

# Efficacy of household learning assessments in improving education for a more equitable world: Lessons from East Africa

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# Panelists and Discussant



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# Efficacy of household learning assessments in improving education for a more equitable world: Lessons from East Africa

(Introduction by Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Panel Chair)



# Why Learning assessments? Why do they need to be universal? Why is the household central?

- All three East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have ratified international protocols that commit them to universalising basic education. (SDG4 and previously MDGs and EFA Goals among others)
- Three national policies have been framed and implemented in the three countries to address access and equity in education:
  - Universal Primary Education (1997) in Uganda
  - Free Primary Education (2003) in Kenya
  - Fee-Free Basic Education Policy (2014) in Tanzania



# Sustainable Development Goal 4



Ensuring **inclusive** and **equitable quality** education and promote lifelong learning opportunities **for all**.



# Role for assessment at household level

- How do we more effectively measure that education provided is inclusive and of equitable quality?
- Universalisation of education in turn also demands that assessment is for all
- Does household-based assessment offer any promise?



# Structure of the Panel Discussion

- This panel discussion seeks to share the experiences of designing and implementing agile tools for measuring equity in education using household assessments.
- The panel discussion presents two papers:
  - 1) A framing paper on framework of using household assessments, the process, test development processes, sampling of learners/children to be assessed, preparation of citizen volunteers for assessment, assessment protocols, data analysis and engagement process after data analysis.
  - 2) A paper on opportunities and challenges of using household-based learning assessments to measure equity.



## Paper I

Household assessments for improving an **equitable world**: Framing the process and practice from East Africa

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**CIES Conference 2023**

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# Structure of the paper

In this paper, we present:

- 1 HHBAs in EA in numbers
- 2 Features of the household-based assessments
- 3 Process of developing and conducting household-based assessments
- 4 Features of the household-based assessments that reveal equity efforts
- 5 Standardization and common assessments



# Household-based assessments in EA in Numbers

Since 2009 when the assessments were first conducted,

- 26 assessments have been conducted in the three countries,
- Over 1.5million children (aged 4-20) assessed with the help of over 20,000 citizen volunteers and assessors (not necessarily teachers and psychometricians) in from the respective villages
- Over 450 diverse local civil society have helped to coordinate the assessments
- Over 15 MoE agencies have been involved in drawing samples and developing assessment items for HHBAs



# About household-based learning assessments

- First conducted in EA in 2010 after being adapted from the Pratham's Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)
- HHBAs features include
  - Conducted with help of citizen assessors
  - Covered the domains of literacy (basic, beyond and functional), numeracy and life skills
  - Have targeted children, adolescents and young adults aged 4-20 years (started with the 6-16 years)



# Household based assessment processes

- Assessment tools developed by panels
- Three stage sampling– districts, households and children/young adults
- Selecting and deploying assessors
- Assessing and sharing feedback at the households
- Sharing and engaging stakeholders with the evidence (sub-national, national, global actors)

## Paragraph 1

Mary has a very big garden. Her friend gave it to her. She has grown flowers on it. The flowers look good.

## Paragraph 2

John is not feeling well. He will miss school today. His father gave him medicine. He will get well soon.

## Story

Martin had seven white chicks. An eagle ate five of the chicks. Martin was very angry. He wanted to trap the eagle. He did not know how to trap it. His friend Tom suggested they could use a rat.

The boys went to look for a rat. They saw one entering a hole. They dug deep into the hole. A big snake came out of the hole. The boys ran away screaming loudly. They did not trap the eagle.

1. Why was Martin angry?
2. Why were the boys digging into the hole?



# Focus of equity in household-based learning assessments and equity

- 1) Use of Washington Group of questions to capture data on prevalence of disability
- 2) Trials on assessing children living with some form of disability such hearing impairments (example of adapted tools in Uganda)
- 3) Focus on skills that help all children such as reading and numeracy
- 4) Conducted on large scale (large samples) that allow to check equity issues
- 5) Conducted at the household level, they capture enrolment rates managing to collect details of non-enrolment and drop out cases,
- 6) They collect school attendance data by conducting spot checks on school attendance in the school that is attended by majority of the children from the sampled village
- 7) As household-based assessments, they capture the learning levels of children who are both in and out of school (there is no discrimination in sampling)



