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Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO  
INSTITUTE  
FOR  
STATISTICS

# The Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML): Governance and Organization

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## General acronyms

ACER-GEM	Australian Council for Education Research – Global Education Monitoring
DFID	United Kingdom's Department for International Development
EU	European Union
GAML	The Global Alliance to Monitor Learning
GEMR	Global Education Monitoring Report
IAG	Inter-Agency Groups
IAEG-SDGs	Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Indicators
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OECD	The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SISTER	UNESCO's System of Information on Strategies, Tasks and the Evaluation of Results
SPC	GAML Strategic Planning Committee
TAG	Technical Advisory Group on post-2015 education indicators
TCG	Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG4-Education 2030
TF	Task Force
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDESA	The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO ESC	UNESCO Education Sector's Division of Education 2030 Support and Coordination
UNESCO GCED	UNESCO Global Citizenship Education
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSD	The United Nations Statistics Division
WBG	The World Bank Group

## GAML terminology

A4L	Assessment for Learning
ADC	Assessment of Data Collection, previously known as Assessment of Data Process (ADP)
ADQ	Assessment of Data Quality could also be referred to Evaluation of Data Quality for reporting
ASWEQ	Assessment of Country System Wide Educational Quality Framework, a diagnostic tool to assess the education system and the utility of data for policy development
CLA	Catalogue of Learning Assessment previously known as Observatory of Learning Outcomes (OLO)
EAC	Evaluation of Alignment in Content, previously known as Evaluation of Alignment Process (EAP)
GCCFR	Global Common Content Framework for Reference, at times may refer as Global Content Framework for Reference (GCFR)
GP-LA	Manual of Good Practice in Learning Assessments, previously known as International Code of Practice in Learning Assessment (ICP-LA)
ILSA	International Large-Scale Assessment
LPE	Learning Progression Explorer
MPL	Minimum Proficiency Level
NAF	National Assessment Framework
NLA	National learning assessment
UIS RS	UIS reporting scale – Metrics in Reading and Math



## 1. Executive summary

The Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) is an initiative to support national strategies for measuring learning and enable international reporting. Led by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), GAML brings together UN Member States, international technical expertise, and a full range of implementation partners—donors, civil society, UN agencies, and the private sector—to improve learning assessment globally.

GAML is the first initiative of its kind, bringing together all education stakeholder groups for collective action on obtaining better learning data. The key features of GAML include:

- Balancing data needs of countries and accuracy needed for global reporting;
- Engaging stakeholders through various pathways of participation by national governments, civil society, teachers' organizations, donors, UN agencies, and academia;
- Providing actionable guidance to countries to improve monitoring of learning.

This document describes the governance structure and organization of the Alliance. GAML is organized with a strong and simple governance structure

- A Strategic Planning Committee
- A management Secretariat (UIS) that commission papers, ensures delivery
- Task forces where partners and stakeholders participate to guide the technical work and support the Secretariat (Task forces chair by partners)
- A plenary of members that discuss and endorse solutions
  - ✓ With Member States involved
  - ✓ A result framework that guides the execution of the work plan



## 2. The Global Alliance to Monitor Learning and the Sustainable Development Goals agenda

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goal for education ([SDG 4](#)), which includes several learning targets, marks a paradigm shift from the Millennium Development Goals and its limited focus on tracking access to education. In response, new actors are taking part in the international architecture needed to support Member States and resolve the new measurement challenges facing the entire international education community.

The focus on learning has highlighted both: the increasing availability of data on learning achievements at the national, regional and international levels; and the critical lack of comparability or global standards needed to use this assessment data to foster international dialogue on the issues using common metrics. In short, the diversity of assessment data makes it possible but challenging to measure learning globally.

GAML is a platform designed to coordinate efforts to measure learning and harmonize measurement standards. This multi-stakeholder initiative plays two unique roles within the global education architecture. First, it brings together all of the major stakeholders involved in the production and use of learning assessment data in order to develop and improve global standards, tools and methodologies. At the same time, it serves as the most efficient mechanism for the UIS to coordinate data production as part of its global mandate within the SDG 4–Education 2030 Framework for Action.

GAML will achieve these objectives through work in four strategic components<sup>1</sup>

- Country-level standards and methodologies;
- Global reporting (best practices, standards, alignment, harmonization and data collection);
- Capacity development and support to learning assessment practices;
- Research to support the learning and equity agenda.

