



Parallel session  
**Developing indicators  
to measure progress  
for the post-2015 education targets  
14:30-16:00  
Wednesday, 20 May 2015**

### **Monitoring and reporting on equity in education**

A proposal for an inter-agency group on disaggregated education indicators

#### **Equity: a priority for monitoring the post-2015 education agenda**

A focus on equity is a key feature of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are driven by the objective to leave no one behind. Target 4.5 makes a call to *“eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable”*. Broader and systematic disaggregation of indicators to reveal inequities will therefore be fundamental.

Since 2000, many national and international efforts have examined educational provision across different population groups, but not in a systematic way and seldom to assess change over time. As part of the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), education indicators mostly relied on administrative data to monitor inequalities by sex. While the continued value of these data is universally recognized, survey-based indicators will need to feature more prominently to enable broader efforts to monitor inequalities on a broader scale and across multiple dimensions of potential disadvantage.

The draft *Framework for Action Education 2030* calls for all countries to *“collect and analyse disaggregated data on enrolment, retention, completion and learning outcomes”*. Likewise, the Technical Advisory Group on Post-2015 Education Indicators argues that *“education indicators should aim to capture not just national averages but also the variation across different population subgroups defined by group and individual characteristics”*.

#### **Are we ready to monitor equity?**

Considerable progress has already been achieved since 2000 in tracking inequality in measures of education participation or learning outcomes as a result of the increasing availability of data from household, student and school surveys. However, several challenges prevent the international community from building on these recent improvements, from reporting on the evolution of disparities, and from setting benchmarks:

- There is no standard methodology for processing education-related data from surveys. Estimates for specific indicators often vary among agencies even though the same data sources are used.
- There is no consensus on key definitions to enable global monitoring of education using survey data. For example, there is no common definition of attainment rates or the rate of children who are older than the intended age for a grade.
- There is no consensus on what summary measure of inequality to use to report on disparities in education. While the gender parity index has been used to report on gender gaps in education participation, there has been so far limited discussion of what measures of inequality would be suitable for monitoring educational equity in other indicators of the new agenda.
- There is duplication of effort among agencies. For example, estimates of inequality in school attendance rates are reported by UIS.Stat, the UIS/UNICEF Global Out-of-School Initiative, the EFA GMR’s World Inequality Database in Education, and the World Bank EdStats portal. Resources could be used more efficiently while ensuring consistent reporting for the benefit of countries.

- Only a part of the potential data sources are being utilized. While Demographic and Health Survey and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey datasets have been especially helpful, there are other national surveys and population censuses that could be standardized to significantly extend country coverage with the assistance of Member States.

Other sectors have established coordination and collaboration mechanisms across agencies in the course of the MDG monitoring process to address some of these questions. Examples of such inter-agency work in collaboration with countries include:

- The Inter-Agency Group on Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates for MDG target 1c ([www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates/en/](http://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/estimates/en/))
- The Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation for MDG target 4a ([www.childmortality.org](http://www.childmortality.org))
- The Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group and Technical Advisory Group for MDG target 5a ([www.maternalmortalitydata.org/mmeig\\_tag.html](http://www.maternalmortalitydata.org/mmeig_tag.html))
- The Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group of the Roll Back Malaria partnership for MDG target 6c ([www.rollbackmalaria.org/architecture/working-groups/merg](http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/architecture/working-groups/merg))
- The Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply and Sanitation for MDG target 7c ([www.wssinfo.org](http://www.wssinfo.org))

### Way forward?

An inter-agency task force on education indicators from household surveys and censuses has existed since 2000 and has been instrumental in ensuring that education questions on participation and progression have been harmonised across international surveys. It also conducted research on adjusting age groups to improve the accuracy of estimates and published a guide for countries on collecting, analysing and communicating education indicators from household surveys and censuses.

However, in response to a greater focus on equity in the global post-2015 education agenda, efforts need to be strengthened. Within a broader vision for the monitoring of education targets, as expressed in the proposal of the Technical Advisory Group on Post-2015 Education Indicators, an inter-agency group on disaggregated education indicators would have the **goal** to provide harmonized estimates for measures of equity for key SDG education indicators. It is proposed that initially such a group could focus on three key indicators currently proposed to monitor SDG Target 4.1, namely:

- Completion rate (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary)
- Out-of-school rate (primary, lower secondary)
- Over-age for grade rate (primary, lower secondary)

The aim would be to ensure standardized processing and reporting on indicators based on survey data, with emphasis on the disparities between different population groups to complement evidence from administrative data.

Lessons from this initial work would inform the reporting on inequality for other education indicators, for example with respect to higher levels of education or learning outcomes.

The potential **benefits for countries** from such a group include the following:

- Increased reporting and use of such data to inform policy decisions
- Capacity building efforts ranging from indicator training modules to specific guidance through validation workshops and opportunities to open dialogue about the uses of survey data
- Increased efficiency and consistency in the processing of survey data

- Improved links between education authorities and national statistical offices

It is proposed to progressively achieve the following **objectives** in the course of the next 3-5 years with the aim to ensure an organic growth of activities:

- Reach consensus on indicator definitions
- Harmonize the definition of individual characteristics, e.g. whether a child is poor or rich
- Document, evaluate and pool a wide range of survey data sources
- Increase transparency and harmonize approaches to preparing survey data for analysis
- Publish estimates on key indicators and the level of inequality on a regular basis
- Consult with countries and identify opportunities to build technical and analytic capacity
- Incorporate information from administrative data

### **How could the group be organized and linked with countries?**

The organisations involved in the Technical Advisory Group on Post-2015 Education Indicators (namely the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Children’s Fund and the World Bank) will meet to open the discussion on next steps needed to set up the group, including consideration of *terms of reference* and an indicative workplan of activities.

Experience from other sectors shows that a range of options can be explored to establish collaboration, all of which need to be considered on the basis of their relative merits and a shared understanding of priorities for monitoring equity in the post-2015 agenda. Likewise, membership of the group will be adjusted to ensure the achievement of the objectives.

One or more *expert teams* consisting of independent specialists from national and global research institutions with technical expertise in related areas could help validate the methodologies, identify data sources, and advise the group on future developments.

A consultation process will be undertaken routinely to work with interested countries on the methodology by which estimates will be arrived at to promote a better understanding and to allow countries to review and comment on the results. This process will lead to revisions in estimates, will help build capacity, and is expected to lead to countries making more data sources available for inclusion in the calculations.

### **What are we aiming to achieve in the World Education Forum?**

The presentation at the World Education Forum is aimed at sensitizing the international education community and building support for the idea of coordinated action at the national and international level to consistently monitor and report against the equity in education target. A range of options are open for collaboration and feedback is sought, particularly from countries. More substantive issues and further preparatory work required can be tackled at a meeting later in 2015.

