



What is IRSA Project?

International Research of Student Achievements Project is aimed at accelerating of the achievement of the **SDG 4th (targets 4.1 and 4.C)** and **SDG 17th (targets 17.9.1. and 17.6.1)** through:

- (i) promoting use of innovative methodologies for education quality assessment
- (ii) educators' capacity building
- (iii) gaining research data for policymaking
- (iv) accelerating regional cooperation.

The core of the IRSA Project is a longitude research supported by training, knowledge exchange, contributions to public good and wide results dissemination. The current participants include **Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia.**

IRSA Participants

The idea of the project derived from activities in education assessment and capacity building under the READ Program. CICED serves as a supervising entity and implementing agency. Cross-country partnership has been discussed at an annual CICED conference in November 2016. By that time the in-depth and thorough partner consultation process at a country level had already started. Partner countries, such as Armenia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan have impressed an opinion that it would benefit the project if cross-country comparison would be avoided and more emphasis would be given to providing in-depth data for country's needs. This point was considered, and appropriate changes were made to approach and methodology section.

National testing centers and institutes of education serve as focal points for project teams. The focal points, being national assessment bodies, ensure the linkage between project outcomes and policy makers and come with country-specific products (e.g. seminars or reports available in national language) for the purpose of informing policy makers on recommendations produced within the project. Involving national assessment bodies is expected to deliver recommendations for teachers training institutes as the institutional connections between those kinds of institutions is traditionally high in CIS/post-Soviet countries. Country team consist of both prominent education community members and young promising specialists with wide representation of women and youth.

IRSA Implementation

During the project partner coordination is maintained via country teams that serve as main implementers of in-country activities. Country team is responsible for identifying any additional stakeholders that would emerge during the project implementation and ensure proper alignment of the project with any other related activities that happen in the country. Project is open for participation to other



relevant education agencies, to all specialists working in education assessment, specialists from teacher training institutions, actual school administration and teachers.

Representatives of donor community, international and local education NGOs, think-tanks, consultancies and scholars get invited for large regional meetings dedicated to IRSA results. The IRSA design and intermediate outcomes were already presented at a few international events such as CIES annual conference, EAE-Europe annual conferences, to global expert groups such as Building Evidence in Education and World Bank seminars.

IRSA Activities

IRSA's key project activities encompass three domains: (i) training and "learning by doing", (ii) research conducting and (iii) results dissemination.

Training and "learning by doing" activities aim at developing educators' capacity in beneficiary countries including young specialists and specialists without previous work experience. Main approach to this task is a "learning by doing" approach when country teams take part in (i) localization of an assessment tool and studying tool methodologies, (ii) data analysis (excluding secondary statistical analysis) and (iii) project results dissemination. Other types of capacity building like trainings and study-tours on modern trends in assessment, application and data use for policymaking and test development provided for the country teams, application. Consultations and assistance from an international team of experts is available throughout the project. Specialists from country teams also encouraged to publish papers on the research results and present them at different international events.

The core activity for the IRSA Project is **a longitudinal cross-country research**. Country teams participate in the field work collecting data through testing students and surveying students and teachers. It is necessary to introduce new effective instruments to measure learning outcomes for low-income countries to keep them on track with SDG agenda. Since some countries do not have assessment methodologies, practical knowledge in conjunction with provided innovative instruments allow to perform an effective assessment of the quality of education in these countries. Regular assessment, rather than single-slice sampling, will make it possible to track trends in the level of achievements and quality of education over time. Monitoring student progress also gives teachers the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching and assess the impact of the instructional strategies they use.

Results dissemination strategy includes joint seminars (in each of the participating countries with participation of the governmental representatives to insure encoring research results in educational policy) and workshops, cost-effective online information sharing via websites and webinars, and support for the publication of the findings by national teams. International meetings are organized annually to share the project implementation and intermediate outcomes. Annual meetings are also intended for better project



coordination. Regular reviews of the project from international experts is also an important type of feedback. Every country team produces annual report on the intermediate results of the project.

Capacity-Building

Capacity building activities is one of the most important domains of the project. During the project many specialists receive training and improve their expertise. Specialists working in the project include those ones without any research experience and expert who is well known in this sphere. It is a unique opportunity for knowledge sharing and learning from one another acquiring new skills in research and assessment conducting. Project also include traditional approaches to capacity building such as trainings and seminars. Overall the most common capacity building activities within the IRSA project include:

- Short-term distant training programs in educational assessment and educational management broadcasted through distant learning platform. The distant learning platform allows interactive communication between teachers of the course and course participants in a real time. It reproduces the atmosphere of the lecture room and has all its' features. Teacher of the course assess the homework and successful participants receive state approved certificates.
- “Learning by doing”. This type of activity is developed for research participants that have none or very small work experience. They gain actual experience by working in the project under the supervision of the more experience colleagues of supervisor. This a great opportunity for knowledge sharing and mastering some skills in research data collection and data analysis.
- Seminars and workshops for teachers and curricula specialists on introduction of innovative methodologies for classroom assessment.
- National seminars for specialists on performing of educational research activities, data processing and collection.
- Study-tours to leading organizations to learn about educational assessment and SDG 4 implementation.
- Annual regional seminars for knowledge and experience sharing with involvement of educational authorities responsible for educational reforming in the country.

Exchange of knowledge and methodology

Technology Transfer is arranged through joint activities on localization of assessment methodologies and tools for the use in different languages and cultural context. Every localized methodology is given to the country and owned by the country. Technology for the conducting of the large scale research was developed specially for this project and then it was discussed with every participating country to avoid “one doesn't fit all” situation. Participating countries have localized this methodology in different languages and for the specific country context. All methodologies that were provided to the countries during the project are available for access for the interested academia, public and policymakers.