This document presents the governance and coordination strategy for GAML. It explains the positioning of the Alliance within the global development architecture and details the roles and responsibilities of the various constituents of the initiative.

## 3. GAML in the global SDG4 architecture

Recognizing the range of indicators required for the comprehensive monitoring of the SDGs, the United Nations has identified four levels of monitoring: a small set of global (comparable) indicators; a broader and complementary set of thematic indicators (which can also be compared globally); national and regional indicators that reflect education issues specific to regions or countries. These four levels of monitoring are intended to cover all of the SDG 4 targets and reflect multiple aspects of education systems, such as access, completion, equity, learning outcomes, school environments, and educational resources. Successful measurement of SDG 4 will rely on regularly-produced, reliable data

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<sup>1</sup> This document only describes GAML governance. More detailed information on tasks and activities can be found in the reference documents and concept notes available on the [GAML website](#).



that address the intent behind each target and ensure that global and thematic indicators are available for a majority of UN Member States.

In response, the international development community has been working to put in place the structures and processes to implement the measurement agenda. Key milestones include the political endorsement of global and thematic indicators as well as the creation of spaces to reflect on the intersection of technical and policy issues. At this stage, the challenge lies in executing the highly technical work needed to develop the methodologies to produce quality cross-nationally comparable education data.

Throughout the process, the key to success lies in building partnerships and collaborative relationships between multiple organizations in which risks and benefits are distributed in pursuit of a shared goal. Each partner needs to understand their specific role and contribution as well as the wider decision-making process related to SDG 4<sup>2</sup>.

At the global level, the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) is the custodian of the global indicator framework for all SDGs. The IAEG coordinates the development of the official indicator framework for the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda at the global level and supports its implementation. It is composed of representatives of Member States and includes regional and international agencies as observers, among which the UIS is representing the global education community.

At the thematic level, the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee ensures coordinated support to Member States and partners to achieve SDG 4 and the education-related targets in other goals of the 2030 Agenda. In particular, it officially adopts a list of thematic indicators that are broader than the education goal based on recommendations from the global education community. The majority of members are representatives of Member States, while the others represent UN agencies, international and regional organizations, the Global Partnership for Education, OECD as well as groups representing civil society and teachers.

