# Strategic Interventions for Robust Learning Assessment- A Reflection

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# Why do we need to investment on Learning Assessment?

**1. Least expensive but most effective education reforms** (0.3% global average)

- From great turnaround in German education post PISA 2000 to South Korea and Vietnam topping the table in international assessments
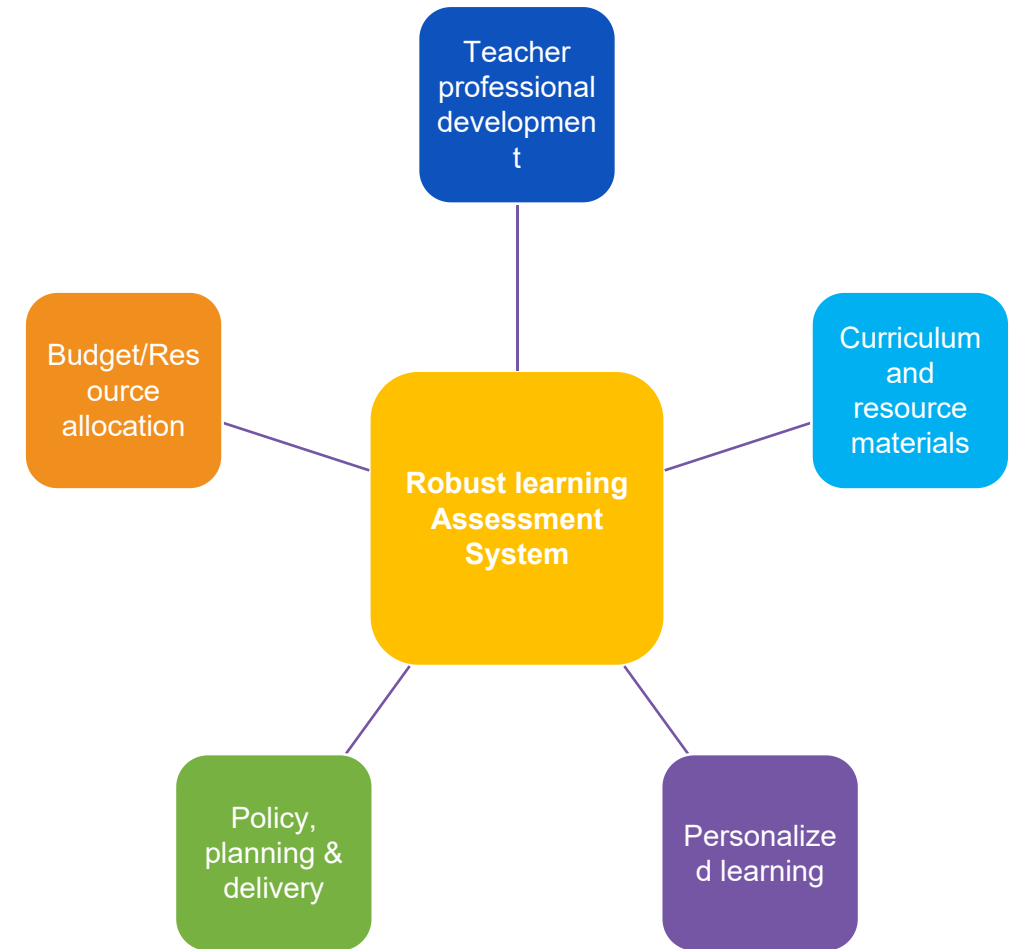
**2. Shifting from inputs to evidence-based outcome led planning and programming**

- Assessment is the key driver in result- based planning

**3. Better data for better learning outcomes**

- Fundamental prerequisites for progress towards the learning goals

**4. Countries that have been successful in improving learning -** usually have strong learning assessments in place

Teacher professional development

Budget/Resource allocation

Curriculum and resource materials

**Robust learning Assessment System**

Policy, planning & delivery

Personalized learning

unicef
for every child

# Learning Assessment - Challenges



- Mostly project based; lacks technical standards

- Lacks regularity

- Sustainability challenges- resources and capacity

- Insecurity and fragile context

- Large window- design to publication

- Lacks complementarity between large scale and school-based assessments

- Sub-optimal usage of assessment data

# Strategic measures to measure learning outcomes

1. Mapping of learning assessment

2. Promotes assessment that suits the purpose

3. Tools to measure foundational learning

4. Suggestive departure and synergic actions

5. Learning assessments in crisis context

6. Next step- benchmarking and comparable measurement

# 1. Mapping of learning assessment



Figure 6: Levels of education covered by national learning assessments
What levels of education are covered?

