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Paper 1 - A critical analysis of the evolution of the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric (SEA-PLM)

1 ABSTRACT

This paper describes the evolution of a major new regional assessment - the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric (SEA-PLM), led by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and UNICEF. The initiative started in 2012 with a series of consultations and technical analyses of curricula across the region provided by the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH) and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

The goal of SEA-PLM has evolved over time due to both political and technical considerations, including growing concerns over the need to link assessment to education improvement and to enhance in-country capacity. SEA-PLM aims to “contribute towards improving and redefining learning outcomes by providing a regional culturally appropriate metric and thereby towards a more equitable and meaningful education for all children in the region”. It assesses learning across three domains at Grade 5: reading,

writing, and mathematics (based on Southeast Asian values). There are also questionnaires for students, teachers, principals and parents which aim to provide contextual information to provide an indication of the factors that may be associated with enhanced student learning. Students are also asked about their interest and attitudes to global citizenship. The paper will draw on documentation from technical analyses, and committee and technical review panel reports, describing the tensions around the need for regional metric, utility at Country level and potential linkages between the regional metric and a proposed global metric for monitoring learning.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Rationale and Purpose

This paper describes the evolution of a major new regional assessment - the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric (SEA-PLM), led by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and UNICEF. It attempts to identify and analyse the key factors that affected its evolution over a three year period (2012-2015) and the critical factors which must be considered when developing a regional metric. It describes the tensions around the need for a regional metric and the need to ensure utility at the Country level and how the managers of SEA-PLM have responded to such challenges.

2.2 Methodological approach

The approach taken to this analysis is that of a participant observer working within the project. The description and analysis is also based on a critical synthesis of the different perspectives of key actors involved in the development of SEA-PLM, including the key agencies: SEAMEO, UNICEF and ACER and documentation drawn from the different forums and meetings which supported its implementation, including internal and external documentation drawn from key moments. The joint authors have also engaged in external debates which have in turn also influenced SEA-PLM. These include key global and regional meetings, related research and assessment work, and contributions to key global and regional statements on the future of education as we transition from EFA and the MDGs towards the new Sustainable Development Goals.

3 THE CURRENT STATUS OF SEA-PLM

SEA-PLM was initiated in 2012. Its key objectives were to develop a regional metric to allow for a common approach to assessing learning outcomes at age 10 or Grade 5, which Countries would over time adopt across the region, as has been the case in other regions, including Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. SEA-PLM was not born with a theory of change. Instead this has evolved over time, but there was an implicit assumption that a combination of political leadership through SEAMEO,

programmatic experience and funding through UNICEF and high quality technical work through an institutional contractor namely ACER, would ensure that the initiative would take clearer shape over time through its interaction with Member Countries. The need for a more explicit programme logic has now been recognized due in part to an enhanced focus on results-based management both globally, but also due to the perceived need to broaden partnerships as SEA-PLM prepares to roll out across the region.

If the timeframe had been narrower with less scope for adjustment the initiative may have struggled to adjust as it has. One key shift in focus has been enhanced emphasis on national capacity development and the need to establish clear linkages between the regional initiative and education improvement at all levels – regional, Country and sub-national. A vision statement for SEA-PLM was agreed in 2014 and is as follows: “SEA-PLM will contribute towards improving and redefining learning outcomes by providing a regional culturally appropriate metric and thereby towards a more equitable and meaningful education for all children across the region”. This vision is supported by three outcomes, as follows:

Outcome 1: Enhanced capacity to generate and analyse assessment data at regional, National and sub-national levels

Outcome 2: Enhanced capacity to utilise assessment data for education improvement and more equitable learning outcomes at regional, National and sub-national levels

Outcome 3: Enhanced ASEAN integration in the education sector in terms of approaches to assessment, with an initial focus on Primary Grade 5 in the domains of literacy: reading and writing, numeracy: mathematics and global citizenship.

