Learning Metrics Task Force
Summary of New York City Meeting
September 27-28, 2012

Introduction
To advance progress for children and youth around the world, it is critical that education and learning are recognized as essential for human development. As EFA and the MDGs sunset in 2015, and the UN Secretary-General launches Education First, the education sector has a unique window of opportunity to raise the profile of international education goals and ensure that learning becomes a central component of the global development agenda. To do this, the global education community must work collectively to define global ambition on improving learning and propose practical actions to deliver and measure progress.

In response to this need, UNESCO, through its Institute for Statistics (UIS), and the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution have co-convened the Learning Metrics Task Force, comprised of representatives from national and provincial governments, regional organizations, multilateral organizations, teachers' organizations, civil society groups, and donor agencies. The overarching objective of the project is to catalyze a shift in the global conversation on education from a focus on access to access *plus* learning.

The Learning Metrics Task Force will engage high-level political actors, technical experts, and practitioners in a year-long global consultation process (see Annex A) to build consensus around three questions:
- What learning is important globally?
- How should it be measured?
- How can measurement of learning improve education quality?

Task force members met in person for the first time on 27-28 September 2012 in New York City. Over the two days, task force co-chairs facilitated discussion and debate among attending members around the first core question: What domains of learning are important for children and youth to master for success in school and beyond? The Standards Working Group shared the results of the consultation process, through which more than 400 individuals in 45 countries submitted feedback during August and September 2012. The working group then presented its revised framework for the task force's consideration. Below is a summary of the main topics and outcomes of that discussion. (See Annex B for the meeting agenda and list of participants.)

Meeting Objectives
- Review the results of the consultation process
- Discuss and make final decisions on the recommendations of the Standards Working Group
- Discuss plan of action and identify additional opportunities for informing the post-2015 agenda
- Discuss plan of action for engaging national-level stakeholders
- Evaluate the LMTF process to date and identify improvements if necessary

Key Decisions
- Seven domains (see Figure 1) will be submitted to the Measures and Methods Working Group for recommendations on measurement.
- Sub-domains within each of the seven domains (see Annex C) will be offered to the Measures and Methods Working Group as guidance for areas of measurement.
- Not all of the seven domains are feasible for a potential global learning goal; accordingly, the task force recommends exploring a hybrid approach to measuring learning at the global and national levels. Options for this approach will be proposed by the Measures and Methods Working Group and decided upon at the next task force meeting (20-21 February 2013 in Dubai).
- The recommendations of the task force will encompass comprehensive basic education, from early childhood to lower secondary (ISCED 2).
- The recommendations will seek to encompass children who are in school and those who are out of school, but the task force acknowledges that measuring learning of children in school may be more feasible.

Topics of Discussion

While the task force broadly accepted the working group's revised competencies framework, attendees engaged in lively discussion and debate on specific domains and sub-domains, as well as larger questions about the project vision and scope. The following questions were major topics of discussion over the two-day meeting.