Primary — 100%
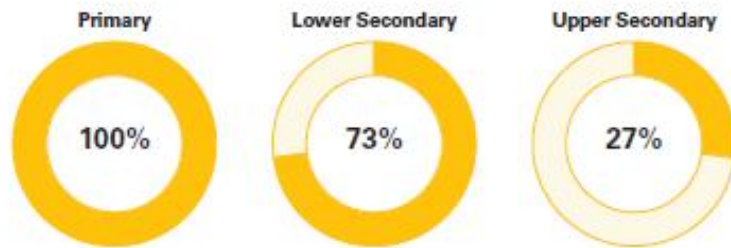Lower Secondary — 73%
Upper Secondary — 27%



Figure 12: Sources of funding for national learning assessment operations
Who provides the funding of standardized national learning assessment operations?

Development partners — 86.7%
Government/Ministry of Education Budget — 73.3%
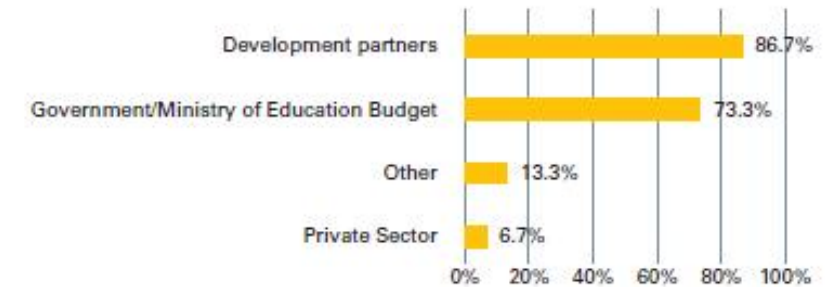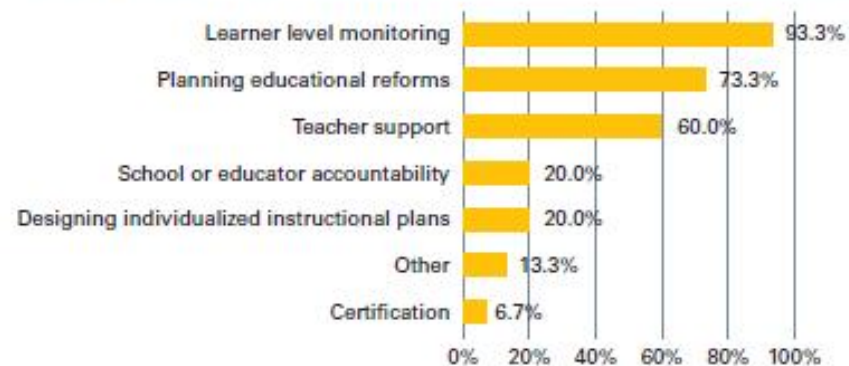Other — 13.3%
Private Sector — 6.7%



Figure 7: Objectives of primary-level national learning assessments
What are the objective of standardized national learning assessments at the Primary education level?

