



NEQMAP's 7th Annual Meeting Education Quality Monitoring for SDG4-Education 2030

11-13 November 2019 | Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20 Hotel, Thailand

Annual Meeting Summary Report

Background

NEQMAP's 7th Annual Meeting and 7th Steering Group Meeting on Education Quality Monitoring for SDG4-Education 2030, was held on 11-13 November 2019 at Novotel Sukhumvit 20 Hotel, Bangkok Thailand with the generous support by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The meeting was attended by 47 participants representing NEQMAP's member institutes, partners and donors from 22 countries across the Asia-Pacific region. The three-day meeting was divided into two parts: part I, the Annual Meeting on 11-12 November and part II, the Steering Group Meeting on 13 November.

NEQMAP is entering its 7th year of engagement in the Asia-Pacific region in monitoring the quality of education. As a UNESCO programme, NEQMAP also aims to ensure the alignment of national education systems to the global education agenda, SDG4-Education 2030. NEQMAP serves as a regional platform with three main pillars of activity: capacity building, research and knowledge sharing. The Annual Meeting is considered as one of the network's main activities, which offers members the opportunity to share knowledge and updates as well as discuss partnership, collaboration and networking. This year, the NEQMAP Annual Meeting had two main objectives: i) to share the experiences and best practices of on-going activities in ensuring the quality of education and alignment of the global commitment, and ii) to review the role and position of NEQMAP as a regional platform and network in monitoring and strengthening quality of education in the Asia-Pacific.

As part of the second objective, UNESCO Bangkok/NEQMAP Secretariat hired a consultant to carry out an external review and evaluation in the second half of 2019. The consultant presented the findings of the study at the annual meeting. NEQMAP members were asked to provide their inputs and feedbacks to the evaluation process as well as for its future directions. There were fruitful insights and critical views from the members shared at the meeting and overall, this was an important opportunity for participants to engage, collaborate and build capacity. This summary document serves to share the outputs of the discussions.

Day 1 – NEQMAP Member updates

Session 1: Education quality in SDG4 - Education 2030 and NEQMAP

The NEQMAP Secretariat presented an [overview of the network and its programme activities in 2019](#). At the time, there were 54 members: 50 institutions and 4 individuals from 29 countries/jurisdictions in the

network. Two capacity development workshops, one on 'School Based, Classroom, Teacher and Formative Assessment' led by the Australian Council for Educational Research, Centre for Global Education Monitoring (ACER-GEM) and the other on 'Promoting Transversal Competencies across Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment' led by Brookings Institute (BI) were held in Indonesia (24-24 June) and Philippines (16-19 September), respectively.

The capacity development work was complemented by research activities on the same topics. With the collaboration of Brookings Institution, UNESCO published the second report on [Assessment of Transversal Competencies](#) in June 2019. Following the workshop in Bandung, ACER-GEM agreed to assist UNESCO in reviewing and revising a regional study on school-based assessment.

Another research study carried out by the NEQMAP Secretariat and Dr. Esther Sui Chu Ho from the Chinese University of Hong Kong is the [Regional Mapping Study on Learning Assessments in the Asia-Pacific](#). This mapping exercise's objective was to take stock of learning assessments systems in the region, particularly looking at how they are integrated into education policies, and how the learning assessment results are utilized to shape and inform better practices. Dr. Ho presented the findings from this research study, sharing the regional trends and analysis of learning assessments (international, regional and national) and how countries implement, analyze and utilize various learning assessments.

The introductory session gave an overview of NEQMAP's recent and on-going activities in collaboration with NEQMAP's member institutes and experts in ensuring the quality of education in the region and alignment of the global commitment.

Session 2: NEQMAP Member updates – Education Quality Monitoring

NEQMAP Member updates in Education Quality Monitoring presentations by Member Institutes from Bangladesh, Hong Kong (SAR) and Bhutan. Mr. Syeed Ahamed from the [Institute of Informatics and Development \(IID\) in Bangladesh](#) showcased the work their institute is doing to closely monitor the progress of SDG4. IID is the main partner for conducting and analyzing PAL Network's Citizen led Assessment of Numeracy (CLAN 2019) in Bangladesh. They are using their experience to help the government to develop the assessment tools for monitoring SDG4.1, which will be piloted in December and shared with PAL South Asia to establish a common SDG4.1 assessment framework in South Asia.