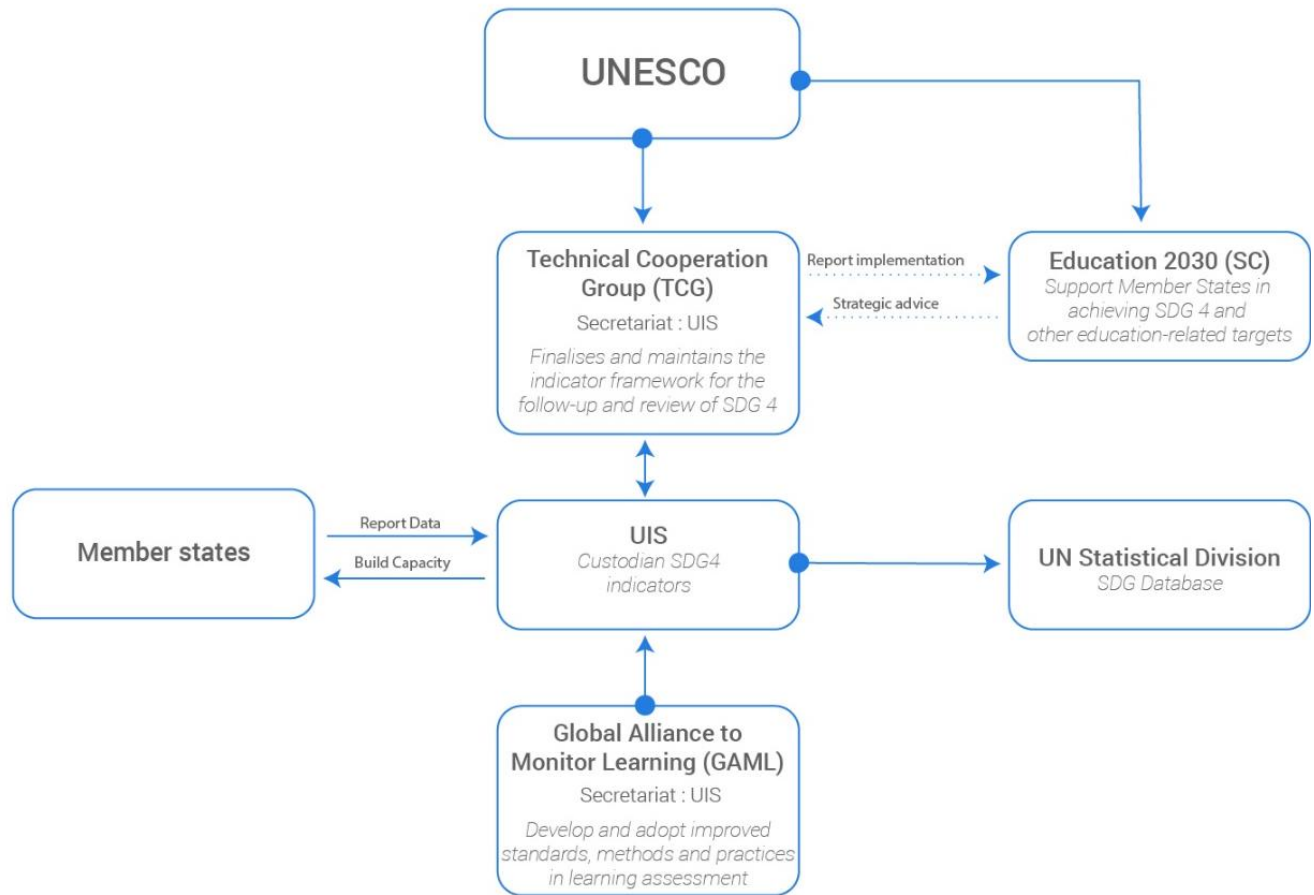
The Technical Co-operation Group for SDG 4 – Education 2030 Indicators ([TCG](#)) brings together education experts from governments, multilateral agencies and civil society groups. It works on global and thematic indicators and informs both the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee (SC) and the IAEG-SDGs with technical solutions that have been jointly developed and agreed upon by experts in various fields of education measurement and from all constituents of the global education community, including Member States, multilateral agencies and civil society groups. The TCG includes several working groups. In addition, GAML informs the TCG on sound technical solutions to measure learning on a cross-nationally comparable basis for all SDG 4 targets that include a learning indicator (4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7). **Figure 1** illustrates the positioning of GAML within the thematic decision-making process.

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<sup>2</sup> See Annex I for further details on the different bodies presented here.



*Figure 1. GAML and the decision-making process of SDG 4-Education 2030*



Looking beyond the global architecture for the SDG agenda, GAML is also playing a critical role in supporting countries to establish and improve national learning assessment systems in general. As the key platform for assembling commonly agreed upon standards, tools and methodologies to assess and improve national learning assessments, GAML will be a natural partner in initiatives such as the Assessment for Learning (A4L), a GPE initiative to fund activities to strengthen national assessments. A4L and other initiatives aiming to improve learning assessments will have to rely on a number of diagnostic and measurement tools, which, ideally, follow the highest standards and methodologies devised and agreed upon by learning assessments experts globally. GAML can help to connect or align funding and support to the use of the vetted assessment tools and methodologies.

Finally, GAML will also provide and support education ministries and civil society groups with the means to evaluate systems, diagnose weaknesses and develop robust strategies based on established and recognized international standards. The aim is to help them advocate at the national, regional and international levels for additional resources to support credible learning assessment plans.



