



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO  
INSTITUTE  
FOR  
STATISTICS

# Expanding Coverage for Global Indicator 4.1

June 2017



## Background Information

1. In the global data architecture, the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) is a technical entity aiming to frame the learning/skills related indicators. Most of them are global and some of them in Tier III. These indicators are 4.1; 4.2.1; 4.4.2; 4.6; 4.7.4 and 4.7.5.
2. GAML needs to produce the methodological development is pertaining; the global reporting scale; the associated definition of benchmarks and the metadata by the end of December 2018.
3. In case the tasks are impossible, then a work plan to finalize the indicator. Articulation between different bodies implies that:
  - i. GAML produces technical solutions that are submitted to the Technical Cooperation Group on Indicators for SDG4 – Education 2030 (TCG) for endorsement.
  - ii. The TCG endorses GAML recommendations for the global Indicators that, once endorsed, should go to the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) that is the ultimate technical body at the global level. The Education 2030 Steering Committee (SC) has only to take note of the recommendations, thus mirroring the articulation between the technical and political bodies at the UN level where the UNSC has the last word on technical issues.
  - iii. For thematic Indicators, the TCG endorses GAML recommendations and acts as the ultimate technical body at the thematic level. Once endorsed, decisions should go to the Education 2030 SC for final endorsement.
4. The UIS does not only have mandate by creation in the UN aegis but ratified by the Education 2030 Framework for Action. The UIS holds both Secretariats – for GAML and TCG, co-chairs the TCG together with UNESCO Education 2030 Support and Coordination division (Ed/ESC) and the Review, Monitoring and Reporting (RMR) Working Group in the Education 2030 SC. Together with the Global Monitoring Report (GEMR).
5. According to the UIS background paper on the state of reporting for SDG4 in the baseline year 2017, only one third of countries in the world report on indicator 4.1 on a cross national assessment (though not yet on a comparable global scale. Only 23% of low-income countries and 49% of middle-income countries participated in cross-national learning assessment.
6. The GAML has been working for the last 18 months proposing solutions for:
  - i. Global reporting through the UIS reporting scales, benchmarking
  - ii. Standards, guidelines and tools to assess data robustness



- iii. Expansion on data coverage (as recorded in the UIS Global Learning Metric (GLM) concept note drafted in November 2015 and revised in March 2016).
7. As part of the work, various meetings occurred in the last several months. The most recent GAML meeting held in May 2017 in Mexico City concluded, among other points, that:
  - i. The use of a Global Reporting scale serving to map national, regional and international assessments, in each respective target, against a common scale.
  - ii. The development work toward reporting scale and validation process is pending for review. The development of good practices for learning assessment manual has been endorsed to proceed to development.
  - iii. A global measurement strategy proposal from the Secretariat with inputs from GAML. Consultation that implies as first step a meeting at the end of June with implementers of cross national assessment in the attempt to agree upon (ii) linking assessments and reporting metrics; (iii) how to expand the number of Learning Assessment worldwide.
8. The TCG meeting held in June in Montreal summary highlighted:
  - i. Endorse the progress and work-plan as presented by the TCG and GAML
  - ii. Invite to progress on the discussion on benchmarks
  - iii. Strengthen the invitation to members states and development partners to engage in the different working groups
  - iv. Consider data on learning as a critical bottleneck for achieving the 2030 Agenda.
9. Finally, the Review, Monitoring and reporting (RMR) Working Group is proposing to the Education 2030 SC in its point 1. Recommendations:
  - To invite the TCG to produce a report by the end of 2017 on the status of development and availability of SDG4 indicators, including: a) plans for, together with an assessment of resources needed to fund the finalization of the conceptual, methodological and operational work on the global indicators by December 2018; and b) potential revisions to current global indicators. This report should include as well the identification of potential additional indicators to for the major review of indicators in 2019.



## Executive summary

This paper offers a strategy to increase the number of countries participating in learning assessments and reporting learning assessment data for SDG4. A compact implies

- No new tests, but rather linking current assessments to a common scale in the short terms conceptually (true the UIS reporting s scale) but without a true, rigorous, psychometric linking
- No substitution or crowding out of national learning assessments
- **Urgent decision-making as the next wave of International assessments will occur in 2018 and 2019**
- Funding for countries to help pay fees for regional and international learning assessment
- Funding for countries to cover learning assessment administration costs
- Funding for countries that need technical assistance
- Funding for international agencies to support capacity development

The UIS is proposing a coordination of actions of different actors in order to increase the coverage of countries participating in cross national assessment and offers to play a brokerage role with some development partner or a group of them to facilitate the process.



