

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

> Summary of the Third Meeting of the Technical Cooperation Group on SDG 4 – Education 2030 Indicators

> > June 2017



# Introduction

The third meeting of the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG4-Education 2030 (TCG) took place on 31 May – 2 June 2017, at the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in the University of Montreal campus in Montreal, Canada. 40 experts and representatives from 13 Member States, 5 Observer States and 7 organizations participated in the meeting (see Annex 1).

The main objectives of the meeting were to a) advance the work of the Working Groups through face-to-face meetings; b) update members on SDG-related developments; c) report on the progress to date and intended roadmaps of the 3 TCG Working Groups for the next 12-18 months; d) share national initiatives in the implementation of SDG 4 follow-up and review; e) inform participants on CapED; and f) To discuss and agree on the process for rotating membership to the TCG.

The first day of the meeting was devoted to face-to-face meetings of the 3 Working Groups to continue discussions previously held virtually and develop a work plan and expected outcomes for the next 12 – 18 months. The second and third days (1-2 June) involved the entire TCG and took place in plenary sessions.

# Main outcomes

Participants were updated on the global process of SDG reporting; outcomes from the three TCG working groups and additional topics related to statistical capacity building and indicators being developed outside of the TCG. The TCG also discussed the challenges associated with the SDG agenda particularly related to the engagement of Member States as well as issues related to benchmarking and the selection of minimum levels to assess learning outcomes.

Participants were APPRAISED of:

- the process of global indicators especially the UN Statistical Commission;
- the forthcoming adoption of the global indicator framework by ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly as a 'voluntary and country-led framework;
- IAEG-SDG's plans for future refinement and revision of the framework and the resulting deadlines; and
- the new TCG logo.

Participants REVIEWED and APPROVED revised TORs for each WG and work plans and planned activities and outputs in 2017-2018.

The TCG LEARNED about

- statistical capacity development initiatives and some tools available and/or underdevelopment including the CapED project;
- China and Argentina's experiences on SDG4 follow up and review; and
- technical work related to the development of a Global Lead Indicator.

And were INVITED to provide inputs on the Global Lead Indicator and TCG Membership rotation proposal. They also NOTED the recommendation of GAML about 2017 reporting on 4.1 to use Cross-National Assessments as published by the administering organizations.

The TCG RECOGNISED:

- the challenges of keeping the engagement of participating countries and reaching out to a wider range of countries;
- the need to strengthen collaboration with regional and national representatives; and
- the need to discuss in detail in upcoming sessions the conceptual and operational issues pertaining to benchmarking, thresholds and minimum levels.

Regarding the strategic direction and work in the next 3 years of the TCG, members agreed:

- to consolidate, accelerate, and develop the work on defining global and thematic indicators in order to meet critical global deadlines (IAEG and UNSC) and prepare for the 2019 report to the HLPF;
- that work on the thematic indicators can be more flexible, but the group will strive for parallel processes; and
- to define and consult on the challenges of benchmarks, thresholds, proficiency levels.

The TCG requests the Education 2030 Steering Committee to:

- ENDORSE the progress and work-plan as presented by the TCG and GAML and the 2017 reporting;
- STRENGTHEN the invitation to member states and development partners to engage in the TCG Working Groups and GAML Task Forces; and
- CALL ATTENTION to the critical need to:
  - close the gaps in learning data which are critical for achieving the 2030 Agenda; and
  - explore the possibilities and challenges of thresholds and benchmarking.

# **Individual sessions**

## Session 1. Opening session

Ms Silvia Montoya, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, opened the 3<sup>rd</sup> TCG Meeting by thanking the Governments of Canada and Quebec and Statistics Canada, for their assistance to the organization of the meeting and generous sponsorship of some participants. Ms Montoya also thanked the UNESCO Division for Education 2030 Support and Coordination for its financial sponsorship. TCG members and UIS observers were then invited to introduce themselves to the plenary.

Finally, Ms Montoya presented the agenda which was adopted by the TCG with no revisions.

