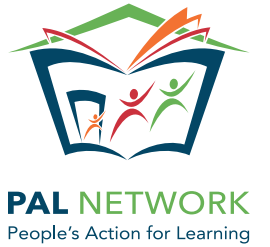# PAL NETWORK
People's Action for Learning

ICAN & ICARe

PAL Network's Common Assessment for Foundational Learning

Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) | Paris | December 6-7 2023

About the PAL Network

- The People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network is a south-south partnership of 17 members working across Africa, Asia and America to promote children's foundational learning.

- PAL member organisations are the pioneers and experts of Citizen-Led Assessment (CLAs).

- The Network has since developed common assessments: ICAN, PAL-ELANA, and now ICAN and ICARe.

Nigeria

Nepal

Tanzania

Mexico

Pakistan

- ❑ We assess basic skills, including reading and simple arithmetic
- ❑ We assess children in their homes
- ❑ We assess children orally, one-on-one
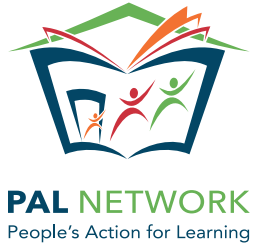
PAL Network 'common' assessments

ICAN → PAL-ELANA — Early Language & Literacy and Numeracy Assessment → ICAN & ICARe

ICAN & ICARe: PAL Network's Common Assessment for Foundational Learning

International Common Assessment of Reading and Learning (ICARe)

Overview

ICAN & ICARe seeks to track SDG 4.1.1(a) across 2024, 2027, and 2029, providing a reliable, actionable, and comparative dataset of children's learning.
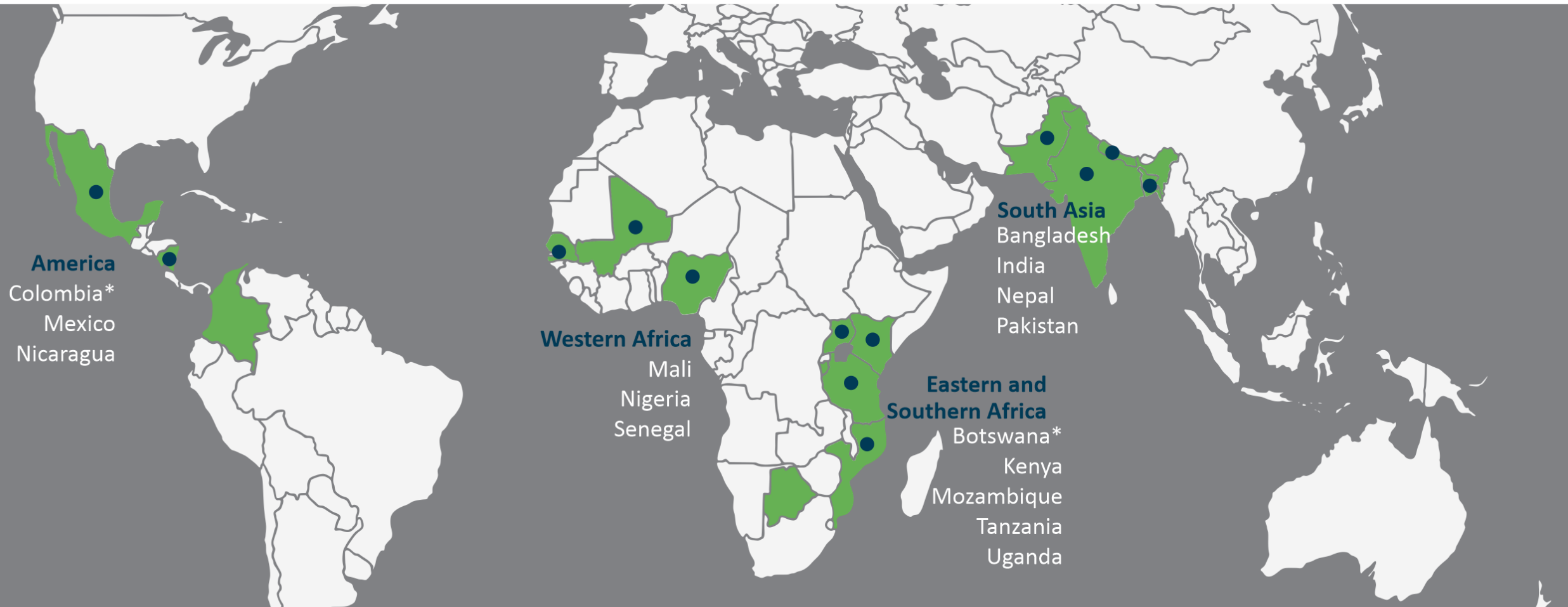
Key features:

- **Reaching ~99,000 children** (5 to 16 year old) across 200+ enumeration areas in 15 countries in each round.

- Informing global, regional, and national policy discussions to **advocate for better education policies**, gender equity, and evidence-based global goals post-pandemic

- Incorporating **pilots of inclusive modules** for social and emotional learning (SEL), education in emergencies (EiE), and children with special needs (sign language and braille).

