

## 4<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED2030)

### Transforming Learning

#### Meeting the skills demand to achieve the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific

12-14 July 2018  
Bangkok, Thailand

#### Concept Note

### Background

Since 2015, the **Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED2030)** has served as a convening platform for education officials and development partners throughout the region to learn about the latest global and regional developments on SDG4 and to advance the ambitious Education 2030 Agenda in one of the most dynamic and diverse world regions. It has provided an opportunity to collectively discuss progress and challenges, and exchange good practices and lessons in implementing and monitoring SDG4-Education 2030. By so doing, APMED contributes to capacity development of key stakeholders at country and regional levels towards the common agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.

SDG4-Education 2030 and its ten targets cover a broad range of thematic areas and issues. As such, APMED aims to focus on specific targets,<sup>1</sup> allowing for more in-depth discussions and analyses of the regional capacity needs and priority action areas. The 4<sup>th</sup> APMED2030 will specifically focus **on target 4.3 (equitable access to TVET and tertiary education)** and **target 4.4 (relevant skills for work)** and explore progress and challenges towards implementing and monitoring skills development and outcomes through formal, non-formal and informal education. The meeting will also convene the 3<sup>rd</sup> SDG4 National Coordinators' Network meeting to discuss the regional preparation for the Global Education Meeting (GEM, December 2018) and global review of SDG4 in 2019.

The following section briefly summarizes the regional trends and challenges in Asia and the Pacific related to SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4.

### Regional trends and challenges related to targets 4.3 and 4.4

In terms of economic and social development, Asia and the Pacific is one of the largest and fastest-growing regions in the world, and is home to the largest share of the youth population in the world.<sup>2</sup> The region is also characterized by its diversity, rich cultural heritage, ethnic and linguistic diversity, and demographic shifts. Migration--both domestic and international--along with urbanization, globalization, technological innovation and expanding regional economies among Asia-Pacific countries has raised the importance of developing relevant, effective and applicable strategies to foster more inclusive societies. This includes building skills for ICT,

<sup>1</sup> For example, the 3<sup>rd</sup> APMED2030 focused on SDG target 4.7

<sup>2</sup> World Bank. [The World Bank in East Asia Pacific](#). (Accessed 7 March 2018).

sustainability, entrepreneurship as well as ‘soft skills’ to empower learners to become more resilient and adaptable to rapid change. The SDGs recognize the urgent need to bridge the worlds of education and employment and ensure a solid educational and skills foundation for young people to make that leap to the world of work. Some of the pertinent trends in the region related to SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4 include:

- ***Increasing demand for relevant education and training:*** In terms of growing demand for quality tertiary education and training, including university, Asia and Pacific now represents over 50% of total global tertiary enrolment, which increased from 39 million in 2000 to 112 million in 2015.<sup>3</sup> This rapid expansion, coupled with the diversification of public and private sector providers has significant implications, including on governance and administration, affordability and access, and an increased focus on quality assurance mechanisms. Such systems exist to ensure quality and relevance of education, yet remain fragile for many countries in the Asia-Pacific region where qualifications are often not outcome-driven approaches to student learning.
- ***Skills demand, supply and mismatch:*** With the increased demand for education and training, at the same time, countries and labour markets face significant challenges to keep pace with shifts in skills demands.<sup>4</sup> While Asia-Pacific countries have made some progress in reshaping, enlarging and transforming their technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems in order to address issues like youth unemployment, slow economic growth, poverty, inequality and sustainability in the region, many countries continue to encounter a skills mismatch. This is due in part to the poor alignment of TVET and tertiary education with the rapidly changing world of work, as well as the mismatch between the skill demand and skill supply.<sup>5</sup> For many countries, as the pace of change for in-demand skills is set to accelerate,<sup>6</sup> building better synergy between the labour market and the education and training sectors is essential to produce more jobs and growth.
- ***Overcoming disparities in access:*** Wide disparities in access to quality education, both in gender and socioeconomic status, begin at the earliest stages of life and persist through primary and secondary education and beyond. For example, UIS (2014) reported that, in selected countries in Asia, less than 7% of young adults (aged 20-24) from the poorest 20% of households have ever attended higher education compared to up to 65% from the richest 20%. Gender disparity has improved over the last decade, but females in low income countries appear to be dramatically disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts. In the field of TVET, regionally, male participants aged 15 to 24 dominate the programmes, and little to no information is available on marginalized and disadvantaged populations’ participation.<sup>7</sup> To ensure equal access to TVET and tertiary education, new transformative models for skills development are needed, such as expanding offerings to non-traditional programs for women, quality distance education and appropriate use of ICT to expand flexible access to and relevance of education and training in formal, non-formal and informal sectors.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Bangkok. 2018. Regional Report: Advancements needed for the Asia-Pacific region to achieve the target set under SDG4.