# What has adapting the household based assessment processes and tools revealed?

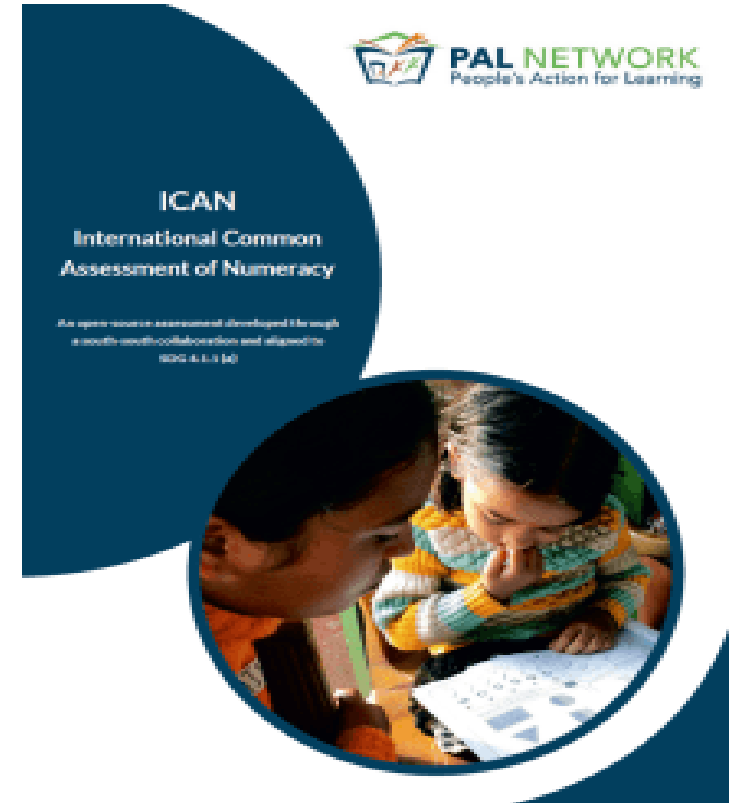
Adaptation has revealed that:

1. Curriculum similarities on competencies that are Grade/age appropriate
2. Policy space- articulation and agencies with similar mandate
3. Findings that learning levels are low, inequitably distributed and delayed across the region
4. The policy/partner response to the problem of low learning outcomes is similar