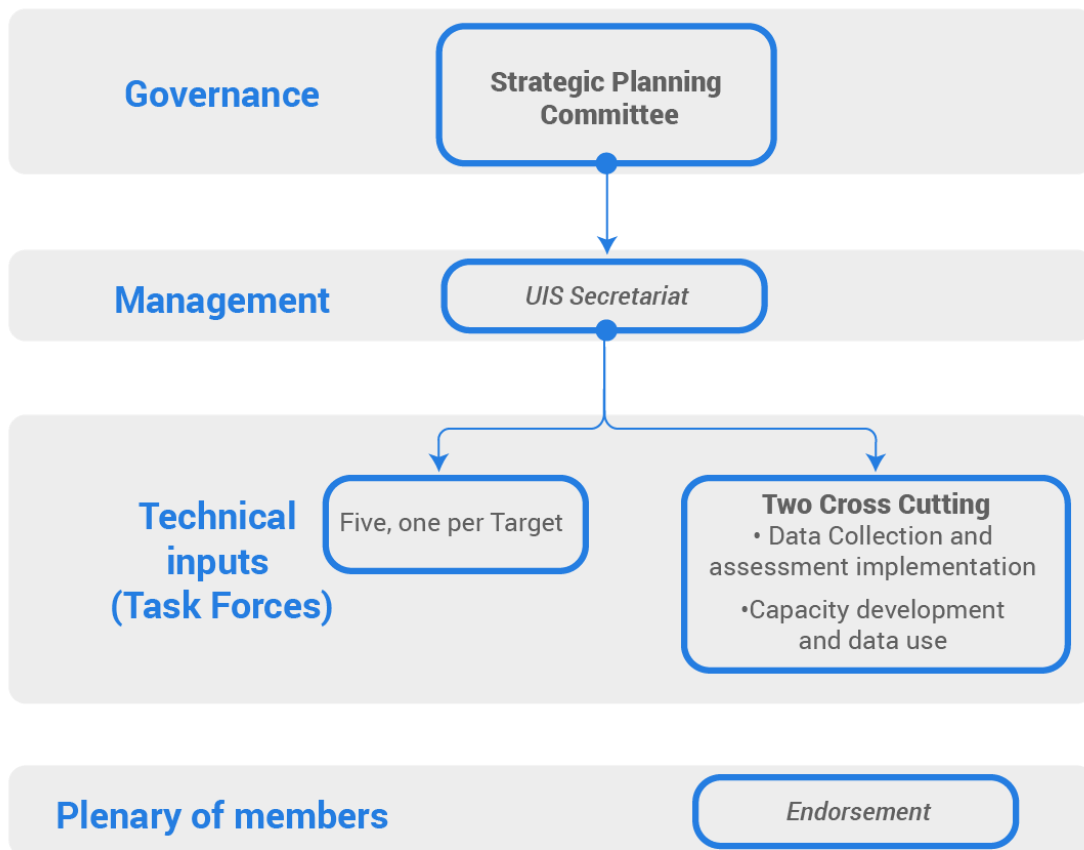
#### 4. GAML programme implementation

To respond to the challenges and tasks highlighted above, GAML will conduct its work in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, and may invite experts, as appropriate, from civil society, academia, the private sector and Member States to contribute their expertise and experiences.

In all areas, GAML will clearly acknowledge the diversity of technical inputs and development required to respond to the needs for data and indicators for all targets related to a learning component.

The functioning of the Alliance is straightforward. GAML will have a strong and simple governance structure including: the Strategic Planning Committee; management with the UIS serving as secretariat to ensure delivery through commissioning papers; and task forces and plenary members making recommendations to the secretariat.

*Figure 2. Governance structure*







#### 4.1. GAML membership

The open and participatory nature of GAML is a key element of the initiative's success and sustainability. GAML membership is open to individuals and organizations committed to participating and promoting the work of the Alliance. Members may fall into several groups: Member States, international organizations, development partners, regional organizations, and regional development banks, civil society, UIS technical partners, assessment organizations and academia.

Individuals who join the GAML network and are committed to the goals of the Alliance are members. The members will:

- a. Promote the work of GAML;
- b. Participate in at least one task force, based on relevant skills (see below for description of task forces) and provide timely feedback to Secretariat's initiatives;
- c. Participate in meetings and ensure alignment with best practices in learning assessments.

Members might want to be engaged in different activities of GAML:

- **Assessment implementation:** Member States, regional, international and (large-scale) assessment organizations, networks and technical partners that are directly involved in implementing assessments.
- **Methods and standards:** Organizations, technical partners and academia that contribute to the development of standards and guidelines for assessment implementation and reporting, Member States and assessment organizations implementing the assessments following best practice principles, and all partners responsible for reporting.
- **Analysis and reporting:** Partners using assessment data for the purpose of education monitoring and education policy development or for research on further developing assessment methodology.
- **Communication and advocacy:** Partners communicating results within countries or in the global education community and who advocate for evidence-based policy making.
- **Capacity development:** Partners participating in or providing capacity-building activities related to test development and test design, sampling, data collection procedures, data management, data analysis, etc.
- **Funding:** Partners providing in-kind contributions to methodological development as global public good or donors' financial contribution to support certain activities related to development and assessment implementation.