# Session 2a. UPDATE on SDG-related activities and developments since the 2nd TCG meeting (Jordan Naidoo)

Ms Alison Kennedy (UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Member of Working Group 1) updated participants on SDG-related activities and developments since the last TCG meeting. She provided a detailed timeline related to the endorsement of the SDG4 indicator frameworks culminating with their formal adoption at the UN General Assembly. Ms Kennedy highlighted the following key elements of the draft resolution:

- the framework is voluntary and country-led
- need to integrate new data sources
- need to validate international statistics with national authorities
- adoption of the Cape Town Global Action Plan

Ms Kennedy also provided an update on the main UNSC decisions which have an impact on indicator development such as:

- only annual 'refinements' will be accepted from the IAEG
- proposals for new/additional indicators will only be considered during the first major review in 2019/2020
- major reviews will be undertaken in 2019 and 2024 for approval in 2020 and 2025, respectively
- agreement on rotation policy for membership to the IAEG

The main takeaway from this presentation was that the framework is not likely to change and is, therefore, the basis for upcoming work on indicator development. The TCG expressed appreciation of the progress on SDG 4 implementation since the last TCG meeting and the work of the GAML. They further noted decisions taken by the UN Statistical Commission and the future adoption of the global indicator framework by ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly as a 'voluntary and country-led framework.'

Discussion focussed on the contradiction that the mandatory list of global indicators as well as the thematic indicator list is voluntary. The TCG secretariat provided background information related to the decision and highlighted that the nature of the framework allows for flexibility given national contexts. The framework is meant to be a help for countries for countries to use within their own priorities. As such not all countries are expected to adopt all indicators at once and that the choice of indicators depends heavily on national relevance.

The secretariat also highlighted that the education goal has more applicability and agreement despite some complexities. However very few countries can produce all of the indicators and therefore decisions will need to be made, whether political or practical. It is up to the TCG to consider how best to guide countries on which indicators to choose.

Canada requested more information about the HLP report. The secretariat informed that each



goal area is requested to submit a story line and short report. This report was drafted by UIS and GEMR. Getting data was a major challenge. In addition, 18 countries were invited to report about 1.5 pages for each goal area. The individual country reports were most important. Ms Montoya pointed out that guidelines were produced for countries on how to choose interlinkage indicators.

Participants were informed that the HLP report consists of 2 reports which are published annually in June: one for national reporting and one for consolidated international reporting. Mr Naidoo highlighted that while the 2017 report will focus on poverty and equity, other thematic areas are also required to report on progress (1.5 pages per goal). In 2019, the HLP report will be focussed education report which will require more effort.

Participants supported the formal process for adopting the methodologies such as the TCG. They stressed that any change in tier requires solid meta data.

# Session 2b. Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) - Informing the TCG

Ms Kennedy presented how the GAML works through partnerships to generate tools for highquality data on learning outcomes and the reporting scale to benchmark and sustain efforts at all levels of education. She also provided an in-depth explanation of the governance, management, technical inputs and decision making aspects of the GAML. Ms Kennedy concluded by updating the TCG on the outcomes of the three GAML meetings since 11 May 2016.

# Session 3. Results from the 3 TCG Working Groups (Chair: Husein Abdul-Hamid, World Bank Group)

The three Working Groups (WG) held their first face-to-face meetings the day before the TCG meeting. Each WG introduced the group members followed by a presentation on the work undertaken since they were formed in March 2017 and their planned activities and outputs in 2017 and 2018. These are summarised in **Table 1**.

Members States highlighted the urgent need to support agencies who will in turn support countries to implement the SDG4 indicators at the national level. The group also discussed the meaning of Tier II vs. Tier III indicators and the feasibility of implementation. They also discussed the need to refine some of the indicators, particularly regarding time periods so that they could better fit into existing national indicators. For example, 4.3.1 is available in Brazil's national household survey but for a shorter period.

The same case applies to the Labour Force Survey data. The GEMR suggested that the labour force survey should be adapted to include a specific question on 4.3.1 in labour force surveys. Must consider the methodology and mechanisms in the OECD are very costly and may not be possible in all countries. The WG 1 is considering all of these options.

Participants highlighted the challenges to change labour force surveys which is focussed only on the unemployment rate. They further highlighted the trade-off between international



comparability and data availability. Data at the national level may cover different time periods and be consistent over time but cannot be compared cross-nationally.

It was also pointed out that in addition to seeking international and regional sources of data, the WG 1 is also looking into adding questions to national surveys which are similar to those in PIACC and AES. Participants further agreed that any strategy for capacity building and data production must be integrated into the National Education System and budget of the country. Data must be used and the focus should always be focussed at production at the national level. There should also be a coherent strategy across international agencies.

Participants also highlighted the need for adequate and sustained funding to develop appropriate sustainable systems and capacity to develop, analyse and use the data as well as the necessity for a coherent strategy across international and regional organizations.

Benchmarking and the selection of a minimum level of proficiency were identified as areas of political rather than technical concern. The need for regional rather than or in addition to global benchmarks was discussed. Ms Montoya stressed that countries should make their own decisions regarding the level that they would like to attain and referred to a concept note written for the GAML which could help guide the discussions.

