

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Quality Assurance and Standards Department

NATIONAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR SOMALIA

August 2025

MINISTER'S MESSAGE ON THE NATIONAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (NLA)

The National Learning Assessment Framework represents a transformative milestone in the Federal Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education's efforts to strengthen the quality of education in Somalia. This assessment serves as a modern and evidence-based approach to measuring the learning achievements of Somali students and identifying both progress and challenges within the national education system.

The Ministry firmly believes that assessing the quality of education is an essential step toward achieving genuine learning outcomes and nurturing a generation equipped with knowledge, skills, and critical thinking. The NLA unites schools, teachers, administrators, and parents under a common goal to generate reliable data that informs effective policy and decision-making.

The Ministry is fully committed to ensuring that this national assessment process remains transparent, credible, and inclusive. It aims to inspire innovation in teaching, foster accountability, and motivate students to realize their full potential.

Ultimately, the goal of the National Learning Assessment Framework is to uphold "Quality, Equity, and a Brighter Future" the core pillars of the Ministry's vision to guarantee that every Somali child receives a high-quality education that opens pathways to opportunity and lifelong success.

H.E Farah Sheikh Abdulqadir
Minister of Education, Culture, and Higher Education
Federal Government of Somalia

FORWARD

Somalia's education system is undergoing a period of significant transformation. The enactment of the National Education Policy in 2013 marked a turning point, and the Ministry of Education, Cultural, and Higher Education (MoECHE) is committed to ongoing improvements. A key element in achieving this vision is a robust and effective assessment system.

The National Learning Assessment Framework (NLAF) is a comprehensive initiative designed to guide the development of such a system. It outlines a structured approach to assessment that will provide reliable data to inform educational decision-making, support improved learning outcomes, and ensure equitable access to quality education for all students. This Framework is a collaborative effort, informed by consultations with diverse stakeholders across Somalia. It acknowledges the progress made in the devolution of responsibility to state and district levels, the establishment of education pathways, and the introduction of formal examinations. However, it also recognizes the challenges that persist. The NLAF proposes five guiding principles to shape a future-oriented assessment landscape.

1. Student-centered approach: Assessments should cater to individual learning needs and foster student growth.
2. Equity and inclusion: Assessments should be designed to mitigate bias and ensure opportunities for success for all learners, regardless of background.
3. Learning progression: Assessments should track student progress along a defined developmental framework. Essential skills: Assessments should evaluate the critical skills necessary for thriving in the modern world.
4. Early childhood education: Assessments should monitor the development of knowledge and skills from an early age.
5. The NLAF envisions a balanced assessment system that incorporates various assessment types, linked coherently within a holistic framework. This system will provide a comprehensive picture of student learning, enable monitoring of progress, and inform decision-making at all levels.
6. The Framework outlines key stakeholders including students, teachers, parents, communities, school leaders, and government entities, and underscores the importance of their engagement in the assessment process. The successful implementation of the NLAF hinges on three key planning priorities: Improving teachers' assessment literacy and equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to conduct effective assessments.
7. Introducing standardized assessments for early primary school grades and across key learning stages.

A well-designed National Assessment Programme to inform policy development, monitor learning outcomes, and report against Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets.

The MoECHE is committed to working with internal and external stakeholders to develop the necessary programs, tools, and processes to realize the goals of the NLAF. Establishing a dedicated national assessment unit, securing adequate funding, and fostering clear communication and collaboration are all crucial elements in this endeavor.

The NLAF marks a significant step forward in Somalia's journey towards a world-class education system. Through a shared commitment to a robust and equitable assessment framework, we can ensure that all students can reach their full potential.

H.E: Hassan Mohamed Ali
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education

Acknowledgements

I am pleased to announce the complete completion of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia in my capacity as Director General of the Basic Education at Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education in Somalia. This noteworthy accomplishment represents a critical turning point in our continuous efforts to raise the standard of education throughout the country.

The development of national learning assessment framework has been a collaborative effort involving educators, policymakers, and stakeholders from various sectors. Their commitment and knowledge have been crucial in developing an all-encompassing assessment plan that supports our national education objectives. This approach is intended to efficiently assess student learning outcomes, giving us a clear picture of academic success and areas in need of development.

Establishing a culture of responsibility and ongoing development in our educational system depends on the National Learning Assessment Framework's implementation. It will offer insightful information about curriculum relevancy, teaching methods' efficacy, and general educational standards. We will be better able to make decisions that will improve the educational outcomes for all Somali children if we systematically evaluate student performance.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone working on this project, especially our overseas partners who have been a tremendous help during this process. By working together, we are giving our young people the high-quality education they need and laying the foundation for a better future.

As we move forwards, Let's continue to be dedicated to successfully putting this framework into practice, aiming for educational excellence, and creating an atmosphere where each student may succeed. We appreciate your unwavering support during this crucial journey.

H.E: Dr. Abdullahi Abdi Omer
Director General of Basic Education
Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEC	Community Education Committees
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education management information system
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
FMS	Federal Member States
IRT	Item response theory
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoECHE	Ministry of Education, Cultural, and Higher Education
MPL	Minimum proficiency level
NAP	National Assessment Program
NLAF	National Learning Assessment Framework
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SEACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

