WG/GAML/8

VIRTUAL REGISTER:

REVIEW OF DATA RECEIVED TO DATE

Introduction

UNESCO UIS and the World Bank are launching a new global Initiative to increase the availability of regular, reliable and comparable learning data to support the attainment of SDG 4.1 and 4.1.1 by 2030.

The Initiative aims to ensure that by 2030 all countries can produce regular and comparable data on learning outcomes through more transparent, coordinated, and targeted support to learning assessments.

This will enable policy makers to develop evidence-based policies to improve teaching and learning, enable accurate reporting on SDG 4.1.1 (with an initial focus on SDG 4.1.1 (a) and (b)), and help benchmark learning poverty indicators. More generally, this will help to achieve the broader goal of SDG 4.1, which will be extremely challenging without good data on learning outcomes.

The Initiative will work towards these objectives using two main modalities:

1. **Launching a Virtual Register** to record, coordinate and 'broker' existing donor support to learning assessments and the creation of learning data ("learning assessments"). This will help to identify existing donor funding in this area, identify and fill gaps in support across countries, enhance donor coordination, and improve the quantity and quality of learning data globally

2. **Raising new funding** to develop global public goods related to learning assessment, and to help cover financing gaps in country-level support to fix broader global learning measurement gaps

The Virtual Register was soft-launched in February 2020. A simple template was designed) and distributed to selected donors to record spending on learning assessments since 2010. To-date, four donors (DFID, World Bank, GPE and GAC) have participated in the Virtual Register and returned data on previous and anticipated support to learning assessments in developing countries.

Assumptions used to conduct analyses

The data returned by donors has been consolidated and analyzed to develop initial insights on funding to learning assessments. Several assumptions were used to do this analysis:

- **Donors:** The World Bank's return contained entries for several other donors and partnerships:

  o   World Bank and GPE partnership
  o   European Union
  o   UNICEF
  o   REACH
  o   Russian Federation
  o   UNICEF, FDA and CONFEMEN consortium
  o   Irish Aid (via UNICEF)
  o   World Bank, GPE, AFD and UNICEF pooled fund

  These additional donors and partnerships have been grouped together as one 'other' category. As such, the analysis is based on 5 donors - World Bank, DFID, GPE, Canada and 'other'. The only time when this 'other' category is disaggregated is when reviewing the number of different
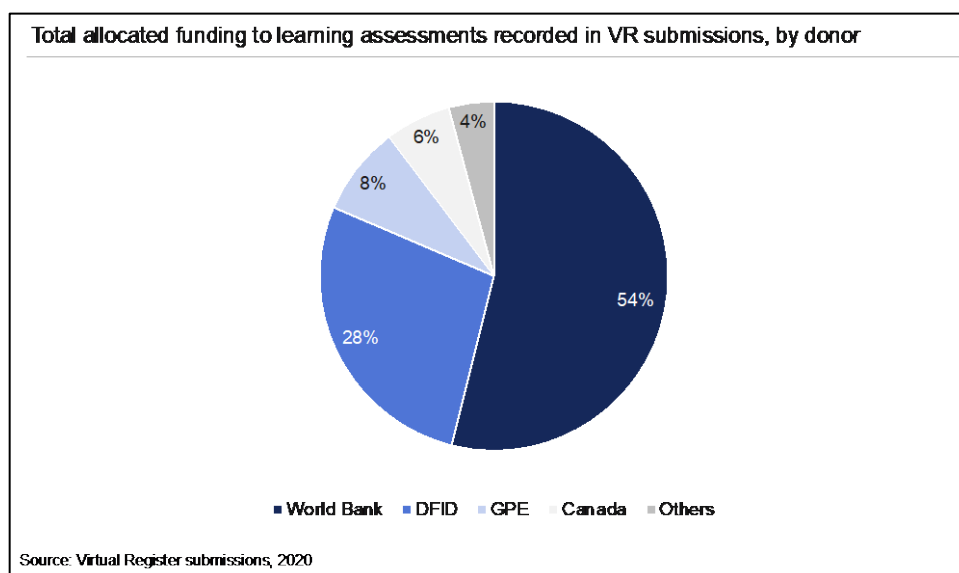
donors for each recipient country.

