Continental Assessment Framework for Africa

A harmonized yet flexible approach to monitoring learning outcomes in mathematics and reading in Africa

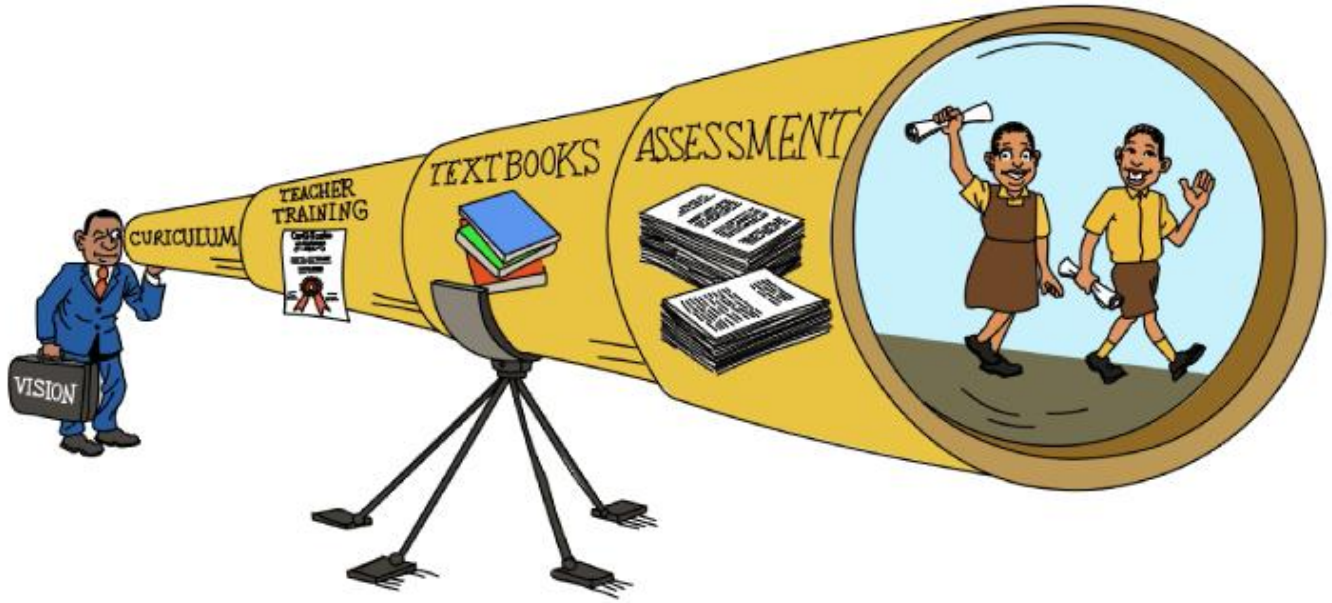
African Union | LEARN Leveraging Education Analysis for Results Network

Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA)

unesco Global Education Monitoring Report

unesco Institute for Statistics

ADEA Association for the Development of Education in Africa



Continental Assessment Framework for Africa

Rationale, key insights and next steps

41st Annual Conference
Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA)
Addis Ababa, 25 August 2025

Manos Antoninis
Director, Global Education Monitoring Report

unesco
Global Education Monitoring Report

Background and context

Learning data scarcity in Africa

Data on reading proficiency at the end of primary (4.1.1b) only available since 2015 for:
1 in 3 children for levels and **1 in 4** children for trends (even less in early primary, end of lower secondary)

- Lack of data hinders effective education policy and progress tracking (CESA, SDG etc.)

African Union engagement

In October 2023, Zambia (with support from Gambia, Kenya, Rwanda and Senegal) called for a continental initiative to address the learning data gap

- AU Specialised Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology decision

Many challenges but one can be addressed through common action

Led by AEAA, a Continental Assessment Framework has been developed through an agreement between the GEM Report and Stellenbosch University, with technical guidance from the UIS, with the aim to:

- Upstream Enable countries to report comparable data for CESA indicator 4.5.1 / SDG indicator 4.1.1
- Downstream Support countries to develop their national assessment frameworks

Why the GEM Report?

