

## KIX Africa 19 Hub

### KNOWLEDGE-SHARING WEBINAR CONCEPT NOTE

on

## Innovation in Assessment Emerging in the COVID-19 Era in Sub-Saharan Africa

Date: Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Time: 3:00 – 5:00 East African Standard Time

Link: Zoom [Click here to register.](#)

### 1. Background and Context

Assessment is vital to the education process. In any educational system, assessment ascertains the extent to which educational learning outcomes are achieved and students have mastered the subject matter. Based on assessment, educators can determine whether students are developing desired competencies and values, or whether the curriculum provides the vital knowledge and skills of the discipline, and whether students can integrate learning from individual courses into a complete educational experience that prepares them for future careers. Assessment is an important instrument to measure students' growth in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning domains.

There are three types of assessments: **diagnostic**, **summative** and **formative assessments**. Diagnostic assessments are a way for teachers to evaluate students' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills before teaching begins. In schools, the most common and visible assessments are summative. Summative assessments are used in several ways: To measure what students have learned at the end of a course/subject; to promote students to the next level; or to ensure they have met required standards for certification, school completion, university admission, or entry into certain occupations. Ministries or departments of education may use summative assessments and evaluations as a way to hold publicly funded schools accountable for providing quality education. Summative assessment is assessment *of* students' learning.

On the other hand, formative assessment is assessment *for* students' learning. Formative assessments are frequent, interactive, in-classroom assessments of student progress and

understanding to identify learning needs and adjust teaching accordingly. Formative assessment often takes more time and effort than summative assessment, but it leads to better learning outcomes. **Teachers who use formative assessment approaches and techniques are better prepared to meet diverse students' needs – through differentiation and adaptation of teaching to raise student achievement and reach greater equity in student outcomes.** The most common method applied in formative assessment is continuous in-classroom assessment through homework, practical assignments, quizzes, group discussions, student presentations, and projects.

However, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has made teaching, learning, and assessment very challenging. With nearly 114 million confirmed COVID-19 cases globally and 2.5 deaths worldwide,<sup>1</sup> the pandemic has caused an unprecedented global crisis. In the education sector, 190 countries shut down face-to-face instruction for much of 2020 to prevent the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact. According to UNESCO, the pandemic has impacted nearly 1.6 billion learners, and in Africa alone, approximately 297 million learners have been affected.<sup>2</sup>

Such a massive lockdown compelled governments in Africa, as well as the rest of the world, to launch flexible online and offline learning schemes. Often these remote learning initiatives involved radio and television-broadcasted lessons, Zoom and Microsoft Teams meetings, WhatsApp, SMS, telegrams, and printed booklets. **Even as many schools have reopened partially or fully, these modalities of learning and a blended approach continue to influence schools.**

The pandemic has undoubtedly complicated assessment practices, but even before the pandemic, assessment was a challenging area for many countries. The recent in-depth country analysis has revealed that **assessment is not being implemented or used well in most of the 18 KIX member states in sub-Saharan Africa.** The greatest challenges in learning assessment include poor or underutilization of assessment results to inform school reforms and to monitor and evaluate systems; the lack of feedback provided to learners; and weak national assessment systems.<sup>3</sup> The causes of this underutilization of assessment results for learning are complex. They include educators' lack of theoretical understanding and application of assessment methods; a lack of necessary infrastructural support; the lack of mechanisms to track students' online learning; and attitudes which favor summative evaluation over formative assessment.

This has resulted in an unprecedented learning outcome crisis in most countries of the region. According to the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, 250 million children have not learned basic

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization (2021). [WHO Dashboard: COVID 19 Cases](#) on March 1, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO (2021). [COVID-19 Education Response. Education: From disruption to recovery.](#)

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO IICBA (2020). [Thematic Priorities in GPE Member States.](#) KIX Africa 19 Hub. Report.

numeracy and literacy skills, even though half of them have spent at least four years in school.<sup>4</sup> As a result, there has been a shift in emphasis at the global level from simple access to education to quality and inclusivity (as well as access), as laid out by Sustainable Development Goal 4.

**Improving learning outcomes is only possible with strong assessment practices and systems.** Assessment for and of learning is critical to addressing the challenge of providing quality, inclusive education in sub-Saharan Africa. At the system level, it is also crucial to use assessment results to inform policymaking and monitor its results, thereby ensuring appropriate resource allocation and equity of learning among schools, regions, and population groups.