## 4.2. GAML task forces

To ensure the quality and timely delivery of expected outputs, GAML will rely on the technical work from thematic task forces. Task forces will provide technical inputs to focus areas outlined by the Technical Cooperation Group on SDG 4 – Education 2030 Indicators (TCG).

The task forces enable GAML members to focus on their respective areas of expertise while providing donors and funding agencies with the possibility to target support to GAML towards their areas of interest and strategic priorities. The task forces also mitigate the risk of default by distributing the responsibilities among several partners and institutions. The plenary will discuss technical inputs and recommendations.

The main function of the task forces include:

- Advocate for key thematic issues within each target for GAML in external meetings;
- Collaboratively oversee and review the development of tools;
- Make pragmatic technical decisions on the feasibility of related methodologies and processes within each target; and
- Suggest resources to help practitioners within each target.

## 4.3. GAML plenary

Technical inputs and task force recommendations will be discussed and endorsed during in-person meetings of GAML.

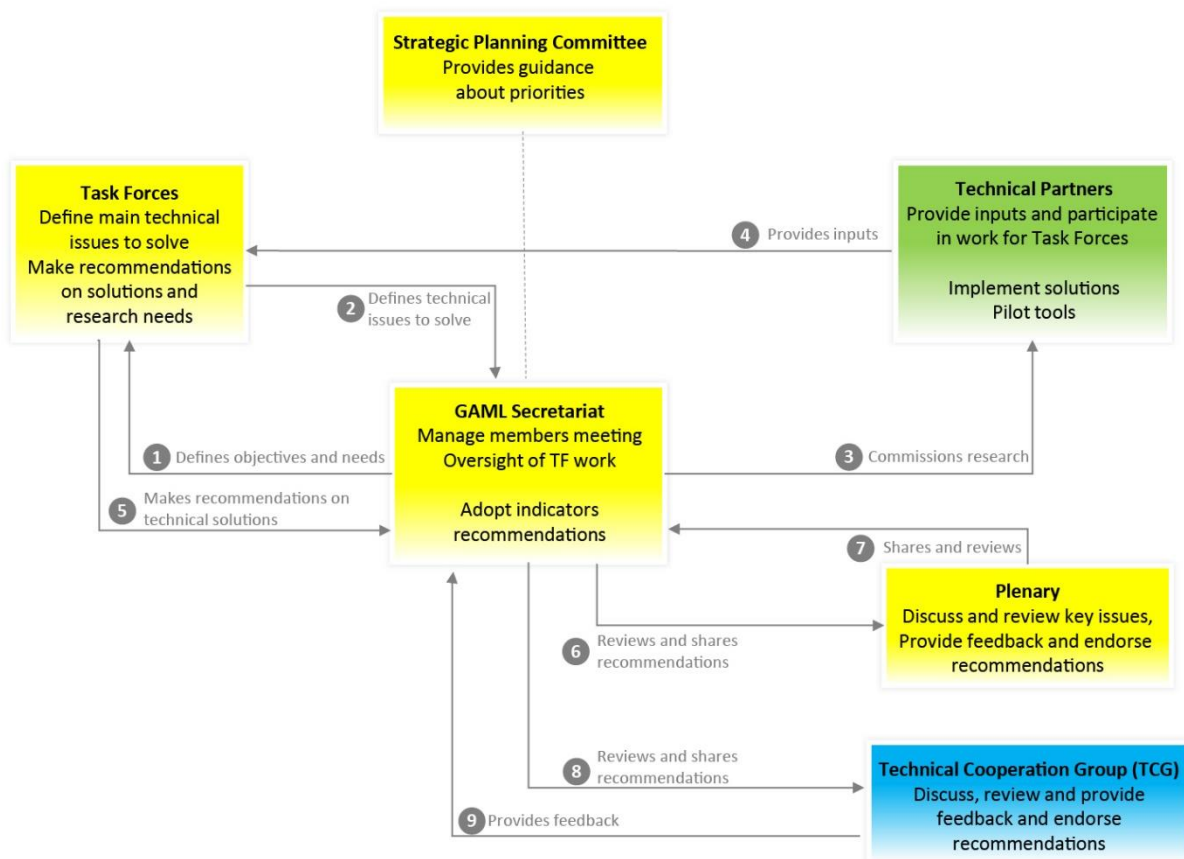
The GAML plenary is a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the technical work done by the task forces and by technical partners. The plenary represents the culmination of the process to endorse decisions, related to technical proposals, agreed-upon roadmaps, etc. Based on these decisions, the Secretariat will finalize recommendations and report to the TCG.