## The vision (why):

The need for more, better, cost-effective, and timely statistical information on learning assessments is widely recognized within the sector. Partner governments and development organizations both need these data for decision-making to improve learning and eventually the quality of life. Data allow measuring progress of development endeavours, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but most importantly is the kids and learning.

It is currently impossible to gain a global perspective of what children are learning because:

- Not all regions (and countries within regions) conduct assessments as shown in **Table 1**.
- There is no single measure at any education level (i.e. the last grade of primary and lower secondary vary across countries). National assessments, if exist, are given to different grades. Not all countries finish the same ISCED level at the same grade
- Quality and scope of national assessments vary. Without accepted global standards, national assessments are developed or implemented based on their own standards.
- Assessments follow different methodological frameworks that are difficult to link and may not yield comparable results. As national assessments assess different content and use different methodology and model to report on scores, it may be hard to link across assessments.

This information gap jeopardises the global monitoring of the new global education goal and targets that needs:

- Learning assessment, preferably participation in cross national assessments
- A global reporting scale
- Well-defined outcomes and related benchmarks (for instance, the definition of the minimum level or contents)
- Repeated measurement
- Capacity development for action at the country level in different phases
- Resources to achieve the goals.



**Table 1. Number of number of low- and middle-income countries participating in cross-national learning assessments by type or assessment**

Grad/level of education	Assessment	Number of countries	
		Low-income	Middle-income
Grade 2/3	PASEC (2014)	7	3
	TERCE (2013)	0	13
End of primary	PASEC (2014)	7	3
	PIRLS (2011)	0	12
	SACMEQ III	0	8
	TERCE (2013)	0	13
	TIMSS (2015)	0	10
End of lower secondary	PISA (2015)	0	22
	TIMSS (2015)	0	13

Source: UIS

## The approach (what): value proposition

Participation in cross-national assessment is the first steps to sound national learning assessment strategies and global comparability. This initiative solves some of the problems presented above, however, does not promise or pretend to solve all of them.

The set of products offered are:

### **Countries**

- Access to assessment in a sustainable and cost affordable way by increasing participation in regional assessment at reduced fees
- Access to assessment in a sustainable and cost affordable way by increasing participation in international assessments
- Access to technical assistance reducing transaction costs and in integrated and coordinated way
- Access to comparability through either linked assessments or global reporting scale

### **Guiding principles**

- No new test but linking current assessments to a common scale in the short terms conceptually (true the UIS reporting s scale) but without a true, rigorous, psychometric linking



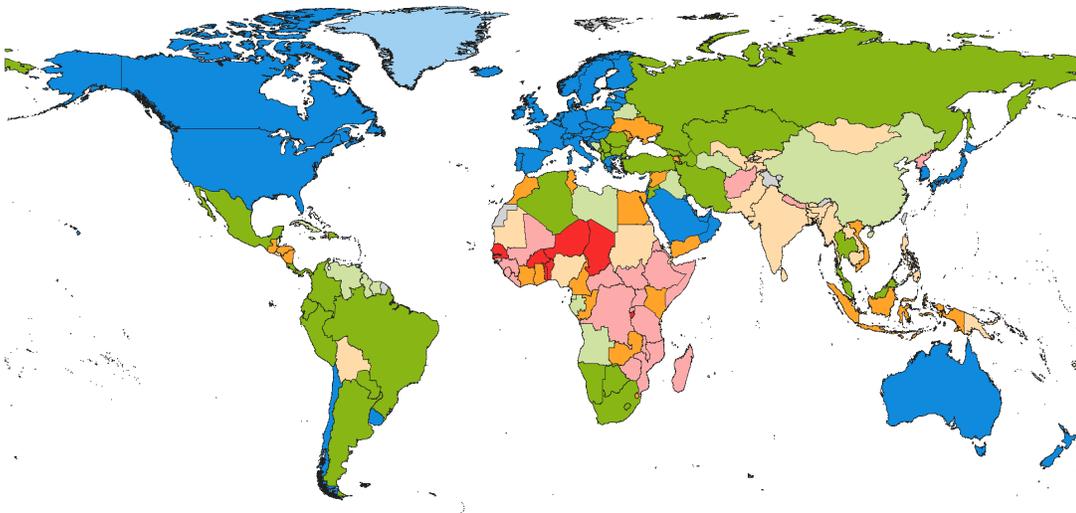
- No new test but linking current assessments to a common scale in the short term conceptually but without, necessarily, a true, rigorous, psychometric linking
- No substitution or crowding out of national learning assessments.
- A phase-out period that implies countries resource mobilization to carry forward the implementation of the assessments. .

