

PROPOSED REVISIONS IN THE TCG ORGANIZATION

The Technical Cooperation Group on SDG 4 Indicators was created in May 2016 as a successor to the Technical Advisory Group on post-2015 education indicators, which had been established by UNESCO in April 2014. In brief, its objectives as outlined in the [terms of reference](#) revised in February 2020 are:

- **SDG 4 global and thematic indicator framework development:** Recommend and decide on priority improvements; propose, develop and endorse indicator methodological norms, standards, tools and guidelines; identify needs and propose ways to develop country capacity; coordinate global efforts to improve data availability and quality; and collaborate with agencies and countries.
- **Other indicator development:** Define and approve methods for other pressing policies and management challenges identified by member states not included in the SDG 4 framework.
- **Quality assurance:** Assure data quality and timeliness, and compliance with TCG decisions.
- **Support to global and regional entities:** Work with the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and relevant regional organizations on the implementation of the global and thematic monitoring framework and coordinate the harmonization of regional monitoring frameworks, assuring the coherence of these processes.
- Inform SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee on indicator framework implementation.

Since 2019, its mode of working has been based on six working groups focused on data sources:

- Administrative data and education management information systems;
- Household survey data;
- Learning assessment data / Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (with indicator-specific task forces);
- Teachers and personnel data;
- Expenditure data; and
- Additional groups on specific issues (e.g. refugees, conflict-affected countries).

Other working groups may be set up with the agreement of the TCG to address specific priorities. The working groups, which are chaired by TCG members:

- Develop objectives, indicator priorities and deliverables in an annual work plan;
- Meet at least twice a year and report on progress to the TCG;
- Coordinate with each other.

The TCG, for which UIS serves as secretariat, is composed of 38 members (**Annex 1**) with:

- UNESCO (4 members of which 3 voting);
- UNESCO member states (28);
- Multilateral organizations (3);
- Civil society organizations (2); and
- Co-chair of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee (1).

It also includes observers, notably from UN regional commissions, regional agencies, non-government organizations and other organizations able to provide expert technical advice and support.

The roles and responsibilities of TCG members are the following:

- Commit to tasks and outcomes of TCG work plan and additional tasks decided by the TCG;
- Commit time and effort to complete tasks on time and to a level of excellence;
- Participate in physical meetings and virtual communications;
- Review key deliverables/products from the TCG, its working groups and GAML task forces;
- Identify issues that the TCG should address;
- Identify potential risks and suggest possible solutions;
- Participate in at least one working group (or designate an alternate);
- Contribute towards successful communication and positive motivation among participants

Evaluation of TCG progress and rationale of proposed revisions to the terms of reference

The global education monitoring framework underwent a major change in 2015, which called on the TCG's establishment a year later. Five years into its operation it is important to look back at its contributions, notably in terms of the cases it has promoted:

- *Framing*: It has been an active platform for collaboration, framing discussions comprehensively, not shying away from the main challenges to reporting comparative education data.
- *Inclusiveness*: It has promoted open, inclusive and transparent exchanges between its members, especially after the establishment working groups in 2019.
- *Innovation*: It has contributed to the development of new methodological approaches, especially for indicators that rely on learning assessments and multiple sources of data.
- *Coherence*: It has strongly emphasized the need for coherence between national, regional and global education monitoring frameworks, promoting alignment and communication to strengthen foundations for more complementarity in the future.
- *Use*: It has emphasized the need for greater use of data for policy, promoting the work on setting national benchmarks, which was a commitment made in 2015.

At the same time, it is also necessary to look at challenges and identify ways to better promote the TCG objectives, as stated in its terms of reference. The following issues are proposed for discussion and potential solutions are put for decision.

a. Member state representation (1)

The terms of reference specify that the 28 member states should help achieve 'balanced regional representation'. Member states are not expected to represent their regions, report to them or seek their views on the TCG decision points arising, as this would have been a major commitment that few, if any, would have been able to undertake. However, this means that links with member states not represented in the TCG are not clear, which is an obstacle to communicating TCG priorities and decisions and sharing developments on the SDG 4 monitoring framework.

Proposed decision: Experience in organizing virtual conferences during the pandemic has shown that it is possible to rely on this modality more to enable the participation of all countries and to overcome these constraints. It is therefore proposed that two tiers are recognized in the TCG structure.

- All Member States will nominate **TCG contact point(s)** who will receive the agenda, take part in the global and regional meetings, and be notified of the decisions.
- **TCG members**, as recognized in the terms of reference, will be those who TCG contact points who, in addition, will vote for issues put to decision using the current TCG rules.

