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About this document

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms

CoP   Community of practice

EAA   Education Above All Foundation

EAC   Educate A Child

EG   Educate Girls

FMOE   Federal Ministry of Education

IDP   Internally displaced person

MoE   Ministry of Education

OOSC   Out-of-school children

TPD   Teacher professional development

UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund

1. Document purpose

This document was produced in response to a request from the UNICEF Sudan team that was submitted to the EdTech Hub Helpdesk in November 2021. The UNICEF Sudan team requested the development of three guidance documents to foster gender equity in a 2022 e-learning initiative:

1. **Guidance on Pre-Assessment for Establishing E-Learning Centres (this document)**

   This guidance can be used by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and UNICEF as a checklist prior to the implementation of the e-learning initiative to assess locations and communities where e-learning centres will be established for out-of-school children (OOSC), and to determine how to establish the centres in an effective and context-sensitive manner.

2. **Guidance on Community Mobilisation for Girls' Education**

   This guidance focuses on how to engage with community members, with particular attention to girls and social norms that may inhibit girls from enrolling in the e-learning initiative.

3. **Guidance on Facilitation of E-Learning**

   This guidance addresses technical and programmatic considerations for facilitators.

As the first of the three guidance documents on e-learning, this checklist is meant to be a tool that spurs UNICEF and MoE staff to think through the current situation using the data that they have. Their assessment can inform the design and implementation of an e-learning initiative that is realistic to implement and as effective as possible. Beyond answering 'yes' or 'no' to each question, decision-makers can use this document to identify potential gaps and focus their priorities for any e-learning initiative.

2. Education and e-learning in Sudan

Almost three million children, or around a third of the children between the ages of six and thirteen, do not go to school in Sudan. Girls, children affected by conflict, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), children in rural areas, and children from poor households constitute the most vulnerable groups in Sudan, with high dropout rates for girls and children living in rural areas (↑UNICEF Sudan, 2021a). According to the 2018 National Learning Assessment, the overall quality of education in Sudan is poor (Ministry of Education, 2018, as cited in ↑UNICEF Sudan, 2021a), and there continues to be a shortage of basic school infrastructure and qualified teachers across the country (↑UNICEF Sudan, 2021a).

In light of the current situation, a promising opportunity exists for e-learning to provide a sustainable approach to providing children with access to a quality education. Both children enrolled in formal schools and OOSC can benefit from e-learning initiatives; different approaches to e-learning have been established for these two groups. For children enrolled in formal schools, an online platform that contains digitised curricula, e-books, videos, and interactive quizzes and games was launched in October 2021 (↑UNICEF Sudan, 2021b). For OOSC, e-learning will take place through centres established in rural communities that provide tablets, supporting equipment, and support from facilitators.

As of January 2022, the communities where the e-learning centres will be established still need to be identified. This guidance document aims to support UNICEF and MoE staff in assessing and selecting the locations and communities for the e-learning centres.

3. Points to consider

Points to consider when assessing locations to establish e-learning centres are organised into the following categories:

1. General selection criteria

2. Location

3. Timing

4. Community support

5. Community resources

6. Infrastructure

7. Gender-responsive policies

3.1. General selection criteria

- What are the localities with the highest numbers of OOSC?

- What are the three main reasons for children being out of school in these areas?

- Is there a sufficient number[1] of children aged 7–14 years who are not enrolled in any education system to merit the establishment of an e-learning centre?

- Are both girls and boys in the community given the right of education?

3.2. Location

- How far is the closest school / learning centre to the community?

- How do children travel to the closest schools / learning centres (if any)?

- Will the e-learning centre location be within walking distance from the children's communities (< 2 km)? (⇡UNICEF & FIA Foundation, 2021)

- Will the community be accessible during the rainy season?

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[1] The target number for each community is 60 children to ensure optimal utilisation of equipment.

- Will services be provided to ensure boys' and girls' safety during travel to the e-learning centre, such as adult supervision or school speed reduction initiatives?[2] (↑UNICEF & FIA Foundation, 2021).

