

# Proceedings from the Learning Metrics Task Force Forum Executive Summary

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Kigali, Rwanda

February 4-6, 2015

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Learning Metrics Task Force (LMTF) is a group of more than 45 organizations around the world working to define and build global consensus around mechanisms that measure successful learning in a holistic way. Led by the Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education (CUE) and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the LMTF's first phase was launched in July 2012 and featured a broad global research and consultation process that resulted in consensus on a global framework of learning domains—seven of them, including literacy and numeracy but going beyond those to capture equally critical but other often ignored elements of learning. Within these domains, the LMTF identified measurement areas that could be tracked globally to gauge progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The LMTF released [a set of recommendations for](#) using existing assessments of learning as well as developing innovative, new measures to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for all children and youth. Now in its second phase, LMTF 2.0 is focused on further developing learning indicators and providing support to countries in improving their assessment systems and adapting recommendations to the national context.

Beginning in January 2014, the Task Force convened LMTF 2.0 to convert these domains and areas of measurement into practical strategies and instruments that education systems (from the ministry to the classroom) and their national and international partners can use to reinforce the attainment and monitoring of learning outcomes. This network of partners is working in their individual expertise areas to achieve five key results by the end of 2015:

1. **Technical:** Partners will develop measurable indicators in each of the areas recommended for global tracking.
2. **Institutional:** Governments and other national stakeholders will implement LMTF recommendations in country-specific ways to support learning assessment and the national use of assessment data to improve learning.
3. **Political:** LMTF recommendations will inform the post-2015 global development and education agendas.
4. **Assessment as a Public Good:** Assessment tools, technical expertise, and data are more accessible to low- and middle-income countries.
5. **Knowledge Sharing:** Actors and experts in learning assessment will share knowledge and coordinate efforts.

The inclusion of LMTF recommendations by a variety of agencies at the country level is an important step toward building a sustainable network of actors and a blueprint for taking LMTF recommendations forward after the Task Force itself has ended. To set this process in motion, in July 2014 the LMTF Secretariat and its members selected fifteen countries as Learning Champions. These countries will serve as a pilot cohort using LMTF metrics, tools, and recommendations to develop solutions to their unique educational challenges. This diverse group includes: Argentina (Buenos Aires), Botswana, Canada (Ontario), Colombia (Bogotá), Ethiopia, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan, Tunisia, and Zambia.

Learning Champions are seeking to share knowledge globally in order to develop new solutions to measuring and improving learning. A diverse group of national stakeholders will be working over 18 months (July 2014 – December 2015) to adapt LMTF recommendations to their national contexts and priorities. 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.

As a means of building momentum around the Learning Champions initiative, as well as advancing progress around the five work streams under LMTF 2.0, the 15 Learning Champion countries came together with the LMTF Partner Organizations from February 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015 in Kigali, Rwanda for the sixth LMTF meeting and the first meeting of the Learning Champions. The main aim of the Kigali Forum was to set the stage for the Learning Champions to complete their plans to validate a new or refreshed set of learning assessment tools and strategies across a range of domains and areas drawn from the LMTF documents. To achieve this aim, the forum aspired to the following objectives:

1. Share the results of each Learning Champion's national mapping and planning exercises to receive feedback and to finalize for moving to implementation.
2. Exchange conceptual and practical guidance on key aspects of the strategic dimensions of LMTF with which the Learning Champions are experimenting.
3. Clarify the roles and relationships of the LMTF Secretariat and Task Force members (globally and at the country level) and specify strategies and actions to undertake after the forum to provide appropriate support to Learning Champions.
4. Identify available tools, technical assistance, and potential funding sources to support implementation of the Learning Champion plans.
5. Cultivate a sense of common mission and collaboration among the Learning Champions and identify concrete strategies and mechanisms for supporting consultation and cooperation after the forum within (and across) regions.

Over the three days, more than 70 participants from governments, civil society, teachers' organizations, international agencies, donors, and academia engaged in conversations around the state of learning and ways to ensure quality and learning are at the forefront of the post-2015 agenda, both at the global level and through policy and implementation within countries.