- **Estimated budgets:** In several instances total education program budgets were submitted, instead of the actual proportion of program funding allocated to learning assessments. In these cases, estimated spending to learning assessments was calculated through each project's logical framework document. For example, DFID allocated $127m (£93m) to Rwanda between April 2015 and September 2023 in overall education aid. According to the Rwanda Project logical framework, 10% of this was allocated to measuring learning outcomes. As such, a 10% multiplier was applied to the total figure, to get an estimated amount of $12.7 million allocated to learning assessments. This approach provides a robust estimate of spending on learning assessment.

- **Commitments and disbursements:** It is not possible to differentiate commitments or disbursements in the funding data received by donors. As such, all funding is considered as 'allocable funding' to learning assessments.

- **Timespan:** The data returned by donors covers a 16-year period between January 2011 to August 2027 (although the timespan differs for each donor). Given the lack of information on disbursements timelines, it is not possible to calculate accurate annual expenditures.

- **Currencies:** Where US dollars were not submitted (e.g. DFID), values were converted to USD based on current exchange rates.

- **Scope:** All analysis pertains to financial data contained in completed Virtual Register templates submitted by participating donors. Financial data was assigned to several categories in the template: SDG 4.1.1. (national learning assessments, cross-national learning assessments, sub-national learning assessments, citizen-led assessments, or other learning assessments); EMIS (GPE and WB only); Household Surveys (WB only); and "other sources of data" (WB only). Due to inconsistencies in data entry, these are all aggregated as one "allocable financing to learning assessments" category.

This analysis is based on just data contained in the completed Virtual Register templates by the four participating donors. As such, the analysis shows just a partial view of donor support to learning assessments, and insights in this brief note should not be considered as a complete or exhaustive overview of donor support to learning assessments.
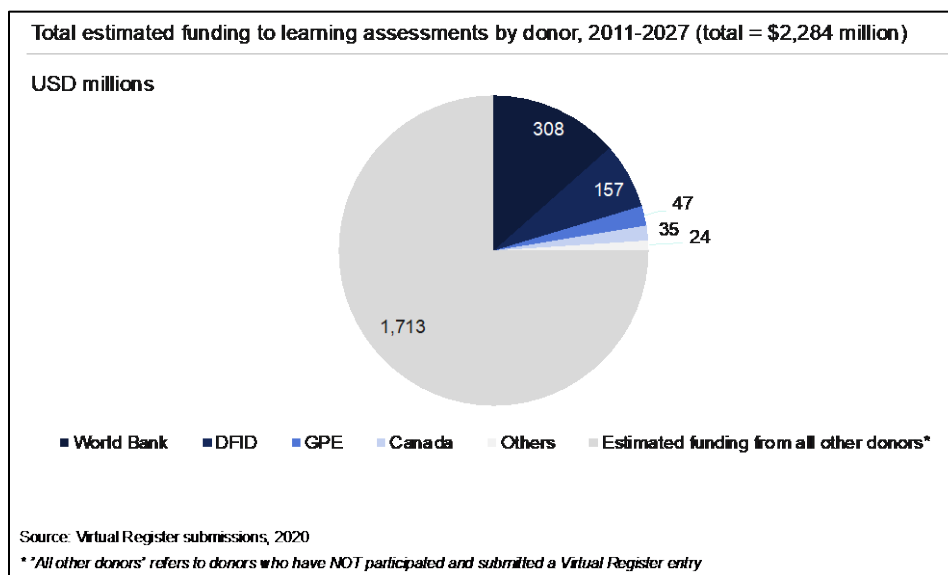

Analysis of data received to-date

Overall, $571 million was allocated to learning assessments between January 2011 and August 2027 in the completed Virtual Register templates submitted by the four currently participating donors. Of this, World Bank accounted for $308 million (54% of the total), with DFID accounting for $157 million (28%). GPE and Canada accounted for $47 million (8%) and $35 million (6%) respectively, with 'other' donors accounting for the remaining 24 million (4%). This is shown below:

