



**ASIA REGIONAL PREPARATORY
MEETING FOR THE FIRST
SESSION OF THE 'UNESCO
CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION
DATA AND STATISTICS'**

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

2023

**2024 CONFERENCE ON
EDUCATION DATA
AND STATISTICS**

The regional consultation meeting for the first session of the ‘UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics’ was organized as part of the Regional Meeting of Education Statisticians on “Improving Education Data Ecosystems in Asia” between 17 to 20 October 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting provided the platform to discuss issues and priorities for the Asia region. A total of seven position papers were presented during the meeting:

1. Paper 1: Implementation of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED): challenges and solutions
2. Paper 2: Administrative education data: What are the challenges going forward?
3. Paper 3: Teacher data: What are the challenges going forward?
4. Paper 4: Learning Outcome data: What are the challenges going forward?
5. Paper 5: Use of household survey data for reporting on SDG 4
6. Paper 6: Education expenditure data: What are the challenges going forward?
7. Paper 7: Setting and monitoring national SDG 4 benchmarks: What are the challenges going forward?

For each of the position papers, the UIS presented the background, key challenges, and focus areas for countries in data collection, compilation and reporting at the international level, discussed some of the prominent solutions and then suggested an agenda forward for the UIS to work with Member States to improve the data collection, compilation and reporting at the national and international levels.

After presenting the working papers, the present countries and regional bodies were participated in-person and virtual to provide their feedbacks, clarifications, concerns, and any additional inputs which each paper should address. After these countries and regional bodies’ interventions, the floor was opened for further dialogue and to ensure a common understanding of the issues and challenges among the countries from the region at to be represented the global.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION (ISCED): CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FORWARD

- The meeting recognized the role of ISCED in standardizing and compiling internationally comparable data in education and the meeting expressed thankful to UIS for its support in mapping their national education programmes into ISCED.
- The meeting notes countries' specific concerns and expectations, underscoring the importance of tailored support, training, and capacity-building programs for implementation of ISCED.
- The meeting also endorsed the proposed way forwards for improvement and adjustment of ISCED resolve the existing challenges. The creation of the ISCED Committee marked an important step in addressing these challenges and is expected to lead to recommendations in the coming months.
- **Pakistan** expressed concerns about mapping non-formal education and the decentralization of school administration to the provincial level were discussed.
- **Bangladesh** highlighted the complexity of mapping the programmes run by different Ministries/departments in ISCED is a big challenge. The country also expressed the need for increased attention to the transition in ISCED levels 0-2. It also brought issue of not addressing home schooling in ISCED. The country also enquired on the criteria of ISCED committee membership and proposed a rotation-based membership to allow most of the countries to participate and contribute.
- **Cambodia** highlighted the importance of coordination and raising awareness on ISCED among a wider audience was stressed. The country aimed to integrate ISCED into its education masterplan and expressed the need of coordination among different education providers to have better mapping of the ISCED.
- **Malaysia** questioned the inclusion of non-formal education in ISCED mapping. Specific queries were raised regarding the placement of master's degree of medical programs (MBBS) within ISCED levels as it is already mapped as ISCED 7 for MBBS
- Participating countries also emphasized the adjustment or revision of ISCED-F to reflect the new development and demands various field of studies in Tertiary education.

ADMINISTRATIVE EDUCATION DATA: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES GOING FORWARD?

- The meeting acknowledged the critical role of administrative data in education planning and policy development. Challenges related to data quality, reporting consistency, and data bias were acknowledged, and viable solutions were proposed. Collaborative efforts between UIS and member states, as well as knowledge-sharing among nations, were encouraged to address these challenges.
- Countries shared their specific difficulties in implementing administrative data reporting, underscoring the need for guidance and solutions in areas such as education expenditure, home schooling, and teacher training data. The meeting highlighted the importance of continued cooperation in addressing challenges related to administrative education data. If data not for private schools, major proportion of students missing. Complete requires all populations, including those not under public administration. It can be taken into account for the Conference in 2024 as a potential topic. It is expected that these discussions will inform future strategies and initiatives in the education sector.
- **Bangladesh** supported the use of national population data was emphasized, as requested by UIS in new templates.
- **Indonesia** showed concerns in getting data by ISCED levels particularly disaggregated levels such as education expenditure is challenging.
- **Nepal** highlighted challenges related to collecting and reporting data on teacher training in the uniform manner.
- **Philippines:** The incorporation of home-schooling data was discussed, and the need for a collective discussion on this matter was emphasized.
- **Lao PDR** reported developing integrated EMIS system helps to report on the indicators have been improved a lot particularly for the school education. However, compiling data for Tertiary Education is still challenging as all the tertiary education data are compiled in the system.