## 4.4. GAML implementation workflow

**Figure 3** describes the implementation process and the key decisions points.



**Figure 3. GAML Workflow**



## 5. GAML governance

The underlying principles for governance are to advance GAML in a transparent and efficient manner through shared decision-making; clear lines of responsibility and accountability; defined processes aimed at results; efficiency; and good communication.

The governance consists of a Strategic Planning Committee that oversees and provides management guidance to the UIS secretariat.

### 5.1 Strategic Planning Committee

The GAML Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) has oversight over GAML, the operational effectiveness of the GAML agenda, and the positioning of GAML within the broader SDG environment.



The SPC has the following priorities:

1. To shape overall GAML governance, to provide and maintain clarity on:
  - GAML policy directions;
  - Decision-making processes within the GAML partnership;
  - Progressing a multi-year agenda, defined by GAML members, most notably the GAML Results Framework.
2. To track progress of the GAML agenda, with a focus on:
  - Monitoring resource mobilization efforts in support of GAML;
  - Maximizing the use of expertise, drawn primarily from GAML stakeholders;
  - Successes and challenges in realizing the GAML agenda, as defined in GAML policy and operational documents, and the GAML Results Framework;
  - Identifying barriers and enablers of the GAML agenda;
  - Reviewing and advising GAML bodies on annual and medium-term plans.
3. To keep under review the value-added of the GAML agenda, by:
  - Assessing the objectives of the GAML agenda and its underpinning governance and management structures, at least annually;
  - Liaising with members of the GAML partnership;
  - Liaising with relevant entities with a stake in SDG 4 and the broader SDG agenda;
  - Assessing the degree to which GAML is achieving its performance targets.