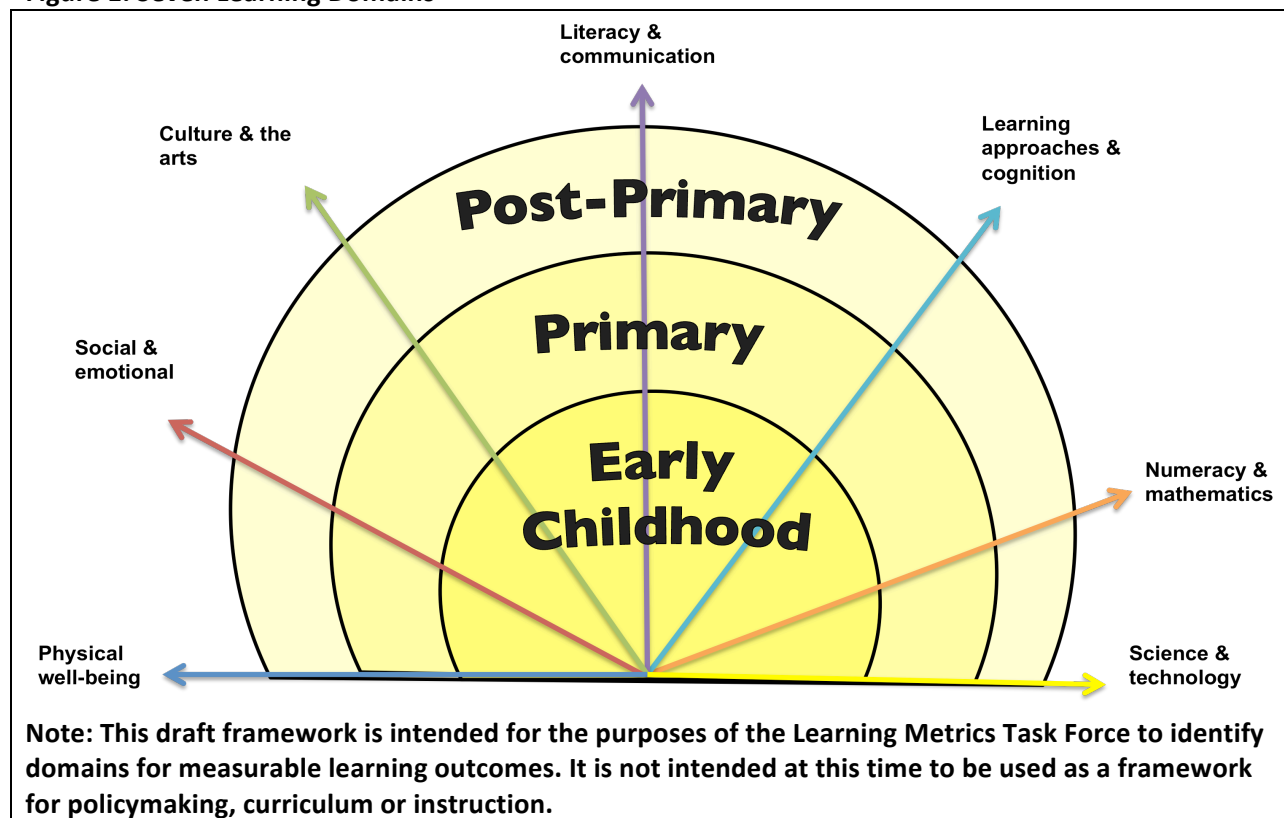**How comprehensive should the framework be?**

Task force members discussed the revised framework proposed by the working group for learning in early childhood, primary, and post-primary. Seven domains and corresponding sub-domains were presented as important areas in which children should demonstrate learning:
- Physical well-being
- Cognition and problem solving
- Learning approaches and skills
- Language and literacy
- Social and emotional
- Numeracy and mathematics
- Science and technology

The task force broadly accepted the framework for learning outcomes proposed by the working group, but with several changes:
- The domains of "learning approaches and skills" and "cognition and problem solving" were combined
- "Culture and the arts" was made a distinct domain rather than being incorporated into the "social and emotional" domain.
- The "language and literacy" domain was renamed to "literacy and communication," to encompass the various ways in which human beings communicate ideas, including through information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Figure 1. Seven Learning Domains[1]

Note: This draft framework is intended for the purposes of the Learning Metrics Task Force to identify domains for measurable learning outcomes. It is not intended at this time to be used as a framework for policymaking, curriculum or instruction.

Sub-domains (see Annex C) were offered by the Standards Working Group as important areas for measuring learning within each of the seven domains. The sub-domains are suggested areas for exploration by the next group and may be refined as the Measures and Methods Working Group develops its recommendations. The task force requested numerous changes to the sub-domains, including:

- Sub-domains related to written language (i.e., phonological awareness, symbol knowledge, print concepts and conventions, early writing) were intentionally excluded from the literacy and communication domain for early childhood. The task force decided that given the large disparities in young children's access to print materials and varied orthographies, mastery cannot be defined in a way that lends itself to applicability at the global level. Print awareness (i.e., understanding that writing represents spoken words, direction of print, book orientation, etc.) was the only sub-domain for written language that the task force felt could be realistically included in early childhood.

- Phonemic awareness and phonics were intentionally excluded from the primary-level framework due to the fact that they do not apply to all languages and scripts, but may be appropriate to measure in some orthographies. The task force also felt that at the global level it

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[1] Each arrow in the diagram represents one domain of learning, radiating outward as a child expands his or her knowledge in a given area. The half circles represent three time periods in which the task force will concentrate its recommendations: early childhood (birth through primary school entry); primary, and post-primary (end of primary through end of lower secondary). The intensity of color in the early childhood years represents the intense capacity for learning that occurs during this time in a child's life. The diagram does not assume that all children will reach learning outcomes at the same point in time or that progress will be even across domains. The arrows extend outward from the diagram indicating that an individual may continue learning more deeply in a given area at the upper secondary, tertiary, or technical/vocational level or through non-formal learning opportunities.

was important to focus on the end goal (i.e., reading and speaking with fluency), while intermediate competencies are best decided at the national level.