## Who will benefit

According to the information in **the Figure 1 below**, there is a crucial need for LIC and MIC to implement learning assessment data. The next cycle of regional and international tests (2018-2019) calls for an urgent support strategy.

### Countries participating in cross-national learning assessments, by income level

Low-income countries:	<span style="color: red;">■</span> Assessment	<span style="color: pink;">■</span> No assessment
Lower-middle-income countries:	<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Assessment	<span style="color: lightorange;">■</span> No assessment
Upper-middle-income countries:	<span style="color: green;">■</span> Assessment	<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> No assessment
High-income countries:	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Assessment	<span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> No assessment



**Note:** The depiction and use of boundaries and related data shown on this map are not warranted to be error free nor do they necessarily imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNESCO.

Expanding the number of countries participating in international assessments requires:

- Support from development partners to LICs for: a) fees; b) capacity development; c) administration; d) reporting.



- Support from development partners to MICs, a) fees; b) capacity development; c) administration; d) reporting.
- Support to the UIS for global comparability and validation.

## Channels for expanding the number of countries participating in cross-national learning assessments

The proposed strategy implies using the existing channels to participate in learning assessments, trying to take advantage and transition from fragmented to integrated vision. The UIS will help convening and liaising countries with regional assessment and development partners and negotiation operating as a broker in both a collective and bilateral basis.

As suggested, the most effective way is to focus expansion through:

- regional assessments
- international assessments
- Achieving global comparability through the UIS Reporting Scale that will allow locating any assessment on a common scale.

## Implementation relationship

The different roles and actions in **Table 2** below. The UIS will operate as a broker enabling dialogue between the different partners involved. UIS will reach out to the regional and international assessment as well as with development partners and with countries to facilitate the liaison.

**Table 2. Actors and their roles .**

Actors	Roles					
	Broker	Administration of Assessment	Provision Funding	Coordinates and centralizing administration	Technical Assistance	Global Reporting and validation
UIS	X					X
Development Partner	X					
Regional and International Assessments				X		
Countries		X				X



National & Research centers / Peer partners					X	
---	--	--	--	--	---	--

A second type of implementation option is generating for each country a partnership between the country, a research center to produce assistance and a development partner. This option starts by the country committing political to implement the assessment and to direct the funding to the Cross National Assessment, agree on a research centre to support technical assistance with the development partner's resources.

## What are the gains of the approach

- Countries will have access to assessments in a comprehensive and sustainable way
- Countries engagement through their political commitment and participation of training centers.
- Capacity-development efforts concentrated around those with most experience in the field while granting progress towards global comparability.
- Help with a learning assessment data strategy and support from the UIS with different diagnosis and assessment tools
- Regional and International organizations expand their coverage.