In Hong Kong, a presentation on Assessment for Learning: Territory-wide System Assessment, by Han Ngai Sze of the HKEAA. The Territory-wide Assessment System is administered in primary 6 and secondary 3, and covers Chinese, English and mathematics. The results are shared through an online interactive report, which quickly and easily provides feedback to teachers. Teachers and schools can access the reports in order to adjust instruction and lesson plans. The territory wide system focuses these efforts to ensure 'assessment for learning'.

[In Bhutan](#), the country is currently undertaking a major curriculum review, as well as revising their current assessment frameworks to reflect both the new and updated curriculum and the principles of continuous formative assessment. Mr. Kinga Dakpa of the Royal Education Council, spoke about the influential first national school curriculum conference, held in 2019 to set off this process, involving teachers, principals, education officials and other relevant stakeholders. This reform and revision will have a deep and lasting impact on the teaching and learning process in Bhutan, and aligns it with SDG4 targets.

Session 3: NEQMAP Knowledge Portal

The updated [NEQMAP Knowledge Portal](#) was presented by Mr. Job Barallas from the Section of Inclusive Quality Education at UNESCO Bangkok. This session aimed to give practical experience and encourage members to try and get themselves familiar with how to use the portal, especially the forum discussions function. Unfortunately, due to technical issues, the portal could not function fully and the exercise was not fully completed. However, the official introduction of the portal was a good start for the members, as they were able to view some of the other functions, and it provided a good opportunity to collect resources from our members. At the meeting, members were able to share relevant resources that could be uploaded to the portal.

Session 4: NEQMAP Thematic Reviews on Inclusion and Equity

Following the 2018 NEQMAP Annual Meeting, it was decided to carry out three case studies/reviews on learning assessments with a focus on inclusion and equity. An expert meeting was organized in March 2019 in Bangkok with over 20 stakeholders from the region to discuss the issues of inclusion and equity in assessments. Three NEQMAP members volunteered to prepare the reviews; Amit Kaushik and Anannya Chakraborty of ACER India prepared the review on disabilities, Nordin Abd Razak of University Sains Malaysia and Karen Lamola from UNESCO Bangkok prepared the review gender, and Shuting Huo and Maggie Yue Zhao of the University of Hong Kong prepared the review on ethnolinguistic challenges.

At the annual meeting, a panel discussion was held to discuss the findings of the NEQMAP Thematic Reviews on Inclusion and Equity that were carried out in 2019. The panel consisted of Dr. Nordin Abd Razak, speaking about '[Gender equity and learning assessments](#)', Mr. Mark Manns, speaking about '[Language barriers in education from an assessment perspective](#)', and Mr. Amit Kaushik, speaking on '[Assessment for students with disabilities to ensure inclusive learning opportunities for all](#)'.

[The thematic reviews](#) provide an overview of the existing inclusive education policies and practices in the region and specifically focuses on learning assessment of children with disabilities at the school level, how learning assessments interconnect and interact with issues of gender equity and equality, and how educational assessments are equitable and fair for linguistically diverse students. The reviews suggest that countries could do a better job at integrating minority children into mainstream education. Some recommendations include: strengthening teacher education to accommodate more inclusion; permitting disability-specific accommodations to ensure assessment accessibility to children with disabilities; embracing linguistically diverse students' mother tongue in the learning assessment process; and carrying out more research as to what role learning assessments can or do have in terms of gender equity.

Session 5: Initiatives on Education Quality Monitoring for SDG4-Education 2030.