- Some of the physical well-being sub-domains should be measured in relation to life science under "science and technology." For example, knowledge about health and how diseases are transmitted may be assessed under the science domain, but the actual behaviors children demonstrate might be assessed under physical well-being. The subsequent working group on measures and methods will take these issues into account when developing their recommendations.

The framework that the task force agreed to put forth is depicted in Figure 1 (below). Task force members stated that this framework should be disseminated with several caveats. First, the task force acknowledged that recommending a comprehensive framework for measuring learning could diffuse already limited resources in low- and middle-income countries. Second, the framework should be presented with a "caution label" (see Figure 1), stating that it is intended for exploring measures of learning outcomes and should *not* be used as a framework for curriculum, instruction, or policy-making. The task force decided that the Measures and Methods Working Group (convening from October 2012 to April 2013) should propose hybrid models for realistically measuring fundamental skills as well as more aspirational ones.

Should the task force recommend global or national metrics?
Related to the discussion on the comprehensiveness of the framework, the task force discussed the issue of global learning goals versus nationally defined goals. There was broad consensus that the task force should propose some type of global goal.

Several task force members called for a prioritization of the seven domains, especially for countries where some of the domains are not currently part of the national curriculum. The following alternatives were suggested:
- Propose one or two truly global goals that all countries should measure progress toward, with several other goals that countries could "opt-in" to measure.
- A "basket" approach wherein countries select and prioritize the domains based on national needs and interests.

The task force charged the Measures and Methods Working Group to propose models for how to measure progress toward a global learning goal, without narrowing the focus of learning to just one or two domains.

Will the task force make recommendations for all children or only those who are in school?
Task force members acknowledged that learning happens in many contexts including homes, communities, and schools. Some task force members advocated for focusing the recommendations for measuring learning on those children who are in school, especially in primary, which is the level in which enrollment rates are highest worldwide. They reasoned that because school systems are the primary vehicles for improving learning in countries, they should be the primary focus of these recommendations. Others cited low enrollment numbers in pre-primary programs and secondary school, especially in low- and middle-income countries as reasons why the recommendations must extend to children outside of formal school settings.

There was general consensus that while the domains focus on competencies typically developed by children who are in school settings, the recommended measures should not focus exclusively on children who are in school. The Measures and Methods Working Group will provide recommendations on the feasibility of capturing learning data for out-of-school children. Existing methods of data

collection, such as census and other household survey data, were suggested as an option for measuring learning beyond schools.

Should learning be measured by age cohort or grade level?
The discussion on age cohort and/or grade level was related to the discussion on whether the recommendations should apply to all children or only children in school. Some task force members pointed out that an age-based model would help keep countries accountable for learning of all children, whether or not they are enrolled in school. Others felt that the varying ages at which children begin school globally would make grade levels a fairer way of measuring learning, especially in any internationally comparable way.

No consensus was reached on this issue. The task force requested that the Measures and Methods Working Group develop recommendations to answer this question. One task force member suggested a "learning stages" model rather than setting specific ages and grades at the global level. The Secretariat and Standards Working Group members propose the following model as one example of an age- and grade-level framework:

Figure 2. Proposed Learning Stages Framework

Stage	Level	Focus	Approximate age at which learning is measured
Early Childhood	ISCED 0 (pre-primary, including formal and non-formal)	School readiness	5-7
Primary	ISCED 1 (lower and upper primary)	Basic skills	11-12
Post-Primary	ISCED 2 (lower secondary)	Preparation for work, life, and future learning	14-15

How far into the education lifespan will the task force's recommendations extend?
The task force discussed various options for how far into the educational lifespan its recommendations should extend. The ability of individuals to pursue lifelong learning was cited as an important goal for education. However, around lower secondary (ISCED 2) students begin to specialize depending on their academic performance, interests, and life situations. Some children may discontinue formal schooling even earlier as they transition to parenthood or the workforce. The general consensus was that the recommendations should encompass early childhood and basic education, defined by UNESCO as:

> *The whole range of educational activities, taking place in various settings, that aim to meet basic learning needs as defined in the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990). According to ISCED standard, basic education comprises primary education (first stage of basic education) and lower secondary education (second stage). It also covers a wide variety of non-formal and informal public and private activities intended to meet the basic learning needs of people of all ages.[2]*

Several task force members advocated for the inclusion of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and other workforce skills. Higher education and TVET are critical to sustainable growth, especially in low- and middle-income countries. While setting standards and recommending measures

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[2] UIS Glossary, n.d. "Basic Education."

for specific vocations is beyond the scope of the task force, the proposed domains provide a foundation for children to move toward individual pathways for learning beyond lower secondary.

Will the task force make recommendations for how assessments can be used to improve learning?
Task force members discussed the importance of recommendations that were relevant and could be used to not only measure learning, but also improve learning based on the data. The current scope of the task force does not allow for producing detailed guidance on how to use assessment results to improve learning, but the Implementation Working Group will address some of these issues and develop recommendations to the extent it can within its timeframe. One task force member recommended developing a "how-to" guide on how to achieve learning in the seven domains; another called for recommendations on how countries and civil society organizations can learn from each other, encourage local efforts, and "cross-fertilize" their efforts. There was broad consensus that the recommendations of the Implementation Working Group should address the mechanisms through which assessments of learning could improve learning outcomes, but some members cautioned that given the time constraints it is not realistic to expand the project scope. This question was left open for discussion and will likely depend on the outcomes of the next task force meeting.

What is the timeline for proposed learning goals?
Several questions were raised regarding the urgency of the goals and how ambitious the task force can be with its recommendations. Task force members acknowledged the fact that country-level improvement on existing internationally comparable learning measures (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS) is quite slow, and some countries are even making negative progress. It was agreed that the timeline should align with other global goal-setting efforts (SDGs, MDGs, EFA), but the exact levels of learning that countries should aspire to are yet to be determined.
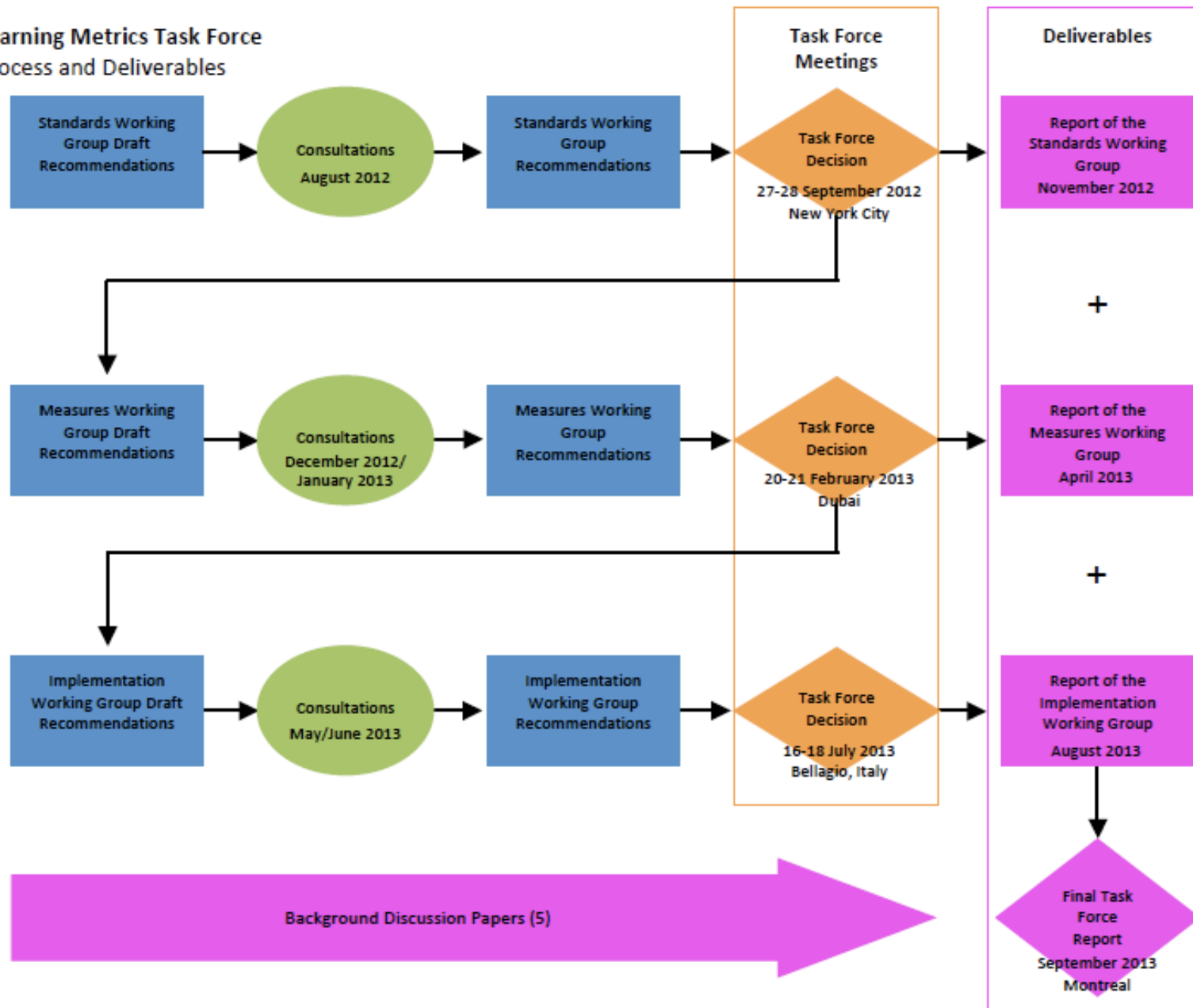
In sum, the proposed competencies framework represents the task force's vision for what every child everywhere should learn and be able to do, whether at the classroom, system, or global level, by the time they complete post-primary education. All seven domains should remain the aspiration for every child throughout the education lifespan.