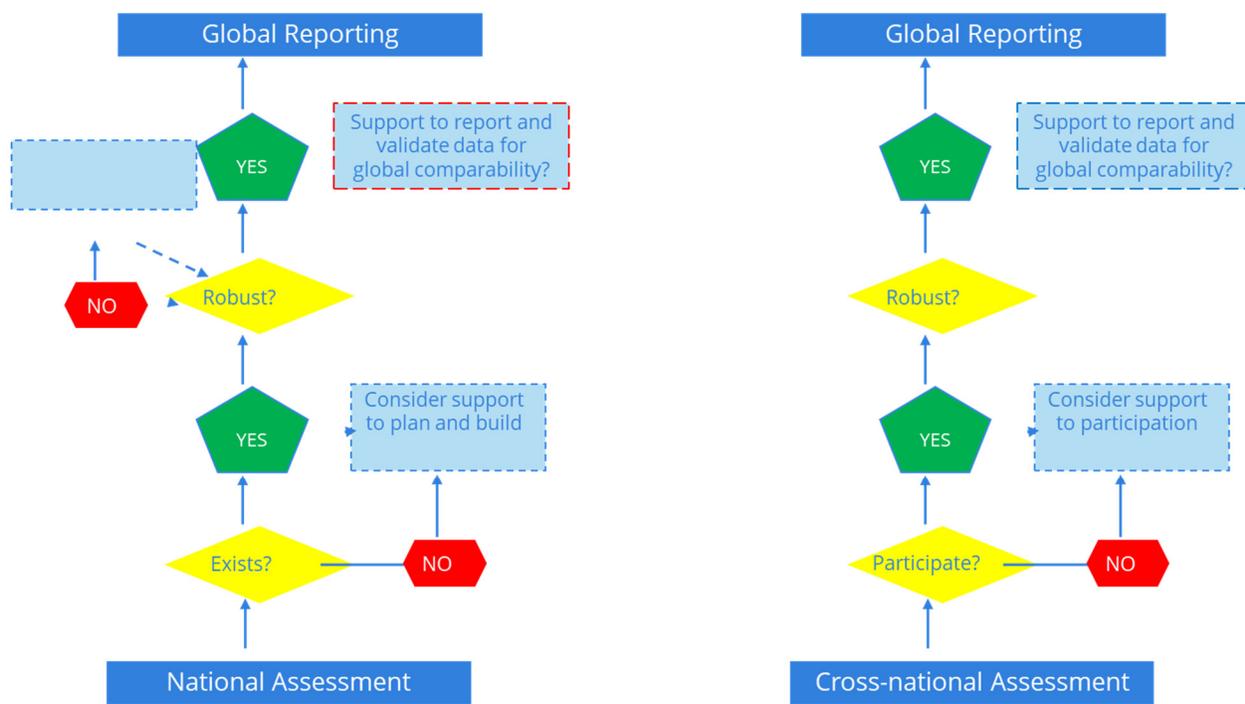
## Key resources

Currently the situation implies critical bottlenecks as **Figure 3** is describing:

- Assessment data robustness;
- Funding for a sustainable strategy to expand coverage



**Figure 3 – Validating Global Reporting for SDG4**



**Resources needed:**

- Funding to support Learning Assessment strategy
- Technical assistance through research centers (either national or regional) and/or peer learning
- UIS reporting scale, benchmarking for UIS to finish the scale
- Standards and guidelines to guide countries assessment practices
- Funding to participate in international assessment.

**Key activities needed:**

- Countries political commitment to participate in international assessment
- Regional and International organizations providing test administration at a reduced fee
- UIS reporting scale and data validation
- Development Partners coordinating their action
- Technical assistance to countries



## Collective action solutions: partnership needed to deliver

The success of this approach hinges on a coalition of partners, including partner governments that are focused on a common goal for better learning assessment data.

- UIS as a brokering institution preferably along a development partners
- Regional assessments and international assessment coordinating the administration of assessment, facilitating technical assistance and dissemination of results
- Development partners funding various needs

Ideally, a funding partnership would make available a larger pool of resources. This might result the expansion of coverage.

Two type of coordination are to be conducted simultaneously”

- ✓ Financial: some development partner might coordinate with these donors and rally others to garner increased commitments and build out the partnership
- ✓ Technical: UIS could coordinate the technical assistance and the reporting scale.

## The cost (how much)

Current survey cost information suggests that each LA survey costs between \$750,000 and 1 million dollars including data collection and technical assistance. We consider that a cost of half a million dollar per assessment that includes:

### ***International***

- Regional/International organization fee (reduced by half in this case) and some extra money for the psychometric analysis to scale the data across countries and international co-ordination cost across regions
- UIS: the initial investment to generate and adapt the methodological framework (e.g., content, items, guidelines, administration, tools, and analysis) and reporting scale in the development phrase. The cost will be substantially reduced once the methodological framework is established and operationalized.

### ***Country Level***

- Administration of the test: with variation mainly due to regional variation in labour costs and the size and complexity of the survey. Probably the costs for LIC could be located at a lower



level than for MIC. There would be a sliding scale of support costs depending on the wealth of the country.

- Capacity development that appears as a way to further expand the initiative and spread the adoption of improved standards to other countries.