Learner level monitoring — 93.3%
Planning educational reforms — 73.3%
Teacher support — 60.0%
School or educator accountability — 20.0%
Designing individualized instructional plans — 20.0%
Other — 13.3%
Certification — 6.7%

## Key takeaway from the mapping of LA

- Assessments are mostly at national level and targeted to primary level

- Conducted for monitoring learning level and planning educational reforms

- Most of the cases assessments supported by DPs

# Learning Assessment Landscape in SSA



Source- UNESCO mapping of LA in SSA
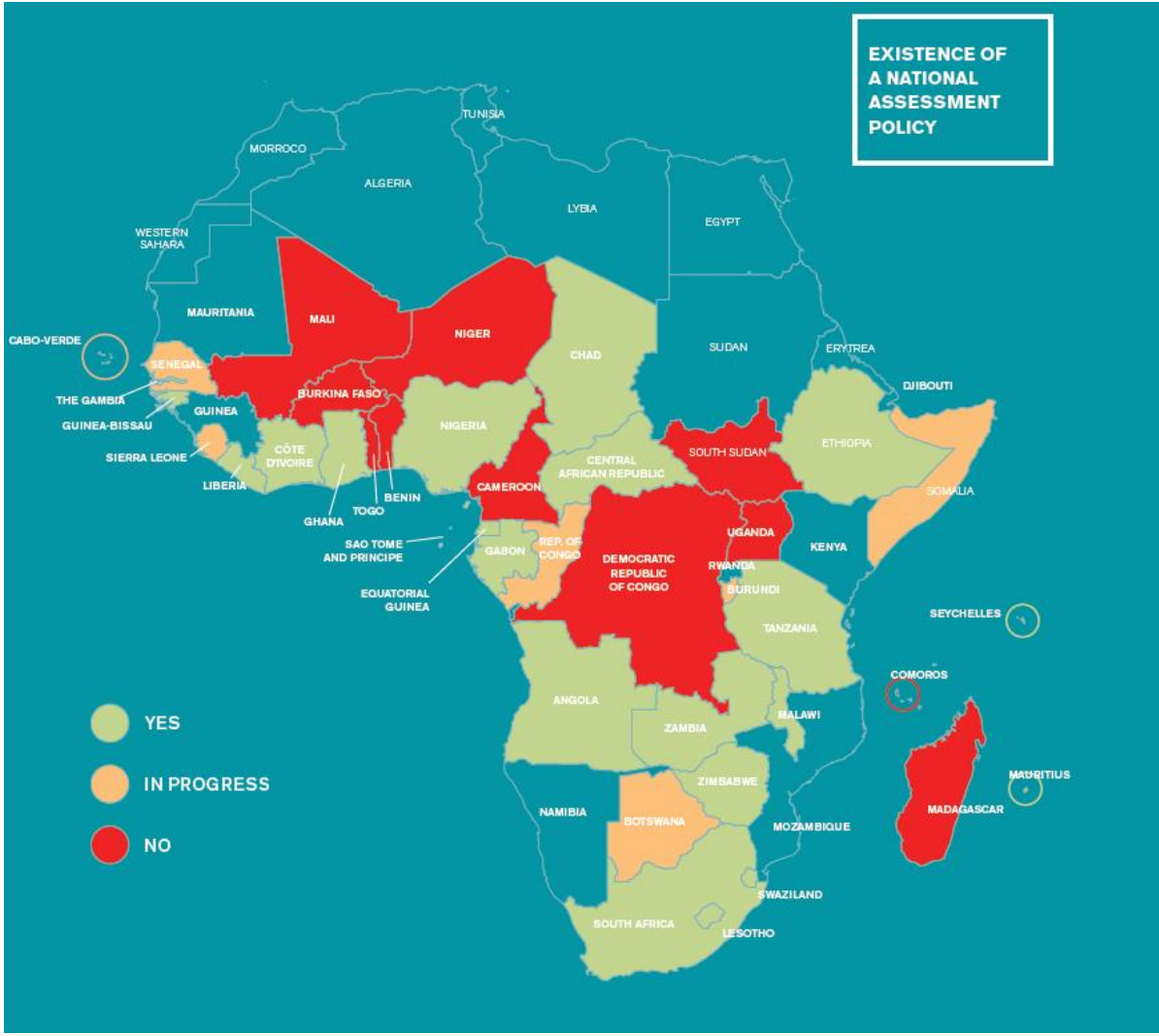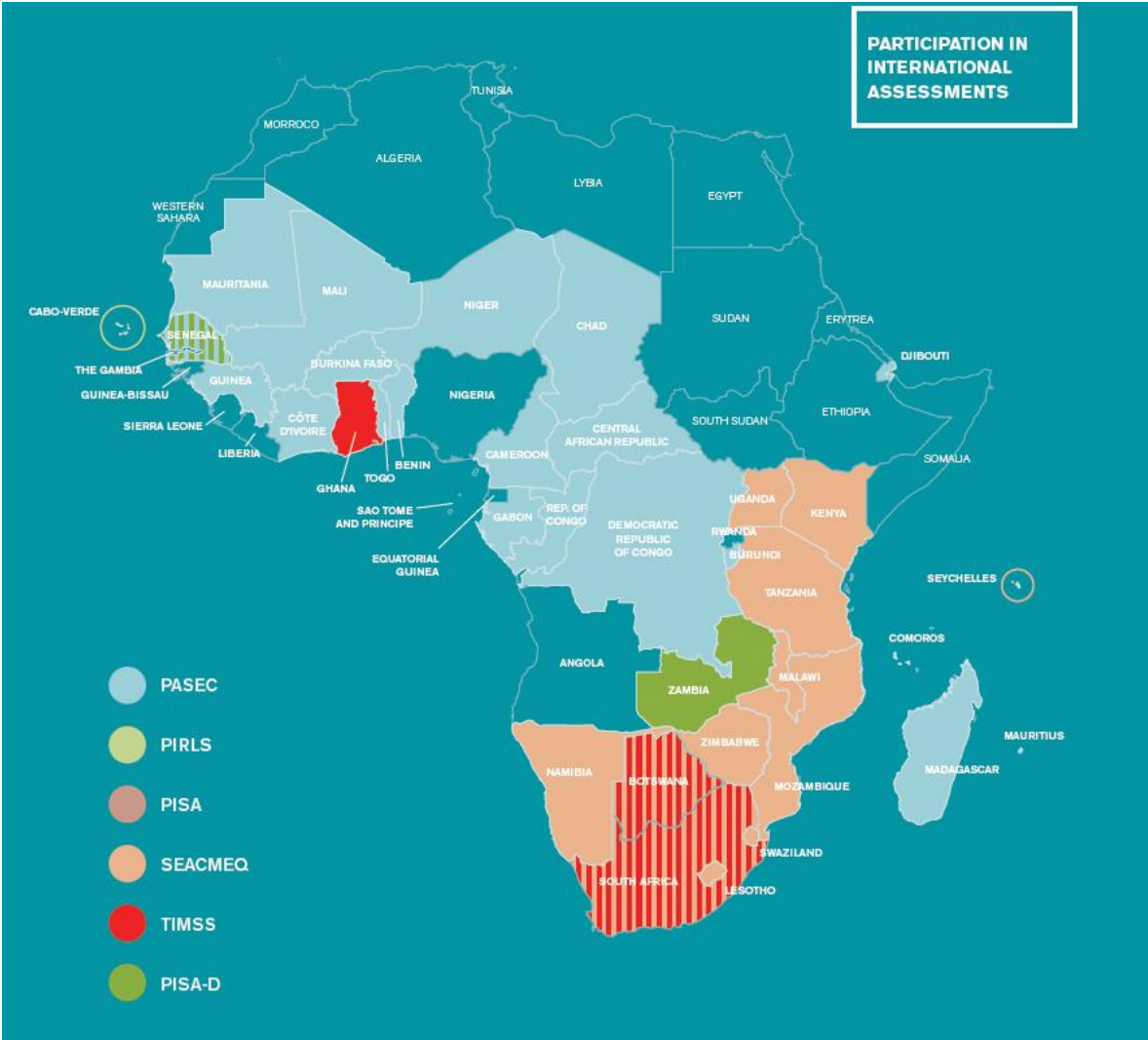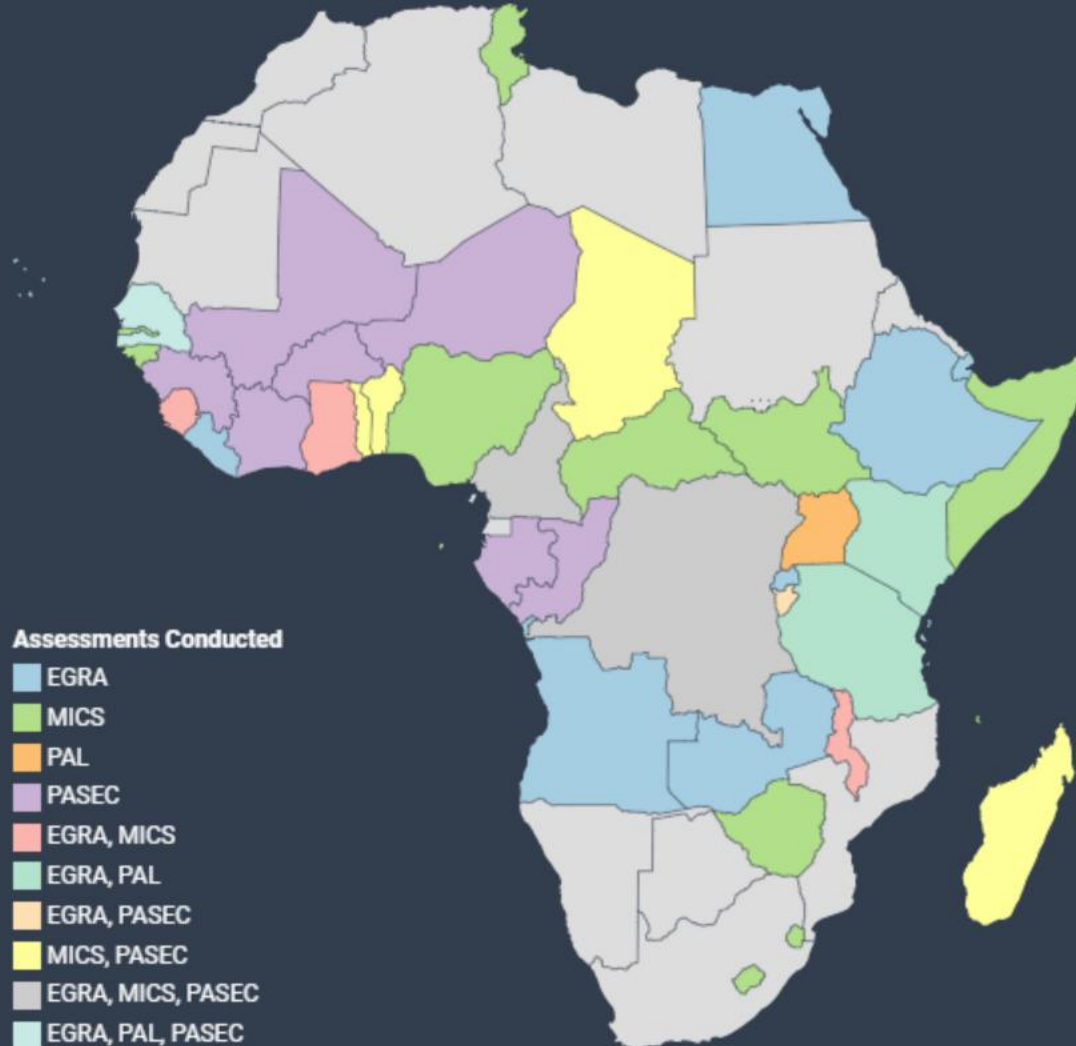
# 2. Assessment that suits the purpose