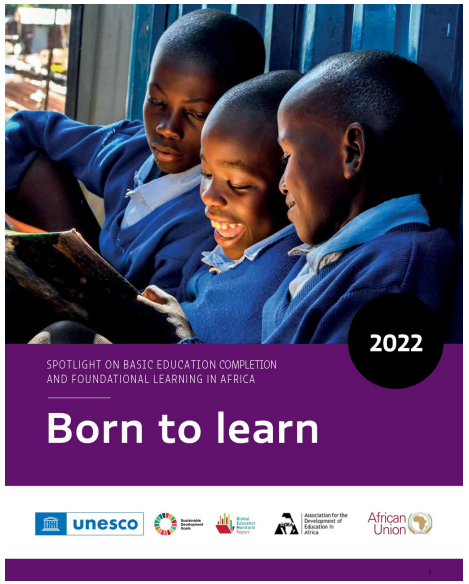
Editorially independent report hosted and published by UNESCO since 2002 with the mandate to monitor progress in education

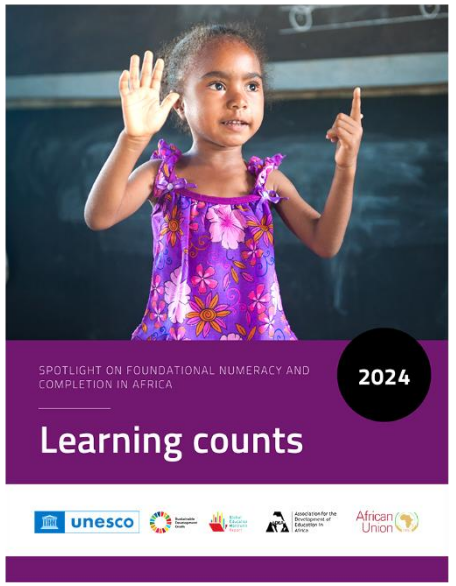
In addition to overall SDG 4 monitoring activities, 3 specific activities are relevant for assessment:

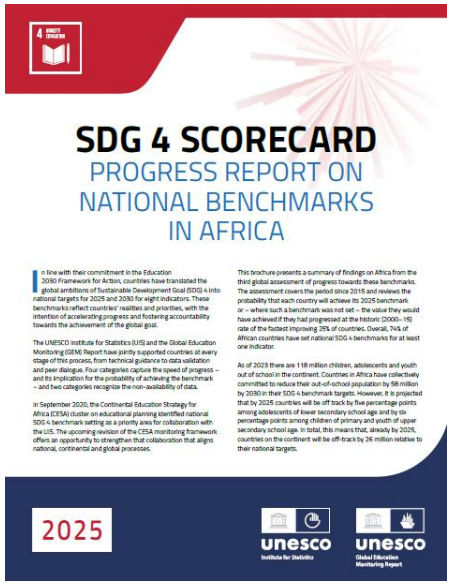
1. **Spotlight** series on foundational learning in Africa (in partnership with AU and ADEA) and **LEARN** initiative to support 3 CESA clusters to promote common action

2. **SDG 4 Scorecard** (in partnership with UIS) assesses country progress towards national targets

3. **SDG 4 monitoring framework** coordination and development (in partnership with UIS)







Methodology

Data sources and collection National curricula, syllabi and assessment frameworks from 10 countries

- Lack of national assessment frameworks → Analysis based almost exclusively on curriculum

Analytical framework Global Proficiency Framework (reading/mathematics) as primary analytical tool.
= a structured progression of skills in reading and mathematics from Grades 1 to 9 (with 4 proficiency levels) previously field-tested in several African countries **but** not yet adapted continentally

Analytical process Three main steps:

- Compile and analyse curriculum frameworks from 10 African countries
- Map to the Global Proficiency Framework by country and carry out cross-country analysis
- Draft Continental Assessment Framework for mathematics and reading and Grades 3, 6 and 9

