



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Education Quality and Classroom Conditions in sub-Saharan Africa: Data to strengthen policymaking and impact

Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies):	Sub-Saharan Africa
Duration (in months):	On-going (at least 24 months)
Name and unit of project officer	EIDA/UIS (Education Indicators and Data Analysis) Albert Motivans
Partner(s) institutions:	African Union (AU), Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), UNESCO field offices
Total estimated budget inclusive of Programme Support costs	USD 1,700,000 per year

Rationale and background

The international statistical community at large is faced with the *growing demand for more data and new types of indicators* from three major stakeholders:

- Ministries need more relevant comparable statistics for policymaking, especially in the run-up to 2015 and the development of new education goals and targets.
- International organizations require a broader range of education indicators to better target new initiatives and to monitor progress.
- Donors are increasingly relying on comparable data to evaluate the use of their resources dedicated to supporting national and regional development programmes.

No institution can effectively respond to this rising demand for data without addressing a major constraint: the *response burden for national statisticians*. National statistical authorities already invest considerable financial and human resources to respond to international surveys, such as those conducted by the UIS. This burden can be particularly heavy for developing countries because of weak infrastructures and budget constraints.

Therefore, the Institute has developed a new initiative to respond to the most pressing demands for data without substantially increasing the burden on national statisticians. The “core” questionnaire of the UIS annual education data collection is being reduced to allow for

the creation of new modules designed for more flexible collection of data on specific topics of global and/or regional importance.

Special priority is given to sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) given the urgent and growing demand for quality education. In particular, governments across the region are struggling to not just expand access to basic education but ensure that all children are learning. This is the explicit objective of UNESCO's flagship programme to improve the quality of education through the development of inclusive and holistic policies and education programmes adapted to the needs of African States. This flagship programme involves key regional stakeholders, such as the African Union (AU) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), which have established a regional monitoring agenda linked to the AU's Second Decade for Education. However, there is no regional mechanism to accurately produce and standardize the data required to effectively monitor the agenda and related interventions in the field.

Therefore, the UIS in consultation with the regional stakeholders, UNESCO field offices and other international organizations, has developed a mechanism to effectively produce the data required without putting additional burdens upon the national statistical systems. This initiative will lead to the sustainable production of data specifically reflecting African education policy priorities, such as: participation in teacher-training programmes, improved classroom conditions (e.g. class size, provision of clean water, electricity, gender-specific toilets, etc), education quality (e.g. access to textbooks and learning materials) and equity (gender issues).

Why UNESCO?

There is general consensus among regional and international stakeholders that the UIS is uniquely suited for this initiative given its experience, reputation and mandate to serve as the United Nations depository for global education statistics.

In addition, all stakeholders are keenly aware of the need to ensure that there is no duplication of efforts, whereby different organizations request the same information from national statistical authorities.

The 'added value' of the Institute is summarized below.

- **Efficiency in terms of resources:** the UIS has the contacts (e.g. network of national statisticians), infrastructure, experience, and reputation required for efficient data collection in countries at all stages of development.
- **Efficiency in terms of data collection:** many of the new indicators identified thus far require data that are already being collected by the Institute.
- **Quality assurance:** the UIS is the guardian of the statistical frameworks (ISCED, operational definitions, and indicator methodologies) used to produce cross-nationally comparable data. Very few regional organizations have the experience, procedures or resources for the intensive process of standardizing data for benchmarking purposes.
- **UIS network of statistical advisors:** The Institute has statistical advisors in the field leveraged to implement this initiative, which will entail in-depth consultations with regional partners, establishment of technical committees, training of national statisticians, etc.

Overall Goal/Objective

- Improved monitoring of issues related to education quality, classroom conditions and equity in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Greater use of cross-nationally comparable data for policymaking at the national, regional and international level.
- More effective use of resources for education policymaking.

Main expected results

Expected Result 1

Governments, partners and regional stakeholders have access to timely, policy-relevant indicators specifically reflecting classroom conditions in African countries and use them in elaborating national education and development plans designed to improve education quality.

Expected Result 2

At the country level, national statisticians in SSA sustainably integrate appropriate methodologies and standards into national statistics while promoting their use for evidence-based policymaking and to monitor education goals elaborated at the national, regional and international levels.

