

Learning assessments in the Gambia

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INTRODUCTION

Large-scale learning assessments can be used to generate performance and contextual data on student learning outcomes. They can be national, regional, or international; school based or household based. The UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) has conducted a qualitative study to explore both how and why learning assessment data are used in six sub-Saharan African countries.

This Information Sheet provides background details for IIEP's Policy Brief on the Gambia. It looks at the characteristics and setting of student assessments, presents the roles and responsibilities of the different actors, and sets out the documented uses of learning data.

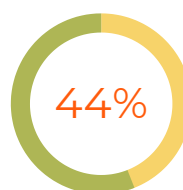
KEY FIGURES (UIS, 2018)

2 280 000

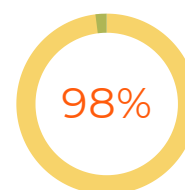
POPULATION

673 406

ENROLLED STUDENTS
(PRIMARY & SECONDARY)



AGED 14 YEARS
AND YOUNGER



PRIMARY GROSS
ENROLMENT

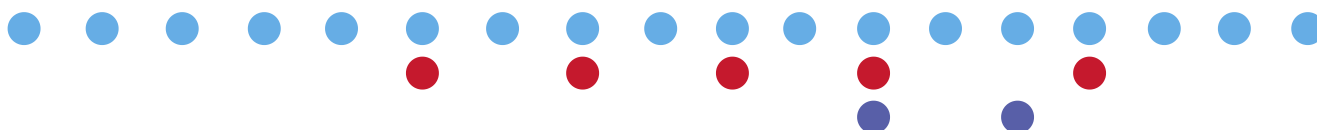
BACKGROUND

The Gambia conducts three large-scale assessments: the **National Assessment Test (NAT)**, the **Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)**, and the **Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA)**. All assessments are largely funded by the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The Gambia's Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education provided additional funding when external resources were not available.

ASSESSMENT FREQUENCY



2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019



ACTORS, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Centralized level

West African Examinations Council (WAEC)

- Leads NAT item writing and piloting
- Contributes to NAT item moderation, assessment implementation, and monitoring
- Coordinates NAT marking
- Shares raw NAT data with other stakeholders

Planning, Policy Analysis, Research and Budgeting Directorate (PPARBD)

- Stores assessment data and uses them for planning purposes
- Conducts NAT subject analysis and presents results to all stakeholders at Coordinating Committee Meetings
- Disseminates learning data to schools in the form of scorecards

Standards and Quality Assurance Directorate (SQAD)

- Monitors NAT administration
- Contributes to NAT item moderation
- Leads the drafting of NAT reports

Assessment Unit (AU)

- Contributes to NAT item moderation and monitoring of NAT implementation
- Conducts NAT thematic analysis and shares it with regional directorates
- Contributes to the drafting of NAT reports
- Conducts training for head teachers on the interpretation of NAT thematic data as well as the incorporation of NAT results in School Improvement Plans

Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (M&E)

- Uses learning data to set targets to monitor performance progress

Curriculum Research Evaluation and Development Directorate (CREDD)

- Leads the process of using learning assessment and examination data in the development of curriculum and teaching guides
- Contributes to the moderation of NAT test items and the monitoring of NAT implementation
- Contributes to the drafting of NAT reports
- Coordinated previous EGRA implementation

In-Service Training (INSET)

- Uses learning assessment and examination data in teacher professional development programmes
- Coordinated previous EGRA implementation

Gambia College

- Uses learning assessment and examination data to improve teacher training programmes

Decentralized level

Cluster monitors

- Monitor 1) the implementation of EGRA recommendations, 2) the utilization of EGRA-related teaching and learning materials, and 3) the alignment of the teaching and learning processes with EGRA content
- Distribute and collect NAT materials on the day of the test

Regional directorates

- Compile a timetable for the operation of learning assessments, shared with WAEC
- Transmit learning assessment data to schools
- Participate in the monitoring of NAT implementation

POLICY DOCUMENTS



The Gambia's Education Sector Policy (2016–2030) sets a general framework for the production and use of learning assessment data, specifying the roles and responsibilities of the different actors. It highlights the need for synergy between assessments, curricula, teaching, and learning.

The Gambia's Assessment Policy (2015–2022) aims to create a coherent assessment system building on the guiding principles of the Education Sector Policy. The Assessment Policy contains an Assessment Framework, Assessment Protocol, Monitoring Framework and Assessment Standardization. However, its finalization and dissemination are pending.

ASSESSMENT DETAILS

TEST POPULATION

SUBJECTS ASSESSED

TEST FRAMEWORK

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRES

NAT

Grades 3 & 5 (in alternate years) and Grade 8 (annually)

Grade 3: Maths; English; Integrated studies
Grades 5 & 8: Maths; English; Science; Social and environmental studies

Curriculum based

2012 & 2016: Grade 5 pupil questionnaire on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

EGRA

Grades 1, 2, & 3

Pre-reading skills (knowledge of letter names and sounds; phonemic awareness);
Listening comprehension;
Reading skills (word, invented word, and narrative reading; reading comprehension)

Competency based

Student and teacher interviews are conducted to identify factors linked to student performance

EGMA

Grades 1, 2, & 3

Number identification; quantity discrimination; missing numbers; shape identification; addition, subtraction, and word problems

Competency based

Student and teacher interviews are conducted to identify factors linked to student performance

USE OF NAT DATA AT SCHOOL LEVEL

Data from the Gambia's NAT have been used to inform a number of school improvement initiatives. These include:

- School Improvement Plans
- School Participatory Performance Monitoring (discussions with communities about student performance)
- Coordinating Committee Meetings (discussions with stakeholders about student performance)
- Community Report Cards (district, regional, and national comparisons of school performance and resources)

PROGRAMMES AND TOOLS INFORMED BY THE EGRA



Primary-level teaching and learning programmes

The 2007 EGRA informed reading programmes including Jolly Phonics, Serholt Early Grade Reading Abilities, and National Languages. In 2015 these were harmonized into the Gambia Reads programme.



Teacher training and instruction

The EGRA was used to redesign pre- and in-service teacher training programmes and develop supporting training materials.



Textbooks and instructional materials

The EGRA helped identify a correlation between poor assessment results and a lack of textbooks. This led to an increased provision of textbooks and other pedagogical resources.



Curriculum

The EGRA informed the revision of the curriculum at primary level and was used to develop remedial programmes for struggling students.

CONTACT



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