<sup>4</sup> ADB. 2015. [Challenges and Opportunities for Skills Development in Asia: Changing Supply, Demand, and Mismatches](#).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> World Economic Forum. 2016. The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Global Challenge Insight Report. Geneva, World Economic Forum

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). (Accessed 7 March 2018).

<sup>8</sup> The Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy on Using ICT to Facilitate the Achievement of Education 2030 (11 May 2017, Seoul, Republic of Korea).

- *Secondary education reform:* Another challenge across the region is the inadequacy of secondary education reforms. In the past, secondary education reforms have either been overlooked by priorities in basic education or higher education, or influenced mainly by competitiveness and a desire to improve academic achievements. The overall results may have been inconsistent. In addition, the disparities mentioned previously are also significant, particularly for females, as this stage of education often steers learners into specific education or career tracks. Further, this level of education experiences large rates of dropouts, even in more economically advanced countries. There needs to be a balance of both skills and academic development in order to prepare young people for the challenges of higher education, TVET, skills training and the world of work. Secondary education systems can aim to impart skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability, building on emerging markets, technological advancements and rising urbanization, while not forgetting the context of growing inequity and insecurity.
- *Growing interest to align policies and practices for employability and sustainability:* Recent developments across Asia-Pacific include policies for and between skills development, TVET and tertiary education, including higher education. These policies aim to link quality assurance with the development and implementation of national and regional qualifications frameworks, and promote international recognition. As a result, the Tokyo Convention on international recognition in Asia-Pacific entered into force on 1 February 2018 after renewed interest among Member States to promote mobility and employability throughout the region. Going forward, building local and regional capacity for a 'living quality culture' in Asia-Pacific is recognized as an urgent need to strengthen education and training systems,<sup>9</sup> and ensure the relevance of tertiary education overall. This approach also supports progress towards SDG4.4 and skills for work, which include ICT skills as one of the new skillsets to monitor and measure (i.e. see Global Indicator 4.4.1 the proportion of youth and adults with basic ICT skills).

Young women and men can drive economies and societies to be more vibrant and productive. At the same time, this potential can only be realized if learners benefit from quality learning pathways from early childhood through adolescence, and continuing later into life. In order to respond to these important trends in Asia and the Pacific, there is a need to ensure both **access** to diverse education and training pathways as well as the **relevance** of learning outcomes and skills. For example, this can be achieved through improving the transparency of qualification systems, creating possibilities for credit accumulation and transfer, and strengthening quality assurance systems in both formal and non-formal settings. APMED 2030 will address these needs in the context of monitoring progress to achieve SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4.

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<sup>9</sup> UNESCO Bangkok (14-16 June 2017). [Shenzhen Statement](#) - Building Local and Regional Capacity for a Living Quality Culture in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific.

## Objectives

The overarching objective of the meeting is to enhance Member States' understanding and capacity to implement, monitor and report on SDG Targets 4.3 and 4.4. As such, the focus will be:

- To clarify and create a shared understanding of the definition, strategies and monitoring issues regarding SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4;
- To identify priority capacity building needs by sub-regions in implementing and monitoring SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4;
- To build consensus on a regional action plan for monitoring SDG Targets 4.3 and 4.4 and reviewing SDG4 progress in the region

## Expected outputs

- A set of sub-regional follow-up capacity building proposals on SDG target 4.3 and 4.4
- Regional action plan for monitoring SDG Targets 4.3 and 4.4
- Regional inputs to Global Education Meeting (GEM, Dec 2018)

## Meeting theme and structure

The overarching theme of the 4<sup>th</sup> APMED is ***Transforming Learning – Meeting the Skills Demand to Achieve the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific***. The aim is to understand how Member States are progressing towards implementing the SDG Targets 4.3 and 4.4, and to facilitate cross-national exchanges and sharing. The meeting has two main parts:

**Part 1** consists of technical sessions that focus on SDG Targets 4.3 and 4.4, which will be examined and discussed from the perspectives of equitable access (emphasizing SDG 4.3) and quality and relevance (emphasizing SDG 4.4). Part 1 will be two days consisting of plenary sessions and concurrent breakout sessions for focused discussions and sharing organized around sub-themes identified under each target. Target 4.b ('scholarships') will also be reviewed in the context of SDG 4.3 given its emphasis on vocational and higher education.

