Central Asia Regional Technical Consultation Meeting on Regional Benchmarks
Meeting Notes
29 April 2021

Moderators and speakers:
- Mr. Roshan Bajracharya, Regional Advisor for Monitoring, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Bangkok;
- Mr. Nyi Nyi Thaung, Education Programme Specialist UNESCO Bangkok;
- Meirgul Alpysbayeva / Education National Professional Officer, UNESCO Cluster Office in Almaty;

More than 60 participants from the Ministries of education, National Statistical Committees, National academy of education and other education stakeholders took part in the meeting.

- **Welcoming remarks by Ms. Krista Pikkat, Director UNESCO Cluster Office in Almaty:**

- Brief background information and rational for establishing Regional benchmarks for SDG4 proposed by UIS and supporting countries in developing regional and national indicators using various approaches. The joint Declaration of the countries (October 2020) stated the commitment of the countries to accelerate the progress and to propose relevant and realistic benchmarks of key SDG 4 indicators for subsequent monitoring, especially in the context of COVID-19. Establishing benchmarks will facilitate the identification of gaps in data for monitoring SDG4. It will also help to identify countries, which may left behind on certain key indicators.
- The meeting can be a platform for collecting updated data in national education monitoring framework and discussing expanding the scope of the benchmark indicators with additional indicators of interest to Central Asia and its Member States. The benchmarks may be extended by additional indicators for the Central Asian countries. The outcome of the meeting is expected to provide recommendations and inputs of the experts to finalize the levels of regional and national benchmark for 2025 and 2030 and to develop a follow up plan for the national consultations. Ms. Krista Pikkat thanked colleagues from UNESCO Bangkok and UIS for support and continued cooperation.

Country presentations:
Kazakhstan
- Analysis on achieving of SDG targets has been conducted. All the normative and legal acts have been reviewed, all the strategic plans and the international studies held on these issue, were analyzed.
- Methodology of ETF was used to trace implementation of each indicator. All 43 indicators were mapped against all strategies (SDG targets) and developed so called matrix. TIMSS indicators and indicators of national testing were considered, sources of data and further steps were analyzed, and the same approach was used for every target. The strategies, which are fully implemented and those needs to be supplemented and what is lacking have been analyzed.
- Methodology of calculating indicators was developed and some approaches are still being discussed with UIS (Montreal). The methodological guidelines on estimating indicators was issued to support all education stakeholders to and policy makers to have one single methodology based on which they can work and fill in the gaps.
- National Project on Education Development for 2021 -2025 in Kazakhstan (in the pipeline) is based on the National Plan of Development for Kazakhstan until 2025.
- Interim indicators: the state program has each indicator in the breakdown by years and milestones and in this respect the government of KZ embeds 5% growth for interim indicators of local budget.

Kyrgyzstan
- Kyrgyz Government and National Statistics Committee (NCS) of the Kyrgyz Republic has jointly adapted and nationalized SDG in the Matrix of distribution SDGs by ministries and agencies. A National voluntary review of achieving SDGs in the Kyrgyz Republic has been prepared as per the Matrix. It has been presented on 22 July 2020 at the political forum of high level arranged by Economic and Social Committee of the UN (ECOSOC).
  The disaggregated information regarding the status of indicators under SDG4 are available at the link: https://sustainabledevelopment-kyrgyzstan.github.io/4/
- The approach of 5P has been used while assessing adaptation of Agenda 2030 in the Kyrgyz Republic.
- Tasks Roadmap for implementation SDG4:
- To ensure equal, fair access to education.
- -to ensure quality of education.
- To ensure efficient management and financing of education system

- To create conditions for development of every student including adults and their intellectual abilities, to develop soft skills.
- SDG4 in Education development program for period 2021-2040:
- The amount of expenditure on pre-primary education according to % of coverage of children aged 1-6 years (SDG1a));
- Coverage of children aged 5-7 years with pre-school training programs (SDG4.2)
- Coverage of children with preschool education by sex and territory (percentage of the corresponding age group 1-6 years) (SDG4.2);
- Coverage of children with secondary general education in urban settlements and rural areas (percentage of population aged 7-17) (SDG 4.1.);
- National average computer/student ratio (SDG 4.a.);
- Availability of a measuring system for educational achievements of schoolchildren (SDG 4.1.)
- Indicator of average national testing in the country and results of PISA participation (SDG 4.1., SDG 4.6).