The Honorable Minister Professor Silas Lwakabamba of Rwanda and the Honorable Julia Gillard, Brookings Distinguished Fellow and Chair of the Global Partnership for Education set the stage for the three-day forum, highlighting the achievements in access to education over the last decade and emphasizing the need to continue the momentum to ensure all children and youth are receiving a quality education.

In order to frame the discussions, an overview of LMTF was presented that covered the progress from the first phase of the Task Force to present day and reviewed the main objectives of LMTF 2.0. Participants were also provided an overview of the Learning Champion process and the responsibilities of both Learning Champions and LMTF members. As each Learning Champions will develop a plan and implement specific actions over the course of the year under the auspices of LMTF 2.0, representatives presented on the distinctive features of their work while anticipating next steps post-Kigali and identifying support they expect to be useful in fulfilling their plans. Specifically, they gave an overview of the following: national context as it relates to assessments; motivation for being involved with LMTF; steps taken to date; main findings of the mapping exercise; key challenges; and key questions for the broader group.

Representatives presented lessons from their collective experiences in order to identify common challenges, common decisions, and any specific questions they wanted to explore more deeply throughout the rest of the forum. Common themes that came from the presentations included lack of

technical capacity for assessment in their countries, financial challenges to implementing measurement, and questions on how to prioritize the seven learning domains. Learning Champions also expressed a need for the following from the global education community: to advocate for greater transparency around dissemination and use of data; to identify ways to involve different stakeholders in discussing education and assessments; and to examine and better understand the types of assessments being used in their countries and around the globe.

Over the three days, experts in the field of assessments and learning presented on various topics, allowing participants to explore in-depth the key technical elements associated with assessing learning across the seven learning domains and seven measurement areas identified by LMTF 1.0. Two keynote speeches discussed the importance of investing in education and how specifically investing in assessments of learning should not be seen as an “extra” but rather as an integrated component of a functioning system. In order for education to receive the necessary investment, the education community needs to get better at collecting evidence and communicating results.

Through a series of panels, Task Force members and Learning Champions shared concrete experiences that further investigated key technical areas and helped Learning Champions reflect upon their own plans. Panel topics included:

1. Beyond Literacy and Numeracy – Research, tools, and networks have been created to support literacy and numeracy as vital aspects of learning. However, there still exist gaps in understanding and developing domains and indicators for the soft or non-cognitive skills. This panel was designed to help Learning Champions select appropriate domains to assess learning that are linked to the vision of their ministry and society in general and that go beyond the traditional domains of literacy and numeracy. The variety of experience on the panel provided a map of experiences and models in the Learning Champion countries and beyond that could be useful for planning and experimenting on how to design and implement measures.
2. Assessments Across the Universe – This panel was designed to help Learning Champions identify what assessments and tools exist at the global, regional, national, and sub-national levels, understand how different types of assessments can serve various purposes, and to identify partners with experience and expertise.
3. Using assessment data – This panel was organized to help Learning Champions explore and identify various ways to use data within their own context, including how to collect data, analyze, and disseminate the information collected.

Members of the Task Force also presented on how to make assessment tools, expertise, and data more publically available to low- and middle-income countries. The Learning Metrics Task Force has recently given rise to the concept of an international platform for assessing learning. The main purpose of the Assessment for Learning (A4L) platform would be to help countries to improve learning through the implementation and analysis of learning assessments and the use of their results to inform policy. Learning Champion countries and partner organizations reflected on the concept, acknowledging that developing countries stand to benefit from the platform, as it is an opportunity to network, possibly a place where different countries can showcase their tools and get feedback on them, and a way to support countries in the analysis, use, and communication of learning data.

Through panels, small group discussions, and interactive dialogues, Task Force members and Learning Champion representatives worked together, to identify resources that might be most useful in supporting the process of improving measurement of learning, with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes. Learning Champions expressed the need for a space to continue to share lessons learned and best practices, to connect with others already administering strong national assessments,

and to receive technical support on methodologies. Task Force members offered support including: technical support to countries interested in formative assessments and teacher training programs, strategies, and policies; knowledge sharing through a catalogue of learning assessments, which collects and centralizes information on learning assessments characteristics and design; and technical assistance for improving systems for monitoring learning outcomes. Participants also divided into regional groups to discuss common priorities and plans for collaboration. The regional groups included the Americas, Sub Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, and Asia.