The group also discussed how best to ensure a robust global consultation process regarding the recommendations of the 3 working groups. There was general agreement that SDG4 is all inclusive, and that country ownership is paramount to ensure that national interests are reflected at the global level.

Table 1: Summary of Activities and Outputs of TCG Working Groups	
WG1 Indicator Development (Presented by Ms Lotta Larsen, Sweden)	Time frame
Agree on methodology for 3 indicators within the WG	Sept 2017
Conduct consultation/validation process with countries	Dec 2017
Select additional indicators/areas to develop	Dec 2017
Agree on methodology for further 4 indicators within the WG	Jan 2018
Submit first 3 methodologies to TCG for endorsement/approval	Q1 2018
Conduct consultation/validation process with countries on 4 more indicators	Q1 2018
Agree on methodology for another X indicators within the WG	Q1 2018
Submit first further 4 methodologies to TCG for endorsement/approval	Q2 2018
Conduct consultation/validation process with countries on X more indicators	Q2 2018
Submit another X methodologies to TCG for endorsement/approval	Q3 2018
Select additional indicators/areas to develop	Q3 2018
Agree on methodology for further Y indicators within the WG	Q4 2018
Submit TCG-endorsed global indicator methodologies to IAEG for approval	Q4 2018
WG2 Capacity-building (Presented by Said Ould Voffal, UIS)	Time frame
Complete capacity building framework document	Q4 2017
Populate the framework with existing tools	Dec 2017
Validate framework	Q1 2018
Identify and respond to gaps in the framework	Q1-2 2018
Advocate for use and funding of the framework	Q1-2 2018
WG3 Data Reporting, Validation and Dissemination (Presented by Canada)	Time frame
Specification of data flows	Q4 2017
Calendar of publications	Q4 2017
Terminology document	Q4 2017
Define validation process for SDG4 indicators (including process for opting out)	Q1 2018
Recommendation to the TCG for a strategy/approach for reporting on different levels of 'missing' data	Q1 2018 and beyond

### Table 1: Summary of Activities and Outputs of TCG Working Groups

The TCG congratulated the Working Groups on their efforts so far and endorsed revisions to the TORs and work plans and planned activities and outputs in 2017-2018.

# Session 4. Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) – Update on Progress (Chair: Klarka Zeman, Canada)

Ms Silvia Montoya updated participants on the critical path and issues regarding the set of SDG4 indicators which measure learning outcomes. Ms Montoya provided an in-depth overview of the objectives and tools related to each indicator as well as the progress within each area and work plan of the GAML. Indicator 4.1 is most advanced but still requires capacity development. Indicators 4.2; 4.4; 4.6; and 4.7 are less advanced and have a more urgent need for capacity development.

Ms Montoya further explained the measurement strategy and key issues related to the identification of suitable data, global comparability, definition of minimum levels, collection, reporting and use as well as capacity development at the global, regional and national level.

Discussions focussed around the need to clarify the roles of the GAML and the TCG and the interlinkages between the two groups. Member countries expressed interest in the development of a short literacy survey which could be useful for both developed and developing countries.

The TCG noted the recommendation of the GAML that for reporting in 2017 on Indicator 4.1.1, the UIS will use Cross-National Assessments as published by the respective administering organizations (ERCE, IEA, OECD, PASEC, and SAQMEC). The TCG expressed interest in the discussions initiated in the GAML on the establishment of benchmarks, thresholds and minimum proficiency levels and requested that this should be an agenda item for the next TCG meeting.

# Session 5. UPDATE on temporary reporting and the Global Lead Indicator (GLI) (Chair: Dankert Vedeler, Education 2030 Steering Committee)

Ms Elise Legault (UIS) presented a paper on the development of a Global Lead Indicator (GLI), which is under development at the request of the Education Commission as an advocacy tool similar to the out-of-school and under-five mortality rate for moving the SDG4 agenda forward. The aim of the GLI is to inform the SDG4 agenda in a compact and easy to understand way. Reducing the full set of indicators to just one without losing focus on the breadth of the SDG agenda is a major challenge.

There were very few comments from the plenary indicating that the GLI was not necessarily embraced:

- France: Interesting but probably more relevant on a regional level.
- Uganda: Interesting but we still need more detail to ensure that quality aspects are covered.
- El: Some questions concerning the need and requests for a GLI. Will it be an additional indicator (44 instead of 43). Will it narrow down the SDG4 agenda?
- Latin-America CSOs (not present) raised the same issue about narrowing the SDG4.



