

Summary of UIS Regional meetings

July 2020

In May 2020, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG 4 – Education 2030 (TCG) Secretariat hosted a series of regional meetings to inform the international community on UNESCO’s support to countries in the current COVID-19 pandemic context, and to provide a platform for countries to share their current data production challenges, needs and new data required to face the effects of the pandemic more effectively, including interruption of current data collection processes, new data demands and new monitoring mechanisms.

The present document sums broadly the impacts, actions and mechanisms set in place shared during these regional meetings. It is divided in three sections:

1. Which mechanisms of data collections have been affected?
2. Which mechanisms have countries put in place since the COVID-19 pandemic has started?
3. What guidance is needed from UNESCO?

1. Which mechanism of data collections have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

For many countries, **data collection processes and reporting have been interrupted or delayed** in response to the COVID pandemic due to the temporary suspension of in-class education and regular activities. The limited access to school level data has for effect to also delay the collection for education indicators, used by decision-makers and planners. The interruptions likely have affected school assessment data because of the absence or limited face-to-face interactions and meetings.

The suspension of data collection and processing has also slowed down because data production staff are not necessarily able to access and work with the information at the national and subnational levels. Some governments have had to re-focus resources to address challenges brought by the COVID-19 crisis within the education system. Parents also faced financial struggles with the need to cater for e-learning resources and set up for their children to make use of e-material created for children to continue their school year.

For some countries, data collection operations are still operating with the collection of EMIS, monitoring student numbers, teachers, school closures and student movements.

The responsibility of monitoring the education of children has fallen back on parents and caregivers to children; this had proved to be challenging for parents, particularly for those employed in essential services. These struggles include:

- Parents with limited education struggle to attend with the needs of their children; -an area that should be considered with utmost care as not all parents are educationally equipped to assist their children;
- Access to ICT: For some students located in remote areas and with limited access to computer, internet, or to electricity for example, access to smart technology and parents' limited skills in ICT, e-learning presents itself as very challenging. These situations call for innovative, engaging and dynamic teaching styles.
- Increase cost of having children at home: With children at home for longer hours, the pressure on costs of foods, home entertainment, electricity bills and water increased tremendously

As a result, a raise in the dropout rates as been observed or is expected, as maintaining students' learning while confined at home has proved to be an important challenge for parents and educators.

Teachers have had to adapt the teaching material under short notice and for an uncertain period of time, resulting in an increase amount of stress. Communications between students and parents with teachers is also difficult due to limited availability of teaching staff.

All these constraints will likely result in break in series of data, under coverage, creating comparability issues in the future analyses of data (interruption of data collection processes) as annual surveys in schools have been disrupted, the collection of administrative data have been delayed and the adjustments to the calendar year.

2. Which mechanisms have countries put in place since the COVID-19 pandemic started?

Some of the most common mechanisms put in place by countries to address the challenges brought by the COVID-19 crisis and as part of an elaboration of response plans include:

- Distance learning & virtual lessons
 - Creation of web applications, the broadcast of adapted educational programmes on local TV, radio, and the internet and social medias (Facebook, YouTube) to offer visual and auditory media.
 - Online and open source (free), in some cases, the reschedule of on air program to accommodate the delivery of education via media
- Self-learning material for students
 - Hard & soft copies of learning material and training packages delivered to students
- Small learning groups:



- Areas where there is no media coverage but educational programs can be pursued through small gathering On site: longer school hours, weekend class (Saturday), and extra curriculum activity

Infrastructure mechanisms

- Adjusted academic year to extend assessment timelines
- Added sanitary measures: In-school and Ministry of education health policies revisited to strengthened restrictions on children and staff coming to school sick
- Plan Ceibal (Uruguay) : Computers (notebooks) per student and teachers
 - Mainly aimed at public education, but access to private educational institutions was enabled
 - Digital platforms - resources for students, teachers and families
 - Dictation of classes and evaluations

2.1 Mechanisms related to data collection newly put in place

A need for more modern data production system via the use of online tools for data collection, allowing for real time data collection.