4 FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ABOVE PROGRAMME LOGIC

4.1 Alignment with the post-2015 agenda

The initiative needed to align well with global and regional priorities at a time when these were still evolving. Two key events that impacted on the formulation of the current programme logic were the Asia and Pacific Regional Education Conference (APREC) (Bangkok, 6-8 August, 2014) and the World Education Forum (WEF) in Incheon (June 2015). APREC was particularly it provided a regional statement for post-2015 and part of the purpose of SEA-PLM is to promote ASEAN values. APREC was convened by UNESCO, but in close collaboration with UNICEF and SEAMEO. APREC culminated in the Bangkok Statement on Post-2015 for Asia and the Pacific. One of the key paragraphs that relate to the key purposes of SEA-PLM is Para 9: “Quality in education will be supported also by learning environments that are safe, healthy, gender-sensitive, inclusive and conducive to learning, mother tongue-based multilingual education, and comprehensive monitoring and quality assurance systems”. The statement

also makes frequent reference to peace, tolerance and global citizenship which is critical to SEA-PLM as global citizenship is one of its domains. However SEA-PLM is equally aligned with the World Education Forum Declaration on Education Post-2015: “We commit to quality education and to improving learning outcomes, which requires strengthening inputs, processes and measuring progress”. Both statements stress the need to develop appropriate tools and frameworks to monitor and assess learning progress.

4.2 Influence of global deliberations on what learning is and how it should be measured

The thematic Focus of SEA-PLM was also influenced by the efforts of the global Learning Metric Task Force (LMTF) to develop universally agreed domains of learning which go well beyond cognitive measurements of numeracy (mathematics) and literacy. Due to advice from ACER, the Steering Committee also agreed to break literacy into two sub-domains – reading and writing, despite issues over the relative complexity of measuring writing, especially across different linguistic groups and scripts. Other aspects of the seven domains proposed by LMTF were to be captured across the metric and more explicitly within global citizenship.

4.3 Alignment with the objectives of the key organisations

For SEA-PLM to succeed it must be fully supported and driven by its co-founders: SEAMEO and UNICEF. For SEAMEO, given its role as a primary inter-governmental organization in the region and its commitment to developing standards across the region, the political objective of ensuring regional participation has always been of paramount importance. One of the major drivers of SEA-PLM is the demand for greater convergence across the SEAMEO Member Countries in terms of standards – curriculum and assessment. This is based on both economic and cultural imperatives. Although there is significant variation in terms of culture and religious affiliation across the region, the Member Countries believe there are shared values which need to be promoted to enhance regional integration. SEAMEO is also committed to enhancing equity and inclusion and adopting a 21st Century curriculum across its Member Countries. This was agreed by the Ministers of Education of the SEAMEO Member Countries outlined in the Joint Statement on Education Agenda for Southeast Asia (2015-2035) and the seven priority areas to be pursued by SEAMEO in the next twenty years, in September 2014 in Vientiane¹. For UNICEF SEA-PLM is very much in tune with the over-arching goal in UNICEF’s strategic plan: “Improved learning outcomes and equitable and inclusive education”. A major imperative is to drive the global equity agenda and enhance learning for all children through identifying barriers to learning, including factors such as poverty, location, gender, ethnic and linguistic background, etc. The role that SACMEQ played in Southern and Eastern Africa in allowing such an analysis was part of the inspiration for UNICEF. UNICEF and SEAMEO are also working closely with ASEAN to ensure that SEA-PLM is supported in its new five-year workplan, linked to

¹ Final Report, 37th SEAMEO High Officials Meeting, 25-27 November 2014, Bangkok, p.20

ASEAN's commitment to the "Promotion of culture of peace and understanding through education in contributing to the peaceful and harmonious development of ASEAN Community".

4.4 The relationship of SEA-PLM to other global, regional and National assessments

While international assessments are widespread across the region and are the most common way of assessing students' achievements and position within a specific considered curriculum, many studies have shown that these assessments are mostly used for ranking purposes rather than actually targeting the improvement of education and learning environment within the Countries. The pressure of the assessment results on students, teachers and school administrators is tremendous. Additionally, as most international assessments are developed and driven by OECD countries, there can be a mismatch between the content of the test and what children are actually taught at school. Indeed, while national and global assessments are common in Southeast Asia, there are currently no metrics that generate regionally contextualized data and evidence on learning outcomes in the region. A field visit such as to Lao PDR also highlighted the potential to link SEA-PLM with previous national assessments focussed on Grade 5 to ensure coherence between the regional and national assessments. Recent research has often highlighted the need to shift the focus of assessments more towards school and classroom-based assessments and assessment *for* rather than *of* learning. However this does not invalidate the need to also establish good system - wide data on the evaluation of learning. The key challenge is to link these different levels of assessments to an overall learning improvement programme.