Ramya Vivekanandan from Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Dr. Ursula Schwantner of the Australian Council for Educational Research, Centre for Global Education Monitoring (ACER-GEM) presented a new tool called '[ANLAS: Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems](#)', which has been developed in order to help countries strengthen their learning assessment systems. The ANLAS model comprises a qualitative analysis of the *context* of the assessment system, the *quality* of the assessment programs administered, and the *coherence* of the assessment system with other elements in the education system. The analysis can be embedded into the country's broader education sector planning

process to facilitate the formulation and implementation of improvement strategies for learning assessment systems as part of the Education Sector Plan. ANLAS is designed to be a country-led, participative process, with tools that are easily adaptable to each country context and identify patterns of strengths, weaknesses and recommendations to improve the national learning assessment system. The timeframe needed is about 6 months, requiring a national team of 8-12 members undertaking the analysis in part-time. ANLAS was piloted in three GPE partner countries, Ethiopia, Mauritania and Vietnam. The findings of the pilot in Vietnam indicated there are well-established assessment frameworks, instruments, sampling, and data management for large-scale assessments; however, improvement is needed in data analysis, reporting and dissemination. The ANLAS toolkit is now available on the GPE website for use by any interested country, at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/toolkit-analysis-national-learning-assessment-systems-anlas>.

Dr. Orawan Sribooruang from SEAMEO presented an update on [the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics \(SEA-PLM\) 2019](#), a [regional large-scale assessment](#) to measure quality learning outcomes across SEAMEO countries. The first round was carried out in 2019 with 6 countries: Myanmar, Philippines, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Cambodia and Malaysia. SEA-PLM will report regional trends across countries in terms of competencies level and disparities, and will help countries to better understand the status of student learning achievement and thereby improve the quality of their education systems. To share some of the concrete findings, and to highlight how SEA-PLM impacts at the national level, the case study from Myanmar was presented by Mr. Aung Htike. As a result of its participation in SEA-PLM, Myanmar has developed its National Assessment Policy for Basic Education, launched in September 2019, and SEA-PLM will be one of the sample-based assessment tools used at the national level.

Lastly, Dr. Kwok Sang So from the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, presented the development of a [framework of recognition for examinations by the International Association for Educational Assessment \(IAEA\)](#). IAEA is a global association for stakeholders involved in educational assessment, with more than 50 members around the world. The recognition framework for examinations will provide a set of benchmarks and good practices for examination organizations and their operations, with the ultimate aim to improve the efficiency and relevance of examinations. The framework can also be applied as a tool for self-reflection and self-evaluation.

The inputs and reports from NEQMAP member institutes provided a good overview and background of what different organizations are doing to improve their learning assessment systems, learning outcomes, and the quality of their education systems.

Day 2 – NEQMAP Critical Review and Evaluation

Session 6: NEQMAP Critical Review

The [NEQMAP Critical review](#) was presented by Dr. Jyothi Mirle Achutarao, UNESCO's external programme evaluation consultant. The evaluation examined three components: the effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of NEQMAP. The findings and recommendations were presented based on a survey of NEQMAP member institutes, as well as interviews with select members, the Steering Group, the NEQMAP Secretariat, UNESCO staff, and other relevant stakeholders, including the donors.

Some highlights of the feedback on each activity pillar:

- i) the capacity development workshops – workshops were useful and relevant as they set examples of what could be implemented at the country level, but should be more needs-based, i.e. training of trainers model and series of workshops that culminates in a quality improvement project;
- ii) research – raises awareness for teachers and educational stakeholders; consider including action research to provide solutions to existing educational issues;
- iii) knowledge sharing – main activities are annual meetings and the knowledge portal; content of meetings ranged from visioning, plans, institutional matters, country presentations, presentations of scientific papers and research it could be more focused on the stories of change as a result of follow up activities to build commitments to action.

Following the presentation, members discussed the findings from the analysis and asked what activities under the three pillars (capacity building, research, knowledge sharing) were perceived to be effective, relevant, and sustainable. Interviewed members had indicated that capacity building is most effective and relevant. It was recommended that in order to be sustainable and to increase effectiveness, capacity building should focus on the long term. Knowledge sharing has also shown to be effective, with high engagement from NEQMAP member institutions in related activities. The interviewed members expressed a recommendation that the research pillar needs to include more qualitative studies in order to be more relevant and useful. The point was made that it is difficult to measure the impact of NEQMAP's activities given the diverse region and different needs of the members. Some activities will be more beneficial to some than others – depending on country context and country needs. This highlights the importance and relevance of communication and knowledge sharing, so that members can prioritize and receive/share information they need the most. Lastly, the recommendations that were provided in the evaluation were not clearly linked to the findings or evidence from the analysis. These should be clarified in the final version of the evaluation.