- For some, new EMIS development and testing process have been impacted and will be delayed
- Need for increase in assistance to improve the quality and availability of its ICT to ensure sustainable development of its people, resources and country.
- Limited information were available to complete tasks and complete practical expectations of the curriculum (using of science labs, practising vocational and technical work) and assignments as lockdown affected all sources of information

Support for the design of COVID-19 monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans:

- Appointment of independent service providers to conduct data collection and reporting
- Nationally representative phone household surveys could be integrated to the usual data collection operations to measure, with support and guidance to collect a range of household level information (health, income, activities, attitudes), child hunger, learning in the home, and school related information and track changes over time.

2.2 National strategies to continue data collection during COVID-19

New strategic Data Collection Approach

- COVID tool survey to examine the benefit of the implementation of school at home or “ESCOLA BA UMA” to guarantee ongoing access to education opportunities to children during the school closure time.
- Online survey by interviewing parents and caregivers’ opinion on ESCOLA BA UMA program focus to preschool and primary education grade 1-6.

How are you planning on recording usual aggregate measures?

- By simplifying questionnaires to adjust to the current situation instead of the full "normal" survey
- Use of provisional figures
- Increase the use of administrative data
- Replace missing survey data with data from administrative sources or data from preceding year, e.g. details on infrastructure Harmonised approach/ sound imputation techniques to deal with the high number of missing data or delays
- The Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) may be considered instead of sending questionnaires by post and follow-up of questionnaire completion may be done through telephone calls
- Create contact and communication strategies, aiming to maximize high response rates
- Best Practices of fieldwork may be envisaged Develop the existing software and hardware infrastructure and platform at Ministry of Education to support computer assisted telephone interviews and also, online self reporting portals
- Setting up of the IT Unit of the Ministry of Education with the help of several Data Entry Officers where collection of data using telephone interviews
- Invest in online and cost effective solutions

In Ecuador: At the district level, information is obtained through field officials about field knowledge on the connectivity of homes with Internet, TV and radio. In an effort to monitor the situation of children in the rise of COVID, a joint initiative was developed with UNICEF by conducting a survey via telephone to parents over 6 months to evaluate the benefits of classroom instruction compared to distance learning, and the risk factors related to the reopening of schools (current time and return to face-to-face mode). A registration registry is used to monitor sustainability changes at all levels on the implementation of projects and evaluate if there is a migratory movement due to the world crisis.

2.3 Challenges in collecting data (regular and new collection)

Challenges anticipated by school administrations and data collection authorities, as a result of new practices for the delivery of education and disruptions to the regular data collection activities, include:

From the school administration:

- Students may not be familiar with e-learning platforms available
- ICT providers were not fully equipped to deliver the relevant services
- Initial scoping of student and staff accessibility to internet while at home showed gaps
- Lack of proper training and tailor made capacity strengthening on the required computer skills
- SIM cards provided by mobile companies were not taken advantage by all students, as not all have the devices to use the available internet services
- Adjustment to budget allocations across the education sector needed
- Not all schools participate in data collection
- Limited resource to do monitoring
- Not all line functions are involved
- School transactional system and not able to receive information from households



- Data to share with external agencies e.g, Internal Affairs. Social welfare, child benefits, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management.

Some of the challenges faced in obtaining response to the new data requirements are:

1. Obtaining logistical funding and resources required to ensure a good coverage rate and a quicker turn around time in terms of responses for timely decision-making.
 - Temporary restrictions in mobility between regions
 - Low return rate of electronic questionnaires, difficulty in use of online tools (principals, directors ...)
 - Limited resources to do monitoring
2. Training capacity of school's heads in providing quality datasets or responses back.
 - Not all schools participated in data collection
3. Monitoring self-learning and conducting managerial evaluation of school principals, academic and administrative vice-principles
4. With student learning from home and the limited curriculum delivery, which was set in place to continue the learning through the radio and TV broadcasting,
 1. Monitoring of learning in the wake of physical distancing measures continue to be a challenge by the ministry.
 2. To establish conventional indicators such as coverage, access and participation continue is a daunting task.

In South Africa, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESR) is presented with different challenges depending on the sector of education, private vs public. In the private sector, the information is withheld by fear from the tax authorities, to which measures were taken by the Ministry and the 2020 data collection will allow an assessment of the impacts of these measures. In the public sector, there is no statistics production unit, a perpetual questioning of the arrangements made for the transmission of the information (the Ministry is disabling the process in general). It is trying to bring together and to get the cooperation of all actors in the field. In addition, the lack of information on students, teachers, administrators, infrastructure and university works and required for production makes it difficult to have some sort of estimation of the impacts from the changes brought by the COVID-19 crisis. It is understood that there is a large gap between limited information estimated and the reality, which the authorities will only be able to evaluate once data collection is completed. South Africa is also faced by a lack of funding for statistical activity.