The TCG members were invited to provide their inputs to the paper either during the meeting or within a week following the meeting.

Participants actively discussed the importance of expanding the coverage of data on Learning Assessments and the measurement of learning. This is the critical issue, knowing that for instance in GPE countries only 32% assesses learning. Cross national assessments cover about 100 countries and few LIC are among those. National assessments/exams are difficult to compare cross nationally and to use for longitudinal purposes. In addition questions were raised about thresholds/benchmarks and the relevance of global comparison.

The group also discussed the need to ensure that the indicator, if developed, is relevant in the national, regional and international contexts to be fully robust by engaging regional organisations as early as possible.

# Session 6. Presentation on UNESCO's overall approach to Capacity Development (Chair: Alison Kennedy, UIS)

Mr Said Voffal presented the UIS' overall strategy to capacity building as well as the Pacific Capacity Building Project. He provided an overview of the various initiatives undertaken by the UIS through its long involvement in capacity building as well as the guiding framework and the outcomes of the Pacific project.

Mr Marc Bernal gave an overview of the tools that the UIS has developed or is planning to develop. Finally, Mr Jordan Naidoo presented the CapED project which aims to develop the capacities of 10 participating countries to integrate SDG4 into national education policy and sector management as well as the monitoring of progress.

The TCG members expressed interest in having access to the DQAF tools developed by the UIS which will be made publicly available in June 2017 on the UIS website. They also supported having a centralised repository for all tools so that all countries can access them, which is what the WG2 is working on.

They discussed the importance of addressing the sustainability of any capacity building activity especially in light of the potential lack of political will and turnover at the national level. Participants agreed that coordination and commitment at the technical and political level are paramount and that any initiatives are country-led. The UIS emphasised that this is the approach which they endeavour to undertake.

Member States stressed the importance of learning by doing rather than simple training to build capacity and targeting the right people to ensure that human resources are in place.

# Session 7. Statistical capacity development initiatives of OECD, GPE and the World Bank (Chair: Carthbert Mulyalya - Uganda)

During this session participants were appraised of the capacity development initiatives and tools produced by regional and international organizations to assist countries in the implementation of the SDG4 agenda.

Mr Mortitz Bilagher provided an overview of the Global Partnership for Education and how it works with Member States. He described the results framework and outcomes such as the increase in data availability for key indicators but that only 32% of country partners have implemented learning assessment systems.

Mr Husein Abdul-Hamid presented the World Bank Group's initiative which includes and assessment using the SABER framework; data integration; support and development; grants and support to build learning assessment data systems.

Ms Corinne Heckmann presented the impact and challenges of implementing SDG at the OECD level. She described the OECD's engagement with the SDG4 agenda and presented the progress of OECD members towards SDG4. Ms Heckmann presented the main challenges faced by the OECD which relate to different methodologies between international organizations, the global relevance of some indicators and the political issues surrounding benchmarks. She proposed adding the benchmarking issue in the TOR of the WGs and to include a session on benchmarking at the next TCG.

The ensuing discussions focused on the dearth of learning assessment data and that while capacity development seems to be resulting in more data, learning assessments are still missing. Participants also stressed the importance of collaboration between international organizations.

- Agreed that benchmarking should be addressed at the next meeting.
- Suggested that countries which have already implemented benchmarks should be contacted to reflect on their experience.
- That thresholds may be linked to regional objectives.

# Session 8. China and Argentina (Chair: Carthbert Mulyalya - Uganda)

One of the key challenges of the SDG agenda is implementation at the national level. As stated throughout the meeting, country ownership and capacity are vital elements toward meeting this objectives. The TCG can only benefit from learning about country experiences and promoting a South-South cooperation.

During this session, countries were invited to select a particular theme within the SDG4 agenda and to present the road map and challenges towards implementation of high-quality statistics related to that theme and address the following questions:

- 1. What are the national policy priorities related to the theme?
- 2. How are stakeholders engaged?



- 3. What are some of the key decisions related to quality?
- 4. What is the national strategy for data production?
- 5. What are some of the key internal and external challenges?
- 6. What were the lessons learned/implications and proposed way forward?

China and Argentina presented on their roadmap and challenges to developing high-quality statistics to inform the SDG4 agenda, particularly in relation to learning assessments.

