

MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT (Final)

GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING (GEM) CENTRE PHASE 3

February 18, 2023 [FINAL MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT SUBMISSION]

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DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Council for Educational Research or the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Definition ¹
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AMPL	Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels
ANLAS	Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
C&E	Communications and engagement
CONFEMEN	Conférence des Ministres de l'Éducation des États et Gouvernements de la Francophonie (Conference of Ministers of Education in French-Speaking Countries)
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF)
EiE	Education in Emergencies
GAML	Global Alliance to Monitor Learning
GEM Centre	Global Education Monitoring Centre
GEM Executive	Global Education Monitoring Executive Group
GEM Partnership	Global Education Monitoring Partnership
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ILSA	International large-scale assessment
KIX EAP	Knowledge Innovation Exchange Europe, Asia, Pacific Hub
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LLECE	Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación (Latin-American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education)
LPS	Learning Progression Scale
MELF	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework
MFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MILO	Monitoring Impact on Learning Outcomes

¹ Several of these definitions, including those for relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, capability and lessons learned, are taken from the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MTEG	Monitoring Trends in Education Growth
NEQMAP	Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development -Development Assistance Committee
PAL Network	People's Action for Learning Network
PASEC	Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems of Conference of Ministers of Education in French-Speaking Countries (Program d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN – Conférence des Ministres de l'Éducation des États et Gouvernements de la Francophonie)
PIC	Pacific Island Country
PILNA	Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
RTID	Round Table Interactive Discussion
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SEA-PLM	South-East Asia-Primary Learning Metrics
SISQUE	Uzbekistan State Inspectorate for Supervision of Quality Education
SPC	Pacific Community (Compte officiel de la Communauté du Pacifique)
TALENT	UNESCO Teaching and Learning Educators' Network for Transformation for Sub-Saharan Africa
TIMSS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO IIEP	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute of Statistics International Institute for Educational Planning
(UNESCO) UIS	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute of Statistics
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund

USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition ²
ASER	Hindustani for “impact.”
Capacity	The overall ability of organisations or systems to add value to others.
Capacity Enhancement or Development	A process that focuses on increasing the abilities of specific types of personnel within an organisation. ³
Coherence	<p>“How well does the intervention (organisation) fit?” The compatibility of the intervention (organisation) with other interventions (organisations/bodies) in a country, sector or institution.</p> <p>Note: the extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention, and vice versa. Includes internal coherence and external coherence: Internal coherence addresses the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out by the same institution/government, as well as the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which that institution/government adheres. External coherence considers the consistency of the intervention with other actors’ interventions in the same context. This includes complementarity, harmonisation and coordination with others, and the extent to which the intervention is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort.</p>
Collaborative Evaluation	A collaborative evaluation “implies a varying level of involvement that considers the extent to which program staff and other stakeholders should be included as part of the evaluation team ... is often empowering to participants...(and) enhances their understanding of evaluation so they gain new skills...promotes utilization of evaluation findings.” ⁴
Effectiveness	<p>“Is the intervention (organisation) achieving its objectives?” The extent to which the intervention (organisation) achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.</p> <p>Note: analysis of effectiveness involves taking account of the relative importance of</p>

² Several of these definitions, including those for relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, capability and lessons learned, are taken from the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

³ Cohen, J. M. (1993). *Building sustainable public sector managerial, professional, and technical capacity: a framework for analysis and intervention*, Harvard Institute for International Development, Harvard University. Development Discussion Paper 473.

⁴ O’Sullivan, Rita M. (2008)

	the objectives or results.
Efficiency	<p>“How well are the resources being used?” The extent to which the intervention (organisation) delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.</p> <p>Note: “economic” is the conversion of inputs (funds, expertise, natural resources, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes and impacts, in the most cost-effective way possible, as compared to feasible alternatives in the context. “Timely” delivery is within the intended timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the demands of the evolving context. This may include assessing operational efficiency (how well the intervention was managed).</p>
Evaluation	A social science activity directed at collecting, analysing, interpreting and communicating information about the workings and effectiveness of social programs.
Global Education Monitoring	Global education monitoring is the systematic and strategic collection, analysis, interpretation and use of high-quality evidence (robust data on education outcomes, and factors related to those outcomes) to influence education policies, practices and investments aimed at improving educational progress for all learners. ⁵
Impact	<p>“What difference does the intervention (organisation) make?” The extent to which the intervention (organisation) has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.</p> <p>Note: impact means the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It is the social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. It captures the indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention reflected in holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and effects on people’s well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.</p>
Lessons Learned	Generalisations based on evaluation experiences with activities, programs or policies that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Lessons learned may highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design and implementation that affect performance, outcome and impact.
Objective	<p>A concrete statement describing what the project is trying to achieve. The objective should be written at a low level, so that it can be evaluated at the conclusion of a project to see whether it was achieved. A well-worded objective will be specific, measurable, attainable/achievable, realistic and time bound.</p> <p>http://www.tenstep.com/open/miscpages/94.3Glossary.htmlhttp://www.tenstep.com/open/miscpages/94.3Glossary.html</p>
Relevance	Is the intervention (or organisation) doing the right things? The extent to which the intervention (organisation) objectives and design respond to beneficiaries*, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. Note: “respond to” means that the objectives and design of

⁵ ACER. (2022). Definition provided by the GEM Centre Head, September, 2022.

	<p>the intervention are sensitive to the economic, environmental, equity, social, political economy and capacity conditions in which it takes place. “Partner/institution” includes government (national, regional, local), civil society organisations, private entities and international bodies involved in funding, implementing and/or overseeing the intervention. Relevance assessment involves looking at differences and trade-offs between priorities or needs. It requires analysing changes in the context to assess the extent to which the intervention can be (or has been) adapted to remain relevant.</p> <p>* “Beneficiaries” is defined as “the individuals, groups, or organisations, whether targeted or not, that benefit directly or indirectly, from the development intervention.” Other terms, such as rights holders or affected people, may also be used.</p>
Stakeholder	<p>Specific people or groups who have a stake in the outcome of the project. Normally stakeholders are from within the company and could include internal clients, management, employees, administrators, etc. A project may also have external stakeholders, including suppliers, investors, community groups and government organisations.</p> <p>http://www.tenstep.com/open/miscpages/94.3Glossary.htmlhttp://www.tenstep.com/open/miscpages/94.3Glossary.html</p>
Sustainability	<p>“Will the benefits last?” The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention (organisation) continue or are likely to continue.</p> <p>Note: includes an examination of the financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time. Involves analyses of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs. Depending on the timing of the evaluation, analyses may cover the actual flow of net benefits or the likelihood of net benefits continuing over the medium and long term.</p>

LOCATIONS OF GEM CENTRE PARTNERSHIPS

Figure 1: Map of global level partners



This map shows GEM Centre partners (in blue font) and countries reached between 2014--2023.

GEM CENTRE DATA TABLE

Name	Global Education Monitoring Centre (GEM Centre)	
Location	Australia (Authorised Geographic Area 937)	
Partnership Funding Organisations	Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Government of Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australian Government DFAT)	
Key Dates	Phase 3 Mid-Term Evaluation	July-December, 2022
	Phase 2 Mid-Term Review	August 2019-January 2020
	GEM Centre Implementation Periods	2020-2023 Phase 3 Partnership 2017-2020 Phase 2 Partnership 2014-2017 Phase 1 Partnership 2013 Founding/ACER
Contract Numbers	Phase 3 Agreement No. 76412 Phase 2 Agreement No. 73319 Phase 1 Agreement No. 70322	
Total Contract Values	TOTAL CONTRACT VALUE 2014-2023: \$12.750m (ACER Contribution: \$6.375m; DFAT Contribution: \$6.375m) Phase 3: \$4.2m (ACER Contribution: \$2.1m; DFAT Contribution: \$2.1m) Phase 2: \$4.350m (ACER Contribution: \$2.175m; DFAT Contribution: \$2.175m) ⁶ Phase 1: \$4.2m (ACER Contribution: \$2.m; DFAT Contribution: \$2.1m)	
Phase 3 Mid-Term Evaluation Provider & Collaborators	Valerie Haugen (Evaluator / Independent Consultant)	
	MTE Collaboration Team Members:	Ursula Schwantner (GEM Centre Head) Kemran Mestan (GEM Centre Coordinator) Jess Hennessy (GEM Centre Communications Specialist)

⁶ The Phase 2 grant agreement period was extended due to Partnership workshops in May - September, 2020. To cover the extended time period, the grant amount was increased from \$4.2m to \$4.350m.

	<p>Belynda McNaughton (DFAT Senior Education Advisor)</p> <p>Hazel Lang (DFAT Assistant Director, Australia Awards, Global Education and Scholarships (GLE), Global Programs and Partnerships Branch (GPB), Development Policy Division (DPD))</p> <p>Antonella Heggie (DFAT Program Officer Australia Awards; GLE; GPB; DPD)</p>
<p>MTE Contributing Organisations</p>	<p>ASER Centre India (New Delhi, India)</p> <p>Australian Government DFAT (Canberra, ACT, Australia)</p> <p>Global Partnership for Education (GPE) (Washington, DC, USA)</p> <p>Pacific Community Education Quality and Assessments Programme (Suva, Fiji)</p> <p>People’s Action for Learning Network (New Dehli, India)</p> <p>Research Triangle Institute International (Durham, North Carolina, United States of America)</p> <p>UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Office Education Bureau – South-East Asia – Primary Learning Metrics Secretariat (Bangkok, Thailand)</p> <p>UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (Paris, France)</p> <p>UNESCO Institute of Statistics (Montreal, Quebec, Canada)</p> <p>UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (Bangkok, Thailand)</p> <p>World Bank (Washington, DC)</p>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Education Monitoring Centre (GEM Centre) is a research hub established in 2013 and housed within the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), an Australian-founded international not-for-profit educational research organisation. The GEM Centre aim is to improve learning by ensuring that education policy, practice and investment are influenced by high-quality evidence and provides support to local, regional and global organisations, and governments. In 2014, ACER and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)⁷ entered the long-term strategic Global Education Monitoring Partnership (GEM Partnership). The Partnership brings together ACER's education research expertise and DFAT's aid development assistance and foreign policy expertise. The two organisations invest equally in the GEM Centre to continue to support international efforts to monitoring educational outcomes for the improvement of learning. The establishment of the GEM Centre and the initiation of the GEM Partnership came at a time of critical change as the world transitioned from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The GEM Partnership is based on the mutual priorities articulated in ACER's mission to improve learning⁸ and DFAT's Education Strategy and education policy.⁹

The priorities can be summarised as:

- academically rigorous research, analysis and capacity development
- strengthening Australia's capability to influence international debates on global learning goals and monitor educational outcomes in the Indo-Pacific region
- integrating system-based approaches and evidence-based decision-making for improving learning
- developing early childhood and foundational skills for learner progression
- learning in disadvantaged contexts
- focusing on the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁰

The GEM Centre Pathways to Impact Strategic Framework (2020)¹¹ captures the GEM Centre's overall objective (goal): To improve learning by ensuring that education policies, practices and investments are influenced by high-quality evidence. Figure 2¹² illustrates the progression from priorities to outcomes (short, medium and long term).

⁷ The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which provides foreign, trade and development policy advice to the Australian Government and works in partnership with a range of Australian and foreign government departments, bilateral and multilateral donors, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector, to represent Australia's interests and promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, stability, and poverty reduction in the Asia-Pacific region. DFAT's immediate development focus is on working with the region to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, informed by Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response. DFAT's Education Section provides strategic and technical advice and services to support effective aid investments in education. See p. 4 in Halse, Michelle. (2020). DFAT-ACER GEM Partnership: Phase Three Strategy.

⁸ Australian Council for Educational Research. <https://www.acer.org/au/about-us>. Accessed Aug. 23, 2022.

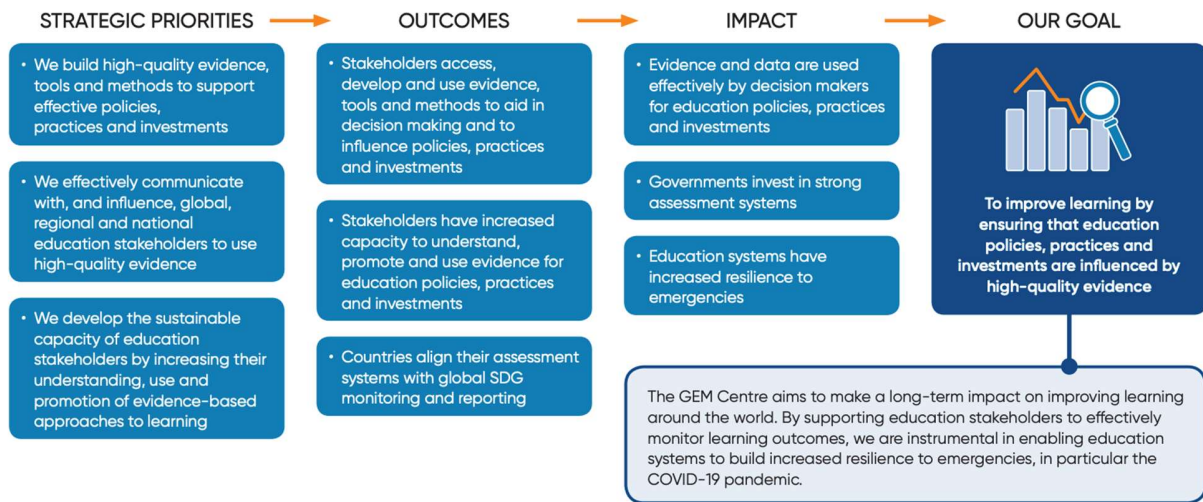
⁹ According to DFAT Education Advisor, Belynda McNaughton, there is no updated DFAT Education Strategy available at this point; however, there is a set of policy actions that are being utilised.

¹⁰ Australian Council for Educational Research. (2020). GEM Centre Completion Report for Phase 2 Funding 2017-2020. Melbourne, VIC, Australia: ACER GEM Centre.

¹¹ Australian Council for Educational Research. (2020). GEM Centre Pathways to Impact. Melbourne, VIC, Australia: ACER GEM Centre.

¹² Taken from ACER GEM Centre Pathways to Impact brochure.

Figure 2: GEM Centre Pathways to Impact



During Phase 2 (2017-2020), a Mid-Term Review¹³ (MTR) of the GEM Centre was carried out. The MTR validated the Centre’s overall success and provided recommendations for Phase 3 (2020-2023) to strengthen the ACER-DFAT Partnership through a clear strategic focus, deepened collaboration and active exchange, demonstrated outcomes over outputs, greater mutual accountability, and a stronger communications and stakeholder engagement strategy.¹⁴

The GEM Partnership commissioned a second Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) for Phase 3 (2020-2023) mid-point (July 2022 to February 2023) to assess progress against the MTR recommendations and to help inform the future of the Partnership. The MTE evaluator and Partnership members collaborated to plan the evaluation. The evaluator reviewed approximately 60 documents, interviewed 14 (11F/3M) individuals from GEM Centre key collaborating organisations, and DFAT, held four formal discussions with Partnership members and the GEM Executive, and had numerous conversations with GEM Centre personnel over the course of the evaluation period.

Evaluation questions were agreed with Board members and reflect the Organisation for Economic and Development Cooperation (OECD) Development Assistance Committee criteria. Sub-questions that focus on specific aspects of importance to Board members were incorporated and are listed in the Report body (see section 2.1). Recommendations from the previous MTR are covered as well. The evaluation questions covered the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the GEM Centre work with respect to global education monitoring and the functionality and perceived value of the GEM Partnership to both ACER and DFAT.

MTE Key Conclusions

The GEM Centre is undertaking important work in global education monitoring. Given the nascent state of global education monitoring at the international/global, regional, and country levels and the extensive

¹³ Fearnley-Sander, Mary. (2020). Mid-Cycle Independent Review of the ACER Centre for Global Education Monitoring (ACER-GEM). Melbourne: ACER GEM Centre.

¹⁴ Australian Council for Educational Research and Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2020). GEM Centre Completion Report for Phase 2 Funding 2017-2020. Melbourne: ACER.

opportunities to contribute thought leadership, high quality evidence/data, and products, the need for such work will continue into the foreseeable future. The value proposition – a commitment to contributing to the global public good – that is fundamental to the GEM Centre work program, is both unique and highly valued. Any interruption in or loss of this value proposition would mean a blow to innovation and the contributions to the public good. The GEM Centre is also a prime example of value for money. GEM Centre funding from DFAT and ACER for three phases (2014-2023) is \$12.750m and from 2014-2022, GEM Centre’s contribution to ACER’s income generation sits at \$44.4m, with another year remaining in phase 3. For every \$1.00 invested, the GEM Centre has brought in nearly \$3.50: this is a return on investment of roughly 3.5:1 or 350%.

The breadth and scale of GEM Centre opus is impressive and includes several firsts. Foremost among these is the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) 2022 espousal of the GEM Centre thought leadership and products (Learning Progressions Scales/LPSs and global Minimum Proficiency Levels/MPLs) as the common basis for global education monitoring and reporting architecture and the notion and pursuit of equivalency across diverse assessments. The Products Catalogue (Annex 2 chronicles some of the many product and conceptual contributions and demonstrates the ways in which the GEM Centre work is being taken up and pushed out and how spins-offs from the work are proliferating. The body of work has emerged over an extended timeframe and successes and movement forward are not always predictable or linear. It is highly likely that these process characteristics will continue. Ensuring the sustainability of products and concepts through widespread use at the regional and country levels will require focused attention.

The GEM Centre has excelled in the international/global landscape among the global education assessment community, and it can be assumed it will continue to do so, given the unmet needs in SDG Indicator 4.1 as well as early childhood education, youth/adult education and global citizenship. The GEM Centre has also contributed to the regional landscape within education assessment networks, especially the work on the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessments (PILNA) under the Pacific Community Education Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP). There has been limited traction at the country level, for various reasons, including challenges for the GEM Partnership board to identify and promote country engagement opportunities. Improving learning outcomes is an aspirational – but not unattainable – goal. However, making a difference in learning outcomes will require the international/global architecture as well as ongoing development assistance (technical and financial) at the country level that links assessment results with policy changes for systems, curricula, and teaching over an extended timeframe.

The value and merit of the work of the GEM Centre and the array of opportunities to contribute to the global public good at the international/global, regional, and country levels are extensive. Care must be taken to be strategically judicious in how to proceed and build upon the strong global education monitoring foundation put in place over the past decade. Key opportunities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- enhancing the GEM Centre’s capacity building work to expand the regional talent pools needed to fully and effectively build and operationalise assessment architecture and systems
- focusing on equity dimensions in global education monitoring through thought leadership and practical methods and products
- advocating for donor’ and assessment service providers’ commitment to “do no harm” principles and practices at the country level
- identifying a handful of countries as demonstration sites to strengthen the assessment ecosystem and the links with other education system pillars (curriculum, teaching) and

- advocating for the inclusion of assessment in education program designs and contracts and educating managing contractors and their advisers about global education monitoring and the assessment ecosystems.

The GEM Partnership has undergone its own stages of evolution. Since the 2019 MTR, Partnership members have worked hard to address the MTR recommendations, including strengthening the relationship between ACER and DFAT, but the full and expected depth of the Partnership has not been realised. Changes in the DFAT political economy and organisational ways of working have militated against the realisation of the enhanced Partnership vision. The significant transaction costs for both organisations as personnel try to live up to the expected roles and responsibilities do not appear to have commensurate benefits. At present, the Partnership is functioning but it is not highly functional.

Nonetheless, the common interests of both ACER and DFAT have been realised to a large extent through the Partnership. The GEM Centre has enhanced its (and ACER's) reputation over the past decade and efforts have paid off handsomely in terms of income-generation and status and credibility of Australian expertise, including in geographic areas (Indo-Pacific/Asia-Pacific) that are of interest to DFAT. DFAT's reputation and place within the global education monitoring landscape were very strong in the earlier years of the Partnership; however, since a high-water mark in the early days of the Partnership (coinciding with the advent of Sustainable Development Goal 4/SDG 4), DFAT's engagement and leadership in the global education monitoring field has lessened.

DFAT and ACER can both continue to benefit from a partnership, but the form of the relationship and the funding modality and funding envelope need to be reconsidered. DFAT also needs to resolve ambivalence regarding the Partnership, so that ACER can plan accordingly.

Recommendations

Use the time remaining in Phase 3 to:

Recommendation 1: Reconfirm the Partnership's shared priorities and interests and agree on acceptable ways to reduce transactions for Partnership members with respect to the existing work plan and governance functions for the remainder of Phase 3.

Recommendation 2: Determine whether the Partnership will continue and what changes will be enacted regarding the Partnership modality (given each organisation's political economy), funding modality, and funding envelope. DFAT should clarify its leadership role with the GEM Centre and involvement in global education monitoring through the Partnership and in what way/s. A DFAT–ACER arrangement that is less resource-intensive for personnel could still achieve the expected outcomes and benefits. ACER should undertake scenario planning and consider whether the MTE findings and conclusions and other recommendations should be factored into the future of the GEM Centre.

Recommendation 3: Begin to position the GEM Centre for increased impact and sustainability beyond Phase 3 by tightening the strategic approach and orientation around three levels of engagement at the global, regional, and country levels. Develop a crosswalk of DFAT priority countries, GPE countries, and countries in which ACER/the GEM Centre has already contributed, including via international ACER offices. Use the crosswalk to identify and agree on regional and country capacity development and education assessment systems strengthening and identify and commit to ways to promote GEM Centre engagement in specific countries and regions (including Southeast Asia). In addition, determine whether the GEM Centre or ACER branding should be used for external communication.

Recommendation 4: Identify and begin to produce and market products for a broader group of audiences the global, regional, and country levels that can be carried forward beyond Phase 3. Articulate

a strategic 'communication for development' approach that is aligned with and supports the tightened strategic approach (above) and effectively and efficiently contributes to the ongoing relevance, coherence, impact, and sustainability of Partnership efforts in the global education monitoring ecosystem.

Recommendation 5: Refine and incorporate several of the MTE data consolidation tools into the GEM Centre monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approach. Once the strategic direction is determined, improve the MEL plan and framework in terms of tracking and consolidation of output and outcome achievements to inform strategic decisions, implementation, and reporting beyond Phase 3.

I. INTRODUCTION

This section provides a brief history of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Centre and the GEM Partnership and a summary of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) approach and limitations.

I.1 GEM Centre Origin

The GEM Centre is a research hub established in 2013, not long before the world transitioned from the Millennium Development Goals to the September 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Education 2030):

Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

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 and (ii) mathematics, by sex.

The GEM Centre is housed within the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), an Australian-founded international not-for-profit educational research organisation. It seeks to drive improvements in learning by supporting the monitoring of educational outcomes worldwide through the development, documentation, and dissemination of models of good practice in education monitoring globally. The GEM Centre is a knowledge partner to local, regional, and global organisations and bodies, and governments.

I.2 GEM Centre Partnership

The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)¹⁵ provides foreign, trade and development policy advice and works in partnership with a range of public, private and civil society organisations. In 2014, shortly before the advent of the SDGs and as it became apparent there was a clear need and opportunity for thought leadership around the monitoring of SDG 4, DFAT and ACER entered the long-term strategic GEM Centre Partnership. The Partnership enables both organisations to capitalise on their respective strengths – DFAT’s development assistance and foreign policy expertise and ACER’s educational research expertise – to support international efforts in monitoring educational outcomes for the improvement of learning. The Partnership also complements other ACER and DFAT collaborative projects and initiatives at the bilateral, regional, and global levels, such as the Pacific Community’s Education Quality Assessment Program (EQAP) and the Australian Strategic Partnerships in Remote Education project.¹⁶

¹⁵ DFAT’s immediate development focus in the region is to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, informed by Partnerships for Recovery: Australia’s COVID-19 Development Response. DFAT’s Education Section provides strategic and technical advice and services to support effective aid investments in education. See Halse, M. (2020). *DFAT-ACER GEM Partnership: Phase Three Strategy*, p. 4.

¹⁶ This project has since ended.

The Partnership is based on mutual priorities articulated in ACER’s mission to improve learning¹⁷ and in DFAT’s Education Strategy and education policy.¹⁸ The mutual priorities that underpin the Partnership's work program can be summarised as:

- a common commitment to academically rigorous research, analysis and capacity development in the education sector
- the intention to strengthen Australia’s capability to:
 - inform and influence international debates on global learning goals and outcomes
 - monitor educational outcomes in the Indo-Pacific by reviewing trends and growth, which are essential markers for governments and development partners for appraising the efficacy of the development education investment and accountability
- a preference for integrated system-based approaches and evidence-based decision-making for improving learning
- the importance of early childhood development and foundational skills for learner progression
- a focus on learning in disadvantaged contexts
- an interest in the Asia-Pacific region.”¹⁹

Both DFAT and ACER invest in the GEM Centre, with total funding of \$12.750m for 2014–23. The allocation per phase is agreed by the Partnership Board and disbursed at the start of each of the Partnership’s three-year phases with an equal contribution from each organisation: Phase 1 2014–17 (ACER \$2.1m; DFAT \$2.1m), Phase 2 2017–20 (ACER \$2.175m; DFAT \$2.175m), and Phase 3 2020–23 (ACER \$2.1m; DFAT \$2.1m). The Partnership funding envelope excludes any additional resources generated by the GEM Centre or by ACER through capitalisation on reputation and work.