5 SCOPE OF SEA-PLM

5.1 Geographic scope of SEA-PLM

SEA-PLM targets all Member Countries of SEAMEO and member states of ASEAN. Scale is critical to regional assessments, meaning that a regional metric must involve a critical mass of Countries in the region and that these Member Countries agree to share their National results with other partners in the region. If these objectives are not reached, it will remain a multi-country assessment with more limited validity and utility for the region as a whole. It is expected that at least 6 Countries will have undergone field trials and then carried out the main surveys by the end of 2017, including: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar.

5.2 Focus in terms of age group, approach and periodicity

SEA-PLM will initially focus on Primary Grade 5 students and is curriculum referenced. This ensures that factors affecting the effectiveness of the primary curriculum can be analysed and addressed. Focusing on this age group also means that issues can be addressed before students enter secondary education. However the metric is being developed in such a way that it allows for testing at different ages in future – perhaps earlier in the primary cycle and also in lower secondary. UNICEF is also supporting the roll out of ECD Scales in East Asia and the Pacific where

the focus will be on children of pre-primary age. Another key issue yet to be determined is the timing of the survey in terms of periodicity. For such surveys to be effective in assessing the impact of interventions regular surveys are necessary.

6 MANAGING THE SEA-PLM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

6.1 Organisational Structure of SEA-PLM

The SEA-PLM Steering Committee has played a crucial role in the development and management of the initiative. The Committee is chaired by the SEAMEO Secretariat and UNICEF EAPRO and convenes on a quarterly basis and is composed of the Ministries of Education Focal Points of the six initial Countries, SEAMEO INNOTECH and Partners from the Brookings Institute, UNESCO Institute for Statistics and EPR Unit of UNESCO Bangkok, UNICEF Myanmar, and UN ESCAP Statistical Unit. Key decisions and agreements on both technical and institutional aspects of SEA-PLM are made during Steering Committee meetings, which are now usually linked to domain development and capacity development workshops to ensure high levels of attendance and technical input. The structure is designed to ensure optimal technical leadership and linkages to global developments. Similar structures at the country level are also deemed critical to the success of SEA-PLM. At this level government leadership is of course critical, but external support is also provided by UNICEF Country Office and/or SEAMEO Regional Centres.

6.2 Increasing the emphasis on local context and capacity development

Key SEA-PLM meetings included consultations leading to agreements to provide more space for capacity development of National staff on item development to ensure that SEA-PLM has a multiplier effect. Linked to that was the realisation that the survey items must be explicitly grounded in the local context and including the review of existing National assessment items so that they are meaningful and valid. This infers that local experts must be involved in the development of the test items, especially given that SEA-PLM is a curriculum referenced exercise and an exercise therefore to inform curriculum reform. The Steering Committee also decided to include a broader range of countries in such capacity development workshops even if they were not intending to trial the SEA-PLM tools, so capacity development sometimes preceded political commitment to widen buy-in to the survey and encourage upward advocacy within Countries to join at later stages.

6.3 Reinforcing the potential impact of SEA-PLM on education improvement

The SEA-PLM Steering Committee and both its coordinating agencies, as well as ACER, have developed a growing commitment in 2014 to ensure that the analysis generated by SEA-PLM will not only report on standards, but will also support the improvement of education standards for all children within the participating Member Countries, as reflected in Outcome 2 as mentioned above. The main factors for

this incremental shift were as follows: feedback from experts engaged in SEA-PLM meetings, not least the Domain Technical Review Panels that developed the items for the assessments; feedback from international meetings, including a key meeting in Paris on assessment in February 2015²; and feedback from the initial country visits by SEAMEO, UNICEF, and ACER which underlined the need to embed SEA-PLM into government processes and priorities. For SEA-PLM to expand to additional Countries and have an effect on education improvement various barriers - enabling environment and supply and demand side - will need to be addressed.

