

WG/GAML11/CN/1

Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML)

Education Data and Statistics Commission Working Group on Learning Assessments

CONCEPT NOTE

Paris, 25 - 26 February 2025

Introduction

Established by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2016, the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) is the working group of the '[Education Data and Statistics Commission](#)' (EDS Commission, formerly the Technical Cooperation Group on SDG 4 indicators or 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 11th GAML meeting (25 - 26 February 2025) focuses on SDG indicator 4.1.1, the global indicator measuring learning outcomes, and more particularly, its sub-component SDG 4.1.1a, learning in early grades. The meeting will update participants on the recent progress, including inter alia: the work of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG)¹ established by the UIS to finalize the [eligibility criteria](#) for learning assessments; the development of an assessments blueprint; the work on defining benchmarks for precursor skills in early grades; the proposal for a [virtual fund](#) and a vetting mechanism for assessments; and the [buyer's guide](#) aimed at promoting countries' free and informed choice of learning assessments.

In addition to discussing SDG indicator 4.1.1, the GAML meeting will also follow up on the [decision](#) of the latest EDS Commission consultation by which it was agreed to replace global indicator 4.6.1 on functional literacy and numeracy by thematic indicator 4.6.2 on youth and adult literacy rates to report on Target 4.6², a decision that was also agreed during the 15th IAEG-SDG meeting in Oslo (21-23 October) which focused on the [2025 Comprehensive Review Process](#).

A note on SDG indicator 4.1.1

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

¹ The TAG met twice, in March and May 2024, and intense virtual consultations have been held to support its work over the first five months of the year. Further information on the TAG is available on this [page](#).

² For more information, please visit the [meeting's page](#) and read the [report](#).

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.

Since 2016, substantial advancements have been made to help countries produce reliable and internationally comparable learning outcomes data, focusing on conceptual, methodological, and reporting frameworks. Despite all these significant efforts, the availability of learning outcomes data remains low, especially for learning in early grades, which was the main reason behind the downgrade by the [IAEG-SDGs](#) of SDG 4.1.1a from Tier I to Tier II in [October 2023](#).

One of the responses to this demotion was the UIS' establishment of a Technical Advisory Group (TAG)³ for SDG 4.1.1a in early 2024 whose main task was to finalize the [eligibility criteria](#) that assessments would need to meet to be able to report on SDG indicator 4.1.1 (Annex 1). This will be discussed during the meeting along with other related significant topics, including among others: definition of benchmark levels for precursor skills which are important signposts as children move towards learning to read and eventually reading to learn; proposal of a virtual fund and vetting mechanism for assessments as ecosystem improvements that can make it easier for countries to measure and report especially on learning; proposal of a buyer's guide providing countries with information on options and costs of learning assessments to help them – as well as the assisting donors - decide what assessment they need (Annex 2).

A note on SDG Target 4.6 and its indicators

SDG Target 4.6 calls to ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy by the year 2030. The global indicator for this target is [SDG Indicator 4.6.1](#), which measures the proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex. However, this global indicator has a coverage below 15% and there is no foreseeable increase.

This is the reason behind the UIS' proposal to replace the global indicator with the thematic indicator of the target, [SDG indicator 4.6.2](#), which measures youth and adult literacy rates. As a thematic indicator⁴, 4.6.2 has substantially higher data availability, and an established data collection process. Indicator 4.6.2 is calculated from census and sample survey data. When multiple sources are available, they may provide conflicting information due to the possible presence of sampling and non-sampling errors in survey data, as well as different definitions and age groups covered by each source. Based on a decision of the Education Data and Statistics Conference in February 2024, the methodology will be developed further to model literacy rate estimates, building on lessons from similar approach used to estimation out-of-school and completion rates. The model would ensure that the above challenges will be addressed to provide up-to-date and more robust data series for regional and global aggregates. Current Indicator 4.6.1 that assess functional literacy and numeracy for youth and adults could take part of the SDG4 thematic framework.

³ The TAG met twice, in March and May 2024, and intense virtual consultations have been held to support its work over the first five months of the year. Further information on the TAG is available on this [page](#).

⁴ The SDG 4 global and thematic indicators provide greater alignment between education targets and national priorities and contexts, while maintaining cross-national comparability. Global indicators address the key outcome at stake with each target while thematic indicators act as reference indicators that can be used for monitoring progress at regional, national, and sub-national levels. The thematic framework also allows a more comprehensive and nuanced view related to potential levers for policy change by including different policy-based indicators. For more information, check out the [World Education Statistics 2024](#) and the full [list](#) of global and thematic indicators.

Objectives and expected outcomes of the GAML meeting

The 11th GAML meeting aims at presenting the developments and discussing pending challenges related to SDG indicator 4.1.1, with a special focus on SDG 4.1.1a.

The meeting will also discuss the measurement of literacy through SDG indicators 4.6.1 and 4.6.2.

It is expected that the meeting will lead to the final approval of the eligibility criteria and take forward the discussions related to the virtual fund, vetting mechanism and buyers' guide.

Meeting Modalities

The GAML meeting will be an in-person meeting in Paris on 25 and 26 February 2025. 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 Arabic, French and Spanish. More information will be added at the EDSC meetings [page](#) (in development).

