Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

TIER 2 INDICATOR TECHNICAL NOTE

EDUCATION LEARNING QUALITY
PROPORTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACHIEVING AT LEAST MINIMUM PROFICIENCY IN READING AND MATHEMATICS, WITH AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT

Last updated: August 2023

DEFINITIONS

This indicator aims to capture evidence of Australia's contribution towards improving basic education learning outcomes, in reading and mathematics, in a) Grade 2, 3 or 4; b) the end of primary school; and/or c) the end of lower secondary school.[1] Data can be drawn from a range of existing program, national and/or regional level education reporting. This technical note will support program areas to use the Aidworks questionnaire to report their Tier 2 data for this indicator.

Children are girls and boys aged 0 to 18 years.[2] **Young people** are aged 15-24 years.[3]

Girls/Boys include all learners enrolled in basic education, regardless of age.

Proportion is the percentage of learners achieving minimum proficiency compared with the whole student population.

Schools are providers of basic education, as defined by partner governments. May include formal schools (government or private) and non-formal schools (particularly in emergency or humanitarian contexts).

Basic education comprises primary education (first stage of basic education) plus lower secondary education (second stage of basic education); usually nine years of schooling. Kindergarten, senior secondary school, and non-formal/alternative education provisions may also be included, if the partner government includes them in its basic education definition.

School and grade levels[4]**:** Grades 2, 3 and 4 and are usually the second, third and fourth years of primary school; end of primary school is usually the fifth or sixth year of primary school; end of lower secondary school is usually the eighth or ninth year of basic education. Children of varying ages might be in the same grade/year levels.

Learning outcomes are measurable achievements in literacy (reading), numeracy (mathematics) and/or other domains such as science or social studies.

Learning assessments measure learning outcomes. Knowledge level may be tested using a variety of modalities, including multiple choice; constructed questions (free text/short answer questions); and verbal assessments. Learning assessments may be population-based (all students in a specific grade at all schools) or sample-based (a representative sample of students from a particular grade). Learning

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[1] These levels align with global reporting for SDG 4.1.1

[2] https://uis.unesco.org/node/3079800

[3] https://www.unesco.org/en/youth

[4] May include additional grades/ages, depending on partner government's basic education definition

assessments may be conducted at regional, national or program levels (additional detail under *Data Sources* below). Language/s of assessment should be included as contextual information in reporting as it may be different to the learner's mother tongue.

Minimum Proficiency Level (MPL) is the benchmark of basic knowledge in a domain (such as mathematics or reading) at a given age/grade (for example, in Grade 2 or 3, end of primary school, and end of lower secondary school) as measured through learning assessments. Learners with a MPL in reading/mathematics have demonstrated sufficient knowledge and skills to successfully complete the most basic grade-level tasks in reading/numeracy.[5] MPLs for national/regional/international learning assessments should, ideally, be linked to the Global Minimum Proficiency Framework to support reporting against SDG 4.1.1[6] . MPLs of learning assessments that are not benchmarked with the Global Minimum Proficiency Framework are not necessarily comparable with each other.

SCOPE
INCLUDES:

- Reading and mathematics learning outcomes data for children and young people, regardless of age, who participated in learning assessments in: Grade 2, 3 or 4[7]; at the end of primary school; and/or the end of lower secondary school. Learning assessment participants might be from:
    - Primary or secondary schools, including other grade levels. For example, a child nominally enrolled in Grade 1 might participate in a Grade 2 or 3 learning assessment.
    - Alternative education providers, such as disability inclusive or special education schools, and/or
    - Non-formal schools, particularly when formal school options are limited, including in emergencies or humanitarian contexts.
- Learning outcomes data derived from standardised program, national or regional-level learning assessments that align with global MPL definitions[8]. Please see the Data Sources section below for details and examples of acceptable learning outcomes data from program, national and regional-level learning assessments.

EXCLUDES:

- Learning outcomes data from domains other than reading and mathematics, such as science or social studies.
- Learning outcomes data from assessments for other grade levels, such as assessments for end of senior secondary school.
- Learning outcomes data from assessments for other institutions, such as assessments for technical and vocational education training.
- Non-standardised learning assessment data that does not have an established minimum proficiency level.

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[5] https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/05/Countrys-reporting-option_Zambia_2023.05.15_FINAL.pdf

[6] https://milo.uis.unesco.org/mpl/#:~:text=grade%2Dlevel%20tasks.-,Meets%20Global%20Minimum%20Proficiency,complete%20complex%20grade%2Dlevel%20tasks.

[7] Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) Grade 4 learning assessment data is used for SDG 4.1.1 reporting, that nominally seeks data from Grade 2 and 3 levels, so Grade 4 PILNA data may be reported for this Tier 2 indicator too.