6.4 Addressing issues at the enabling environment level

In terms of the enabling environment key meetings convened by SEAMEO have brought about high level buy-in at the Ministerial level (see Key moments in the evolution of SEA-PLM below), but not as yet firm promises to engage by all Ministers. However political commitment is required not only at the highest level – but also at senior operational levels within Ministries - Directors of Planning and Statistics, etc. and across other departments – curriculum and assessment, teacher education, inspection, etc. Going beyond the Ministry of Education itself, if the surveys are to have impact on policy and practice other key stakeholders need to engage, including the Ministry of Finance, teacher unions and development partners and organisations that represent parents, such as PTAs. If the survey is going to impact at the lower levels of the system – districts and schools – these levels should also ideally be involved in the development of the assessment process from conception to the utilisation of findings. Recognition of the importance of involving teachers led to an agreement to include a specific teacher questionnaire in June 2015. The rationale was two-fold: teachers needed to be given opportunity to express their views on critical issues around pedagogy and school management as well as their interpretations of issues such as global citizenship.

6.5 Addressing supply side issues

It is less difficult to secure government officials' buy-in if there are incentives in terms of training and funds for travel. The true test of sustainability is whether an initiative continues after external funding ceases. UNICEF has provided the initial funding for SEA-PLM. SEAMEO has also provided substantial support, including in kind contributions by including SEA-PLM in the responsibilities of key staff. As the initiative gathers pace and more countries engage considerably more funding will be required. When it comes to the actual surveys, the major source of funding should come from the Member Countries themselves, but the SEA-PLM partners may have to meet a significant proportion of the initial costs of instrument development, capacity development, advocacy and piloting. In terms of supply of technical expertise, the capacity development strategy underpinning SEA-PLM must ensure that most of this capacity will be transferred to the Countries involved and the dependency on external support, primarily

² Consultation on National Assessments and Measuring Learning for the Post-2015 Education Agenda, convened by UNESCO and UNESCO Institute of Statistics in Paris, February, 2015

through the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) will reduce over time. The shift in focus of supply from external to internal supply will ultimately very much depend on demand and the prioritisation of SEA-PLM in Government sector plans and budgets.

6.6 Accommodating to Government cycles

A further critical factor is the timing of the survey in relation to other Government commitments to assessment and beyond. If the survey is conducted when key personnel are overly committed to other priorities, there is significant risk that commitment will be impaired not only in the execution of the study, but also in terms of the dissemination and utilisation of the findings. Linked to this is the need to ensure that key Ministry staff have the capacity to not only to engage in the management of the survey but to lead this process and ensure high levels of commitment and efficiency.

7 KEY MOMENTS IN THE EVOLUTION OF SEA-PLM

The following section describes key sequential steps in the evolution of SEA-PLM and notes specific moments of critical importance.

7.1 Initial development

A key initial step was the establishment of a Working Group by SEAMEO and UNICEF EAPRO in 2012 composed of regional and international stakeholders. This group agreed on a common approach to assessing learning and to establish a committed network of government officials from the Southeast Asian region and regional and international experts.³ The Regional Experts Reference Group (RERG) was then established to ensure quality and regional relevance and provide technical advice on key conceptual issues including age against grade reference and the learning outcomes to be assessed. Desk reviews were conducted on the primary education curriculum in Southeast Asia countries to identify commonalities and unique elements within curricula frameworks in light of the LMTE domains by SEAMEO INNOTECH and ACER. The findings served to further inform the RERG on the design features of SEA-PLM. A Regional Experts Seminar was convened in September 2013 in the Philippines to further define the concept and scope, develop work plans and terms of reference for developing and field testing the SEA-PLM and decide on next steps. The seminar agreed that the purpose of the SEA-PLM was to serve the goal of improving the quality of education through the system-level monitoring of learner achievement. It also agreed on learning areas to be assessed, namely Literacy, Numeracy and Global Citizenship, on the grade-basis of the assessment, reached a consensus on the paper and pencil mode of assessment, and the introduction of the SOLO Taxonomy as a framework to establish the levels of

³ This included: UNESCO (UIS, Education Policy and Reform Unit), UN ESCAP Statistic Department, UNICEF EAPRO, SEAMEO Secretariat, SEAMEO INNOTECH and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

complexity of the assessment⁴. Last but not least, the seminar recognized the quality of SEA-PLM as being uniquely ASEAN, reflecting Southeast Asian values and context.