In Columbia, the technological development of the GEIH operation was modified to produce an application for mobile devices in a very short period of time. This application allows the pollsters to collect the GEIH information. Yet, this quick adaptation and implementation of the technology also brought some challenges, namely with regards to the transmission and storage of information online securely. The joining of the databases of the operation before the emergency and after the emergency and maintaining the integrity and quality of the information. To address these challenges, the Ministry



of Education’s key initiatives to follow-up and monitor the situation include the maintain of the information systems which were already in use by making the reporting mechanisms more flexible, the addition of new topics, actions and programs carried out in the context of the pandemic, made space for opened virtual communication channels to help resolve any difficulties which may arise with the new context. They also strengthened the communication mechanisms with territorial entities through specialized teams set in place to systemize the advances, difficulties and obstacles present on their respective territories. Finally, Colombia has focus their efforts in the face of the crisis and regarding their data production by prioritizing the tasks based on the urgency and the risks, they formed agile and multidisciplinary actions to support their teams, implemented monitoring and response schemes, maintained rigorous quality of information despite the urgency, and advocate for a constant communication as it is considered as essential for the development of operations.

In Ecuador, for AMIE Statistical Information system, the challenges related to the collection of new data include the variation in data collection dates, due to changes in school calendars. To address this, the collection of information moved to an online data collection, so it can be done from anywhere with internet. However, this also depends on the availability of the information of the person in charge and the connectivity in telework.

3. What guidance is needed from UIS/UNESCO?

Advocacy from the UIS to national authorities on the importance of availability in time of statistical data and creation of a specific budget line for the school census.

To make available to all **documents and strategies on the good practices** shared by all countries to face the challenges during the COVID-19 crisis resulting from worldwide consultation (eg. UIS regional meetings). Sharing expertise and experiences with innovative education solutions in crisis can serve as models for others. To offer support and **capacity building for data collection** related to teaching, learning, monitoring, data collection and use of data by UIS and partners, especially considering the new indicators to monitor the situation adequately (to capture distance learning via the television and other online tools).

Sharing alternative solutions and methodologies (tools) that can be used in this pandemic situation to address issues faced by national statistical offices, and governments and produce education data

- Non responding school’s data projections methodologies
- Renforcer les capacités des acteurs pour le calcul des indicateurs avec prise en compte de données manquantes
- How to recover the delaying of data collection from schools
- Assessing distance learning and access to learning from home: Which tools to use to monitor the output for school at home activities or shift of the unit of statistical observation from school to “home” - What are some of the best practices to measuring this specific aspect?



- Statistical package or other tools use for quicker data analysis, online tool to collect and process data

To offer **support in the implementation of an integrated system of information collection** (system integrated information such as EMIS). This could be for the **use of smarter innovative technologies**, which can produce faster data responses for any decision making of such crisis within education systems. Setting up of a **common platform** for sharing and learning from experiences of other countries and capacity building, a mutual open and online educational resources and digital learning platforms. EMIS data could include socioeconomic information of learners such as family education background and related educational context collected periodically to offer more perspectives in the analyses of the impacts. Finally, countries stated the **support for the implementation of the school mapping** to better coordinate school networks and update monitoring system evaluation at all levels.

3.1 SDG 4-related guidance

- Guidance on the appropriate use of the SDG's 4 indicator's including new education indicators in general
- Suggesting Standards and methodologies of new indicators along with its role in achieving HDI and SDG goals
- All the SDG 4 could not be adequately monitored and reported as a result of non conduct of national census in education

For example in Colombia, the monitoring of global and thematic indicators may not be possible because it has not been possible to carry out tests at the national level for given grades (eg global indicator 4.1.1) and thus it will be important to think about alternative methods to follow-up.

- The Ministry of Education is designing, together with the ICFES, mechanisms to use in the schools that allow us to identify the current learning levels, the inequalities that have been generated in this period, and thus be able to adjust the policies and generate leveling strategies.