Donor	USD, millions	% total
World Bank	308	54%
DFID	157	28%
GPE	47	8%
Canada	35	6%
Others	24	4%
Total	571	100%

Total allocated funding to learning assessments recorded in VR submissions, by donor

4%
6%
8%
54%
28%

■ World Bank ■ DFID ■ GPE ■ Canada ■ Others

Source: Virtual Register submissions, 2020

According to OECD CRS and GPE data, the four donors that completed Virtual Register templates accounted for approximately 25% of all education aid to primary and secondary education between 2011 and 2018[1] (excluding imputed fees and scholarships). Using this as a proxy, it is possible to estimate total allocable funding to support learning assessments across all donors between 2011 and 2027 as $2,300 million (i.e. four times the amount recorded by World Bank, DFID, GPE and Canada), with estimated funding from all other donors amounting to around $1,700 million during this period.

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1 Source: OECD CRS, 2020; GPE financial statements, 2011-2018. The '25%' figure relates to the four donors' (WB, DFID, GPE and Canada) share of total donor financing to basic and secondary education, excluding imputed aid and including GPE annual disbursements
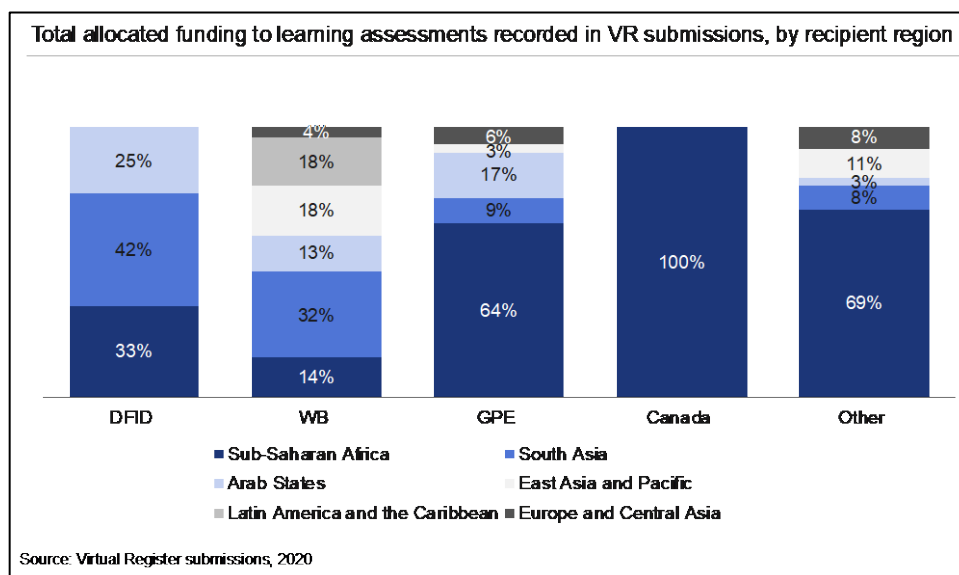
Total estimated funding to learning assessments by donor, 2011-2027 (total = $2,284 million)

USD millions

308

157

47

35 24

1,713

■ World Bank ■ DFID ■ GPE ■ Canada ■ Others ■ Estimated funding from all other donors*

Source: Virtual Register submissions, 2020

* 'All other donors' refers to donors who have NOT participated and submitted a Virtual Register entry

No data on disbursement timelines is included from the four donors that submitted Virtual Register data. However, $571 million of allocable funding to learning assessments was detailed by the four participating donors between 2011 and 2027, and so it can be assumed that annual allocable funding during this period amounts to around $35 million each year on average.

When this assumption is extended to the estimated $2,300 million in total funding to learning assessments between 2011 and 2027, an estimate of $140 million can therefore be assumed as the total yearly funding allocated to learning assessments across all donors.

