Indicator proposal summary: Completion rate

Full name of the Indicator: Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)

Custodian Agency: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Goal and target addressed: Goal 4, target 4.1 (by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes)

What type of proposal (replacement, refinement, adjustment and addition), for replacement, refinement and adjustment, please list the original indicator and its number: Addition

1. Background and rationale for the indicator proposal

Target 4.1 aims to "*ensure that all girls and boys **complete** free, equitable and quality **primary and secondary education** leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes*". In other words, it consists of three parts:

- Attainment: universal completion of primary and secondary education.
- Quality: characteristics of education. This part is monitored with global indicators 4.a.1 on the school environment and 4.c.1 on teachers.
- Learning outcomes: This part is monitored with global indicator 4.1.1, on the percentage of students in primary and lower secondary education who achieve a minimum level of proficiency in reading and mathematics.

However, indicator 4.1.1 focuses exclusively on children who reach the respective points of measurement in the education system (grades 2 or 3, end of primary education, end of lower secondary education). It therefore neglects:

- the often large populations of children who may not reach those levels; and
- a crucial aspect of the target, completion of primary and secondary education.

This proposal aims to fill this gap by proposing the (primary, lower secondary and upper secondary) **completion rate** as an additional global indicator for target 4.1. The completion rate is the percentage of a cohort of children or young people aged 3-5 years above the intended age for the last grade of a level of education who completed that grade.

The proposed new global indicator can be used either as a self-standing indicator or in combination with indicator 4.1.1. In the latter case, the two indicators combined would provide information on the percentage of children *in a cohort* who achieve a minimum level of proficiency, and not on just the percentage of children *in school* who achieve minimum proficiency.

2. Information on how and when the methodology has become an international standard and who is the governing body that approves it

The completion rate is indicator 4.1.4 in the thematic indicator framework for SDG 4 that was adopted as part of the *Education 2030 Framework for Action* in November 2015.[1] The methodology for the completion rate was approved by the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG 4, the body convened by UNESCO and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics for the development of the SDG 4 monitoring framework. The TCG is composed of 38 regionally representative members from Member

[1] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2016. "Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4." ED-2016/WS/28. Paris: UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656

States, international partners, civil society and the Co-Chair of the Education 2030 Steering Committee, with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics hosting its Secretariat. The Technical Cooperation Group has also requested the refinement of the methodology to model the completion rate estimates, following an approach similar to that used for the estimation of child mortality rates. The model would ensure that common challenges with household survey data, such as timeliness and sampling or non-sampling errors are addressed to provide up-to-date and more robust data.

3. Data sources and data availability

The completion rate is calculated from individual-level microdata on school completion collected with censuses and household surveys. Sources include publicly available data from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Condition (EU-SILC), the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), and national household surveys and censuses.

The primary completion rate is currently available for 111 countries, representing 46% of all countries worldwide and 89% of the global population in the reference age group (see table below). The lower secondary completion rate is available for 145 countries, representing 61% of all countries and 94% of the global population (see the figure below). Coverage for the upper secondary completion rate is similar, with data for 144 countries, representing 60% of all countries and 93% of the global population. Secondary completion rates are available for more countries because some high-income countries do not collect data on primary completion.

Availability at the regional level varies by level of education and SDG region. In Central and Southern Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa, the completion rate is available for countries that, combined, represent 90% to 100% of the regional population. Europe and Northern America have secondary completion rates for countries representing nearly the entire reference population in the region; the primary completion rate, on the other hand, is available for 52% of the regional population. In Northern Africa and Western Asia and especially in Oceania, coverage is less complete.

Coverage is expected to improve over the coming years due to analysis of additional census and survey datasets. The reporting burden for countries will not increase because the indicator is calculated from publicly available datasets.

Available completion rates by SDG region, 2018 or latest year

Region	Countries with completion rates								
	Primary education			Lower secondary education			Upper secondary education		
	No. of countries	% of countries	% of pop. in region	No. of countries	% of countries	% of pop. in region	No. of countries	% of countries	% of pop. in region
Central and Southern Asia	11	78.6	93.9	11	78.6	93.7	10	71.4	93.8
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	10	55.6	91.5	10	55.6	91.2	10	55.6	89.7
Europe and Northern America	10	17.5	51.5	41	71.9	100.0	41	71.9	100.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	28	57.1	99.7	28	57.1	99.7	28	57.1	99.7
Northern Africa and Western Asia	12	48.0	75.3	14	56.0	77.0	14	56.0	77.5
Oceania	0	0	0	1	4.0	59.4	1	4.0	35.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	40	78.4	97.6	40	78.4	98.0	40	78.4	96.7
World	111	46.4	88.8	145	60.7	93.8	144	60.3	93.1

Notes: Oceania includes Australia and New Zealand. Population refers to theoretical age for the respective levels of education (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary).
Sources: UIS database, http://data.uis.unesco.org; World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE), https://www.education-inequalities.org.

Countries with lower secondary completion rate by SDG region, 2018 or latest year

Note: Oceania includes Australia and New Zealand.
Sources: UIS database, http://data.uis.unesco.org; World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE), https://www.education-inequalities.org

4. Confirmation/explanation of joint submission with other partner/co-custodian agencies (if applicable)

Not applicable.

5. Conclusion

The proposed additional indicator **monitors a crucial aspect of SDG target 4.1**: progress towards universal **completion of primary and secondary education**. The completion rate combined with indicator 4.1.1 provides information on the proportion of children, adolescents and youth who completed primary or secondary education and who achieved minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics.

The completion rate is a **clearly defined indicator with an agreed methodology** that was approved by the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG 4, the body convened by UNESCO and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics for the development of the SDG 4 monitoring framework. The Technical Cooperation Group has also requested the refinement of the methodology to model the completion rate estimates, following an approach similar to that used for the estimation of child mortality rates. The model would ensure that common challenges with household survey data, such as timeliness and sampling or non-sampling errors are addressed to provide up-to-date and more robust data.

Primary and secondary completion rates are **available for 46% to 61% of all countries and 89% to 94% of the global reference population**. Coverage is expected to improve over the coming years due to analysis of additional census and survey datasets. The reporting burden for countries will not increase because the indicator is calculated from publicly available datasets.

Because of the utility of the indicator, its ease of calculation and interpretation, and high data availability, the **completion rate is proposed as an additional global indicator for target 4.1**.