7.2 Endorsement process

The SEA-PLM was presented for the first time during the 35th SEAMEO High Official Meeting in November 2012. This endorsement was followed by additional endorsements through other SEAMEO meetings and the Launching Ceremony of the SEA-PLM took place on 20 October 2014. This reflected the commitment of six Ministers of Education to actively engage in SEA-PLM: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. Participants registered support and noted its “relevance, importance and timeliness of the SEA-PLM as the field of education represents the most important investment one can do”⁵. In addition, Myanmar expressed interest to engage in SEA-PLM and agreed to actively participate in 2015.

As high level technical expertise is essential to the success of the SEA-PLM a request for proposals was advertised by UNICEF. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) was recruited through an open international competitive tendering process to provide this support on 21 October 2014. ACER has considerable experience of engaging with international assessments. This experience was regarded as critical in ensuring that SEA-PLM has the same level of rigour as international surveys.

7.3 Development of the SEA-PLM tools

The first meeting of SEA-PLM after the recruitment of ACER was the Regional Consultative Meeting on 4-5 November 2014 in SEAMEO Regional Centre for Education in Science and Mathematics (SEAMEO RECSAM), Penang, Malaysia with representatives from the SEAMEO Member Countries, SEAMEO Regional Centres and other partners. This was guided by the ACER experts, as well as UNICEF EAPRO and the SEAMEO Secretariat. This meeting was linked to a complementary consultation to guide the development of the Southeast Asia Basic Education Standards (SEA-BES) as this is also a SEAMEO priority. Important matters on the Programme Structure Management were discussed, including in-country facilitating units to support the national implementation of the SEA-PLM (SEAMEO Regional Centre and/or UNICEF Country Office). A Domain Technical Review Panels meeting in February 2015 involved more than fifty (50) regional and international participants who were experts in assessment and curriculum. The meeting improved the draft framework of the SEA-PLM prepared by ACER but also uncovered key issues that had been underestimated such as the in-country technical, financial and

⁴ Regional Experts Reference Group (RERG) Seminar Report, SEAMEO INNOTECH, 24-26 September 2013, Quezon City, pp. 61-70.

⁵ Report on the Launching Ceremony of the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), SEAMEO Secretariat, UNICEF EAPRO, 20 October 2014, Bangkok, p.1.

human resources expectations related to the implementation of the SEA-PLM and highlighted potential sources of disagreement about the content of the assessment between the SEAMEO Member Countries, such as the definition of the Global Citizenship (GC) domain and how this domain should be measured. As a consequence the 3rd SEA-PLM Steering Committee Meeting decided that the GC domain should remain but focus on foundations of global citizenship given the age group concerned and that GC would be assessed through a questionnaire and “it was agreed to delimit the measurement of the GC component to socio-affective outcomes”⁶.

7.4 Country visits

Country-visits to the Countries that would undertake the first round of the field-trial took place in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Brunei Darussalam between February and May 2015. Initially these visits were seen as primarily technical, but adjustments were made to ensure that senior UNICEF and SEAMEO officials were also engaged to ensure deeper buy-in at the Country level. Meetings with High Officials were key to enhancing understanding and ownership. As described by ACER, ‘the SEA-PLM has been designed from the bottom-up in close collaboration with the three countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia and Lao PDR) that will conduct the field-testing. Further, it aims at being as inclusive as possible and is representative of all Countries in the region’⁷. Further, the country visits aimed at shedding light on national priorities in education in each of the field-trial countries and in ensuring that SEA-PLM actually addresses the Countries’ areas of improvements and complements the already existing assessment structures. As highlighted by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport from Cambodia, ‘the Ministry is facing many challenges including teacher quality, pedagogy and infrastructure. As such, the Minister is strongly motivated to strengthen the quality of student assessments which provide the necessary data for intervention’⁸. It was important that SEA-PLM became seen as ‘not only a product but also a capacity building process opportunity’⁹ by the participating Countries.

8 LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD

8.1 Lessons learned

It became increasingly clear that SEA-PLM would need to be fashioned through in-depth exchanges with Member Countries and the Country offices concern. Advocacy at the Country level by the SEAMEO Secretariat has been critical in this regard. UNICEF has also adopted a very flexible approach in redesigning the project and including more activities to ensure greater fit with national curricula and enhanced capacity at the Country level, while ACER has responded flexibly to contractual amendments

⁶ Minutes of the 3rd SEA-PLM Steering Committee Meeting, 13 February 2015, Bangkok, p. 8.