Of total funding recorded by donors in returned Virtual Register templates, the largest share of funding was allocated to Sub-Saharan African and South Asian countries, which accounted for 31% and 30% of total funding respectively. Regional allocation varies across donors, however, as can be seen below:

	DFID	WB	GPE	Canada	Other	Total
Sub-Saharan Africa	33%	14%	64%	100%	69%	31%
South Asia	42%	32%	9%	0%	8%	30%
Arab States	25%	13%	17%	0%	3%	16%
East Asia and Pacific	0%	18%	3%	0%	11%	11%
Latin America and the Caribbean	0%	18%	0%	0%	0%	10%
Europe and Central Asia	0%	4%	6%	0%	8%	3%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

NB: Assignment of regions has been done based on most recent OECD classifications

Total allocated funding to learning assessments recorded in VR submissions, by recipient region
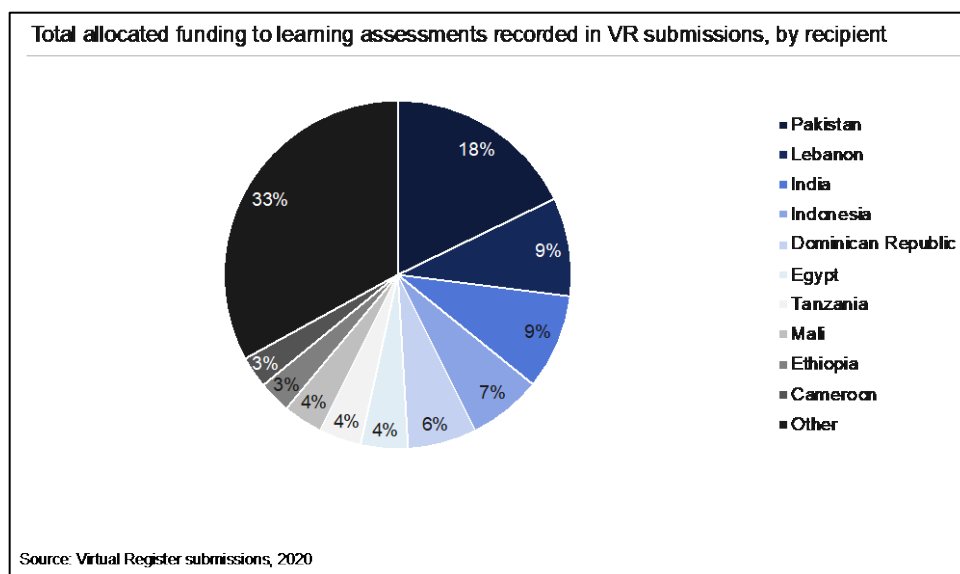
Source: Virtual Register submissions, 2020

While donor support to learning assessments is generally focused on Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, there are large portions of these regions that do not receive donor support, as can be seen in the graphic below. While most of these gaps in support are likely filled by other donors yet to participate in and submit data as part of the Virtual Register, this will not be known until such donors participate.
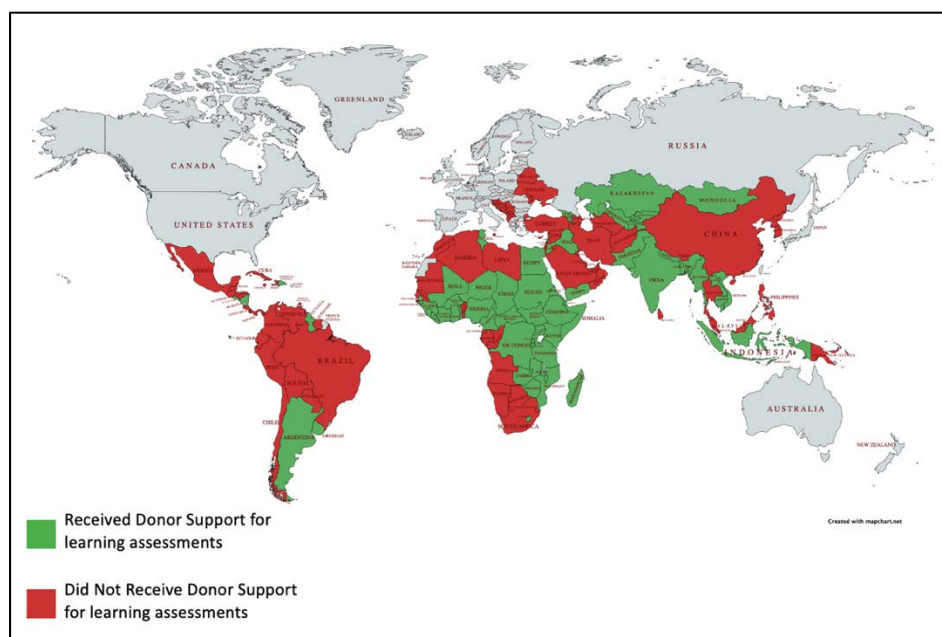
Funding recorded in the returned Virtual Register templates by the four participating donors went to 58 developing countries. Of these, the largest recipient was Pakistan, accounting for $102 million in estimated[2] funding to learning assessments, and 18% of the total. Overall, the top 10 recipients account for two thirds ($382 million) of total spending recorded to date.