GLOSSARY

Assessment framework	An assessment framework details the type, purpose, and processes of the assessment programs and practices across the system. It provides details of how learning growth and achievement of learning outcomes are measured, and how wellbeing may be monitored. It provides guidelines on how assessment data are to be used to drive improvements in learning.
Capability	A person's combination of knowledge, skills, and individual qualities that enable them to act appropriately in familiar and unfamiliar situations.
Construct	An ability or latent trait that can be measured on a single empirical scale. For example, reading ability is a construct. Constructs can be defined broadly or more narrowly, often as subconstructs. For example, 'reading comprehension' and 'decoding' may be defined as subconstructs of reading.
Diagnostic assessment	Assessments that can be used to identify specific student learning needs.
Domain	The major elements of a particular subject area. For example, mathematics has domains relating to number and algebra, and measurement and geometry. Descriptions of progress at the domain level describe the development of learning in a more focused way.
Feedback	Information that can be used to meaningfully describe where students are on their learning journey and what they should aspire to next.
Formative assessment	Assessments that can be used to guide teaching and learning progress.
Horizontal linkage	Refers to the alignment of assessments within the same educational level, ensuring that assessments across different subjects or domains at the same grade level are consistent and comparable.
Interval scale	An interval level measurement scale is a quantitative scale where the difference between values is meaningful and consistent allowing for the comparison of intervals between measurements, but where there is no true zero point.
Learning progression	A learning progression quantifies, describes, and illustrates long-term growth in knowledge, understanding, and skills essential to a learning area.
Reliable (assessment)	Refers to the degree that an assessment consistently produces the same results under the same conditions.
School improvement	School improvement is the ongoing work of schools in driving improved educational outcomes for all students, regardless of starting points.
Student wellbeing	Student wellbeing is reflected in a sustainable positive mood and attitude, health, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships, and experiences at school.
Summative assessment	Assessments that can be used to describe current student achievement
System transformation	System transformation is the fundamental repositioning of various components in an education system to coherently contribute to an articulated shared purpose.
Valid (assessment)	Refers to the degree that an assessment accurately measures what it is designed to.
Vertical linkage	Refers to the alignment of assessments across different levels of education, ensuring that assessments at various stages (e.g., primary, secondary, and tertiary education) are connected for a continuous and coherent measurement of student progress over time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia envisions a future in which robust, reliable, and equitable assessment policies and practices drive continuous improvement in teaching and learning. This framework is designed to support the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education in improving learning outcomes and ensure that all students have access to a quality education and the opportunity to reach their full potential.

As a comprehensive initiative, the National Learning Assessment Framework is guided by several principles and strategies that provide the foundation for a structured approach to learner assessment and strengthen system policies and school-level practices. These include generating reliable data to support educational objectives, emphasising the importance of modifying day-to-day classroom practices to meet the learning needs of all students, and ensuring ongoing learner progress. Such modifications should be planned from early childhood education and continue through all learning stages, helping students to maximise their learning opportunities and reach their potential.

A brief analysis of the current educational landscape in Somalia has highlighted significant developments in education planning since the enactment of the first National Education Policy in 2013. Specifically, federal level planning in Somalia has continued further towards devolving more responsibility to state and district education stakeholders, while education pathways have been established to support learner entry into schools and institutions across Levels 0-3. The government has also established formal examinations at Grade 8 and Form 4 to assess students' knowledge and skills, and grant progression to higher levels of study and eligibility for programs and scholarships. While the Ministry of Education, Cultural, and Higher Education has initiated a series of consultations in January 2024 to reform Somalia's education and assessment systems, it is clear that several challenges persist and have the potential to negatively impact system performance and learner outcomes. In seeking to address these challenges and support overall system strengthening, the following principles, guidelines, and next steps are proposed.

There are 5 principles used to guide planning towards a desired assessment landscape for Somalia and developing a structured and effective assessment system.

1. Adopting a student-centric approach to ensure that assessments meet individual learning needs and foster growth.
2. Creating assessment practices that are inclusive. Assessment supports a diverse range of learners and mitigates bias, discrimination, and disparities among different groups. This ensures that all students, regardless of their background, have opportunities to succeed.
3. Promoting an understanding of learning progression, a framework that supports students' ongoing growth in their educational journey.
4. Assessing learners' essential skills so that they may develop these to thrive in the modern world. These essential skills include collaboration, critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and self-regulation, and could be extended to national identity and integrity.
5. Emphasising the significance of early learning by assessing and monitoring children's knowledge and skills from an early age. This early intervention is crucial for maximising students' learning potential and fostering their development over time.

A balanced assessment system should be developed such that there are various assessments within the system to be coherently linked, with clear descriptions of learning targets for each subject. The assessment system should be comprehensive, ensuring that assessments offer a holistic variety of evidence to inform educational decision-making and allow students to demonstrate their learning. The assessment system must provide information that enables monitoring of student progress over time, ideally using learning progression as a model to showcase growth. Assessment information should be readily usable by diverse stakeholders to meet their needs. The assessment system should be efficient, with the variety of assessments serving their intended purposes, avoiding redundancy and ensuring judicious use of resources.

The desired assessment landscape for Somalia includes:

Classroom-based, individual-level assessments. Strengthening classroom-based, individual-level assessments to match individual student needs and monitor their progress effectively is addressed. These assessments aim to provide detailed and continuous insights into student learning, thereby enabling educators to adapt their teaching strategies to support each student's growth and development.

Refined school and state-level assessments. There is a need to ensure that a comprehensive range of learning data is reliably entered into the education management information system. Capacity building is needed for stakeholders who provide reports at the system and school levels, in order to drive overall system and school performance.

A national assessment programme. The purpose of a national assessment programme is to enhance educational oversight and performance. This programme will inform policy issues, by reporting on and regularly monitoring learner performance across sub-populations and with respect to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 indicators and their associated minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. This will enable policy stakeholders to use assessment data to inform assessment policy and practice, plan stakeholder capacity building and implementation, and ensure that data is used to strengthen education inclusivity and equity across Somalia.