- **Bhutan** opined that the efforts to align data related to UIS as an opportunity to compile data at national level. Bhutan's intention to collect data using national ID for EMIS and household survey was shared.
- **SEAMEO** suggested to advocate for the more agile and flexible data system which is resilient to future shocks.

TEACHER DATA: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES GOING FORWARD?

- The meeting emphasized the importance of accurate and consistent teacher data to evaluate educational progress and challenges. Challenges related to teacher data definition on qualified and trained were recognized, with specific issues related to teacher qualifications.
- The meeting highlighted the need for collaboration and data standardization among member states to ensure meaningful international comparisons. The importance of developing clear criteria for teacher qualification was underlined, although it was acknowledged that global-level definitions might not be practical due to country-specific needs.
- The meeting acknowledged the pre-meeting as a valuable opportunity for knowledge-sharing and collaboration on addressing the challenges associated with teacher data. Further work and cooperation are essential to standardize teacher data collection and reporting for global education assessment and policy development.
- **Bangladesh:** it was highlighted that the same teachers teach across multiple levels and disaggregating the teachers by level is a challenge. The country also mention that the qualified teachers and trained teachers were identified as essential aspects.
- **Nepal:** The In-service teacher training plays crucial role, however, standardizing the in-service teacher training across the countries and sometime within the country is also difficult. It is highlighted that the need for a minimum standard for teachers across countries was considered.

- **Sri Lanka:** Producing data for Pupil trained teacher ratio provide better representation of quality of teacher than just presenting Pupil teacher ratio. However, it was queried whether pupil trained teacher ratio be produced by subjects.
- **India:** The country also brought the issue of teachers teaching in different levels and need clarity in the counting them in correct manner avoiding double counting particularly for higher education institutions.
- **Maldives:** A clear guidelines on counting teachers who are teaching in different levels was discussed.
- **Bangladesh, Cambodia India and Maldives** discussed the need of international definition of minimum qualification and minimum training to measure the qualified and trained teacher in more comparable manner.
- **Bangladesh and Cambodia:** also enquired the global process of defining the minimum qualification and trained teacher and showed their interest in contributing to the process.

LEARNING OUTCOME DATA: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES GOING FORWARD?

- The meeting recognized that learning outcomes are the most important agenda for SDG4 and the country should be able to produce required data for measuring quality of education. The data on learning outcomes should go beyond school education and efforts should also be put in producing data for 4.2.1, 4.4.2, 4.6.1, 4.7.4, and 4.7.5.
- It is noted that there is a huge data gaps in measuring learning outcomes in each participating countries. The meeting also acknowledged the issues of comparability of grades and education levels, procedural quality, financial costs, and low coverage of cross-national assessments. National assessments may face alignment constraints due to the different frameworks being used.
- The meeting agreed on the agenda forward for the potential solutions, including aligning items with the minimum proficiency level and a global proficiency framework. The Assessment of Minimum Proficiency Level (AMPL) assessment programs to measure minimum proficiency level for reporting SDG4.1.1a, b and c to ensure comparability among

countries participating in different regional assessments has been agreed as potential solutions to filling the data gaps in learning.

- The meeting emphasized that the efforts to harmonize data, align assessments, and establish a common understanding of proficiency levels are essential for robust data reporting and international comparisons. Collaboration and support from organizations like UIS are crucial in this endeavor.
- **Pakistan:** noted challenges related to digital access and capacity for its population, suggesting the retention of pen and paper assessments (LaNA).
- **Malaysia** shared a recent report comparing its results with Kazakhstan over PEARL and SEA-PLM assessments, noting challenges in comparability due to differences in grade levels among participants. Data reliability and psychometric mapping were identified as challenges, with some countries facing difficulties in meeting data standards.
- **Nepal's** multilingual context posed a challenge in assessing minimum proficiency among different linguistic groups as the assessments are mainly done in official language.
- **Cambodia** acknowledged a previous workshop on policy linking in collaboration with UIS during the COVID-19 pandemic and expressed a desire for increased UIS support for capacity building and future learning assessments programmes.
- **Sri Lanka** proposed to establish a validation body (of experts) to validate country specific local assessments of measuring learning outcomes that are in alignment to specific set standards.
- **SEAMEO** raised concerns about the lack of indicators related to gender equality, highlighting the need to address issues such as early teenage pregnancy. They also emphasized the importance of collecting more data on STEM education for women and girls in Southeast Asia.

USE OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEY DATA FOR REPORTING ON SDG 4

- The meeting acknowledged the potential use and benefits of household surveys in monitoring SDG4 and noted that its under-utilization in policy discussions and monitoring

due to the lack of capacity, lack of awareness among the policy makers and coordination between MOE and NSO.