Country	USD, millions	% total
Pakistan	102	18%
Lebanon	52	9%
India	50	9%
Indonesia	39	7%
Dominican Republic	37	6%
Egypt	25	4%
Tanzania	23	4%
Mali	21	4%
Ethiopia	17	3%
Cameroon	17	3%
Other	188	33%
Total	571	100%

2 DFID funding to countries is estimated, as it has been calculated based on relevant 'impact weightings' detailed in respective project log-frames

Total allocated funding to learning assessments recorded in VR submissions, by recipient

Legend: Pakistan, Lebanon, India, Indonesia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Tanzania, Mali, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Other

Pie values: 18%, 9%, 9%, 7%, 6%, 4%, 4%, 4%, 3%, 3%, 33%

Source: Virtual Register submissions, 2020

The number of recipients supported by donors during this period varies. Between January 2011 to August 2027, World Bank allocated support to 33 countries, GPE to 24, DFID to 9, and Canada to 3 countries. Other donors or partnerships accounted for an additional 8 countries.

According to data detailed in returned Virtual Register templates, average funding per-recipient was $10 million. However, this varies across donors. For example, on average DFID allocated $17 million per-recipient, Canada $12 million, World Bank $9 million, and GPE $2 million.

The range of donor funding per-recipient also differs. For example, DFID has a range of $55m (between $66 million allocated to Pakistan, and $0.7 million to Ghana), while GPE had a range of nearly $8 million (from $8 million allocated to Uganda, and $40,000 allocated to The Gambia).

Donor	# Countries supported	Average allocation per-country	Highest amount recorded (USD, millions)	Lowest amount recorded (USD, millions)
World Bank	33	9	50 (India)	0.2 (Sierra Leone)
DFID[3]	9	17	66 (Pakistan - Punjab & KPK)	0.7 (Ghana)
GPE	24	2	8 (Uganda)	0.05 (The Gambia)
Canada	3	12	21 (Mali)	Niger (5)
Others	12	2	12 (Ghana)	0.08 (Mozambique)
Total	**58[4]**	**10[5]**	**-**	**-**

Donor support is generally concentrated in a small number of countries. For example, 33% (3) of the 9 DFID-supported countries accounted for 76% of total DFID funding to learning assessments, while 25% (9) of the 33 countries supported by World Bank accounted for 80% of total World Bank funding to learning assessments (all of whom received $10 million or more). Similarly, 3 of the 24 countries supported by GPE accounted for 50% of total spending.

While the average amount received by a given country was $10 million, 38% (22) of the 58 countries supported across donors received $2 million or less. Of these countries, a third are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Countries that received less than $2 million are visualized on the graphic below[6]:

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3 DFID funding to countries is estimated, as it has been calculated based on relevant 'impact weightings' detailed in respective project log-frames

4 The total number of countries does not equate to the sum of individual countries supported by each donor (81), due to overlaps in support

5 This is the average of total support recorded across all Virtual Register submissions, not the average of 'average support per donor'