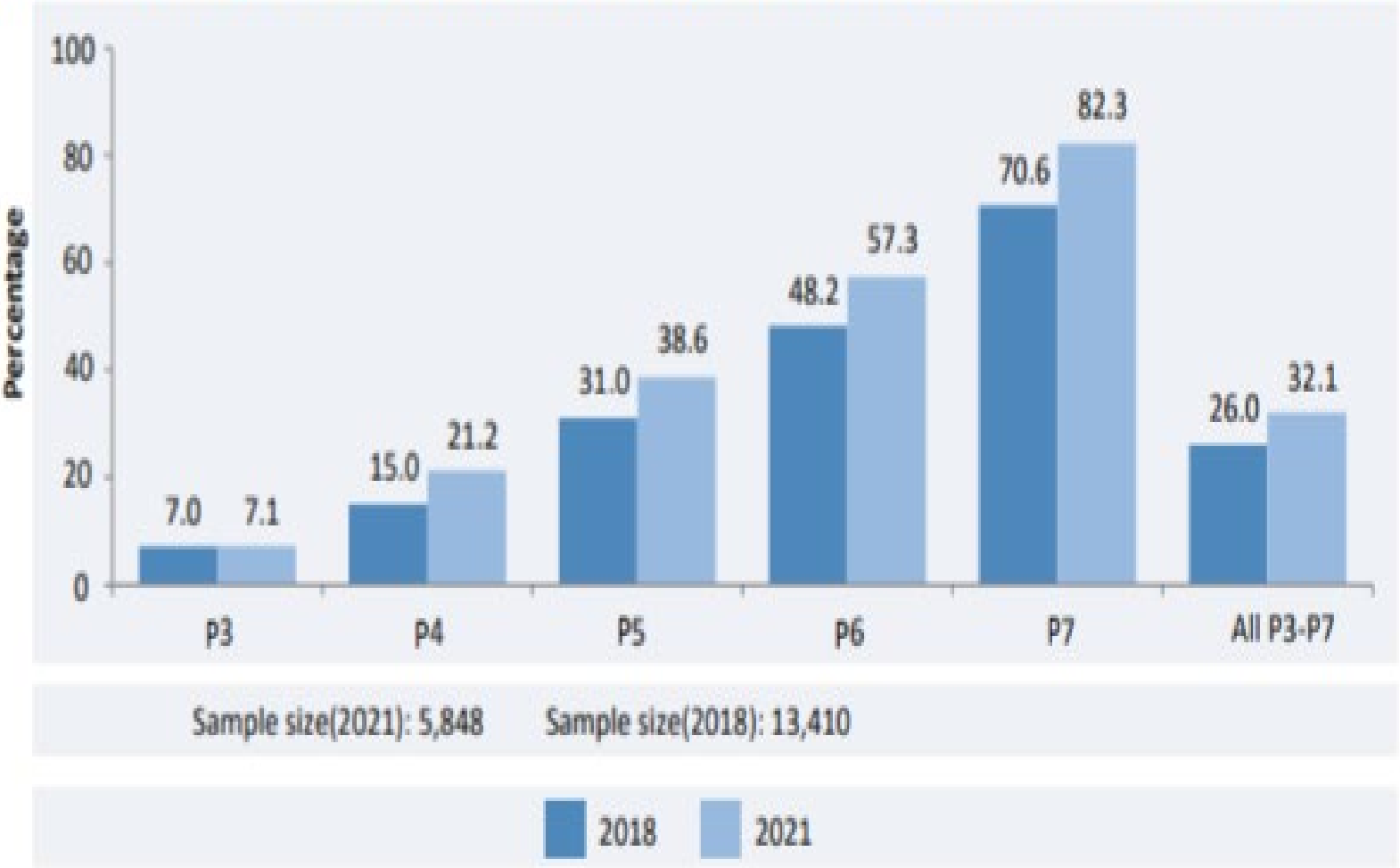


# From adaptation to common assessment tools

- Experience of conducting assessments in same regions (with similar issues) has seen the emergence of common assessment tools
- Under the People's Action for Learning network, ICAN was developed and implemented in 13 countries (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania participating)