Activities and outputs/deliverables relating to the achievement of expected results

Activity 1 – expected result 1 Data collection
Output/deliverable 1.1 Regional sets of indicators specifically designed to address priority policy issues
Output/deliverable 1.2 Analysis of indicators undertaken at the regional level
Activity 2 – expected result 2 Capacity building
Output/deliverable 2.1 Guidance provided to national statisticians in application of international standards and methodologies in order to produce and use cross-nationally comparable indicators
Output/deliverable 2.2 Improvements in sustainability of national capacities at institutional, technical and individual level related to the production and use of statistical information and international comparisons

Indicator development

Based on input from the project's stakeholders, the UIS has developed a new set of indicators specifically designed to better respond to regional education priorities as expressed by local stakeholders. Their policy relevance is clearly illustrated in the examples below:

- Indicators on **basic school services**, such as the availability of toilets for girls, electricity and drinking water in schools, are key factors influencing accessibility and efficiency of education.
- **Ratio of textbooks per pupil** will inform policies aimed at improving the quality of education.
- **Data on teacher training and attrition rates** are needed to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of teachers in classrooms to achieve universal primary and secondary education.
- Indicators on the **mobility of tertiary students** (i.e. to what extent do African students pursue their education abroad) are essential for better understanding the scope of 'brain drain'.

This set of indicators needs to be regularly revised and updated by a committee of regional stakeholders to ensure ownership of the project.

- Integration of questionnaire modules within the annual UIS education data collection.
- Data production: data processing; verification with national statisticians; and calculation of new indicators.
- Data dissemination: providing UIS data to regional partners in formats designed to suit their needs.
- Promotion of regional indicators at the global level: data dissemination via the UIS online Data Centre and related publications produced by the UIS, UNESCO and other international partners such as the World Bank.

Beneficiaries and stakeholders

Member States in sub-Saharan Africa, regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), UNESCO and international partners.

Stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project will be directly involved in determining its outputs by providing input concerning the types of indicators required for effective policymaking and monitoring.

Implementation strategy

Consultation process: A technical committee composed of stakeholders (Member States' policymakers, AU, field offices, etc.) has helped to formulate the list of policy priorities which served as the basis for identifying a list of indicators that are regularly reviewed to guarantee ownership of the process and its results by the stakeholders.

Production process: Based on recommendations from stakeholders, the UIS has produced appropriate and technically sound methodologies to obtain this information without increasing the overall burden on data providers. Since all the UIS data are normally disaggregated by sex, particular attention is given to developing gender equality indicators. These indicators will then be integrated into the UIS annual education questionnaire sent to all Member States in sub-Saharan Africa.

To ensure the accurate and efficient collection and production of data, UIS field staff will be supporting the national statisticians in responding to the questionnaires and submitting the data. At the same time documentation and other supporting materials will be prepared to

ensure subsequent reporting. The data received by the UIS will be processed and verified with the national counterparts and the indicators will be calculated.

Dissemination process: The UIS in partnership with UNESCO, regional stakeholders and other partners (such as the World Bank) will promote the results in the region and globally with the UIS advisors available to assist with interpretation and dissemination.

Sustainability and exit strategy

The sustainability of this proposal will depend on the ongoing production and use of the resulting data. Concerning the data production, the UIS will provide the methodological frameworks and training to ensure that countries are able to regularly collect and report their data according to international standards. As new questions and issues arise, national statisticians can continue to rely on the support of UIS statistical advisors based in UNESCO field offices.

In addition, the UIS will continue to promote the use of these data by ensuring their policy relevance through regular consultations with national authorities, UNESCO field offices, regional stakeholders and international partners focused on improving education quality in Africa. The new indicators will continue to be used by these partners as well as other initiatives, such as the EFA Global Monitoring Report, especially in discussions concerning the post-2015 development agenda and the renewed focus on learning and equity.

Very often, new indicators are collected for a specific project or report. They are not integrated within a permanent database. The new data and indicators collected by the UIS will be a permanent feature of the Institute's electronic database which is available via its website. This will ensure that the data will be available for use by diverse audiences (such as researchers, academics, advocacy groups, media, etc.) in the future.