

## Learning Data Compact – UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank Unite to End the Learning Data Crisis

UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank have joined forces to close the learning data gaps that still exist and that preclude many countries to monitor of the quality of their education systems and assess if their students are learning. The three organizations have agreed to a **Learning Data Compact**, a commitment to ensure that **all countries, especially low-income countries, have at least one quality measure of learning by 2025**, supporting coordinated efforts to strengthen national assessment systems.

In many low- and middle-income countries, learning data are not collected frequently and, in some countries, not collected at all. Even when data are collected, learning assessments may not be of high quality and are not always used effectively to inform decision-making.

As education systems progressively return to in-person instruction after school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for timely and quality data on learning and drivers of student achievement is more urgent than ever. It is critical for policy makers and school administrators to have this data to accelerate students' learning recovery, and prepare and support teachers.

The Compact offers a menu of evidence-based methodologies, tools, and solutions developed by and with developing countries. These can be combined in a flexible manner to help countries improve the quality, relevance, and timeliness of information from their national large-scale learning assessments. Also, as multilateral institutions working directly with governments in supporting the implementation of education policies, the institutions in the Compact agree to ensure that in those cases where there are learning data gaps or deficits in the country capacity to measure learning, its operations will support the necessary investments.

*“Apart from issues with data availability and quality, constraints related to technical and financial capacity often hold back the effective use of learning data for decision-making,”* says **Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO.**

To support this objective, the initiative will strengthen institutional capacity at the country level for measuring and using data on student learning outcomes. It aims to build sustainable learning monitoring systems by promoting multi-year collaborations among development partners and countries.

The initiative will support countries to:

- plan, design, implement, analyze, and use results of large-scale learning assessment;
- produce repeated measures of student learning that are comparable over time and across countries;
- strengthen the link between information from large-scale student assessments and classroom assessment;
- support improved collection and use of census administrative school data; and
- support improved coordination, quality, oversight, and transparency of global efforts to measure student learning.

*“Gathering good quality and comparable learning data frequently is essential to effectively implement policy measures needed to recover COVID-19 learning losses. Successful education systems focus*

*relentlessly on learning, and if countries don't know their students' performance, they are flying blind,"* stresses **Jaime Saavedra, Global Director for Education, World Bank.**

A key vision under the initiative is for all countries to measure learning in *at least 2 subjects* (for example, math and reading), in at least **two grades** (for example, early primary, end of primary, end of lower secondary), and with at least **two planned rounds** over 5 years. Each element of the 2x2x2 framework is important:

- (i) Measuring across **at least two subjects** allows for capturing multiple dimensions of learning;
- (ii) Measuring in **at least two grades** allows diagnosing learning constraints at different stages of schooling; and
- (iii) Ensuring **at least two planned rounds** of data collection allows countries to measure progress over time and can help embed the practice of collecting and using learning data into country policies.

This ambitious initiative requires coordination and the support of all international and regional initiatives, like [PASEC](#), [SEAMEO](#), [SAQMEC](#), and [LLECE](#), which are currently working tirelessly in this agenda.

According to **Robert Jenkins, Global Director for Education at UNICEF**, the Compact is long overdue. *"Countries need to be supported with the tools and resources required to strengthen national data systems in ways that are predictable, consistent, and of high quality. We know that the most vulnerable children will fall even further behind or drop out of school altogether after the disruptions caused by COVID-19 without targeted support to help them catch up on lost learning. Having this data is an essential first step in reaching and supporting those children."*

The time is right to support a comprehensive learning measurement agenda as envisioned under the Compact. First, thanks to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) process, there is an unprecedented alignment among the international community that measurement efforts should prioritize assessment of foundational literacy and numeracy. Second, there is a shared understanding of what constitutes high quality measures of learning and a flexible approach on how to produce them, building on either international, regional, and national learning assessments. Finally, the COVID-19 crisis adds urgency to the need to measure and recover lost learning.

The Compact is in line with the [Mission: Recovering Education 2021](#) by which the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF are partnering to support countries as they take all actions possible to plan, prioritize, and ensure that all learners are back in school; that schools take all measures to reopen safely; that students receive effective remedial learning and comprehensive services to help recover learning losses and improve overall welfare; and their teachers are prepared and supported to meet their learning needs.

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