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A UNESCO instrument: Mini-LAMP

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Adult illiterate population (15+ years)

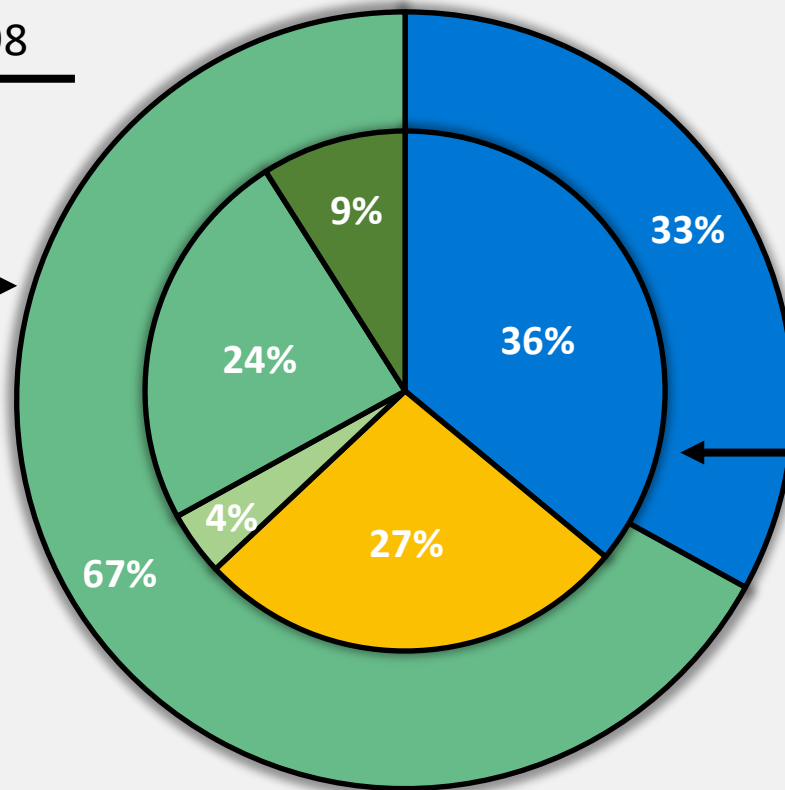
772,641,202

UIS, 2019

A comparison between usual and direct literacy measures

USUAL LITERACY MEASURE Census, Cambodia, 1998

- Illiterate
- Literate



- Complete illiterate
 - Semi-literate
 - Basic literacy level
 - Medium Literacy level
 - Self-learning literacy level
- ## DIRECT LITERACY MEASURE ALS, Cambodia, 1999

LITERACY DATA COVERAGE

CURRENTLY, 64 COUNTRIES OUT OF 195 HAVE IMPLEMENTED A DIRECT ASSESSMENT OF ADULT LITERACY SKILLS (33% OF COUNTRIES)

- 1 Asia & Pacific**
22 COUNTRIES OUT OF 63 (35%)
- 2 Africa**
4 COUNTRIES OUT OF 54 (7%)
- 3 Latin America**
7 COUNTRIES OUT OF 32 (22%)
- 4 North America & Europe**
31 COUNTRIES OUT OF 46 (67%)



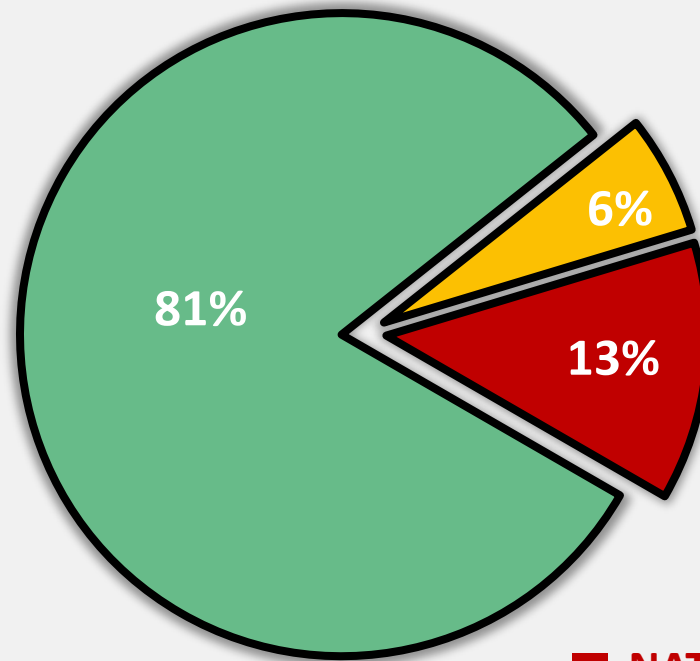
Source: UIL
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Where do the data come from?

