

FACT SHEET

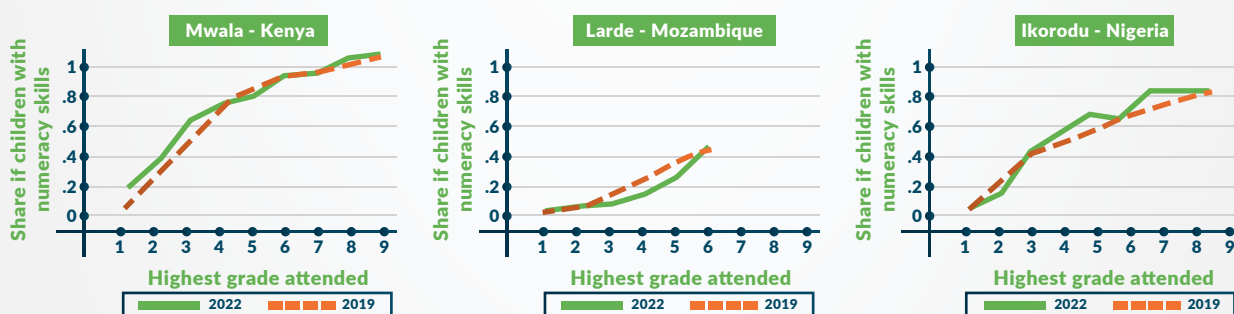
I. INTRO

The People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network is a South-South partnership of organizations across 15 countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, devoted to providing reliable and accurate evidence on children's learning across the Global South. PAL responds to the urgent need for learning assessment data that includes all children, regardless of their schooling status. In the Global South assessing the foundational learning needs of the children is both challenging and vital but cannot be done in the school settings where traditionally standardized assessments take place- given high absenteeism and tendency of schools to test at the top of the grade. To be able to understand the dimension of the problem, it is key that the needs of children are assessed locally.

Citizen Led Assessments are locally rooted assessments conducted in households to include all children irrespective of their schooling status. CLAs seek to transform the foundational learning landscape by engaging parents, community members, policy makers, and others in children's learning assessments. These citizens with agency participate in large-scale assessments that helps them understand what children can do and where they need support (i.e., starting with the youngest learners can prevent the need for catch-up programs later).

The experience with Citizen Led Assessments of PAL Network members over the past two decades has given the network considerable technical expertise and field-level insights to innovatively design, develop and implement a multi-country common assessment called ICAN (International Common Assessment of Numeracy). ICAN is the fruit of years of common work and effort between organizations focused on numeracy in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. It is an open-source tool available in 11 languages and is composed of tasks aligned to the Global Proficiency Framework. ICAN is simple and quick to administer and understand, therefore easy to scale. PAL used the ICAN tool in 2019 to gather data from 3 continents, 13 countries, 13 rural districts, 779 communities, 15,000 households and more than 20,000 children. In Sub Saharan Africa PAL implemented in 2022 a second round of ICAN, including a follow-up survey in the districts where ICAN was implemented in 2019 thus obtaining a view of learning outcome change before and after the pandemic in three PAL countries, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Kenya. This second wave of assessments has reached 16 thousand children across 546 rural communities¹.

PAL's recent common assessments are showing very poor learning outcomes pre-covid 2019 and very shy progress after COVID recovery 2022



¹The children who participated in this study live in very deprived contexts. Across the sampled locations in Kenya and Mozambique, only 13-40% of children have electricity in their households. Across all the locations in the study, only between 2 and 18% of children have a computer at home.

II. THE TEN ESSENTIAL FACTS ABOUT ICAN 2022-SSA

01

In and out of school: 92-100% of Nigerian and Kenyan surveyed children are enrolled in schools but this proportion decreases dramatically to 34-53% in the case of Mozambican surveyed children.

02

Enrolment in government and private schools differs by location. Almost all surveyed Mozambican children who are enrolled in school, attend government schools. In the Kenyan sample the average of children attending public schools is 90%, while in Nigeria only 43-32% of surveyed enrolled children attend public schools.

03

A very small number of surveyed children can read a grade 2-3 level story. On average, 1 out of 2 surveyed Nigerian children in grades 4-6 Nigeria can read a grade 2/3 level story. In Kenya, this proportion declines further- 1 in 3 children can read a story. In Mozambique, the share of children that can read this kind of text is less than 1 out of 10.

04

Children in our sample have great difficulty performing basic math operations: In grades 4-6, only between 65 and 70% of all surveyed children can do a subtraction of two two-digit numbers with carry-over. In the case of Nigeria and Mozambique, the percentages are lower.

05

Children have greater difficulty in solving math operations that are put in context Children surveyed in Kenya perform better: 50 and 63% in grades 4-6 solve the contextualized operations in the ICAN tool. In the same task, performance in the Nigerian sample ranges from 34 to 51%. The percentage of Mozambican children in our sample who can solve contextualized operations is the lowest: from 9 to 16%.

06

Gender differences are not constant across locations. In the Nigerian sample girls perform better than boys both in reading and mathematics. In Kenya, surveyed girls perform better than boys only in mathematics. We cannot observe a clear trend in the Mozambican sample.

07

Not only are the learning levels low overall, but additional years of schooling are not providing substantial learning progress. In the best-performing location in our sample, only 60% of children achieve Minimum Proficiency Levels (in Numeracy) at a Grade 2 level when they reach Grade 3. Only when children reach Grades 8-9 100% of children reach the Minimum Proficiency Level required for second graders.

08

Very few children reach Minimum Proficiency Levels (MPL) in grades 2 and 3 when they are expected to acquire them, and many still do not reach these levels in advanced grades. 69-77% of surveyed Kenyan and Nigerian children acquire MPL of grade 2 by grades 4-6. In the case of surveyed Mozambican children this percentage drops to 35-42%.

09

Comparing ICAN 22 with ICAN 19 (pre-covid) data obtained in the same sample locations we do not find consistent evidence of learning losses across these locations. In Ikorodu (Nigeria), for most grades the percentage of children achieving MPL at a grade 3 level decreased between 3-5 percentage points. In Larde (Mozambique), we see a drop in achievement of the MPL at a grade 3 level of 3-21 percentage points. In Mwala (Kenya), we see an increase in the achievement of the MPL at grade 3 of around 10 percentage points.

10

Our sample shows that poor foundational literacy and numeracy learning is not an outcome of the COVID pandemic. It is a persistent crisis that cannot be solved with business or rather “schooling” as usual approach. We argue that contexts in the Global South, like the ones analyzed in our sample, require systemic improvement.