

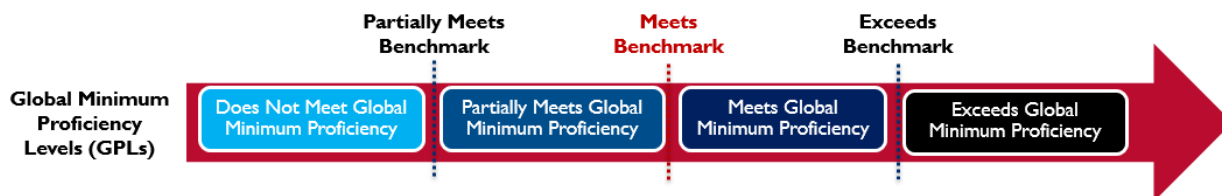
# POLICY LINKING FOR MEASURING GLOBAL LEARNING OUTCOMES OVERVIEW

## OVERVIEW:

Policy linking is a methodology that can be used to link assessments to the Global Proficiency Framework (GPF) and to set benchmarks (or cut scores) on learning assessments that allow those assessments to be aligned across countries and contexts. The method allows countries to use their existing national assessments, household-based assessments, or early grade reading and math assessments to report against Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4.1.1. The first step in policy linking is for teachers and curriculum expert to make judgements on the linkage between the national assessments and the GPF, a framework developed by multilateral donors and partners based on current national content and assessment frameworks across more than 50 countries. The GPF provides performance expectations/ standards for learners in Grades 1-9 in reading and mathematics. After linking the assessment, the teachers and curriculum experts make judgements on whether minimally proficient learners would answer assessment items correctly, which leads to a benchmark by which countries can judge whether their learners are meeting global minimum proficiency standards. By linking their national assessments to the GPF, countries and donors are able to compare learning outcomes across language groups in countries as well as across countries and over time, assuming all new assessments are subsequently linked to the GPF.

## IMPLEMENTING POLICY LINKING:

Policy linking works by bringing together a group of approximately 15 panelists per assessment, grade, and language that includes expert teachers and content specialists from across a country to collectively set benchmarks. The panel reviews the GPF, which defines performance standards for learners under four global proficiency levels (GPLs)—does not meet minimum proficiency, partially meets minimum proficiency, meets minimum proficiency, and exceeds minimum proficiency—with three benchmarks, as shown in the figure below. Using the detailed descriptors in the GPF, the panelists determine alignment between the GPF and the items that appear in their national assessment. Assuming strong alignment (which means that the majority of subconstructs are covered at least partially by the assessment items), the panelists continue forward to the next step of policy linking. In the second step, the panelists each independently determine how learners who fall into each GPL would likely perform on each item from the national assessment being linked. They then review how panelist scores compare and are presented with impact data that how the percentage of learners who would fall into each GPL based on their ratings. Finally, the panelists independently review each assessment item again and determine whether learners in each proficiency category would get the item correct or incorrect. The facilitators then compile and average the benchmarks identified by the panelists and present them to the Ministry of Education for reporting against global indicators.



## **GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS AND INPUTS:**

- Commitment to conducting the workshop and considering the benchmarks
- Helping identifying and reaching out to/inviting 30 panelists, to include:
  - 12 master classroom teachers and 3 curriculum/teacher training/pedagogy specialists—all with a good understanding of the abilities of the appropriate grade of learners—for reading at the end of primary; these teachers and experts will act as the workshop panelists
  - 12 master teachers and 3 curriculum/teacher training/pedagogy specialists—all with a good understanding of the abilities of the appropriate grade of learners—for math at the end of primary; these teachers and experts will act as the workshop panelists
- One Reading Content Facilitator, preferably a reading curriculum expert in the country (he/she will be trained ahead of the workshop)
- One Math Content Facilitator, preferably a math curriculum expert in the country (he/she will be trained ahead of the workshop)
- Recent quality reading and mathematics assessment instruments for the end-of-primary
- Data from the most recent administration of the reading and math assessments, if possible, to present panelists with item difficulty data and impact data.
- A recent technical assessment report, including information on assessment reliability and validity, sampling, etc.  
Attendance at a 5 full-day in-person workshop or 8-session remote workshop with sessions lasting from 2-4 hours and some homework for panelists

## **ADVANTAGES:**

- Low-cost method for countries to set benchmarks that are linked to global standards
- Allows countries to continue to use their national assessments for measuring learning outcomes and reporting on global indicators
- Supports government ownership since benchmarks are set by countries rather than donors and can be continued by governments after development assistance ends
- Does not rely on current learner performance to set benchmarks, which can distort benchmarks when there are not a sufficient number of proficient learners in a country
- Allows countries to compare assessment results over time, across contexts, and across languages to better target interventions to the most vulnerable groups (when all assessments are linked to the GPF)
- Allows countries to compare progress in learning outcomes amongst one another
- Allows countries to report against the SDGs and USAID's "F" indicators

## **KEY TERMS:**

**Content Standards** – describe what learners should know and do as a result of instruction. USAID and other stakeholders used content standards from more than 100 countries to inform the GPF.

**Performance Standards** – describe how learners should perform on assessments to meet the content standard; the GPF includes the internationally-agreed-upon performance standards for grades 1-9 in reading and math. Countries can also set their own performance standards and set benchmarks for those standards; they just will not be able to use those standards to report against the SDGs.

**Benchmark** - a specific assessment score that designates a performance standard has been met on a given assessment; the desired competence or skills learners should developmentally be able to demonstrate when provided appropriate resources and support. Benchmarks should be set based on objective evidence of required performance rather than the current performance of learners.

**Global Proficiency Framework (GPF)** – a framework developed by donors and partners based on current country content and assessment frameworks across more than 100 countries, that provides performance expectations/standards for learners in Grades 1-9 in reading and mathematics

**Global Proficiency Levels (GPLs)** – the four levels of proficiency defined by the GPF for classifying learner outcomes: does not meet minimum proficiency, partially meets minimum proficiency, meets minimum proficiency, and exceeds minimum proficiency.