Comparable examinations. Developing comparable examinations across Somalia involves using contemporary measurement methods. These include linking examinations through common equating and item responsive theory, collecting examination data for equating, and establishing standard procedures for conducting examinations.

Cross-national assessments. Cross-national assessments provide invaluable insights into student knowledge, facilitate international comparisons, and monitor educational progress. These assessments enable countries to learn from each other and uphold quality standards in education.

The task of introducing a National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia is best supported by identifying key stakeholders and articulating their roles and engagement in the assessment process. The following stakeholders need consideration in the design of programmes arising from the implementation of the National Learning Assessment Framework: students, teachers, parents and guardians, community education committees, private school associations, head teachers, the Ministry of Education, Cultural, and Higher Education, and the Federal Member State Ministries.

There are 3 planning priorities identified for implementing the National Learning Assessment Framework.

1. Improving teachers' assessment literacy by incorporating updated assessment content and practice modules into both pre-service and in-service teacher training courses.
2. Providing standardised assessments in literacy and numeracy for use at the entry to primary school, and at the beginning of grades 3 and 6, to support and monitor learning.
3. Developing a National Assessment Programme to inform policy goals, focusing on assessing grade 3 and 6 learners' Somali language and mathematics capabilities once every three years. These assessments will require piloting in selected regions, before a full-scale rollout is implemented across Somalia. A well-designed programme can provide valuable information that can be utilised by Federated Member State Ministries of Education to enhance learning outcomes in schools, and by system stakeholders to report against Sustainable Development Goals indicators 4.1.1. and monitor learning outcomes and trends across sub-populations over time.

The MoECHE will also need to address financing and provision. The development of a monitoring and evaluation plan is recommended to ensure the implementation of the goals of the National Learning Assessment Framework are realised over time.

The next steps for implementing the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia involve developing programs, tools, and processes. This will include:

- ensuring that the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia is supported by a strong mandate, policy, and legal authority to secure its legitimacy, structure, and sustainable implementation at every level.
- prioritising the establishment of a National Assessment Advisory Committee, and considering the creation of national assessment unit
- defining clear leadership and operational roles for stakeholders at all levels to ensure accountability
- outlining clear project timelines, deliverables, and responsibilities, and implement phased capacity-building for key groups through training and institutional support.
- developing training and support materials for educators and key stakeholders to facilitate effective implementation of the National Learning Assessment Framework.

Additionally, budget considerations will ensure efficient resource allocation, involving government and non-governmental funds. Clear roles and responsibilities must also be defined, with the MoECHE overseeing federal policy development, while state-level ministries handle local implementation. Throughout this process, effective communication and consultation strategies must be implemented to keep all stakeholders engaged and informed throughout the process.

CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction

The MoECHE aims to improve Somalia's assessment system by creating and implementing a National Learning Assessment Framework across all states and regions.

The purpose of this framework is to guide the development and implementation of balanced, robust student-centred assessments, while promoting equitable, reliable, and culturally relevant assessment policies and practices that support national priority areas and strengthen Somalia's education system. The National Learning Assessment Framework also provides policymakers with a strategic roadmap for monitoring learning outcomes, informing policy decisions, and aligning assessment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 addressing inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.. For school leaders, it offers practical tools and principles to enhance classroom assessment, improve teaching practices, and foster inclusive learning environments. Together, these efforts strengthen accountability, equity, and educational quality across Somalia.

This framework will provide consistent approaches for assessment and generate reliable data on student learning that will support the achievement of prioritised educational goals. This framework will also address issues like inequality, access to education, service delivery, and collaboration within the education system. It will help students, teachers, and parents understand student progress and provide strategies for improvement. Additionally, it will guide stakeholders in understanding where students are in their learning and inform teaching practices to support student progress and inclusivity.

In working towards these goals, an initial step is the development of a robust framework that will enable a structured and devolved approach to assessment that supports the MoECHE to improve learning outcomes and ensure that all students have access to a quality education. Such a framework should emphasise how day-to-day classroom practices might be modified to meet the learning needs of all students and ensure their ongoing progress. It should also draw attention to the importance of monitoring learning from early childhood education and across all learning stages, helping students maximise their learning opportunities and reach their potential.

Accordingly, the role of a National Learning Assessment Framework and its objectives will be outlined in this introductory section. This is followed by a summary analysis of the current assessment context in Somalia, which addresses the overall state of the education and examination systems in Somalia. A section outlining the desired assessment fundamentals is then presented, which proposes broad, student-centric principles for guiding the development of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia.

Section 2 outlines five principles that guide the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia:

1. The first principle emphasises the need for a student-centric approach to assessment to ensure that students' learning needs and growth are forefront.
2. The second principle, addressing equity and inclusion, highlights the need to ensure that a range learner needs are supported through assessment so that bias, discrimination, and group disparities are avoided.
3. The third principle, a focus on learning progression, deals with the importance of framing student learning on a continuum to support their ongoing learning growth.
4. The fourth principle, the inclusion of essential skills, emphasises the need to support students to develop a range of skills that are essential for thriving in contemporary society.

5. Finally, a focus on early learning, maintains the imperative to determine and monitor children's levels of knowledge and skills as early as possible to support their learning potential and growth.

In section 3, the components of a balanced assessment system are described. A balanced assessment system provides all education stakeholders with the information they need to support student learning and progress. This includes providing evidence from a broad range of learning domains, the ability to communicate a shared understanding of what learner progress looks like over time, and supporting educational decision-making by learners through to system stakeholders. Accordingly, the levels of reporting provided by a balanced assessment framework must meet a range of stakeholders' needs. These range from providing individual learning feedback and support, to enhancing education policy.