- Diagnostic Assessment- TaRL approach and targeted remediation (16/21 countries)

- Assessment for learning (classroom- formative assessment almost all countries- Ethiopia institutionalized)

- Project based- EGRA, EGMA

- National assessments- almost all countries

- Assessment on FLN – MICS, ELANA, ASER

- Regional assessments- SEACMEQ, PASEC

- International Assessments- PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS (SA, Rwanda, Zambia)

**Key takeaways**

- Ensuring assessments are
  - Effectively used for teaching and learning, curriculum and planning
  - Adequate skills transfer to national team
  - Institutionalized- supported with national assessment framework and policy
  - Assessments that complimenting each other

# 3. Foundational Learning Assessment in Africa



## 1:1 Assessments Conducted Across Africa

**Assessments Conducted**
- EGRA
- MICS
- PAL
- PASEC
- EGRA, MICS
- EGRA, PAL
- EGRA, PASEC
- MICS, PASEC
- EGRA, MICS, PASEC
- EGRA, PAL, PASEC

**TARL FLN benchmark**

- **Reading Scale:** Beginner, Letter, Word, **Paragraph,** and Story
- **Mathematics Scale:** Beginner, Level 1, **Level 2 and higher**

**PAL Network**

- The International Common Assessment of Numeracy (ICAN)
- The Early Language & Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (ELANA)
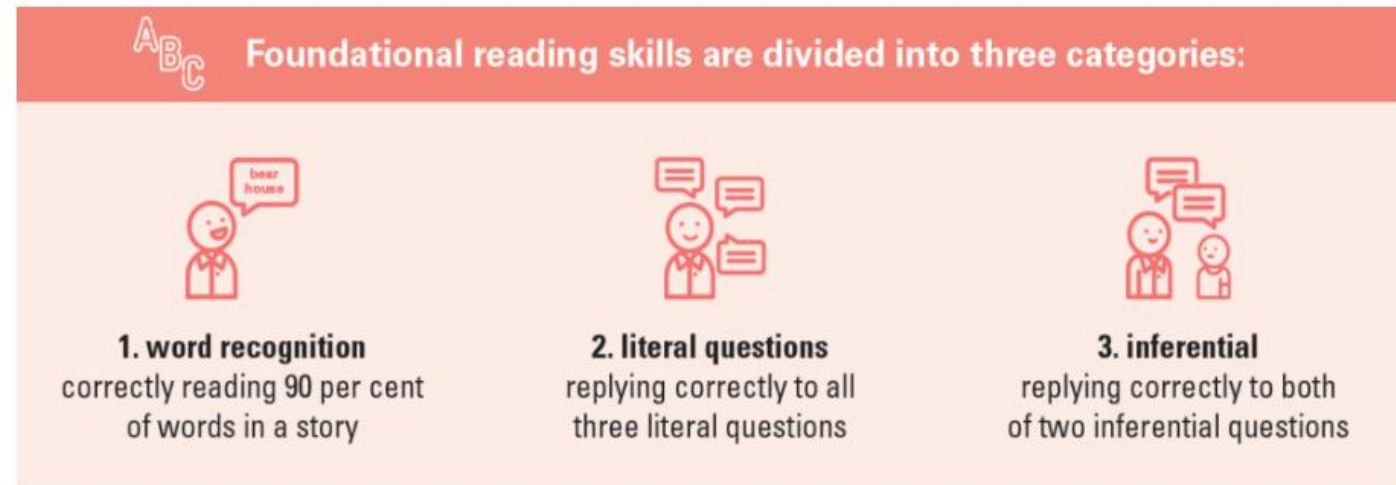
**PASEC:**
- A regional Grade 2 assessment in Francophone Africa covering reading and mathematics in local or official languages. Conducted every 4-5 years
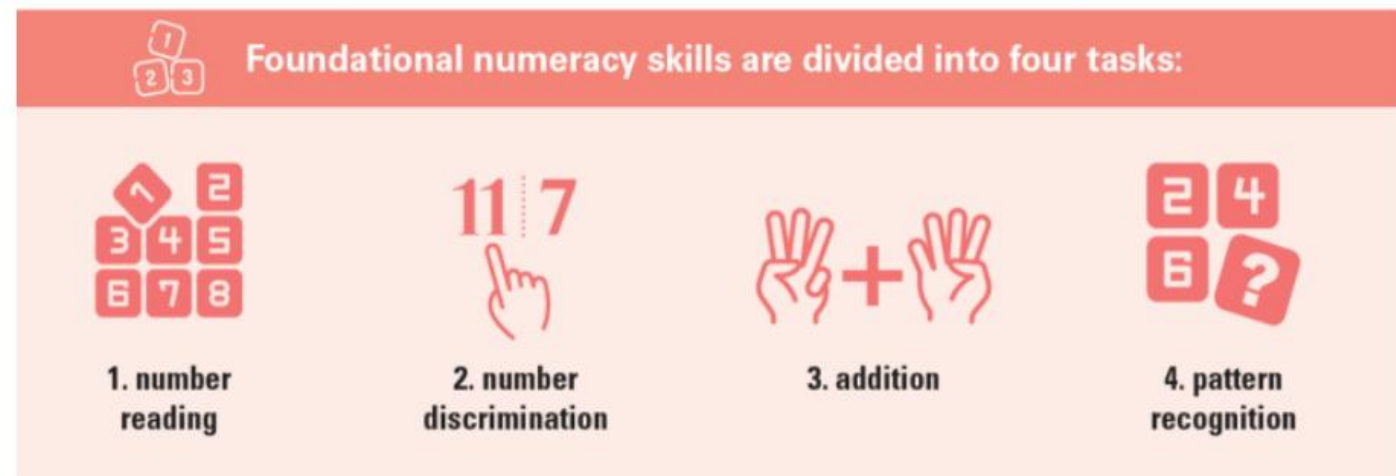
**MICS-FLM (UNICEF):**
- Conducted every three years as part of the MICS household survey, this module includes literacy and numeracy components assessed 1:1 with children aged 7-14.