## Membership

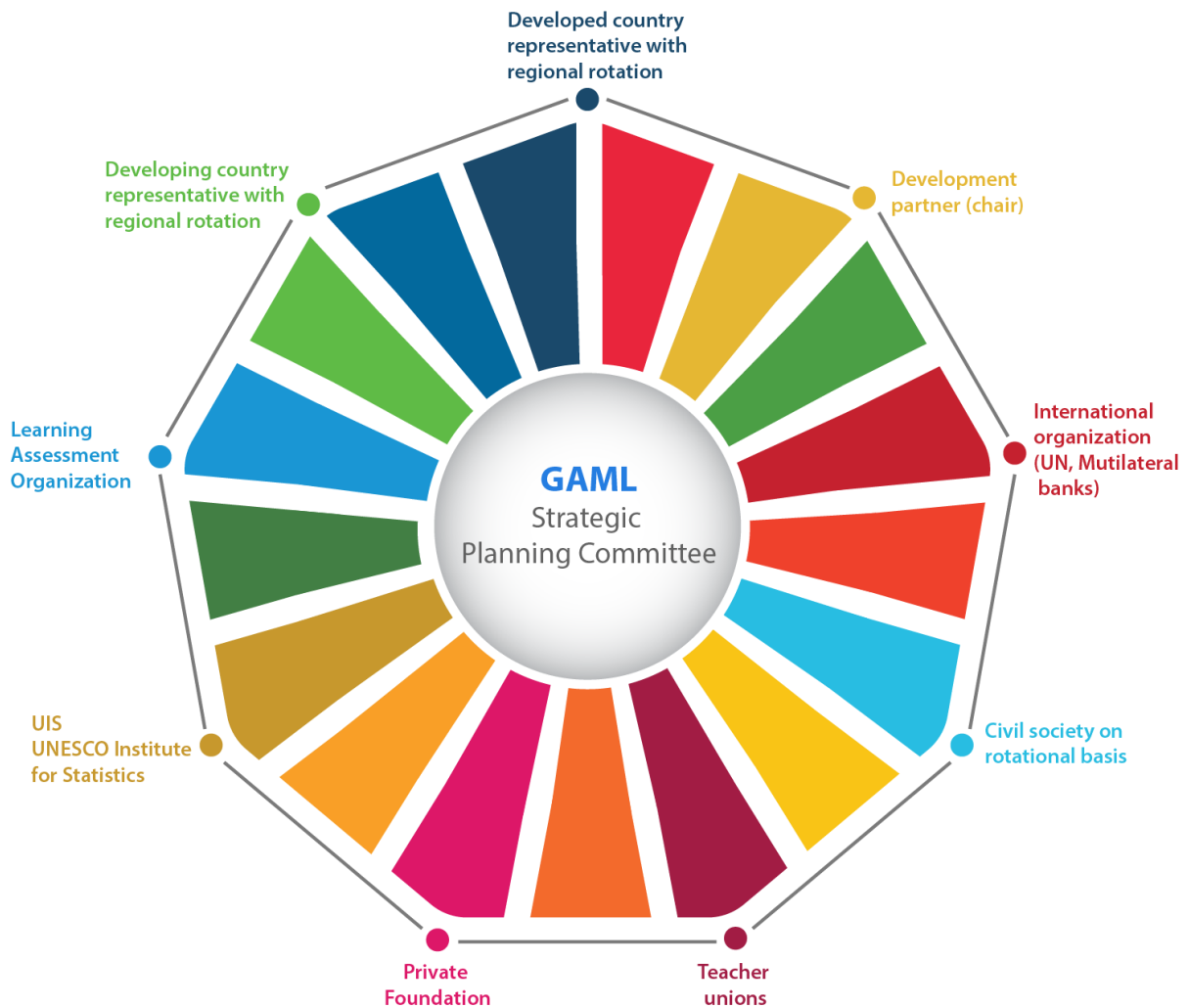
The SPC is comprised of an SPC Chair, the UIS Director, and a bureau of vice co-chairs with seven members that represent the following constituencies:

- One representative for international organizations (UN, multilateral bank, OECD);
- One representative for civil society groups on a rotating basis;
- One representative for teacher unions;
- One representative from civil society;
- One representative from private foundations;
- One representative from regional and international learning assessment organizations;
- Two representatives for countries from different regions on a rotating basis.

UIS management will propose committee members to the relevant constituencies. The SPC Chair will be appointed by the UIS after consultation. The SPC Chair and SPC members will serve a two-year term, with the possibility for one additional term.



*Figure 4. Strategic Planning Committee*



## 5.2 Secretariat

The UIS is the GAML Secretariat, and is responsible for the management of the initiative. The Secretariat has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Provide overall support to GAML, the SPC and task forces so that they can fulfill their roles and responsibilities and maintain progress toward the strategic objectives of the Alliance;
- Provide support and coordination for the organization of GAML meetings, including preparation of meeting agendas and logistics;
- Help coordinate GAML efforts to address issues and priorities related to policy, data, capacity, and finance;
- Exercise other tasks as determined by the SPC.



## 6. GAML results framework<sup>3</sup>

GAML implementation involves development objectives and outcome indicators with a robust results framework to guide implementation. It builds on the results framework agreed with UIS donors: United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and UNESCO'S System of Information on Strategies, Tasks and the Evaluation of Results (SISTER).

The overarching goals for long-term impact include improved monitoring for policy-making; increased efficiency, transparency and accountability in education data; improved education system results; and, ultimately, improved learning worldwide. GAML will achieve these objectives through work in four strategic components:

1. National-level standards and methodologies
2. Global reporting (best practices, standards, alignment, harmonization and data collection)
3. Capacity development and support to learning assessment practices
4. Research to support the learning and equity agenda

**Table 1**, on the other hand, summarizes the logic model of the project and the intended outputs, outcomes and impact. Some resources will cut across all targets while others will be specially developed for each target. It is important to note that within each target, there is a need to identify the constructs or domains to be measured before proceeding to define the minimum level, periodicity or comparability, which were highlighted as the three key points in the first meeting. A clearer roadmap and tools have been developed for indicator 4.1 and could serve as an example for the expected outcomes for the remaining targets.