Ultimately the task force would like to identify strong, helpful measures for each of these domains, and from there develop guidance on how to improve outcomes in these areas at the classroom, school, system levels. While we anticipate that as a community our global assessment capability will improve greatly through collaborative efforts, we do not yet have adequate measures in all of these areas at the global level.

The task for the next technical working group on measures and methods is to determine what subset of domains *can* be measured globally within our current capacity. The task force also encourages local assessment development in the remaining areas, so that over time we may gain insight into measuring them. Further, while focusing on a smaller subset of domains, the education community should also build systems to promote learning in other domains (for instance, working to increase the cadre of teachers who are able to teach science effectively prior to participating in science assessments).

Annex A. Process and Deliverables

Learning Metrics Task Force
Process and Deliverables

Task Force Meetings

Deliverables

Standards Working Group Draft Recommendations → Consultations August 2012 → Standards Working Group Recommendations → Task Force Decision 27-28 September 2012 New York City → Report of the Standards Working Group November 2012

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Measures Working Group Draft Recommendations → Consultations December 2012/January 2013 → Measures Working Group Recommendations → Task Force Decision 20-21 February 2013 Dubai → Report of the Measures Working Group April 2013

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Implementation Working Group Draft Recommendations → Consultations May/June 2013 → Implementation Working Group Recommendations → Task Force Decision 16-18 July 2013 Bellagio, Italy → Report of the Implementation Working Group August 2013

Background Discussion Papers (5)