6 NB – graphic does not include small island nations who received less than $1m. A full list is included in the appendix
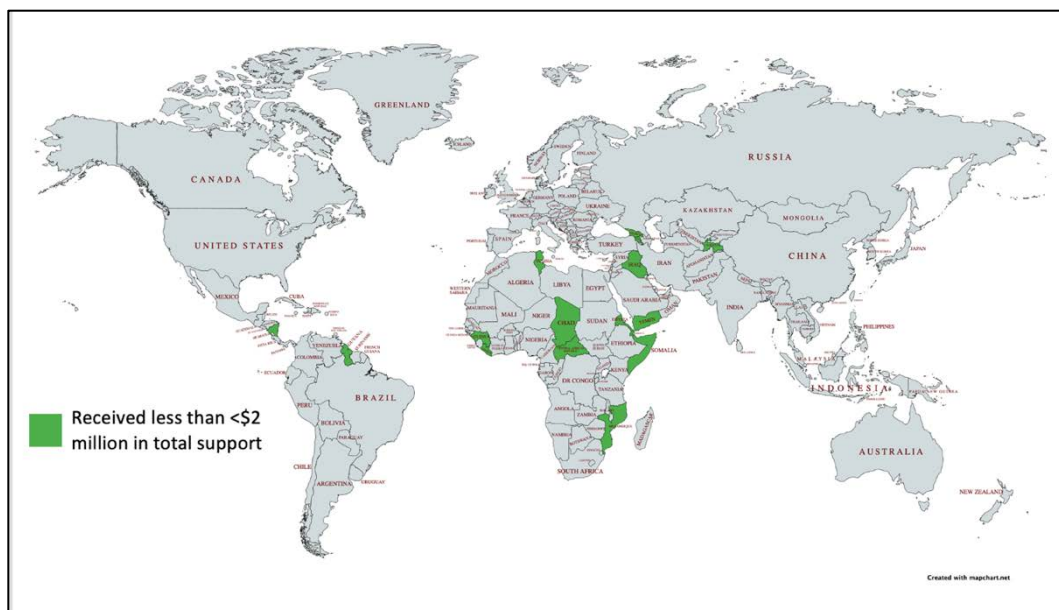
There are 16 countries in which more than one donor provided support between 2011 and 2027. However, in only 13 countries (Pakistan, Nepal, Burundi, Lebanon, Cameroon, Rwanda, Ghana, Zambia, Cote d'Ivoire, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Guinea Bissau, and Timor Leste) did more than one donor provide $1 million or more in support, while in only 6 countries did more than one donor provide $2 million or more in support (Pakistan, Nepal, Lebanon, Cameroon, Zambia, Uzbekistan).

Recommendations

Receiving completed Virtual Register submissions from four leading education donors is extremely encouraging, and a good sign that donors are willing to participate in the Virtual Register initiative more broadly, in order to improve the transparency and coordination of support to learning assessment.

In order to expand the impact of the Virtual Register, recommendations are advised in three areas:

1. **Increase participation in the Virtual Register:** The four donors that have already submitted data are leading donors in education and assessments. However, many other key donors have not yet signed up. As such, it is not yet possible accurately assess the extent of donor funding to learning assessments, or to identify any gaps in this support. Participation should also extend to private foundations as well as bilateral country donors, since such foundations are playing an increasingly important role in this area.

2. **Develop an online data entry portal:** While Xls templates are quick to develop and easy to complete, this is not a sustainable approach to track and record funding to learning assessments

in the longer-term. A simple online portal should be developed for donors to quickly, easily and accurately submit data on funding in this area in a standardized way, enabling automated consolidation and analysis (e.g. via a Tableau interface). This would be managed by UNESCO UIS as a new global public good. This will also help to 'professionalize' the Virtual Register, giving it greater credibility. In the short term, the existing Xls template should be enhanced to standardize data-entry and enable more granular analyses for new donors and private foundations interested in participating immediately.

Leverage the findings to counter the impact of COVID-19: The impact of COVID-19 has been felt most sharply in developing countries, with education severely disrupted for many children in these countries. It will therefore be essential to ensure that such countries participate in regular, reliable and comparable learning assessments, to assess the impact of COVID-19 on learnings, and prioritize donor support to mitigate this impact and ensure continued progress towards SDG4. As such, Virtual Register data should be leveraged with the broader global education community to ensure that all countries receive the support they need to hold regular and high-quality assessments, and that any gaps in support to learning assessments are promptly fi