

## **Knowledge-Sharing Event Report: *Innovation in Assessment Emerging in the COVID-19 Era in Sub-Saharan Africa***

### **Summary**

On March 17, 2021, the KIX Africa 19 Hub Secretariat at UNESCO IICBA organized the Hub's first online knowledge-sharing event of 2021, titled *Innovation in Assessment Emerging in the COVID-19 Era in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The event featured presentations from four member countries (The Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, and Sierra Leone) and remarks from the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), UNICEF, and the African Union Commission - Institute of Education for Development. An ensuing question-and-answer session led to a discussion between country representatives and other attendees. The Hub Secretariat spent two weeks promoting the event to country representatives and more than 100 teacher colleges in the 18 member states through a variety of methods: flyers (see Appendix 1), Facebook posts, WhatsApp messages, existing networks, and email invitations.

### **Attendance**

The webinar was attended by 49 people from KIX country teams, ministries of education, civil society organizations, and schools, universities, and teacher colleges; this number excludes the Hub's consortium of partners, technical partners, and project funders. This webinar yielded a slightly higher turnout than previous webinars held by the Hub 2020, likely due to a combination of the relevance of the topic and the extent of the promotion.

### **Presentations by multinational organizations**

Maryann Dreas-Shaikha, the knowledge management consultant of the KIX Africa 19 Hub at UNESCO IICBA, began the event and co-moderated it with Hunji Njora, a senior program officer evaluation at UNESCO IICBA. Beifith Kouak Tiyab, an education specialist at the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, introduced the theme in the context of COVID-19 and the ongoing and underlying learning crisis in many countries. "The topic of this webinar comes at the right moment and provides us the opportunity to learn together and share experiences and resources and solutions and innovations being developed in measuring learning outcomes," said Mr. Tiyab.

Shem Bodo, the senior programs officer at the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), also developed the theme by presenting on the need to rethink assessment in the COVID-19 era and beyond. "What has been the COVID experience from the African perspective?" questioned Mr. Bodo. "The COVID-19 experience calls for a rethinking in effectively delivering quality education in an inclusive and equitable manner, and technology is a key enabler." Moreover, "the future of assessment lies in classroom-based formative assessment and not centralized summative assessment," asserted Mr. Bodo. He recommended several norms that would benchmark the development of a sound remote education system: the norms of a robust

policy and legal framework, a strong teacher workforce capacity, and monitoring, evaluation, and assessment.

## **Experiences and knowledge from member countries**

The highlight of the webinar was a series of four presentations by KIX Africa 19 member states: The Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, and Sierra Leone. All countries had both accomplishments and challenges to share. Most reported their ongoing strides towards shifting from purely summative assessments towards more frequent formative assessment.

### **Sierra Leone**

Brima Sesay, the learning assessment focal person at the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education delivered a presentation with the support of Emmanuel Deoud, the development partners coordination desk officer at the Ministry. The presentation focused on the creation and implementation of evidence-based assessment policies in Sierra Leone. Mr. Sesay described how Sierra Leone developed surveys and reports to inform the learning assessment unit at the Ministry, and how the information is strengthening reforms in the country.

### **Lesotho**

Makhube Ralenkoane, the curriculum and assessment lead at the Ministry of Education and Training gave a joint presentation with a local school-based stakeholder, Letsatsi Ntsibolane, a senior graduate teacher at Lithabaneng High School in Lesotho. Dr. Ralenkoane and Mr. Ntsibolane focused on teacher readiness to practice continuous assessment during COVID-19. They shared an audio recording of female elementary and secondary students speaking articulately with female teachers about their perceptions and the technical problems of taking assessments during the pandemic. Clearly, remote learning has been a challenge for both students and teachers. Lesotho acknowledged there are more challenges than successes, but that progress is underway; the mountainous country is transitioning from a traditional subject-based curriculum to an integrated one with more formative assessment.

### **The Gambia**

Fatimata Hydera, a senior education officer in the Assessment Unit at the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, gave a presentation with the support of Alpha Bah, the head of the EMIS and ICT Unit at the Ministry. Ms. Hydera explained how in The Gambia, national assessment results and Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) data are systemically used to monitor teachers and school and inform the development of education sector plans. The Gambia also has a Star Award System to recognize and encourage schools to engage in critical self-review using assessment data.

## Kenya

Anne Wanjiru Ngatia, a coordinator at the Kenya National Examinations Council presented on Kenya's strategies to promote equity and inclusion through innovative assessment. Like Lesotho, Kenya is also undergoing a national shift from traditional summative assessment to more frequent formative, authentic, integrated, and inclusive assessment. Kenya's new curriculum is competency based and promotes classroom-based grassroots assessments with a focus on twenty-first century learning, performance assessment, integrated ICT, and immediate or quick feedback to learners.

