

RESHAPING THE ECOSYSTEM FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

WEBINAR SERIES ON LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

CONCEPT NOTE

I. BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an impetus to use or develop high quality assessment programmes for reporting. The language of the SDGs requires that “Global monitoring should be based, to the greatest possible extent, on comparable and standardized national data...”. SDG global indicator [4.1.1](#), ‘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’, is focused on examining learning progression from foundational through early secondary years using globally accepted benchmarks in learning areas universally accepted as critical.

Despite these and other UIS efforts to make available [supportive tools](#), such as information about assessment costs, fitness for purpose, calibrated modules such as Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPL), and a growing bank of items that countries can use, the availability of learning outcomes data remains low. There are financial and technical reasons but also, importantly, the functioning of the [learning assessment market](#) remains inefficient and inequitable: there is insufficient clarity of alternatives available to countries and the donors that often support them which prevents informed choice. It is unlikely that those who participate in the assessment industry will, collectively or as individual actors, solve what are essentially ecosystem problems of coordination and public good delivery.

This makes it difficult to make progress: if one does not know where one is in learning outcomes, it is hard to decide how much effort to make. Since learning levels are now known to be predictive of economic growth, and, much more importantly, human well-being and citizenship skills, the lack of measurement is not just an education problem of concern to measurement institutions such as the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, but is,



instead, a serious development issue. Countries themselves might not perceive the need to measure as much as global actors do. This suggests that subsidizing such measurement as both a local merit good and a global public good, makes sense. While countries may not always realize the value of measurement, some do, and UIS constantly receives requests for help and coordination, and other multilateral and bilateral agencies and philanthropies receive such requests.

But assessments continue to be under-funded. More importantly, what funding there is, is often chaotic in many respects as some assessments may not have been particularly well coordinated with other assessments. But they do exist and there is continued and growing interest in reporting. Funding may be tied to a particular assessment X that a country must use, if it is to get funding from donor Y. This deprives countries of choice or drives them into sub-optimal choices if assessment X was not the ideal one for the country. In the past few years, there have been several blogs detailing these issues written by UIS staff, available [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). The issues with the market include lack of price transparency, high barriers to entry due to economies of scale, un-pairing of the basic assessment as a good, from a more sustained capacity development *service*.

UIS has proposed many solutions to these issues, and some of them are on track to being implemented or at least scoped out. For instance, UIS has worked to create item banks, or mini-assessments that can be used by countries or incorporated into their assessments, via the AMPL effort, described [here](#). In addition, UIS is planning a “buyer’s guide” that would help countries choose an assessment.

A more recent development is that UIS has been asked, by the community of partners interested in the measurement of SDG indicator 4.1.1.a, to develop criteria for accepting a set of newer, non-traditional assessments as being reportable for international comparability purposes. UIS is preparing a guide or checklist of criteria for the eligibility of assessments in particular countries. Importantly, this could include national assessments.

Once the document [Criteria for Eligibility](#) is finalized, countries and/or agencies will start to submit assessments to be included for reporting on SDG 4.1.1, since in many cases they already have taken place, are planned, are already funded, etc.

It is in this context that the UIS is planning to organize a series of webinars ‘**Reshaping the ecosystem for learning assessments**’ in September 2024.

II. Objectives of the webinars

The main objective of the webinars on **‘Reshaping the ecosystem for learning assessments’** is to describe the progress made in measuring learning and the ongoing efforts to solve the issues identified which still hamper countries from reporting on SDG indicator 4.1.1 (see **Annex 1**). In particular, the webinars will tackle two important aspects - as described below - reflecting the way forward towards offering countries products that will allow them to measure learning:

- The first webinar will mainly focus on institutional innovations, including an overview of the overall architecture of the assessments ecosystem and the rationale for its improvement. It will focus on a proposed virtual fund and a vetting mechanism for assessments as ecosystem improvements that can make it easier for countries to measure and report especially on SDG 4.1.1.
- The second webinar will introduce a proposed buyer's guide aimed at promoting countries' free and informed choice of learning assessments. The guide provides countries with information on options and costs to help them – as well as the assisting donors - decide what assessment they need.

The webinars will provide an opportunity to discuss the issues at hand with a wide audience, to listen to their points of view and take note of their feedback and input.

III. Background documents

Background documents to the webinars on **‘Reshaping the ecosystem for learning assessments’** are uploaded on the dedicated [web page](#).

- [UIS tools](#) to reshape the learning assessments ecosystem
- [Draft concept note](#) or set of discussion points on a virtual fund and vetting function for learning assessments
- [Draft concept note](#) for a Learning Assessment Buyer's Guide
- [Eligibility criteria document](#) for SDG 4.1.1

IV. Webinar modalities

The webinars on **‘Reshaping the ecosystem for learning assessments’** will be held virtually via Zoom as per the following schedule:

Webinar	Topics	Date	Time
Webinar 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments ecosystem Virtual fund Vetting mechanism 	10 September 2024	9:00 am – 10:30 am (Montreal time) *
Webinar 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buyer's guide 	16 September 2024	9:00 am – 10:30 am (Montreal time) *

* *Kindly check the correct hour in your time zone at <https://bit.ly/3DgxrXD>*

The webinars will be in English with interpretation to French and Spanish.

For more information, please visit the [page dedicated to these webinars](#).

Annex 1. Issues, actions and products related to assessing and reporting on learning

