

The Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML)

TCG Working Group on Learning Assessments

CONCEPT NOTE

6 – 7 December 2023

1. Introduction

Established by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2016, the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) is the working group of the Technical Cooperation Group on SDG 4 Indicators (TCG) that focuses on learning data and aims at improving learning outcomes by supporting national strategies for learning assessments, and developing internationally-comparable indicators and methodological tools to measure progress towards key targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). Through a highly collaborative approach, GAML brings together a broad range of stakeholders, including experts and decisionmakers involved in national and cross-national learning assessment initiatives, as well as donors and civil society organizations advocating for education.

The focus of the 2023 GAML meeting (6 – 7 December) will be on SDG indicator 4.1.1, the global indicator measuring learning outcomes. The meeting will present the main challenges associated with producing reliable and internationally comparable learning outcomes data, while highlighting the significant developments made and lessons learned, and setting an agenda for the way forward.

2. Global SDG indicator 4.1.1: challenges and developments

Global indicator 4.1.1 refers to the ‘proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex’. The indicator assesses learning progression from early ages until the end of lower secondary education, using globally agreed benchmarks as a reference of what knowledge and skills should be acquired at a specific point, and in learning areas universally accepted as important. Some of the major inputs required to frame the indicator are:

- Contents or constructs to be measured in each domain (reading and mathematics)
- Percentage of coverage of a given assessment to be comparable to other assessments
- Procedures needed to ensure quality of data collected is adequate for reporting
- Minimum proficiency level for each domain to allow estimation of percentage of students achieving minimum level
- Linking procedures allowing conversion of all assessments in the same scale.

Achieving consistency in global reporting is very complex and consequently, it has always faced significant challenges. More than half of countries have not participated in a cross-national assessment, making it hard to benchmark their progress towards SDG 4.1.1: they need to understand how such assessments can be used to support the national agenda, report on the SDGs, and help their ministries make management decisions. Countries need better guidance and more information about what tools are available for global reporting to make an informed choice and select the most suitable for them. They need to know what the costs associated with their participation in various assessments are and have the needed resources and technical capacities.

To assist countries in the production of reliable and internationally comparable learning outcomes data, there were many developments related to the conceptual, methodological, and reporting frameworks since 2016. Please refer to the annex to view the related timeline including the main developments. Despite all these significant efforts to make available a menu of options for countries to choose from to produce learning outcomes data, the availability of such data remains low.

3. Objectives of the Meeting

With the recent mid-term review of the SDGs and upcoming review of the SDG framework in 2025, it is important to reflect on the developments and pending challenges related to SDG indicator 4.1.1, take stock of the lessons learned and discuss the best way forward. The tenth GAML meeting will focus on the following:

- Update on the progress made and the pending challenges.
- Discuss developments in cross-national assessments and new tools.
- Share progress in statistical and non-statistical linking strategies (calibrated modules, Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels or AMPLs, Policy Linking...)
- Discuss challenges associated with measuring foundational learning (existing tools and upgrades, ASER, EGRA/EGMA, UNICEF FLM...)

The meeting is expected to produce a summary of the status of development of SDG 4.1.1 reporting tools, explore associated costs and benefits, and agree on options suitable for reporting as well as pending issues and their prioritization (e.g., harmonization of context questionnaires).

4. Meeting Modalities

The GAML meeting will be an in-person meeting at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 6 and 7 December 2023. The possibility of joining the meeting remotely will be offered and the link can be shared with interested participants. The meeting will be held in English, with simultaneous translation to French and Spanish.

The agenda and all related documents will be uploaded shortly on this [page](#) on the TCG website. The registration link is: <https://forms.gle/ojuKlt3EvkWSTwGy8>

Annex: Developments in learning outcomes data since 2016

