

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
SOUTHEAST ASIA - PRIMARY LEARNING METRIC (SEA-PLM)
FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN GRADE 5**

A. OVERVIEW:

1. Background and Purpose

The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) serves the goal of improving quality of education through system level monitoring of learner achievements. The SEA-PLM initiative represents a regional approach and aims at supporting SEAMEO Member Countries to better measure and understand the status of learning achievement amongst the general population and for specific groups. Further, the initiative will support selected technical and analytical capacities of national examination and assessment staff to strengthen ASEAN technical collaboration on learning assessment and standards across education systems.

The initiative is the first of its kind to be based on shared ASEAN values and national curriculum frameworks and aims at providing assessment of higher level of complexity and mastery of content. It is a direct response to a need for a targeted assessment tools to measure learning outcomes for primary grades. It includes 3 key learning domains: numeracy, literacy and 21st century/global citizenship skills and will initially target grade 5 (age 10), but possibilities exist to expand the metric to include assessment tools for early primary grades.

The proposed Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric (SEA-PLM) initiative would support SEAMEO Member Countries:

- a. to better measure and understand the status of learning achievement amongst the general population and for specific groups (e.g., boys/girls; sub-nationally; public/private sectors) through the lens of equity;
- b. to use culturally appropriate metrics for formative and summative purposes that can assess 21st century skills and critical thinking
- c. to heighten the quality of education by making recommendations on areas for improving the relevance and suitability of curriculums in primary school;
- d. to assert equitable learning environments that corresponds with the quality of education and holistic learning approaches as defined by the metric;
- e. to build technical and analytical capacities of national examination and assessment staff; and
- f. to strengthen ASEAN technical collaboration on learning assessment and standards across education systems.

2. Characteristics

The SEA-PLM represents a regional approach for system level monitoring of learner achievements, and stands out this way. However, rather than assessing a single subject area, the SEA-PLM will have distinct tools and protocols which can be used as a package or separately along with existing national survey tools to also measure learning environment, school and student context.

This SEA-PLM will be informed by progress from the global Learning Metrics Task Force (LMTF) initiative and will also make reference to experiences in the region with OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA).

Likewise, the SEA-PLM will also complement and learn from regional endeavours, including SEAMEO RECSAM's development of the Southeast Asian Regional Standards for Mathematics and Science Teachers (SEARS), SEAMEO QITEP's work in Mathematics' Regional Wide Assessment (MaRWA), SEAMEO Basic Education Standard and UNICEF EAPRO's experience with East Asia Learning Achievement Study (EALAS), using Rausch Modelling with math and reading tests for primary school age children.

3. Long-term goals

The SEA-PLM addresses issues of regional common concern to ensure quality in education and that learning outcomes are achieved by all children in the early years of primary schooling. It offers regional contextualised tools to explore cross-national variations to inform and improve policy strategies and programmes for equitable quality education. Because of its customised and regional compatible composition the SEA-PLM will enable policymakers and education planners in Southeast Asian countries to selectively sample learners for targeted analysis and to assess the impact of innovations and pilots. As such, the SEA PLM is expected to inform target standards, enable harmonization across SEAMEO and potentially inform ASEAN education qualification frameworks.

Further, if proved successful, it is recognized that the assessment system could be expanded to cover lower primary grade levels in the future. This would also depend on the support and commitment from SEAMEO member countries to apply and recognise the metric as a regional target standard for learner achievements.

4. Description and progress of project implementation

Timeframe for SEA-PLM, phase I, II and III:

- Phase I: November 2012 - November 2013
- Phase II: March 2014 - December 2015
- Phase III: February 2016 – March 2017

3.1. Phase I

The initiative was presented, discussed and ultimately recommended at the 35th SEAMEO High Officials Meeting in November 2012. It was further reviewed and endorsed by the 47th SEAMEO Council of Ministers (COM) Conference in March 2013; the Council approval included the formation of advisory mechanisms, technical teams and formulation of plans for a Regional Experts Reference Group (RERG) seminar.

The first phase of the SEA-PLM consisted of a Regional Experts Reference Group (RERG) seminar and two research reviews to assess the situation within the region and established a solid understanding of the situation with all SEAMEO Member Countries. Additionally, a solid network was established to ensure the quality of SEA-PLM, consisting of regional as well as international experts.

Following the successful completion of phase I, the second phase, including the actual development and testing of the metric, was presented by UNICEF EAPRO at the 36th SEAMEO High Officials Meeting on 19 February 2014 in which full endorsement was given.