Section 4 describes the desired assessment landscape for Somalia, with specific emphasis on assessment utility and efficiency. The following six elements of this desired landscape are addressed:

- Classroom-based assessments should provide meaningful information about students' current learning achievements and progress, and guide classroom teaching.
- Refining school and state-level assessments involves considerations for Education Management Information System (EMIS) and reporting, and the mechanisms for school and state-level reporting.
- A National Assessment Programme for Somalia involves monitoring learning outcomes and informing policy issues, alongside considerations for linking reading and mathematics learning data to the sustainable development goals (SDG) for education, and sample-based designs for national assessment programmes.
- Comparability of examinations across FMS is needed to enhance the quality of assessment data collected, and support national learning goals and overall system improvement.
- Moving towards cross-national assessments involves understanding the benefits and limitations of participating in cross-national assessment programmes.
- Stakeholder roles and engagement should be identified within the context of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia, especially for students, teachers, parents and guardians, community education committees, private school associations, head teachers, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education, and the Federal Member State Ministries.

Section 5 focuses on planning and identifies three key priorities for implementing the National Learning Assessment Framework. These include improving teachers' assessment literacy, implementing standardized assessments for early primary school grades, and developing a National Assessment Programme to inform policy goals.

Section 6 addresses considerations for strengthening the assessment system. It highlights the need to manage education funds effectively, develop a monitoring and evaluation program, and maintain data privacy and management standards.

The framework concludes by outlining in Section 7 the next steps for implementation, with Sections 8 to 11 highlighting the references, methodology, and additional information used, to inform the development of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia.

1.1 Role of a National Learning Assessment Framework

Developing, improving, or transforming educational systems requires adjusting daily classroom practices to meet all students' learning needs and ensure they are making progress. Such efforts should start from early childhood education and continue through all learning stages, so that learners can maximise their opportunities and reach their potential. Research shows that understanding where students are in their learning and tailoring teaching accordingly are essential to ensuring learning progress and enhancing inclusivity. Well-designed and implemented assessments help students, teachers, and parents understand a student's learning progress. As such, assessment provides the evidence base to support system improvement and transformation.

These elements of an assessment framework are aligned with national objectives, priority areas and strategies set by the MoECHE. These include:

National Education Policy 2024 ⁽¹⁾, which emphasises the following objectives:

1. To ensure that education is available, inclusive and accessible to all Somali citizens
2. To improve the quality and relevance of education
3. To promote the teaching of science and technology with a special focus on Information and communications technology
4. To promote a comprehensive education orientated towards character development, nationhood, economic and social development and adapted to the present and future needs of the country” (p. 3-4)

National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022-2026 ⁽²⁾ that emphasises:

- The need to “prepare students for primary education while also supporting their socioemotional development” (p.14)
- Strengthening primary school examinations and assessments – Strategy 2.2.3., under Objective 2.2: Improve the quality and relevance of primary education
- Strengthening learning assessment systems in secondary schools – Strategy 3.2.3., under Objective 2.4: Improve quality and relevance of secondary education.

Accordingly, the role of the National Learning Assessment Framework is to document the current state of assessment in Somalia and outline the fundamentals for a desired state. It provides an indication of the desired assessment landscape, including major components like classroom-based assessment, examinations, and monitoring programs. The framework outlines the principles on which this landscape will be built and describes a way forward to develop the assessment landscape, including clear priorities. In essence, the National Learning Assessment Framework is a central guiding document that can be referred to continually as the assessment landscape develops.

1.2 Current context analysis

The education system in Somalia is structured and devolved across four levels, with each level designed to administer processes that support students with gaining the skills and knowledge needed for their level of study and beyond. Efforts are currently in place for improving school infrastructure and resources to create conducive learning environments. Despite challenges, such as limited resources and system stability, there remain opportunities for growth and improvement through international support and collaboration ⁽³⁾. Key elements of the current education system in Somalia include:

1. Governance and Structure: The education system in Somalia is overseen at the federal level by MoECHE. It is responsible for overseeing and coordinating education services across Somalia. Key responsibilities include developing and harmonising national curricula, setting standards for teacher training, and ensuring policy dissemination to maintain high-quality and inclusive education nationwide. The ministry also focuses on policy development and regulation, establishing educational standards, mobilising funding and support, and coordinating international partners’ efforts. Additionally, the MoECHE supports the development of public schools, manages high school examinations, verifies local certificates, and monitors and evaluates policy, plans, and standards at the federal level. Data management, including linking, aggregating, analysing, and storing education data, is also a critical function of the ministry.

1. Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2023). National Education Policy 2024. Federal Republic of Somalia.

2. Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2022). National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022

3. Federal Government of Somalia. (2022). Education Sector Analysis 2022. UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning; Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2023). National Education Policy 2024. Federal Republic of Somalia.

At the state level, Ministries of Education oversee regional administration of education. These ministries implement federal policies in response to local needs and priorities, and provide educational authorities with some financial assistance. Bylaws that are aligned with federal laws may also be implemented at the FMS level. State-level Ministries of Education are also responsible for monitoring the delivery and quality of educational services so that they adhere to national policies and standards, as well as recruiting personnel, distributing educational materials, and conducting evaluations of educational outcomes. They support the EMIS by collecting and managing data, and develop state-level policies and strategic plans. Additionally, they mobilise resources, register and maintain schools, and collaborate with educational partners.