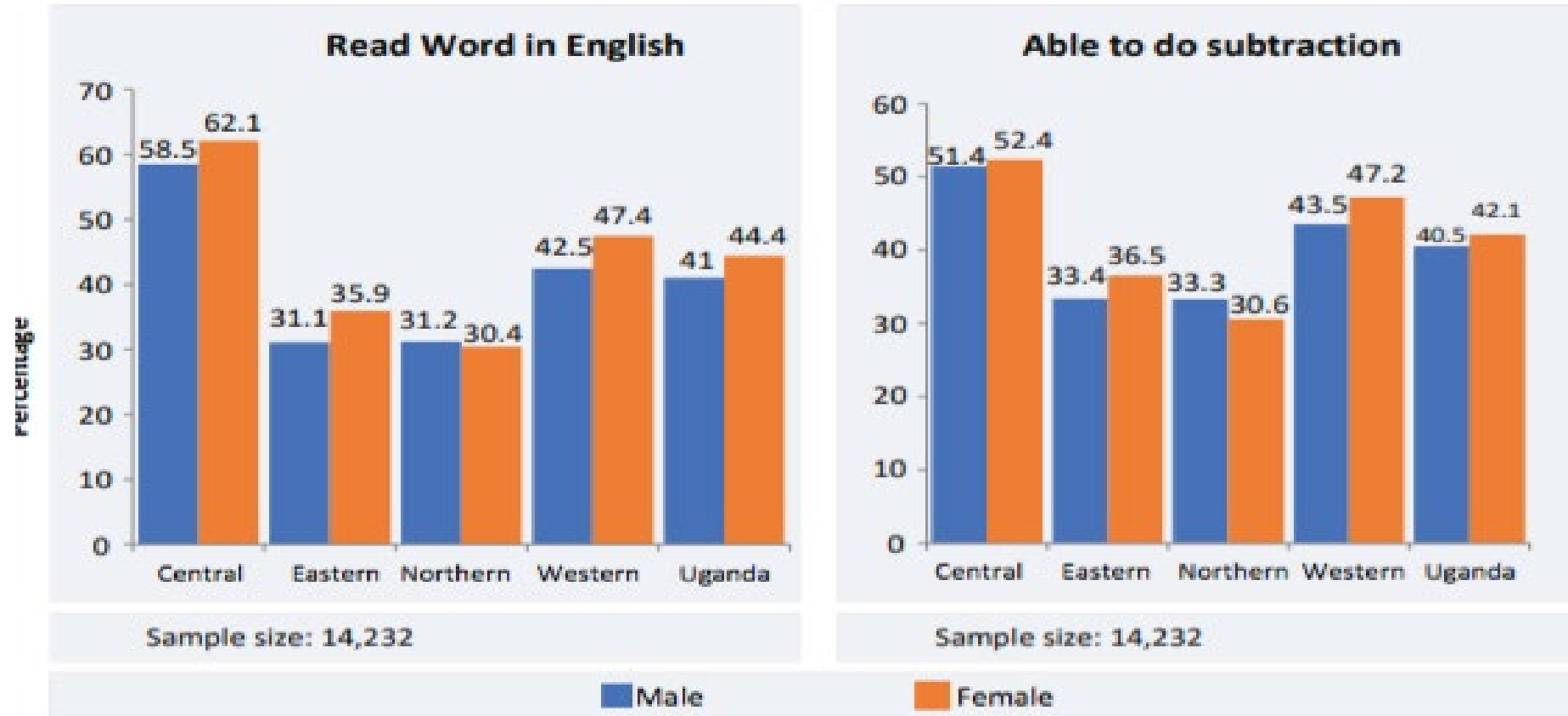
**Figure 4: Percentage rates of Combined Literacy and Numeracy Competence in P3-7 (2018 vs 2021)**



Learning outcomes are low with most children delaying to acquire the grade appropriate competencies. By Grade 7, almost 18% still can't demonstrate basic competencies.