Short overview of steps taken in phase I

- The Working Group was established which includes the SEAMEO Secretariat, SEAMEO INNOTECH, UNICEF EAPRO, UNESCO (UIS, Education Policy and Reform Unit), ACER, UN ESCAP Statistic Division. The Working Group was active in finalizing the Concept Note, in preparing for the RERG Seminar and in coordinating and supporting various activities related to the SEA-PLM.
- A Regional Experts Reference Group (RERG) was established for the proposed project, comprising of the Technical Working group institutions, and other interested regional and national level experts. The Experts' Reference Group's key function is to provide technical advice on key conceptual issues related to the 3 domains – literacy, numeracy and global citizenship.
- Through the technical assistance of the Experts Reference Group, UNICEF EAPRO and SEAMEO INNOTECH has convened a Regional Experts Seminar during 24-26 September 2013. Experts in curriculum, assessment and metric development from SEAMEO Member Countries, from specialized institutions, and from development partners participated in the Regional Experts Seminar.
- Completion of a desk review of primary school curricula in South-East Asian countries (conducted by SEAMEO INNOTECH) that includes:
 - Review SEAMEO Member Countries' National Curriculum at Primary levels – to identify shared domains and unique elements within national core curricular frameworks and compare this to the Learning Metrics Task Force's (LMTF's) seven Domains of Understanding.
 - Compilation of comparable grade level curricula expectations or expected outcomes for children aged 8 and 11 years.
- Completion of a desk review of experiences with primary learning metrics – and with PISA and TIMSS – in the region (conducted by ACER). More specifically, the desk review includes:

- Mapping of what types of metrics have been introduced in SEA countries
- Regional experiences with primary learning metrics reviewed – including innovative approaches, issues, and lessons learned of relevance to the SEA-PLM initiative

3.2. Phase II

The SEA-PLM is in its initial stage of phase II. Phase II involves development and field testing of the Literacy, Numeracy and Global Citizenship domains of the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric. The development of the domain includes design of the implementation plan, develop frameworks, design tools, finalise list of competencies, conduct field testing in the participating countries, finalise tools, associated manuals, and documentations.

To support the process a number of organisational bodies will support and facilitate the process, including an Institutional Contractor who will play a key role in developing the tools and protocols for the SEA-PLM.

The international contractors supporting the process, as well as UN Agencies and regional institutions, will provide capacity development opportunities to participating countries – especially for National Teams involved in drafting and adapting the tools for Field Testing. Plans for capacity development and technical training under Phase II can be further applied by national teams to the development of national metrics, or for strengthening national assessments systems.

Working closely with appointed in-country organisation (either UNICEF Country Office or national SEAMEO Centre), UNICEF EAPRO & SEAMES (SEA-PLM Secretariat), and the Institutional Contractor, the main activities for Phase II of the SEA-PLM are as per below:

- 1. Consultative Meeting with SEAMEO Centres (June 26)**
- 2. Inauguration ceremony and first Steering Committee meeting (Oct. 20)**
- 3. First preparation meeting of Subject Task Team members**
- 4. Completion of detailed work plan by Institutional contractors (tools/ frameworks/ protocols/ capacity building plans)**
- 5. Institutional contractors' visit to country teams for orientation and training of trainers to draft tools/ frameworks/ protocols/ capacity building plans**
- 6. Finalisation of tools/ frameworks/ protocols/ capacity building plans**
- 7. Visit to country teams for quality assurances and fill in the outstanding gaps**
- 8. Field-testing in participating countries**
- 9. Revise/ refine and finalise tools/ frameworks/ protocols/ capacity building plans**
- 10. Final Regional Expert Reference Group (RERG) meeting**

In addition to the development of the draft domains and capacity building, phase II also has a strong external outreach, developing and disseminating communication materials, SEA-PLM informational portal as well as cooperating across organisations and advocating for the scaling up into phase III.

The chapters describing the roles and responsibilities on a national and regional level will provide further details on the steps and elements of phase II.

3.3. Phase III

In Phase III the final validation process will be initiated, which involves the draft tools and protocols to be translated into language of instruction corresponding to location for validation. The SEA-PLM will not require nationally representative sampling for validation, but will need heterogeneous samples within countries (e.g. urban/rural; private/government schools) and a regionally representative sampling defined by key demographic education indicators. Countries supporting the regional validation process are expected to test up to 2,000 children assessed from those grades which are primarily made up of 10 year olds. Meta-analysis of the three domains, literacy, numeracy and global citizenship will provide an insightful overview on the status of learning in SEA. The validation process will result in the SEA-PLM tools and protocols to be finalized and officially translated into language of instruction for selected SEA target populations – which will represent the first learning metric to be normed and referenced with South East Asian children.

A variety of partners has expressed interest supporting the scaling up of Phase III, including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Global Metrics Task Force, the World Bank and DFAT. Regional institutions, such as ACER, Harvard, the University of Hong Kong and the University of Melbourne, are also keen to support the development of a South East Asian Primary Learning Metric.