Finally, at the district level, the administration of education is overseen by district education officers. The administration of district education actively involves the community to support schooling and care for students, and utilising limited local funds and resources. It is responsible for recommending measures to improve education at this level. District education officers oversee the work of school head teachers who, in turn, oversee various school-level responsibilities. These include managing and guiding school services, ensuring health and safety, supervising and appraising teacher performance, developing and implementing educational schedules, submitting educational data and requirements, maintaining the national curriculum, and engaging with parents and local education committees.⁽⁴⁾

2. Educational Levels: As seen in Figure 1, the Somali education system is structured across four levels, with different institutions supporting different learner groups and needs. These levels and institutions are:

- **Level 0.** Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Somalia encompasses programs designed with a holistic approach to support children’s early cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. ECE programs introduce young children to organised instruction outside of the family context. This level of education lasts for two years and has a theoretical entry age of 3 years⁵. Integrated Qur’anic Schools (IQSs) are pre-primary education institutions for children from 3-6 years. The curriculum focuses on religious knowledge and prepares learners for primary school. Upon completion, students can transition to lower primary school.
- **Level 1.** Lower Primary Education is compulsory and designed for children aged 6–9 years. The entry requirement is that children must be 6 years old. Lower primary education lasts for four years, covering Grades 1–4, and does not result in any certification or diploma. Upper Primary Education is also compulsory and intended for children aged 10–13 years. This stage covers Grades 5–8 and successful completers receive a Level 1 certificate at the end of Grade 8. In addition to students promoted from Grade 4, adults aged 18 or over who complete the non-formal Learning and Literacy Programme can take an entrance exam to join Grade ⁽⁵⁾.

Alternative Basic Education is a formal education stream that runs parallel to lower and upper general primary education. Alternative basic education has an entry age of 9 years and enables learners to sit for the Primary Examination at the end of the cycle. This program is a modification of the formal primary school Grade 1–8 cycle and allows students to complete primary education in four years instead of eight. It features a condensed syllabus, flexibility in the learning process and calendar, and multiple entry and exit points. The alternative basic education program has four levels, each covering competencies equivalent to two grade levels in the formal stream. Adult Basic Education is designed for young people who have left or missed school. It modifies the Grade 1–8 cycle into a three-year program with a condensed syllabus, faster learning, flexibility, and multiple entry and exit points. The program has three levels: the first two cover learning equal to three grades each, and the third covers two years. The minimum entry age is 18 years. Vocational training institutes in Somalia are designed for individuals who are at least 18 years old. To enrol, students must have either a

4. Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2023). National Education Policy 2024. Federal Republic of Somalia.

5. While the National Education Policy 2024 identifies this level of education to be three years from ages 3-6, the Quality Assurance and Standards Department (MoECHE) has clarified that the current Early Childhood Education Policy specifies two years for this level of education.

lower primary certificate or a certificate from a numeracy and literacy program that lasts between 3 and 12 months. The duration of vocational training programs ranges from one to two years. Halaqat and Islamic Institutes provide lower and upper primary education, respectively. Graduates receive an Islamic primary certificate and can transition to Level 2 Islamic institutes.

- Level 2.** Technical secondary education is a Level 2 program that requires a Level 1 completion certificate. It begins at the age of 14 and focuses on technical subjects such as engineering, fishing, and agriculture. This program lasts for four years, and successful students are awarded a technical secondary certificate. General secondary education in Somalia is designed for children or adults who have a Level 1 certificate. It starts at the age of 14 and lasts for four years, covering Form 1 to Form 4. Students who complete this level receive a certificate of secondary education. Professional schools run parallel to technical secondary education, with an entry age of 14. These schools focus on subjects like nursing and have programs that last for two or three years. Graduates receive a professional secondary certificate. Islamic Institutes run for four years parallel to general secondary education. Graduates are awarded an Islamic secondary education certificate.
- Level 3.** Higher education in Somalia is the final stage of formal education. It is accessible to students who have completed general secondary education, technical secondary education, or have graduated from Islamic institutes or professional schools. Successful students at this level are awarded Bachelor's degrees, which typically take three to four years to complete. Colleges and institutes offer two-year programs for training future professionals and teachers who wish to teach at all levels of the education system, except for higher education. The minimum entry requirement for these programs is a secondary certificate, and the minimum enrolment age is 18 years.

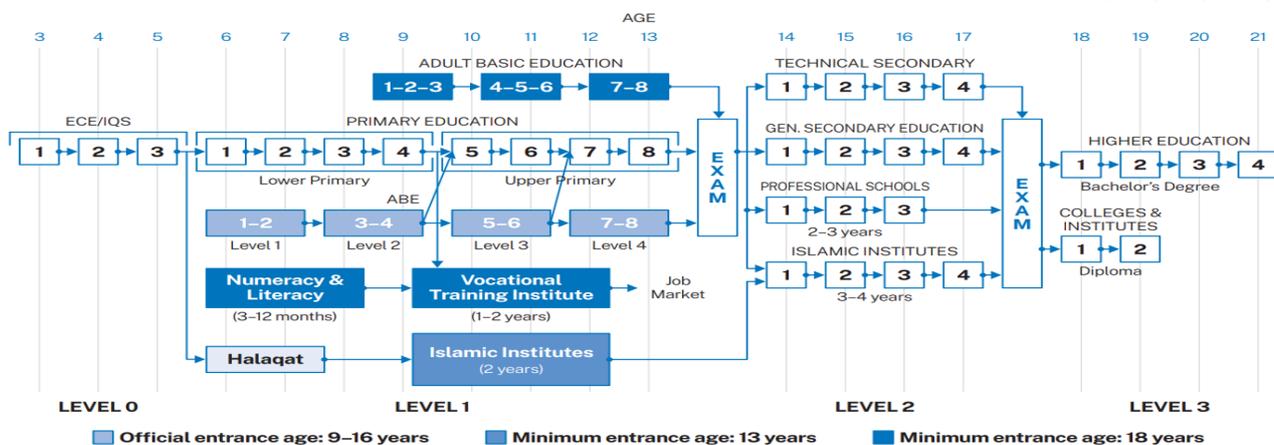


Figure 1. Structure of the education system in Somalia

3. Assessing learners in Somalia: The FGS has made significant strides in strengthening its national assessment system over the past decade. This includes the reintroduction of Form 4 standardised national examinations during the 2014/2015 academic year, and the progressive reinstatement of Grade 8 standardised examinations across various FMS starting in 2018.