This approach is being piloted in the 8th TCG meeting, which the contact points of the SDG 4 national benchmark process have been invited to attend. This is also a necessary step to familiarize member states with TCG proceedings and facilitate continuity when TCG members need to rotate.

b. Member state representation (2)

No rotation process for Member States had been specified in the original TCG terms of reference. A mechanism will be introduced from 2022 onwards.

Proposed decision: Each selected Member State will serve as TCG member for three calendar years. Member States will be selected through the UNESCO regional Electoral Groups. The next selection will take place in the first quarter of 2022 for the period 2022–2024. It is possible for a Member State that is already serving as a TCG member to be selected again.

c. Member state representation (3)

Discussions in the TCG plenary and working groups have occasionally highlighted potential gaps in communication between ministries of education and national statistical offices; the latter tend to be responsible for SDG reporting. The need for countries to have contact points from both sides would also be consistent with the scope of the SDG monitoring agenda, which has privileged multiple sources of information. In the case of education, this has meant the increasing incorporation of information from surveys that are led by national statistical offices.

Proposed decision: Each member state would nominate one TCG contact point from the education ministry and one TCG contact point from the national statistical office.

This approach is being piloted in the 8th TCG meeting, as the contact points of the SDG 4 national benchmark process, who have been invited to attend, tend to come from both.

d. Member state engagement

The TCG seeks to apply to education the principles and ways of operations of the IAEG-SDGs (**Annex 3**) and is, first and foremost, an inter-governmental body, which should serve the interests and needs of member states. To move closer to this aim, participation of member states needs to be strengthened in TCG plenary and working group meetings, giving more opportunities to member states to express preferences and concerns. The global setting of these meetings may be an obstacle to more active participation. The support of regional organizations with existing education agendas

and monitoring frameworks can be a way forward. During the national benchmark setting process, it has also been observed that gaps remain in a shared understanding of SDG 4 indicators and their methodologies, which would benefit from improved communication and sharing of experiences.

Proposed decisions: Two complementary actions are proposed.

a. Regional organizations, which are currently observers in TCG meetings, would have a stronger role. For each regional group, one or two regional organizations with an education agenda and monitoring framework, would become TCG members (a list of such regional organizations is attached in **Annex 2**). Currently, 6 of the 28 TCG member state seats are vacant. It is proposed that these seats are taken up by 6 regional organizations, which will be invited to become TCG members.

b. Regional TCG meetings would be an additional activity to the plenary and working group meetings. There would be at least one meeting per region with all countries, possibly hosted by regional partners, in which countries are invited to participate. The objective would be to increase ownership of TCG processes, help form consensus in the region on potential decisions, encourage stronger participation and improve coherence of communication. Different options can be examined with respect to the timing of these regional meetings to ensure complementarity with other related activities. For instance, regional meetings could take place:

- after the working group and before the plenary meetings
- around annual UIS coordination workshops
- around regional organization meetings

e. National SDG 4 benchmark indicator process

Following the positive response of countries to the invitation to submit national benchmark values for selected SDG 4 indicators for 2025 and 2030, it is important to include this activity to the TCG terms of reference. The TCG could discuss issues that arise in the use of particular indicators for benchmarking; decide on the addition, deletion or refinement of indicators; advise on adjustments to benchmarks when unexpected events occur, notably the effect of COVID-19; support processes by which countries can develop benchmarks/targets where these are missing; and address misalignment between national, regional and global indicators and search for common ground through dialogue and capacity development.

Proposed decision: Add the development of the national benchmarking process to the objectives of the TCG terms of reference.

f. Data gaps

Coordinating global efforts to improve data availability and quality is one of the TCG objectives but there has been limited engagement in this direction. Steps have recently been taken at the global level in that direction, notably on data from learning assessments, but these have been led by international organizations without the involvement of TCG. Such involvement is needed to ensure that the voice of countries is heard in the arrangements.

Proposed decision: The TCG would need to be consulted in each global initiative that aims to improve data collection to fill SDG 4 monitoring data gaps. Its definitions, methodologies and approaches will need to be followed in these initiatives in compliance with the data governance established for SDG4.

g. Reform of the global education cooperation mechanism

Informing the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee on the SDG 4 indicator framework implementation is one of the TCG objectives but there have been relatively few interactions. Recent changes to the global education cooperation mechanism are expected to improve matters. The new High Level Steering Committee, supported by a group of high-ranking officials and an inter-agency secretariat, will oversee three functions, one of which is on data and monitoring. The strengthening of the TCG, along the lines presented in this paper, has been proposed as one of the strategies in this function.

Proposed decision: Amend the objectives of the TCG terms of reference to reflect the reformed global education cooperation mechanism.