B. DETAILS OF PHASE II

4. The Coordination Mechanism

The below flow chart explains the basic guideline for coordination mechanism for the Southeast Asia - Primary Learning Metric Initiative. There are 6 different groups that will play a critical role to mutually develop a common set of tools and protocols for Southeast Asian (SEA) countries to measure the learning outcomes of children of primary school age. These 6 groups are:

1. Steering Committee
2. SEA-PLM Secretariat (EAPRO & SEAMES)
3. Institutional Contractor
4. In-country facilitating unit (SEAMEO Centre or UNICEF CO)
5. Regional Subject Task Teams (Numeracy, Literacy and & Global Citizenship)
6. National Teams from SEAMEO Member Countries



7. Key functions and agreements on a regional level for phase II:

The SEA-PLM has a strong regional presence and commitment reflected by the below key regional contributors to the SEA-PLM. These groups require a dedicated continuous supervision and coordination which will be the role of UNICEF EAPRO together with SEAMES. Together these will act as Secretariat and Coordinator for the SEA-PLM. The key regional contributors to the SEA-PLM are as per below:

- i. **SEAMEO Secretariat – UNICEF EAPRO-SEAMES Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)** for Coordination and hosting of Inauguration ceremony of Phase Two, with communication with participating countries and Steering Committee members; facilitation of broader SEAMEO engagement and other coordination and support roles as negotiated.
- ii. **SEAMEO INNOTECH – UNICEF EAPRO-SEAMES Innotech Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)** for continued support for RERG and Subject Area task team coordination and for other coordination and support roles as negotiated.
- iii. **Institutional Contractors** – to develop the draft frameworks, tools and protocols in close cooperation with Regional Task Teams and National Teams. The instructional contractor will provide orientation and in-country capacity building to the National Teams to be ready for the field testing process, including monitoring and quality control. The instructional contractor will ensure the field testing process for the three domains are conducted jointly in each participating country.
- iv. **In-Country Facilitation Unit** (UNICEF Country Offices or SEAMEO Centres) – to provide guidance for MOE and to provide logistical support for in-country workshops and field testing (agreement with in-country facilitation unit could be included in the existing MOA between UNICEF and SEAMES)
- v. **Regional Subject Task Teams** (literacy, numeracy and global citizenship) consisting of members from the participating countries and members of the already established Regional Expert Reference Group (RERG) from phase I. The Regional Subject Task Teams will work directly with the Institutional Contractors on developing the framework for the assigned domain and sub-domains, competencies, indicators and test items. Members are expected to join 2-3 regional task team workshops during Phase II (maximum of 3 days) and contribute on an ongoing basis to the development of the tools and protocols for the SEA-PLM

Resources for coordination and communication amongst members of the Subject Task Teams, for planning of the workshops and travel cost will be provided by the SEA-PLM Secretariat or supporting in-country organisation.

- vi. **Steering Committee – UNICEF EAPRO** to provide Secretariat support, including coordination and communication services to the Steering Committee members. The Steering Committee will act as an advisory body and establish support for the scaling up into phase 3.

The Steering Committee comprises of key members from the Working Group under phase 1: UNICEF EAPRO, UNESCO Bangkok, Policy and Reform [EPR] Unit, UNESCO Bangkok Institute of Statistics

[UIS], Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Statistic Division, SEAMEO Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology [SEAMEO INNOTECH], and the newly joined member, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization [SEAMEO] Secretariat. The Steering Committee will also include senior Ministry of Education officials (national focal points) from SEAMEO member countries and representatives from the Institutional Contractor.

Resources for coordination and communication amongst members of the Steering Committee, for planning of the meetings and travel cost will be provided by the SEA-PLM Secretariat or supporting in-country organisation. Members of the Steering Committee will meet virtually or face-to-face at a minimum every quarter to ensure quality and assure that technical standards are met.

8. Break-down of roles and responsibilities at country level for phase II:

Proposed participating countries to engage in development of tools and protocols and perform in-country field testing:

- 1. Brunei Darussalam**(in-country organisation to support and facilitate the process: SEAMEO VOCTECH)
- 2. Lao PDR** (in-country organisation to support and facilitate the process: UNICEF CO)
- 3. Malaysia** (in-country organisation to support and facilitate the process: SEAMEO RECSAM)
- 4. Philippines** (in-country organisation to support and facilitate the process: SEAMEO INNOTECH)
- 5. Thailand** (in-country organisation to support and facilitate the process: UNICEF CO/EAPRO)

Participating countries are expected to play key roles in SEA-PLM phase II as per the following:

The in-country implementation of the SEA-PLM phase II are managed by the appointed members from the MoE with strong support from an appointed in-country organisation supporting and coordinating key activities such as ongoing communication with MoE. Additionally, the development of the metric and various protocols will be led by the Institutional Contractor in close cooperation with the Regional Subject Task Teams and National Team (MoE). This process will take place through 2 regional workshops (for the Regional Subject Task Teams) and 2 in-country visits (for the National Team).