Session 7: Focus Group Discussions on NEQMAP, member priorities and SDG4-Education 2030

Members were asked to provide specific inputs as to what their organizations focus on, to ensure that NEQMAP aligns its activities to meet members' interests and priorities. They provided their organizational objectives and some included work plans. Though members consist of a variety of different organizations and have slightly different objectives, all of them work on education quality at the national/regional level (either through learning assessments, examinations, curriculum development, etc.) and are often a part of national SDG4 monitoring and implementation activities. This information provides a useful frame of reference so that the NEQMAP Secretariat and UNESCO plan and implement activities that address and reach the needs of our member institutes.

Members were also asked to provide suggested activities and topics that they would like to see NEQMAP carry out in the coming years. Suggested activities that our members highlighted include:

Capacity Development:

- How to use evidence to inform and review policy – including the full cycle of assessment and alignment

- Transversal Competencies and from many different perspectives (i.e. item analysis, measurement and analysis, curriculum and pedagogy, etc.)
- Data analysis, report writing and dissemination
- Monitoring of SDG 4.1.1
- Teacher assessment and evaluation
- Computer based assessment
- National level technical assistance/technical workshop series
- Study visits for observations

Research

- Assessment trends
- Effect of class size in Teaching-Learning process
- Transversal Competencies – practices, reflections on teaching and learning process

Sessions 8 & 9: Focus group discussions on NEQMAP's role, future strategy, proposed activities and workplan

Participants worked in small groups to undertake a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis on NEQMAP and its activities. The SWOT analysis helped provide members and the Secretariat with suggestions and recommendations on how NEQMAP can move forward in the coming years. The Network's three main pillars (knowledge sharing, research and capacity building) were highlighted as strengths and NEQMAP members agreed its core objectives of monitoring the quality education and learning outcomes, and ensuring the alignment of learning assessments with pedagogy and curriculum, remain critical and relevant.

At the same time, members highlighted some weaknesses, risks and threats, as well as what could be done better (opportunities). NEQMAP can improve the quality of its own monitoring activities, aiming for longer-term impact at the national level. Human and financial resource challenges include the availability of technical partners to facilitate workshops and the limitations of the Secretariat (i.e. limited human resources) and member institutes to carry out in-depth programmes. Communication and visibility of the Network (nationally, regionally and globally) can be strengthened to increase awareness of NEQMAP's focus areas in learning assessments, learning outcomes and quality of education. Members suggested that with better communication and visibility, NEQMAP could become a reference network internationally, which could attract more funding opportunities to sustain engagement in the region.

The following figure shows a summary of the SWOT analysis:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unique regional platform in Asia-Pacific region taking lead in monitoring the quality of education • specific focus on enhancing the use of learning assessments for the improvement of learning outcomes • three core pillars: capacity building, research and knowledge sharing are valuable to members • provides technical expertise in the focus areas of large-scale assessments, classroom and school-based assessment, 21st Century/transversal competencies skills • strengthens the alignment of quality education across curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment • platform for networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among members, • links national interests, priorities and partners to the international agendas (i.e. SDG 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measuring long-term impact of NEQMAP activities at national level • Communication and visibility – awareness and recognition of NEQMAP's work is not broad • Limited resources (human and financial) to carry out in-depth activities • Target goals can be too broad, leads to lack of focus and lack of follow-up
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage policy-makers to influence the changes and impact at national level • Strengthened communication and visibility can increase recognition of NEQMAP's work at national, regional and international level, and attract donor/partner attention • Raise more awareness of the need for quality education, particularly in learning assessments, learning outcomes and quality of education system alignment (assessment, pedagogy and curriculum) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability and continuity in funding and human resources • Donor's mandate, priorities and interests vs. NEQMAP's priorities and strategy • Similar regional/sub-regional initiatives may replicate NEQMAP's work (UNICEF, SEAMEO) • Members or partners perceived lack of value added

Some suggestions and recommendations:

- a) **For NEQMAP Secretariat/Network** - to improve monitoring progress of quality of education and impact of the Network, the Secretariat can:
- Strengthen communication and visibility of NEQMAP and its activities
 - Regularly check if members disseminate/implement the knowledge learned at NEQMAP workshops at the country level
 - Engage and coordinate with the UNESCO field offices so that national stakeholders are well aware of NEQMAP mandate and activities, including the ministerial level and policy makers;
 - Collect and share country profiles for past, present, future activities for members to learn about from other
 - Take a varied and multifaceted approach, to address different needs and identifying gaps and priorities of NEQMAP's member institutes.