Mr Tao Xin presented China's roadmap towards the implementation of a national education assessment system, including typical questions, the data production process, selection of levels and the results by county and grade as well as linkages to PISA. The assessments which began in 2007 with 295 schools cover Math, Chinese, Science, Physical Education, Arts and Moral Education on a rotational basis. By 2016 the assessment included 6527 schools. Defining the quality of education, assessment standards and dealing with the diversity within China itself were presented as a challenge. Assessment data from China are used to inform the Ministry and Statistical Council and to provide feedback to provinces to improve quality. Data are not fed back to schools.

China highlighted the importance of government ownership, data integration, managing diversity and the challenges of defining quality.

Ms Samanta Bonelli showed results from Argentina's national assessments which are publicly available on the web by province. Argentina has conducted national assessments since 1989 through several instruments and sources. Major challenges are the lack of coordination amongst different levels of government, ministries and sectors, the lack of data on equity as well as the global comparison and relevance of some SDG4 indicators at the national level.

Both countries demonstrated a strong political commitment to assessing learning. Key challenges were ensuring coordination amongst all players, responding to the full agenda (e.g. equity and quality) as well as the challenges associated with global comparison and the relevance of some indicators to inform national policy.

# Session 9. Rotation of TCG members and TCG Expected Outputs and Work Plan (Chair: Jordan Naidoo)

Ms Alison Kennedy opened up the discussion on the rotation of TCG members and described how the TCG was formed and the process for rotating membership in the IAEG. Ideally, the TCG membership should be refreshed every 2 years in common with the IAEG-SDGs. The aim should be to replace 1/3 of members each time in order to retain some institutional memory in the group and to give other countries or organizations an opportunity to participate and represent their respective constituencies, and/or regions.

The Secretariat proposed to seek nominations via the UNESCO Regional Groups in order to ensure a balanced regional representation and to change approximately one-third of members in order to retain some continuity while bringing in new ideas.



Nominations will be invited in the second half of 2017 and will be implemented in 2018

Participants welcomed the idea of having increased national representation but also cautioned about losing momentum. An issue for discussion was how to maintain the momentum of the TCG while ensuring geographic coverage and introducing fresh ideas. Some members expressed concern about the political nature of requesting nominations from UNESCO which may result in diplomats rather than statisticians participating in the TCG.

The following suggestions were made:

- to maintain those participating in working groups
- or to allow members to stay on even if their country was rotated out
- to have contacts for all countries and not just those participating so that information could be widely shared
- to increase the membership size of the TCG
- to fill in empty positions of non-participating countries

No agreement was reached and instead the TCG proposed that UIS draft proposals based on the discussions for approval by the Education 2030 Steering Committee.

Participants favoured the idea of strengthening country participation. Suggestions included having contacts from all countries and not just those participating in the TCG and establishing a permanent body for the TCG which would be similar to the INES working party of the OECD.

They stressed the importance of maintaining the technical expertise of the group by ensuring representation of statisticians from Ministries of Education and National Statistical Offices. However, no decision was taken, and it was agreed that the UIS would draw up some options to be considered by the Education 2030 Steering Committee.

The proposed rotation of some of the members of the TCG will provide an opportunity to strengthen country participation and engagement while maintaining the institutional memory and expertise already developed in the group.

Participants favoured having face-to-face meetings in order to really advance the technical work of the TCG WGs.

Session 9b - Ms Alison Kennedy also presented the expected outputs and work plan of the TCG in 2017 and 2018. She reminded the TCG to comment on the documents received thus far and that they are invited to engage in the GAML process.

Discussion ensued around the role of the TCG vis a vis the GAML.



## Session 10. Next steps and closing remarks (Chair: Denkert Vedeler)

Ms Montoya summarised the main outcomes of the meeting and invited the TCG to comment on the decisions which will go to the Education 2030 Steering Committee by 9 June 2017.

Participants reiterated the need for clarity regarding the roles of the TCG and GAML and requested the TCG Secretariat to ensure that documents are sent out in advance of the meetings with a clear indication of the type of feedback required.

Ms Montoya made reference and invited TCG members to read the TCG ToR from December 2016 which described the relationship between the two bodies. She reminded those concerned that they are welcome to provide inputs at any time in between the meetings. She also reminded participating countries that they are representing their regions which will enable the engagement of all countries not just those in the TCG.

Suggestions were made to clearly communicate to members the purpose or expected inputs for each document sent out by the TCG secretariat. It was agreed that documents would be sent out shortly after the meeting and that the TCG members would provide feedback by the 9 June 2017.

The meeting was adjourned with a congratulations to the UIS by Dankert Vedeler and the appreciation from Ms Montoya to all participants.

# ANNEX. Participants list

# **MEMBER STATES**

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Alexander Leicht Section of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Chief

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#### **UNESCO Institute for Statistics**

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