Using LFS to report on indicators SDG 4.6.3, SDG 4.6.2 (and SDG 4.3.1)

1. Objective

This note analyses the potential use of LFS to report on indicator 4.6.2 and 4.6.3. As indicator 4.6.3 was reported using a module in DHS and it is not reporting in the last 11 years then some recommendations are made regarding the continuity of this indicator in the framework.

2. SDG 4.6.3: Participation rate of youth/Adults in literacy programs.

By definition (according to UIS metadata for the global and thematic indicators), the participation rate of youth/adult in literacy programmes is the ratio of number of youth (aged 15-24) and adults (aged 15 years and above) participating in literacy programmes to the number of the illiterate persons of the same age, expressed as a percentage.

Remark 1: Calculation method

$$PRLP^t_a = \frac{PartLit^t_a}{IllitPop^t_a}$$

where:

$PRLP^t_a$ = participation rate of the population of age group **a** in literacy programmes in year **t**

$PartLit^t_a$ = participants in literacy programmes of age group **a** in year **t**

$IllitPop^t_a$ = Illiterate population of age group **a** in year **t**

a   =15-24 years (youth) or 15 years and older (adults)

In the formula, it is not clearly explained the nominator: that is the group of participants in literacy programs. It should be stressed out that in the nominator we refer to illiterate population that is participating in literacy programs. While the dominator is defined correctly.

Remark 2: definition of illiterate and literate

The definition of functional literacy (and functional numeracy) defines a person as functionally literate if he/she can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective functioning of their group and community and which enables them to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for their own and the community development.

In the metadata should be added the definition for the illiterate population: number of persons that cannot read and write (as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary), or number of persons having little or no education, unable to read or write.

Remark 2: Literacy programs

The UIS metadata for the global and thematic SDG 4 indicators should give a clear definition of what a literacy programm is. for instance, what is included in these programmes: formal education / non-formal education / informal learning?

Remark 3: Data sources for SDG indicators SDG 4.6.3, SDG 4.6.2 and SDG 4.3.1

In the Adults Education Survey (AES), there is an answer category "000 - No formal education or below ISCED 1" for the question "What is the highest level of education or training successfully completed?" In the EU-LFS, the answer category for the same question does not distinguish the group of individuals that have completed less than ISCED 1 level. Strictly there is no possibility to identify the illiterates[1].

Moreover, in the EU-LFS data there is not a distinction of the category of persons without formal education. **Therefore, the identification of the illiterate population is not possible.** The EU-LFS do not contain the relevant information for obtaining **SDG 4.6.3** estimates. The AES data might be used with caution if there is a conventional agreement to use as illiterate group those who have completed less than ISCED 1 or have not completed any formal education. If there is such an agreement than SDG 4.6.2 estimates can be derived using the indirect measure of literacy rate, but taking into account the reliability and cross-country comparability of estimates. The most reliable data source for the SDG 4.6.3 is the PIAAC.

Regarding the **SDG 4.6.2**, (youth/adult literacy rate) EU-LFS questionnaires do not have the standard question "Can you read and write?" (except of two or three EU countries). **However, other non-EU countries have a variable that identifies the literate and illiterate persons (mostly countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia)[2].**

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[1] Indeed, this answer category is not giving a separate group of illiterates. There are two possible solutions: 1) to propose the division of this answer category into two different categories, the first one, ideally identifying the number of illiterates; the second solution is to accept conventionally that this answer category gives an approximate estimate of illiterates. In both cases, I think in EU countries will not make a big difference, but in less-developed countries I think the division makes more sense.

[2] Those persons that answer no for both components (do not read and do not write) will be filtered at the question of the highest educational level successfully completed, but we cannot capture their participating in the literacy programs . This is because in almost all non-EU countries the number of education questions are limited and ask only for the school attendance in general.

Compared to LFS data, AES data have a better coverage of non-formal education, information that serves to better estimate the **SDG 4.3.1**. Both surveys can be used to calculate the participation rate of youth/adult population in formal and informal education.

Table 1: Potential use of LFS and AES data for estimating SDG indicators 4.6.3; 4.6.2; and 4.3.1

| | Literacy | | Possible to estimate? | | |
	Program	Person	Ind 4.6.2	Ind 4.6.3	Ind 4.3.1
EU – LFS	No	No - for the majority of EU countries	No	No	Yes
EU- AES	Maybe (if the answer category "000 - No formal education or below ISCED 1" is divided into two separate categories.	Maybe (if the answer category "000 - No formal education or below ISCED 1" is divided into two separate categories.	Yes, if the answer category "000 - No formal education or below ISCED 1" is divided into two separate categories	Yes, if the answer category "000 - No formal education or below ISCED 1" is divided into two separate categories	Yes
LFS in non-EU (in general)	No	Yes, for those countries that ask the questions: Can you read? Can you write?			Yes
MICS	Not clear	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Metadata UIS – Definition	Not clear	Clear	Clear	Need to be reviewed	Clear
Metadata Formula	Need to be better clarified	Need to be better clarified	clear	Need to be reviewed	Clear

3. Recommendation

a. It is recommended to review the metadata for the SDG 4.6.3: concretely: the definition of illiterate population (how to define correctly this group and give concrete examples; define more precisely the literacy programmes; better explain the numerator in the calculation formula; update data sources.

b. **It is recommended to search for alternative data sources for the SDG 4.6.3 and unless identified discontinue the publication.** The LFS data does not provide the necessary information to obtain relevant and reliable estimates. AES data offer a better and more comprehensive information, but do not clearly identifies the illiterate population.

c. For SGD 4.3.1 the LFS data are a good source that assures a more complete geographical coverage, despite the methodological differences with the UIS definition (such as the period of reference, the participation in non-formal education and training). AES data comply with UIS definition of SDG 4.3.1 but there are two limitations: 1) the frequency of survey (conducted every 5 years); 2) conducted mainly only by EU and EU candidate countries; and 3) in my opinion, the overestimation of non-formal education and training.