- b) **For NEQMAP Member Institutes** – to enhance collaboration, engagement and contributions to achieve quality learning outcomes at national level, members institutes ca:
- actively and continuously engage in NEQMAP's 3 pillar activities: capacity development, knowledge sharing and regional research;
 - prepare country/national information for sharing, e.g. country profiles, national assessment data etc.
 - make use of lessons learned from NEQMAP activities (capacity building development workshops, seminars, research, etc.) at national level to ensure positive impact;
 - share progress in education quality monitoring (i.e. SDG4) with NEQMAP members (e.g. through knowledge sharing activities such as the annual meeting, seminars, webinar, NEQMAP's knowledge portal, etc.)

These discussions and suggestions revealed that the modality of NEQMAP capacity development may need to change. For NEQMAP to truly have an impact on the quality of education at the national level, there may need to be an effort to extend regional and sub-regional capacity development into programmes and activities that will continue at the national level, and that will include a wider range of national level stakeholders. Currently, regional capacity development workshops typically bring 1-4 members per country to a workshop. A mechanism to follow-up and engage with members and track whether learnings from the workshops are utilized, disseminated and have an impact at the country level will be useful.

Day 3 – Steering Group Meeting

The Steering Group met on day 3 to discuss the programme evaluation, inputs from the members, and reflect on the work that has been done in NEQMAP to date in order to map out the network's future mission/strategy and potential activities for 2020 and beyond.

Session 1: Inputs from GPE on lessons learned and potential ways forward

Ramya Vivekanandan from the GPE Secretariat was invited to speak to the SG members during the introduction of the meeting to provide brief inputs and observations given GPE's support to NEQMAP through its Assessment for Learning (A4L) initiative. GPE's grant to NEQMAP through A4L will conclude in June 2020.

Ms. Vivekanandan began by giving an overview of recent developments at GPE, including the new initiative known as the Knowledge & Innovation Exchange (KIX), which will connect the expertise, innovation and knowledge of GPE partners to help GPE partner countries build stronger education systems. GPE is also currently working on its next strategic plan for the post-2020 period. An important input to the development of the strategy has been a recent landscape review on 21st century skills which was conducted by the GPE Secretariat (under A4L) in order to explore how GPE can best support the area of 21st century skills in the future.

Noting that NEQMAP has implemented a large number of different activities, the GPE representative highlighted those which were seen to be of most interest, which include the work around assessment of transversal competencies/21st century skills in the region. Building off of the previous ERI-Net and

NEQMAP work, the recent efforts under the Optimizing Assessment for All (OAA) Initiative by Brookings (which GPE has also supported), provide a sound base for NEQMAP to continue working in this area. The September 2019 workshop on assessment of transversal competencies has also been notable in this regard.

Another important output of NEQMAP's is the topical research on the impact of assessment on policies and practices, such as the joint case studies with ACER GEM (on PILNA, SEA-PLM, Nepal, etc.). These case studies should be continued, and are a great opportunity for members to contribute to knowledge base of the network.

GPE provided some suggestions for NEQMAP's operational strategy. NEQMAP should consider a more strategic focus and prioritized approach, thinking about what particular modality or approach can distinguish it from other initiatives in the region. In thinking about how to better assess the network's outcomes and impact, a closer examination or review of how other networks/initiatives approach this issue (i.e. via desk review) could provide insight into NEQMAP's added value and strategic position. A roadmap based on the findings of evaluation could better share and communicate to broader audience.

On the resource mobilization aspect, NEQMAP can explore partnership and collaboration with other similar partners/services (e.g. UIS for data sharing). As the A4L funding concludes and given that GPE has been supporting NEQMAP since 2013 (including through the GRA program previously), it is important for NEQMAP to invite new partners with new perspectives to join the table and to diversify its sources of support. Finally, UNESCO itself should consider engaging and contributing more resources (financial and human) to the NEQMAP network.

