stakeholders about the existence of these services and assist in their mobilization to seek access to them. For instance, the EMACK project in Kenya found that the effectiveness and relevance of most SMCs was mainly constrained by a lack of access to essential information related to key government policies that would enable them to carry out their school improvement plans. EMACK's work with SMCs thus concentrated on enhancing their access to such information and strengthening their local advocacy capacity to lay claim to their legitimate entitlements.

Step 10: Implement activities to document the program and disseminate program results and lessons.

To bring about lasting change that ends the marginalization of certain groups, programs need to demonstrate the need for, and the effectiveness of, their interventions. Successful programs do not approach this in an ad hoc fashion but methodically design activities and documentation strategies that begin at project startup.

Deliberately designing and executing a dissemination plan

The SHIKHON project in Bangladesh had a comprehensive design that illustrates a range of activities: official national-, regional-, and district-level meetings; workshops and organized visits to program sites; formal exchange seminars between formal school teachers and complementary school teachers; the development of a documentation and dissemination strategy that outlines the process and audiences for the production of brochures, policy briefs, leaflets, posters, folders, periodicals, and billboards over the course of the program; the engagement of 50 journalists from local, regional, and national print media in the program, who provide coverage of SHIKHON and the issues surrounding the education of marginalized children; and the development and publishing of case studies that give an in-depth, personal window into the lives of marginalized children, families, and their communities, the barriers to their schooling, and the impact of SHIKHON on their lives. The case studies are disseminated to a range of audiences through reports, policy briefs, brochures, meetings, roundtable discussions, and the newspapers of the journalists engaged in the program.

Successfully raising awareness

The EMACK project in Kenya was also successful in raising awareness about the needs of educationally marginalized children through special efforts to strengthen existing advocacy networks so that they could engage meaningfully in government policy formulation processes for early childhood development and primary education. Activities included workshops, open days, and campaigns. For instance, one network organized the Kenya Pastoralist Week in which pastoralist communities lobbied the government to prioritize their education, fund it accordingly, recruit and deploy sufficient numbers of teachers, and address serious problems in the delivery of the curriculum.

Credit: World Education



Additional effective activities found in other programs include the use of radio, television, film documentaries, and dissemination activities organized by targeted marginalized children themselves, such as youth forums, community to national campaigns, and the provision of cameras. Youth-led activities have proved very effective in demonstrating program successes and needs.

Credit: World Education



CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Unexpected instability can cause setbacks

The educationally underserved tend to reside in areas that are remote, impoverished, and/or in societies characterized by social and economic disparities. These are also precisely the places most susceptible to various forms of disturbances and upheaval (political instability, social unrest, natural disasters) that can hinder access to education and cause setbacks to even the best designed programs. The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) estimates that half of the world's 75 million out-of-school children reside in conflict-affected states and that millions of children are living in areas affected by natural disasters.¹¹

High rates of program dropout because of poverty and related factors

Programs for the underserved often face high dropout rates among the children who are most in need because of the opportunity costs that school participation presents to their families. Whether covering the direct costs of their studies and stimulating parents' demand for the education of their children will suffice will depend on how families weigh these tradeoffs. Links to programs and services for household food security and improved livelihoods are essential to help bolster the household economy and lessen the urgency for children to work instead of attending school. These links might be difficult to establish, given the endemic neglect by government and development agencies for the most marginalized populations. Therefore, concerted efforts to foster these links are essential. Programs that include advocacy for increased services for these groups, or that can offer a range of development services themselves, are among the most successful in counteracting dropout. Effective programs develop additional interventions such as establishing savings and credit groups and providing entrepreneurship or practical skills training for improved income generation for target children and their families.

Inaccessibility of target areas

Frequently, educationally marginalized children live in areas that are remote and inaccessible. Even where program implementation groups are village based, the inaccessibility of the areas drives up program costs. Travel to and from implementation sites for capacity building and monitoring is essential if programs are to be of good quality. The time and costs required have to be reflected in program budgets and work plans, and donors need

to understand the logistical realities of reaching this target group.

Mobile populations

Educationally marginalized groups are often quite mobile. Some migrate seasonally in search of work, some are driven out of their homes as a result of discrimination or natural disasters, and others practice nomadic livelihoods. For these groups, education programming targeted at their children has to adapt accordingly. Modular curricula that allow children to integrate new classes at multiple entry points work well here, as do mobile, local teachers who move with the group. For example, Kenya's North Eastern Province developed a Nomadic Education Policy that provided grants to mobile schools. Such schools often feature a traditional, collapsible hut that can be carried by the transport camels that are a regular part of the traditional pastoralists' lifestyle. The hut and the household items, including learning materials, are packed on camelback when it is time to shift to other areas in search of pasture and water. When the family finally settles, the hut is reassembled and learning activities continue. The Nomadic Education Policy allowed flexibility within the school calendar to allow for nomadic lifestyles, recruited teachers from nomadic areas, and used radio and mobile phones to reach learners who were on the move (UNESCO, 2010). Tracking children from mobile communities remains a challenge, but innovative programs have developed detailed student tracking systems in response.

Popular perceptions that alternative, complementary teaching and schooling are of lower quality

Education programs for marginalized children that use community teachers, promote nonformal education methodologies, or set up nonformal community schools have to work hard to demonstrate that the quality of the education they provide is at par with, or exceeds, that of the formal system. Strategies that work to counter this perception include setting up robust educational achievement assessments of target learners based on competencies and benchmarks agreed on by government education authorities. Similarly, developing community teacher training curricula and quality control systems in conjunction with the relevant government bodies has worked well. Dissemination strategies that showcase the learning gains of targeted children, such as media features, reports, case studies, and high-level promotion events, can help. Efforts at more-local levels are also required, such as including formal education officers in the program monitoring or management groups and setting up advisory boards.