# MICS as a good practice to measure Foundational Learning outcomes

Foundational reading skills are assessed by asking the child to perform three tasks:

**Foundational reading skills are divided into three categories:**

**1. word recognition**
correctly reading 90 per cent of words in a story

**2. literal questions**
replying correctly to all three literal questions

**3. inferential**
replying correctly to both of two inferential questions

Foundational numeracy skills are assessed by asking the child to perform four tasks:

**Foundational numeracy skills are divided into four tasks:**

**1. number reading**

**2. number discrimination**

**3. addition**

**4. pattern recognition**

- Administered to one randomly selected child (age 7-14) per sampled household

- Implemented in more than 50 countries, including local languages, since 2017

- FLS and FLM2.0 can be added to any household survey sampling children

**Foundational Numeracy Skills, by class of attendance**

Children with foundational numeracy skills
Children without foundational numeracy skills
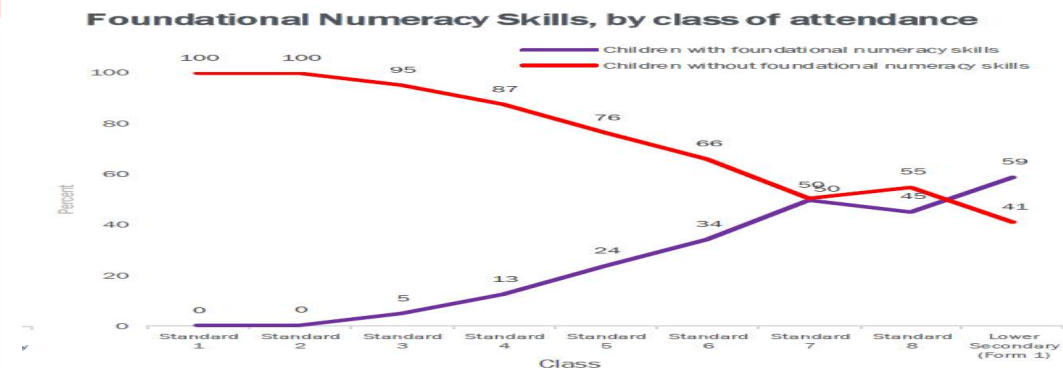
# 4. Assessment in Emergency Context- Step by step toolbox



**Mapping of Tools and Solutions to Measure Learning in Emergencies and Protracted Crises in Eastern and Southern Africa**

UNICEF EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE

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## SOLUTIONS TOOLBOX

### Why measure?

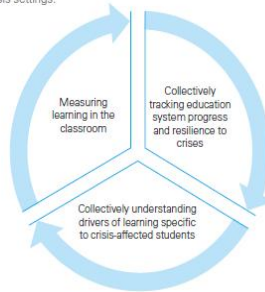**121 MILLION** school-aged children affected by crises in sub-Saharan Africa

**45 million** are out of school

**69 million** are in school but not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading or math

**7 million** are in school and achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and math

Measurement is crucial to improve learning in crisis settings. **The Solutions Toolbox is designed to help Ministries of Education and partners move from sporadic assessments to systemic reform efforts**, which involve identifying ineffective approaches, determining success factors, and understanding the root causes of weak learning outcomes.