Session 2, 3, 4: Reflections on lessons learned, challenges, opportunities, future activities, workplan and strategy

Discussion 1: Funding opportunities and partnership: the discussion explored different partnership opportunities. NEQMAP can look to synergize/collaborate with other learning assessment groups, for instance with SEAMEO and UNICEF under the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA PLM), and/or other regional initiatives. Other collaborations outside the AP region could be explored with the TALENT network through the UNESCO office in Dakar. In addition, NEQMAP could consider carrying out more national case studies on education quality to better analyze needs and gaps to attract more partnerships, funds and grants.

Discussion 2: Reflections on NEQMAP critical review and evaluation: SG members were critical of the methodology of the evaluation. In particular, the convenience sample of workshop attendees and survey respondents was not representative of the network. In addition, the recommendations provided were not clearly linked to the overall goals of the evaluation, nor clearly linked to the findings/analysis. Recognizing the limitations of the critical review (time, sample size, etc.), members recommended the evaluation provide more in-depth qualitative analysis that can capture stories of both successes and failures (learning experiences) so that the network can address those obstacles and introduce any necessary changes. These comments and feedback were subsequently shared with the evaluation consultant SG members agreed that the outputs of the SWOT analysis on Day 2 were very useful. Overall however, SG members appreciated the efforts undertaken for the external review, as it provides important feedback for developing a vision and strategy for the network. In particular it will inform the development of:

1. Vision and strategy
2. Work program. UNESCO works on bi-annual work plans. 2020 and 2021 need to be planned. Plan thematic areas for NEQMAP
3. Monitoring and evaluation framework
4. Resourcing strategy
5. Membership structure and SG membership

Discussion 3: SG Membership, structure and process: the areas discussed were the criteria and composition of the SG members, and how SG members can rotate. The main points agreed to were:

- The aim is to have at least 1 SG member per sub-region. Currently there are representatives from Central Asia, South and West Asia, South East Asia, East Asia and the Pacific;
- The SG membership is open to individuals from full NEQMAP member institutions in the AP region with the endorsement from their organisation (*note: Associate members will not be considered for SG);
- The SG should comprise a broad representation of different institutional members (e.g. government vs non-government). At present there is no Ministry of Education representative;
- SG should consider gender balance;
- SG members should regularly participate in NEQMAP activities to better understand the network's function and scope;
- SG members will begin to rotate starting 2020, and Secretariat will initiate and reach out to find new members.

Discussion 4: The vision and strategy of NEQMAP: the discussion focused on how to enhance the strengths of NEQMAP. The discussion on the SWOT analysis from the annual meeting confirmed that the Initial vision, objectives and pillars (capacity development, research and knowledge sharing) of NEQMAP are still important and continue to be relevant. The updated and revised vision and strategy should also consider the strengths and opportunities that members highlighted.

First, in terms of the global education agenda (i.e. SDG4-Education 2030), NEQMAP should consider how to operate as an umbrella entity for the monitoring of education quality in the region, with its focus on the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. As one of the core issues in the region still lies in literacy and numeracy outcomes, and the low proficiency levels in some cases, NEQMAP should help countries build and strengthen monitoring frameworks at the national level by providing essential data, best practices and evidence-based policy to align national education systems. To achieve the overarching goals, short-term outcomes can focus on strengthening skills and competencies (both learners and teachers), and summative and formative assessments (i.e. Assessment for learning).

To strengthen the impact of NEQMAP's pillars, future work can focus on developing a series of tools and components (i.e. action research to pull together comprehensive views to different ways of measuring students learning outcomes).

Discussion 5: Specific Activities for next years: NEQMAP Secretariat will develop a 2-year strategy/workplan in alignment with UNESCO programmes. The strategy will be shared with all members and will continue to strengthen its work on the 3 pillars of activities:

1) Capacity Development:

- Focus on a series of workshops that encourages continuity and repeated attendance of the participants to deepen and strengthen capacity.
- Explore more capacity development workshops at the country level. NEQMAP has received interest from Bhutan and Uzbekistan to host workshops/meetings.
 - o Bhutan is interested in organizing national/regional workshops in review and reform of curriculum in line with the TVCs skills together with agencies who work on TVC.
 - o Uzbekistan is interested in hosting either workshop or meeting;Possible partnership and co-organising event: UNICEF and SEAMEO are organizing some workshops in 2020 around their SEA-PLM programme (with ACER as technical lead). NEQMAP Secretariat will explore possibilities to collaborate and co-host one workshop.
- Other topics for workshops included: Test Item Development, Data Analysis, and transversal competencies and competency-based assessment.

