Inter-Agency Group on Disaggregated Education Indicators (IAG-DEI):
Meeting summary

World Bank, Washington, DC

5 April 2016

Participants

- UIS: Silvia Montoya, Albert Motivans, Friedrich Huebler, Patrick Montjourides
- World Bank: Luis Benveniste, Deon Filmer, Gero Carletto, David Newhouse, Igor Kheyfets, Jung-Hwan Choi
- UNICEF: Hiroyuki Hattori, Priscilla Idele, Shane Khan
- Global Partnership for Education: Jean-Marc Bernard, Moritz Bilagher, Margaret Irving, Yamila Simonovsky
- GEMR: Manos Antoninis
- DHS program: Sunita Kishor
- RTI: Luis Crouch
- Moderator: Ariel Fiszbein

Meeting objectives

Representatives of international organizations working with household survey data met in Washington on 5 April to review current work by the participating agencies, discuss technical issues surrounding the production of disaggregated education indicators, and reach consensus on the best approach to move forward a UIS proposal to establish an Inter-Agency Group on Disaggregated Education Indicators (IAG-DEI), with the UIS, UNICEF and the World Bank as founding members, in response to the call for greater policy focus on education equity within the SDGs. The meeting was moderated by Ariel Fiszbein.

Meeting summary

Silvia Montoya, UIS Director, opened the meeting and summarized the objectives for the day. Her remarks were followed by a series of presentations and subsequent question and answer sessions.

Luis Crouch, Chief Technical Officer at RTI International, framed some of the key considerations for the proposal to harmonize education data from diverse sources. He expressed the need for agreement on data collection methods, indicator definitions, and indicator values, with the UIS playing a crucial role as the global authority for education statistics. He also stated that surveys are important for reporting, but that EMIS is necessary for planning and resource allocation, and proposed ways to increase confidence in data from household surveys. Crouch emphasized the need for consensus among organizations at the international level and noted that there are two approaches to consider: ex ante, to harmonize efforts upstream (e.g., design of data collection instruments), and ex post, to harmonize existing measures (e.g., validation of national indicators).

Hiro Hattori of the Data and Analytics Section of UNICEF gave a presentation on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). He talked about national coverage, education indicators calculated from MICS data,

current disaggregation, and plans for the future (including disaggregation by disability and migration status). Recent work by UNICEF includes the development of education profiles and of new educational attainment measures (completion of primary and secondary education). Challenges that he described include a lack of consensus on key indicator definitions and data processing methods, which is reflected in discrepancies between indicator values generated by different organizations from the same data. During the question and answer session participants learned that the disability module for children is still a work in progress.

Sunita Kishor, Director of the DHS program, gave a presentation on Demographic and Health Surveys, a program funded by USAID. She described national coverage and talked about details of data collection, including recent changes to the education module. Among other things, she mentioned that in upcoming surveys the reading test will be given to respondents with less than tertiary education. There are no plans to add a disability module to DHS surveys. Kishor also mentioned that proposals to modify education questions and produce new indicators in DHS would have to be validated with USAID and participating countries. The geographic coverage of DHS has progressively moved away from Latin America, where a number of countries are now considered to be developed enough to be less of a concern for USAID. Kishor also explained that DHS microdata can only be distributed by the DHS program, whereas indicators can be distributed by anyone. DHS data are accessible via an Application Program Interface (API) to facilitate the development of web apps using DHS data.

David Newhouse, Senior Economist at the World Bank, gave a presentation on two World Bank databases with harmonized household survey data: the Global Micro Database (GMD, with data from about 300 surveys) and the International Income Distribution Database (I2D2, with data from about 1300 surveys). These databases are harmonized (e.g., they use the same variable names) but not standardized (e.g., data on school attendance or attainment are not reported with reference to ISCED). The databases can only be used internally by World Bank staff and they only include surveys that collect data on labour and welfare. Due to legal agreements with countries the databases cannot be shared outside of the World Bank but it is currently seeking agreement with NSOs regarding public dissemination of the data. There is also some hesitation to share the databases more widely because they could be used to produce poverty estimates that are different from those officially disseminated by the World Bank.