EXISTING ASSESSMENTS

INTERNATIONAL ONLY

Three international assessments were carried out: LAMP from UNESCO, STEP from the World Bank and, most often, PIAAC from OECD. STEP does not assess numeracy skills.



Source: UIL

NATIONAL ONLY

Bangladesh, Botswana, Lao PDR and Papua New Guinea. The four of them collected data on both literacy and numeracy skills.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

With the exception of Kenya (STEP), all the countries have also participated in PIAAC.

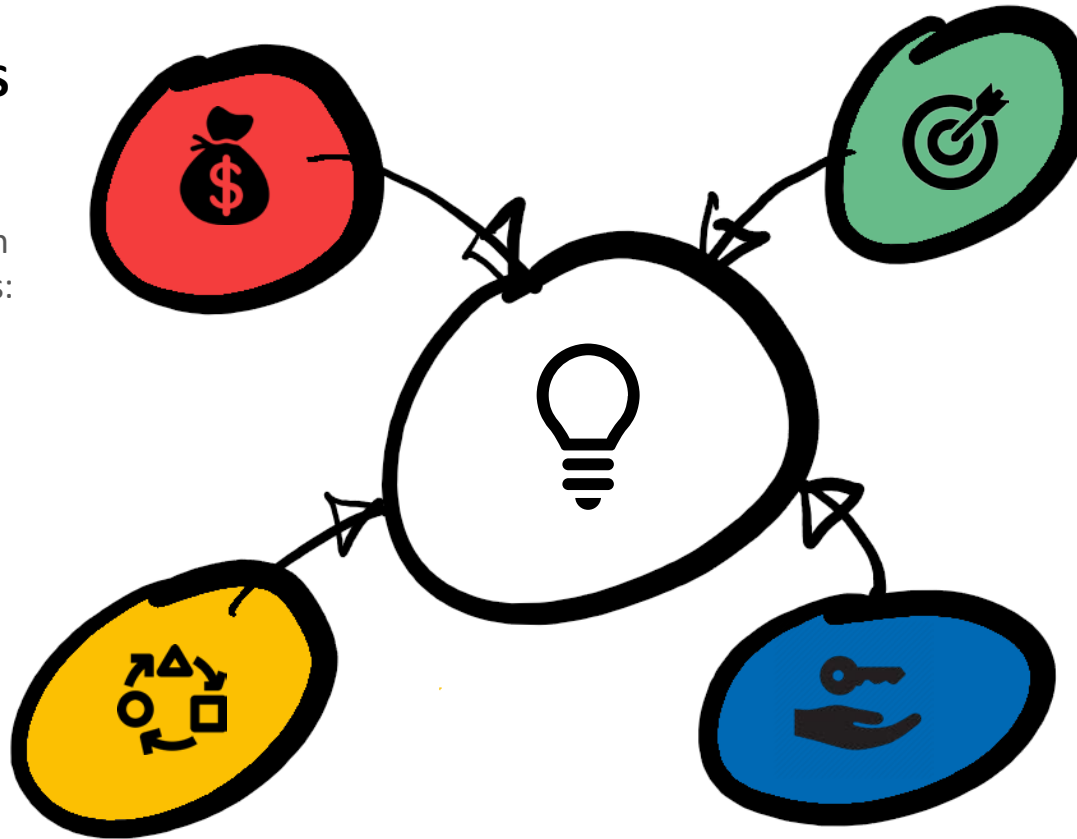
What are the main challenges?

RESOURCES

Direct assessments are more expensive and complex to conduct than usual household surveys: Requirement for high financial, human and technical resources.

FLEXIBILITY

International assessment are highly standardized. No additions. No adaptations. No flexibility in timelines.



TARGET

Cover usually the full range of proficiency. Not focused on specific country needs. Difficulty in reaching the most vulnerable populations.

OWNERSHIP

Lack of capacity building. Ownership of data. Opacity of softwares and statistical methods. Not easy to replicate the survey.

The Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP)

Cognitive instrument

- Short, includes literacy and numeracy
- Questions field-tested in 10 languages

Background questionnaire

- Focused on professional and daily uses of literacy and numeracy skills
- Easily adaptable

Sound methodology

- Documentation and guidelines
- Software package



Paper and pencil

Pre-designed questionnaire

Guidelines for training, administration, scoring and coding



Tablet-based

Multilingual portable tool

Low connectivity



Phone-based

People in geographically isolated or dangerous areas

Low operational costs

How to get and implement mini-LAMP?

UIL can...

- Share the mini-LAMP survey
- Develop new or share existing guidelines
- Provide targeted technical advice
- Engage with donors, ministries and technical partners
- Support countries in all phases of implementation

More generally, UIL can...