### Country engagement

Nine country focal points or country team members were present at the webinar. As detailed in the paragraphs above, four countries (The Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, and Sierra Leone) actively contributed to the event by providing the program's main content. Their engagement meets progress marker *2. Sharing their experiences, evidence and knowledge, and responding to requests for information from other country representatives*. Three focal points (from The Gambia, Lesotho, and Sierra Leone) involved other stakeholders from the ministry, schools, and civil society in their presentations, meeting progress marker *4. Seeking out perspectives of colleagues in government, research institutions, and/or civil society in preparation for or in response to Hub activities*. One focal point from Lesotho involved actual stakeholders from impacted high schools by bringing in a teacher to present and sharing an audio clip of a discussion between high school students and a teacher about assessments.

Table 1 below shows a record of the member states that were involved in the webinar. The Hub Secretariat is keeping such records for all learning events to track countries' engagement at a moment in time, and over time.

Table 1:

Date	Event	Indicator	Hub Presence and Participation at the Assessment Webinar																	
			Eritrea	Ethiopia	The Gambia	Ghana	Kenya	Lesotho	Liberia	Malawi	Mozambique	Nigeria	Rwanda	Sierra Leone	Somalia	South Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Zambia	Zimbabwe
3-17-2021	Knowledge-sharing Webinar: Innovation in Assessment in Sub-Saharan Africa in the COVID-19 Era	Attendance																		9
		Contribution																		

### Learning from feedback

Taking feedback on countries’ takeaways and impressions has become a standard good practice at learning events. The Hub Secretariat facilitated a mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) feedback survey to gauge whether the assessment webinar met its learning objectives and whether participants found it useful and relevant. These results prompt reflection on the present event and also inform the planning of future events. Since the knowledge-sharing assessment webinar was aimed at a larger audience than just the KIX Hub, the feedback described below and displayed in Appendix 2 includes responses from both country representatives, teachers, and students from universities and teachers’ colleges. The population size was 18 respondents (n = 18).

### Findings

Feedback indicates that the assessment webinar was largely a useful and relevant for the majority of the respondents. When asked how useful the webinar was to their particular work, 50% said “very useful” and 33% said “useful,” meaning that 83% of participants found the webinar useful. In particular, they found the presentations by the four countries and the question-and-answer session more useful than the presentations by the international organizations.

When asked how likely they are to engage in future Hub activities, 50% said “likely,” and fewer, 33%, said “very likely.” Essentially, 83% are likely to engage with the Hub in the future.

When asked how likely they are to inform their colleagues or networks about the Hub, 44% said “very likely,” and 39% said “likely,” meaning that 83% are likely to spread the word about the Hub’s work.

When participants were asked what they learned and what aspects of the webinar they can apply to their areas of responsibilities, they responded in a variety of ways that reflected the richness of their various backgrounds and projects. A few commented that they learned that assessments need to be authentic, inclusive, and innovative, and that they want to explore digital assessments for marginalized learners. Another commented that “This webinar gave us ideas and starting points on themes for reflection on how to improve education and training in times of crisis, taking into account an essential concept such as evaluation.” A student teacher from one of the member states commented: “My main take way is the use of data and assessment tools to inform policy formulation. I hope that as I do my studies and research, I develop a problem based approach mindset to provide last mile solutions.”

Please see Appendix 2 for more details on the survey.

## **Analysis**

While the responses on the feedback survey are positive, they do not indicate the presence of deeper learning or policy consequences, and nor does the webinar promise to generate such learning and implementation. There were two survey questions that began this inquiry: “How does this webinar topic relate to your work?” and “What knowledge or aspects from this webinar can you apply to your own area of responsibility?” However, these two questions lack a more specific focus on *how* participants can and will use the learning event in their sphere of influence. This generation of policy implications is crucial to the goals of the Hub, but is difficult to ascertain and perhaps impossible to generate through a feedback question; is better developed within the learning event collectively with other stakeholders. In future learning events, the methodology should include breakout rooms for focal points and team members to discuss the ideas and evidence presented and reflect on their own systems.

Some of the qualitative responses in the survey indicate that a follow-up webinar on sub-topics in assessment may be necessary. This also supports the notion that the one-off workshop dissemination model is less effective than sustained learning encounters built around participants’ learning needs. The responses that necessitate the most consideration in a follow-up webinar are the ones that relate most closely to the project goals and thematic priorities: the responses from ministry officials who are reforming assessment policies and setting up assessment units; respondents who are interested in how to link assessment to early learning and development; and respondents who need more information on assessments for rural and marginalized learners.