This includes:

- A. Appoint in-country organisation:** The in-country organisation is key to ensure proposer communication channels are applied, to facilitate identification of most relevant participants, to ensure ongoing communication with MOE as well as supporting and provide assistance in coordinating key activities such as travels, in-country training and field testing. This organisation should either be a SEAMEO Center or UNICEF Country Office.
- B. Appoint a focal point**
Ministry of Education will appoint one focal point who will be the main contact for all communications regarding the development of the SEA-PLM in the country.

Responsibilities:

- 1) Be the focal point for all coordination and communication with the SEA-PLM Secretariat and International Contractors who will provide capacity building at the country level
- 2) Oversee and facilitate problem-solving for the national team
- 3) Seek assistance (technical and capacity building) with the SEA-PLM Secretariat to manage obstacles and prevent problems

C. Appoint member of the Steering Committee

As an integral part of the development and quality assurance of the SEA-PLM, a Steering Committee is to be appointed to represent the participating countries and key organizations involved in the development of the metric. The appointed focal point will be automatically eligible as the member of the Steering Committee.

D. Contribute with experts to the Subject Task Teams

All SEA countries will be invited to nominate participants to serve on the Regional Subject Task teams – with expertise sought in curriculum outcomes, assessments and test item development around the specific subject areas. Countries (National Teams) involved in the field test are encouraged to contribute with experts to the Regional Subject Task Teams, just as experts from SEA governments, from academic and technical institutions as well as freelance experts are also invited to join these Regional Subject Task Teams.

E. Set up the National Team

The National Team is responsible for coordinating various field testing processes at the country level, including development of protocols, the translation of tools and planning of training for field test purposes. Members of the national team will also be represented in the Regional Task Teams.

The members of the national team must include members of the Ministry of Education or Education Institutions that are directly responsible in the design of national assessment tools. There is no limitation on the number of members in each national team. However, the Ministry of Education will need to ensure that the national team members will be able to fully receive the capacity development offered as part of the teams work requirements.

Technical and financial support for the adaptation of the tools into national languages and context – and for field testing, can be requested from UNICEF EAPRO if required.

Second Phase Key steps	2014				2015			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
SEA-PLM Concept Note and Phase 2 plans Endorsed at the SEAMEO High Officials Meeting. Members of Steering Committee identified.	X							
Steering Committee established – Terms of Reference finalized – International Experts/Institutions identified to support Phase 2. Draft Task Team members and TOR shared with Task team leaders.		X						
Establish Math Task Teams of curriculum and evaluation specialists	X							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work shop for Task Team – Work plan and TOR finalized – draft framework with sub-domains and competencies commented upon. 	X							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework with Sub-domains, Competencies and Indicators shared – discussed and commented upon virtually – and Finalized 		X						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop involving training on SOLO Taxonomy – and Preparation of Test Items 		X						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test Items and Protocols drafted – shared virtually with Task Team members for feedback 		X	X					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field Test of Items and Protocols in 2-3 countries 			X	X				
Establish Reading/Writing Task Team - curriculum and evaluation experts	X							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work shop for Task Team – Work plan and TOR finalized – draft framework with sub-domains and competencies commented upon. 	X							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework with Sub-domains, Competencies and Indicators shared – discussed and commented upon virtually – and Finalized 		X						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop involving training on SOLO Taxonomy – and Preparation of Test Items 		X						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test Items and Protocols drafted – shared virtually with Task Team members for feedback 		X	X					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field Test of Items and Protocols in 2-3 countries 			X					

Establish Global Citizenship-Civic education Task Team - curriculum and evaluation experts	X							
• Work shop for Task Team – Work plan and TOR finalized – draft framework with sub-domains and competencies commented upon.	X	X						
• Framework with Sub-domains, Competencies and Indicators shared – discussed and commented upon virtually – and Revised		X	X					
• Framework with Sub-domains, Competencies and Indicators Finalized			X	X				
• Workshop involving training on SOLO Taxonomy – and Preparation of Test Items				X	X			
• Test Items and Protocols drafted – shared virtually with Task Team members for feedback					X	X		
• Field Test of Items and Protocols in 2-3 countries						X	X	
Field Test Task Teams established at Country Level		X						
Tools and protocols translated into 3-5 languages for piloting and field testing			X	X				
Regional Expert Reference Group Seminar, in Manila, with revised Work Plan and TORs for working groups				X				
Revise and Refine the Instrument Based on Piloting and Field Test experience					X	X	X	
Prepare report on Status of Phase Two and plans for Phase 3 for SEAMEO Council of Ministers				X				