More recently, the National Education Policy 2024 has formalised the need to unify the Somali education system by ensuring that Grade 8 and Form 4 standardised examinations are assessing content based on the same curriculum. This enables comparability between FMS, while helping to identify learning gaps and areas where targeted interventions are needed. Specifically, this policy emphasises effective administration of examinations and assessments, to promote a cohesive examination process. It mandates formal examinations, continuous assessment, and diagnostic tests aligned with the curriculum. To achieve these goals, the policy outlines several key objectives,

including:

- designing and administering an assessment system that meets education and training system needs.
- developing an internationally recognised assessment system that is responsive to market demands.
- reviewing and innovating assessment methods.
- balancing formative and summative assessment procedures.
- enhancing formative assessments to provide ongoing learner feedback.

To implement the National Education Policy 2024 with respect to educational assessment and examinations, the FGS plans to:

- review, approve, and disseminate national examination policies and procedures.
- strengthen examination management and administration through staff training.
- collaborate with schools to enhance school-based assessments across all grades.
- develop a National Continuous Assessment System to determine minimum learning requirements.
- establish mechanisms to reduce examination malpractices.
- decentralise the issuance of secondary school certificates efficiently.
- create relevant assessment tools for students with special education needs.
- harmonise technical and vocational education and training examination and certification.
- establish devolved examination management mechanisms through State Examination Boards and Local Government Examination Committees.

Key challenges include addressing education access and equity, with 85% of school-age children out of school, and gender disparities complicating enrolment rates. Education quality suffers due to a lack of qualified teachers and insufficient learning materials. High dropout rates and low school life expectancy highlight retention issues ⁽⁶⁾.

On the issue of early-grade assessment, the FGS intends to implement a Functional National Learning Assessment system that includes conducting annual EGRA/EGMA assessments across the country using a representative student sample. These assessments are intended to provide valuable insights into literacy and numeracy skills among learners in the early primary grades, with the findings informing teacher training, classroom instruction, and curriculum review. Efforts are also underway to integrate assessment data into the EMIS to enhance data accuracy and utility ⁽⁷⁾. As with attempts to reform assessment across other primary grades and secondary education, a range of challenges have been identified as likely to impact assessment during the early primary years. In addition to those outlined above, other issues impacting the EMIS include inaccurate reporting of learner and assessment data, conducting assessments in conflict-affected areas, and inadequate infrastructure and resources to support learner assessment ⁽⁸⁾.

4. Examination system: The examination system in Somalia plays a crucial role in assessing students' knowledge and skills, determining their progression and eligibility for programs or scholarships. It includes standardised tests at Grade 8 and Form 4 to assess students' knowledge and skills. This system aims to maintain high standards of education and ensure that students are adequately prepared for their future endeavours. End-of-cycle examinations are conducted for students completing Level 1 primary education to assess students' readiness for secondary education (Grade 8). Similar examinations are also conducted at the end of secondary education and are essential for Level 2 students pursuing higher education or vocational training (Form 4).

6. Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2022). National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022-2026. Federal Republic of Somalia.

7. Global Partnership in Education, Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education, & Save the Children. (2024, January 18). System Transformation Grant: Program document 18 January 2024. Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education.

8. Wafula, C., & Mulongo, G. (2020). Are children in South and Central Somalia accessing education, and are they learning? Baseline information. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssho.2019.100011>

5. Refining the examination system: The administration of national examinations for Grade 8 and Form 4 in Somalia follows a structured process. It begins with developing a work plan and budget, and sensitising stakeholders to key messages. This is followed by the registration of candidates and examination entries. Examination materials are then printed and prepared for dissemination to Grade 8 and Form 4 candidates. After conducting an examination, answer scripts are marked, and raw marks are graded. Finally, results are released, queries handled, and certificates issued. Despite facing significant challenges, such as security concerns, infrastructure limitations, resource constraints, and technology limitations, the MoECHE is committed to ensuring the successful administration of these examinations. This ministry collaborates with security agencies to safeguard examination centres and personnel, builds and renovates schools and examination centres, improves the skills and knowledge of examination staff, and allocates resources to support the examination process. In principle, these ensure that all students, regardless of their location or background, have equal access to education and examination opportunities ⁽⁹⁾.

More recently, however, the MoECHE initiated a series of consultations in January 2024 to refine the design of Somalia's examination system. These consultations led to important insights about how national assessments might be conducted, and how these might be administrated within a National Learning Assessment Framework. Specifically, it was emphasised that:

- Early to mid-primary Grades should be targeted for national assessment. There is currently a limited understanding of student learning within Somalia's primary education cycle as standardised national assessments are not conducted between grades 1-8. The National Assessment Programme aims to bridge this gap by assessing whether early to mid-primary grade students possess the knowledge and skills needed to meet national educational standards and advance the broader vision for Somalia's education. By targeting these populations for assessment, more evidence and understanding of learning progress can gathered to inform policy and practice decision making.
- A nationally representative sample should be assessed. The MoECHE is considering a nationally representative sample of students to capture learning achievement data that can be generalised to the respective populations of enrolled students within these grade levels.
- Key subjects should be assessed across grade levels. The assessment will focus on literacy and numeracy for early to mid-primary grades students, with Islamic Studies assessed at grades 4 and 6.
- Assessments should be conducted regularly. It was suggested that a biennial national assessment cycle will be adopted to balance resource allocation and the need for timely data.
- Responsibility for implementing the National Learning Assessment Framework and administering national assessments should be shared across federal and state levels. The MoECHE will provide technical support and capacity building to state-level authorities, who in turn will be responsible for the implementation of national assessments and the National Learning Assessment Framework's implementation. To ensure quality control, integrity, and transparency, the MoECHE will provide oversight in collaboration with independent observers.