- For monitoring and evaluation, are locations accessible and within a reasonable distance from the state MoE and UNICEF offices?

- Is the selected location within walking distance of other centres?

- Is the selected location within an area where previous or current successful initiatives that focus on gender equity have been implemented?

Figure 1. *Educate Girls' saturation and clustering approach in India.*

The non-profit organisation Educate Girls (EG) worked in partnership with Educate A Child (EAC), a global programme of the Qatar-based Education Above All Foundation (EAA), to successfully enrol more than 100,000 out-of-school children in schools across the state of Rajasthan. Four-fifths of the newly enrolled students are girls. The project surpassed expectations for a number of reasons, one of which was EG's saturation and clustering approach. The non-profit concentrated its efforts early on in a geographical cluster of three blocks in the Pali district. Later, as more schools and villages were engaged by EG, the organisation decreased the geographic area of its engagement, a decision which allowed it to pervade or 'saturate' every village within its three-block cluster. The rationale behind the clustering and saturation approach was to ensure that community members heard the same message repeatedly and could mutually reinforce each other's changing behaviour (↑Leveraging Community, 2019).

3.3. Timing

- What activities and tasks do children spend their time on in their communities? What is the timing of these activities and tasks? How can we ensure that sufficient time is allocated for education?

- Have you taken into account girls' household chores and family responsibilities when scheduling learning times / classes? (↑Allier-Gagneur & Moss Coflan, 2020)

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[2] Ensuring a safe location is not only about distance, but also time. For girls and children from marginalised populations, travelling during daylight and off-peak hours is safer as it reduces the chances of harassment and /or violence.

- Should the centre offer changing or flexible starting times for learners? (↑FAWE, 2018)

- Should the centre anticipate the need for extra time for learners (e.g., to make up for missed classes)? (↑FAWE, 2018)

3.4. Community support

- Who are the community stakeholders?

- Are community members interested in hosting an e-learning centre for their children? If not, what are the reasons behind their refusal?

- Have female members of the community also been consulted?

- How can the initiative be framed so that it alleviates some of the fears and concerns that the community may have?

- Is the community willing to contribute to the establishment of the e-learning centre (e.g., through building materials or learning spaces)? Will local and / or national resources be used to launch the centre? (↑Girls' Education Challenge et al., 2021)

- Will there be a sense of ownership on the part of the community towards the learning centre?

- Is the community willing and open to host a facilitator from another community? Will space be provided for the facilitator?

- Are households willing to participate in extracurricular e-learning activities for a fee?

- Will the community support the facilitator and make them feel welcome?

- Does the local community agree to take responsibility for the management, maintenance, and safekeeping of all project equipment, including solar panels and their accessories, tablets and their accessories, and any other materials that belong to the project? Who will manage and maintain the equipment after the project concludes?

3.5. Community resources

- Does the community have access to clean drinking water? If not, how can access be provided?

- Is there a health centre in the area?

- Does the community have alternative learning facilities (e.g., an Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP), Khalwa)?

- Are there any established partnerships with existing local organisations in the community? (⇡Belfield et al., 2021)

- Will the equipment be kept secure if the centre is built in the community's area?

3.6. Infrastructure

- Will the centre be built with infrastructural norms and policies that ensure adequate and separate water, sanitation, and health amenities, including a private space where girls can wash, change sanitary pads, and access disposal bins and sanitary supplies? (⇡Girls' Education Challenge et al., 2021)

Figure 2. *The UN Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE) in Malawi.*

The UN Joint Programme on Girls Education in Malawi, a collaboration between the Malawi government and three UN agencies (World Food Programme, United Nations Population Fund, and UNICEF), established sanitary facilities in schools and provided girls with menstrual hygiene management resources. These resources included water, sanitary pads, soap, and separate washroom facilities. The result was a significant increase in overall school enrollment (31% between 2014 and 2017), a decrease in dropout rates (from 15.6% to 5.2% for girls and from 13.5% to 4.9% for boys), and a 7% increase in the rate of girls passing the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations (⇡UN Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE), 2020; ⇡FAWE, 2018).

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