11 See <http://www.ineesite.org/>

SUGGESTED INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Measuring Success of Overall Program Goals at a System-wide/National Level

Education programs for marginalized groups tend to have goals that relate to increased access to, and quality of, basic education for marginalized groups.

These might measure success in improved access at a general, system level by collecting national- or district-level data, or both, on the number of out-of-school children, school enrollment rates, dropout rates, and completion rates. To track progress, baseline data are taken at program start and then collected each year. Overall success in improving the quality of education for marginalized groups is sometimes measured through grade-level achievement tests among a random sample of children from the marginalized group(s).

However, most programs tend to focus measurements among those specifically targeted by the program. Many deem it unrealistic to expect to see system- or national-level changes in improved access and quality given the program's timeframe and scale, unless it is a large program working at the national level.

Measuring Program Success Among Target Marginalized Communities

Approaches to measuring the success of education programs for marginalized children tend to fall into three areas:

- Measurement of access
- Measurement of learning and teaching quality
- Measurement of changes in attitudes toward, and community and national actions and policies related to, marginalized children's education

Illustrative examples of indicators for measuring improved access:

- Percentage of targeted children enrolled
- Targeted children's attendance rate

Credit: American Institutes for Research



Illustrative examples of indicators for measuring improved education quality:

- Percentage of targeted children with grade-level competency
- Percentage of teachers/facilitators with adequate skills (using specially designed assessment tools that provide an objective scheme that defines and measures "adequate")
- Percentage of classroom learning environments in target schools/communities that show improvement according to a standardized instrument designed for the purpose (see example below)
- Grade repetition rates that decline among targeted children
- Promotion and completion rates that improve among targeted children
- Percentage of target schools that refine school processes, methodologies, and curricula to make them more appropriate to marginalized children (see example below)
- Improved representation of minority groups among teacher

The IBEC project in Cambodia is a useful model of how to operationalize some of these indicators of the quality of education. The program has a tool for assessing overall quality of its target schools, with a particular focus on the extent to which each school meets the learning needs of educationally marginalized children. This tool has sections that look at various areas:

- *Learning environments* (e.g., group seating arrangements, wall displays, clean school grounds)
- *Inclusiveness and gender sensitivity* (e.g., a system to identify high-risk students; mixed-sex seating; participation of the whole class; respectful language used by teacher and students; mixed-ability groupings; test results not displayed on wall; toilet facilities; books available for all students)
- *Health and nutrition* (e.g., school has attendance records that detail illnesses; health center referral systems in place; hygienic classrooms and grounds; availability of clean drinking water)
- *Parental/community engagement* (e.g., school-organized parent days; community involvement in following up near drop-outs and high-risk students; information notice boards in use; community involved in school decision making).

IBEC also has a classroom assessment tool that establishes seven sub-indicators of quality:

- Classroom environment and organization
- Supplementary activities to support curriculum content (e.g., word banks, weather boards, question books, sandboxes)
- Integration activities (linking theme of lesson to other subject areas; giving opportunity to develop competencies in other areas; setting work to early task completers)
- Tasks requiring critical thinking (at application or analysis level)
- Tasks requiring creative thinking
- Use of student portfolios for assessment
- Setting of homework or research activities

For each sub-indicator, a clear scoring system is laid out that defines the conditions in which the scores, which range from 1 to 5, can be awarded. For instance, for classroom environment and organization, 5 points can be awarded if teacher-produced learning aids, instructional posters, and students' work are displayed on walls at a height appropriate for children and if there are at least two learning corners that are well organized and used properly by children. Scenarios under which lesser scores should be awarded are equally clearly defined.

Measuring changes in community/government attitudes, awareness, and action to address the educational needs of marginalized children:

- Percentage of target marginalized communities taking voluntary action to ensure educational access for out-of-school children
- Perception about schools/education among community members that improves with respect to school management and school's responsiveness to minority cultural needs
- Number of policies regarding education for marginalized groups informed and influenced by the program

The SHIKHON program in Bangladesh illustrates the use of these indicators. For instance, for the first indicator above regarding actions by marginalized communities, the program has set clear criteria for assessing whether local groups are actively supporting the newly established community school for out-of-school children. A SAG that performs each month at least three of the following eight activities is deemed to be active: holds group meeting, ensures that school has access to safe water, ensures that school has access to a sanitary latrine, holds a parenting education activity, holds a "reading for children" activity, visits the SHIKHON school, has a school improvement plan, and organizes a visit of the group to the local government primary school or a visit of formal school personnel to the SHIKHON school.

Creative ways of measuring the extent to which programs have influenced national, state, or province policies can also be established. For instance, program monitoring and evaluation officers or communication officers can be given the responsibility and tools for continually scanning policy announcements and directives, press releases, news features, and campaigns for evidence of program influence.

Case study tools, focus group discussion protocols, and individual questionnaire tools can also be developed and used at baseline and then at regular intervals to assess changes in attitudes and practices among community leaders, parents, and government officers at various levels. Questions can explore attitudes and actions toward marginalized children's educational needs, school quality, and the value of education for all children.

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Credit: World Education

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First Principles: Designing Effective Education Program for Underserved Populations is part of a series called *First Principles*, which provides guidance for programming in a range of topics in education and development. Topics in the series include:

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