*For more information or questions about this report, please contact Maryann Dreas-Shaikha at UNESCO IICBA at [mj.dreas@unesco.org](mailto:mj.dreas@unesco.org).*

## Appendix 1: Documentation of the learning event

### Presentations

The following presentations were given during the webinar. The links to each are below:

[Innovation in Assessment Emerging in the COVID-19 Era in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)

[Re-thinking Learning Assessment in the COVID-19 Era in Eastern, Western, and Southern Africa](#)

[Development and Implementation of Evidence-Based Policies on Learning Assessment in Sierra Leone](#)

[Innovative Strategies for Assessing Learning Outcomes Emerging in the COVID-19 Era in Sub-Saharan Africa: The case of Lesotho](#)

[Learners' Views on Assessment During COVID-19: Lesotho \(audio clip\)](#)

[Promoting Equity & Inclusiveness in Learning through Innovative Assessment in Kenya](#)

[The Gambia Experience: Using Assessment Results](#)

### Recording

The meeting was held over Zoom and a [recording](#) was uploaded to YouTube and proactively emailed to the more-than 70 individuals who registered for the webinar, not just the 49 who attended, since some may not have been able to attend.

## Flyer

Beginning two weeks before the webinar, the following flyer was created and circulated through Facebook, WhatsApp, and email:

The flyer features a background image of two young children wearing face masks, with a decorative border of colorful overlapping circles. The text is arranged in a clear, hierarchical layout.

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

**Wed. March 17, 2021  
3:00–5:00 p.m. GMT+3  
East Africa Time  
Zoom**

**GPE KIX** AFRICA 19 HUB  
KNOWLEDGE INNOVATION EXCHANGE

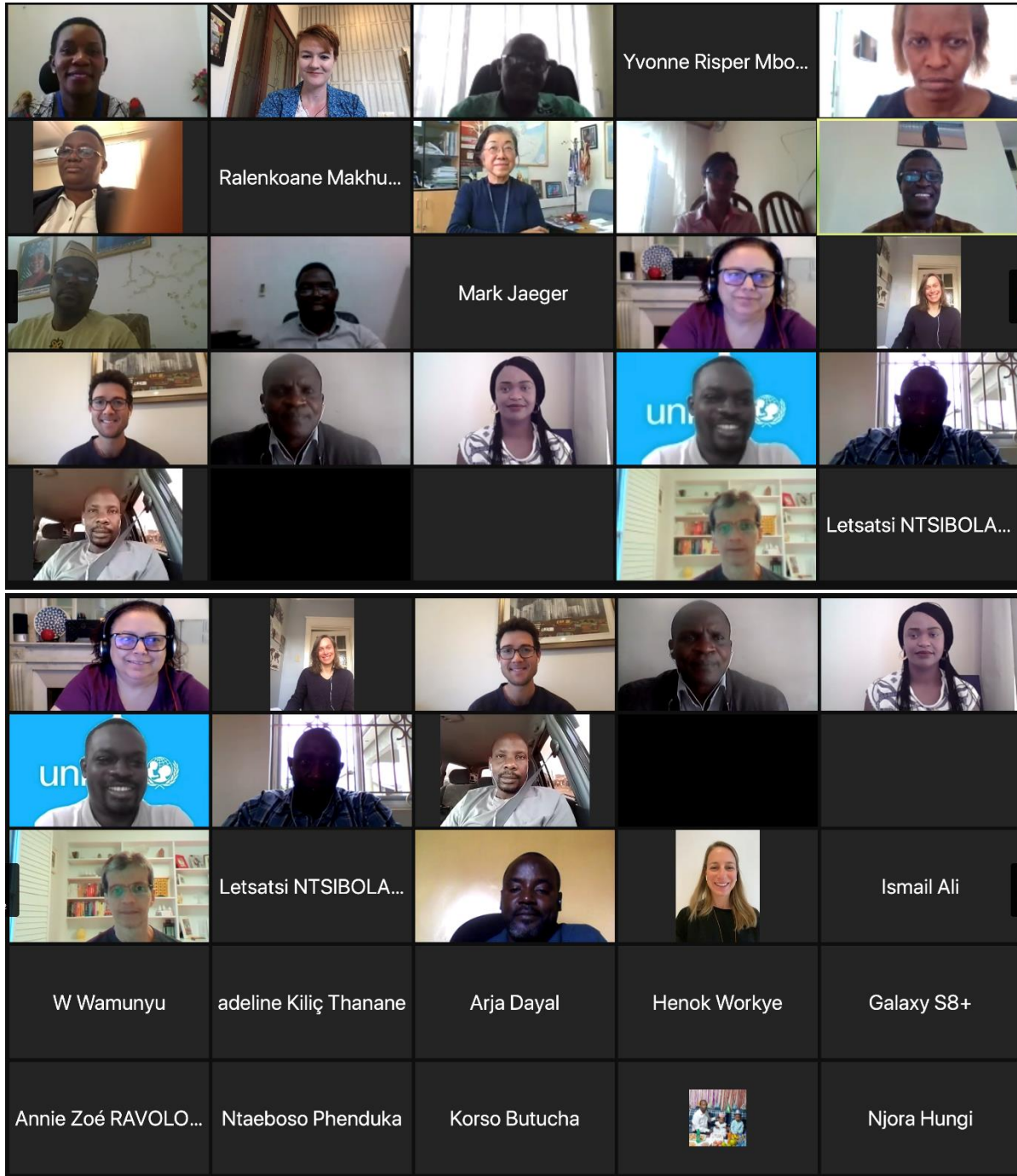
**IDRC | CRDI**  
International Development Research Centre  
Centre de recherches pour le développement international