1.3 GEM Centre Strategic Framework

The GEM Centre’s overall objective (goal) is to improve learning by ensuring that education policies, practices and investments are influenced by high-quality evidence. Figure 3²⁰ shows the GEM Centre’s strategic framework and illustrates the progression from priorities to anticipated outcomes (short-medium term outcomes; medium–long-term impact outcomes; and long-term goal).

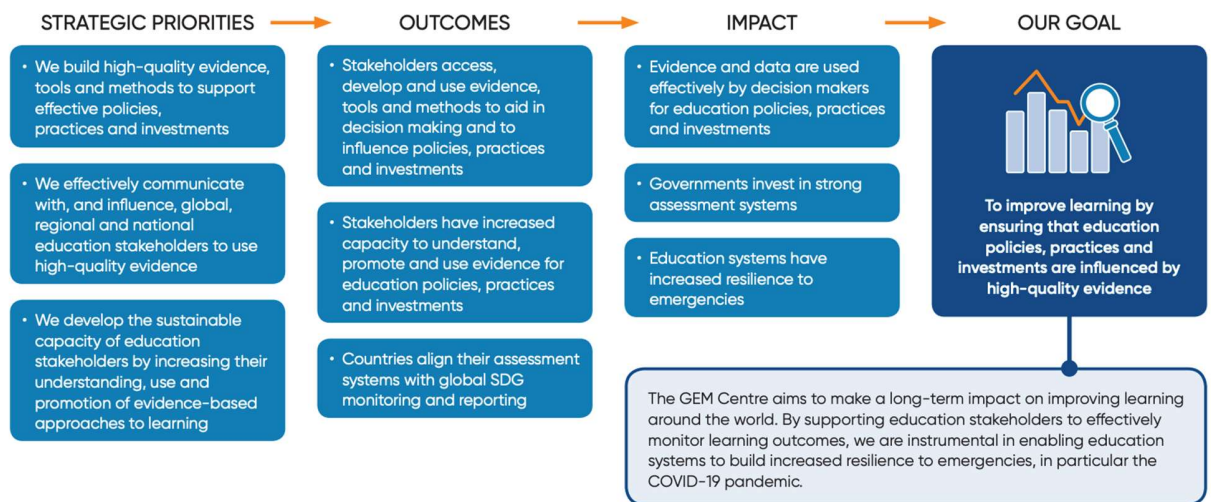
¹⁷ Australian Council for Educational Research. <https://www.acer.org/au/about-us>.

¹⁸ According to DFAT Education Advisor, Belynda McNaughton, there is no updated DFAT Education Strategy available at this point; however, there is a set of policy actions that are being utilised to guide programming. The new Development Policy due in May 2023 may provide further strategic direction to DFAT’s education portfolio

¹⁹ ACER. (2020). *GEM Centre Completion Report for Phase 2 Funding 2017-2020*. Melbourne: ACER GEM Centre.

²⁰ ACER. (2020). *GEM Centre Pathways to Impact*. Melbourne: GEM Centre.

Figure 3: GEM Centre Pathways to Impact



The GEM Centre has several sets of strategic parameters, as outlined below.

Three Strategic Priorities – 1) build high quality evidence by developing tools and methods that support effective policy, practice and investment and conducting and translating robust research into practical recommendations and actions; 2) communicate and influence by disseminating high-quality evidence in an accessible and useable way, and partnering with global and regional education stakeholders and networks; and 3) build sustainable capacity by leveraging global, regional and in-country stakeholders and networks and tailoring capacity developments to stakeholders, contexts and needs.

Three Key Principles – 1) define learning, 2) measure learning and 3) understand learning.

Four Work Program Areas – 1) Education 2030 Agenda: SDG 4 Monitoring and Reporting; 2) Quality Assessment Systems; 3) Reviews and Analyses; and 4) Communications and Engagement (cross-cutting thematic area).

The draft Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF),²¹ produced in May 2021, sets the main parameters for Phase 3 MEL, which are to:

- monitor progress across regular points in time relative to its intended outcomes
- evaluate processes, and the extent to which the GEM Centre is achieving the intended short to medium-term outcomes relative to the intended longer-term impacts
- learn from monitoring and evaluation to ensure the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the GEM Centre.

²¹ ACER. (2021). *GEM Centre Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (Draft)*. Melbourne: GEM Centre.

A Mid-Term Review²² (MTR) of the GEM Centre was carried out in 2019 during Phase 2 (2017–20). The MTR validated the Centre’s overall success and identified the following set of recommendations:²³

- DFAT should take a more active role in guiding the priorities of GEM Centre work and in communicating the significance of the work to DFAT posts and stakeholders
- ACER and DFAT should both communicate the significance of the GEM Centre work to stakeholders, with a focus on outcomes over outputs/deliverables
- The GEM Centre needs to develop a Theory of Change or program logic to better communicate its mission to improve learning through robust assessment, which is fundamental to creating impact through the Partnership.

The MTR noted that implementation of these recommendations would strengthen the ACER–DFAT Partnership through a clear strategic focus, deepened collaboration and active exchange, demonstrated outcomes over outputs, greater mutual accountability, and a stronger communications and stakeholder engagement strategy.

²² Fearnley-Sander, M. (2020). *Mid-Cycle Independent Review of the ACER Centre for Global Education Monitoring (ACER-GEM)*. Melbourne: GEM Centre.

²³ ACER. (2020). *GEM Centre Completion Report for Phase 2 Funding 2017-2020*. Melbourne: GEM Centre.

2. MID-TERM EVALUATION APPROACH AND LIMITATIONS

The GEM Partnership commissioned Dr. Valerie Haugen, an independent external evaluator, to conduct an MTE in Phase 3 (2020–23), from July 2022 to February 2023. The MTE is intended to enable the GEM Partnership to reflect on progress against the 2019 Review recommendations and to help position the GEM Centre for the remainder of Phase 3 and to inform the next implementation triennium (i.e., Phase 4).

2.1 Evaluation Approach and Evaluation Questions

Partnership members were deeply involved in a collaborative MTE process to frame the evaluation approach and questions and to collect and discuss data and draft findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Ultimately, however, the final conclusions and recommendations were exclusively the purview of the evaluator.

Seven overarching evaluation questions, each with a sub-set of specific questions, were agreed. These seven overarching questions reflect the Organisation for Economic and Development Cooperation (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria. The 2019 Review recommendations are addressed as sub-questions under Question 7.

1: To what extent is the GEM Centre relevant with respect to global education monitoring?²⁴

- Is the strategic focus of the GEM Centre guided by the shared objectives and individual interests of DFAT and ACER, as outlined in the GEM Partnership Phase 3 Strategy?
- Is the GEM Centre’s work program consistent with its strategic focus?
- Is the GEM Centre’s work program relevant for its partners and other stakeholders?

2: To what extent is the GEM Centre coherent with respect to global education monitoring?

- Is the GEM Centre compatible with other organisations/entities in education monitoring globally, regionally, and in specific countries?
- Does the GEM Centre demonstrate internal coherence (addressing the synergies and interlinkages between the GEM Centre and other interventions carried out by ACER and DFAT and consistency of the GEM Centre with relevant international norms and standards to which ACER and DFAT adhere)?
- Does the GEM Centre demonstrate external coherence (addressing consistency with other actors’ interventions and including complementarity, harmonization, and coordination and value adding without duplication)?

3: To what extent is the GEM Centre effective in enhancing global education monitoring?

- Has the GEM Centre achieved/will the GEM Centre achieve the outcomes identified in *Pathways to Impact*, especially the short to medium-term outcomes?

²⁴ The GEM Centre defines global education monitoring as “the systematic and strategic collection, analysis, interpretation and use of high-quality evidence (robust data on education outcomes, and factors related to those outcomes) to influence education policies, practices and investments aimed at improving educational progress for all learners.”

- Is the GEM Centre work likely to contribute to the long-term goal of improving learning?
- Has the GEM Centre contributed to the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery?
- Has the COVID-19 pandemic created opportunities and challenges for the Centre and its work program?

4: To what extent is the GEM Centre efficient in enhancing global education monitoring?

- Is the GEM Centre using resources in the most cost-effective way possible and in a timely manner?
- Are the inputs adequate to implement the GEM Centre's strategic priorities and work program?
- Does the GEM Centre represent value for money?

5: To what extent is the GEM Centre making an impact on global education monitoring? (Refer to Figure 3 section 1.3)

- Is the GEM Centre making an impact on global education monitoring, specifically on short to medium-term expected outcomes, and on promoting inclusive and equitable education?
- Is the GEM Centre on track to elicit the expected long-term impacts?
- Does the GEM Centre have a Theory of Change or program logic to better communicate its mission to improve learning through robust assessment, which is fundamental to creating impact through the Partnership? (2019 Review Recommendation)

6: To what extent is the GEM Centre's work on and benefits to global education monitoring sustainable? (Refer to Figure 3 section 1.3)

- Will the GEM Centre's strategic priorities and work program have a lasting benefit in working towards meeting the Centre's overall objective?
- Do the GEM Centre's strategic priorities and work program need to be reshaped for the remainder of the Phase 3 funding agreement to have a lasting benefit?
- Should other aspects be considered to ensure the continuation of GEM Centre benefits beyond the current Phase 3 funding agreement?

7: To what extent is the GEM Partnership functional and of perceived value to both ACER and DFAT?

- Are both partners contributing actively to achieving the short to medium-term outcomes of the GEM Partnership, including communicating the outcomes and significance of the GEM Centre work to DFAT posts and other stakeholders? (2019 MTR Recommendations 1 and 2)
- Do GEM Centre governance and operations support the implementation of the Centre's strategic priorities and work program? (Including: has DFAT taken a more active role in guiding the GEM Centre's work and in communicating its significance to DFAT posts and stakeholders? Have ACER and DFAT communicated the significance of the GEM Centre's work to stakeholders, with a focus on outcomes over outputs/deliverables?)

- Are ACER's and DFAT's stated shared interests and organisation-specific interests being achieved through the GEM Partnership?
- Do specific benefits, disadvantages and limitations arise from the GEM Partnership model, given organisational changes in DFAT and ACER over time?

2.2 Methods

The MTE utilised a combination of methods, including document review, key informant interviews, and collaborative discussions with Partnership personnel as a group and individually to collect the information used to form the conclusions and recommendations presented in this report. The evaluator reviewed approximately 60 documents. Eleven interviews were conducted with 14 individuals (11 women, three men) with deep global education monitoring knowledge and experience from organisations that reflected the range of GEM Centre key collaborating organisations and DFAT. In addition, three round table interactive discussions (RTIDs) were held with five Partnership personnel, including three from ACER and two from DFAT. Numerous conversations took place with GEM Centre and ACER personnel, especially the GEM Centre Head, Dr Ursula Schwantner (see Table I below.) Efforts were made to triangulate the data.

Table I. GEM Centre Evaluation Methods

Research method	Data source	Instruments and analyses	Numbers
Literature review	GEM Centre technical, operational and contractual documents Documents referenced in GEM Centre documents DFAT strategic documents of relevance to the Partnership Documents collected through internet searches	Content analysis of qualitative data to identify themes and patterns and discrepant cases	~60 documents
Key informant interview – formal	External experts (11) DFAT experts (3)	Interview protocol Content analysis as above	14
Conversations	Internal GEM Centre personnel knowledgeable about Centre		4 current personnel
Partnership Round Table Interactive Discussion (RTID)	Current Partnership personnel	Semi-structured agenda with PowerPoints covering targeted topics/content	3 RTIDs 5 current Partnership Board Members (3 GEM Centre; 2 DFAT)
GEMC Executive Round Table Interactive Discussion	GEM Executive personnel	Semi-structured agenda with targeted topics/content	1 RTID 7 ACER Personnel (including GEM

Research method	Data source	Instruments and analyses	Numbers
			executive members)

Evaluation questions were agreed with Board members and reflect the Organisation for Economic and Development Cooperation (OECD) Development Assistance Committee criteria. Sub-questions that focus on specific aspects of importance to Board members, including three recommendations from the 2019 MTR, were incorporated, and are listed in the Report body (see section 2.1). A separate Inception Report that details the evaluation approach was produced and submitted to the Partnership Board for internal use.

2.3 Limitations

- **Evaluation scope/intensity:** the GEM Centre Partnership board members wanted the evaluation to be a “light touch” endeavour and focused on Phase 3. However, due to the non-linear and non-time-bound nature of the work, the evaluator decided to take account of Phases 1 and 2 as well. Limiting the number of key informants to a few purposively selected individuals contained the scope of the evaluation yet was sufficient for identifying patterns in the interview data.
- **Evaluation timeframe:** the original timeframe for the evaluation (mid-July to late November 2022) was already lengthy, then extended into 2023 for various reasons, including availability of interviewees and GEM Partnership Board members. It was hard to maintain momentum over such a protracted timeframe. While not ideal, the situation managed, particularly through ongoing conversations with the GEM Centre Head.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** the absence of a high-quality MELF and associated data aggregation and reporting hindered the MTE. For example, GEM Centre documents offer abundant information, but analyses and reporting against analytical frameworks are not readily available. This meant that the evaluator needed to develop and populate suitable analytical frameworks. This type of work takes time and effort but is necessary for trustworthy analyses and credible conclusions and recommendations. The limitation was mitigated by working closely with GEM Centre personnel to fill data gaps.
- **Content:** many GEM Centre documents contain dense narrative, with terminology that is not always clearly defined or consistent across the three phases, and some opacity as to how conceptual constructs fit together and can be monitored and evaluated. These obstacles hampered the evaluation, but ongoing engagement with the GEM Centre Head helped overcome challenges.
- **Analysis of qualitative data:** qualitative data can be analysed using approaches ranging from manual assessment to intensive coding using dedicated software. Due to time and human resource constraints and the small number of key informants, qualitative data were analysed manually to identify patterns and themes. In addition, by focusing on global-level stakeholders, the evaluator was unable to compare their views with those of regional and country-level stakeholders.

3. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section provides key findings and conclusions for each overarching evaluation question and its sub-questions.

3.1 To what extent is the GEM Centre relevant with respect to global education monitoring?

- Is the strategic focus of the GEM Centre guided by the shared objectives and individual interests of DFAT and ACER, as outlined in the GEM Partnership Phase 3 Strategy?
- Is the GEM Centre’s work program consistent with its strategic focus?
- Is the GEM Centre’s work program relevant for its partners and other stakeholders?

The GEM Centre’s strategic focus is to be guided by DFAT and ACER’s shared objectives and individual interests. However, given the sizeable number of shared and individual interests (30, including nine DFAT interests, eight ACER interests and 13 shared interests found in the Phase 3 Partnership Strategy),²⁵ the overlap and opacity of many, and the absence of a clear tracking mechanism, it is difficult to demonstrate the relevance of each interest to the strategic focus. For the purposes of the evaluation, the list was rationalised to six common interests: 1) contributing high-quality initiatives for the global good; 2) promoting Australian expertise; 3) working in the Asia-Pacific region, 4) early childhood development and foundational skills for learning progression; 5) a preference for integrated system-based approaches and evidence-based decision-making for improving learning; and 6) focusing on disadvantaged learners. The discussion below provides evidence of the ways in which the GEM Centre’s strategic focus is guided by shared interests, as well as the work program’s alignment with the strategic focus and its relevance for partners and other stakeholders.

FINDINGS

At the global level, the GEM Centre’s relevance is widely recognised. All interviewees noted the GEM Centre’s thought leadership and efforts in the early days of SDG 4 as a member of the Learning Metrics Task Force and then the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning convened by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS). The Learning Progression Scales (LPSs) and the Global Minimum Proficiency Levels (MPLs) both came out of internal work by ACER pre-SDG 4 and were finally accepted by global expert stakeholders because of GEM Centre advocacy. Two interviewees echoed the consistent views shared during interviews: *“Insofar as I know the work of the GEM Centre, it is absolutely relevant. There would be a major gap if the GEM Centre did not exist.”* *“There aren’t too many organisations that cross over into what the GEM Centre does.”* *“The GEM Centre approach has been extremely positive and qualitatively different from other organisations that could be doing the same things.”* The GEM Centre is pursuing opportunities to continue to contribute to the global public good in the next stage of global education monitoring – “blue sky” work in new areas of SDG 4 (4.1.1a, 4.1.1c, 4.2, 4.6, 4.7) and, in this way, will remain relevant at the global level.

²⁵ Halse, M. (2020). *DFAT-ACER GEM Partnership: Phase Three Strategy*. This is an internal document for the Partnership organisations only.

Relevance at the regional level is particularly noticeable in the Pacific and Southeast Asia regions through collaboration with the Pacific Community EQAP on the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA), the South-East Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM),²⁶ the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) and, increasingly in South Asia where GEM Centre work has been picked up by UNICEF India through ACER India and by South Asia members of the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network for Citizen-Led Assessments. The GEM Centre work on COVID-19: Monitoring Impact on Learning Outcomes (COVID-19: MILO) in collaboration with the Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems of the Conference of Ministers of Education in French-Speaking Countries (PASEC CONFEMEN) is also viewed as being relevant and timely, although the results were unsurprising to most interviewees, given the learning crisis that existed before the pandemic. Several interviewees emphasised the importance for the GEM Centre to remain relevant through focused and strategic regional (and country) engagement:

We have a ton of data now at the global level, so we need to work at the regional and country levels. We need to create momentum at the country level and that is completely different (than at the global level) – we need a new approach for that! Don't only sell services but be in partnership with national partners.

Focus on the end user. Make people who aren't 'education insiders' care.

The GEM Centre does not appear to be relevant in other regions of the world. Some interviewees mentioned that, while there is a competitive advantage for involvement in the Asia-Pacific region, understanding what is happening globally across regions (e.g., the Latin America and Caribbean region through the UNESCO Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of the Quality of Education Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa) could help the GEM Centre enhance its relevance. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of worldwide regional endeavours can inform GEM Centre work.

The PAL Network for Citizen-Led Assessments (CLAs) collaboration with the GEM Centre deserves special mention in terms of relevance. International large-scale assessments (ILSAs – such as early grade reading assessments, early grade mathematics assessments, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS], Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA], Trends in Mathematics and Science Study [TIMSS]) that are costly and dependent on technical experts, are common. These assessments are often only funded for one round of administration and countries cannot afford (and may lack capacity to undertake) additional rounds; as such, the assessment is a snapshot in time. Although a snapshot has its uses, the absence of assessments over time prevents monitoring progress. CLAs offer a low-cost and egalitarian alternative to the ILSAs but have had issues with rigour. The PAL Network and GEM Centre are helping to enhance the rigour of the CLAs without losing their unique benefits: together, the organisations are breaking new ground conceptually and technically. The rapid increase in PAL Network members from four to 14 organisations over the past decade is indicative of a broader trend toward CLAs.

All interviewees considered country-level work to be a very relevant focus, and the GEM Centre products and methods are seen to be relevant for use in various countries. *“There is now a push*

²⁶ Several interviewees noted the importance of donor funding enabling the EQAP to advance PILNA work over the past 12 years and the struggle to make the SEA-PLM work as successful, given the lack of funding.

for the MILO AMPL²⁷ to be used. Everyone – the GPE,²⁸ UIS, World Bank, and others – have realised that countries simply don't know how to do assessment well.” There are examples of GEM Centre engagement with countries, for example, the several inputs over time for the Government of Indonesia National Assessment Centre and with the Government of South Africa and the principles, approaches, methods, tools and lessons generated by the GEM Centre are also applied in ACER's contracted work for other organisations (e.g., UNESCO, GPE, World Bank). For example, the GPE promotes the use of GEM Centre tools, and there is potential for dissemination to be more strategic under the GPE's new operating model.

There have been some opportunities for the application of GEM Centre work in DFAT priority countries (e.g., Indonesia, Papua New Guinea [PNG], Philippines) that are highly relevant, but the time-bound nature of the engagement and the lack of potential for follow-on affects both relevance and impact (see also section 3.4 Efficiency and section 3.5 Impact). Overall, there was a shared perspective among both internal and external interviewees that GEM Centre relevance at the country level could be enhanced beyond some limited examples, such as the EQAP work with Pacific Island ministries of education to analyse PILNA results and identify policy actions. “The GEM Centre needs to make a clear line of sight between affecting policy and policy affecting learning. There is still a long way to come from their academic approach to what policymakers need, although it is getting better.”

Indications are that the GEM Centre contributions around the alignment of any/all assessment results with the global MPLs, quality assurance of data for SDG 4 reporting, and expanding and promoting the Global Item Bank will remain relevant. Interviewees suggested additional avenues for staying relevant, including generalisability of results to the sub-national level and equity aspects such as: disability-sensitive assessments (through assessments adapted for use with students with disabilities²⁹ and incorporation of the Washington Group questions³⁰ as part of an assessment protocol for any student who is assessed); analysis of the effects of socio-economic status on assessment results; and virtual assessment for use in conflict-, crisis- and crime-affected contexts. Several interviewees also mentioned the need for qualitative data in addition to the quantitative data being generated. Other interviewees mentioned the relevance of GEM Centre literature. “The ACER website is one of the sources I monitor on a daily basis ... The resources are definitely of high quality”; “We use the Centre's work in our resources and syntheses.” But they also expressed concerns about ongoing relevance (see also section 3.6 Sustainability) with respect to the continued use of GEM Centre tools and methods, especially given the proliferation of assessment products over the past two decades.

One of the main objectives of the Learning Portal is getting products out to ministries of education. ... But there are so many tools. We've been trying to synthesise some of the evidence and package and share. ... And how do you link sustainability with the publications being produced? Many organisations are also struggling with this.

²⁷ Assessment for Minimum Proficiency Levels

²⁸ Global Partnership for Education

²⁹ See GEM Centre research into disability-inclusive education. ACER. (2022). Teacher professional development for disability inclusion in low- and middle-income Asia-Pacific countries: An evidence and gap map. Melbourne: ACER. <https://www.acer.org/au/discover/article/enabling-teachers-to-support-students-with-disability> and <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cl2.1287>

³⁰ Washington Group on Disability Statistics. <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/>

There was some scepticism about the relevance of GEM Centre’s research studies under the Reviews and Analyses work area and a feeling that there was not a clear and obvious link between the studies and the core business of global education monitoring.

CONCLUSIONS

The GEM Centre global work is highly relevant overall, including for partners and stakeholders. Since its inception in 2013, the GEM Centre has built a highly credible reputation among international organisations; the increase in contracts (see section 3.4 Efficiency) is testament to the GEM Centre’s relevance. The GEM Centre’s strategic focus is relevant, as is its work program. The Products Catalogue (see Annex III), GEM Centre Annual Reports and the MTE interviews provide an abundance of examples of the development of high-quality evidence, tools, and methods to support effective policies, practices, and investments. Moreover, the many examples of the uptake of and spin-offs from these products are testimony to the relevance of the work program and actions in support of the shared interests of ACER and DFAT.

Given the nascent state of the global education monitoring ecosystem, it is very likely the GEM Centre will remain relevant well into the future, even operating as is. However, there are clear opportunities for the GEM Centre and the GEM Partnership to increase relevance by:

- continuing to contribute to and influence global education monitoring for SDG 4.1, including through incorporating qualitative data and equity measures
- advancing the “blue sky” initiatives around 4.2, 4.3 and 4.7
- continuing to build capacity at the regional level, especially in the regions of strategic importance to Australia, including Southeast Asia
- working in partnership at the country level to identify contextually appropriate assessment for national use and policy linking³¹ and for SDG 4 monitoring and reporting.

The suggestions of some interviewees for country-level innovation, such as incorporation of the Washington Group questions or sub-national generalisability, should be considered. The GEM Centre can help to counteract harm from the development community that comes from pushing education assessments that are not undertaken as part of an appropriate assessment framework and that cannot be repeated for temporal comparability. Such situations can be communicated to DFAT to advocate for wiser actions by the development community (see section 3.4 Efficiency).

In a landscape replete with assessment tools and large and powerful organisations influencing action at the country level, assuring the GEM Centre’s relevance in the practical work of global education monitoring will need deeper thought and strategising, also taking into account coherence, impact and sustainability (see Questions 3.2, 3.5 and 3.6).

3.2 To what extent is the GEM Centre coherent with respect to global education monitoring?

- Is the GEM Centre compatible with other organisations/entities in education monitoring globally, regionally, and in specific countries?

³¹ See: UNESCO. (2017). Large-scale assessment data and learning outcomes: linking assessments to evidence-based policy making and improved learning. Paris: UNESCO.

- Does the GEM Centre demonstrate internal coherence (addressing the synergies and interlinkages between the GEM Centre and other interventions carried out by ACER and DFAT and consistency of the GEM Centre with relevant international norms and standards to which ACER and DFAT adhere)?
- Does the GEM Centre demonstrate external coherence (addressing consistency with other actors' interventions and including complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination and value adding without duplication)?

FINDINGS

There are many examples of GEM Centre compatibility, complementarity, harmonisation, coordination and non-duplicative value-adding with other organisations/entities in education monitoring globally, regionally and in specific countries. Several examples of success, especially in compatibility, are covered in Question 3.1 Relevance (above). In addition, many interviewees consistently noted the GEM Centre's contribution to harmonisation, coordination and value-adding through its global thought leadership around SDG 4.1.1b (also discussed in Question 3.1 Relevance). Many interviewees gave specific examples of inter-organisational compatibility from their own experiences and observations at global fora. Interviewees, GEM Centre personnel and GEM Centre documents yielded no evidence of incompatibility. Regarding the compatibility of the GEM Centre with stakeholders, one interviewee noted:

I put this [the effective relationship with the GEM Centre] down to our ACER partnership – it's been a catalyst for being able to work effectively with the GEM Centre. Ministers of education are very aware of ACER work – it is not seen as an external organisation, parachuting in – it is part of the “education family.” I see real synergies and line of connection between what we do, what ACER and the GEM Centre does and what NEQMAP does.