[8] Global MPL definitions here: https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/05/Countrys-reporting-option_Zambia_2023.05.15_FINAL.pdf

CALCULATION METHOD

Improved learning outcomes depend on a multitude of factors, not only those supported by Australia's interventions. For this reason, Australia will only claim contribution to this indicator, not full attribution. This means further calculations beyond the raw percentage of learners achieving minimum proficiency are not required. Instead, case study narratives are requested to help demonstrate how Australian support contributed to improved learning outcomes.

Case study narratives (100 words maximum) should include: investment value; key outcomes/achievements; and co-contributors, such as partner governments, other development partners, multilateral organisations or other Australian Government departments and agencies.

All case studies must be approved by the relevant AS for possible public reporting.

DATA SOURCES

This indicator seeks to optimise opportunities for program areas to share learning outcomes data. Different investments will prioritise different grade levels and be at different stages with respect to measuring learning outcomes. Learning outcomes data availability will also change every year. For these reasons, it is unlikely any program will be able to respond to all parts of the Aidworks questionnaire in full, but we encourage program areas to complete as much as they can. If requested data is unavailable or unknown, simply enter "NA" (not applicable) and move to the next question.

Data sources for reporting against this indicator will ideally include program, national *and* regional-level data, but we anticipate most programs will only be able to report at one or two levels in any given year.

- **Program-level** learning assessment data, sometimes called sample-based learning assessment data, measures and reports learning outcomes directly related to the investment. Program-level data may be collected annually or through baseline, midline and/or endline learning assessments. Compared to other forms of data, program level data provides more granular and longitudinal evidence of the effectiveness of specific Australian support/interventions, particularly when national/regional data is less reflective of Australia's investment or in years when national/regional data is unavailable. For example,

  - The Papua New Guinea Partnerships in Education program uses the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) tools for baseline, midline and endline learning assessments. This data reflects the program's targeted support to early grades and its Grade 2 learning outcomes data can be reported against this indicator at the program-level.

- **National-level** learning assessment data, specific to individual countries, may be used at program level to show the effectiveness of Australia's support, particularly when Australia has invested in national education system strengthening, including Teacher Professional Development Systems and/or curriculum development. National learning assessment data is sometimes disaggregated at the sub-national level, which can be particularly helpful when Australia has provided targeted support for subnational regions or provinces. For example:

  - Several Pacific Island countries conduct national-level learning assessments, typically every second or third year in alternation with the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA). These include: the Vanuatu Standardized Test of Achievement (VANSTA); the Solomon Islands Standardised Tests of Achievement (SISTA); and the Standardised Test of Achievement in Kiribati (STAKi).

  - Indonesia has recently introduced a Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) which will support national-level reporting of lower secondary school learning outcomes.

- Regional-level learning assessment data is collected using standardised methodologies and can be useful for both country level reporting and aggregated regional reporting. Regional learning assessments have been mapped and aligned with SDG 4.1.1. For example:

  □ The PILNA[9] is administered by the Pacific Community's Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP)[10] to Grade 4 and Grade 6 students every three years. PILNA results may not be comparable with other regional/national learning assessments but can be compared against PILNA 2021 baseline results. PILNA Grade 4 learning assessment data is used for SDG 4.1.1 reporting for Grades 2 and 3.

  □ The South-East Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM)[11] is a sample-based regional learning assessment conducted for Grade 5 students[12] every three to four years.

  □ The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)[13] is an international-level learning assessment. But for the purposes of reporting against this indicator, PISA lower secondary school learning outcomes data can be reported under the regional-level heading.

DISAGGREGATION

Sex and disability disaggregated learning outcomes data should be reported under this indicator if available. If disaggregated data is unavailable or unknown, please enter "NA" (not applicable) and move to the next question. Because sex and disability disaggregated data shows how effectively Australian aid investments are benefiting girls, boys and children with disabilities compared to their representation in the broader population, estimating disaggregation by extrapolating from numbers of girls, boys and children with disability in the general population is inappropriate.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Papua New Guinea

Children and young people in Papua New Guinea (PNG) participate in two levels of learning assessment. Grade 4 and Grade 6 learners participate in a regional-level learning assessment (PILNA) every three years, and Grade 2 learners participate in a program-level learning assessment linked to Australia's education investments at key stages in the investment period. There is currently no national-level learning assessment in PNG.

This means that the PNG program may report reading and mathematics:
- Regional-level learning outcomes data from PILNA for children and young people every three years
  □ at Grade 4 level; and
  □ at the end of primary school [Grade 6]
- Program-level learning outcomes data for children and young people at Grade 2 level in years when this learning assessment is conducted.

The PNG program will not report national-level learning outcomes unless a national learning assessment for PNG becomes available in the future.

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[9] https://eqap.spc.int/PILNA

[10] Status of Pacific Education Report 2022 (PILNA regional report) (pdf)

[11] https://www.seaplm.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=56&Itemid=441&lang=en

[12] https://www.seaplm.org/PUBLICATIONS/regional%20results/SEA-PLM%202019%20Main%20Regional%20Report%20Summary.pdf

[13] https://www.oecd.org/pisa/)