Tajikistan:

- The range of strategic documents related to achieving SDG4 have been endorsed: National Strategy on Development of Tajikistan until 2030, Education Development Strategy until 2030, Concept of lifelong learning in Tajikistan. Concept of assessment in education has been developed (reading and mathematics). With the support of the USAID, the assessment of primary grades on the reading and understanding has been held.
- 5.6% of GDP comes for education, which is higher average expenses.

Turkmenistan
- Brief information on education system of Turkmenistan.
- Reform of education system aimed at increase of its quality and creating better conditions is ongoing in the country. Introduction of international standards and informatization of the education system is ongoing as well.
- In 2017, the Concept of developing digital education has been introduced. The aim is to increase quality of education services based on digital platforms and creating conditions for lifelong for the population.
- Gender equality in education system of Turkmenistan: disproportion in HE. Share of girls in HEIs is higher in 2021 (41.1%) compared to 35.5% in 2015. National plan of actions on gender equality in Turkmenistan for 2015-2020 has been endorsed.

Uzbekistan
- Government of Uzbekistan has adopted 16 national goals and 125 targets in the sphere of sustainable development. As for SDG 4, there 9 targets and 12 indicators. There is a methodology on 8 indicators. One indicator will be developed after PISA and TIMSS.
- Most of indicators are formulated based on NSC reporting and survey of households.
- Coverage of students by secondary education is 99.9%
- Quality of education: preparatory work for PISA is ongoing. PIRLS (assessment of reading and understanding), preparations for TIMSS (Trends in Mathematics and Science Study)
- The work on inclusive education is ongoing. Introducing inclusive education program in 42 schools. Establishing specialized groups;
- 76% of schools have broadband Internet connectivity (SDG4 target 4.7)
- About 100 000 teacher have in-service training annually.

Presentation by Mr. Roshan Bajracharya, Regional Advisor for Monitoring, UIS

Introduction to benchmarking and the regional process:
- Global commitment to honor the Education 2030 Framework for Action call to foster improvements in education outcomes (2015)- a call to establish appropriate benchmarks
- Global Education meeting (2020) to accelerate the progress and propose relevant realistic benchmarks of key SDG4.
- Benchmarks will improve the outcomes through enhanced **alignment** of global policy areas, regional and national benchmarks; **commitment** from countries, from regional bodies and mobilize resources; **monitoring country** capability and capacity, to identify 'bright spots" and best practices, support to low performance, bottlenecks; **accountability** (focus on improvement, country ownership, targeted support from donors based on evidence);
- Key priority policy areas linked to achievement of SDG4. At the global level 5 key areas have been identifies as key policy areas: basic education, pre-primary, teachers, expenditure, equity.
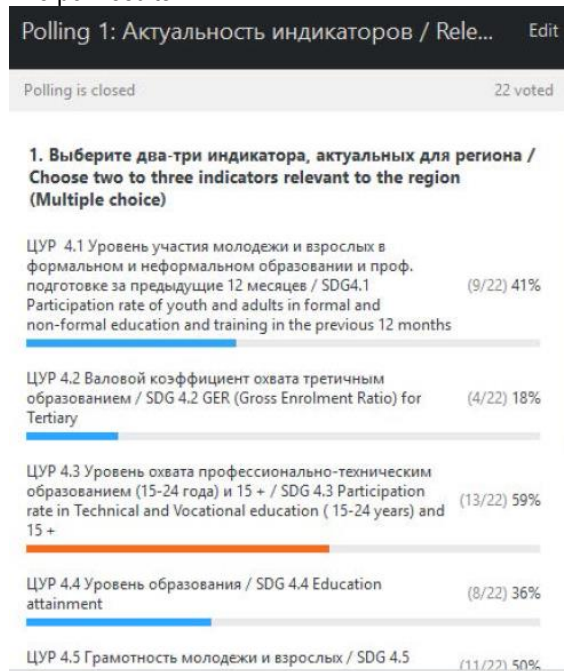
- Benchmarking is to understand where the real gaps are, where the focused investments are needed, alignment of policy areas with data and while bringing policy and data together, the gaps may be identified and strategies/plans can be developed to fill the gaps.
- Regional frameworks: Pacific regional Education framework 2018-2030, SEAMEO Strategic Plan 2021-2030, SAARC Framework for Action; there is no any framework for Central Asia;
- Key product: Dashboard which helps to regularly monitor and report on how counties are moving to SDG4 based on common benchmark indicators;
- Based on region priorities countries are welcomed to add additional indicators;
- Regional processes of benchmarking exercise: preparatory and advocacy phase; technical process; political process (presenting regional benchmarks and their endorsement at 2d Asia Pacific Regional Education Ministerial Conference Sep-Oct 2021).