Next steps

The 8th TCG meeting will discuss and decide on the proposed action points. If approved:

- the terms of reference will be revised accordingly for the next TCG plenary meeting;
- the selection of members will be carried out in time for the next TCG plenary meeting;
- regional meetings will take place before the next TCG meeting

Annex 1

Number of TCG member states by UNESCO electoral groups

	TCG current	TCG intended	IAEG-SDGs
Group I (Western Europe and North America)	4	4	5
Group II (Eastern Europe)	3	3	2
Group III (Latin-America and Caribbean)	5	5	5
Group IV (Asia and the Pacific)	4	6	6+1 chair
Group V (a) (Africa)	3	7	6
Group V (b) (Arab States)	3	2	3
Total	22	28	28

Proposed number of TCG member states and regional organizations by UNESCO electoral groups (2022-)

	Member States	Regional organizations	Total
Group I (Western Europe and North America)	4	1	4
Group II (Eastern Europe)	2		3
Group III (Latin-America and Caribbean)	4	1	5
Group IV (Asia and the Pacific)	5	2	7
Group V (a) (Africa)	5	1	6
Group V (b) (Arab States)	2	1	3
Total	22	6	28

Annex 2

Potential eligible regional organizations

Group I (Western Europe and North America)	European Union
Group II (Eastern Europe)	European Union
Group III (Latin-America and Caribbean)	CARICOM
Group IV (Asia and the Pacific)	SEAMEO, Pacific Community
Group V (a) (Africa)	African Union
Group V (b) (Arab States)	ALECSO

Annex 3

For reference

Terms of reference for the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators

1. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators will:

(a) Develop an indicator framework for the follow-up and review of the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, taking into account existing efforts by different groups of countries and organizations, including regional and international agencies, regional commissions, academia, civil society and other relevant international organizations, to be adopted by the Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session, in 2016;

(b) Provide technical support for the implementation of the approved indicator and monitoring framework over the 15-year period towards 2030; ensure the use of harmonized and agreed indicator definitions; share experiences on monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals; and encourage good practices and innovations, including in the area of national capacity-building;

(c) Regularly review methodological developments and issues related to the indicators and their metadata;

(d) Regularly review capacity-building activities in statistical areas relevant to Sustainable Development Goal monitoring and make recommendations to be considered by the Statistical Commission, the High level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities;

(e) Review and support work by the Secretariat for the development of a Sustainable Development Goal data-user forum, tools for data analysis and an open dashboard on the state of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. The Expert Group consists of 27 representatives of national statistical offices and one ex officio member and also includes, as observers, representatives of regional commissions and regional and international agencies, to provide important technical advice and support as needed. Members of the Group will be nominated through existing regional mechanisms for an initial period of two years, after which some are expected to be rotated as agreed by the respective regional mechanisms, with a view to ensuring equitable regional representation and technical expertise and including members of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The respective regional mechanisms will ensure that a certain number of members will be rotated for continuity of the work of the group. Countries that are not members of the Group may send their representatives to participate in the activities of the Group as observers.

3. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat will be the secretariat of the Expert Group. Member States that are part of the Group will elect two Co-Chairs. At the time of membership rotation, one Co-Chair is expected to step down and is invited to serve for

an additional term of two years as a member. Preferably, members of the Expert Group should not serve concurrently as members of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The existing global monitoring groups, generally composed of representatives of national statistical systems and experts from international agencies working on specific indicators, will contribute to the work of the Expert Group as deemed appropriate by the Group. In addition, as deemed appropriate, global monitoring groups will be formed bringing together national and international experts that will support the work of the Group on the selection and definition of indicators and data compilation and reporting to monitor progress in new and emerging areas covered by the new Goals and targets.

4. The Expert Group will conduct its work in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, and will invite experts, as appropriate, from civil society, academia and the private sector to contribute their expertise and experiences on indicators and innovative data compilation methods.

5. The Expert Group will meet physically twice a year, and otherwise conduct its work electronically. Participation in the physical meetings is self-funded. A limited number of developing countries that are members of the Group may receive funding to support their participation in the meetings, if available. In this connection, a trust fund is expected to be established to mobilize resources in support of the work of the Group.

6. The Expert Group will report annually to the Statistical Commission and seek guidance from it.

Number of members by IAEG-SDG regional groups

Chair of UN Statistical Commission	1
Eastern Africa	2
Middle and Southern Africa	2
Western Africa	2
Northern Africa	2
Western Asia	1
Central, Eastern, Southern, and South-Eastern Asia	4
Oceania	2
Caribbean	2
Central and South America	3
Eastern Europe	2
North America and Northern, Southern and Western Europe	5
Total	28