Sampling

America
Colombia*
Mexico
Nicaragua

Western Africa
Mali
Nigeria
Senegal

South Asia
Bangladesh
India
Nepal
Pakistan

Eastern and Southern Africa
Botswana*
Kenya
Mozambique
Tanzania
Uganda

Past rounds of Common Assessments

*PAL Members initiating Common Assessments

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Alignment to the SDG 4.1.1a Reporting Criteria

Criterion 1:
Is the assessment sufficiently aligned with the MPL/GPF?

MPL Grade 2-3: Students read aloud and comprehend many single written words, particularly familiar ones, and extract explicit information from sentences. They make simple inferences when longer texts are read aloud to them.

ICARe has different item types to assess diverse languages while maintaining common items

International Items
- PICID: Picture Identification
- PICNA: Picture Naming
- LC: Listening comprehension
- SC: Sentence completion
- RC: Reading comprehension

Country-Specific Items
- SI: Symbol identification
- SS: Sound-symbol mapping
- WD: Word decoding

Domains/subdomains	# of items
Listening Comprehension	**6**
Retrieval	5
Inferential	1
Reading Comprehension	**10**
Retrieval	8
Inferential	2
Decoding (Oral Reading Accuracy)	**10**
Symbol identification	5
Word decoding	5
Test length	**26**

Criterion 2: Have items been reviewed qualitatively and quantitatively to determine suitability for inclusion?

- The items went through 3 rounds of revisions based on data collected through field trials.

- For each field trial, data was analysed using the IRT method to identify item functioning and item DIF at country level

- Further investigation was done between the technical team and country PMTs to understand why some items may not have performed the way they should have.

- Items were removed based on the following criteria:

  - significant country-level DIF,

  - compromised administration due to technical glitches within the delivery application,

  - and insufficient data to support robust inferential statistics.

Criterion 3: Is the sample of learners that took the assessment representative of the population?

- PAL Network assessments are household-based, and representative at the enumeration area level, meaning that all children (both in- and out-of-school) are sampled in a representative manner.

- PAL Network assessments so far have been nationally representative 'estimates', but ICARe is designed as a strictly nationally representative household-based assessment of children 5-16 years old.

ICARe sampling features:

- Two-stage probability proportionate to population size (PPPS) sampling, whereby enumeration areas are first randomly sampled from specified strata, and households are then randomly sampled from enumeration areas.

- Data will provide precision at the age, gender, urban/rural characterization, and in- vs out-of-school level. Additionally, we will have disaggregated data by socioeconomic status and government/private school.

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Criterion 4: Is there evidence that the assessment was administered in a standardized way?

PAL Network has been conducting common assessments since 2019, building the capacity of its member organisations to administer assessments in a standardized way for comparable data.

Standardized administration procedures of PAL Network common assessments include:

- Centrally-produced instruction manual, that is adopted as-is by all implementing countries and translated verbatim

- Centrally-designed training procedures, with a centralized Tier 1 training at regional levels and subsequent Tier 2 trainings in countries.

- Centrally-designed and enforced quality assurance processes, which include quizzes on knowledge of assessment procedures, monitoring during the survey by both the Secretariat and country teams, and desk and field rechecks of data by both the Secretariat and country teams.

- Centrally-managed data, including data collection using SurveyCTO which automatically shares data with the Secretariat, cleaning and analysis at the Secretariat level.

Criterion 5:
Are the outcomes of the assessment sufficiently reliable?

- **ICARe is a new assessment that is currently in the development phase.** The item bank builds on the PAL Network's extensive common assessment item bank which is currently being refined under the PAL-ELANA assessment.

- From next month, ICARe will begin its pre-assessment year whereby alignment to MPL/GPF will be reviewed, and field trials undertaken to (i) refine the tool, (ii) adapt the tool to new contexts, (iii) compute reliability estimates by age, and (iv) refine the standardized assessment administration protocols used by the Network.

- Following this, benchmarking will be done separately for listening comprehension, decoding, and reading comprehension to report against the MPL/GPF.

ICAN & ICARe: PAL Network's Common Assessment for Foundational Learning

Clarifications and Next Steps

Clarifications and Recommendations

Clarifications needed

- **Sampling:** Is consistency needed in the sampling framework across countries? If so, in what ways?

Recommendations

- **Advisory group:** PAL Network, USAID, and UNICEF would like to collectively recommend constituting a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to support assessment design decisions for reporting on SDG 4.1.1a.

- **Language of assessment:** Assessments should be administered in the language of instruction, even for household-based studies.

- **Test confidentiality:** Provide more clarity on what constitutes test confidentiality (i.e. different items but same item format being released publicly).

Next steps for both ICARe/ICAN

Under ICARe's pre-assessment year (2024) whereby alignment to MPL/GPF will be reviewed, the assessment refined through field trials, and benchmarking of proficiency estimates, we will:

- Document assessment development and adaptation processes, and the final assessment frameworks

- Finalise sampling frameworks and languages of assessment

- Commence field trials to refine the assessment and compute reliability estimates by age group

- Refining standardized test administration procedures

- Set benchmark for proficiency estimates

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