- Help countries in developing their own instruments
- Upcoming: provide online training

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Direct assessments of adult skills and competencies

Numeracy and literacy in the adult population are key skills that underpin lives, promote social inclusion and contribute to sustainable societies. Without these skills, adults are at risk of disadvantage. Furthermore, innovation will not as easily transfer into a growth in well-being, while inclusion and countries will be less prosperous. Getting the best returns on investment in the development of adult skills and competencies requires comprehensive data to assess what people know, what they do with what they know, and the extent to which they are equipping themselves with the skills they need to sustain themselves in the twenty-first century.

While collective efforts have led to continuous progress in increasing literacy rates, global data on literacy based on conventional proxy indicators is not sufficient to offer a comprehensive picture of the literacy landscape. To give an example, the global literacy rate for adults aged 15 years and older was 86% in 2016, a figure that is almost unchanged since 2016. However, in absolute terms, the number of non-literate youth and adults increased by 23 million to 773 million between 2016 and 2018 (UNESCO, 2020) – a stark reminder of the task ahead if the international community is to deliver on its education priorities by 2030.

Currently, only 17% of countries have data on literacy and numeracy skills based on direct measurements (Gibson and Pineda, 2019). Literacy estimates are mainly based on a self-reported measure of reading, which distinguishes between those who cannot read or write at all and those who have some skills, and usually does not measure numeracy competencies. In contrast, direct measures of literacy and numeracy determine how well individuals perform the key skills society needs and

provide a detailed analysis of the distribution of skills in the adult population.

Moreover, direct measures of the skill levels of adults in literacy and numeracy help for:

- determine the sub-groups that are not equipped with sufficient skills and are more likely to be left behind. For example in Germany, the second Level One Survey conducted in 2018, assessed the reading and writing skills of the German-speaking adult population and gathered detailed data about the distribution of three lower levels of literacy proficiency, taking into account a series of socio-economic variables (gender, age, mother tongue, educational qualification, among others) (Gentilovich et al., 2019). With this information, the government can implement targeted basic skills training opportunities for the most fragile sub-populations in appropriate settings, such as in the workplace;
- examine the impact of skills on a range of economic and social outcomes. In countries participating in PIAAC, the survey results are used to determine the influence of skills proficiencies on professional wages, likelihood of employment and health (OECD, 2019);
- evaluate the performance of education and adult training, work practices and social policies in developing the skills that are required to create and promote knowledge-based societies. Kenya, for instance, designed and carried out the Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey (KNALS) in 2008 to assess the development of inclusion used to assess progress on the implementation of education-related programmes (ONIS, 2007).

© UNICEF/WHO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Survey of Adult Skills, which is part of the progression programme for the international assessment of adult competencies (PIAAC).

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Adult numeracy: Assessment and development

Numeracy in the adult population is a key skill that supports the lives of all citizens and contributes to the development of jobs, markets, economies and societies around the globe. Adult numeracy is, therefore, included in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a specific target (see indicator 4.6.1, 6.1, 6.2). Unfortunately, the importance of numeracy is often overlooked by policymakers both in terms of numeracy education for adults and in schools and measuring of skill levels by credible direct assessment.

For many decades, UNESCO considered numeracy as part of basic skills, sometimes described as 'arithmetic' or 'computation' within literacy. Most countries lacked data on the numeracy skills and practices of their citizens. However, increasing evidence suggests that numeracy should be analysed and prioritised as a separate dimension and target. Building adult numeracy skills is key for citizens' well-being and active participation in modern society. It contributes to significant economic and social outcomes (East, 2020).

Insufficient data on adult skills in general, and on numeracy in particular, remains a serious challenge (East, 2016). SDG target 4.6 calls on countries to ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030. Indicator 4.6.1, which tracks this target, measures the proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex (UN, 2023). The target age group is 15 years and older.

Numeracy and its domains

Conceptual framework and cumulative findings demonstrate the importance of foundational numeracy for twenty-first century citizens, communities and economies. It can be described in five separate domains (see Gal et al., 2020, for definitions and references):

- **Civic numeracy** relates to citizens' ability to understand and react critically to quantitative and statistical information regarding important societal, economic and environmental issues, and how data and statistics shape public policy.
- **Digital numeracy** is becoming increasingly important in times of growing public exposure to big data, open data, and the use of algorithms in many digital environments, alongside digital literacy.
- **Financial and commercial numeracy** includes the computation and critical evaluation of information involving money, savings and related risks.
- **Health numeracy** is emerging as an independent field in research and health services research, and includes the comprehension of treatment options, risks and projections, alongside health literacy.
- **Workplace numeracy** encompasses a range of topics such as management, schedule optimization, resources and budgets along with comprehension of statistics and data on production, quality control and customer behaviour to compete in an evolving job market.

Tasks undertaken in all of the above contexts require a wide range of basic and advanced numeracy and critical thinking skills, including many skills not subsumed in school mathematics.

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