The examples below regarding internal and external coherence provide additional evidence of compatibility.

There were suggestions that the depth of compatibility could be improved, particularly at regional and country levels, for greater impact. Many interviewees emphasised the need for a deep and grounded understanding of country-specific contexts to identify opportunities, craft suitable responses, and avoid redundancies/overlap with other donors – in general and in the interests of the GEM Partnership. For example, two concurrent activities undertaken with SISQUE in Uzbekistan that both focused on assessment landscape capacity – one by USAID and one by OECD/PISA 2022 (the latter was developed based on GEM Centre principles): neither provider was aware of the other's efforts and SISQUE did not volunteer the information. “A lot of work on assessment tends to happen in a vacuum; countries tend to go in whatever direction a funding organisation pushes them.”

There are many examples of how the GEM Centre promotes internal coherence with ACER through synergies and linkages, including:

- push-out of ACER internal (pre-GEM Centre) work on LPSs
- uptake by ACER global and ACER international offices of GEM Centre products, such as the ACER India development of the *Senior Education Administrators' Learning Assessments Self-Evaluation Tool* that drew on the GEM Centre *Good Practices in Learning Assessments* publication

- GEM Centre rebroadcasting of the *Self-Evaluation Tool* and results at the NEQMAP 2019 annual meeting.

There is also some evidence of internal coherence with DFAT education work through synergies and linkages, including:

- several contracts to support the Innovation for Indonesia’s School Children program, for which GEM Centre provided technical support to the National Assessment Program
- technical support and capacity building for Asian Development Bank projects for the Government of Indonesia National Assessment Centre with funding from DFAT
- development, administration, and analyses of two early grade reading and math assessment baselines for the DFAT-funded Philippines Education Pathways for Peace in Mindanao, implemented by a managing contractor
- a review of assessment of student learning outcomes for the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) Basic Education Quality, Access and Learning Program (through a managing contractor)
- ongoing engagement with the EQAP on PILNA, funded through DFAT and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

Despite these examples of coherence, there were also examples of how the DFAT ecosystem and political economy hinders the flourishing of Partnership work in DFAT priority regions and countries and with managing contractors, militates against synergies and interlinkages, and prevents the GEM Centre from identifying and advancing coherent country-level and region-level opportunities without strong advocacy from DFAT through the Partnership. This situation is discussed in 3.7 Partnership. The GEM Centre’s missed country-level opportunities are discussed in 3.4 Efficiency.

Several interviewees noted weaknesses in the internal coherence of the GEM Centre’s own work program. “*The work program needs to be more targeted – needs to have a clearer strategy. (It) still feels ‘ad hoc’ – it needs to be more coherent.*” There seem to be two contributing factors to the perspective that the GEM Centre work program lacks coherence. One factor may be that, while each GEM Centre phase (including Phase 3) has been based on a detailed internal work program since 2014, there are parts of the work that are responsive to partner needs, requests and opportunities and contextual changes (such as a global pandemic) and therefore may look *ad hoc* and opportunistic. Other factors that may reinforce the *ad hoc* appearance of the GEM Centre work program may be the density of its reports, in terms of language and the volume of work included, and difficulty in articulating a clear and compelling narrative.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the GEM Centre work program demonstrates strong coherence and compatibility with the global education monitoring work of other organisations/bodies and at global, regional, and country levels. One organisation cannot rectify the coherence problems at each of these levels, but the GEM Centre is well placed to be a leader in the next stage of evolution of the global education monitoring ecosystem. Realising this leadership potential will require a deeper and clearer strategic vision. Specifically, the work program itself needs to be more strategically coherent. This is not to say that the opportunistic aspect should be eliminated, but the work program needs more intentional strategic thought underpinning a Phase 4 (as mentioned above in

section 3.1 Relevance). Even if challenging, given the non-linear and unpredictable uptake of the work, articulating a strong, coherent narrative about GEM Centre work (and emphasising that narrative through key messages) is important. The GEM Centre can also inform DFAT of opportunities to enhance coherence through its membership in the donor community, including striving for coherence in country level assessments within an appropriate national assessment system framework to avoid causing harm (see section 3.1 Relevance above).

3.3 To what extent is the GEM Centre effective in enhancing global education monitoring?

- Has the GEM Centre achieved/will the GEM Centre achieve the outcomes identified in *Pathways to Impact*, especially the short to medium-term outcomes?
- Is the GEM Centre work likely to contribute to the long-term goal of improving learning?
- Has the GEM Centre contributed to the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery?
- Has the COVID-19 pandemic created opportunities and challenges for the Centre and its work program?

FINDINGS

As articulated in the Pathway to Impact program logic (Figure 5, section 1.3), the GEM Centre's strategic priorities are to:

- 1) generate high-quality evidence, tools, and methods to support effective policies, practices, and investments
- 2) effectively communicate with and influence global, regional, and national education stakeholders to use high-quality evidence
- 3) develop the sustainable capacity of education stakeholders.

Short to medium-term outcomes (called outcomes and impact in the logic diagram) can be summarised as:

- stakeholders are accessing and using the evidence, tools, and methods and developing and using additional evidence, tools, and methods
- stakeholders have increased capacity to understand, promote and use evidence
- countries align their assessment systems with global SDG monitoring and reporting
- governments invest in strong assessment systems
- education systems have increased resilience to emergencies.

For additional discussion of the long-term goal to improve learning outcomes, see Question 3.5 Impact.

Achievements in Strategic Priority I, *generate high-quality evidence, tools, and methods to support effective policies, practices and investments*, are found in the large pool of high-quality evidence (e.g., assessment results, alignment of assessments results with global metrics), tools and methods generated over the past decade by the GEM Centre. Please refer to the Products Catalogue (Annex III) for an extensive and detailed set of examples. In addition, the GEM Centre Annual

Reports (including the 2022 Report) list the evidence, tools and methods generated and the Centre's engagements and collaborations.

Achievements in Strategic Priority 2, *effective communication and influence*, have two aspects: ongoing interaction through calls, messages, meetings and workshops, and strategic communications through targeted marketing. Both are discussed here. There are many examples of the GEM Centre's success in ongoing communication and influencing education stakeholders, as evidenced by the realisation of some of the short to medium-term outcomes.

The GEM Centre has acted on the 2019 MTR recommendation to improve its strategic communications products. There are now designated communications personnel, a website refresh is underway, and several guiding documents have been produced, including a communications and engagement (C&E) strategy, a C&E plan template, and a messaging toolkit. Six bespoke C&E plans have been produced and implemented, with more anticipated, and a stakeholder survey will be developed and administered to get perspectives on the GEM Centre. External products are still largely in the form of technical reports and articles, with most documents oriented to a small, select readership. Some notable products, such as the Assessment GEMS series, could appeal to a broader audience.

There are some recurring issues with strategic communications. For example, there is no consistent naming convention for documents, which makes marketing difficult; some documents are not disseminated in a timely manner and/or do not adequately speak to their title (e.g., "policy briefs" published prior to Phase 3). Most interviewees mentioned that a strong marketing campaign with clear messaging about the GEM Centre's global education monitoring work and an expanded suite of products crafted for a broader audience (particularly aimed at ministry decision-makers), in addition to reports for experts in the field, would be useful. Two interviewees noted, "*It's hard to quantify (the GEM Centre) influence and benefits. But the GEM Centre needs to be able to create a narrative around all the benefits – beyond a report on COVID-19 or 21st-century skills.*" "*I have this feeling that so much more is possible – possibilities that remain untapped because of the [lack of] GEM Centre visibility [beyond the global education monitoring elite].*"

Achievements in Strategic Priority #3, *stakeholder sustainable capacity*, need to be discussed in relation to two outcomes: *stakeholders are accessing and using the evidence, tools and methods, developing and using additional evidence, tools and methods, and have increased capacity to understand, promote, and use evidence.* Several examples demonstrate that regional and country-level stakeholders are accessing and using GEM Centre evidence, tools and methods and developing their own. For example, the GEM Centre's capacity-building workshops with regional network members have resulted in them developing a range of products, and there is some indication that those products are being used in members' home countries, although there is no consistent tracking of application and benefits.

There are also instances that show that stakeholders have increased capacity to understand, promote, and use evidence because of the GEM Centre's efforts. A standout example is found in the Pacific Islands. The unique trilateral relationship between DFAT, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Pacific Community (SPC) and a flexible funding agreement enabled the EQAP to form a five-year partnership plan with ACER in 2015, with support from the GEM Partnership, to establish PILNA governance and management, develop and implement PILNA 2015, and design a long-term regional assessment model. Senior ministry officials have been heavily involved in the PILNA development process and the assessments have been administered and

results interrogated over the past 12 years. Some ministries have used PILNA results to introduce policies to support improved teaching and learning (e.g., the PNG Department of Education used PILNA writing rubrics with teachers to improve classroom teaching and learning). “The GEM Centre has been invaluable to us in ensuring the PILNA is high-quality and in reporting the results.” Other examples³² include the collaboration with the PAL Network on the International Common Assessment of Literacy (ICAN) and Early Language and Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (ELANA).³³ (See Annex V Capacity Enhancement Summary and Annex III Products Catalogue for more evidence.) There are various publications that document policy changes; however, in general, policies and the effects of policy implementation effects are not well documented, tracked and/or reported and those that are publicised are not necessarily linked to GEM Centre work at the country level.³⁴

Some interviewees noted that the results of the MPLs and other assessments have affected how education system leaders and practitioners view and understand what is happening in education systems.

In countries that participate in international or cross-national assessment, you often see leadership that is more plugged in ... As a result of participation in PASEC or PILNA, some countries have gotten interested in developing their own national assessments and learning how to do assessment from a to z.

... [There has been] a huge impact on how countries view assessment results.

While recognising that there will always be a need for external expertise, given the highly technical nature of much of the work, many interviewees felt that the GEM Centre could capitalise on its experience and others’ efforts and develop courses with a certification and/or diploma pathway through short courses in multiple fields (project management, data analytics, etc.), not only psychometrics. One interviewee suggested establishing cohorts of regional learners who could work through a program together (similar to the UNESCO curriculum development diploma program³⁵). Several interviewees mentioned other organisations’ capacity enhancement efforts, including the:

- SPC EQAP micro-qualification in assessment for examiners
- UIS series on how to design, implement and monitor learning assessments

³² NEQMAP capacity building workshops were convened by UNESCO Bangkok and follow-up activities that focused on use of results were anticipated but have not yet been undertaken.

³³ See <https://palnetwork.org/ican/> and <https://palnetwork.org/elana/>

³⁴ In addition to citing the GEM Centre/ACER extensively, a UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) publication on using learning assessment data provides two pages of examples of policy development. See Raudonytė, I. and Foimafafisi, T. (2022). *Using learning assessment data for educational planning in Sub-Saharan Africa: a comparative analysis*. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning. An ACER publication also provides policy change examples linked to assessment results: Tobin, M. et al. (2015). *Using large-scale assessments of students’ learning to inform education policy: Insights from the Asia-Pacific region*. Melbourne: ACER (co-published by ACER’s Centre for Education Policy www.acer.edu.au/epp and Practice and Centre for Global Education Monitoring www.acer.edu.au/gem). See also ACER. (2015). *The big picture: the impact of assessments on education policy*. Melbourne: ACER. <https://www.acer.org/au/discover/article/the-big-picture-the-impact-of-assessments-on-education-policy>

³⁵ See <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/ibe-diploma-curriculum-design-and-development>

- World Bank substantive series, *Assessing National Achievements in Education*, a simpler version developed with IIEP, and an assessment introductory e-learning course
- IIEP short course on learning assessment data
- Education Testing Service course.

The GEM Centre is contributing to the outcome *countries align their assessment systems with the global SDG monitoring and reporting*. For example, in another first, GEM Centre work in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) on the PILNA has resulted in alignment of reading and mathematics results against the global MPLs (although the aligned results have not yet been reported at the global level) and the six South-East Asian countries³⁶ involved in the SEA-PLM have aligned results in reading and mathematics with the global MPLs and reported the aligned results to the UIS for the first time. This alignment is also built into any assessment administration and data analyses that the GEM Centre undertakes in a given country and enables these countries to see their results against the MPLs for the first time (e.g., COVID-19 MILO initiative countries). Other organisations (such as the World Bank) are also helping to ensure that countries align their assessment results.

For the outcome *governments are investing in strong assessment systems*, there is evidence (discussed above and in section 3.6 Sustainability) that governments are increasingly interested in and willing to participate in assessment system reform, and that the GEM Centre has contributed to this (e.g., PICs through the PILNA work). There is evidence that some countries are committing money for reform, but interview data suggest that most system reform investment is coming through donor funding. At present, the GEM Centre does not attempt to track financial information for countries in which it works, and interviewees offered no specific details. Without access to budget information for specific countries, either directly or through regional capacity-building initiatives, it is not possible to assess the GEM Centre contribution to country-level investment.

For the outcome *education system resilience to emergencies (including COVID-19)*, some concrete examples illustrate the contribution of GEM Centre work and products to initial steps that could eventually lead to more resilient systems. At the 2022 Asia-Pacific Regional Education Ministers Conference-II, convened by UNESCO Bangkok, all attending ministers committed to prioritising learning recovery and education system transformation to accelerate progress towards SDG 4. The GEM Centre contributed to the production of a background paper and policy brief on learning recovery and the learning crisis for conference attendees and participated as a discussant in a session on learning recovery in the Asia-Pacific region, with priority actions identified. Other examples of foundational work that could eventually contribute to increasing system resiliency are summarised below.

Rapid Review of Education in Emergencies (EiE).³⁷ A 2021 review was funded by UNESCO Bangkok, with a GEM Centre in-kind contribution, to provide evidence that would help decision-makers to develop policies to build resilient systems. Spin-offs of the review include a policy monitoring framework that address preparedness, response, and recovery and a policy monitoring tool. There has been wide dissemination, particularly of the policy monitoring framework and

³⁶ Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Viet Nam

³⁷ Tarricone, P., Mestan, K., & Teo, I. (2021). Building resilient education systems: A rapid review of the education in emergencies literature. Australian Council for Educational Research. <https://doi.org/10.37517/978-1-74286-639-0>

tool, through posting on websites (e.g., an ACER Discover article, reposted on the Education and Development Forum/UKFIET blog), through presentations to global education monitoring networks (e.g., the NEQMAP annual meeting in December 2021, involving 26 Asia-Pacific countries; the UKFIET Conference 21; the Knowledge Innovation Exchange Europe, Asia, Pacific (KIX EAP) Hub Education Policy and Innovation Conference 2021; the DFAT Education Forum in November, 2022; and the [14th Asian Conference on Education \(ACE\) 2022](#) in Japan in December, 2022; and a presentation to high-level representatives from the Western Australia Department of Education on EiE in December 2022). In 2023, the GEM Centre expects have planned to provide a series of webinars for the USAID [Leading Through Learning Global Platform](#) and Government of PNG interest is discussed in 3.1 Relevance and 3.4 Efficiency.

The COVID-19: MILO project. After UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank were awarded GPE COVID-19 grant funding, UNESCO subcontracted ACER as a technical partner to undertake the COVID-19 MILO project in six Anglophone and Francophone African countries. The MILO Project aimed to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on learning outcomes and to evaluate the effectiveness of distance learning mechanisms used during school closures on students at the end of primary school. The GEM Centre contributed to the overall study conceptualization, the use of items from global item bank in the MILO assessments, alignment methods and standard setting to benchmark the MILO results against the MPLs, and the overall capacity building concept. The project findings were disseminated widely via a webinar and at an ACER research conference and will be presented at the Comparative and International Education Society 2023 Annual Conference and on the UIS website. The COVID-19 MILO work was well-received, especially by the global education monitoring elite, including the UIS, GPE and the World Bank and (anecdotally) the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The methodology and tools can be used in emergency and non-emergency settings.

Thematic review of flexible learning strategies. In collaboration with NEQMAP, the EiE policy monitoring framework was applied to inform the thematic review that considered flexible learning strategies as a response to COVID-19 in 14 Asia-Pacific countries in collaboration with NEQMAP.

Other aspects of effectiveness that were of interest to the Partnership include the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the GEM Centre and the GEM Centre monitoring and evaluation approach and tools. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the GEM Centre in ways similar to other organisations worldwide, notably the expanded use of virtual communication. However, nearly two years of restrictive Australian Government travel policy prohibited face-to-face engagement within or outside of Australia, and income generation was probably affected as a result (see 3.4 Efficiency – Phase 3 income generation).

The GEM Centre has made efforts to improve its MEL approach. For example, a MELF was developed, and an Excel spreadsheet captures and tracks work and enables quarterly reporting and work program planning. The spreadsheet includes each of the three work programs and aims and indicators and is aligned with the *Pathways to Impact* outcomes. The GEM Centre has found these tools to be useful for management purposes. The effectiveness of the MEL approach and tools for systematic and precise tracking and reporting on both outputs and outcome achievements (including in the aggregate) and the use of such evidence to inform strategies and work planning is less clear. The MELF itself is not presented in the manner now standard in development assistance initiatives. For example, despite the GEM Centre's focus on capacity development, data on people who participate are not captured in one place.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the GEM Centre has demonstrated significant success in achieving aspects of its three strategic priorities, three outcomes and three impacts. With respect to the strategic priorities, the GEM Centre has generated an impressive amount of evidence and many tools and methods.

The GEM Centre is to be commended for communicating with and influencing education stakeholders, particularly at the global since its inception through interpersonal contact and technical publications. Communication with and influence of regional level stakeholders has occurred through many venues where GEM Centre evidence, tools and methods are shared. There is less success in communicating at the country level more broadly and beyond those countries where the GEM Centre is undertaking specific work. The GEM Centre has also worked hard to address the 2019 MTR recommendation to improve communications, particularly through development and implementation of key guiding documents.

Noticeable gaps remain in the production and dissemination of communications products that address the needs and interests of regional and country-level education stakeholders. The GEM Centre has a wealth of accrued experience that can be used to satisfy the strong interest in products that speak to country-level decision-makers – for example, short, concise, engaging country case studies focused on successes (and even failures) in building the assessment ecosystem and policy-linking. Communications guidance can be improved, including by uncoupling “communications” from “engagement” (which should be dealt with at a strategic level linked to global, regional and country levels of engagement) and by using a standard (not bespoke) C&E Plan for respective products. Communications monitoring and evaluation also needs attention. Empowering communications personnel with sufficient authority to undertake their responsibilities is essential for effective (efficient) communications products.

The GEM Centre is to be congratulated for the capacity-building work that has been undertaken to date, for the collaborative approach used when working with countries, and for embedding capacity building into contracted work, even when this is not specified within contracts. However, the term “sustainable capacity enhancement” is confusing, and it is difficult to ascertain what is to be sustained. It is also difficult to identify the improvements the capacity enhancement work has brought about, since there is no systematic tracking of benefits (such as changes in participants’ knowledge, attitudes and skills and subsequent application of them). Without a focused capacity enhancement approach and systematic tracking of benefits, aside from chronicling of workshops, the GEM Centre will continue to struggle to demonstrate success in this priority area.

There needs to be greater clarity and shared understanding (across the Partnership) about what the Centre is expected to do and for which it will be held accountable or will contribute only. The incorporation of the notion of “below the line” responsibility/accountability and “above the line” contribution may help with clarity and a shared understanding. Simplification of Amalgamation of some of the outcomes and impacts and simplification (so that they do not include conjunctions such as “by”) and use of terminology such as short-term/immediate outcomes, medium-term outcomes and long-term outcomes/goal might help. See Question 3.6 Impact for a discussion of the *Pathways to Impact* program logic. Improvements such as these may also facilitate the GEM Centre’s reporting on how it is contributing to change rather than focusing heavily on chronicling outputs. The MELF could then become a tool not only for work program management and output capture but for capturing evidence of positive change (e.g., in individuals’ behaviour and in country government investment and system strengthening).

A critical challenge for the GEM Centre will be to be selective about its focus. Global education monitoring for SDG 4.1 still requires attention, high-quality education assessment machinery is lacking for other SDG 4 areas and needs to be introduced and operationalised, and regional and country level assessments and systems need focused and systematic support, there may be a temptation to get involved in everything. This temptation will need to be resisted or the GEM Centre will risk becoming prolific at generating evidence, tools and methods without those products leading to actual change. Given the GEM Centre’s capacity for innovative thought leadership and the indications that education will increasingly need to be provided in conflicts, crises (such as pandemics), and natural disasters (including from climate change), the contribution of assessment monitoring to enhancing education system resilience might be a strategic focus for Phase 4 in one or two demonstration countries.

3.4 To what extent is the GEM Centre efficient in enhancing global education monitoring?

- Does the GEM Centre represent value for money?
- Is the GEM Centre using resources in the most cost-effective way possible and in a timely manner?
- Are the inputs adequate to implement the GEM Centre’s strategic priorities and work program?

FINDINGS

The GEM Centre has received funding of just over \$12.750m over nine years (\$4.2m per triennium disbursed annually in \$1.4m tranches). There is clear evidence that the Centre has used its funding to generate a large body of evidence, tools and methods recognised for their quality by external stakeholders, built a sterling reputation as a “go-to” thought leader/partner, and exerted influence that has shifted paradigms in global education monitoring worldwide. Over the past 10 years, the GEM Centre has contributed to ACER contracts to the value of 44.4m – \$16.6m in Phase 1, \$20m in Phase 2 and \$7.8m in Phase 3³⁸ (total contract value to date).

There are numerous examples of the GEM Centre/ACER’s entrepreneurial bent. For example, the packaging of experience, tools and methods gained through the World Bank Education Quality Improvement Program/Government of Afghanistan Monitoring Trends in Education Growth (MTEG) initiative into the GEM Centre’s MTEG Partnership Service. Two interviewees felt the GEM Centre (ACER) was expensive: “ACER is seen as relatively costly, and part of that (cost) is (because) they have a niche,” but several other interviewees noted that the GEM Centre costs less than some other large organisations and provided good value for money. All interviewees noted the quality of GEM Centre (ACER) work.

The symbiotic relationship between the GEM Centre and ACER brings efficiency benefits – for example, in relationship building, capability statements for proposals, and utilising internal expertise. There are also examples of the GEM Centre’s (and ACER’s) ability to adapt to changing landscapes and to seize opportunities to fill the gaps in thought leadership, provide innovative solutions and expert capacity. For example, the GEM Centre has several “firsts” for which it can claim credit. These successes are discussed in 3.3 Effectiveness and 3.5 Impact and include

³⁸ The COVID-19 pandemic took hold in early 2020 during Phase 3 and very likely had an adverse impact on the GEM Centre’s income generation; indications are that income will pick up now that the immediate crisis is past.

UNESCO's 2022 declaration that the LPSs are *de riguer* and the work with the PAL Network on CLAs to bridge the gap between academic rigour and the efficient, cost-effective grassroots nature of the assessments. One interviewee exclaimed, *"I can't think of any organisation, except perhaps UNESCO, which has managed to grow and change [as much as the GEM Centre has] over the years."*

Overall, GEM Centre inputs seem to have been adequate for most technical work and management to date (see Question 3.3 Effectiveness for a more extensive discussion of achievements). Several interviewees noted the impressively short timeframes for certain kinds of work, especially assessments. *"In four months, you go from data collection to the release of results – other assessments are two years!"* *"The assessments by [other organisation, name withheld] take years to complete and are incredibly complicated and there is a sense of these 'being done' to a country ..."* Several external interviewees noted the need for GEM Centre to have rapid access to a pool of experts for assessments, including those with the language skills required to work efficiently in various parts of the world.

Several interviewees noted missed opportunities, such as the Government of PNG's loss of interest in the use of the GEM Centre's EiE policy products, and deadlines for conference papers. A few interviewees noted that such events were not unique to the GEM Centre. One interviewee noted their own lesson learned about allowing more lead time for preparation, and others mentioned the fundamental disconnect between the need to respond quickly and nimbly and the GEM Centre's roots in a research institute (not a development contractor) that typically performs highly technical work over long timeframes. Some interviewees felt that the Centre's efficiency (and effectiveness) could be improved by deeper understanding of country contexts and leveraging ACER country offices. From the perspective of GEM Centre personnel, timeliness problems result from the time needed to ensure quality and rigour; drawing on technical experts from multiple ACER research programs means aligning schedules takes time; and competing demands on researchers where projects with contractual deliverables take precedence.

With respect to the GEM Centre as an entity distinct from ACER, all interviewees noted that they either did not understand the GEM Centre–ACER distinction, did not understand the need for the distinction, and/or did not understand enough about the GEM Centre itself and its agenda. *"When I talk to people, I just say 'ACER'."* *"In your questions for this interview, you say, 'GEM Centre', but I don't really know what the GEM Centre is. Could you please explain?"* The confusion around the Centre's name, Global Education Monitoring, was also mentioned. *"There is confusion because of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report. When we say, 'GEM Centre', people think we are talking about the GEM Report."* The GEM Executive Board (internal to ACER) members felt strongly that the GEM Centre needed to remain as a distinct entity within the ACER organisational structure but not necessarily for external audiences.