It is against this background that the KIX Africa 19 Hub Secretariat, in collaboration with its consortium partners, UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and the African Union Commission (AUC), and other key partners, are planning to organize a webinar to facilitate a rich policy and practice discussion with stakeholders on innovative strategies for assessing learning outcomes which are emerging during the COVID-19 era in sub-Saharan Africa.

## 2. Purpose of the Webinar

The main purpose of this knowledge-sharing webinar is to bring together regional researchers, policy actors, practitioners, and thought leaders to share their experiences, challenges, innovations, and lessons learned in assessment typical to their regional or countries' contexts, and to extract common policy ideas to be adopted in the KIX 19 Hub member states.

## 3. Objectives of the Webinar

The webinar, more specifically, intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide a **forum for countries to share the broad-based learning measurement solutions and/or innovations** that are being used to promote the achievement of learning outcomes for all learners in the COVID-19 era in sub-Saharan African countries;
2. To deliberate on **the different learning assessment challenges** confronting education systems amidst the pandemic; and
3. To devise strategies to **improve teachers' capacity to design and apply learning assessment strategies** amidst the existing constraints.

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<sup>4</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report Team. (2012). [Education For All Global Monitoring Report: Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work](#). Paris, France: UNESCO.

## 4. Participants

This webinar aims to include and cater to policymakers and practitioners responsible for assessment design, implementation, utilization, and research. The expected audience will be country focal points from the KIX Africa 19 Hub, members of in-country education groups, teacher educators, members from academia, and ministry of education officials. Including a diverse range of stakeholders who are at different levels of assessment development can contribute to a more informed discussion entailing connections across the education sector.

## 5. Topics of Focus

This webinar will highlight knowledge from sub-Saharan Africa by featuring presentations by national and regional education and assessment experts, practitioners, and policymakers. The presentations will contribute towards a better understanding of the following topical issues:

- 1. Teacher competence and readiness to assess learning and sustain learning gain through formative, continuous, and summative assessment;**
- 2. Practices that address the challenge of learning assessment in the COVID-19 era;**
- 3. Promoting equity and inclusiveness for disadvantaged learners through innovations in learning assessment; and**
- 4. Using learning assessment data to inform policies and school reforms.**

## 6. Outcomes

The following outcomes are expected from the webinar:

- Shared understanding about the challenges and opportunities of implementing good assessment practices within education systems in sub-Saharan Africa, both in the COVID-19 era and beyond;
- Galvanized efforts exerted to jointly address the underutilization of assessment results of teaching, learning, and assessing learning in the COVID-19 era, particularly in the Hub member states;
- Derivation of policy takeaways by policymakers and education focal points of the KIX member states.

## 7. Expectations from the KIX Africa 19 Hub

The Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) is a joint endeavor between the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The KIX Africa 19 Hub aims to support GPE member countries to accelerate progress toward SDG 4 for quality education and the African Union’s Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025. The Hub believes that the upcoming webinar will bring together practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to deliberate on the crisis of learning assessment and take away feasible solutions.

## 8. Agenda

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**Program Moderator: KIX Africa 19 Hub, UNESCO IICBA**

Time	Agenda	Facilitator
3:00 – 3:05	Introduction, welcome, and the agenda	KIX Africa 19 Hub, UNESCO IICBA
3:05 – 3:10	Opening remarks	UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
3:10- 3:20	<b>Re-thinking learning assessment</b> in the COVID-19 era in Eastern, Western, and Southern Africa	Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)
3:20 – 4:15 (10 mins per speaker)	<p><b>Country experiences and innovations on the use of learning assessments to improve education quality in Eastern, Western, and Southern Africa</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and implementation of <b>evidence-based policies</b> on learning assessment in <b>Sierra Leone</b></li> </ul>	Moderated by UNESCO IICBA

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Teacher readiness</b> to practice continuous assessment during emergency situations in <b>Lesotho</b></li> <li>▪ Promoting <b>equity and inclusiveness in learning assessment</b> through innovative assessment in <b>Kenya</b></li> </ul>	
4:15– 4:35	Interactive Q-and-A plenary session	KIX Africa 19 Hub, UNESCO IICBA
4:35 – 4:45	<b>Linkage of learning assessment data to school improvement programs</b> in The Gambia	
4:45– 4:55	Concluding remarks	African Union Commission - Institute of Education for Development
4:55 – 5:00	Dissemination of survey to gather feedback on the webinar	KIX Africa 19 Hub, UNESCO IICBA