

## **Strengthening Education Systems for Better Learning Outcomes with *Learning Enablers for Asia and Pacific (LEAP) Programme***

### **Background**

Large-scale data on learning outcomes are becoming increasingly available. International assessments such as PISA and TIMSS collect vast amounts of data on schools, students and households. PISA, for instance, with an increasing number of countries participating every time, has become a very powerful tool in education policy making. While the framework of such assessments has clear limitations (e.g. limited coverage to those in formal schools and emphasis on cognitive skills), it offers great potential for secondary analysis. In addition, most countries have assessment mechanisms with nation-wide coverage for both high stakes and low stakes tests. However, the use of education-related “big data” for evidence-informed policy making is limited, partly due to insufficient institutional capacity of countries to analyze such data and link results with policies. Many countries therefore rely on research findings from other countries and regions, even though these findings may not be relevant for their education systems. Therefore, in order to improve the use of student learning assessment data in strengthening education systems, and to support evidence-based policy making in improving education quality, UNESCO’s Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) is planning to launch a regional programme called “Learning Enablers for Asia and Pacific” (LEAP).

### **Objectives**

With an overall goal of improving quality of learning in UNESCO Member States, LEAP aims to develop capacity of the Member States in designing and implementing policies to improve learning based on evidence. It will specifically focus on mapping of national practices of collecting, analysing and utilizing international and national assessment data for policy formulation and implementation, conducting analysis of large scale international and national assessments to identify learning enablers and organizing technical workshops to enhance institutional and human capacity in the area of data analysis and policy design.

For the implementation of the activities of LEAP, UNESCO Bangkok will leverage the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP), a regional platform established in 2013 with an aim to improve the quality of learning in the Asia-Pacific region by enhancing the use of student learning assessment to strengthen education systems. NEQMAP focuses on student learning assessment as a key tool for monitoring education quality while acknowledging the importance of maintaining strong linkages with other enablers of learning in classroom including curriculum and pedagogy. The network supports countries in the region through capacity development, research and knowledge sharing activities in the area of learning assessments.

### **Methodologies**

The analyses in LEAP will be based on secondary analysis of existing data from international and national large-scale assessments and therefore no new assessment data will be collected. The participating countries are expected to conduct detailed statistical analysis of the existing data using Microsoft Excel and other statistical packages such as STATA and SPSS.

## **Beneficiaries and their role**

The first phase (2015-2016) of the programme will target approximately 10 countries representing the sub-regions of Asia and the Pacific. Participating countries will benefit from this programme through:

- Improved national capacity in analyzing large-scale assessment data for better education policy formulation and implementation
- Enhanced understanding on use of large-scale assessment data in policy and practice through exchange of knowledge and experiences with other participating countries.

The direct beneficiaries of this activity will be government officials and researchers from universities, research institutions and think-tanks of the participating countries. As such, they will be expected to:

- Collaborate with NEQMAP to conduct mapping of national practices of collecting, analysing and utilizing international and national assessment data for policy formulation and implementation
- Participate in the regional capacity development workshop on quantitative analysis of large-scale assessment data
- Conduct secondary analysis on the existing international and/or national assessment data of their respective countries and present their preliminary findings at the regional meeting
- Prepare country report based on the mapping exercise as well as findings of their analysis.

As LEAP is based on the secondary analysis of already existing international and/or national learning assessment data, it is important for participants to have easy access to national assessment data of their countries. Privacy of the data will be assured, if considered necessary.

## **Criteria for selection**

UNESCO Bangkok is pleased to invite Member States to join the LEAP programme and would like **two (2)** officials to represent Ministries/organizations/institutions in the programme and participate in the capacity development workshop, to be held **14-18 September 2015** in Bangkok, Thailand (tentative). Participating members from the relevant Ministries/organizations/institutions should meet the following requirements to join the LEAP programme:

1. One (1) official:
  - a. who is deeply involved or has experience in conducting quantitative analysis using international and/or national assessment data; and
  - b. who is familiar with statistical softwares such as STATA, SPSS, etc.;
2. One (1) official:
  - a. who is deeply involved in the policy and planning of their respective education systems (i.e. from the planning and policy division/section);
3. Officials who have access to international and/or national assessment data relevant to their countries. The assessment data should have corresponding information/data from background questionnaire (example: student, teacher, school and/or parents); and
4. Officials who will be able to draft, present, and publish their findings as part of a regional synthesis report.

## **Contact**

To indicate your interest in participating in the LEAP programme and related activities, please kindly respond to Mark Manns ([m.manns@unesco.org](mailto:m.manns@unesco.org)) at the UNESCO Bangkok Office by **Friday, 31 July 2015** indicating the name of the institution and the names of participating members (**up to 2 persons**).