CONCLUSIONS

The GEM Centre investment is an excellent and notable example of value for money and a demonstration of how a very small investment (compared to many of DFAT's other education investments) can generate an impressive multiplier effect. The GEM Centre's income generation is also indicative of its relevance (see Question 3.1 Relevance). Benefits include tangible elements such as evidence, tools, methods, and capturing external funding, and intangible elements such as reputation and influence (which set in motion a virtuous circle that results in additional tangible elements). The capacity of ACER/the GEM Centre to be an adaptive and opportunistic organisation is also a clear indication of efficient management (and the ability to stay relevant).

Although contracts are typically between ACER and the contracting organisation, the GEM Centre and ACER could explore avenues for greater efficiencies in enhancing global education monitoring, for example, by ensuring that contracts have sufficient lead time, clearly defined expectations, and expectations about communicating results and products.

Current funding is likely sufficient to enable the GEM Centre to continue to operate as it has to date. However, if the Partnership decides to focus on more systematic and deeper capacity enhancement, especially at regional and country levels, with intensive and longer-term engagement in certain selected “demonstration” countries of importance to DFAT, GPE and ACER³⁹ (see Question 3.5 Impact), the Centre's budget may be insufficient unless funds are redirected from other work program areas, such as Reviews and Analyses, towards Education 2030 and Quality Assessment Systems.

The preservation and presentation of the GEM Centre as a distinct entity appears to be important for ACER internally, especially for accountability to the ACER Board, but not for DFAT. It should be possible to use ACER as the organisational “face” for external audiences, while also maintaining the Centre as a distinct entity within ACER, without any adverse effects.

3.5 To what extent is the GEM Centre making an impact on global education monitoring?

- Is the GEM Centre making an impact on global education monitoring, specifically on short to medium-term expected outcomes, and on promoting inclusive and equitable education?
- Is the GEM Centre on track to elicit the expected long-term impacts?
- Does the GEM Centre have a Theory of Change or program logic to better communicate its mission to improve learning through robust assessment, which is fundamental to creating impact through the Partnership? (2019 Review Recommendation)

(Refer to Pathways to Impact, Figure 3, section 1.3 when reading this section of the report.)

FINDINGS

Interviewees consistently noted the significant and unique impact of the GEM Centre as an unbiased “honest broker” providing thought leadership that has shaped the way in which key organisations now think about global education monitoring. GEM Centre publications and conversations with world leaders in global education monitoring provide extensive evidence that the GEM Centre, through its involvement on peak bodies including the Learning Metrics Task Force and the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning, has introduced thinking that has shaped the landscape of and changed the discourse around global education monitoring.

Taking the SDG ideals and making SDG 4 real – no one knew how to do that. ... No other organisation (besides the GEM Centre) was passionate enough or not trying to push their own agenda and products. ... There was lots of infighting around how to manage assessment.

A seminal example raised many times in interviews is the LPSs – an accomplishment that took a decade to bring about – and the articulation of global MPLs within the LPSs and the recent UNESCO UIS public declaration espousing their use. As mentioned in Question 3.3 Effectiveness,

³⁹ ACER. (2022). *Australian Council for Educational Research Strategic Plan*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

several low- and middle-income countries, including in the Indo-Pacific Region, have begun to report assessment results aligned to the global MPLs, with the help of international organisations.

Many interviewees emphasised the importance of the public good contributions of the GEM Centre, and attributed this unique capability to the fact that the Centre is not restricted by inflexible project parameters and thus can respond to and fill gaps that other organisations cannot.

The facts speak for themselves – none of [the other organisations] have been involved in the creation of global public good. ... As of today, ACER [the GEM Centre] is the only organisation not trying to develop their own tool – they are committed to developing a true public good. From the (organisation name omitted intentionally) side, the AMPL (4.1.1b) work is a huge public good. ... Funding is very important. It has enabled the GEM Centre to contribute to the public good.

The GEM Centre can pursue avenues of exploration that are of mutual benefit – that are for the common good.

For example, the knowledge and approaches gained from developing, administering and analysing AMPL 4.1.1b (end of primary)⁴⁰ are being recycled (under a recently signed UNESCO contract) to inform the development of AMPLs for SDG 4.1.1a (grades 2/3) and 4.1.1c (end of lower secondary), and the OECD has chipped in items for lower secondary assessments.

The GEM Centre has contributed products focused on resilience, specifically the COVID-19 MILO initiative (discussed in section 3.3 Effectiveness) and the EiE work, and has contributed somewhat to equity matters through current secondary data analysis of the UNESCO Latin-American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE - Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación) to examine mother-tongue instruction and learning outcomes for students;⁴¹ however, there is no clear evidence of any noticeable or identifiable GEM Centre impact on resilience or assessment system investment in a respective education system, either in documents or from interviewees. Several interviewees noted the importance of external funding for generating impact, since most countries lack sufficient recurrent budgets or the luxury of ongoing donor support for assessment systems strengthening, with the exception of PICs that receive ongoing development assistance through the DFAT, MFAT and SPC partnership agreement. Indeed, the impact of investments in the global education monitoring realm for foundational work is compromised because of the lack of funding for follow-through and deepening system strengthening. A quick mapping of DFAT priority countries shows that, despite some regularity in the regional assessment profile (i.e., PICs participating in the PILNA cycles), most countries have irregular and varied assessment profiles (see Annex 5 Assessment Profile of DFAT Priority Countries and also a UNESCO mapping⁴²).

⁴⁰ The GEM Centre developed 4.1.1b AMPL as part of the COVID-19 MILO project. The World Bank has been introducing the AMPL approach and assessments to countries and plans on continuing to do so.

⁴¹ ACER. (2014). Assessment Gems Series #2. The Latin-American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education: Measuring and comparing educational quality in Latin America. Melbourne, Australia: ACER. https://www.acer.org/files/AssessGEMs_LLECE.pdf

⁴² Also refer to work by UNESCO such as: UNESCO. (2020). *Large-scale Learning Assessments in Asia-Pacific: A Mapping of Country Policies and Practices*. Paris: UNESCO and Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok.

The GEM Centre program logic, *Pathways to Impact*, and a narrative explaining the logic, was developed as per the 2019 MTR recommendation and is seen as a helpful product by GEM Centre staff. External interviewees were not aware of the program logic. When informed of the goal (taken from Figure 3 (section 1.3) – “*The GEM Centre aims to make long-term impact on improving learning around the world*” – several interviewees noted that the aim of improving learning is a universal, lofty goal and it is not realistic to frame this as something the GEM Centre will achieve. However, it can certainly contribute, especially in the policy development work linked to assessment results, not just in the development of tools and methods. In addition, the goal statement itself presents a challenge because of the use of the conjunction “by” – “*To improve learning by ensuring that education policies, practices and investments are informed by high-quality evidence*” – which makes it difficult to identify the actual goal. There is also some redundancy in the outcomes and impact areas; for example, Outcome 1: “*Stakeholders access, develop, use evidence, tools and methods to aid in decision-making and to influence policies, practices and investments*” and Impact 1: “*Evidence and data are used effectively by decision-makers for education policies, practices and investments*” are nearly identical – it is only the difference between the active and passive voice and stakeholders versus decision-makers that distinguishes the statements. There is no clear evidence that the program logic has been used to “better communicate the GEM Centre’s mission to improve learning through robust assessment” (2019 MTR recommendation). Communications is discussed more extensively in section 3.4 Efficiency.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the impact of the GEM Centre on global education monitoring writ large has been considerable, and should be celebrated. The GEM Centre has been instrumental in laying the foundation for global education monitoring machinery and for providing innovation in the field. The GEM Centre’s enhanced reputation (discussed in section 3.1 Relevance) has enabled it to continue to shape the global education monitoring ecosystem and to use what has been learned over the past decade to extend product implementation (e.g., the AMPLs and LPSs) into other areas of SDG 4.1 (such as 4.1.1a and 4.1.1c) and to bring thought leadership, product and methods and evidence generation to 4.2 early childhood and pre-primary education, 4.6 adult skills, and 4.7 sustainability and global citizenship. The GEM Centre’s global public good products are contributions to the *promotion of inclusive and equitable education*. For example, if a country does not know where it stands with respect to learning outcomes derived from trustworthy tools and analyses, and a minimum standard, it will be difficult to determine how to fix problems or capitalise on successes. The GEM Centre has provided the tools and methods that any country can use to produce and understand learning outcomes.

The GEM Centre’s impact could be broadened and deepened with more focused and intentional strategic thinking and less reliance on opportunistic time-bound initiatives. A reworking to tighten the program logic would also be beneficial, especially if framed around a clear program of work for:

- the global realm, with a continuation of the “bread and butter” work under SDG 4.1 with continued action to implement the alignment and reporting methods already developed and “blue sky” work, particularly SDG 4.2 early childhood and pre-primary education, 4.6 adult skills, and 4.7 sustainability and global citizenship
- the regional level, with an enhanced focus on upskilling local expertise in selected regional networks and increasing GEM Centre knowledge about other, less familiar regions (e.g.,

Latin America and the Caribbean – which also has small island countries) – insights from other regions may help inform GEM Centre work in the Asia-Pacific region.

- the country level, with a handful of demonstration countries (e.g., agreed by DFAT, GPE and ACER) in which the demand for assessment assistance is stimulated and the assessment machinery is strengthened, policy and practice linkages are apparent, and changes in learning outcomes may become evident. ACER's expertise in curriculum development and teacher professional development are critical.

Demonstration countries could potentially enable the full extent of the GEM Centre logic pathway to be realised, even to the extent of demonstrating improved learning outcomes, but to do so would require a Partnership commitment to engagement beyond the typical 3–5 years of development assistance investment and to ensure sustainability, be locally led (see section 3.6 Sustainability). Impact must also be strengthened by messaging that highlights the linkage between assessment and learning outcomes. Improved learning outcomes are achieved by enhancing assessment measures, using results to inform education policy development to help solve a problem or expand successful initiatives, applying policy, and then undertaking assessment again to measure the improvement. Messaging should also highlight that strengthening the links between assessment and improved learning outcomes contributes to realising other Australian government interests, in particular the value add of Australian education investments.

It is unrealistic to expect that the GEM Centre can have a felt, demonstrable effect on the long-term goal of improving learning outcomes. The overall goal of improving learning outcomes is aspirational and should be viewed as such. The GEM Partnership Board must acknowledge the fundamental, foundational, and interdependent steps needed to enable a country to improve learning outcomes: explicitly acknowledging and highlighting the interlocking nature of assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning informed by good policy decisions will yield improvements. To expect that one organisation can contribute in a significant way to improved learning outcomes, especially without holistic treatment of assessment, curriculum and teaching and learning – well beyond the GEM Centre's scope – sets it up for failure. This said, there are clear opportunities for the GEM Centre and the GEM Partnership to build on successes and overcome weaknesses in the global education monitoring realm and to promote the use of data for policy development (and monitoring).

3.6 To what extent is the GEM Centre's work on and benefits to global education monitoring sustainable?

- Will the GEM Centre's strategic priorities and work program have a lasting benefit in working towards meeting its overall objective?
- Do the GEM Centre's strategic priorities and work program need to be reshaped for the remainder of the Phase 3 funding agreement to have a lasting benefit?
- Should other aspects be considered to ensure the continuation of GEM Centre benefits beyond the current Phase 3 funding agreement?

There is considerable evidence that the GEM Centre's open-source public good products (especially tools and results of assessments) are being sustained (as detailed in the Products Catalogue in Annex III under "push-out" and "spin-offs"). Products are publicised in various locations, including on ACER's and partnering organisations' websites and sometimes on the websites of organisations that were not involved in a specific collaboration, and can be accessed

by any interested party. However, several interviewees noted that tools and methods are difficult to socialise widely and often end up in document repositories, gathering virtual dust. A few interviewees mentioned the need for the GEM Centre to build in obsolescence to ensure the sustainability of its products (including data) beyond its (or ACER's) organisational boundaries. According to one interviewee:

You have to apply a business test – do you have redundancies in place, assuming the GEM Centre closed tomorrow? For example, the Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels 1b psychometrics and data are still inside the GEM Centre⁴³ – that's why regional hubs are so important, so if the GEM Centre moves on, the content still remains. ... GitHub could be used to house the code – others need to be able to clone and replicate the work.”

The GEM Centre's thought leadership is a form of sustainability and has permeated the ethos, approaches and products of many other organisations. A notable example being is GPE, which commissioned the ANLAS initiative, contracted ACER to develop it, and now promotes and utilises the approach and tools (to which the GEM Centre contributed – see Annex 2).

With respect to the sustainability of capacity enhancement, there is evidence in documentation that some individuals have benefited, particularly through intensive engagement on national assessments and system analyses (e.g., in African Anglophone and Francophone countries, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam) and will (it is hoped) retain and apply their new knowledge and skills. In addition, approximately 481 individuals from a wide range of government and global education assessment networks were exposed to GEM Centre products and thought leadership in workshops (e.g., the intensive week-long capacity-building workshops for NEQMAP members), webinars and other forums. Although it is not extensive or well-documented, there is some evidence of participants developing products such as a country strategic plan for the alignment of 21st Century Skills with assessment, curriculum and pedagogy and using those products in their own countries (See Annex V GEM Centre Capacity Enhancement Summary.)

Some interviewees noted the need to build in sustainability from the start and the importance of “doing with” rather than “doing to” country stakeholders.

If sustainability isn't built in from the start – those learning pathways and a plan for that to happen – things can fall apart.

It was good that ANLAS was built with a capacity development lens – countries can use it by themselves.

Interviewees also emphasised the need to anticipate and be ready to meet demand for capacity-building opportunities but also expressed concern that the demand cannot be met. They felt that by stimulating the demand side without a ready supply-side response, the GEM Centre (and other organisations) would risk squandering country decision-makers' interest in and ongoing commitment to global education monitoring:

There is a lack of capacity to serve the demand, and there is a huge demand! We need systems and protocols in place, so we can somewhat anticipate and respond to the demand.

The capacity analysis of institutions in [several] countries regarding assessment has whetted the Ministries' appetites for capacity building opportunities. ... There has to be continual support for

⁴³ The MILO/AMPL data are available publicly as are the psychometric parameters.

and attention to building on what has been done. In some countries, there is high turnover in ministries – can we keep going back to the GEM Centre to bring people back into the process?

Several interviewees noted the importance of an extended time horizon, the need to produce temporally comparable studies in low and middle-income countries, and ongoing investment on the part of donors if global education monitoring is to improve.

Show concrete examples of countries that have leveraged assessment data for education system reform, such as the way Japan use PISA results; although with LMICs, we don't necessarily have data over time to use for comparative views.

Look at the PISA – after 23 years (of administration), it still requires donor funding. The TIMSS, the PIRLS – it's the same thing.

For every dollar put into assessment, you need to put two dollars into the use of the data.

The ability of the GEM Centre to generate income (as discussed in 3.4 Efficiency) can also be seen as a sustainability achievement. The more the GEM Centre can generate income, the more it can embed its work in and help develop the global education monitoring ecosystem. It seems that the original intent of the Partnership was for DFAT to identify needs and broker connections in a given country/organisation, and for the GEM Centre to provide seed funding to gain a foothold, undertake the work, then generate additional funds to continue the engagement. There have been some successes with this approach, including: the regional PILNA work through the EQAP, the Partnership Service initiative with the Government of South Africa, and the PAL Network engagement, but the effectiveness of this approach as a sustainability strategy is not clear. No interviewees endorsed the notion of the Centre providing a “fee for service”; they felt that the unique advantage of the Centre is its ability to respond to needs and contribute to the global public good, and that a fee for service would eliminate this advantage and reduce the Centre's sustainability. According to one interviewee:

If you removed the GEM Centre and only had what ACER could do under project funding, it would be a big loss. Ministries are not paying for things like the GEM Centre – they focus on paying salaries and keeping the lights on.

Every interviewee noted the importance of maintaining effective and accessible communications about development approaches and products (discussed in section 3.3 Effectiveness) as a key strategy for sustainability (but also for relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact).

Make the case that monitoring or assessment should be leveraged for improving student learning. There are so many rich studies and data that are never used! [For example,] UNESCO did a series of case studies on how assessment has been used to impact systems.

Several interviewees pointed out the importance of messaging and helping and safeguarding champions (e.g., a minister of education may not be excited about publicising and being held responsible for poor learning outcomes) so that assessment work can continue, and offered some suggestions for the GEM Centre:

Figure out how to provide the best advice to countries ... provide good answers to governments. We aren't thinking like politicians – it is political suicide (to have bad results). We need to understand the political economy; maybe the GEM Centre could do a literature review on how countries have managed to message results.

You need to create different materials for different audiences. In work on poverty reduction, we trained journalists in how to report accurately and clearly on poverty-related matters.

CONCLUSIONS

There are indications that certain aspects of the GEM Centre's work have been sustained. Products will continue to be available. Some products and methods (such as the ANLAS) that have a more obvious sustainability lens, will be sustained as long as there is a champion and an incentive for use (e.g., a requirement for GPE assistance). Global-level capacity enhancement already has a firm foundation and efforts in this arena should continue to prove fruitful. It is also very likely, based on financial data from the three phases, that the GEM Centre will sustain its pattern of income generation; however, the sustainability of the seed funding model needs to be tested and either discarded or ramped up accordingly.

Overall, however, it is difficult to ascertain sustainability achievements, particularly with respect to capacity enhancement (discussed in 3.3 Effectiveness). The absence of a well-articulated strategic approach to sustainability, supported by MEL methods and data, militates against firm conclusions. In addition, SDG 4 education monitoring and assessment systems in developing countries worldwide are in a nascent state, which makes sustaining capacity enhancement contributions difficult (to say the least) without ongoing attention, support, and engagement. At this juncture, despite the glaring needs, the GEM Centre is not equipped financially or operationally and programmatically to take on significant and expanded country-facing work to enhance sustainability; but it could be, with a targeted, selective approach, and it can likely ramp up regional-level capacity enhancement, especially with DFAT assistance.

Reshaping the strategic priorities and work program for the remainder of Phase 3 would not be advisable, given that there is only one year remaining. However, using Phase 3 Year 3 to prepare for Phase 4 of the DFAT–ACER Partnership would be a good use of time. Priorities could include:

- discussing and agreeing on a different Partnership modality and funding mechanism
- articulating new strategic focuses that position the GEM Centre for innovation in new areas and for sustainability of “old” areas. This is especially important given the view among external stakeholders that the global education monitoring space is getting crowded (e.g., interrogation of and learning from the COVID-19 response and “recovery” to inform education system resilience is unfinished “old” business that could enhance the impact of GEM Centre work)
- looking more deeply into a capacity enhancement strategy, including how to package products and develop and promote a certificate course (potentially with UNESCO and/or IIEP, which is pushing micro-credentials); introducing fields of assessment into DFAT fellowships and country-level Australian Development Scholarships; and establishing and utilising regional-level cadres of experts in assessment fields
- learning from the experiences of supporting assessment ecosystem development in different types of countries, including small island countries
- generating and disseminating a suite of high-quality communications products that speak to a broader audience.

3.7 To what extent is the GEM Partnership functional and of perceived value to both ACER and DFAT?

- Are both partners contributing actively to achieving the short to medium-term outcomes of the GEM Partnership, including communicating the outcomes and significance of the GEM Centre work to DFAT posts and other stakeholders? (Review Recommendation #1: DFAT should take a more active role in guiding the priorities of GEM Centre work and in communicating the significance of the work to DFAT posts and stakeholders. Review Recommendation #2: ACER and DFAT should both communicate the significance of the GEM Centre work to stakeholders, with a focus on outcomes over outputs/deliverables.)
- Do GEM Centre governance and operations support the implementation of the Centre's strategic priorities and work program?
- Are ACER's and DFAT's stated shared interests and organisation-specific interests being achieved through the GEM Partnership?
- Do specific benefits, disadvantages and limitations arise from the GEM Partnership model, given organisational changes in DFAT and ACER over time?

FINDINGS

The 2019 MTR noted the distance between ACER and DFAT and the need for focused efforts to strengthen the Partnership; consequently, DFAT funded an external facilitator and Partnership members participated in a series of virtual workshops and made efforts to clarify and subsequently adhere to core governance documents (e.g., Partnership Board Terms of Reference) and produce and utilise strategic documents and implementation tools (e.g., *Pathways to Impact*, a draft MELF, a C&E strategy, and C&E plans). The facilitated process brought a clearer understanding of programmatic parameters and ways of working and insights into each organisation. GEM Partnership members express commitment to fulfilling the expectations articulated for Partnership Board members but note that they are under stress as they try to remain true to their expected responsibilities.

The Partnership members described shared interests as important; these interests can be summarised as follows:

- a common commitment to academically rigorous research, analysis and capacity development in the education sector
- the intention to strengthen Australia's capability to:
 - inform and influence international debates on global learning goals and outcomes
 - monitor educational outcomes in the Indo-Pacific region by reviewing trends and growth, which are essential markers for governments and development partners for appraising the efficacy of the (development education investment and accountability
- a preference for integrated system-based approaches and evidence-based decision-making for improving learning
- the importance of early childhood development and foundational skills for learner progression
- a focus on learning in disadvantaged contexts

- an interest in the Asia-Pacific region.⁴⁴

To date, the Partnership can demonstrate success to a greater or lesser extent against all of the interests above (although the “focus on learning in disadvantaged contexts” is problematic, because all developing countries could be considered as such, and the GEM Centre has worked in many developing countries). DFAT’s role in Phases 1 and 2, especially around a commitment to rigorous research, analysis and capacity development and strengthening Australia’s influence in global education monitoring at the international level was highly visible. The standout example of the Partnership’s success is found in the advocacy of DFAT for Australian expertise to contribute to the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning, and the ability of the GEM Centre to respond when UNESCO UIS tasked it to find a way to realise the ideals of SDG 4. As noted in other parts of the report, through the GEM Centre’s involvement on the Learning Metrics Task Force and the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning, it has become a trusted contributor.

According to several external interviewees, the GEM Centre/ACER has a unique (competitive) advantage in that it is seen as an unbiased and honest broker within an increasingly dense field of global education actors (including those that push their own agenda and tools), and that it is quite possibly the only such organisation focused on contributing to the public good. The memorandum of understanding (MoU) between UNESCO and ACER came about because of the GEM Centre’s prior exposure to and relationship-building with UNESCO and its focus on the global public good. Although the MoU has not been used as a vehicle to identify and fund projects, ACER has become more competitive and won UNESCO contracts, including in 2022. Thus, the early work of the Partnership has continued to benefit the GEM Centre/ACER into the present as the GEM Centre’s/ACER’s visibility and reputation expanded significantly over the past decade. The GEM Centre’s social capital also advanced the uptake of Australian expertise and generated income that flows into an Australian business (see also 3.3 Effectiveness).

DFAT has benefited from the Partnership, particularly through recognition as a leader due to its visibility in promoting the GEM Centre (ACER) at the global level with respect to SDG 4 monitoring. DFAT has also been able to report annually to the OECD DAC on GEM Centre work against the DAC criteria. However, despite early success, DFAT has struggled to maintain its foothold as a strong partner and a global leader in recent years. There is a feeling that DFAT has lost visibility, a perspective that most interviewees advanced. “*We don’t see DFAT anymore at these global fora.*” There have also been changes in the Australian Government (since the election of May 2022), in the aid context, in DFAT itself, and in DFAT Partnership Board members over time that interviewees familiar with the Partnership modality feel have hindered achievement of the Partnership’s interests. DFAT has devolved authority to posts, education and education personnel are dispersed across multiple parts of DFAT, and under the demand/request-driven mode of operation, has little authority to promote GEM Centre expertise to posts. Personnel at posts have minimal education technical background, especially in the highly technical field of assessment. According to one external interviewee, “*DFAT’s perspective of where the gaps are is not always well informed; if they are holding the purse strings for such work, they need to understand the contexts.*”

CONCLUSIONS

⁴⁴ ACER. (2020). *GEM Centre Completion Report for Phase 2 Funding 2017-2020*. Melbourne: ACER GEM Centre.

The GEM Partnership has yielded clear benefits over time for both ACER and DFAT, but changes in DFAT's ways of working, changes in DFAT Partnership members, recent relocation of the GEM Partnership management to the Global Education and Scholarships section of DFAT, and heavy transaction costs for both Partnership organisations, have put significant strain on the Partnership modality and affected the expected benefits from a research centre and donor agency collaboration.

Dissolution of the Partnership and cessation of DFAT's contribution to GEM Centre funding would likely have negative repercussions for both organisations and for the Partnership's original mutual interests – particularly contributing to the public good and strengthening education outcomes in important geographic regions. For the GEM Centre/ACER, due to the social capital built over the past decade, the negative effects of dissolution of the Partnership at the global and regional levels would likely be minimal, while the implications for working more deeply at the country level on global education monitoring would likely be significant without the presence and involvement of a strong enabling donor. Because DFAT's social capital in the global education monitoring sphere seems to have diminished, it may have little to lose with respect to visibility and leadership status. However, if DFAT wishes to regain its status as a leader in global education monitoring, there are certainly ways to do so, given political will and commitment.