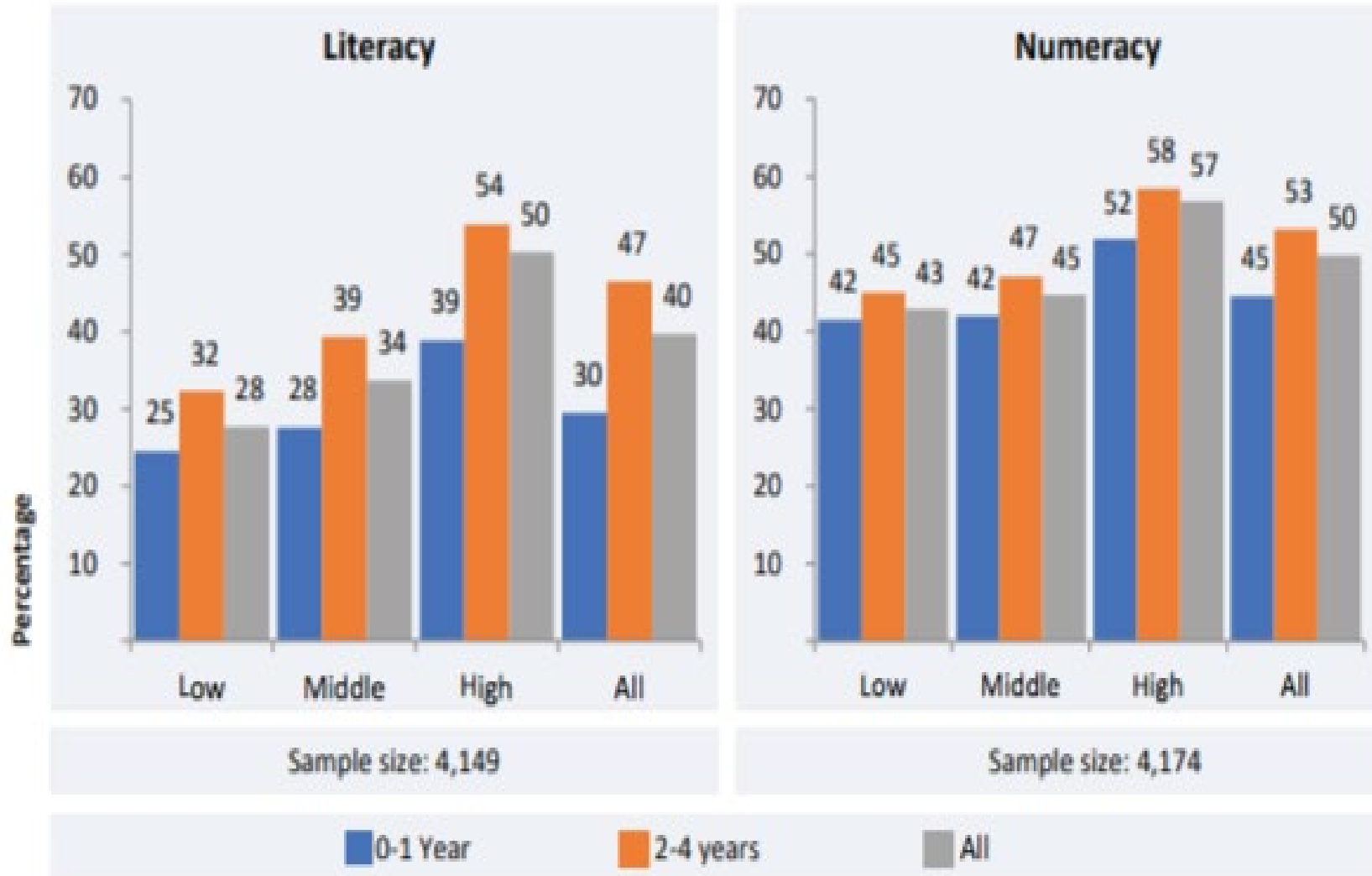


**Figure 10: Ability to Read Words in English and to Do Subtraction, By Gender and By Region for children aged 4-16 years - National Estimates (Percentages)**



Regional disparities with children in Central registering better results than children in Northern and Eastern Uganda

**Figure 12: Rates of Competence in English Reading and Numeracy in P3-P7, By Preschool Experience and By Wealth Group – National Estimates**



Learning outcomes are inequitably distributed in favour of households with high socio-economic status such as those with ability to attend pre-school

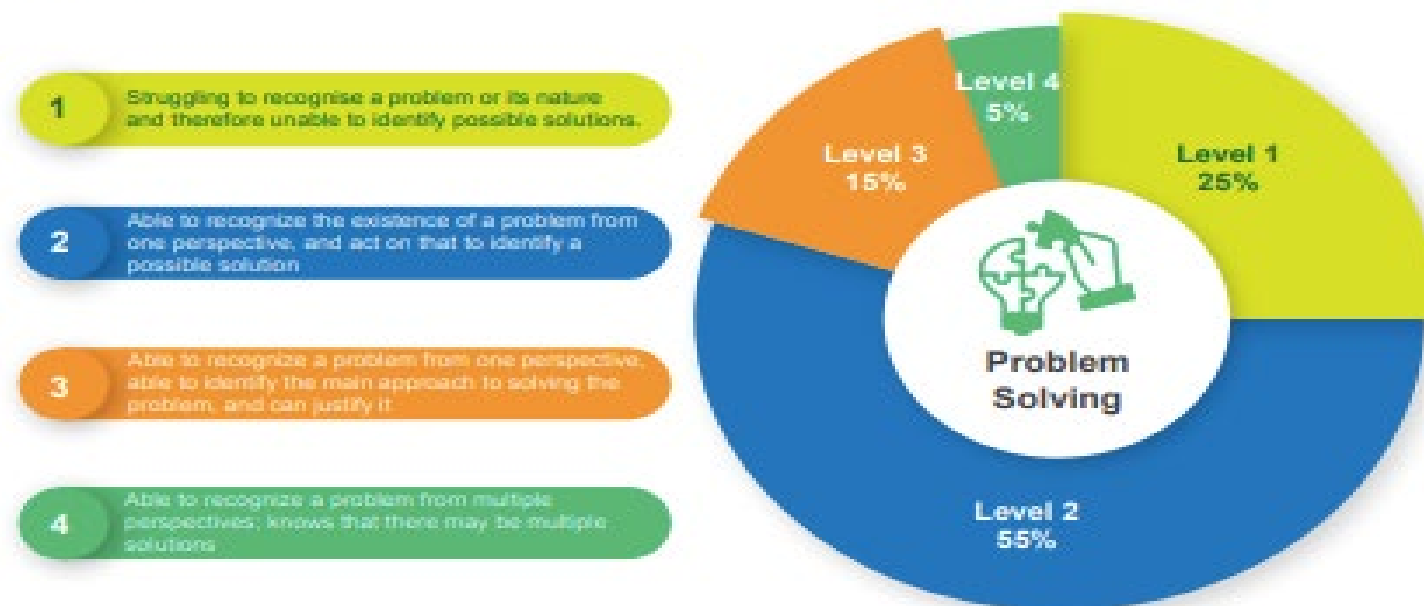
# The case of ALiVE: From adaptation to common assessments