The **financial aspect and technical assistance** were mentioned by many countries as an important challenge in ensuring the continuity of education and thus assistance in developing and financing solutions will be necessary. For example, the development of a master plan describing school census procedure and process.

Annex 1 – Summary table of variables recommended for data collection during COVID-19 crisis

<p>Infrastructure and facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools infrastructure and environment details • School closure (period) • Number of learners per class (class size) to establish the distancing of learners in a class • Learner / Educator Ratio <p>Schools with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional electricity and access to internet • Sanitary/Functional girls and boys toilets • Water and sanitation: access to water and hand washing stations (in operation) <p>School safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools with qualified child counsellors or psychologists • Teachers who have undergone training to be designated as counsellors • Schools that conduct health checkups on regular basis and maintain health card of students • Schools implementing guidelines on school safety and emergency
<p>Students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of students • Contacts of parents or legal caregiver of students • Information on school administration personnel (contact telephone number) • Students enrolment details • Students psychosocial and health information • Student achievement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Monitor changes in enrolment data, achievement data, ○ any correlation with pandemic changes to school/education norms • Children (and staff) with disabilities and from vulnerable groups
<p>Teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers' name lists • telephone contacts • classes held • subjects taught • Number of staff who care for vulnerable people • Teachers trained in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online/ digital content development



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online/ digital teaching ● Educator attendance including reasons for absenteeism ● Wage guarantees for workers
Delivery of education (modes of)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of activities and learning sessions offered ● Accessibility to remote learning platforms and resources for students while at home. e.g, internet connectivity and laptops/mobile phones, apps like ZOOM, google classroom etc. ● Digital learning: Students who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attended online classes using computer or mobile with internet ○ Access and log in of students to alternative learning platforms ○ Completed online courses using dedicated platforms ● Schools with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ access to internet for pedagogical purposes ○ Other modalities developed for those who do not have connectivity Any other digital medium (TV/ radio/ video content, etc.) available ○ Educational channels available on cable TV ○ who have conducted online classes for their students ● In-class teaching hours lost
Monitoring during the closure of schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child well being, including hunger ● Information on distance education experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learning activities in the home ○ Attitudes to school closures ○ Impact on caregivers
At reopening of schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information on academic calendar adjustments ● Information on the indicators of educational activity ● (Assistance, movements, losses) ● Retention of students in class/course ● Deepen measurement of the evaluation of behaviors and homework, in line with SDG Target 4.7
Monitoring the COVID-19 crisis responsive in schools/institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Schools in compliance to prevent/ slow the spread of the COVID-19 crisis. ● Schools in schools having an emergency place plans like isolation rooms, phone contacts etc. ● Schools in regions affected by COVID 19 ● Students attendance including reasons for absenteeism

Annex 2 -Impact of current indicator monitoring and reporting for global and thematic indicators (SDG 4) for which measures are available

Global or thematic SDG 4 indicator	Impact and reporting plan, if any
4.1.1	The plan was to (re)introduce a national assessment programme in 2020, which will run every three years and provide nationally representative data at the grade 3 level for both maths and reading. This plan was delayed due to COVID 19
4.1.6 - Administration of nationally representative learning assessment (a) in Grade 2 or 3, (b) at the end of primary education; and (c) at the end lower secondary education	The new National Assessment Programme will run every three years at the grade 3, 6 and 9 levels.
4.1.4 Out of school rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)	We might miss data for 2020 due to delay in data collection for the General Household Survey
4.2.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well being, by sex	A new early Learning Outcome Measure is being developed and piloted, for first reporting in 2020. The pilot is also delayed.
4.2.4. Gross early childhood education enrolment ratio in (a) pre primary education and (b) and early childhood	We (South Africa) might miss data for 2020 due to delay in data collection for the General Household Survey.
4.2.5. Number of years of (a) free and (b) compulsory pre primary education guaranteed in legal frameworks	It is not compulsory at present, although there is proposed legislation to make Grade R compulsory.
4.6.1 Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skill, by sex	We might miss data for 2020 due to delay in data collection for the General Household Survey.
4.6.2. Youth/adult literacy rate	We might miss data for 2020 due to delay in data collection for the General Household Survey.