- The meeting underscored the challenges of using household surveys for monitoring SDG4 and other policy objectives such as the context questionnaires are not standardized among various surveys, inconsistency in recording age, not using ISCED classification in par with administrative data etc.
- The meeting endorsed the agenda forward presented during the session to overcome the issues and challenges of using household surveys in monitoring SDG4 e.g. improving the coverage, harmonizing the contextual questionnaires, using international standards and establishing collaborative partnerships to enhance the quality and reliability of data derived from household surveys.
- **Thailand** highlighted the challenge of including the birth month of respondents in the survey which is one of the key issues in harmonizing the data between household survey and administrative data.
- **Cambodia** expressed difficulties in obtaining several SDG4-related indicators through household surveys and advocated for finding focal points or partners to acquire the household survey data for UIS to produce international indicators.
- **Nepal** raised concerns regarding the extended time required to obtain data from household surveys and voiced concerns about potential data discrepancies when integrating household survey data with other sources.
- **Bangladesh** raised the question how to address reporting annual when household data is conducted in a periodic basis.
- **Lao PDR** shared challenges related to data collection in remote rural areas and difficulties posed during the rainy season. It raised concerns about the sensitivity of questions leading to potentially inaccurate responses impacting the quality of the data.
- **Pakistan** called for third-party validation to ensure data quality.

EDUCATION EXPENDITURE DATA: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES GOING FORWARD?

- The meeting emphasized the significance of education expenditure indicators in promoting educational equity and resource allocation and mobilization.
- Challenges related to data source conflicts, private expenditure on education, data consolidation, and coverage were acknowledged leading to low coverage of the data reporting at international level.
- The meeting acknowledged the complexities involved in measuring private expenditure on education and the need for a standardized approach.
- The meeting wholeheartedly endorsed the proposed agenda forward and expressed that the proposed actions will be crucial to improving the quality and accuracy of education expenditure data.
- **Maldives** faces difficulties in data disaggregation for education expenditure by levels. Challenge also includes the inclusion of data from multiple ministries.
- **Bangladesh** faces challenges in collecting education expenditure data from household surveys. BANBEIS is working on collecting data from the government financing system. There is also question regarding the extent of coverage of household surveys, whether from primary to TVET, ECE to HE, or all levels.
- **The Philippines** expressed challenges in consolidating education data across three departments responsible for different education levels. Synchronization of data from different agencies is a concern. The country also sees problematic in obtaining data for SDG4 expenditure at the national level due to the variance in data reporting by local governments and private sources. It suggested the need to explore improved data recording systems for quality education expenditure data.
- **Nepal, Philippines, and Indonesia** suggested to develop appropriate methodologies and guidelines for disaggregating the data by levels, recording the education expenditure in more harmonized manners, using household survey to produce private expenditures.

SETTING AND MONITORING NATIONAL SDG 4 BENCHMARKS: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES GOING FORWARD?

- The meeting applauded the initiative and its success and acknowledged its contribution in establishing linkage between policies, plans and monitoring at national, regional, and global level.
- The meeting emphasized the challenges faced in setting and monitoring national SDG 4 benchmarks, with particular emphasis on the need for broader participation, benchmark quality, and COVID-19 impact considerations.
- It also acknowledged the significance of climate change and the interconnected nature of SDG 4 with other sustainable development goals. Addressing these challenges will be pivotal in improving the accuracy and effectiveness of national benchmarking for SDG 4.
- The meeting recognized the agenda forward presented e.g raising awareness among political levels as well as other stakeholders, providing more support to the countries in setting their national benchmarks and seeking national participation in reporting on benchmarking indicators linking with policy levels and extend their support in implementing them.
- **Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan**, together with **UNICEF** highlighted the issues of possible learning loss due to pandemic and suggested that countries to consider such impacts while updating their national benchmark values.
- **Nepal and Pakistan** suggested to consider possible learning loss due to pandemic as well other climate change induced impacts e.g. flood in education while reporting on benchmark indicators.
- **Maldives** emphasized the interconnected nature of SDG 4 benchmark indicators with other SDG targets and need carefully investigate other related goals to have reliable benchmark values.
- **UN ESCAP** congratulated the UNESCO/UIS for the eye-opening as well as learning initiatives for many custodian agencies and recognized that SDG 4 is the only SDG that initiated a national benchmarking process. It also shared challenges of target setting such as in inter-ministry collaboration and the political sensitivity. **The 'UN ESCAP method'** was introduced,

which utilizes a champion country as a benchmark for a desired rate of progress, offering different policy options to countries.