



**Regional Technical Workshop within the framework of
the Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes
initiative (MELQO)**



27-28 July 2016

Venue: Ngor Diarama Hotel, Route de Ngor, Dakar Senegal
Hosts: UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, Brookings Institution

Background:

With the agreement of the Sustainable Development Goals, emphasis on early childhood development is increasingly recognized as critical to reaching goals in education, health, nutrition, protection, poverty reduction and gender equity. Increased investments in early childhood programs and policies is anticipated as a result of the growing knowledge of early childhood development. Alongside implementation of effective policies and programs, measurement of early childhood development will play an important role in tracking progress towards goals. While much progress has been made in developing new tools and building measurement systems, there are several challenges involved in early childhood measurement. First, measures must be locally-relevant and ideally aligned with national standards; second, measures must be easy to use; third, measures should be used in alignment with the purposes for which they were developed and finally, integrating measurement into national systems requires a commitment of time, capacity, and funding.

In recent years, several efforts, global, regional and national have been initiated to help produce reliable methods to capture child development. This meeting will address global initiatives and country experiences with measurement of early childhood development. It will draw on the perspectives of education ministries, researchers, and stakeholders to reflect on opportunities and challenges in reliable tracking of early childhood development. Descriptions of national and regional early childhood measurement projects will be provided, including the Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes (MELQO) project and the West African Early Learning Assessment (ELA), developed and implemented through UNICEF Regional Office for West and Central Africa. Brief descriptions of these two efforts appear below:

MELQO: The Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes initiative (MELQO), co-led by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and Brookings Institution, was designed to address several issues, particularly the need for population-based measurement at the country level. MELQO developed and field-tested modules intended for use to monitor progress towards improving children's development and learning over time, and the quality of children's learning environments.

ELA : To assess the degree of preparation of children entering primary and their experiences in preschool, UNICEF West & Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) has developed an instrument to measure a set of critical skills that lead to success in primary school (socio-emotional, cognitive, language and motor skills). This population-level survey is based on a diversified sample of children that had attended preschool (all existing types of preschool in a given country) as well as children that did not benefit from any type of preschool services (the majority of children in the region, note that the regional average of children entering primary with a preschool experience is 25% -1 out of 4 children enter primary ready to learn). The ELA takes into account different elements that influence school success: children's and families' individual, socio-economic and geographic characteristics; contents, organization and functioning modes of different preschool types and finally the evaluation of cognitive and social-emotional skills required before entering primary. The construction of the survey and all its features is done in close collaboration with national authorities of the demanding countries.

The meeting will also provide an opportunity for discussion on how measurement efforts can be improved to track progress against SDG implementation, with the goal of promoting country action. Emphasis will be placed on defining the role of measurement in shaping effective policies and practices for young children.

Objectives:

This regional technical workshop will provide a platform for discussion among country stakeholders from West Africa on measurement of early childhood development within the SDGs and within the context of the MELQO. The workshop will provide opportunities to consider measurement as part of reaching national education priorities on early childhood development and learning, particularly in relation to target 4.2 of SDG 4 that calls for ensuring that **“by 2030 all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”**. Given the regional experiences in WCAR, the workshop will offer opportunities for country experiences on measurement on ECD to enrich the tool development process, as well as ongoing or future plans in this area.

The workshop will share information on the following points:

1. Why measurement? What policy decisions can be informed by having data on child development and learning and quality?
2. How is early childhood development and learning articulated within the SDGs, and what are the connections with regional efforts?
3. How can progress on early childhood development and learning and quality be measured?
4. What capacity is required for ongoing measurement? What has been learned by countries participating in efforts to date? How can these lessons be shared?
5. What are the realities of taking on measurement? How are measures adapted and validated within country context?

Meeting format:

It is envisaged that the workshop will be organized with sessions on each of the following topics over the course of two days, as follows:

- Why measurement? Role of data, evidence and monitoring in high-quality implementation of early childhood programs and policies.
- Early childhood development within the SDGs: Connections to regional early childhood development efforts.
- Approaches to measurement:
 - An overview of what to measure, adaptation to cultural and national context
 - Examples of measures used to date, including ELA and MELQO
- National capacity:
 - What does it take to implement measurement at scale? What support is available to help countries through the process?
 - Lessons learned: Country views
- Overview of the practicalities of measurement
 - Steps to country adaptation, cultural alignment, and validation

Throughout the meeting, country delegations will be expected to present their own national priorities vis-à-vis measurement of early childhood development and learning, as well as their experiences and/or capacity with using different types of assessment measures in the field of ECCE. Small groups comprised of country delegations, resource persons and facilitators will be established to elaborate on the possibilities and processes for country adaptation of the MELQO tools and to discuss the strategy for embedding such measures into national education systems.

Participants:

The meeting intends to bring together participants from country ministries; universities; and global organizations. Country delegations are expected to include senior-level representatives from Ministries covering primary education, ECCE and technical level representatives from learning assessment units or inspectorates in charge of national evaluations. Other participants will include international experts who have been involved in the development of the MELQO measures, as well as representatives from regional networks, programmes and research groups. Representatives from private schools, Teachers Unions as well as key international and regional stakeholders involved in early learning measurement will also be invited.