If the Partnership is to remain relevant through the remainder of Phase 3, ACER and DFAT will need to rethink their mutual engagement to find entry points to promote global education monitoring and achieve common interests, particularly at the regional and country levels, and DFAT will need to determine if it is interested in re-engaging at the global level. For a potential Phase 4, DFAT needs to determine its commitment to the Partnership and ACER needs to have fallback options if DFAT exits. If both organisations remain committed to an ongoing Partnership for a Phase 4, the Partnership modality needs to be rethought, considering the experience of the past nearly 10 years and DFAT's current organisational ecosystem, priorities and practices. To continue the Partnership successfully will require:

- reconfirmation of mutual interests and priorities
- reduction of transaction costs of Partnership governance
- ensuring deep, shared knowledge of global, regional, and country contexts with each organisation operating in its specific lane (i.e., by default, the GEM Centre should not be forced into taking on responsibilities that would normally be assumed by a donor)
- rejigging the current contract mechanism, possibly by incorporating earmarked GEM Centre funding under an existing ACER–DFAT contract and
- a more targeted approach at the regional and country levels.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1

Investment in the GEM Centre yields huge dividends, but patience is required, because the impact of the investment may not be realised for years. Highly technical products, such as those produced by the GEM Centre, and the push-out of and spin-offs from such products can take years to bear fruit and the engagement process is iterative and fluid. While phased timeframes are sensible for practical reasons (such as financing), a historical view across implementation phases is necessary for a clear picture of the contributions and effects (including outcomes) of a respective initial investment initiative.

Lesson 2

Highly technical products will always be needed and are of value for a select audience. However, greater efforts in communicating effectively about these products to a broader audience will likely contribute to increased use of key technical products and services and ideally influence policy and practice and, ultimately, improve learning outcomes.

Lesson 3

Timing is everything. Opportunities for contribution can emerge rapidly, and a research organisation must be agile and nimble to provide “just in time” assistance. However, quick turn-around times can be unachievable in the case of highly technical inputs/outputs, and delays in completing work can squander opportunities for positive change and cause reputational damage. Identifying and using strategies to mitigate implementation challenges is important for effectiveness, achieving expected outcomes, and safeguarding an organisation’s reputation.

Lesson 4

Significant change within a partner organisation can destabilise a collaborative arrangement (such as a partnership) and reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation. Reviewing expected roles and responsibilities, articulating challenges, and using practical and feasible work-around solutions (e.g., reducing transaction costs) can help minimise the negative effects.

Lesson 5

The nascent state of most developing countries’ systems and the significant challenges associated with improvement (such as recurrent funding streams and human resource development) require “all hands on deck” to bring about substantive change. Donor agencies have a clear and important role to play in stimulating partner government demand for and buy in and encouraging locally led assessment reform, providing help to implement adequate learning assessment systems and to use assessment results to inform policy and practice and, ultimately, improve learning outcomes. Essential roles include ensuring no harm is done to partner countries, promoting donor harmonisation, reducing transaction costs to partner governments, enabling the in-country work of research organisations, and managing contractors, and enabling donor personnel at the country and regional levels.

Lesson 6

There is a place for investment in global public goods, especially given that few organisations fund such work/products in the global education monitoring arena. Without such funding, innovation and production of public goods are constrained.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Reconfirm the Partnership’s shared priorities and interests and agree on acceptable ways to reduce transactions for Partnership members with respect to the existing work plan and governance functions for the remainder of Phase 3.

Recommendation 2: Determine whether the Partnership will continue and what changes will be enacted regarding the Partnership modality (given each organisation’s political economy), funding modality, and funding envelope. DFAT should clarify its leadership role with the GEM Centre and involvement in global education monitoring through the Partnership and in what way/s. A DFAT–ACER arrangement that is less resource-intensive for personnel could still achieve the expected outcomes and benefits. ACER should undertake scenario planning and consider whether the MTE findings and conclusions and other recommendations should be factored into the future of the GEM Centre.

Recommendation 3: Begin to position the GEM Centre for increased impact and sustainability beyond Phase 3 by tightening the strategic approach and orientation around three levels of engagement at the global, regional, and country levels. Develop a crosswalk of DFAT priority countries, GPE countries, and countries in which ACER/the GEM Centre has already contributed, including via international ACER offices. Use the crosswalk to identify and agree on regional and country capacity development and education assessment systems strengthening and identify and commit to ways to promote GEM Centre engagement in specific countries and regions (including Southeast Asia). In addition, determine whether the GEM Centre or ACER branding should be used for external communication.

Recommendation 4: Identify and begin to produce and market products for a broader group of audiences the global, regional, and country levels that can be carried forward beyond Phase 3. Articulate a strategic ‘communication for development’ approach that is aligned with and supports the tightened strategic approach (above) and effectively and efficiently contributes to the ongoing relevance, coherence, impact, and sustainability of Partnership efforts in the global education monitoring ecosystem.

Recommendation 5: Refine and incorporate several of the MTE data consolidation tools into the GEM Centre monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approach. Once the strategic direction is determined, improve the MEL plan and framework in terms of tracking and consolidation of output and outcome achievements to inform strategic decisions, implementation, and reporting beyond Phase 3.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I MID-TERM EVALUATION WORK PLAN

PHASE 0: CONTRACTING
MTE Proposal submitted
MTE Consultant selected
PHASE 1: INCEPTION – July 10-Aug. 10
Documentation Desk Review
Partnership Board Mtg 1 for MTE
Revised detailed Timeline to PB
Inception Report (draft) submitted to PB
Inception Report feedback provided to VRH
Inception Report (final) submitted to PB
PHASE 2: FIELDWORK – AUG. 11 - NOV. 15
Background discussions with individual ACER/DFAT staff
Semi-structured KPIs with 11 external informants and former GEM Centre Partnership Board Members (ca. 1.5 hours/interview)
MTE Working Group Collab. Mtg. 1 (ca. 2 hours)
MTE Working Group Collab. Mtg. 2 (ca. 2 hours)
MTE Working Group Collaboration Mtg. 3 (ca. 2 hours)
GEM Executive Roundtable Discussion (ca. 1.5 hours)
PHASE 3: REPORTING – NOV. 15 2022 – FEB. 21 2023
Produce and submit MTE Report (draft) to GEM Centre Head
Receive feedback on MTE Report (draft) from GEM Centre Head
Revise and submit MTE Report (final draft) to GEM Centre Head
Present MTE Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations to GEM Partnership Members
Incorporate feedback and finalise MTE Report
Submit MTE Report (final) to GEM Centre Head

Annex 2 Catalogue of Products

I. 2010–present ACER Learning Progression Scales (Internal then External)

Initiated in 2010, the ACER Learning Progressions were further developed and realised through the GEM Centre’s input into the development of a unifying approach for reporting results from multiple assessment programs based on a shared understanding of reading and mathematics against SDG indicator 4.1.1. Since then, the GEM Centre has continued to build infrastructure to support improved reporting of assessment outcomes, linked to the ACER Learning Progressions, including the ACER Learning Progression Explorer (LPE).⁴⁵ Through this work, the GEM Centre has provided advocacy and support relating to the wider use of learning progressions in a range of projects across ACER.

Spin-off of:

2010: ACER’s historical internal research over more than two decades.

Partners:

- N/A for internal focus
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
- UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) Learning Metrics Task Force (LMTF)/Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) for external focus (ongoing feedback – not formal partners)
- SEAMEO and UNICEF (for SEA-PLM alignment)
- EQAP (for PILNA alignment)
- ISSE: The ISSE involved independent experts from national ministries of education and associated agencies, United Nations organisations, and regional assessment bodies, including from the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme of the Pacific Community (EQAP) and the People’s Action for Learning (PAL) Network
- USAID, UIS, DFID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (for GPF and Policy Linking Group)

Push Out of ACER Learning Progression Scales Internal Research:

2013: **GEM Centre Establishment.** Support for the Education 2030 agenda has been a priority for the GEM Centre since its inception in 2013 (since 2014 with DFAT partnership). With the adoption of the SDGs, the UIS has been recognised as the official data source for SDG 4 monitoring and mandated to ‘work with partners to develop new indicators, statistical approaches and monitoring tools to better assess progress across the targets related to

⁴⁵ [Learning Progression Explorer \(acer.org\)](https://acer.org/learning-progression-explorer)

UNESCO's mandate (...).⁴⁶ GEM Centre initial focus was on promoting Learning Progression Scales (LPSs) for global SDG 4.1 monitoring and reporting.

2013-2019: **Learning Progression Scales debate.** UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) Learning Metrics Task Force (LMTF)/Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) members debated the concept.

2015-2022: **Learning Progressions Explorer.** Developed by GEM Centre/ACER. In 2021-22, Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) members and other experts gave feedback on Explorer. Explorer went live late 2022. (Also see Catalogue entry on Learning Metrics Task Force/Global Alliance to Monitor Learning.)

Link: [Learning Progression Explorer \(acer.org\)](https://www.acer.org/learning-progressions-explorer)

2022: **Pairwise Comparison Method and AMPL Recognition.** UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) recognised Pairwise Comparison Method and AMPL as methods for reporting data on SDG 4.1 and acknowledged that Learning Progression Scales are fundamental to SDG 4 global education monitoring work.

Spin-Offs from ACER Learning Progression Scales Internal Research:

2014: **Learning Metrics Partnership Concept Note.** Developed by GEM Centre with UIS as part of GEM Centre's membership in the LMTF. Describes the development of an initiative to support countries and national/regional assessment programs and to develop and validate common learning metrics for reading and mathematics.

Link: [learning-metrics-partnership.pdf \(acer.org\)](https://www.acer.org/learning-metrics-partnership.pdf)

Link: [LMTF_PartnerActivityUpdate_JanMarch-2015.pdf \(brookings.edu\)](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/LMTF-Partner-Activity-Update-Jan-March-2015.pdf)

2016 (February): **UIS and ACER MoU.** MoU signed to support SDG 4 monitoring efforts. GEM Centre was recognised as an essential contributor.

2017: **Draft Learning Progression Scales Consultations.** GEM Centre used the ACER Learning Progression Explorer as an enabling tool for widespread consultations on the draft Learning Progression Scales. GEM Centre continues to advocate for their use in SDG 4.1 monitoring and reporting, including at international research conferences.

2017-2020: **Pairwise Comparison Case Studies Series.** Case studies were undertaken to align existing assessment programs with the Learning Progression Scales, including linking of Grades 3 and 6 assessment data from Afghanistan and alignment of the ACER Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT Mathematics and PAT Reading).

2019: **Global Proficiency Frameworks for Reading and Mathematics Review and Input.** GPFs were produced by USAID, UIS, DFID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and ACER⁴⁷. GEM Centre provided substantive input and illustrative items for the GPF.

2019: **SEA-PLM Proficiency Scales Alignment to Learning Progression Scales.**

⁴⁶ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/sustainable-development-goal-4>

⁴⁷ <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/global-proficiency-framework-reading-and-mathematics>

2019-2021: **Global Item Bank (USI)**. GEM Centre donated 300 mathematics and 300 reading items (including items provided for the illustration of the GPF and MPLs) developed by ACER to the Global Item Bank. GEM Centre was involved in producing terms of reference for the Bank and developed quality standards for items considered for inclusion in the Bank. (See separate Catalogue entry on Global Item Bank.)

2019 to 2022: **Policy Linking Method**. Through Policy Linking Group participation, GEM Centre gave input into the Method development and application.

2019 to 2022: **SDG 4.1.1 Minimum Proficiency Levels Refinement**. Two documents (see links below) were presented to and endorsed by GAML members in two separate meetings.

Link 2019: ["Minimum proficiency levels: described, unpacked and illustrated. Vers" by ACER Centre for Global Education Monitoring \(ACER-GEM\)](#)

Link 2022: ["Minimum Proficiency Levels Unpacked" by Australian Council for Educational Research \(ACER\)](#)

2019-present: **ACARA and ACER Learning Progressions Harmonisation**. ACER and Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on harmonising ACARA and ACER Learning Progressions with a view to their use in Australian domestic settings. The GEM Centre was influential in providing high-level input to some large Australian reviews (Gonski Review⁴⁸ and NSW Curriculum Review⁴⁹).

2020 – present: **Pairwise Comparison Method Toolkit**. Countries can use the Pairwise Comparison Method to align their national (or regional) assessment programs to the Learning Progression Scales for SDG 4.1 monitoring and reporting. This method uses expert judgement to compare pairs of items according to their difficulty, using items that are already on the scale, and items from a national or regional assessment. That way, items from a national or regional assessment are anchored on the scale, which allows to establish the MPL benchmarks on the national or regional scale using standard Item Response Theory statistical linking processes. This is an alternative method to the Policy Linking approach.

Link: [WG_GAML_12_Pairwise-Comparison-Method_ACER.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#)

2021- present: **PILNA Alignment with Minimum Proficiency Levels**. Pairwise comparison method used against the LPS.

2021: **UIS COVID-19: MILO Study**. GEM Centre contribution to the overall study included conceptualization, alignment methods including standard setting, use of items from Global Item Bank in the MILO assessments, and capacity building concept.

2022: **Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPL)**. COVID-19: MILO project resulted in the development of AMPL. Items are anchored on the Learning Progressions Scale and form part of the Global Item Bank. AMPL tools can be used as a stand-alone or integrated into national assessment or regional assessment programs. The AMPL Toolkit comprises:

- AMPL tools: SDG 4.1.1 a, b, c

⁴⁸ Northam, M. (2017). Gonski: Review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools. *Newsmonth*, 37(7), 4.

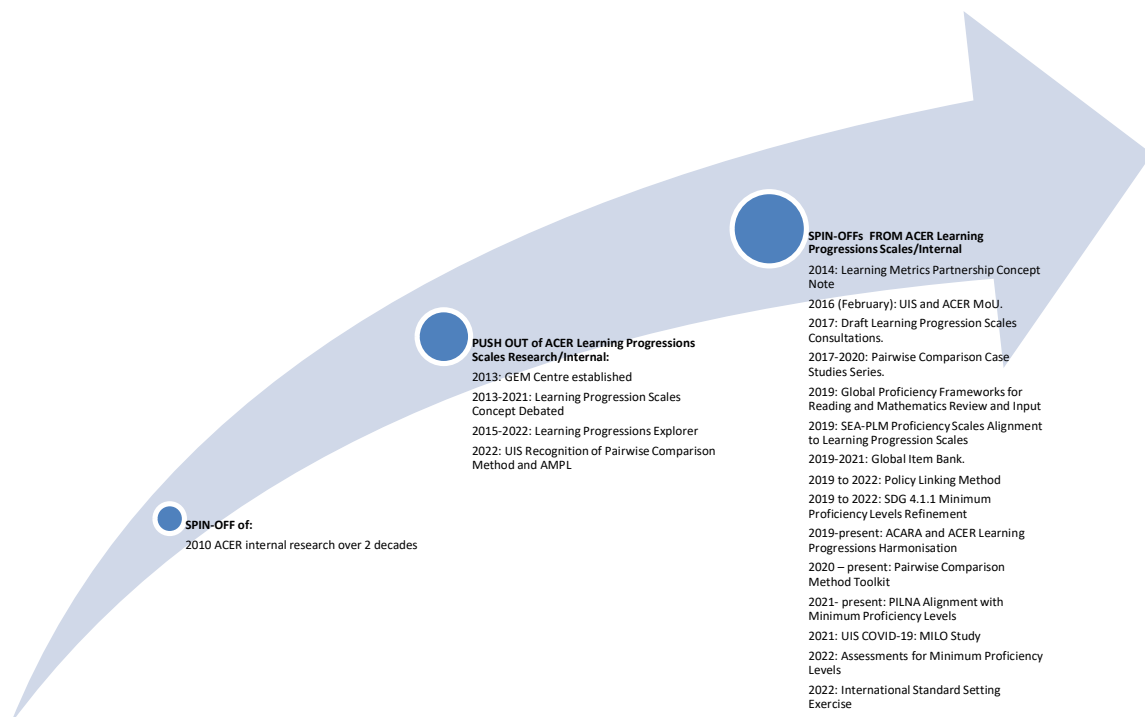
⁴⁹ Masters, G. N. (2020). Reforming the New South Wales curriculum.

- Assessment blueprint
- Contextual framework
- Administration guide

Link: [Assessments for MPLs - MILO: Monitoring Impacts on Learning Outcomes \(unesco.org\); ampl.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#)

2022: *International Standard Setting Exercise (ISSE)*. ISSE mapped MPL benchmarks for SDG 4.1 a, b, c (for the three stages of schooling) to the LP scales.

Link: [WG_GAML_5_ISSE_ACER.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#)



2. 2019–present Global Item Bank (Internal then External)

Between 2019 and 2021, the GEM Centre sponsored the development of 300 reading and 300 mathematics items for the Global Item Bank of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) that are mapped on the Learning Progression Scales. UIS subsequently began to source items from a range of assessments to continue to populate the Global Item Bank and established the UIS Global Item Bank Quality Review Panel to which the GEM Centre contributed. The Panel remit was to find a technical contractor to manage a Global Item Bank Platform and to review potential items using the Global Item Bank Quality Criteria already developed by the GEM Centre. Once the Platform is in place and the Global Item Bank continues to be populated,

these open-source items will provide a significant public good, especially since capacity in high quality assessment item development is lacking in most developing countries.

Spin-off of:

2010-present: Learning Progression Scales (see above).

Partners:

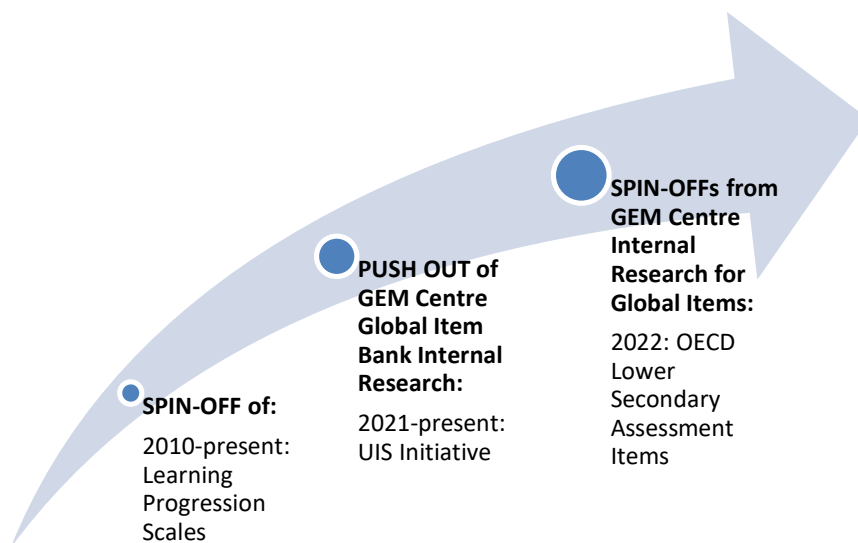
- None for internal focus
- UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) for external focus

Push Out of GEM Centre Global Item Bank Internal Research:

2021-present: *UIS Initiative of Global Item Bank.*

Spin-Offs from GEM Centre Global Item Bank Internal Research:

2022: *OECD Lower Secondary Assessment Items.* According to the World Bank, the OECD has contributed items for lower secondary assessments.



3. 2012–present Learning Metrics Task Force/Global Alliance to Monitor Learning Membership

Since its inception in 2012 and eventual dissolution in 2016, ACER/GEM Centre was a member of the Learning Metrics Task Force (LMTF, "...a multistakeholder collaboration, led by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Center (*sic*) for Universal Education at Brookings (Institution), which worked to improve learning outcomes for children and youth worldwide. The LMTF focused specifically on strengthening assessment systems and the use of assessment

data in service of moving the global agenda from access to education toward access *plus* learning and helping countries improve their assessment systems. The LMTF worked in two phases. The first phase (LMTF 1.0) focused on catalysing global dialogue and developing a series of recommendations on learning assessments. The second phase (LMTF 2.0) focused on implementing the task force's recommendations. Now the SDGs are in place, the LMTF has officially sunset. While the LMTF is no more, the research and consensus built by LMTF and the community of practice it convened will continue long into the future. ...four projects...grew out of the LMTF: Skills for a Changing World; Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes; Measuring Global Citizenship Education; and Breadth of Learning Opportunities.”

Link: <https://www.brookings.edu/product/learning-metrics-task-force/>

Link: [Champions for learning: the legacy of the Learning Metrics Task Force | Unesco IIEP Learning Portal](#)

In 2016, following the LMTF, the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) was established by the UIS, and ACER/GEM Centre became a member of this group as well. The Global Alliance to Monitor Learning is an “institutional platform to oversee the coordination of efforts to measure learning and the harmonization of standards for measuring learning. GAML works in tandem with the Technical Cooperation Group on the indicators for SDG4-Education 2030 to support the use of learning assessments to report for SDG4. ... All GAML outputs are developed through a fully transparent and participatory process and are based on global consensus using the best methodological approaches and practices.” <https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/>

“GAML Task Forces have been established to address technical issues and provide practical guidance for countries on how to monitor progress towards SDG 4.

The Task Forces make recommendations to the Alliance and are specifically responsible for:

- The framework for all global and thematic indicators related to learning and skills acquisition for Targets 4.1.1, 4.2.1, 4.4.2, 4.6.1, 4.7.4 and 4.7.5;
- Tools to align national and cross-national assessments into a universal reporting scale for comparability;
- Mechanisms to validate assessment data to ensure quality and comparability;
- Standards, guidelines and tools to guide countries in implementing and evaluating the quality of their learning assessments;
- Capacity-development tools and resources to complement existing ones and support countries in collecting, analysing and using learning assessment data; and
- Guidelines and templates to help countries develop their own strategies to monitor learning.” <https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/task-forces/>

Spin-off of:

DFAT contract for Ray Adams to represent Australia and Australian expertise in the LMTF.

Partners:

- UNESCO UIS
- LMTF: UNESCO Institute for Statistics; Brookings Institution (USA). Center for Universal Education
- Learning Metrics Task Force and Global Alliance to Monitor Learning member organisations

Push Out of Learning Metrics Task Force (LTMF)/Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) Membership:

2014-present: **Learning Progression Scales Advocacy.** GEM Centre/ACER advocate for LPS concept within LTMF and GAML.

2016-present: **Learning Progression Scales Review Using Learning Progressions Explorer.** GEM Centre used Explorer with GAML members and other international experts to undertake review of the LPS.

2019-2022: **Minimum Proficiency Levels Expanded Definitions Appraisal.** UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) members appraise GEM Centre expanded definitions of Minimum Proficiency Levels (MPLs).

2021-2022: **GAML Members' Feedback on Learning Progressions Explorer.** Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) members' and other experts' feedback on Learning Progressions Explorer (also see Catalogue entry for Learning Metrics Task Force/Global Alliance to Monitor Learning).

Spin-Offs from Learning Metrics Task Force/Global Alliance to Monitor Learning Membership:

2014-present: **ACER and DFAT Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Partnership.**

2016-present: **UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and ACER MoU.** (Also see UNESCO UIS and ACER MoU catalogue entry.)

2014. **Learning Metrics Partnership Concept Note.** GEM Centre and UIS produce concept note for an initiative to support countries and national/regional assessment programs and to develop and validate common learning metrics for reading and mathematics.

Link: learning-metrics-partnership.pdf (acer.org)

Link: LMTF_PartnerActivityUpdate_JanMarch-2015.pdf (brookings.edu)

2017: **Principles of Good Practice for Learning Assessments (GP-LA).**⁵⁰ GEM Centre developed and advocated use. (See separate entry on the GP-LA below.)

2017: **System-Wide Analysis of Assessment Practices Concept Note.** GEM Centre developed Concept Note. (SWAAP, 2017)⁵¹ A SWAAP would support education stakeholders to develop

⁵⁰ <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/principles-good-practice-learning-assessments-2017-en.pdf>

⁵¹ <http://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/08/gaml4-system-wide-analysis-assessment-practices.pdf>

national assessment strategies that could generate meaningful data for evidence-based policies aimed at improving learning outcomes. Concept Notes was shared with GAML members and published on the UIS website (see link below). GPE liked the Concept Note and used it as the basis of their ANLAS initiative, which aimed to help countries improve the coherence of assessment with the broader education system and the quality of assessments through education sector planning. ACER then won the ANLAS initiative contract, and the GEM Centre implemented the project. The SWAAP Concept Note development likely gave ACER a competitive advantage when bidding for the ANLAS initiative.

Link: <http://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/08/gaml4-system-wide-analysis-assessment-practices.pdf>

2017-2018: **UIS CLA Redevelopment.**⁵² CLA has formed the basis of UIS standard international data collection and reporting process (CLA): Version 2 Concept Note)⁵³

2018-2021: **Global Proficiency Frameworks for Reading and Mathematics Input and Review.** Produced by USAID, UIS, DFID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and ACER.⁵⁴ GEM Centre provided illustrative items for the GPF.

2019-2021: **Global Item Bank and Related Documents.** GEM Centre donated 300 mathematics and 300 reading items to the Global Item Bank, including items to illustrate the GPF and MPLs; UIS sets machinery in motion to make open-source Global Item Bank available. GEM Centre was involved producing terms of reference for the Bank management and quality standards for items being considered for the Bank.

2019-2022: **Policy Linking Method.** GEM Centre was a member of the Policy Linking Group and provided input into the Policy Linking method and its application.

2019-2022: **SDG 4.1.1 Minimum Proficiency Levels Refinements.** GEM Centre presented the two documents (see links below) at the GAML meeting in two stages. GAML members endorsed refinements.