1.2.1 Education system challenges

Despite significant efforts to decentralise federal government oversight and achieve political and social stability following years of civil strife, Somalia's education system continues to face formidable challenges. In particular, several challenges persist in the provision and development of education across the country, potentially impacting the learners who are at the centre of this education system ⁽¹⁰⁾. In areas of conflict, schools continue to be attacked, and children are sometimes caught up in political unrest.¹¹ Humanitarian crises linked to climate shock, including

9. Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education. (2024). National Examination for Grade 8 and Form 4.

10. Abdi, A. A. (1998). Education in Somalia: History, destruction, and calls for reconstruction. *Comparative Education*, 34(3), 327–340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050069828171>; Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2022). National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022-2026. Federal Republic of Somalia; Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education. (2023, February). National Education Policy 2024. The Federal Government of Somalia - Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education.

malnutrition and displacement resulting from drought and flooding, impact both students and teachers in some areas. Delivery of education is often heavily reliant on non-state partners, including private entrepreneurs and international aid organizations, whose efforts can be challenging to align and coordinate. There is no state provision of ECE.

More specific challenges facing existing public schools include inadequate infrastructure, with many schools lacking basic facilities such as classrooms, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and libraries. The destruction brought about by years of conflict has left many educational institutions in ruins, with insufficient funds to rebuild them. This lack of infrastructure makes it difficult to create a conducive learning environment for students, negatively impacting their ability to learn and perform well academically. Additionally, there is a shortage of qualified teachers capable of teaching in the classroom. Many educators in Somalia are unqualified or underqualified to provide quality education. This shortage of qualified educators stems from the prolonged conflict, which has disrupted teacher training programs and professional development opportunities. Within the context of assessment, pre- service and in-service teacher programmes often do not present content and opportunities for enhancing individuals' assessment literacy to support learning in the classroom. As a result, students often receive subpar education, which affects their overall academic performance and further study and work prospects.

There is also limited access to education, particularly for vulnerable learner groups. These include girls and children from rural areas and nomadic backgrounds, internally displaced persons and refugees, and children with disabilities. Additionally, societal norms, security concerns, low school enrolments, delayed school start and high dropout rates, economic hardship, and malnourishment prevent many children from attending or completing school. This perpetuates the cycle of poverty and limits the opportunities for many young Somalis to improve their lives through education. For students who can attend school, the key challenge faced involves a poor quality of education. At present, education quality is impacted by outdated primary and secondary curricula that are in need of review to support engaging teaching and effective learner growth. Class sizes may also be large and grade classes may include a significant number of out of age children⁽¹²⁾. Classroom resources – such as textbooks, learning materials, and technology – are also lacking, which limits the ability of students to achieve their full potential. Accordingly, a significant challenge in Somalia is the lack of educational attainment. About 65.5% of the population has not completed formal education. The most common level of education attainment is the completion of primary schooling (16.6%), followed by secondary schooling, (4.6%) and the higher education studies (4%). Younger age groups show higher attainment rates for higher education at 14.2% for 20–24-year-olds, and 12.2% for 25–29-year-olds. Urban residents generally have higher education levels than rural or nomadic populations. Among nomadic populations, 92.5% have no formal education, while 68.6% of rural residents lack formal education. In rural areas, only 3% have completed secondary schooling, and 1.7% have higher education⁽¹³⁾. Inclusion in education is another major issue impacting this system. Especially, girls who do not have sufficient language skills are unlikely to transition successfully to primary education, or may be excluded from education/have limited opportunities to pursue schooling due to traditional cultural practices and social norms. Additionally, children with special educational needs and disabilities face numerous challenges, such as physical barriers when trying to gain access to schools and discrimination and negative community attitudes. A significant obstacle is also the lack of reliable data on these children, making it difficult to gauge their school enrolment rates accurately⁽¹⁴⁾.

11. Hassan, T. (2024). World Report 2024: Somalia | Human Rights Watch

12. Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2022). Annual Statistic Yearbook 2021-2022

13. National Bureau of Statistics. (2023). 2022 Somalia integrated household budget survey (SIHBS).

14. Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2022). National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022- 2026. Federal Republic of Somalia.

1.3 Desired assessment fundamentals

As outlined in the National Education Policy 2024, the FGS is committed to ensuring that assessments across all cycles of schooling include curriculum based formal examinations, continuous assessments, and routine and ad hoc diagnostic tests ⁽¹⁵⁾. This policy also highlights a commitment to examining all students at the end of primary and secondary education and using data from all assessment types to improve student learning outcomes, particularly in early years numeracy and literacy. The objectives of this policy reference the need to:

1. design and administer an assessment system which addresses the needs of the education and training system
2. develop an assessment system that meets international acceptance and is informed by labour market needs
3. guide assessment methods and align them with new innovations
4. provide guidelines for and awarding of grades and qualifications.
5. ensure a healthy balance between formative and summative procedures.
6. enhance assessment for learning as ongoing, providing continuous feedback to both the learner and teacher
7. enhance the learning program through regular national reviews.

In order to achieve this desired assessment landscape for Somalia, long-term system transformation is needed, which may include making refinements to operational processes and assessment approaches across all system levels. This may include, for example, reframing the analysis of Form 4 results by FMS according to gender and student subjects to better inform policy, and using more descriptive accounts of student learning instead of traditional grades, percentages, and brief descriptions ⁽¹⁶⁾. Over the short to medium terms, significant efforts can be made to refine the current assessment framework and develop a roadmap for future reform.