Final Task Force Report September 2013 Montreal

Annex B. Meeting Agenda and Attendees

Agenda

Day 1 – September 27		
8:30 – 9:00	*Breakfast*	
9:00 – 9:45	Welcome	ADG Qian Tang, UNESCO
9:45 – 10:00	Introductions and Meeting Objectives	Geeta Rao Gupta, Co-Chair
10:00 – 10:30	Progress to Date	Hendrik van der Pol, UIS Rebecca Winthrop, CUE
10:30 – 11:00	*Break*	
11:00 – 12:30	Presentation of Proposed Competencies and Consultation Results	Seamus Hegarty, WG Chair Kate Anderson Simons, CUE Ralf St. Clair, McGill University
12:30 – 13:00	*Lunch*	
13:00 – 15:00	Discussion of Proposed Competencies	Michael Barber, Co-Chair
15:00 – 15:30	*Break*	
15:30 – 17:00	Continue Discussion of Proposed Competencies	Michael Barber, Co-Chair
Day 2 – September 28		
8:30 – 9:00	*Breakfast*	
9:00 – 10:30	Status, Day's Objectives, Continue Discussion	Geeta Rao Gupta, Co-Chair
10:30 – 11:00	*Break*	
11:00 – 12:00	Final Decision on Proposed Competencies	Geeta Rao Gupta, Co-Chair
12:00 – 12:30	*Lunch*	
12:30 – 13:30	Measures & Methods Working Group: Next Steps	Rukmini Banerji, Co-Chair Albert Motivans, UIS Kate Anderson Simons, CUE
13:30 – 14:30	Report of the Subgroup on Post-2015 Strategy	Rukmini Banerji, Co-Chair Jo Bourne, DfID
14:30 – 15:00	Report of the Subgroup on National-Level Strategy	Rukmini Banerji, Co-Chair Olav Seim, UNESCO Dhir Jhingran, Govt. of Assam Jean-Marc Bernard, GPE
15:00 – 15:15	*Break*	
15:15 – 15:45	Communications Strategy and Tools	Mari Soliván, CUE
15:45 – 16:00	Next Steps for the Task Force	Geeta Rao Gupta, Co-Chair

Attendees

Task Force Members:

Organization	Representative(s)
ActionAid International; Global Partnership for Education Board Representative for Northern Civil Society	David Archer, International Head of Education
African Union	H.E. Jean Pierre O. Ezin, Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology Beatrice Njenga, Head of Education Division
Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)	Mohamed-El Aziz Ben Achour, Director General
Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)	Dzingai Mutumbuka, Chair
Campaign for Female Education (Camfed) International; Global Partnership for Education Board Representative for Southern Civil Society	Lucy Lake, Chief Executive Officer
City of Buenos Aires, Argentina	Maria de las Mercedes Miguel, Director General of Education Planning Silvia Montoya, General Manager of Assessment and Educational Quality
Dubai Cares/United Arab Emirates	Tariq Al-Gurg, CEO Beau Crowder, Director of Programs
Education International	Rob Weil, Director of Field Programs and Educational Issues, American Federation of Teachers
Agence Française de Développement (AFD)	Jean-Claude Balmes, Senior Advisor
Global Partnership for Education	Carol Bellamy, Chair of the Board Jean-Marc Bernard, Senior Education Specialist
Government of Assam, India	Dhir Jhingran, Principal Secretary
International Education Funders Group (IEFG)	Chloe O'Gara, Co-Chair
Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI)	Bangran Ryu, Director of School Policy Research Division Chong Min Kim, Research Fellow
Ministry of Education of Kenya	George Godia, Permanent Secretary
Pearson	Michael Barber, Chief Education Advisor (Task Force Co-Chair)
Pratham	Rukmini Banerji, Director of Programs (Task Force Co-Chair)
South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)	Tareque Muhammad, Director, SAARC Secretariat
USAID	Katie Donohoe, Acting Director, Office of Education
UK Department for International Development (DfID)	Jo Bourne, Head of Education
UNDP	Shantanu Mukherjee, Team Leader (MDGs, Poverty Practice)
UNESCO	Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education Olav Seim, Director, EFA Global Partnerships Team Philippe Kridelka, Director, UNESCO Office in New York Lily Valtchanova, Liaison Officer, UNESCO Office in New York

UNICEF	Geeta Rao Gupta, Deputy Executive Director (Programmes) (Task Force Co-Chair) Susan Durston, Associate Director, Education Programs Changu Mannathoko, Senior Advisor, Education Section
Working Group on Implementation Chair	Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Founding President of Aga Khan University, Former Minister of Education of Pakistan
Working Group on Standards Chair	Seamus Hegarty, Chair, International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)
World Bank	Beth King, Director of Education Marguerite Clarke, Senior Education Specialist

Task Force Secretariat:

Organization	Representative(s)
Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution	Rebecca Winthrop, Senior Fellow and Director Xanthe Ackerman, Associate Director Kate Anderson Simons, Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant Maribel Soliván, Learning Metrics Task Force Project Manager Jenny Alexander, Center Assistant
UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)	Hendrik van der Pol, Director Albert Motivans, Head of Education Indicators and Data Analysis Section Maya Prince, Research Assistant

Observers:

Organization	Representative(s)
Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID)	Debbie Wong, Manager Education, Education Thematic Group
Centre for International Cooperation in Education Development (CICED)	Anastasia Maksimova, International Development Officer
University of Pennsylvania	Dan Wagner, UNESCO Chair in Learning and Literacy
McGill University	Ralf St. Clair, Professor, Department of Integrated Studies in Education
Pearson International	Amanda Gardiner, Head of International Affairs

Annex C. Sub-domains

Early Childhood

Defined as the years prior to primary school entry (ISCED 0; typically through age 5 or 6 but varies by country). While some of the skills in these domains emerge beginning in infancy, most are typically demonstrated in the one or two years prior to primary school.