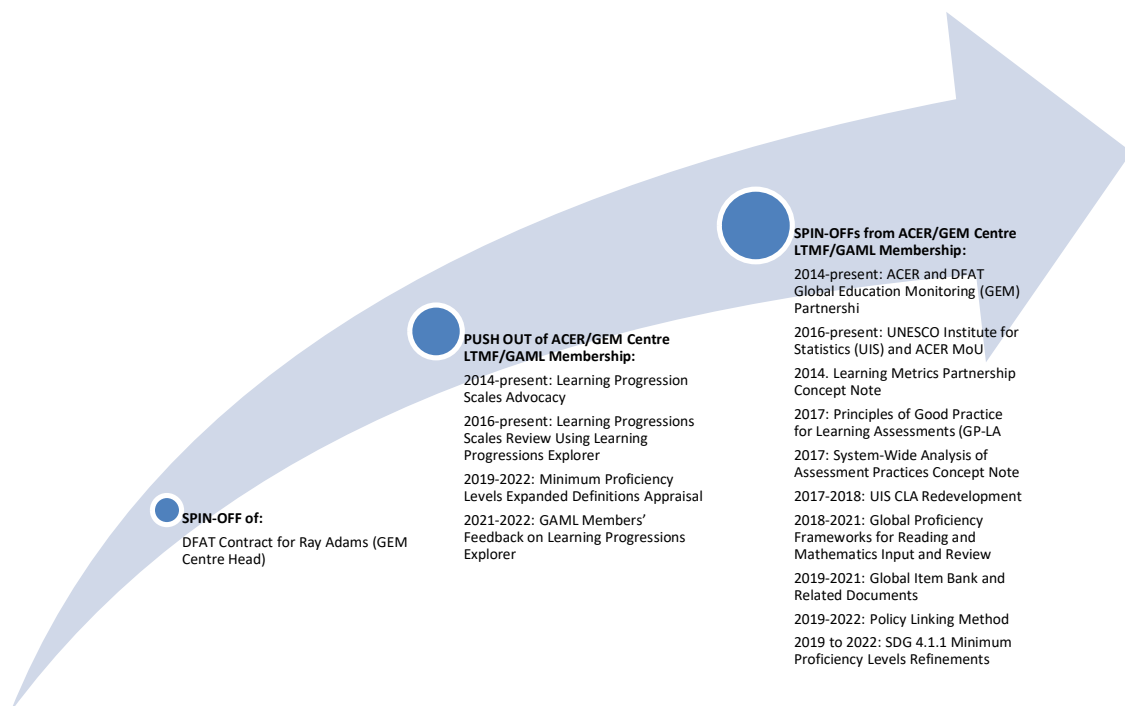
Link 2019: "[Minimum proficiency levels: described, unpacked and illustrated. Vers](#)" by ACER Centre for Global Education Monitoring (ACER-GEM)

Link 2022: "[Minimum Proficiency Levels Unpacked](#)" by Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

⁵² <http://uis.unesco.org/en/cla-survey>

⁵³ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/cla-survey>

⁵⁴ <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/global-proficiency-framework-reading-and-mathematics>



4. 2016–present UNESCO Institute of Statistics and ACER Memorandum of Understanding

In 2016, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) and ACER signed an MoU to collaborate in pursuit of their joint interest in promoting quality learning for all (Link: [Working together: The UIS and ACER collaborate to advance education - ACER Discover](#)). The MoU came about largely because of the exposure of the UIS to ACER and the GEM Centre via the Learning Metrics Task Force (LTMF) (the high-level peak body driving global education monitoring) and subsequently the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), both of which were/are convened by the UIS. ACER/GEM Centre thought leadership on global education monitoring (including ACER’s internal research on Learning Progression Scales) stood out among members. There is significant cachet associated with having an MoU with the UIS. The MoU has likely enhanced the perception of ACER/GEM Centre credibility and contributed to success in ACER winning UNESCO contracts. It seems likely that the collaboration will continue into the foreseeable future.

Areas of cooperation listed in the MoU include: the development of empirically supported learning metrics for mathematics and reading that will support interested national governments to effectively monitor learning outcomes for policy purposes against SDG 4 indicator 4.1.1. in mathematics and reading; the benchmarking of minimum proficiency levels; a Learning Progression Explorer for reading and mathematics; empirical validation of the learning metrics, and production of a supporting item bank; the development of a set of Principles of Good Practices for Learning Assessments; the development of a process for alignment of data from assessment programs with the learning metrics; support to GAML Task Forces in developing learning indicators; support for related activities in the Asia and Pacific region.

To implement the MoU, UIS intends to provide a platform – the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning, to host the learning metrics initiative; secure resources to support international activities and costs related to the learning metrics activities; collaborate with ACER in the development of a global reporting framework such as tools and processes mentioned in the MoU for assessment; collaborate with ACER in the development of an Assessment (Evaluation) of Data Quality framework.

ACER intends to secure resources to support development, international activities and costs related to the learning metrics initiative; provide empirical evidence and evaluate the feasibility of proposed methods; develop guidelines for alignment process and associated tools; produce documentation for the proposed methods and learning metrics.

Spin-Off of:

ACER/GEM Centre Thought Leadership on LMTF and GAML. ACER/CEM Centre provided thought leadership through membership on the Learning Metrics Task Force convened by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and The Brookings Institution and, subsequently, membership on the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), convened by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

Partners:

- UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)

Push-out of UNESCO Institute of Statistics and ACER Memorandum of Understanding for SDG 4:

2016: **ACER Discover Article, “Working Together”.** Article publicises ACER and UIS’s collaboration.

Link: [Working together: The UIS and ACER collaborate to advance education - ACER Discover](#)

Spin-Offs from UNESCO Institute of Statistics and ACER Memorandum of Understanding:

2015/16 -present: **UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) Adoption and Use of 14 Good Practices for Learning Assessment (GP-LA).** The GP-LA is a key tool for appraising whether a country or organisation’s assessment program meets quality principles.

Link: ([GAML6-WD-2-Protocol-for-reporting-4.1.1.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#)) UIS used GP-LA 14 principles to develop a questionnaire to ensure procedural alignment of assessment programs used for SDG 4.1 reporting. “UIS created guidelines, which are contained in its publication, Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment.” (p. 3 of the Procedural Alignment tool.

Link: [4.1.1_09_Procedural-Alignment-Tool.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#)

Link: [Indicator 4.1.1 - Global Alliance to Monitor Learning \(unesco.org\)](#)

2019: **Global Proficiency Frameworks**. Developed by USAID, UIS, DFID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and ACER. ACER contributions include descriptions of what a student can do at a given Minimum Proficiency Level and examples of skills required at a given Level.

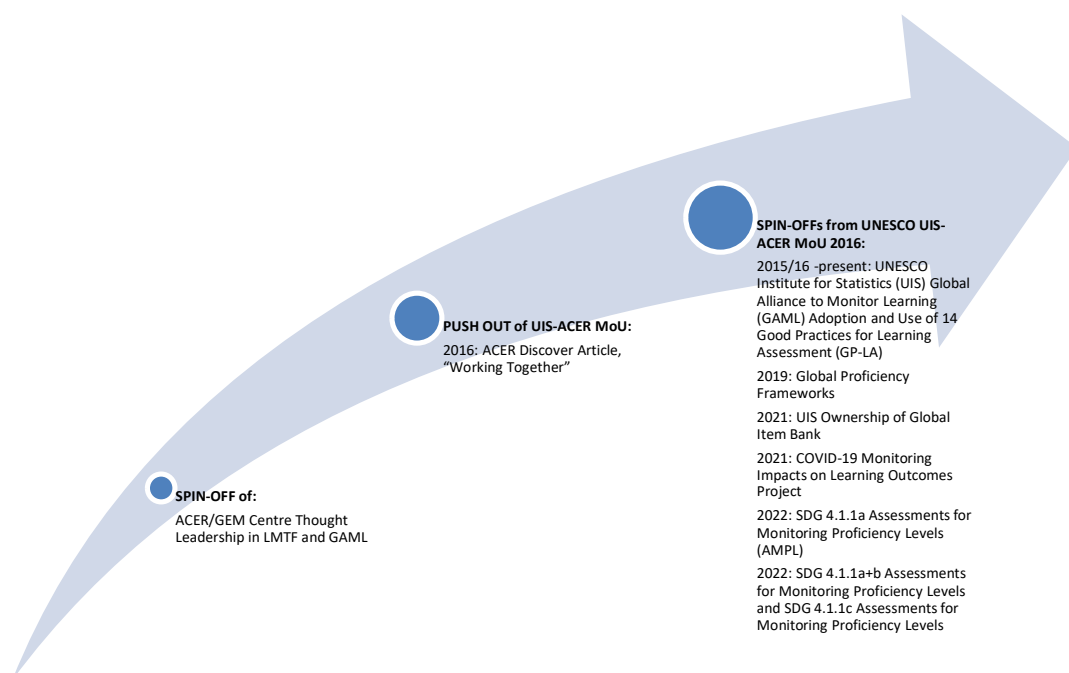
2021: **Global Item Bank (UIS)**. GEM Centre donated 300 mathematics and 300 reading items to the Global Item Bank; UIS set machinery in motion to make open-source Global Item Bank available. (See separate Catalogue entry.)

2021: **COVID-19 Monitoring Impacts on Learning Outcomes Project**. UNESCO UIS contract with ACER to implement MILO Project. GEM Centre in-kind contributions (see separate Catalogue entry below on COVID-19 MILO).

2022: **SDG 4.1.1a Assessments for Monitoring Proficiency Levels (AMPL)**. UNESCO UIS contract with ACER for AMPL. GEM Centre in-kind contributions (see separate entry below on AMPL).

A, b, and c relate to the 3 stages of schooling: 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 and (ii) mathematics, by sex.

2022: **SDG 4.1.1a+b Assessments for Monitoring Proficiency Levels and SDG4.1.1c Assessments for Monitoring Proficiency Levels**. UNESCO UIS contract with ACER. GEM Centre in-kind contributions. This looks at the range between 4.1.1a (end of lower primary) and b (end of primary).



5. 2021 COVID-19 Monitoring Impacts on Learning Outcomes (MILO) Project (with SDG 4.1.1b Assessments to Monitor Proficiency Levels – AMPL-b)

In 2021, the Global Partnership for Education calls for proposals to access grant funding for research into the effects of the coronavirus 19 (COVID-19) pandemic on education. UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank submitted a joint proposal for a Consortium of Grant Agents under which the UNESCO Institute for Statistics was awarded funding for the COVID-19: Monitoring the Impacts on Learning Outcomes (MILO) Project. The UIS subcontracted ACER as a technical partner to undertake the MILO Project in six African countries: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Senegal and Zambia. The MILO Project aimed to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on learning outcomes and to evaluate the effectiveness of distance learning mechanisms used during school closures on students at the end of primary school by sex. The GEM Centre contributed to the overall study conceptualization, the use of items from Global Item Bank in the MILO assessments, alignment methods and standard setting to benchmark the MILO results against the MPLs, and the overall capacity building concept (based on the GP-LA).

To implement MILO, ACER worked closely with the Kenya National Assessment Centre and the Zambia Examination Council To assist with the implementation of MILO. For technical and implementation support in the Francophone countries of Burkina Faso, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, ACER subcontracted the Program to Analyse Education Systems of French-speaking States (PASEC - Le Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN) under the Conference of Ministers of French-speaking States and Governments (CONFEMEN – Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie). ACER developed a manual and a toolkit for planning, administering, analysing and reporting on results from the SDG 4.1.1b Assessments to Monitor Proficiency Levels (AMPL 1b Reading and AMPL 1b Mathematics in English and translated into French) to understand the impact of COVID-19 on learning outcomes and to evaluate the effectiveness of distance learning mechanisms used during school closures on students at the end of primary school by sex (see the SDG 4.1.1b Assessments to Monitor Proficiency Levels (AMPL 1b) Under the COVID-19: Monitoring Impacts on Learning Project (MILO) described below in this Catalogue). Importantly, the lifespan of MILO Project tools can extend beyond the COVID-19 era and can continue to be a global public good (= AMPL).

Spin-Off of:

2016-present: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and ACER MoU and contribution to GAML

Partners:

- Global Partnership for Education (GPE) (funding organisation)
- World Bank (overall consortium partner of UNESCO, UNICEF and WB)
- UNESCO Institute of Statistics, (prime contractors for GPE COVID-19 grant funding)
- UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) (subcontracted ACER)
- Program to Analyse Education Systems of French-speaking States (PASEC - Le Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN) under the Conference of Ministers of French-speaking States and Governments (CONFEMEN – Conférence

des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie) (sub-contracted by ACER)

- The Kenya National Assessment Centre
- Zambia Examination Council

Push Out of COVID-19: Monitoring the Impacts on Learning Outcomes (MILO) Project:

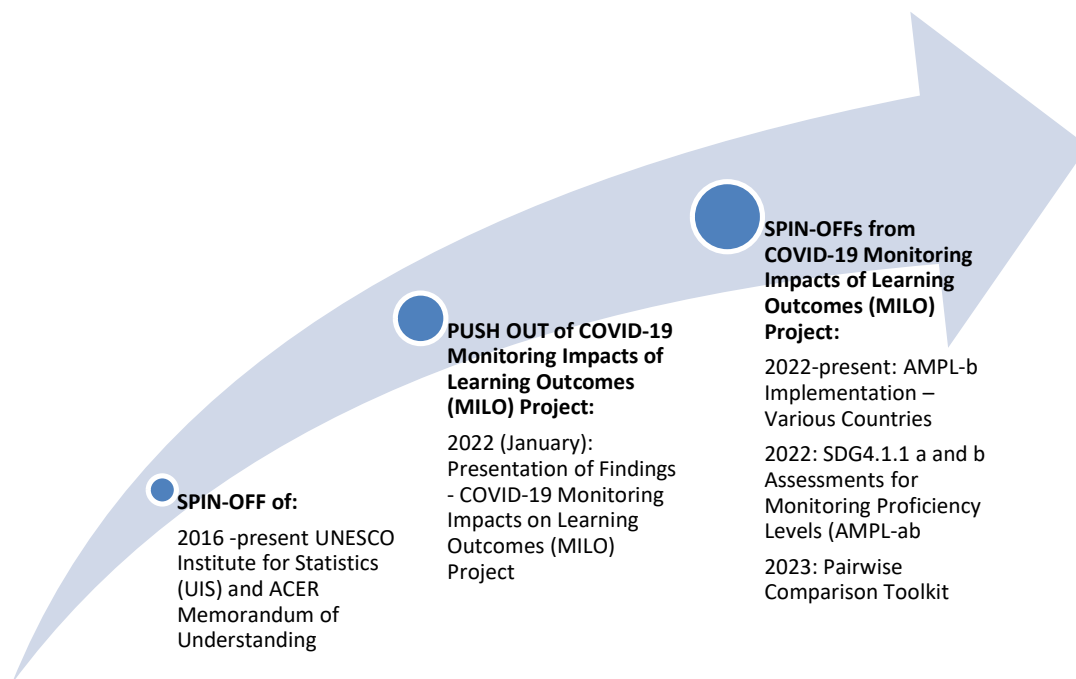
2022 (January): **Presentation of Findings - COVID-19 Monitoring Impacts on Learning Outcomes (MILO) Project.** Organised by UIS for partner organisations and participating country representatives and conducted virtually by GEM Centre.

Spin-Offs from COVID-19: Monitoring the Impacts on Learning Outcomes (MILO) Project:

2022-present: **AMPL-b Implementation – Various Countries.** AMPL is being implemented in Sierra Leone and Pakistan. Work includes making cultural adaptations and translating into Urdu for use in Pakistan. Work has also commenced in translating and adapting the instrument for Jordanian Arabic, likely to be followed by Lebanese Arabic. World Bank is in negotiations to implement AMPL-b in numerous other countries and languages.

2022: **SDG4.1.1 a and b Assessments for Monitoring Proficiency Levels (AMPL-ab).** UIS contracted ACER to implement AMPL-ab in five countries (Bhutan, India, Kenya, Lesotho and Zambia). AMPL-ab focuses on the end of early primary education, thus extending the COVID-19: MILO Project focus (grades 2/3). Project is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

2023: **Pairwise Comparison Toolkit.** GEM Centre will pilot and finalise as part of AMPL implementation.



6. 2021 SDG4.1.1b Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPL-b)

In 2021, ACER developed the tools for and administered the SDG 4.1.1b Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPL-b) under the COVID-19: Monitoring the Impacts on Learning Outcomes (MILO) Project in six African Anglophone and Francophone countries (see 5 above).

The usefulness of the SDG 4.1.1b AMPL (reading and mathematics) manual and toolkit can extend beyond the COVID-19 era and the tools can continue as open-source public goods that can enable developing countries to measure learning outcomes against the Minimum Proficiency Levels (MPLs) and to monitor and report on progress towards SDG 4.1.1b (4.1.1b Proportion of children and young people at the end of primary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics, by sex). If the AMPLs are translated into additional languages, they become even more useful. It is expected that AMPL results will be interrogated and lead to changes in policies and practices that in turn lead to better student learning outcomes.

- Dr. Benjamin Piper-Global Education Director, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: "(The AMPLs are) allowing us both to be able to have comparison across countries as well as comparisons within countries over time. ...It's critically important for us to use the power of the Global Item Bank and these tests in further rounds of learning assessment. The tools allow us to coordinate with other countries to understand what learning outcomes are like, what impact learning improvement programs are having, and what policy responses are working to improve learning."
- Dr. Ramya Vivekanandan, Sr. Education Specialist & Thematic Lead, Global Partnership for Education: "It's really exciting that we now have this pathway to be able to scale assessment results to international benchmarks. This type of work provides a robust

methodology to integrate international assessments and to ensure that they're able to provide reporting towards the global benchmarks."

Spin-Off of:

2021: **COVID-19: MILO Project**. ACER sub-contract with UIS.

Partners:

- Global Partnership for Education (GPE) (funding organisation)
- World Bank (overall consortium partner of UNESCO, UNICEF and WB)
- UNESCO Institute of Statistics, (prime contractors for GPE COVID-19 grant funding)
- UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) (subcontracted ACER)
- Program to Analyse Education Systems of French-speaking States (PASEC - Le Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN) under the Conference of Ministers of French-speaking States and Governments (CONFEMEN – Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie) (sub-contracted by ACER)
- The Kenya National Assessment Centre
- Zambia Examination Council

Push Out of SDG 4.1.1b Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPL-b):

2022 (January): **Presentation of Findings - COVID-19: Monitoring Impacts on Learning Outcomes (MILO) Project**. UIS organised the presentation and GEM Centre presented MILO findings for partner organisations and participating country representatives virtually.

2022 (February): **ACER Report on COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa: Monitoring Impacts on Learning Outcomes (MILO) Project**. Report covered the results of the SDG4.1.1b Assessments to Monitor Learning Outcomes.

2022-present: **Various COVID-19: MILO Project and SDG4.1.1b AMPL Publications**. GEM Centre publications (e.g., Discover articles) and presentations.

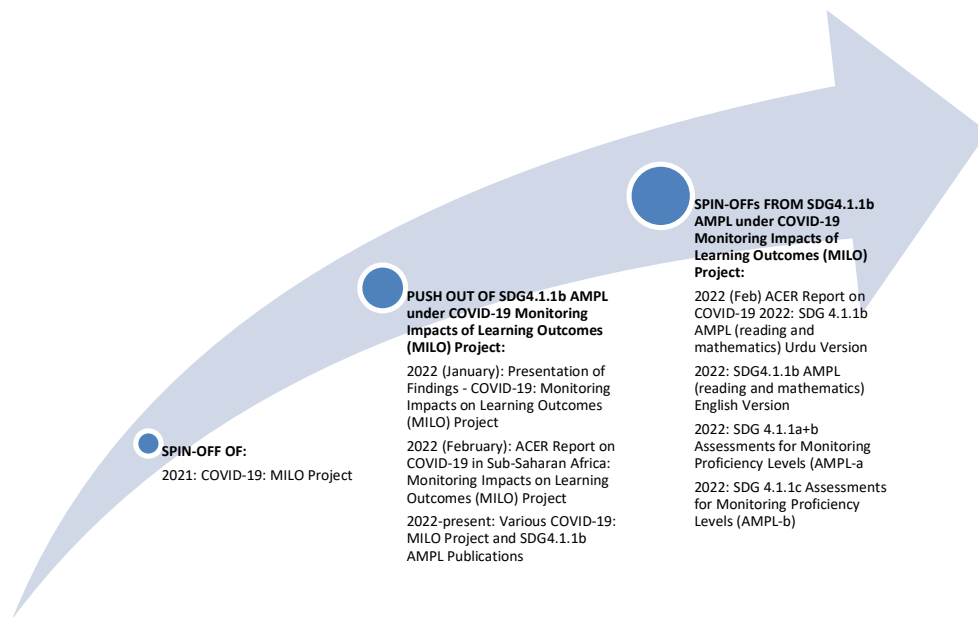
Spin-Offs from SDG4.1.1b Assessments for Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPL-b) (Under COVID-19 Monitoring Impacts on Learning Outcomes (MILO) Project):

2022: **SDG 4.1.1b AMPL (reading and mathematics) Urdu Version**. World Bank/Pakistan has AMPL translated into Urdu and administered in Pakistan.

2022: **SDG4.1.1b AMPL (reading and mathematics) English Version**. World Bank/Sierra Leone administers AMPL in Sierra Leone.

2022: **SDG 4.1.1a+b Assessments for Monitoring Proficiency Levels (AMPL-a)**. UNESCO UIS Contract with ACER to develop these AMPLs.

2022: **SDG 4.1.1c Assessments for Monitoring Proficiency Levels (AMPL-b)**. UNESCO UIS Contract with ACER for these AMPLs.



7. 2012–2016 Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) Program in Afghanistan

From 2012–2016, ACER/GEM Centre implemented the Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) Program in Afghanistan in collaboration with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Department of Education General Education Department and the World Bank 2nd Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP). The MTEG Program aimed to provide an ongoing measure of students' educational progress at key stages of learning: middle primary school (Class 3), towards the end of primary school (Class 6), and towards the end of compulsory secondary schooling (Class 9) and provide assessment results to Afghanistan's policymakers and other stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and students.

Assessments of the type developed for Afghanistan under the MTEG Program are structured so that improvements can be implemented to enhance learning programs and resulting changes in student achievement can be measured in subsequent cycles of assessment. Assessment materials and the subsequent reports provide information about the strengths and weaknesses of students in the formative years of schooling. GEM Centre conceptualized the MTEG program and provided technical support internally at ACER to produce the assessment framework for literacy and numeracy learning domains for years/grades 3, 6 and 9, reading, writing and math assessments for class 3 and 6, methods booklets, and context questionnaires, and administered one cycle of the three assessments for class 3 in 2012–2013 and one cycle of the three assessments for class 6 in 2016. ACER used GEM Centre's capacity development approach and built the knowledge and skills of the Ministry of Education General Education Department personnel. Unfortunately, changes in the political situation resulted in the discontinuation of the work.

Spin-Off of:

ACER Educational Assessment Expertise/Experience. ACER has decades of educational assessment experience and expertise, including monitoring and leading the PISA Consortium for PISA 2000 to PISA 2012.

Partners:

- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Education General Education Department
- World Bank 2nd Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)

Push Out of Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) Program in Afghanistan:

2016: **ACER Centre for Global Education Monitoring (ACER-GEM) Report on Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) in Afghanistan.**

<https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=mteg> (also included on the UNICEF South Asia All Children Learning Assessment Platform)

2016: Publications about MTEG:

*MTEG Reports***Class 6**

- [Class 6 Proficiency in Afghanistan 2013: Report](#)
- [Class 6 Proficiency in Afghanistan 2013: Report summary](#)
- [Class 6 girls and boys in Afghanistan 2013: Comparing outcomes of girls and boys from a learning assessment of mathematical, reading and writing literacy](#)
- [Class 6 girls and boys in Afghanistan 2013: Report summary](#)
- [Class 6 school factors in Afghanistan 2013: The relationship between school factors and student outcomes from a learning assessment of mathematical, reading and writing literacy](#)
- [Class 6 school factors in Afghanistan 2013: Report summary](#)

Class 3

- [Class 3 Proficiency in Afghanistan 2015-16: Report](#)

Assessment Framework

- [Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth: Assessment Framework for Afghanistan](#)

MTEG Databases

- [Download the database for the Class 6 Afghanistan MTEG results.](#)
- [Download the database for the Class 3 Afghanistan MTEG results](#)

MTEG Questionnaires

Download the MTEG Afghanistan Class 6 student context questionnaire in [English](#), [Dari](#) or [Pashto](#).

Download the MTEG Afghanistan Class 6 *school context questionnaire* in [English](#), [Dari](#) or [Pashto](#).

Articles about MTEG in Afghanistan

- [Assessment GEMS No. 6, Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth in Afghanistan \(PDF\)](#).
- [The cure for early grades assessment difficulties? Take a tablet](#)
- [Educational assessment in Afghanistan](#)

2016: **MTEG Brochure**. Published on the GEM Centre website in [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#) or [Arabic](#).