Table 1 presents a tentative summary, with more detailed information presented in the log frame as a separate document.

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<sup>3</sup> A GAML logical frame is provided in a separate document.



*Table 1. Summary of GAML expected outputs per target*

	Target 4.1	Target 4.2	Target 4.4	Target 4.6	Target 4.7
<b>Strategic Component 1: National-level standards and methodologies</b>					
Manual of good practices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assessment of data quality	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Assessment of learning assessment practices	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Strategic Component 2: Global reporting (best practices, standards, alignment, harmonization and data collection)</b>					
Global Common Content Framework for Reference (GCCFR)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Defining minimum proficiency levels	✓	✓	✓	✓	
UIS reporting scale	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Interim reporting: Anchoring cross-national and national assessments	✓				
<b>Strategic Component 3: Capacity development and support to learning assessment practices</b>					
Mapping of best practices (availability, characteristics, frameworks and use)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Learning assessment data strategy: guidelines	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Guidelines about learning assessments	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Recommend and generate a sustainable learning assessment strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Strategic Component 4: Research to support the learning and equity agenda</b>					
Definition of the constructs/ domains	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mapping of existing learning assessments frameworks	✓	✓			
Development of coding scheme for mapping assessment framework	✓	✓	✓	✓	
UIS reporting scale alignment studies	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Global assessment module and bank of items	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Global background questionnaire	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Inventory of tools of learning assessments	✓	✓	✓	✓	



- Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- Target 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- Target 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship
- Target 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- Target 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.





## Annexes

### Annex I. Roles and responsibilities related to SDG 4-Education 2030 indicators

*Table A1. Roles and responsibilities related to SDG 4 – Education 2030 indicator development, production, and dissemination (reporting and sharing)*

Actor	Objectives	Membership and chairing	Decision-making
<b>IAEG- SDGs</b>	IAEG: overall custodian of global indicators	IAEG-SDGs: composed of 28 UN Member States Member States Co- Chairs: Mexico and the Philippines. Co-Chair: UNSD Secretariat: UNSD	Decision on the global indicator list, refinement and revision of the global indicators
<b>Education 2030 Steering Committee</b>	Support Member States in achieving SDG 4 targets and other education-related ones	Member states, civil society, international organizations, regional bodies. Co-Chairs: Norway and Assistant Director-General for Education Bureau of Education 2030: the two co-chairs plus 3 vice-chairs Secretariat: UNESCO ESC/ED Section	Endorse list of thematic indicators
<b>Technical Cooperation Group on Indicators for SDG4 - Education 2030</b>	Finalise and maintain the indicator framework for the follow-up and review of SDG 4	Member States, civil society and international organizations. Co-Chairs: UIS and UNESCO ESC/ED section	Recommend approaches to resolve methodological issues; Support capacity building in countries; and Help countries to report national and international data. Endorses the list of thematic indicators proposed by the Secretariat (UIS) and GAML



Actor	Objectives	Membership and chairing	Decision-making
<b>GAML (Global Alliance to Monitor Learning)</b>	Develop and carry out a coordinated programme of methodological work to develop and adopt improved standards, methods and practices in learning assessment and strengthening their sustainability	Member States, development partners, civil society and international organizations. Strategic Planning Committee Chair: DFAT Australia. Bureau of the SPC composed by Member States (2), the UIS Secretariat, civil society, international organization, development partner (2 including the chair) Secretariat: UIS	Decides and elevates technical solutions to the TCG about all learning outcomes-related indicators



## Annex II. Chairs and vice-chairs of GAML task forces

Task Force (TF)	Chair	Vice-Chair	Launch date
TF 4.1	Marguerite Clarke, The World Bank Group	Rasheda K Choudhury, Campaign for Popular Education	8 March 2017
TF 4.2	Baela Raza Jamil ASER	Tiina Annus, Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia	29 March 2017
TF 4.4	Manos Antoninis, UNESCO GEMR	Jianhua Zhao, International Center for Higher Education Innovation (ICHEI)	13 April 2017
TF 4.6	William Thorn, OECD	Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, UIL	Shortly ASAP
TF 4.7	To be determined	To be determined	Second half of 2017
TF on Assessment Implementation	Esther Care, The Brookings Institution	To be determined	31 March 2017