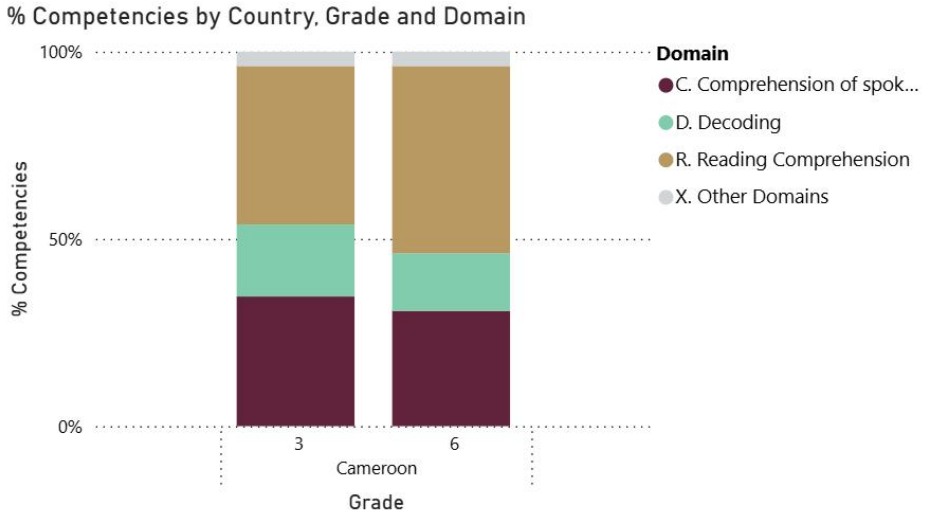
Challenges encountered Variability in curriculum structure, detail and terminology across countries
In reading: limited availability of detailed reading indicators (e.g., genres, text complexity)
Integration of non-language goals (e.g., civic education, life skills) within language curricula

Validation workshop In Livingstone, Zambia, in July 2025, reviewed and validated by several stakeholders, including experts from 9 countries, PASEC and the AEAA Technical Committee

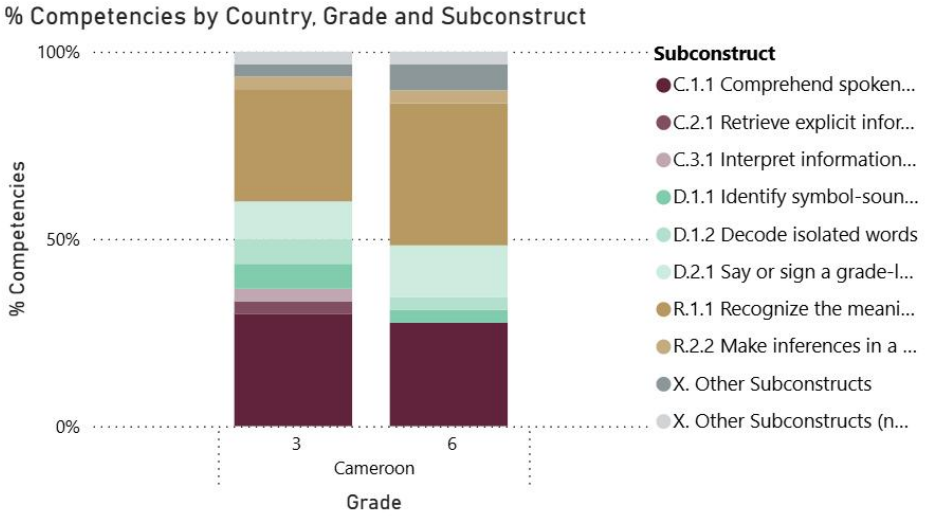
Country analysis example

Proportion of reading competencies mapped by:

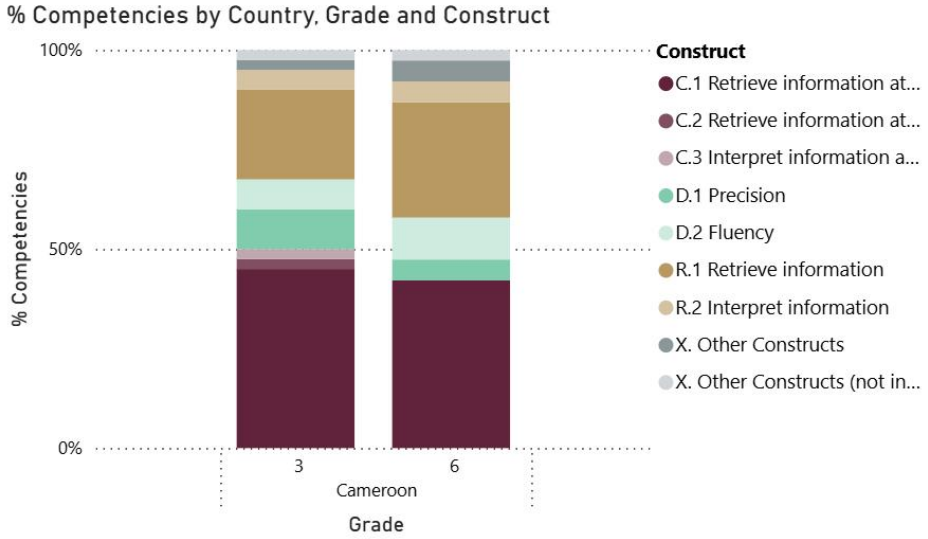
Domain



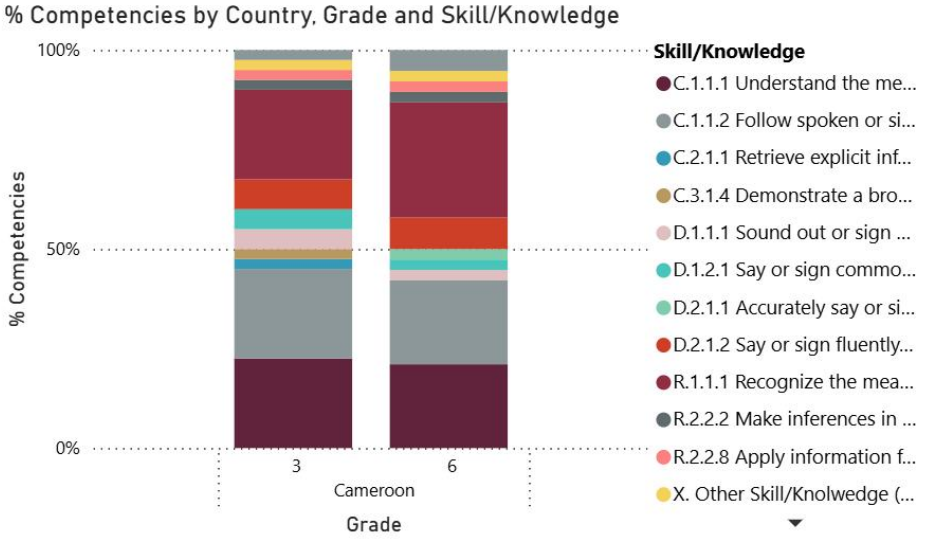
Subconstruct



Construct



Skill/ Knowledge



Cross-country analysis example

African Union | LEARN Leveraging Education Analysis for Results Network | Association for Educational Assessment in Africa | unesco Global Education Monitoring Report | unesco Institute for Statistics | ADEA Association for the Development of Education in Africa

Presence of subconstruct in grade 3 reading curricula
944 competencies analysed across 20 curricula in 10 countries

Minimum proficiency descriptors

Reading

3 domains: Comprehension of spoken/signed language; Decoding; Reading comprehension

- **Grade 3**: Students read familiar words and extract explicit information using decoding skills with increasing precision and fluency; retrieve information and make simple inferences when texts read orally
- **Grade 6**: Students read fluently, locate information, interpret key ideas, express opinions linked to text
- **Grade 9**: Students synthesise information, make inferences, evaluate content across diverse text types

Mathematics

5 domains: Number and Operations; Measurement; Geometry; Statistics and Probability; Algebra

- **Grade 3**: Students demonstrate skills in number sense and computation, measurement, shape recognition and spatial orientation
- **Grade 6**: Students demonstrate skills in number sense, computation, real world problems, basic measurement, 2D shape recognition, and reading and interpreting simple data displays
- **Grade 9**: Students demonstrate skills in computation, solving problems in measurement and constructing a variety of data display, and making use of algebraic representations

Next steps

Short-term

- Review report and provide feedback to finalize
- More dialogue needed with two Africa-based cross-national assessments (PASEC and SEACMEQ)
- Familiarise countries with the framework
- Institutionalize framework within AEAA and encourage countries to share their experience
- Provide training on how countries can develop their own assessment frameworks based on it

Medium-term

Framework is not the end goal but an essential **first step** toward a coordinated, African-led and sustainable approach to learning assessment:

- Contextualization: Adapt framework to local curricula, languages, and resources
- Instrument design: Psychometrically validated items with cultural relevance
- Fulfil the eligibility criteria for reporting of the Education Data and Statistics Commission

African children are born to learn

Continental Assessment Framework
represents a shared vision
for measuring what matters most

Thank you

#BorntoLearn