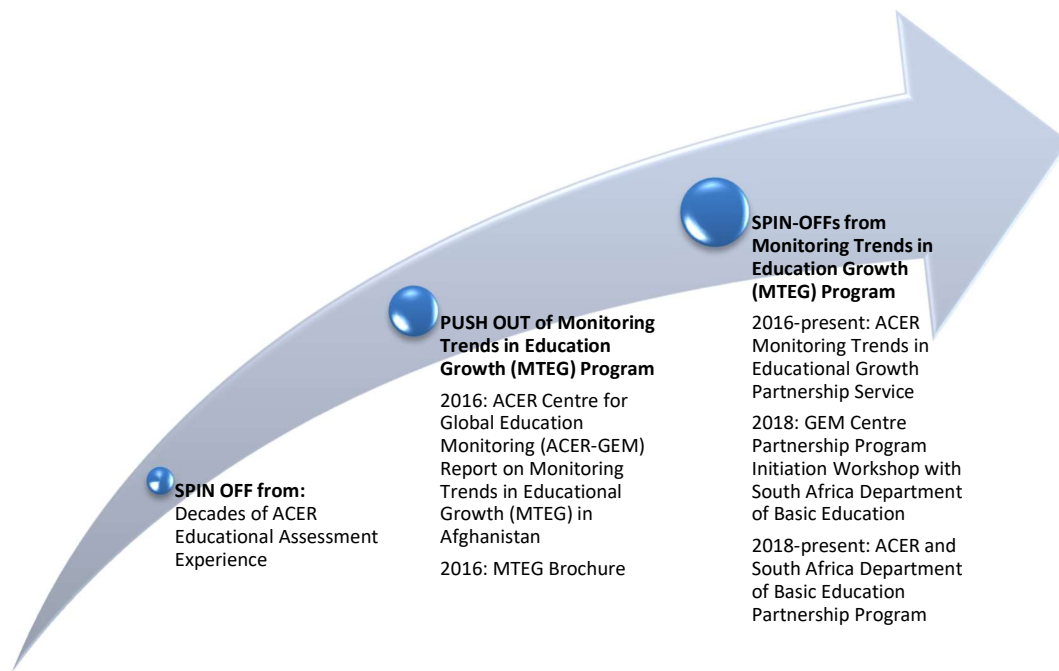
Post-2016: Unable to continue due to Afghanistan political situation

Spin-Offs from MTEG Framework/Afghanistan:

2016-present: **ACER Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth Partnership Service**. ACER/GEM Centre develop the concept of a “partnership service” that countries could access. (See separate entry in the Catalogue.)

2018: **GEM Centre Partnership Program Initiation Workshop with South Africa Department of Basic Education**. GEM Centre conducted a one-week workshop with Department of Basic Education (DBE) stakeholders on the MTEG approach, questionnaire development and assessment development. Workshop laid the foundation for the Basic Education Sector Systemic Evaluation under the ACER and DBE Partnership Program.

2018-present: **ACER and South Africa Department of Basic Education Partnership Program**. Various contracts in support of the Systemic Evaluation of the basic education sub-sector in South Africa. (Partnership Program is not included as a separate entry in the Catalogue.)



8. 2014–present Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) Partnership Service

In 2014, while reflecting on the work under the Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) Program in Afghanistan (see Catalogue entry above), GEM Centre saw the potential in offering the Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) program in form of a Partnership Service that could be marketed to countries needing technical expertise in global education monitoring. The Partnership Service will help countries to monitor the educational growth of students in the early to middle years of schooling. Future assistance could cover: 1) a suite of tools linked to SDG 4.1.1b measurement, monitoring, and reporting including learning domains, assessments, context questionnaires, methods; 2) administration and analyses of and reporting on results from assessments and context questionnaires; and 3) intentional capacity development of targeted personnel. To date, there has been no targeted promotion of the MTEG Partnership Service beyond posting an 8-page brochure (in Arabic, English, French, Spanish) on the ACER website and no interest generated from the brochure publication; however, once organisations become aware of the Partnership Service, there may very well be a demand, provided the assistance is not cost-prohibitive.

Spin-Off of:

2012-16: **Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) in Afghanistan**/Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Department of Education General Education Department and World Bank/Afghanistan 2nd Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)

Partners:

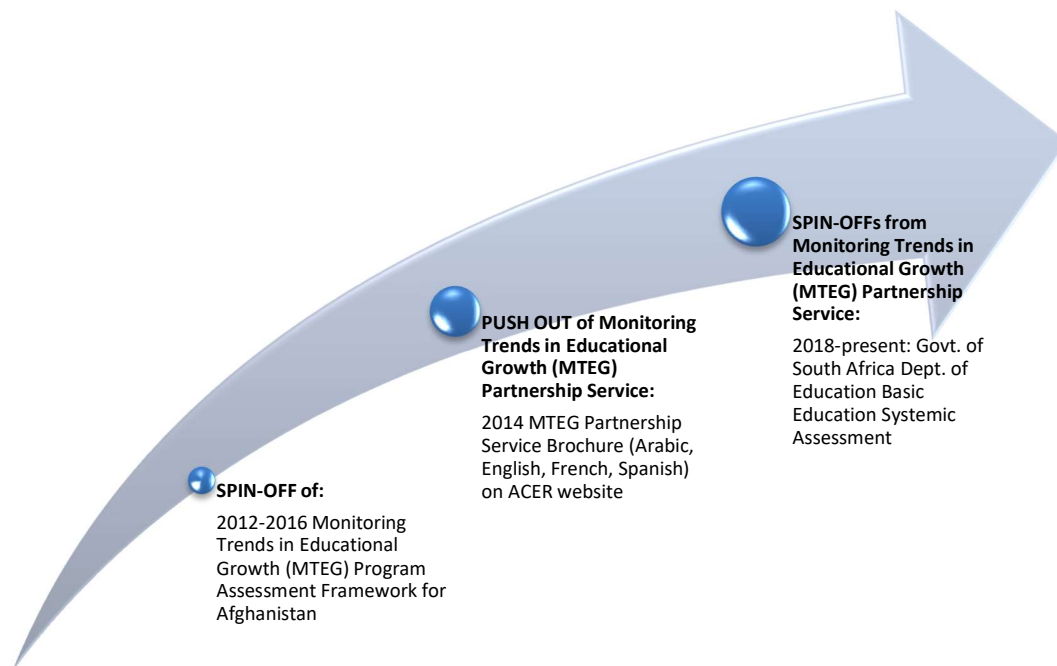
- None to date –GEM Centre is continuing to promote the MTEG Partnership Service, with more targeted promotion through the GEM Centre website refresh

Push Out of Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) Partnership Service:

2014: **MTEG Partnership Brochure**. On ACER website in Arabic, English, French, Spanish.
<https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=mtteg>

Spin-Offs from Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) Partnership Service:

2018-present: **Government of South Africa Department of Education - Basic Education Systemic Assessment**. ACER/GEM Centre approach utilises MTEG tools. (See elsewhere in Catalogue as well.)



9. 2017 Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment (GP-LA)

In 2017, the GEM Centre initiated and produced the (14) Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment (GP-LA) in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) and with input from the GAML Secretariat at UIS (led by Silvia Montoya) and the GAML Assessment Implementation Task Force (chaired by Esther Care, Brookings Institution) and Task Force 4.1 (chaired by Marguerite Clarke, World Bank). The GP-LA provides a robust approach to the planning for and implementation of large-scale assessments and draws on ACER's extensive experience in planning, developing and conducting large scale assessments (most notably the OECD Programme for International

Student Assessment (PISA), for which ACER was the leading consortium partner during five cycles of implementation for more than 12 years) and previous work undertaken, for example, in 2015 for the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in India and in 2016 by the Public Education Evaluation Commission (PEEC) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and ACER. (Description above includes some verbatim content from “Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment”.) <https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/principles-good-practice-learning-assessments-2017-en.pdf>)

Link: [Indicator 4.1.1 - Global Alliance to Monitor Learning \(unesco.org\)](#)

Spin-Off of:

2012-present: **ACER Large-Scale Assessments Experience.** ACER has accrued extensive experience in LSAs, including OECD PISA and national assessment programs and related technical assistance and capacity building.

Partners:

- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) with input from the UIS GAML Secretariat, UIS GAML Assessment Implementation Task Force
- UIS GAML Assessment Implementation Task Force 4.1

Push Out of the Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment (GP-LA):

2017: **UNESCO and UIS Logos on Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment (GP-LA) and Publication on UIS Website.** UNESCO adds the GP-LA to the Monitoring Framework for 4.1.1 – Methodological Framework, as a set of good practices identified to guide the implementation of an assessment. The GP-LA forms part of the UIS outputs to define the minimum procedures that ensure data integrity sufficient enough to report and compare results from learning assessments.

Link: [GAML6-WD-2-Protocol-for-reporting-4.1.1.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#)

UIS used 14 GP-LA principles to develop a questionnaire to ensure procedural alignment of assessment programs used for SDG 4.1 reporting. “UIS created guidelines, which are contained in its publication, *Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment*.” (p. 3 of the Procedural Alignment tool. Link: [4.1.1_09_Procedural-Alignment-Tool.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#))

Link to these documents on GAML website: [Indicator 4.1.1 - Global Alliance to Monitor Learning \(unesco.org\)](#)

<https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/principles-good-practice-learning-assessments-2017-en.pdf>

2017: **GP-LA Development and Advocacy for Use.** GEM Centre developed and then advocated widely for the use of the GP-LA.

Spin-Offs from the Principles for Good Practices for Learning Assessment (GP-LA):

2017: **Sr. Education Administrators Learning Assessments Self-Evaluation Tool.** Developed by ACER/India for UNICEF/India. ACER/India drew heavily on the GP-LA document to develop the Self-Evaluation Tool. Tool helps evaluate the degree of preparedness of the state to undertake a large-scale assessment and identifies further capacity building needs.

2017: **Indian Sr. Education Administrators' Learning Assessments Introductory Workshop.** Conducted by ACER/India for education administrators from all Indian states for UNICEF/India. 3-day workshop covered orientation to key aspects of large-scale assessments and identification of potential areas to further enhance capacity to implement large-scale assessments in the states of India. For this purpose, ACER India developed a self-evaluation tool based on the GP-LA. The self-evaluation tool enabled senior educational officials

2018: **Data Quality and Accuracy Workshop.** Planned and conducted by GEM Centre, UNESCO Bangkok Regional Bureau for Education in Asia, and Pacific Secretariat for the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) for NEQMAP members. Workshop content drew heavily on GP-LA document.

2018: **Citizen-Led Assessments Data Quality Standards Framework.** People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network Secretariat used GP-LA structure and the 14 principles to develop a bespoke framework. GEM Centre provided input for and reviewed Framework. Secretariat applies its Framework as part of the suite of tools used with any new country joining the PAL Network. The Framework is expected to help improve the rigour of PAL Network assessments.

2018 (March): **Data Quality and Accuracy Workshop.** Conducted by GEM Centre for Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) members. Used the ACER/India Sr. Education Administrators Learning Assessments Self-Evaluation Tool in workshop and discussed data obtained from tool use.

2018-2020: **Indian Sr. Education Administrators' Learning Assessments Workshop Series.** Conducted by ACER/India for 45 education administrators/15 States for UNICEF/India. Total of 53 days of face-to-face or online interactions (due to COVID-19). Series covered elements of a robust assessment program (planning, item development, data analysis and reporting).

2019: **South Asia All Children Learning Assessment Platform.** UNICEF/South Asia contracted ACER/India to: 1) collaborate with Community Systems Foundation to build Platform. Platform is based on digital principles (Design with the User, Understand the Existing Ecosystem, Design for Scale, Build for Sustainability, Be Data Driven, Use Open Standards, Open Data, Open Source, and Open Innovation, Reuse and Improve, Address Privacy and Security, and Be Collaborative) and 2) produce content for the Platform. ACER/India contributed the 14 Principles for Good Practices for Learning Assessments (GP-LA) (see <https://allchildrenlearning.org/about/>, <https://www.acer.org/au/discover/article/a-knowledge-portal-on-learning-assessments-for-south-asia>), as well as several other ACER and GEM Centre products.

2019: **Development and Strategic Use of National Large-Scale Assessments Workshop.** GEM Centre co-facilitated with UNESCO Dakar (TALENT Secretariat), UNESCO IIEP, ACER and UNICEF in Yaoundé, Cameroon (Dec. 3-5) for TALENT regional platform. GEM Centre presented [Key Quality Concepts of Learning Assessment \(EN\) - Ursula Schwantner & Andriy Dubovyk \(ACER\)](#).

See Workshop Concept Note (UNESCO): <http://www.education2030-africa.org/index.php/en/workshop-link-december-2019>

2020-present: **PAL Network Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (ELANA)**. GEM Centre assisted with ELANA development, including ELANA Empirical Alignment with Learning Progressions Scales (LPSs) to set cut-off points for Minimum Learning Proficiency Levels.

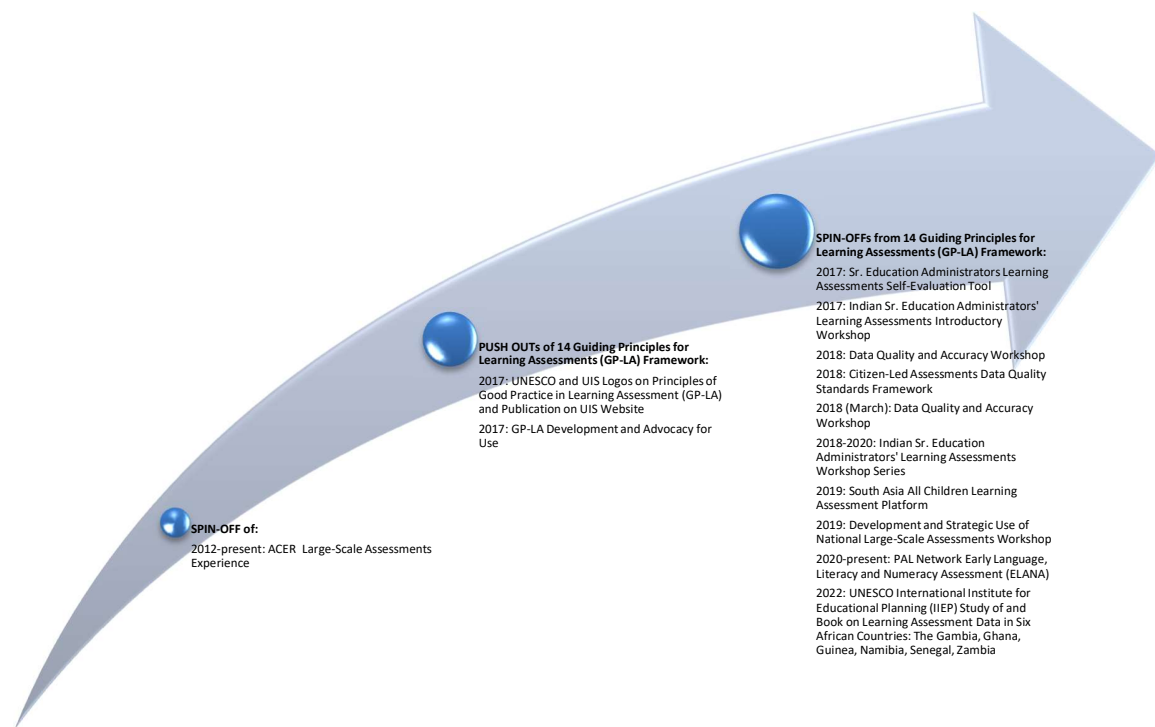
2022: **UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) Study of and Book on Learning Assessment Data in Six African Countries: The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Namibia, Senegal, Zambia**. “Using Learning Assessment Data for Educational Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comparative Analysis,” published on the IIEP Learning Portal. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382621/PDF/382621eng.pdf.multi>

Book has 43 mentions of ACER/GEM Centre, including the following: “The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) ‘Principles of Good Practices in Learning Assessment’ under-lines the importance of inclusive development of assessment frameworks to improve the use of learning data: Consult stakeholders. ... This could include presenting it to a steering committee in which various stakeholders are represented ... and/or aiming for a larger audience of policymakers and learning domain experts. By ensuring that various stakeholders have had the chance to comment on the details of what is assessed, it is more likely that results will be accepted and used in improving outcomes for learners. However, responsibility for finalising the framework should rest with a combined team of experts (expert committee) and test developers.” (ACER-GEM; UIS. 2017: 17)

GP-LA graph of the 14 key areas is shown on various ACER websites (global, ACER India), used to conceptualise capacity building activities for large-scale assessments by ACER global and international offices, and used in ACER proposals.

GP-LA principles underpin OECD PISA Core E Country Implementation and Capacity Development Support and PISA 2025 Capacity Development component.

Link: [Supporting countries new to large-scale assessment - ACER Discover](#)



10. 2018–19 Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS) Toolkit

In 2018, the GPE issued a request for proposals for the development of national learning assessment systems as part of the Assessment for Learning initiative. GPE partner countries must provide proof that they have a functioning learning assessment system to receive GPE funding, and the ANLAS initiative aimed to provide a resource to help countries to systematically gather and analyse information about their national learning assessment systems with the aim of informing the development and implementation of improvement strategies as part of the wider education sector planning process or during other phases of the policy cycle and re-injected into annual reviews or mid-term reviews that may eventually lead to revision of the education sector plan. ACER was awarded the contract and produced the ANLAS – a comprehensive, qualitative analysis with a focus on three dimensions: 1) context of the national learning assessment system, 2) quality of the assessment programs administered, including national and international largescale assessments, national and sub-national examinations and classroom assessment, and 3) coherence of the assessment system, with regard to the wider education system and other elements within the assessment system.

The ANLAS approach is conceptualised as a country-led, participative process implemented by a national team and guided by a steering committee over a six-month (indicative) timeframe and the ANLAS Toolkit includes a manual and a set of tools (Word and Excel templates) that can be adapted to suit the respective context. In 2019, the ANLAS approach and tools were piloted in three GPE partner countries: Ethiopia, Mauritania, and Viet Nam.

Spin-off of:

2017: **SWAAP** (overall concept for ANLAS).

2017: **Good Practices for Learning Assessments**. For the component on quality of large-scale assessments and examinations.

Partners:

- GPE
- Governments of Ethiopia, Mauritania and Viet Nam
- CONFEMEN PASEC to implement ANALS in Mauritania in French

Push Out of Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS) Initiative and Toolkit:

GPE push out of through documents, webinars, blogs.

Documents:

2019: **National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS): A GPE Initiative to Strengthen Learning Assessment Systems**.

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2019-10-gpe-what-is-anlas.pdf>

2019: **Toolkit for Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems – ANLAS in English, French and Spanish**. Toolkit includes separate document files for each tool in English, French and Spanish <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/manual-analysis-national-learning-assessment-systems-anlas>

2019: **Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems: Ethiopia Country Report**.

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/analysis-national-learning-assessment-systems-ethiopia-country-report-june-2019>

2019: **Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems: Mauritania Country Report**.

[Analyse des systèmes d'évaluation nationaux des apprentissages \(ANLAS\): rapport Mauritanie | Unesco IIEP Learning Portal](#)

2019: **Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems: Viet Nam Country Report**.

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/analysis-national-learning-assessment-systems-vietnam-country-report-november-2019>

2022: **Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Government of Haiti Department of Education (ANLAS)**.

Webinars/Meetings:

2019: **Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Webinar - Introducing ANLAS: A GPE Initiative to Strengthen Learning Assessment Systems**. Webinar included Dr. Ursula Schwantner as a presenter.

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/events/webinar-introducing-anlas-gpe-initiative-strengthen-learning-assessment-systems>

2019: **NEQMAP Annual Meeting – Presentation on ANLAS Initiative**. GEM Centre presentation jointly with GPE on the Analysis for National Learning Assessment Systems

(ANLAS) initiative for the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) Annual Meeting through the UNESCO Bangkok Regional Office Bureau of Education for the Asia-Pacific Region

2019: **TALENT Regional Capacity Building Workshop**. With UNESCO Dakar, UNESCO IIEP, ACER and UNICEF, GEM Centre co-facilitated a TALENT regional capacity-building workshop in Yaoundé, Cameroon from 3 to 5 December, 2019, with UNESCO Dakar (TALENT Secretariat): Development and strategic use of national large-scale learning assessments.

From the workshop concept note from UNESCO: <http://www.education2030-africa.org/index.php/en/workshop-link-december-2019>: The regional platform TALENT has been working on the quality of education since its foundation in 2016.

2020: **International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)** hosts the webinar, Improving the Use of Learning Assessment Data for Educational Planning and Decision-making jointly with GPE and ACER (Dr. Ursula Schwantner) <https://www.globalpartnership.org/events/improving-use-learning-assessment-data-educational-planning-and-decision-making>; [Join our second webinar on the use of learning assessment data | Unesco IIEP Learning Portal](#)

Blogs:

2019: **Global Partnership for Education: Supporting the Comprehensive Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems**. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/supporting-comprehensive-analysis-national-learning-assessment-systems>

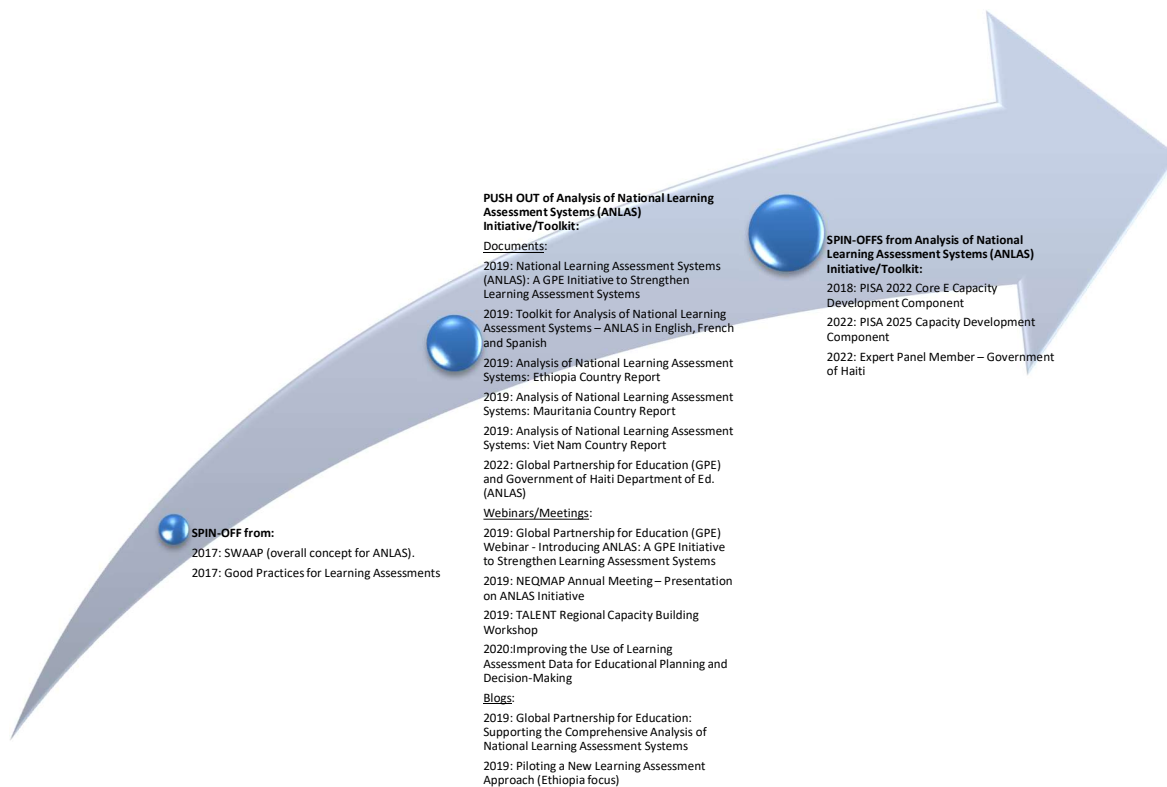
2019: **Piloting a New Learning Assessment Approach (Ethiopia focus)**. Co-authored by GPE and GEM Centre Head (Dr. Ursula Schwantner). <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/piloting-new-learning-assessment-approach>

Spin-Offs from Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS) Initiative and Toolkit:

2018: **PISA 2022 Core E Capacity Development Component**. OECD contracted ACER to implement this component in PISA 2022 (see separate entry below).

2022: **PISA 2025 Capacity Development Component**. OECD contracted ACER to implement this component in PISA 2025 (see separate entry below).

2022: **Expert Panel Member – Government of Haiti**. GEM Centre/ACER invited to be a member of an Expert Panel on developing a national assessment evaluation framework. Convened by the Government of Haiti with World Bank funding.



11. 2018 OECD PISA 2022 Country Preparation and Implementation Support (Core E)

In 2018, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) contracted ACER (which had been the leading consortium partner during five cycles of PISA implementation over a period of more than 12 years) to lead the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 Capacity Development Component (among other components). ACER developed a framework for the capacity building component and undertook a Capacity Needs Analysis and produced a Capacity Development Plan for large scale assessments based on the ACER/GEM Centre 14 Principles for Good Practices in Learning Assessments (GP-LA) and the Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS) Toolkit with four National PISA Centres in El Salvador, India, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan. All four countries have used their Capacity Development Plans, albeit in different ways.

In 2022, the OECD again contracted ACER to lead the PISA 2025 Capacity Development component (among other components). This component was designed based on the PISA 2022 capacity building framework and tools (hence informed by the GP-LA and ANLAS). The OECD has not specified the countries yet.

