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INSTITUTE
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The Global Alliance to Monitor Learning

Third meeting Concept note

11-12 May 2017
Mexico City, Mexico



1. Background

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) has been designated as the lead agency for producing the indicators needed to track global progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, while sharing responsibility for some targets with other agencies. As several targets (4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7) focus on learning, the (UIS) is actively working on defining how to measure learning outcomes through inter-agency working groups and partnerships with various agencies.

The UIS plays a critical role¹ in the Education 2030 Agenda by producing cross-nationally-comparable education indicators and working with partners to develop new indicators, methodologies, statistical approaches and monitoring tools to better assess progress towards the international education targets. To advance this work, the UIS is bringing together national and international education stakeholders for the third meeting of the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), which will take place on **11 and 12 May 2017** at the ***Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (INEE) in Mexico***.

This concept note outlines the Institute's recent work on measuring SDG 4 and the goals of the upcoming GAML meeting.

2. GAML basic principles and immediate issues to resolve

Countries use a range of measures to produce information on learning and education quality. Each measure has its advantages and disadvantages, but they share many common points and complementary functions. Given the diversity in perspectives and approaches, the international community is called upon to produce a succinct and globally-comparable indicator of learning. How the learning indicator should be produced and measured are central questions. However, in the short term, how to report on learning indicators in 2017 is becoming pressing.

For each education target, the mix of challenges and options for measurement is slightly different, as mentioned in the concept note for the second GAML meeting. However, there is a set of working principles that apply to all targets.

- First, the growing importance of national-level measurement to guide country action is recognized. National-level data on learning provides a source of information that can support global monitoring;
- Second, capturing equity in education means that all population groups are covered in the data collection and assessment content needs to be fair and reflect a range of skills and competencies;

¹ Education 2030 Framework for Action paragraph 100: "The UIS will remain the official source of cross-nationally-comparable data on education."



- Third, it is essential to harness and fully leverage the wealth of expertise found in a range of organizations and across all countries and regions; and
- The last principle involves the promotion of knowledge-sharing and exchange in the design and implementation of measurement strategies.

In the second GAML meeting, the plenary group identified three critical issues: global comparability for monitoring, defining a relevant and pragmatic minimum level of proficiency and periodicity. This process is most immediately applicable to decisions related to Target 4.1 but will be equally important or resolving questions on global measurement of learning outcomes for Targets 4.2, 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7. Other challenges which have been identified for reporting in 2017 include:

- Are there unresolved issues that are critical for immediate reporting needs? How should data be validated?
- Is it advisable to use national learning assessments submitted by countries for short-term reporting?
- What are the “minimum acceptable requirements” for national data?
- What are the immediate issues with using national learning assessments for reporting?
More specifically for Indicator 4.1.1:
 - grade of reporting;
 - target population with large proportions of out-of-school children or young people; and
 - choice of diverse tools for reporting on learning, for example if a country participated in international and regional assessments, in addition to conducting their own national learning assessment.

3. GAML implementation

There has been progress made in three areas: i) resolving immediate issues in reporting on learning in 2017; ii) collecting descriptive information for diagnostic purposes; and iii) developing methodologies, tools, standards and guidelines for sustainable reporting in the medium and long term.

To answer some of the immediate issues and formulate a roadmap toward sustainable reporting, the GAML Secretariat has framed six task forces, one on each target (4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7) and one cross-cutting task force on assessment implementation. The Secretariat has also finalized the definition of GAML governance and the log frame to help provide clarity on the direction of technical discussions.

After the second GAML meeting, all task forces – except 4.7 – were launched. The main function of the GAML task forces is to provide the UIS with recommendations on how to measure each target, taking into account a range of organizational and technical aspects.



These include:

- Provide feedback on measurement issues;
- Identify technical issues that are relevant to the learning target;
- Review commissioned research studies and synthesize input; and
- Provide feedback on the development of implementation and capacity-building plan to support countries.

Each task force chair will present the challenges in measurement and short-term solutions for reporting on a learning target's in 2017, while developing more sustainable medium- to long-term reporting.

4. Conclusions from the second GAML meeting and objectives for the third meeting

The following summary points were noted and some agreed upon during the second meeting:

- **Governance:** It was agreed to maintain a light structure of governance for GAML, sufficient to ensure transparency but also efficiency and technical leadership;
- **Integration of GAML within the global architecture:** It was noted that a reasonable division of labour between various initiatives can be achieved;
- **UIS Reporting Scale (formerly known as the Universal Learning Scale):** The group acknowledged the complexities, accepted that there are many measurement approaches, and agreed to identify and focus on commonalities for more efficient progress towards the global measurement of learning. The group still needs to agree on what counts as reaching minimum proficiency in a global context, define technical pathways to produce indicators, ensure data quality and reliability, and ensure equity in measurement;
- **Establishing task forces for the further development of approaches and indicators:** It was agreed to establish GAML task forces, which will lead on developmental activities by target (4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7);
- **Country-level support:** To be effective, this support must involve a wide range of stakeholders, notably civil society groups representing the parents/households of students, through a highly-collaborative approach; and
- **Inputs for the Technical Cooperation Group:** For indicators designated as Tier II: proposal to improve data coverage, depending on country capacity for scaling up efforts. For indicators designated as Tier III: a work plan for methodological development, which would include a proposal on placeholders to be used while methodological development takes place.

The group has identified three critical measurement issues that represent the highest priority for obtaining technical solutions:

- 1) **Global comparability:** Defining technical standards for determining whether measures function similarly across contexts and proposing technical alternatives for using existing national and regional data to generate global estimates;



- 2) **Defining a minimum level:** Defining options for measuring “minimum proficiency levels” through a review of scientific literature, convening experts and identifying possible analytical strategies for generating the data required to define “minimum proficiency levels”; and
- 3) **Periodicity:** Examining the sensitivity of population-based measures to intervention effects, to estimate how frequently the data should be generated to track effects of policy implementation.

5. Objectives for the third GAML meeting

The work of partner organizations will be required to help build capacity for measurement within countries, improve the ability to use data to influence policy, and to identify measurement innovations in nations and regions that could help spur new efforts globally. By convening the TCG and its Strategic Planning Committee and by engaging partners through the task forces, GAML will ensure coordinated and effective messages to countries and regional entities on measurement, and will support planning and implementation of country capacity building.

Building on the second meeting, the third GAML meeting will include presentation of the development work ongoing to progress on the secretariat and from the task forces.

- Present the governance structure of GAML and its implications for Alliance work
- Present the technical work done by the Secretariat and its technical partners most notably in Target 4.1
- Decide on recommendation for 2017 reporting to be made to the TCG
- Agree on the roadmap of measurement for each one of the Targets to be presented at the TCG meeting in Montreal

The modality of work encompasses both plenary and group discussion groups.