2) Research:

- Topics for 2020 could include further research on TVCs, thematic topics similar to 2019's thematic reviews (i.e. language barriers, disability and gender) and policies for education monitoring that are comprehensive and inclusive and how these are executed and assessed;
- More research could be done at the country level, (i.e. case studies based on the country context to connect with the policy level). This can be incorporated to the strategic plan with periodic follow up to ensure continuity and link with capacity building efforts.

3) Knowledge sharing:

- To disseminate findings from the other pillars potential NEQMAP webinars in 2020 could be on Optimizing Assessment for All and Transversal Competencies (21st Century Skills) with Brookings Institute, the latest findings from SEA-PLM with UNICEF and SEAMEO, or on ANLAS with GPE and ACER.

4) Recommended activities to monitor impact of NEQMAP activities:

- Follow up surveys/questionnaires/interviews with member institutes and workshop participants to get feedback on impact and changes at national level (e.g. this can be integrated into the Knowledge portal);
- Annual meetings are an opportunity to conduct regular interviews or collect feedback from members;
- Exit plans can be added in the strategy and work plan (i.e. to clearly monitor baselines and endlines for various NEQMAP activities);
- Summary reports/recommendations/output documents from Secretariat following each activity can be used to measure impact.

Conclusions and Next Steps

NEQMAP's 7th Annual Meeting and 7th Steering Group Meeting provided opportunities for participating NEQMAP members, the NEQMAP Secretariat, as well as participating partners to better understand, reflect and critically review what NEQMAP does, and what it aims to achieve. The discussions with the members reaffirm the strengths and core value of NEQMAP as a unique regional platform and a network in monitoring and strengthening the quality of education in the Asia-Pacific region. However, these discussions also take into account important messages on challenges (risks, threats) and what could be done better (opportunities) to achieve long-term impact at the national level, as well as align and reach international goals (i.e. SDG4-Education 2030).

To address some of these challenges, the NEQMAP Secretariat will develop an updated strategy document that will include a long-term vision, as well as 2-year workplan, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and a resourcing strategy for the network. This strategy document will consider the outcomes of the programme evaluation and the 2019 annual meeting, including the following aspects under the core pillars:

- 1) Under **capacity building pillar**: to extend the capacity development programme activity to the sub-regional and national level and engage more with national partners, this will include:-
 - Strengthen partnerships and collaborations with national counterparts and UNESCO field offices;
 - Provide assistance to national partners to develop and build their own monitoring frameworks through national assessment system;
 - Strengthen competency-based assessments (i.e. TVC and 21st C skills) and the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for better learning outcomes;
 - Focus on building capacity of national assessment organizations to better conduct, analyse and report on learning outcomes.
- Under **research pillar**: to further develop research and topical case studies on monitoring and measuring education quality which include:
 - Learning assessment trends and learning outcome trends;
 - Skills and competencies for better learning outcomes;
 - Strengthening both summative and formative assessments,
 - Thematic topics, such as education for disability, global citizenship education, language barriers, disability and gender; and
 - Studies that look into how evidence is used in education policy and practice.
- Under **knowledge sharing pillar**: to enhance and increase the communication and visibility of NEQMAP, this will include:-
 - Dissemination of data and best practices in the areas of learning assessments, pedagogy, and curriculum through [NEQMAP Knowledge Portal](#), webinars, seminars, etc.

Immediate next steps for the network include the NEQMAP Secretariat announcing for new Steering Group members to join in early 2020. The secretariat will take the lead in developing the strategy and workplan, with initial inputs from the SG, and then further feedback from all members. The programme evaluation, once finalized will be shared with all members.

Through these efforts, NEQMAP will continue to engage in the Asia-Pacific region to support and strengthen more collaboration with the member institutions, as well as partners, in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.