Technical Workshop on the SDG4 Benchmarking Process – Phase 2
Introducing the Seventh Indicator on Equity
Thursday, 21st April 2022
12:00 – 13:00 Beirut Time (Online Workshop)

Report

I. Background
The benchmarking process is a key strategy that supports the data and monitoring function in the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism (GCM). The benchmarks spell out a global level of ambition that should encourage countries to strive for accelerated progress being applicable to all countries, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.

In August 2021, UNESCO invited countries to submit national benchmark values for six of the seven indicators selected for benchmarking for 2025 and 2030. Countries were requested to submit the targets, mainly from their national education sector plans, in templates provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) to facilitate the exercise. These templates also included baseline values, regional values and indicative minimum and feasible benchmarks to assist countries in the establishment of their own national benchmarks.

In the Arab region, all 19 Member States participated extensively in the regional benchmark-setting exercise through an inclusive process in setting and endorsing the regional benchmarks. Following the endorsement of regional benchmarks, the process of setting national benchmarks was initiated. In order to assist the technical teams in each Arab country, UNESCO delivered two sets of technical workshops on SDG4 indicators and indicator measurement and set up bilateral meetings with the Member States. In the Arab states, a total of 16 Member States set national benchmarks for SDG4 indicators and submitted them to UNESCO/UIS.

II. Objectives
As part of the national and regional SDG4 benchmarking process, a major milestone was achieved in 2021: almost all the Arab countries engaged in the process of defining their voluntary contribution to the achievement of the common global SDG4 targets. Building on these achievements, a second phase of the benchmarking process will be initiated in 2022 to submit benchmark values for the seventh indicator on equity, the gender gap in upper secondary completion by all countries, which was not included as part of the national benchmark in 2021. During this second phase, countries will also get the chance to review the benchmarks they submitted in 2021, especially in light of potential new information related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In collaboration with UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) – the responsible agency for providing the technical support to member countries in the development of national benchmarks, UNESCO Beirut held a workshop to support countries in the benchmarking process by clarifying the understanding and calculation of indicators, including the new indicator on equity. In addition, the workshop aimed to support Member States to be technically prepared for the review of the national benchmarks submitted in 2021.
Objective: The Technical Workshop aimed to clarify understanding and calculation of indicators, including the seventh indicator on equity and to support Member States in their review of the national benchmarks submitted in 2021 and submission of the seventh indicator.

III. Format

The workshop was conducted online on Thursday April 21\textsuperscript{st} with one main session that intended to give an overview of the Benchmarking Process, SDG4 Indicators, Concepts, and Methodologies and present the results of phase 1, the next Steps and the needed resources to assist the Member States. The workshop included time for discussions and Q&A.

The workshop was facilitated by Ms. Hana Yoshimoto, Chief of Education/Senior Programme Specialist, UNESCO Beirut, and co-presented by Ms. Silvia Montoya, Director of UIS and Mr. Manos Antoninis, Director of the Global Education Monitoring Report.

IV. Workshop Summary

The workshop was opened by Ms. Hana Yoshimoto, she welcomed all participants, introduced a summary of the workshop objective and remarked the importance of the underlying workshop as well as the leveraged efforts by the Arab member states within the global efforts of SDG 4 benchmarking process.

Main session: “Overview of the SDG 4 benchmarking process and indicators”
Ms. Silvia Montoya, Director UIS and Mr. Manos Antoninis, Director of the Global Education Monitoring Report.
The session started with an outline of the benchmarking process:

Background of the benchmarking process:

The benchmark process is a global coordinated approach and political commitment that started in 2014 within the UN Secretary Report Synthesis Report, and part of the Sustainable Development agenda and the Education 2030 Framework for Action that was adopted in 2015. The benchmark process is significantly important to accelerate the process of achieving SDG4.

