Leveraging SDG 4 reporting data for decision-making and accountability: Case studies from The Gambia, Kenya and Zambia

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Purpose and scope

This presentation explores how The Gambia, Kenya and Zambia have used data generated from the UIS Assessment for Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPL) to inform education policy decisions.

Authors describe:

- mechanisms that helped facilitate the use of the data

- Constraints to using data

➤ a path forward for others

Background

Monitoring Sustainable Development Goal 4

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT **GOALS**

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Target 4.1

By 2030, all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

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, (ii) mathematics**, by sex

Monitoring Sustainable Development Goal 4

- **UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)** is responsible for reporting progress

- Worked with education stakeholders globally to develop:
  - definitions of <u>minimum proficiency</u> in
    - <u>reading</u> and
    - <u>mathematics</u>
    - in grades 2/3 (end of lower primary), end of primary, lower secondary.
  - methodological and reporting frameworks to help countries gather comparable learning outcomes data that provides enough flexibility to meet each country's assessment needs.
  - an assessment "buyer's guide" that walks countries through their assessment options, taking into account their policy needs, assessment goals, budget, workforce capacity and local education context.

Assessment for Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPL)

- A UIS initiative developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

- Targeted to the MPLs based on
  - The Global Proficiency Framework (GPF)
  - The definitions of the MPLs

- Aligned with a country's assessment strategy:
  1. AMPL as a standalone assessment, or
  2. Integrated into national assessments and examinations, or
  3. Used to locate international Minimum Proficiency Level benchmarks on a national scale.

- **AMPL Technical Standards** ensure tools and methods provide rigorous and robust learning outcomes and equity data that can be confidently used by governments for decision-making as well as for global reporting.

AMPL methodology

- **Test design**
  - Population-based, conducted in schools
    - AMPL-a, 4.1.1a instruments administered at grade 2/3 (end of lower primary)
    - AMPL-b, 4.1.1b instruments administered at end of primary
    - AMPL-ab, a combined test design administered at end of primary
- **Domains and constructs**
  - Reading
  - Listening (AMPL-a and ab only)
  - Mathematics

- **Contextual instruments**
  - Student questionnaire
  - School questionnaire
- **Standardised manuals and guidelines** that can be adapted to suit local logistical conditions
- **Rigorous sampling procedures** typically applied in large-scale assessments, and technical standards to ensure sample is representative of the population

Country case study: The Gambia

The Gambia – AMPL overview

- **Purpose of participation:** to report progress against SDG 4 and to measure learning outcomes against internationally recognised benchmarks – AMPL provided the first ever nationally representative data on the proficiency levels of school-aged children in reading and mathematics.

- **Test design and target population:** AMPL-a with Grade 3 learners

- **Test date**: June 2023

- **Sampling details:** Stratification by region (explicit), school ownership (implicit) and school type (implicit)

- **Local adaptations:** Cultural adaptations made to test and questionnaire instruments, where permitted

- **Participation:** 220 schools and 4345 learners

The Gambia – Key results and implications

Results

- 25% Grade 3 learners reached MPLa in mathematics
- 20% Grade 3 learners reached MPLa in reading
  - Girls outperformed boys by 3.4 percentage points ($p < 0.05$)

Implications

- Review and revision of the National Assessment Policy for Basic and Secondary Education.
  - Reposition assessment as a tool for instructional improvement
  - Introduction of end-of-term assessments in the early grades
  - Alignment of National Assessment Test with GPF
  - NAT track individual progress across key stages

The Gambia – Conclusion

- AMPL data supported an evidence-based transformation of The Gambia's assessment landscape
- Enabled by:
    - top-down commitment
    - robust national data systems
- Challenges reaching grassroots stakeholders

Country case study: Kenya

Kenya – AMPL overview

- **Purpose of participation**: to report progress against SDG 4 and to suggest policy interventions based on the results, including learner and school factors that influence achievement
- **Test design and target population:** AMPL-ab with Grade 6 learners
- **Test date**: June 2023
- **Sampling details:** Stratification by county (explicit), school type (implicit), location, class size.
- **Local adaptations:** Cultural adaptations made to test and questionnaire instruments, where permitted
- **Participation:** 250 schools and 5566 learners

Kenya – Key results and implications

Results

- Reading
  - 21.6% Grade 6 learners unable to perform Grade 3 level tasks.
  - 25.5% Grade 6 learners achieved MPLb.
- Mathematics
  - 11.4% Grade 6 learners unable to perform Grade 3 level tasks.
  - 36.9% Grade 6 learners achieved MPLb

Implications

- Early intervention strategies
- Improved teaching strategies
- Enhancing nutrition among disadvantaged learners
- Monitoring progress of national reforms

Kenya – Conclusion

- AMPL data supported policymakers in designing targeted interventions and enhance the quality of education, addressing systemic challenges and ensuring learners achieve minimum proficiency levels

- Enabled by:
  - Targeted communication of the findings
  - Timely dissemination
  - Need

- Stakeholder misgivings about using a one-off study for decision-making proved a challenge.

- Secondary analysis can strengthen the feedback loop between research and policy

Country case study: Zambia

Zambia – AMPL overview

- **Purpose of participation:** to report progress against SDG 4
- **Test design and target population:** AMPL-a with grade 4 learners and AMPL-ab with Grade 7 learners
- **Test date**: June 2023
- **Sampling details:** Stratification by region (explicit), location (implicit) and school type (implicit).
- **Local adaptations:** Cultural adaptations made to test and questionnaire instruments, where permitted
- **Participation:** 250 schools and 4953 G4 learners and 4888 G7 learners

Zambia – Key results and implications

Results

Domain and grade	Percent reaching or exceeding MPLa (Lower primary)	Percent reaching or exceeding MPLb (End of primary)
Mathematics Grade 4	14.4	1.3
Reading Grade 4	12.7	0.8*
Mathematics Grade 7	76.1	16.0
Reading Grade 7	54.7	9.7

There are too few observations to provide reliable estimates

Implications

- Reinforce value of making school accessible for all children
- Informed targeted project participation
- Item response theory methodology allowed new information to be reported.
  - Supported decision to reduce number of years of primary education
  - Supported decision to reintroduce National Competency assessments for early grades.

Zambia – Conclusion

- AMPL data supported the design of new policies, the reinforcement of existing policies, the targeting of programs and the monitoring of learning achievement
- Enabled by:
  - Timing of the release of results
  - Interactive communication strategies
- Capacity building provided by AMPL participation will be used for the national assessment

In closing...

Facilitators of data use

- Tailored dissemination activities providing relevant actionable information
- Strong leadership buy-in
- Integration into national monitoring frameworks
- Timely release of data

Further information

https://ampl.uis.unesco.org/

All methodological information, international and national reports, global SDG 4 standards and other resources

https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/

Methodology and standards related to monitoring SDG 4 more generally

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