

A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark skin and hair, smiling broadly. She is holding a red pencil in her right hand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Improving student learning in Mali

ACER has been working over the past two years to help develop an internal monitoring and evaluation system in Mali. **Petra Lietz** explains.



Dr Petra Lietz is a Principal Research Fellow in ACER's Australian Surveys research program.

ACER through its Centre for Global Education Monitoring is working with Œuvre Malienne d'Aide à l'Enfance du Sahel (OMAES), a non-government organisation in Mali, to provide support for the development of an internal monitoring and evaluation system.

OMAES manages Bækunko, a household-based assessment of children's learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy for six- to 14-year-old children. The long-term aim of the work is to enable OMAES to evaluate the influence of its communication and advocacy activities, and policy impact, particularly in terms of Bækunko.

Bækunko: Citizen-led assessment

In partnership with other civil-society organisations, OMAES manages Bækunko, a citizen-led assessment program.

Through Bækunko, OMAES aims to motivate stakeholders at various levels to take action in schools and communities, and become engaged in education policy reform with the ultimate goal of improving student learning. Its main strategy is to improve awareness among stakeholders, particularly parents, about the actual learning outcomes of children in Mali.

Education decision-making responsibilities in Mali have been decentralised over time to various local and regional levels. As a result, local, regional and national stakeholders are increasingly important in education

reform and in monitoring actual learning outcomes and improving the quality of education.

Developing an evaluation approach

Since Bækunko is an ongoing assessment program, OMAES has identified the need to develop an evaluation approach and tools to enable ongoing data collection for evaluation purposes, and to inform future communication and advocacy activities.

OMAES and ACER collaboratively decided that a prospective evaluation approach would best suit OMAES's information needs. Using this approach, OMAES and ACER staff worked together to further refine stakeholder group definitions and develop measurable indicators for specific outcomes, as well as tools for data collection for the evaluation, and suggested sampling approaches.

The evaluation framework also included guidelines for data analysis and reporting, and data use. In addition, an evaluation schedule was proposed, with team members agreeing that the evaluation and monitoring system should be piloted before being upscaled to a greater number of Bækunko assessment regions in Mali.

OMAES has now adapted this evaluation approach for three prioritised stakeholder groups:

- parents
- school management committees, and
- decentralised education committees at the commune level.

OMAES has administered surveys and conducted focus-group interviews to a sample of these key stakeholder groups in one region of Mali to pilot this evaluation approach, and its procedures and tools. OMAES plans to upscale the evaluation activities in 2017, after a review of insights from the pilot to a nationally representative sample of regions that have participated in Bækunko and to other stakeholder groups. ■

Further information

Measuring the impact of citizen-led assessments for improving the quality of education, by Petra Lietz and Mollie Tobin, is part of the Assessment GEMS series published by ACER's GEM Centre.

LINKS

The preliminary results of the stakeholder evaluation are available at www.oames.org

Read more about ACER's GEM research at www.acer.edu/gem

Read *Measuring the impact of citizen-led assessments for improving the quality of education* at <http://research.acer.edu.au/assessgems/11/>