Domain	Sub-domains
Physical well-being	• Physical health and nutrition • Health knowledge and practice • Safety knowledge and practice • Gross, fine, and perceptual motor
Social & emotional	• Self-regulation • Self-concept and self-efficacy • Empathy • Emotional awareness (knowledge, expression, and regulation) • Social relationships and behaviors • Conflict resolution • Moral values
Culture & the arts	• Creative arts • Self- and community-identity • Awareness of and respect for diversity
Literacy & communication[3]	• Receptive language • Expressive language • Vocabulary • Print awareness
Learning approaches & cognition	• Curiosity and engagement • Persistence and attention • Autonomy and initiative • Cooperation • Creativity • Reasoning and problem solving • Early critical thinking skills • Symbolic representation
Numeracy & mathematics	• Number Sense and Operations • Spatial Sense and geometry • Patterns and classification • Measurement and comparison
Science & technology	• Inquiry skills • Awareness of the natural and physical world • Technology awareness

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[3] Other sub-domains related to written language (phonological awareness, symbol knowledge, print concepts & conventions, early writing) were intentionally excluded from the literacy & communication domain for early childhood. The task force decided that given the large disparities in young children's access to print materials and varied orthographies it was not possible to expect mastery in these domains at a global level.

Primary

Primary education is defined as the first unit of formal (usually compulsory) education (ISCED 1).

Domain	Sub-Domains
Physical well-being	• Physical health and hygiene[4] • Food and nutrition • Physical activity • Sexual health
Social & emotional	• Social and community values • Civic values • Mental health
Culture & the arts	• Creative arts • Social studies • Cultural knowledge
Literacy & communication[5]	• Oral fluency • Oral comprehension • Reading fluency • Reading comprehension • Receptive vocabulary • Expressive vocabulary • Written expression/ composition
Learning approaches & cognition	• Persistence and attention • Cooperation • Autonomy • Knowledge • Comprehension • Application • Critical thinking
Numeracy & mathematics	• Number concepts and operations • Geometry and patterns • Mathematics application
Science & technology	• Scientific inquiry • Life science • Physical science • Earth science • Awareness and use of digital technology

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[4] Some of the physical well-being sub-domains may be measured in relation to life science under "science & technology." For example, knowledge about health and how diseases are transmitted may be assessed under the science domain, but the actual behaviors children demonstrate might be assessed under physical well-being. The subsequent working group on measures and methods will take these issues into account when developing their recommendations.

[5] Phonemic awareness and phonics were intentionally excluded from the framework due to the fact that they do not apply to all languages and scripts, but may be appropriate to measure in some orthographies. The task force also felt that it was important to focus on the endpoint (e.g., reading and speaking with fluency) at the global level and leave the intermediate competencies to be decided at the national level.

Post-Primary

The task force decided to limit the post-primary recommendations to the years generally covered by lower secondary (ISCED 2), intending for the recommendations together to cover comprehensive basic education. After this point, an individual's learning trajectory may become more specialized and setting learning standards and metrics for advanced study was determined to be beyond the scope of this task force.

Domain	• Sub-Domain
Physical well-being	• Health and hygiene • Sexual and reproductive health • Illness and disease prevention
Social & emotional	• Social awareness • Leadership • Civil engagement • Positive view of self and others • Resilience/"grit" • Moral and ethical values
Culture & the arts	• Creative arts • Social studies and history • Social sciences
Literacy & communication	• Speaking and listening • Writing • Reading
Learning approaches & cognition	• Collaboration • Self-direction • Learning orientation • Persistence • Problem Solving • Critical decision making • Flexibility • Creativity
Numeracy & mathematics	• Everyday calculations • Personal finance • Informed consumer • Data and statistics
Science & technology	• Scientific approaches • Environmental awareness • Digital technology • Electronic media