**UNESCO**  
United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**unicef**  
for every child

**African Union**

Group photo





## Appendix 2: Feedback on the learning event

The feedback survey was disseminated to participants immediately following the webinar, on March 17, 2021, and was left open for one week.

### Survey questions

1. How does this webinar topic (assessment) relate to your work?
2. What knowledge or aspects from this webinar can you apply to your own area of responsibility?
3. How useful was today's webinar to your work?
4. How useful to you were each of the following activities (the presentations by international organizations, the presentations by the four countries, and the Q-and-A session)?
5. How engaged did you feel during each of the above activities?
6. How likely are you to engage in future activities with the KIX Africa 19 Hub?
7. How likely are you to inform your colleagues/networks about the KIX Africa 19 Hub?
8. Is there anything else you would have liked to have seen in today's webinar? Please give a suggestion.
9. What topics would you like to see at future webinars by the KIX Africa 19 Hub?

### Graphs of findings

Date: March 17, 2021

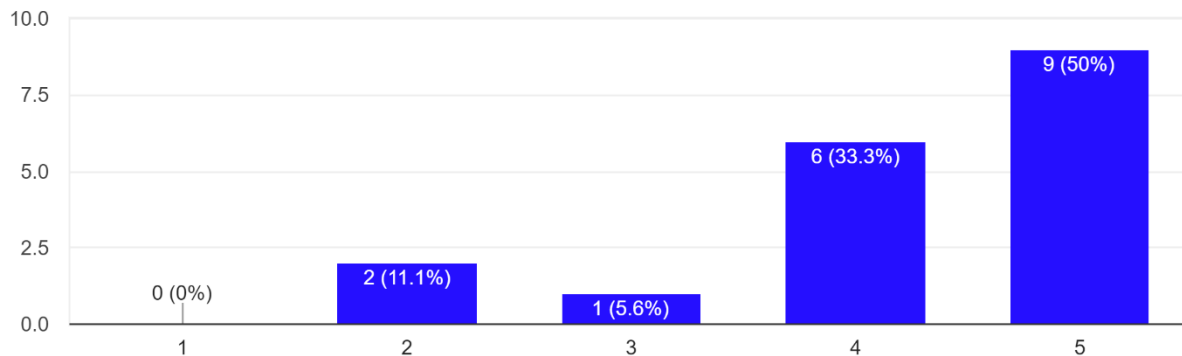
Population size: n = 18

Note: A response of 5 = to a great extent, and a response of 1 = to a very little extent.

**Highlights:**

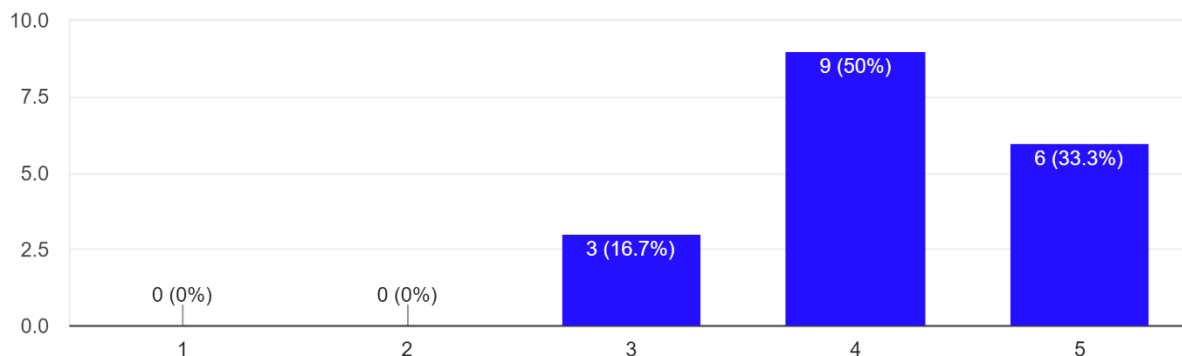
How useful was today's webinar to your work?

18 responses



How likely are you to engage in future activities with the KIX Africa 19 Hub?

18 responses



How likely are you to inform your colleagues/networks about the KIX Africa 19 Hub?

18 responses