⁷ Report of the country visit to Lao PDR, 17-19 March 2015, SEAMEO Secretariat, UNICEF EAPRO, ACER, p.2.

⁸ Report of the country visit to Cambodia, 16-18 February 2015, SEAMEO Secretariat, UNICEF EAPRO, ACER, p.1.

⁹ Report of the country visit to Lao PDR, *Ibid*, p.6.

to accommodate such changes. Key changes included the addition of another regional workshop on item development, and the incorporation of contextual questionnaires for students, teachers, head-teachers and parents, which are more equity focused and include questions on children with disabilities for example. Additionally, a regional workshop specifically to train the National Technical Teams in the technical aspects of assessment including standardised field operations, sampling, test administration and data management. These changes are intended to help ensure a deeper and more disaggregated analysis of factors affecting learning outcomes to inform policy and practice in the future.

Another key component that has been inserted into the SEA-PLM design is the communication strategy. This is critical. UNICEF has learned from experience with the Out of School Initiative globally and in East Asia and the Pacific that Countries are often reluctant to release studies that reflect negatively on the status of the Country. The SEA-PLM response to this constraint has been to build in a communication strategy from the outset so that the Government can position itself as an agent for change, willing to generate and act on data that exposes the realities of challenges in the Country. This work is on-going.

8.2 The way forward – risks assumptions and potential responses

The next step is two rounds of field-trials in in 2015 and 2016. Regional and in-country capacity-building workshops will also be held and a Regional Expert Meeting will further discuss the findings and learnings from the field trial experiences. The main survey will be conducted in 2017¹⁰. Several key challenges are foreseen in terms of moving from the trialling to the main survey in 2017. The first is ensuring that sufficient Countries are engaged to constitute a critical mass and provide credibility for SEA-PLM as a regional metric. The intention is that at least 6 of the 11 SEAMEO Member Countries should be involved. Another challenge will be funding the scale up of SEA-PLM so that it supports the main survey and reaches more Countries. This will involve seeking new donor partners, as well as most crucially persuading Governments to invest at least some of their own resources in conducting the survey and in following up on the findings. If the partners fail to secure such commitments, the SEA-PLM, like many other international, regional and national surveys is unlikely to fulfil its promise “to contribute towards improving and redefining learning outcomes by providing a regional culturally appropriate metric and thereby towards a more equitable and meaningful education for all children across the region”.

The longer term objective is indeed to mainstream the survey into Government plans and budgets and ensure their commitment to periodic surveys as has been the case with SACMEQ and TIMSS and PISA in some Countries. Another challenge will be to decide where SEA-PLM should be housed in future as UNICEF takes more of an advisory role. It is probable that one of the SEAMEO Regional Centres will be selected.

¹⁰ Minutes from the 4th SEA-PLM Steering Committee Meeting, 4 June 2015, Bangkok, p.8.

8.3 Concluding thoughts

As has been discussed above many variables need to be accommodated when designing and implementing a regional assessment initiative. They can be summarised as follows:

1. Strong political leadership promoted through high level advocacy in regional fora and through Country visits to ensure buy-in at the Ministerial levels.
2. Strong leadership commitment by the agencies co-ordinating the initiative in terms of investment of the time and effort required for smooth and flexible logistical planning.
3. Clear understandings of the intentions and scope of the survey at the national level from all key stakeholders backed by a comprehensive communication strategy and transparent information sharing at all levels – global, regional and National.
4. Capacity development to ensure effective Government leadership of the study at the Country level.
5. Accommodation to Government priorities and planning cycles so that the survey is prioritised.
6. Clear coherent coordination mechanisms at regional, Country and sub-national levels with Government leadership but with some initial external technical support.
7. High quality and predictable technical leadership as provided by ACER to date and with high level technical support provided through review panels etc. to ensure that the survey meets international standards.
8. Commitment to utilisation of the data by all key stakeholders and a plan for doing so from the outset.
9. Adequate and predictable funding with Governments committed to including funding for the main survey in their sector budgets if the initiative is to be sustained over time.

The SEA-PLM partners are committed to addressing such challenges and ensuring that SEA-PLM will be part of the assessment landscape from 2017. At the same time we very much value feedback from the global community on how we can enhance our efforts to construct a regional metric for Southeast Asia.