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# The Learning Metrics Task Force 2.0: Taking the Global Dialogue on Measuring Learning to the Country Level

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**Key words:** *Post-2015; Learning; Assessment*

**Summary:** *In the second phase of the Learning Metrics Task Force (LMTF), the Task Force expands its membership and is working with 15 countries to catalyze national dialogues on learning and measurement issues.*

The Learning Metrics Task Force was convened in 2012 to tackle one piece of the post-2015 education puzzle: how we can track progress on learning at the global level. Convened by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution, it was positioned within the context of other efforts to inform the broader education and development agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the UN Secretary General's Global Education First Initiative, the EFA Steering Committee, Open Working Group, and the UNSG's High Level Panel. The LMTF did not aim to narrow the scope of education goals to focus on learning alone, nor did it seek to propose a comprehensive set of indicators for the education sector, a task which the EFA Technical Advisory Group on post-2015 indicators is assigned.

To determine what types of learning measurement are both feasible and desirable for tracking progress at the global level, the Task Force reviewed existing empirical evidence and global discourse on learning and conducted a broad, public consultation in three phases. Teachers, education ministry staff, and youth comprised the majority of the more than 1700 consultation participants in 118

countries. Through this consultation and dialogue with a high-level Task Force, the LMTF came to a consensus on a framework of seven learning domains, recommendations for global measurement areas, and a process by which to support countries to improve their assessment systems in order to improve learning outcomes. These recommendations are being taken into account as the EFA Technical Advisory Group formulates its list of indicators to monitor the education targets identified by the Open Working Group and the EFA Steering Committee. Indeed, nearly all of the LMTF areas of measurement appear in some form in the recent proposed indicators now available for public consultation, among a much broader set of education indicators.

When the LMTF consultations were finished and the final recommendations report published, we were contacted by numerous colleagues who had participated in the LMTF consultations and wanted to continue this dialogue at the country level. In some countries, it was the first time there was an inclusive national dialogue on learning. In others, the previous conversations on learning had been focused only on one or two domains, typically reading and mathematics. The LMTF provided a platform to discuss learning more broadly. For the LMTF Secretariat, we knew that we had explored only the tip of the iceberg on the controversial and often divisive topic of learning assessment, and much more work needed to be done at the global, national and local levels.

The third technical report of the LMTF describes some of the issues raised in these national consultations. Participants around the world converged on some of the same issues, and we heard over and over that much data is collected that does not lead to improved learning. They described a lack of technical capacity for assessment, including among teachers, as a key barrier to measuring and improving learning. They also mentioned that the domains captured in national examinations are limited and therefore curtail the content covered in the classroom, as teachers feel pressure to teach only the subjects covered in the exams. Participants expressed a desire to think through these challenges and potential solutions with other countries around the world that are grappling with similar issues. In response, the LMTF began to think about ways to leverage the collective expertise of those who participated in the first phase of the Task Force to support a nationally-driven but globally-informed process to critically look at learning and assessment issues.

In July of this year, 15 countries applied and were selected as “Learning Champions” under the auspices of LMTF 2.0. National stakeholders will be working over the next 18 months to adapt LMTF recommendations to their national contexts and priorities in Argentina (Buenos Aires), Botswana, Canada (Ontario), Colombia (Bogotá), Ethiopia, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan, Tunisia, and Zambia. A key component of the Learning Champions initiative is broad inclusion in guiding policy decisions, including but not limited to teachers, students, government officials, civil society, and development agencies. Countries will share what they are learning with the Task Force and other Learning Champions, in addition to other countries in their regions and the global education community.

Learning Champions are seeking to develop new solutions to their unique educational challenges, because as my colleague Dzingai Mutumbuka of ADEA pointed out in a blog earlier this year, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to such a complex issue as improving learning. In Kenya, this means taking a critical look at the national examinations system in the context of a growing number of non-governmental efforts to measure learning. In Bogotá, the Secretary of Education is exploring how to showcase its system of assessing citizenship education and scale up innovative assessment in the physical, socio-emotional, sports, arts and cultural domains under the auspices of an existing education quality initiative. There remains much to be learned on the different ways assessment helps (and in some cases hurts) learning and we hope that the lessons from these 15 countries can be used to inform efforts to expand learning assessments in order to improve children’s learning experiences.

In addition to the Learning Champions, the LMTF is opening up its membership to any interested organization working toward the common goals set out by the Task Force in LMTF 2.0 and willing to coordinate and share knowledge. The LMTF 2.0 goals include: developing measureable indicators; working with governments and other national stakeholders to improve learning and measurement; informing the post-2015 education agenda; and developing a platform to ensure that that assessment tools, technical expertise, and data are more accessible to low- and middle-income countries.

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