Part 2 will be one-day dedicated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of SDG4 national coordinators in Asia and the Pacific, during which in-depth discussions on regional inputs to GEM 2018 and monitoring of SDG4 will be held.

Principles of inclusion, gender equality, youth and equity will be crosscutting issues to be addressed in all discussions during APMED 2030.

## Country preparatory work

To prepare for the meeting, UNESCO Bangkok will send a pre-meeting survey to all Member States to gather information on the status of SDG 4.3 and 4.4 implementation and monitoring at the national level. Member States will be requested to submit the completed survey to the 4<sup>th</sup> APMED2030 Secretariat by 15 May 2018. Further details will be provided to all countries via the National Commissions for UNESCO. The information received will inform the format and focus of the sessions, and enrich the discussions during the meeting.

## Participants

With support from the **Japanese Funds-in-Trust, UNICEF** and **UNESCO Bangkok**, approximately 250 key stakeholders will be invited from relevant organizations within and outside the Asia-Pacific region. Invited guests will include government officials, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations in Asia and the Pacific who are responsible for SDG4 planning, monitoring and statistics. In particular, DG and technical level officials, including EMIS officials, of the ministry of education (MoE) and national SDG4 coordinators will be invited. Representatives from the following organizations to be invited include:

- Ministries/institutions working on TVET, higher education, skills development, youth;
- Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs);
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) actively engaged at the national or regional level in work on SDGs 4.3 and 4.4
- Youth representatives
- Training providers (e.g. EdTech)
- United Nations and other organizations/institutes of the UN system
- Multilateral development banks and bilateral organizations; and
- Teacher training institutes

## Organizers

UNESCO Bangkok

UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO)

UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA)

## Dates

12-14 July 2018

- Part 1: Thematic sessions (12-13 July 2018)
- Part 2: National coordinators' meeting (14 July 2018)

## Venue

Landmark Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

## Language

English will be the working language of the meeting.

## Tentative programme

Day 1: Thursday 12 July 2018:	
	<b>Thematic Sessions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plenary sessions on global and regional overview on the SDG4 skills targets</li> <li>• Parallel sessions on thematic trends and challenges of 4.3 and 4.4</li> </ul>
Day 2: Friday 13 July 2018	
	<b>Thematic Sessions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plenary/parallel sessions on thematic trends and challenges of 4.3 and 4.4 (continued from Day 1)</li> <li>• Plenary/parallel sessions on <b>monitoring</b> the regional strategy on SDG4 (with focus on 4.3 and 4.4)</li> </ul>
Day 3: Saturday 14 July 2018	
	<b>SDG4 National Coordinators Meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation and endorsement of the regional action plan for SDG4.3 and 4.4</li> <li>• Presentation and endorsement of the Regional roadmap and support strategies for SDG4</li> <li>• Global/regional updates on SDG4 coordination efforts/initiatives</li> <li>• Preparation for regional inputs to Global education meeting (GEM)</li> <li>• Strategies to prepare national reports for the global review in 2019</li> </ul>

## Contact information

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## Reference documents

1. UNESCO SDG4 Webpage  
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/sdg4-education-2030/>
2. SDG Indicators (Metadata Repository)  
<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>
3. UIS (2017). Metadata for the global and thematic indicators for the follow-up and review of SDG 4 and Education 2030.  
<http://sdg4monitoring.uis.unesco.org/metadata-global-thematic-indicators-follow-up-review-sdg4-education2030-2017.pdf>
4. UIS (2014). [Higher education in Asia, expanding out, expanding up: the rise of graduate education and university research](#). Montreal, Canada. ISBN ISSN: 978-92-9189-147-4