Discussion and agreement on the proposed indicators with Identification of additional indicators for benchmarking, facilitated by Mr. Nyi Nyi Thaung, UNESCO Bangkok

3 key questions for discussion:

• How do you think the relevancy and usefulness of the proposed 7 global benchmark indicators for the monitoring of education agenda in the region and the countries?
• Do you have additional suggestions for the proposed process of setting Regional benchmarks?
• Apart from 7 benchmarks, could you please choose 2-3 additional indicators that could be useful and relevant for the region. Please provide your choice through poll.
The poll results:

Polling 1: Актуальность индикаторов / Rele... Edit

Polling is closed   22 voted

1. Выберите два-три индикатора, актуальных для региона / Choose two to three indicators relevant to the region (Multiple choice)

ЦУР 4.1 Уровень участия молодежи и взрослых в формальном и неформальном образовании и проф. подготовке за предыдущие 12 месяцев / SDG4.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months — (9/22) 41%

ЦУР 4.2 Валовой коэффициент охвата третичным образованием / SDG 4.2 GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) for Tertiary — (4/22) 18%

ЦУР 4.3 Уровень охвата профессионально-техническим образованием (15-24 года) и 15 + / SDG 4.3 Participation rate in Technical and Vocational education (15-24 years) and 15 + — (13/22) 59%

ЦУР 4.4 Уровень образования / SDG 4.4 Education attainment — (8/22) 36%

ЦУР 4.5 Грамотность молодежи и взрослых / SDG 4.5 — (11/22) 50%

Kazakhstan: All 7 proposed benchmarks are considered and regarding the participation in primary school (coverage) is not relevant for KZ, as at the primary school at the normative level KZ has 100% enrollment in the primary school where country is supposed to ensure. There are no any concerns or proposals regarding other indicators.

Questions from KZ: SDG4.1.- It is possible to monitor informal education of youth in KZ, but it is almost impossible for adult education, as there are various private training centers which provide education services and people use online courses (like Coursera); SDG4.4.- Education attainment: it is not clear what education attainment is. SDG 4.5.- Literacy level of youth and adults: PISA assess functional literacy, TIMSS assess academic knowledge in terms of quality; what is meant here? For example, in KZ there is national testing mechanism.

Tajikistan: SDG 4.1.2. – 7 global benchmarks are considered at present. For TJK the level of pre-school coverage is a concern nowadays. The drop-out level used to be 9 % and now it is 15%. The reason for that is few kindergartens or pre-school education institutions in the country. A new government program is being developed on the issue of pre-school education institutions. 30% coverage for pre-school education is set in the Education Development Strategy of Tajikistan and by adopting this Program, hopefully this milestone will be covered.