Benchmarking Process Objectives:

- To mark the contribution of each country to the global agenda through bringing the approach of climate change agenda to education.
- To make the monitoring process of progress more context-specific, given that each country has different priorities and status quo.
- To find a common ground and link national, regional and global education agendas to ensure coherence and mutual understanding of different contexts.
- To focus attention on data gaps on key indicators that every education system needs for management purposes.
- To strengthen national planning to include targets.
- To provide evidence for collective efforts.
**Timeline:**

- *Phase II of the Benchmarking Process* is to be completed by 31 May 2022, where all member states shall complete the submission of benchmark values and revise the previously submitted values if needed, due to the COVID-19 situation, and finally to submit values against the seventh indicator on gender gap in secondary education completion.
- *The 10th High-Level Political Forum* is taking place in July 2022, which will entail conducting the second revision of the process on education, taking into consideration the changes that occurred due to COVID-19.
- In September, the *UN Secretary-General Transforming Education Summit* will take place, which will be an opportunity to highlight the changes that occurred due to COVID-19, as well as the acceleration efforts needed to move SDG 4 forward.

**Gender gap in upper secondary completion rate:**

The seventh indicator on gender equity: this indicator measures the difference in the upper secondary completion rate between females and males. It is not based on new variants, it is simply derived from indicator SDG 4.1.2, but disaggregated by sex knowing that the completion rate refers to the completion of the cohort.

*Calculation*: \[ GG = CR \text{ of females} - CR \text{ of males} \]

*Definition of values*:

- A difference of zero = No gender gap in completion rates.
- Positive values = completion rates of females higher than males.
- Negative values = completion rates of females lower than males.

This indicator will allow countries to reflect on the efforts required to close the gender gap, and to address the root causes of this gap.


**Benchmarking process in 2021:**

Step 1: Countries submit national benchmarks from their own national plans
Targets for 2025 and 2030 were submitted to UIS (in some cases for other years too)

If a. plan or policy does not have target for benchmark indicator or b. there is no up-to-date plan or policy, then:

Step 2: Countries consult internally to set national benchmarks. Targets are then sent to UIS

When no benchmarks were submitted, then:
Step 3: UIS/GEM Report consult national plans. Targets were extracted to inform the analysis

**Key takeaways and next steps:**

Benchmark process. By May 10\textsuperscript{th}:

- Submit benchmarks if not sent yet
- Review benchmarks submitted as needed
- Submit gender gap in secondary completion
Note: Due to the COVID-19 situation and its impact on education, countries that submitted their benchmarking numbers previously in phase I are invited to update their numbers and resubmit the indicators reflecting the impact of the pandemic.

Results to be used in:
- High-level Political Forum in July
- UN Secretary General Transforming Education Summit in September

Call for the nomination of two TCG focal points:
- one from the Ministry of Education
- one from the National Statistical Office

Purpose: Address gaps in communication between ministries and statistical offices – and between plenary and countries

V. Q&A Session:

What if there was no gap in the gender equity indicator? What if the gender gap was positive?
A: If the rates of female education are higher than the rates of male education is there, then this is considered a positive gap. This will turn into a question for the countries to address this change vis-à-vis the baseline and how do countries expect this to evolve between now and the years 2025 and 2030, since this is a country-level decision to be made due to its relevance to policy.

What is the definition of the second phase of secondary school?
A: It is the end of upper secondary education school phase, which in most countries, it is the 12th grade.

What is the methodology of calculating the seventh indicator?
A: The seventh indicator is a parity index that is not calculated based on a new methodology, it is rather a simple equation which is calculated through subtracting the completion rate of boys in upper secondary education from the completion rate of girls in upper secondary education.

VI. Conclusion:

Before concluding the workshop, the team shared some useful resources with the participating countries, which included:
- The SDG4 Data Digest which includes useful information, especially for the countries that have not submitted their benchmarks in phase I. Countries are recommended to check the following annexes:
  o Annex A: Which includes data on the benchmarking process status.
  o Annex B: Which includes data on the benchmarking levels by each country and each indicator. (Link: https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/01/SDG-4-Data-Digest-2022-ENG.pdf)
- The Global Education Observatory (GEO) website, which includes more visualization on the data. (Link: https://geo.uis.unesco.org/)

In conclusion, countries are highly recommended to submit their benchmark values and targets for the years 2025 and 2030 to UNESCO by 10 May 2022.