Spin-Off of:

Principles of Good Practice for Learning Assessments (GP-LA)

2018-19: *Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS) Toolkit*

Partners:

- OECD
- Governments of El Salvador, India, Mongolia and Uzbekistan – National PISA Centres

Push-Outs of 2018 OECD PISA 2022 Capacity development component:

2022: ACER Discover Article.

Link: [Supporting countries new to large-scale assessment - ACER Discover](#)

Spin-Offs from 2018 OECD PISA 2022 Capacity development component:

2022-present: ***Country Impact.***

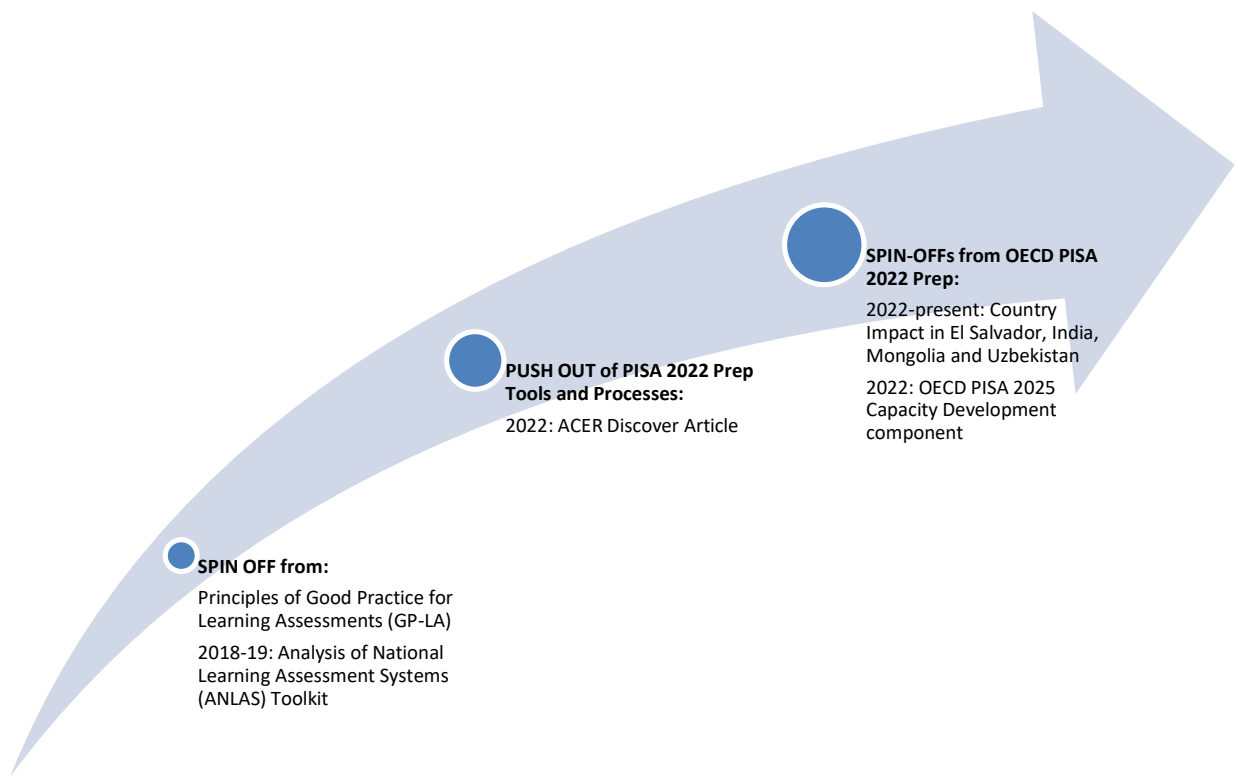
El Salvador – El Salvador used the Capacity Building Plan as a roadmap for professional development to ensure the National Centre staff were equipped to undertake each phase of PISA. They also submitted the Capacity Building Plan as part of a World Bank funding application (successful).

India – Although India dropped out of PISA 2022 during COVID-19, the Capacity Development Needs Analysis and Plan were used by the Indian Government in the establishment of the Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH) National Assessment Centre.

Mongolia – Government is using its Capacity Development Needs Analysis and Plan to solicit donor funding to continue with capacity development efforts and iterations of PISA participation.

Uzbekistan – Government signed an MoU with ACER for additional support and collaboration.

2022: ***OECD PISA 2025 Capacity Development component.*** ACER was contracted by OECD for this component (among others). Tools and processes from the PISA 2022 Capacity Development Component will be used in PISA 2025 countries, although the OECD has not yet indicated which countries.



12. 2014 Hewlett Foundation Review of Citizen-Led Assessments

In 2014, the Hewlett Foundation commissioned Results for Development (R4D) to carry out a review of Citizen-Led Assessments: ASER India, Beekunko in Mali, Jàngandoo in Senegal, and Uwezo in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. R4D subcontracted ACER as a technical partner and the two organisations produced one consolidated review report and four country-specific reports. Seeing the relevance of the Citizen-Led Assessments work, the Hewlett Foundation provided funding to establish the PAL Network for organisations involved in Citizen-Led Assessments. The GEM Centre advocated with Network members to collaborate and streamline work. In 2017, ACER became a “special member” of the PAL Network – special because all other members are country-based organisations. This work, over time, and the relationships built led to more contracted for the ACER/GEM Centre and more technical products.

GEM Centre’s main collaboration activities with PAL Network are:

- Input and review in the development of the PAL network [Data Quality Standards Framework](#) to help improve and ensure the quality of citizen-led assessments as an important data source in SDG 4 monitoring

- Development of assessment models for citizen-led assessments to illustrate improvements in item development and to propose an adaptive test design⁵⁵
- Technical support for the [development of the International Common Assessment of Numeracy \(ICAN\)](#) which was implemented in 2019 in one rural district in 13 PAL Network countries
- Series of capacity-building workshops on objective measurement for approximately 45 members of the PAL Network in conjunction with technical guidance to apply item-response theory to scale citizen-led assessment data and develop meaningful reporting levels
- Consortium of PAL Network, ASER Centre (Pratham), and ACER to develop the [Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment \(ELANA\)](#) to understand the progress across the learning development continuum and to support alignment with SDG 4 monitoring and reporting; participation in the ELANA Project Advisory Group.

2020–2021: GEM Centre led the joint editorial of a topical case study of four citizen-led assessments in South Asia: '[Citizen-led Assessments: A Model for Evidence-based Advocacy and Action](#)' (Bhattacharjea, Saeed, Timalisina & Ahamed (2021)). This topical case study was the fourth in the 'Using Assessment Data in Education Policy and Practice: Examples from the Asia-Pacific' series initiated by the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) at UNESCO Bangkok and the GEM Centre. The case studies were developed collaboratively with members from organisations conducting citizen-led assessments in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The publication provides an overview of the citizen-led assessment model and illustrates a range of ways in which the model has been implemented in the four South Asian countries to monitor and improve learning.

Over almost a decade, the continued collaboration of the GEM Centre with citizen-led assessment organisations and the PAL Network has had an impact on sustainably and effectively improving capacity of member organisations and the quality of citizen-led assessments. The development of common assessments that are comparable and can be used not only to provide relevant data on out of school populations at country-level (where representative), but also for SDG 4 monitoring and reporting, is a further great achievement of this long-term collaboration. Analysis and reporting are being modernised, using state-of-the art Item Response Theory models, to make better use of the information captured and to better describe children's learning levels. This has been made possible through the collaborative hands-on capacity development as part of ICAN and ELANA, in all areas of the assessment development, implementation, and analysis.

The ACER/GEM Centre work on Citizen-Led Assessments is unique within the realm of assessments and is a valuable example of innovation that steps out of the high-stakes assessment world into a lower-stakes but perhaps even more essential assessment world.

Spin-Off of:

55 ACER. (2021). Basic literacy and mathematics test models and framework. Developed for the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network. Melbourne: ACER.

Unknown.

Partners:

- Hewlett Foundation
- Results for Development (R4D)
- 4 Citizen-Led Assessments Organisations - ASER Centre (Pratham-India), Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (Pakistan), Œuvre Malienne d'Aide à l'Enfance du Sahel (OMAES) – (Mali), Twaweza (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda)

Push-Outs of Hewlett Foundation Review of Citizen-Led Assessments:

2014: *Evaluation Findings from 4 Citizen-Led Assessments*. Published by R4D in:

Link: Citizen-Led Assessments Evaluation Report: [Bringing Learning to Light: The role of citizen-led assessments in shifting the education agenda](#)

Link: Report on the quasi-experimental studies in Kenya: [Report on the concurrent validity and inter-rater reliability studies of Uwezo](#)

History of PAL Network: [Our Story - PAL Network](#) and [Our Growth - PAL Network](#)

Spin-Offs from Hewlett Foundation Review of Citizen-Led Assessments:

2014: *Citizen-Led Assessments Organisations connect with ACER/GEM Centre*.

Organisations in the four review countries reached out to ACER and the GEM Centre to work with them.

PAL Network Funded/Founded and Expanding. PAL Network includes at least 14 organisations in 14 countries across Africa, the Americas and Asia.

2017-present: **PAL Network 'Special Member' - ACER.** GEM Centre provides funding for participation in PAL Network activities.

PAL Network - South Asia Hub Member. PAL Network invited to join Network for Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP).

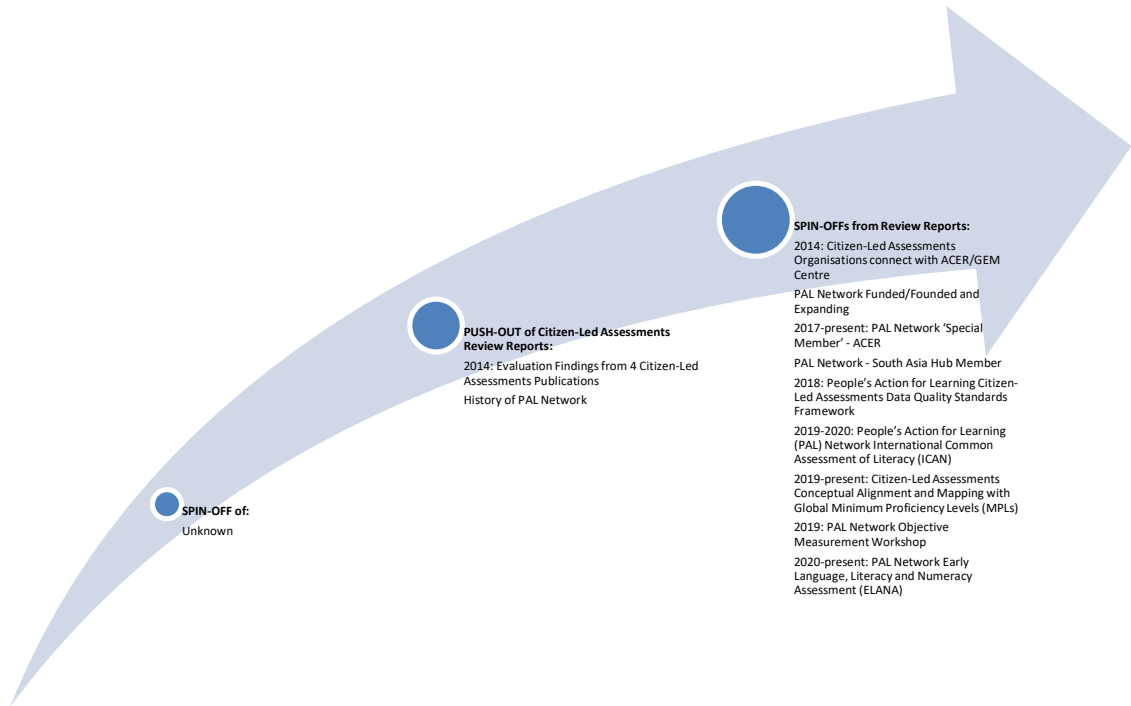
2018: **People's Action for Learning Citizen-Led Assessments Data Quality Standards Framework.** GEM Centre and People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network developed this bespoke PAL Network Framework building off of GEM Centre 14 Guiding Principles for Learning Assessments (GP-LA) (see Catalogue entry above)

2019-2020: **People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network International Common Assessment of Literacy (ICAN).** Developed with GEM Centre help.

2019-present: **Citizen-Led Assessments Conceptual Alignment and Mapping with Global Minimum Proficiency Levels (MPLs).** Undertaken with GEM Centre help.

2019: **PAL Network Objective Measurement Workshop.** Conducted by GEM Centre for 45 PAL Network personnel.

2020-present: **PAL Network Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (ELANA)**.
GEM Centre assisted with ELANA development, including ELANA Empirical Alignment with Learning Progressions Scales (LPSs) to set cut-off points for Minimum Learning Proficiency Levels.



Annex 3 GEM Centre Capacity Development

Event Name	Dates	Event Session Time (in hours)	Vehicle (NEQMAP, etc.)	Partner Org'ns	Countries Involved	Target Audience	No. of participants by country	Outputs	Event details
Building Education System Resilience	May - June 2023	2	USAID Learning Portal	USAID	TBC	Ministry policymakers, NGOs (director and senior officer level)	TBC	No documented outputs (Gain knowledge and skills)	<p>Concept Note addresses technical topic focus area for strengthening resilience capabilities of local education institutions and systems. Workshops will be delivered to government policymakers and non-government stakeholders to strengthening emergency response and coordination capabilities and enhance preparedness and disaster risk reduction capacities.</p> <p>ECCN members to be given access to recent, peer reviewed research on Education in Emergencies that focuses on building resilient education systems.</p> <p>Research dissemination and capability development activity (workshops 2 and 3) will enable network members to gain knowledge and skills to review education in emergency policies using the Policy Monitoring Framework and Policy Monitoring Tool.</p> <p>Intended longer-term outcomes are to strengthen resilience capacities of local education institutions and systems including Ministry of Education, schools' or educators' emergency response and coordination, and preparedness and disaster risk reduction.</p>

Understanding Economic, Cultural, and Social Disparities in the LAC Region	May - June 2023	2	USAID Learning Portal	USAID	Bolivia	USAID Global Learning Network members	TBC	No documented outputs (Gain knowledge and skills)	The main purpose of the proposed work is to disseminate research findings about key issues in relation to the collection and use of data for monitoring equity in education. We aim to organise a webinar, with supporting documentation, for disseminating research that the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Centre has undertaken in relation to improving indicators of economic, cultural, and social status for monitoring equity in education.
Using the Policy Monitoring Tool to Support Education in Emergencies Policy Development and Review	Dec. 2022	1	14th Asian Conference on Education (ACE2022)	International Academic Forum (IAFOR)	4 countries (Australia, Japan, South Korea, Spain)	Education Researchers	10	No documented outputs (Gain knowledge and skills to review education in emergency policies)	This workshop focused on introducing the Policy Monitoring Framework and Policy Monitoring Tool to policymakers and non-government stakeholders with the aim of strengthening emergency response and coordination capabilities, as well as enhancing preparedness and disaster risk reduction capacities. ace-programme-2022.pdf (iafor.org)
Learning Assessments and Education Reform in the EAP Region	Nov. 27 2022	2	KIX EAP	EQAP, SEAMEO, SEA-PLM, PILNA	(Not available)	International education and development professionals and experts	130	Outcomes that can be used to drive education reform across the wider Asia-Pacific region	The 15th KIX EAP Webinar will explore the experiences of three learning assessments that collect evidence on student learning outcomes that can be used to drive education reform across the wider Asia-Pacific region. Two of the learning assessments are large-scale, regional assessments while the third one is an established citizen-led assessment. KIX EAP Webinar 15: Learning assessments and education reform in the East Asia and the Pacific region Education in Asia-Pacific (sdg4education2030.org)

International Standard Setting Exercise	Feb.-Mar. 2022	8	ACER	Education Ministries, EQAP, PAL, SEAMEO, UNICEF, World Bank	17 countries (Australia, Benin, Brazil, Chile, Cook Islands, Guinea, India, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States, Vanuatu)	People with experience and background related to standard setting, including practitioners and assessment agencies' staff	60	Standard setting to identify Minimum Proficiency Levels.	Strengthen GEM Network for building common framework for countries to use their own regional or national learning assessments for monitoring progress towards achieving SDG 4. Participants contributed to a standard setting exercise to identify minimum proficiency levels Capacity enhancement to build participants skills to identify and apply minimum proficiency levels.
Integration of 21st Century Skills Curriculum	June 2021; Sept. 2021	12 hrs over 3 weeks x 2 cycles (Country group 1/Country group 2) Each week = 3x1 hr videos + 1 hr live session	KIX/EAP		14 countries (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam)	Ministry assessment, curriculum, pedagogy divisions' personnel	60	Country Strategic Plan: Alignment of 21st Century Skills with Assessment, Curriculum, Pedagogy Report Developing strategic plans for an aligned approach to 21st century skills integration	21st Century Skills (21CS) Main focus on establishing/building effective collaborative partnerships with assessment and knowledge-sharing networks to build capacity directly within education systems. Developed CB workshop proposals with NEQMAP and the KIX/EAP11 Hub for 24 countries. 2 workshops - 21CS alignment to assessment, curriculum, pedagogy. 2 workshops - curriculum review and audit re presence of 21CS in learning outcomes. All 4 workshops had strong focus on refining policy and enabling stronger links to implementation. A major output - country strategic plan development in relation to future work (e.g., Scoular & Teo, 2021).

<p>Developing Strategic Plans for an Aligned Approach to 21st Century Skills Integration</p>	<p>Oct. 2020; Nov. 2020</p>	<p>12 hrs over 3 weeks x 2 cycles (Country group 1/Country group 2) Each week = 3x1 hr videos + 1 hr live session</p>	<p>NEQMAP</p>		<p>16 countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Uzbekistan, Vietnam); 1 regional organisation (EQAP)</p>	<p>Ministry assessment, curriculum, pedagogy divisions' personnel</p>	<p>80</p>	<p>Country Strategic Plan: Alignment of 21st Century Skills with Assessment, Curriculum, Pedagogy</p>	<p>21st Century Skills (21CS) Main focus on establishing/building effective collaborative partnerships with assessment and knowledge-sharing networks to build capacity directly within education systems. Developed CB workshop proposals (external funding) with NEQMAP and the KIX/EAP11 Hub for 24 countries. 2 workshops - 21CS alignment to assessment, curriculum, pedagogy. 2 workshops - curriculum review and audit re presence of 21CS in learning outcomes. All 4 workshops had strong focus on refining policy and enabling stronger links to implementation.</p>
<p>Development and Strategic Use of National Large-scale Learning Assessments</p>	<p>December 3-5, 2019</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>TALENT</p>	<p>TALENT Steering Group (IIEP, UNESCO, UIS, UNICEF)</p>	<p>12 countries (Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Tanzania, The Gambia, Zimbabwe)</p>	<p>Ed ministry directors and senior officers; National Examination Council directors and senior officers</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>No documented outputs</p>	<p>Teaching and Learning Educators' Network for Transformation (TALENT) National teams shared their knowledge and experiences through country presentations and group activities, highlighting their learning assessment systems, the opportunities and challenges faced, while identifying possibilities of action at a country level. Capacity enhancement to improve national large-scale learning assessments design quality and strategic use and having re adaptation of best practices to different country contexts. http://www.education2030-africa.org/index.php/en/lien-talent-blog-en/1119-on-the-way-of-a-strategic-use-of-national-large-scale-learning-assessments-for-a-fairer-education-in-sub-saharan-africa</p>

School-based, Classroom, Teacher, Formative Assessment (Bandung, Indonesia)	24-27 June 2019	30	NEQMAP	SEAMEO Centre for Quality Improvement of Teachers and Educational Personnel (QITEP) in Science, ACER, and GPE	16 countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Vietnam)	Ed ministry officials and technical staff, NGOs, research institutes	52	No documented outputs (Gain knowledge and skills)	Capacity development workshop on 'School-based, Classroom, Teacher and Formative Assessment' concerning classroom and school culture and climate, policy frameworks, systems and structures, context and environment to develop knowledge on concepts, procedures, practices and policy implications for curriculum, pedagogy, and assessments.
Effective Reporting, Dissemination and Use of Large-Scale Learning Assessments	27-30 Nov. 2018	32	TALENT	PAL Network, PASEC, UNESCO	11 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe)	Ed ministry directors and senior officers; National Examination Council directors and senior officers	20	No documented outputs (Gain knowledge and skills)	Capacity enhancement re relevance of large-scale learning assessments and their role in ensuring education system quality and equity. http://www.education2030-africa.org/index.php/en/lien-talent-blog-en/876-large-scale-assessment-workshop
Data quality and accuracy of large-scale learning assessment programmes	12-15 March, 2018	30	NEQMAP	UNESCO Bangkok, SEAMEO	21 countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Tajikistan, Thailand,	Ed Ministry officials and technical staff, NGOs, research institutes	55	No documented outputs (Gain knowledge and skills)	The workshop aimed to strengthen capacity in ensuring data quality in all stages of the assessment cycle among mainly government partners in the Asia-Pacific region. The four-day workshop addressed data quality in the sampling phase; during implementation (field operations); and post-implementation, i.e. in the course of data management. Workshop: Data Quality and Accuracy for Large-Scale Learning Assessment Programmes (Bangkok, Thailand) – Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (unesco.org)

					Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan, Vietnam)				
Modern Assessment Theory for Afghanistan	2017–2019	(Not available)			Afghanistan	Afghanistan Ministry	(Not available)	National Assessment Strategy; Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) Afghanistan: Capacity Development Framework	Workshop series 2017 – 2019 2019 Technical support to Afghanistan Ministry of Education to outline modern assessment theory and best practice and development of national assessment strategy and a capacity development framework to support strategy implementation. (From Impacts Relationship spreadsheet)
Analyzing and Understanding Learning Assessment for Evidence-Based Policy Making	14-18 Sept. 2015	35	NEQMAP	UNESCO	16 countries (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam)	Ed ministry officials and technical staff, NGOs, research institutes	35	No documented outputs (Gain knowledge and skills)	The workshop aimed to build capacity in analysing assessment data and utilizing evidence to better inform education policy and planning, as part of UNESCO’s Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education’s (UNESCO Bangkok) programme called “Learning Enablers for Asia and Pacific” (LEAP). LEAP programme aims to develop capacity of the Member States in designing and implementing policies to improve learning based on evidence. For the implementation of the activities of LEAP, UNESCO Bangkok leverages the NEQMAP, with an aim to improve the quality of learning in the Asia-Pacific region by enhancing the use of student learning assessment to strengthen education systems. The programme was launched with the capacity development workshop hosted by UNESCO Bangkok from 14-18 September 2015 in Bangkok. Workshop: Analyzing and Understanding Learning Assessment for Evidence-Based Policy Making (Bangkok) – Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (unesco.org)

Introduction to Large-scale Assessments of Learning	23-26 Sept. 2014	30	NEQMAP	UNESCO Bangkok, (GPE) and Malaysian Funds-in-Trust (M-FIT)	14 countries (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan, Vietnam)	Ed Ministry officials and technical staff, NGOs, research institutes	45	No documented outputs (Gain knowledge and skills)	<p>This workshop aimed to provide an overview of assessment issues, including benefits and challenges in implementing assessments, well-known large-scale assessment models and practices at national and international levels, along with assessment initiatives such as ASER, with a focus on the practical parameters of each model's implementation as well as the use of assessment information or data and its implication for policy making. The main target audience for the workshop was government officials with responsibility for conducting large-scale assessments in their respective countries of the Asia-Pacific region, while also welcoming participants from other organizations who were interested in the workshop.</p> <p>Workshop: Introduction to Large-Scale Assessments of Learning (Bangkok) – Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (unesco.org)</p>
PILNA Capacity Development	(Not available)		Secretariat of Pacific Community Educational Quality and Assessment Program (SPC-EQAP)	EQAP, PILNA	Fiji	Fiji Ministry of Education staff, expert teachers, university education dept faculty members	Not available	Map PILNA proficiency levels against SDG 4.1.1 Minimum Proficiency Levels	<p>PILNA Pairwise Study Purpose was to replicate pairwise judgement and mapping of PILNA proficiency levels against SDG 4.1.1 Minimum Proficiency Levels. Pilot workshop in Fiji with EQAP staff, Fiji Ministry of Education staff, expert teachers and higher education faculty to build capacity in the comparative judgement method and student learning outcomes in mathematics and reading.</p>
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Annex 4 Example Template for Learning Assessments Crosswalk, Indo-Pacific Region

REGION	UNESCO Asia-Pacific Countries	Brunei Darussalam	Cook Islands	Fiji	Indonesia	Laos	Malaysia	Marshall Islands	Micronesia	Myanmar	Nauru	Nepal	Niue	Papua New Guinea	Philippines	Samoa	Singapore	Solomon Islands	Thailand	Timor-Leste	Tonga	Tuvalu	Viet Nam
DFAT PRIORITY COUNTRY																							
GPE PRIORITY COUNTRY																							
ACER OFFICE COUNTRY																							
ACER ASSESSMENT ASSISTANCE COUNTRY																							
INTERNATIONAL	PISA	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	✓
	PIRLS	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x
	TIMSS	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x
	ICCS	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	ICILS	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Other?																						
	Other?																						
REGIONAL	PASEC	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	PILNA	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x
	SEA-PLM	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓
	CAPSA	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Other?																						
	Other?																						
COUNTRY	AA																						
	BB																						
	CC																						
	DD																						
	EE																						

Annex 5 Bibliography

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