- ALiVE is an initiative of the over 70 member organisations network of Regional Educational Learning Initiative (RELI).
- Under the thematic group of Values and Life skills, ALiVE is a collaborative initiative that involved the application contextualisation approach to develop an assessment tool to assess selected life skills of self awareness, problem solving, collaboration and the value of respect among the adolescents aged 13-17 years in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.
- The ALiVE assessment contains common test items to assess the selected life skills and values in the three countries.
- The ALiVE assessment was conducted in 2022 and yielded a response rate of over 46,000 adolescents in East Africa.



### Finding 1: Only 5 percent of the adolescents are proficient in problem solving (Level 4)

Most (55%) adolescents are able to recognise the existence of a problem from one perspective and act on that to identify a possible solution. They are, however, unable to identify multiple approaches to solving a problem.



Older adolescents are more proficient than the younger (6% of the 15-17 years compared with 4% of the 13-14 years)



Adolescents with higher levels of education have a high proficiency level (8% of the adolescents with a secondary level of education compared to 4% of the adolescents with a primary level of education)

**Finding 5: About 18 percent of the adolescents (17% males and 20% females) can fluently read a grade 4 text.**



About **42%** of the adolescents (**46%** males and **39%** females) were completely unable to read a grade 4 English text.



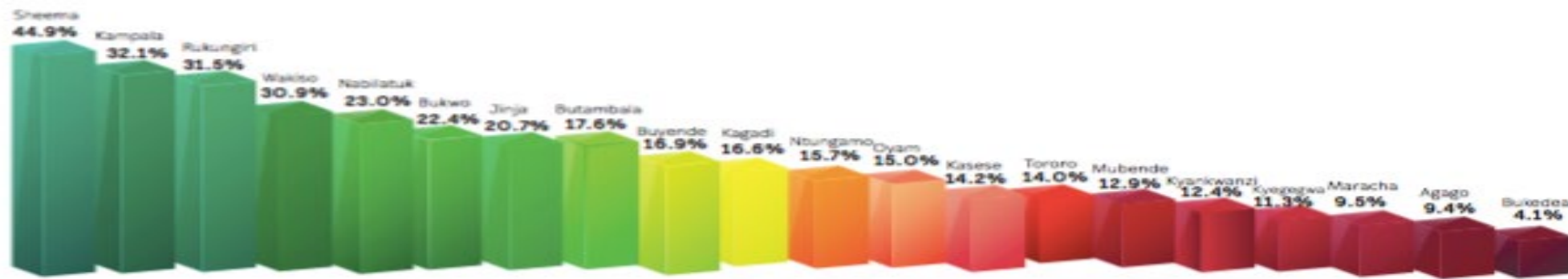
Adolescents with higher reading levels have higher proficiency levels in problem solving, self-awareness (both self-management and perspective taking), collaboration, and respect.



About **17%** of the adolescents (**15%** males and **19%** females) responded correctly to all the three comprehension questions from the text provided



Adolescents who are competent in digital literacy tended to demonstrate higher proficiency levels in problem solving, self-awareness (both self-management and perspective taking), respect, and collaboration.