### Approach

Consistent with the RAPID framework for learning recovery and the Learning Data Compact, the Solutions Toolbox operationalizes a three-pronged framework with a **formative** assessment pillar to collect data from classrooms regularly, a **summative** assessment pillar to assess students regularly against well-defined assessment frameworks and a **research** pillar to shed light on the drivers of holistic learning specific to crisis settings.

- Measuring learning in the classroom
- Collectively tracking education system progress and resilience to crises
- Collectively understanding drivers of learning specific to crisis-affected students

### What you can do with the Toolbox

The Solutions Toolbox empowers users to:

- **access** good international practices in measuring holistic learning in crises;
- **develop** results frameworks and theories of change that prioritize learning, aligned with INEE standards;
- **gain** insights on how to identify effective strategies to improve learning;
- **explore** case studies and examples specific to humanitarian settings;
- **utilize** annotated templates for work plans, budgets, Terms of Reference, and more, based on good practices;
- **analyze** common trade-offs encountered when measuring holistic learning; and
- **stay updated** with the latest advancements in measuring holistic learning.

Practitioners are encouraged to adapt the available resources to suit the unique needs and requirements of their contexts.

### Assessment cycle

The Toolbox outlines a model to operationalize holistic learning measurement in crises [insert link to chapter 2 of the technical guidance document] and provides step-by-step guidance to understanding measurement ecosystems, design assessments, collect data, and use evidence to improve learning in emergencies and protracted crises.

- State of assessment systems
- Setting goals and priorities
- Governance and Resources
- Assessment Framework
- Design
- Languages
- Instruments and data collection
- Data analysis and management
- Reporting and dissemination
- Using evidence to act on learning



**TECHNICAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

**Solutions Toolbox – Measuring Holistic Learning in Emergencies and Protracted Crises**

# 5. Suggestive Departures in Learning Assessment

| SI | Broad areas | General practice | Departure Points |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Frequency | Sporadic, irregular, process takes almost 4 years | Every three years (2025, 2028, 2031....) |
| 2 | Instruments | Focus of assessment was on content and rote learning | Shifting focus on **skills and competencies** |
| 3 | Unit of reporting | Region/province is the reporting unit- summarization at provincial level hides equity and quality information | Subnational/District as the reporting unit |
| 4 | Sampling | Limited coverage, not adequately representative, Manual- introduce bias | Scientific, representative, automated random selection and use of technology |
| 5 | Data management | Manual entry and limited quality assurance | Use of cost-effective scanning with multi layered quality assurance |
| 6 | Data analysis | Traditional classical analysis | Modern psychometric analysis |
| 7 | Reporting structure | One report with limited dissemination | Multi- stakeholder user friendly reports with widely dissemination |
| 8 | Use of data | Limited use | Widely used in educational planning and teacher professional development |

# 6. Summary of challenges and next step- 1



- Multiple assessments conducted with limited coordination across ESA.

- Duplication of efforts and misalignment in tools, timing, and reporting.

- Data gaps and inconsistencies hamper regional comparability and policy use.

- Weak integration of assessment results into national education systems and reforms.

# 6. Proposed Forward Moving Action- 2

UNICEF, in partnership with key stakeholders, is leading the establishment of a **Regional Coordination Mechanism** to:

**1** **Strategically align** stakeholders, methodologies, and assessment timelines.

**3** **Strengthen national capacities** through peer learning and institutional partnerships.

**2** **Harmonize tools and benchmarks**, facilitating data sharing and cross-country learning.

**4** **Promote political visibility and sustainable financing** for learning outcomes data and reforms.

# Reflection and Question & Answer