Uzbekistan: Remark was made regarding level of economy development and social factors that should be taken into account while benchmarking the countries. But in general all 7 benchmarks are important for all countries irrespective level of economy.

Kyrgyzstan: At the national level 9 targets and 10 indicators have been adopted already. 4.1.2 and 4.1.4 were not adopted by the country because the

	coverage by secondary education is mandatory and free of charge and coverage is almost 99%. There is also a pre-school education program. All 7 benchmarks are adopted and there are no proposals on additional indicators at the moment.

Methodological discussion and Interim benchmarks for the selected indicators: Sub regional benchmarks, National level benchmarks, presented by Mr. Roshan Bajracharya, UIS

- Meta-data is available on the website: http://uis.unesco.org/
- The countries should have own benchmark indicators focusing on policy areas and have strategies and country mechanisms in place; UNESCO's tasks are to support countries in this process and UIS developed different scenarios; UIS model has 3 scenarios: country-specific feasible benchmark for 2025-2030; country specific minimum benchmarks for 2025-2030; regional minimum benchmarks for 2025-2030;
- Summary: Country-specific feasible benchmarks: computed based on the median growth rate (conditional on level)
- Country-specific minimum benchmarks: more ambitious, computed based on the 75th percentile growth rate (conditional on level).
  Regional benchmark: The average of the feasible benchmarks for the lowest third of countries

Discussions on the country level benchmarks, facilitated by Meirgul Alpysbayeva, UNESCO Almaty:
1) Has your country set own benchmarks for the SDG4 indicators?
2) If yes, a) what are the benchmarks values and b) for which indicators?
3) Do you think setting benchmarks would be useful in your country?

Kazakhstan: KZ has already set own benchmark indicators for every indicator: gaps are identified and steps to overcome them as well; The questions were regarding the assessment of civic consciousness of the students, how to assess it, and to assess it, as KZ has such indicator as shift to updated content of learning and thanks to participation in PISA and data available, the gaps were identified in terms of content, what should be supplemented. Aspect of civic consciousness is already reflected in updated program. Almost all students learn as per updated education program.

Kyrgyzstan: As per National Voluntary Review (2020), a road map has been designed which has already the following targets. Based on these targets, Educational Development Program has been developed for 2021-2040; All the indicators are included, but will be revised taking into account identification of new indicators of SDG before and after 2030.

Tajikistan: Education development strategy until 2030 contains these indicators.

Turkmenistan: New Educational program until 2030 includes all the indicators pertaining to SDG4.

Uzbekistan: No response.

Plan for national consultations and closing remarks, moderated by Mr. Nyi Nyi Thaung, UNESCO Bangkok

- March-April 2021 -Consultations
- Methodology and the process is described at the Dashboard developed by UIS;
- The MOES may need to convene with NSC of the relevant countries, to consider the methodology described and share their comments with UNESCO UIS and **provide their feedback during May-June**. By July, all the feedback on benchmark indicators will be consolidated and prepared for Ministerial conference in September-October 2021 (validation meeting) and later UNESCO General Conference with participation of the ministers of education of relevant countries.
- Mr. Nyi Nyi Thaung thanked all the participants of the consultations, UNESCO Cluster office in Almaty, Ms. Krista Pikkat, Ms. Meirgul Alpysbayeva, the whole UNESCO team, Mr. Roshan Bajracharya, UIS, and our partner JFIT and all colleagues who prepared the meeting, and gave floor to Mr. Roshan Bajracharya.
- Mr. Roshan Bajracharya thanked all the participants who shared valuable experience, which is important for UNESCO, thanked UNESCO in Bangkok and UNESCO Almaty.
- Ms. Meirgul Alpysbayeva thanked all the participants and reminded to fill in the feedback questionnaire.