# Conclusion

- Household based assessments have helped reveal the equity issues in education since 2010 when they were first conducted (access, retention and quality of education)
- To respond to the equity needs, the assessments have taken to the adaptation of tools and processes
- The adaptation has resulted in adoption of common assessment items and now common assessment tools
- This has not been short of challenges amidst the opportunities that such assessments present





## Paper 2

Opportunities and challenges in using household assessments for improving an **equitable world** in East Africa

Martin Ariapa, Ramadhan Matimbwa and Mary Goretti Nakabugo

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# Background Information & Context






The previous paper focused on the assessment process and how adaptation makes it possible to develop and conduct household based assessments in different national contexts to reveal the equity in education issues.

Household-based learning assessments have gained acceptance in East Africa as a measure of learning. Two uses have emerged:

- The findings are used by policy makers and development partners in formulating policies and interventions in education.
- Learning interventions have used the tools for evaluation purposes.



# Recent national programs to address learning in East Africa

#	Country	Education Program
1		<b>The Education Programme for Results (EP4R)</b> that has been implemented in Tanzania since 2014, targeting children attending public schools that constitute the majority of the children missing out on foundational learning competencies.
2		<b>Government of Uganda/UK AID/USAID programs focused on improving foundational literacy and numeracy learning outcomes</b> e.g. Strengthening Education Systems for Improved Learning (SESIL – FCDO); USAID’s: School Health and Reading Program – SHRP (2012-2019); Literacy and Achievement Activity – LARA (2015-2021) and the ongoing Integrated Child and Youth Development Activity – ICYD (2020 – ongoing)
3		<b>Primary Education Development Project (PRIEDE)</b> , operational since 2016 and funded by the Global Partnership for Education, focused on improving the teaching and learning of mathematics in Primary Grades 1-2 in Kenya.

# Opportunities presented by HHBAs for promoting equity in education in East Africa

Household-based learning assessments have potential to promote equitable education. We cite four opportunities presented by HHBAs:

- 1) Include assessing children who are out of school
- 2) Liberalise the practice of assessments
- 3) HHBAs have an inbuilt advocacy approach
- 4) HHBAs make it easier to identify the extent to which children with disabilities are in school and learning the basics in literacy and numeracy (Malik et al 2022)



# Household-based assessments include assessing children who are out of school

By being conducted in the households, HHBAs capture the extent of the out of school and the learning levels of children who are out of school. These learners include:

- those of schooling age that have never enrolled in school
- those who enrolled in school but dropped out
- those who have completed a level of education but did not proceed (i.e. those who did not proceed with secondary education)



# Household-based assessments liberalise / open up assessments

Most learning assessments are associated with school set ups and psychometricians. However, by conducting the assessments at the household:

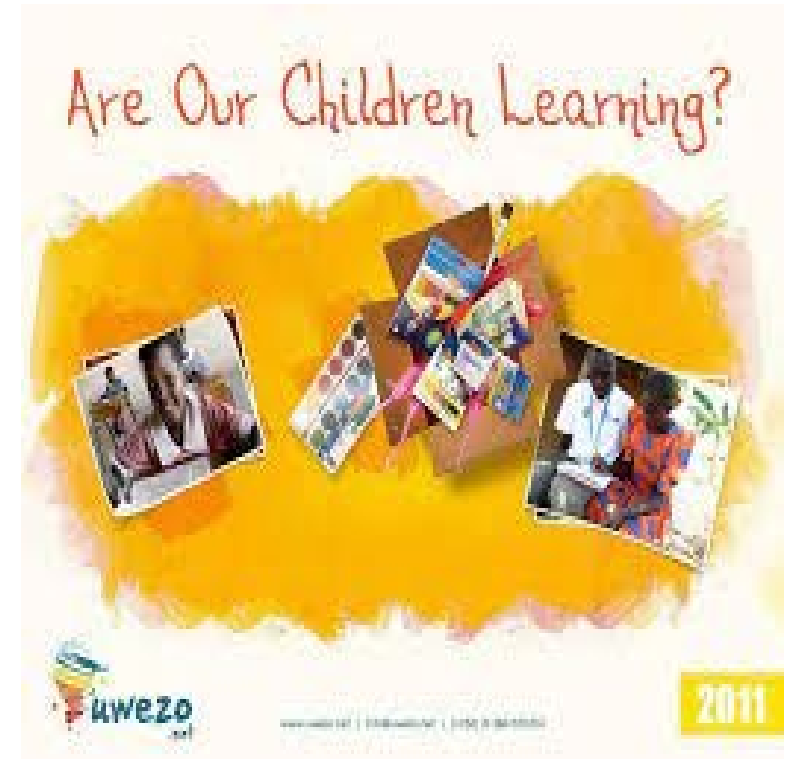
- ❑ More stakeholders beyond teachers and psychometricians are involved in developing the assessments, deciding on sample sizes, the purpose of the assessment and the actual assessment of the children.
- ❑ The household assessments are conducted by citizen assessors also referred to as volunteers.



