

Regional Preparation for the First Session of the UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics

Africa

24 November 2023

Concept note

Introduction

Data is the fuel that powers progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has fostered actions to improve UN Member States' capacities to produce and use data for monitoring the SDGs, taking into consideration the new realities. In the case of education (SDG4), two important changes have shaken up the ways progress was measured and traced before. First, new outcome-focused indicators were introduced, notably those related to learning outcomes. Second, multiple data sources started to be considered in estimating of some of the more established indicators. These changes are opening opportunities but also putting fresh demands on national statistical systems worldwide.

Unlike its sister field of labour statistics, education statistics has not benefited from a regular, open forum where major questions about the present and the future of internationally comparable data can be explored. To fill this gap, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) has been working on establishing the first-ever **UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics** which is envisioned as a mechanism for education statisticians from all over the world to regularly communicate, discuss, and reach a consensus on key issues regarding SDG 4 indicator measurement as well as the impact of technological and other developments and the ways to benefit from them.

The decision about institutionalizing such a mechanism was taken by the Technical Cooperation Group on SDG 4 indicators - Education 2030 (TCG), established by the UIS in 2016 to discuss and develop the indicators used to monitor the Education 2030 Agenda in an open, inclusive and transparent manner. In 2021, the TCG decided to facilitate a wider debate involving all countries. Through 2022-2023, the TCG Secretariat has been accepting from Member States the nominations of TCG observers/focal points who are expected to form the Conference. The first session of the Conference is planned to take place in February 2024 in Paris and should be preceded by thorough regional consultations and discussions to enable the most participative process.

To this end, the UIS has already held consultations with several regions in October and November and the **Regional Preparatory Meeting for Africa** is planned for the 24th of November 2024. These meetings are expected to provide the platform for this discussion, highlighting issues and priorities relevant to each region. The **outcome** of the meetings will be a summary, outlining inputs to the issues which will be presented during the first session of the Conference, with a specific focus on the regional agenda and work prioritizing.

The UIS has always collaborated closely with several partners in Africa aiming for a better implementation and bridging of global, thematic, and regional education frameworks and a better production and reporting of education data in all countries of the region.

The collaboration focuses on three streams of work:

- **Administrative data:** the UIS focuses on capacity-building and provides support to African countries in reporting internationally comparable education statistics.
- **Additional data sources, inventories and catalogues:** the UIS produces inventories of household surveys and catalogues of learning assessments, helping countries identify what education data are available and work on filling data gaps.
- **Benchmarking process for SDG4 and CESA:** Following extensive UIS/AU/IPED consultations (African Union 2021), African countries were supported in aligning SDG4/CESA and national benchmarks and monitoring their progress towards achieving those national benchmarks.

The **regional preparatory meeting for African countries** comes at a critical moment in time characterized by the confluence of major associated movements:

- The Nairobi declaration and call for action that established the commitment to “strengthening National Assessment and Monitoring Mechanisms for CESA 16-25 and SDG4-Education 2030” (African Union 2018).
- The rapid progress in the harmonization of the IPED Strategic Plan (African Union 2022) with the member’s agreement on the SDG 4-CESA regional benchmarks and their indicators (African Union 2021), establishing a clear roadmap monitoring education for the next years.
- The mid-term revision of the CESA framework to assess challenges needs.
- The African Union Summit decision on setting Education as the AU Theme for Year 2024.

Meeting’s objectives

1. To present the draft background documents of the first session of the UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics.
2. To define regional inputs/priorities to be reflected in the background documents of the Conference.
3. To complete the nominations of the delegates for the Conference.

Where?

The Regional Preparatory Meeting will be held virtually via the Zoom platform. The link to join the meeting will be shared in the invitation letter to join.

For whom?

Each UNESCO Member State has been invited to nominate three participants, including one representative from the education ministry, one from the national statistical office, and one from the national learning assessments unit.

In addition, representatives from the following constituencies will be invited: Regional Economic Communities (RECs), regional statistical agencies and organizations, United Nations specialized agencies, and other international organizations, aid agencies, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and the teaching profession.

How and when?

The UIS is organizing the virtual preparatory regional meeting on 24 November 2023. The meeting will be held in English with simultaneous interpretation to French and Portuguese.

Provisional agenda

The Regional Preparatory Meeting will take place virtually from 8:00 am to 11:00 am (Montreal time) as per the table below:

Session	Duration	Time (Montreal time)
Opening	5	8:00 – 8:05
Introduction	10	8:05 – 8:15
Household surveys	10	8:15 – 8:25
<i>Discussion</i>	15	8:25 – 8:40
Learning outcomes	10	8:40 – 8:50
<i>Discussion</i>	15	8:50 – 9:05
Break	10	9:05 – 9:15

Administrative data (including teachers)	15	9:15 – 9:30
<i>Discussion</i>	15	9:30 – 9:45
Benchmarks (including expenditure)	15	9:45 – 10:00
<i>Discussion</i>	15	10:00 – 10:15
Agreements and conclusions	30	10:15 – 10:45
Closing	15	10:45 – 11:00

References

African Union. 2018. "Nairobi Declaration and Call for Action on Education: Bridging Continental and Global Education Frameworks for the Africa We Want." <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263829>.

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UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2021. "Continental Overview: Bridging CESA and SDG 4 in Africa." UIS/2021/LO/RR/01. Montreal. https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/01/UNESCO_UIS_Africa-Report-2021.pdf.

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