Manos Antoninis, Senior Policy Analyst at the Global Education Monitoring Report, presented the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE). The database was originally launched as the Deprivation and Marginalization in Education (DME) dataset in 2010. Antoninis gave an overview of the WIDE website, presented the list of indicators included in WIDE, and showed data visualizations. Plans for WIDE include the addition of data for high-income countries and new indicators, e.g. the upper secondary out-of-school rate and participation in tertiary education. Antoninis also clarified that all data in WIDE were now produced internally by the GEMR team.

Gero Carletto, Manager of the Living Standards Measurement Study, gave a presentation on LSMS. He described plans to fill data gaps in household survey data, for example by supporting a household survey (not only LSMS) in each of the 78 IDA countries every three years. Specifically, Carletto expects an uptick in survey activity from 2017. With regard to harmonization of future data collection he mentioned the option to update the 2000 publication "Designing Household Survey Questionnaires for Developing Countries", also called the "blue book" (http://go.worldbank.org/ZAWINK6M10). He also mentioned a new group to coordinate the survey activities of DHS, MICS and LSMS.

Friedrich Huebler, Programme Specialist at the UIS, presented on UIS work with household survey data, mainly on attainment, literacy and school attendance. He described the data sources, processing, indicator calculation, quality control, dissemination, and data coverage in the UIS Data Centre. Huebler emphasized the efforts of the UIS with regard to standardization to make data comparable across countries, for example by mapping all education data to ISCED. He also explained that validation of survey data in the UIS database with countries is modelled on the well-established process for administrative data.

Next steps and timeline

In the afternoon, Ariel Fiszbein moderated a discussion of next steps for the IAG, starting with indicator definitions and production. The participants mentioned several issues that can cause differences between indicator estimates produced by different agencies, including the indicator definition, the population used for indicator calculation (de facto or de jure), treatment of missing values, age adjustment, and references to the national education system as opposed to ISCED.

As the first step towards a common standard for indicator production, Fiszbein proposed forming a group to agree on the definitions of priority indicators, specifically the indicators mentioned in the concept note for the IAG: completion rate, out-of-school rate, and percentage of children over-age for grade. After some discussion, it was agreed that the UIS would prepare a first draft with definitions and calculation formulae for the three indicators that would then be shared with the other IAG members.

There were some questions about the scope of work of the IAG and how its activities would be organized. Open questions include whether the group will look generally at education data from household surveys or only at disaggregated data, whether it would focus only on global SDG indicators or also thematic indicators, and whether the work would eventually include modelling and harmonization with administrative data, as well as the production of best estimates for certain indicators. Concerns were also raised about possible duplication of work on disaggregation by the IAEG-SDG group. Kishor pointed out that the DHS program was not part of the UN system and that it received its guidance from USAID. Other open issues were the exact role of the Technical Coordination Group for the IAG and funding of the IAG's activities.

For the production of indicators, Crouch proposed that, at least in the case of small differences between indicator estimates, the UIS should be the arbiter with the final say about the "estimate of record" and with the prerogative to review estimates produced by others. Fiszbein also suggested that the UIS should coordinate indicator production, although the process itself could be decentralized, and that it could serve as the main entity for dissemination. Kishor and UNICEF staff confirmed that their organizations could produce indicators from DHS and MICS data, respectively, once there is agreement on a standard approach.

Montoya gave a brief presentation on organization and governance of the IAG and immediate next steps. At the end of the meeting, the group agreed on the next steps listed below, with other issues, for example concerning the organization and scope of the IAG, to be addressed as the group becomes more active over the coming months.

- The UIS will share a draft document describing the data requirements and calculation methods for three indicators, as well as options for disaggregation, drawing on work carried out for the mapping of the SDG and Education 2030 indicators (by 15 April 2016):
    o Completion rate (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary)
    o Out-of-school rate (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary)
    o Percentage of children over-age for grade (primary, lower secondary)
- Each organization represented at the 5 April meeting will appoint a technical focal point (by 20 April).
- The technical focal points will collaborate on refining the draft by the UIS that describes the three indicators and prepare a document for discussion (by 10 May).
- The technical document will be discussed at the meeting of the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG4 - Education 2030 (TCG SDG4 - ED2030) in Washington on 12 May.
- The UIS will provide an updated timeline and convene the next meeting of the IAG to discuss priorities for future work (date to be determined).