# Household-based assessments have an inbuilt advocacy approach

HHBAs in East Africa use the opportunity to communicate findings from previous assessments on learning levels, raise awareness on learning levels and make a call to action at the community/household on the need to improve learning. These efforts include:

- 1) The use of local assessors whose awareness levels on learning levels are increased
- 2) The assessors leave materials at the households such as calendars and call to action posters with specific messages on how to improve learning levels
- 3) The assessments such as basic literacy and numeracy involve sharing of instant feedback on the literacy and numeracy levels of the children assessed



# Household-based assessments make it easier to reach to children with disability

- In low income countries, it is common practice not to enroll children with (extreme) disability in school (inability of HHs, stereotyping...)
- Children with disability easily drop out or frequently absent
- Schools tend to under-report children with disability (see example from Uwezo 2018 on the next slide)

\*\*\* The best place to find children with disability is the household



## ... Schools tend to under-report children with disability

...According to Uwezo national learning assessment of 2018, the rates of disability indicated by the school sample as a whole (for children in P1-7) were very low in relation to the rates obtained from households through the Washington Group Questions. For example, the **household data indicated a visual impairment rate of 3.6% for children in formal education, whereas the school data suggested only 0.8%.**

(Uwezo, 2019)





# Challenges of using household assessments to promote equity in East Africa

Despite the numerous opportunities presented by the HHBAs, there are notable challenges encountered in the process. Among the challenges faced include:

1. **The assessments have still focused on a few domains.** The assessments have focused on literacy and numeracy. Recently, there has been a measure of life skills (problem solving, self-awareness, collaboration and the value of respect)
2. **The assessments have still not reached all children.** It has not been possible to assess all children living with extreme sensory disabilities such as visual and hearing, children living outside mainstream homes e.g. street, foster homes, etc.
3. **If not well-managed, household based assessments can be laborious, energy intensive and logistically demanding.** These assessments use co-creation approaches meaning that it takes time to mobilise all the stakeholders, take time to make decisions and as a result, they are equally costly – but worth it!



# Conclusion

Although household-based assessments in East Africa face a number of challenges at the implementation point, they demonstrate immense possibilities that include:

- the expansion of groups of children who are assessed such as the out of school
- the application of collaborative practice of designing and conducting the assessments
- the implementation of cross-border processes (through standardization of processes and use of common assessment items in different national contexts) that result in generating comparable data for cross-border advocacy

**As such, household-based assessments bring to fore the possibility of expanding equity in education...**



## Cited references

Rabea Malik, Fizza Raza, Pauline Rose & Nidhi Singal (2022) Are children with disabilities in school and learning? Evidence from a household survey in rural Punjab, Pakistan, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 52:2, 211-231, DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2020.1749993

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# Efficacy of household learning assessments in improving education for a more equitable world: Lessons from East Africa

## Discussion

Lydia Marshall



# Questions from Lydia

- What have you learnt about disseminating the evidence and advocating for the data to be used to improve education for an equitable world?
- Another way that assessment can promote equity is at the design stage – including more voices in decisions about which domains are captured, sampling decisions etc. Can you tell us a bit about how that process worked in the ALiVE initiative?
- What would your number one piece of advice be for colleagues looking to start similar household-based assessment initiatives in other regions?
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# Thank you!

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