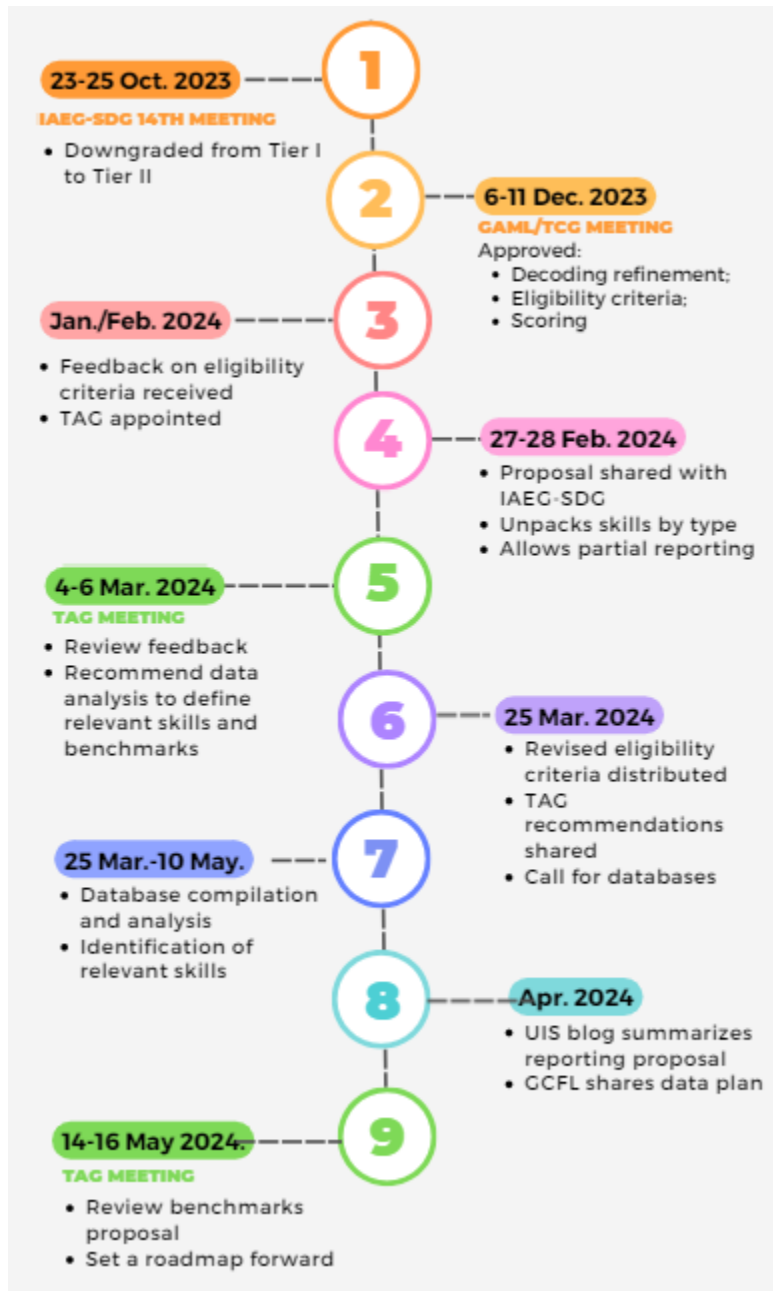
Participants who will be making presentations are urged to make every possible effort to travel. They will be identified and discussed prior to the year-end as per the set of topics listed in the next section.

Tentative list of topics to be discussed

This list is by no means final. UIS is open to suggestions.

1. Update on the '[GAML/TCG criteria for use of an assessment to report on SDG 4.1.1](#)' ('Eligibility Criteria' for short)
 - a. Progress report on an overall technical explanation of the approach to reporting, in support of the 'Eligibility Criteria'
 - b. Progress report on creating exemplars of robust mechanisms for linking to the MPL, as part of Criterion 6 in the 'Eligibility Criteria'
 - c. Update on a simple tool to enable countries or agencies to present an assessment for vetting as reportable for 4.1.1 (with special emphasis on 4.1.1a)
2. Update on a proposed [virtual fund](#) to coordinate and fund learning assessments, and vetting mechanism that would apply the eligibility criteria
3. Update on the creation of a '[buyer's guide](#)' for learning assessments to assist countries in choosing the right assessment for their purpose
4. Update on workstream around 'precursor skills' to reading and mathematics in SDG 4.1.1.a
 - a. Update on the process of creating benchmarks using cross-national data
 - b. Update on / from countries that have set benchmarks using their own processes
 - c. Update on calibration of difficulty of both reading and mathematics items for precursor skills
5. Progress reports from agencies improving their tools to report, with special regard to SDG 4.1.1a
6. Update on an effort to create model-based estimates of learning outcomes that synthesize results of multiple assessments and render them in a common metric
7. Update on Indicator 4.6.2

Annex 1: Timeline depicting the developments with SDG 4.1.1a and the work of the TAG



Annex 2: Issues, actions and products related to the measurement of learning