**Table 4** presents indicative costs of per year costs over the assessment cycle (3/4). Some international costs were

**Table 3. Indicative costs for each assessment 2016-2030 (in USD) (cost is for each 5-year period)**

	Country's implementation for the whole test cycle	international scaling cost	international co-ordination cost	Regional/International Assessment Assessment
2016-2020	500,000	1,500,000	500,000	500,000
2021-2025	500,000	1,500,000	500,000	500,000
2026-2030	500,000	750,000	500,000	500,000

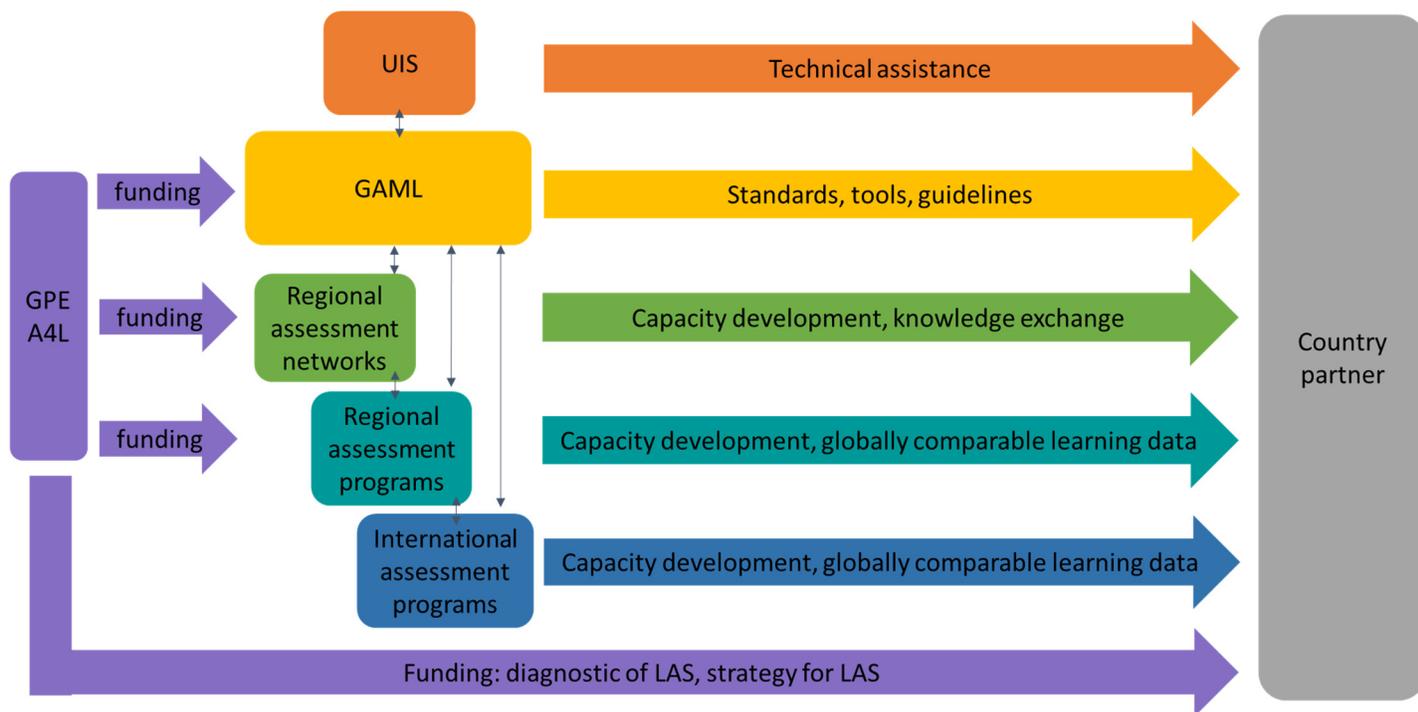
Source: UIS.

**Note:** (\*) international costs should be divided by the number of countries increasing their participation in the Cross National Assessment.

## Making it work

A potential model that could be for instance coordinating role with GPE and starting by Africa might look like the Figure below

**Figure 2. Implementation Process**



### The Countries (Where) and the Timeline (When):

The map of the countries who do not participate is clear. Intermediate targets could be set and trying to expand. For instance 25/30 for next wave of International Assessments, other 25/30 for the following one in each cycle. If we think this way could be .5 million dollars times 30 (15 million dollars), plus 2 million for coordination.

At the end of the day is about populating a table like the one below and simulating who is going to be now and how next in terms of coverage.

**Table: Schedule for all countries; green = existing ISA country**

	2018/19	2021/22	2024/25	2027/28	2030/31
Africa (# of countries)					
Asia					
LAC					
	X	X			