## Key Forum Outcomes

- The Learning Champions have developed ambitious plans to implement recommendations related to the LMTF seven domains and measurement areas in their countries. The plans are based on a landscape analysis and mapping exercise of the current assessment system and input from key stakeholders in their respective countries. The plans include strategies for incorporating the seven learning domains across the curriculum, developing tools to measure social and emotional well-being, incorporating physical health and culture into assessments and teaching, rolling out tools for continuous assessment in the classroom, and collaborating with countries in the region.
- The Learning Champions received concrete, useful feedback to share with their Learning Champion colleagues upon returning home and help in revising (as appropriate) and finalizing their respective plans to move to the implementation of the recommendations as related to the LMTF seven learning domains and measurement areas in their respective countries.
- The Learning Champions identified many common themes on which they are interested to consult and in some cases, collaborate for exploration and implementation in their own countries. These themes include the effective use of assessment data, continuous assessment and teacher training, assessment across a broad spectrum of domains beyond literacy and numeracy, and technical issues related to assessment development, administration, and analysis.
- Task Force member organizations and others presented resources to support the Learning Champions, and are willing to connect individually with Learning Champions to offer tools and resources.
- The Learning Champions identified challenges including financing learning assessments. Although the Learning Champion initiative is not intended to be a platform for funding, many of the Learning Champions will need additional resources to implement their plans.
- Learning Champions and Task Force members requested assistance from the LMTF Secretariat in remaining connected, including an online collaboration space, frequent teleconferences, smaller thematic and regional forums, and an annual forum of the Learning Champions and Task Force members.
- The group acknowledged that Learning Champions were at very different stages in the implementation of the LMTF recommendations, ranging from still mainly reflecting on the idea and pondering what they can do to being well advanced in the experimentation and validation of models and engaged already in related advocacy.
- The Task Force and Learning Champions acknowledged the need to view the LC initiative truly as a “proof of concept” activity, engaging in a very small exploratory initiative, in some cases with no more than 10-15 schools and over just one or two geographies to start. This approach responds not just to the financial constraints most LCs face but also the need for buy-in from many of their ministers of education.

## Next Steps

Learning Champion representatives and Task Force members discussed concrete steps for the next 11 months. As a first step, Learning Champions need to understand the current state of learning, identify their goals for learning and assessment strategies, and develop steps to achieve their goals. Specifically they need to:

- Bringing together stakeholders and analyze the current state of learning and the work that already exists in country to improve the quality of learning.
- Prioritize the steps to be done and areas of focus based on LMTF recommendations.
- Develop an action plan.
- Get feedback on plan: at forums, but also more in-depth feedback. One idea is that regional groupings can view each other's plans.
- Implement the plan.
- Receive continuous feedback – from various levels (grassroots, other Learning Champions, Task Force members).
- Transition plan to move work forward after 2015.

The group discussed the support they would need to further develop their action plans. Learning Champion representatives mentioned the need to come up with a simple and sustainable way to evaluate and manage the large number of tools available for measuring learning. To develop and implement the action plans, countries also need technical capacity, political will, institutional knowledge, and space to share knowledge with others around the world. The group discussed the need to examine what is being done with existing assessments and if and how the seven domains are currently being used in their country. Additionally, the group felt it would be necessary to have a Learning Champions forum before the end of LMTF to share results of the Learning Champion's work.

## Conclusion

The Learning Metrics Task Force does not offer a prescription on how to conduct assessments but rather it is a forum to share knowledge and experiences. Countries should define their own priorities and look to the Task Force members and other Learning Champions as a source of support and new ideas. Representatives stressed the importance of coordination between the LMTF Secretariat and the Learning Champions as well as a space for Learning Champions to interact regularly. In addition to technical support to develop and implement tools, representatives discussed the need for financial support for not only coordinating within country but to help strengthen the research and tool development exercise. At the same time, developing plans with in-country stakeholders and based on the mapping exercise can help showcase the evidence needed to attract financial support.