This process of reform begins by identifying broad system-level principles that can be used to frame Somalia's education and assessment systems to ensure that they are responsive to the needs of 21st century learners. Masters (2023), for example, has proposed three principles that are focused on deep shifts to education and assessment systems, and that have been identified by research as being important for driving improved education outcomes. These principles ⁽¹⁷⁾ frame:

- Learning as personal. The system is designed to better support teachers to establish learners' needs through assessment processes and better respond with more flexible curriculum content and structures, and more adaptive teaching and learning resources.
- Learning as holistic. The system promotes holistic student development and deep understanding, including through curricula and assessment that require the close integration of knowledge, skills and attributes.
- Learning as developmental. Curriculum, assessment, and reporting processes support teachers to establish where individual learners are in their long-term progress, target their teaching accordingly and monitor students' growth across the years of schooling.

Aligned with these broad principles are five more specific assessment-related principles that can be used to guide planning towards a desired assessment landscape for Somalia. These five principles are addressed in Section 2.

15. Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2023). National Education Policy 2024. Federal Republic of Somalia.

16. Examples of Learning outcomes/Achievement descriptors include "Outstanding: Shows exceptional understanding and mastery, with advanced critical thinking and problem-solving."; "Proficient: Demonstrates a firm understanding of the subject and can apply knowledge effectively."; and "Unsatisfactory: Lacks understanding, failing to meet fundamental requirements." These examples have been drawn from the MoEChE's (2024) presentation titled 'National examination for Grade 8 and Form 4'.

17. Masters, G. (2023). Reform challenges in school education. https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1043&context=tll_misc

CHAPTER 2

2. Principles for an assessment framework

2.1 A student-centred approach to assessment

A student-centred approach to assessment recognises that the purpose of assessment must always relate back to the learning needs and growth of the individual student. Student-centred assessment identifies what a student knows and can do at a point-in-time. It also enables students' learning journeys and progress to be mapped over time.

Quality assessment provides valid information for tailoring teaching and learning, with a view to improving student outcomes and supporting growth. Assessment tasks that match and challenge students' ability levels provide the most useful evidence about learning and opportunities for students to experience success. Teachers can use quality assessment data to identify gaps in students' skills and knowledge.

In many education systems, student achievement is typically communicated using scores or letter grades. While this approach provides some indication of a student's learning relative to other students, it does not describe:

- what the student understands and can do
- what knowledge, understanding, and skills the student should possess as they gain greater expertise
- how to best support the student's learning in the classroom.

A student-centred approach to assessment recognises these important aspects of learning. It emphasises growth over time and recognises that every student can make learning progress, irrespective of their starting point.

2.2 Addressing equity and inclusion

Equity in education involves providing all students with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed, rather than treating them all the same. This approach acknowledges the varying starting points and challenges faced by students and aims to level the playing field by addressing these disparities. Educational policies and practices must be responsive to the individual needs of students, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The aim of inclusive education is to ensure that all students are treated fairly and can access equitable learning opportunities. Inclusive education involves providing real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded, such as children with disabilities and displaced populations. It requires changes at all levels of society, including training teachers, refurbishing buildings, and making learning materials accessible. Inclusive education also involves tackling stigma and discrimination at the community level and aligning laws and policies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ⁽¹⁸⁾ at the national level.

National education policies often emphasise the importance of equity and inclusion to ensure that all students, regardless of their background or circumstances, have access to quality education. These policies typically outline strategies to address disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes, focusing on marginalised and disadvantaged groups. They may include provisions for:

- **Equitable Access:** providing equitable opportunities for all students to access education, including those from geographically rural or remote areas, displaced populations, low-income families and those impacted by malnutrition, and nomadic and minority groups.
- **Inclusive Education:** ensuring that students with a disability status have access to appropriate educational resources and support.
- **Gender Equality:** promoting gender equality in education by addressing barriers that prevent girls and boys from accessing and completing their education.

18. OHCHR. (n.d.). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Retrieved October 18, 2024, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

- Quality Education: ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education that meets national standards and prepares them for future opportunities and enables further personal progression.

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) (2022-2026) for Somalia places a strong emphasis on equity and inclusion within the education system. The plan acknowledges the severe challenges faced by the education sector, driven by conflict, displacement, poverty, malnutrition, and natural disasters. To tackle these challenges, the MoECHE has developed the ESSP through a consultative and participatory process.

The ESSP highlights the need for equitable access to education for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. It recognises education as a critical development priority and sets out the urgent need for equitable and inclusive access to education for all. This includes education for sustainable development and global citizenship, as well as youth and adult literacies, skills, and competencies. The plan emphasises that education is the most effective investment in the fight against poverty, helping to improve socio-economic development and prevent generational poverty by providing greater opportunities to earn and positively impacting other socio-economic indicators.

The ESSP also outlines specific policy priorities related to equity and inclusion. One of the key policy priorities is “Access, equity, and completion in basic and secondary education” (p. 36). This priority focuses on ensuring that all students have access to quality education and can complete their education.

Additionally, the ESSP emphasises equity and inclusion in its approaches for building a resilient education system that can withstand and respond to emergencies. It outlines strategies to ensure that education services continue during crises, including the development of emergency preparedness plans, the provision of psychosocial support for students and teachers, and the establishment of safe learning environments. The plan also stresses the importance of collaboration with humanitarian organizations and other stakeholders to provide coordinated and effective responses to emergencies.

To better support the use of assessments with vulnerable and marginalised groups – such as internally displaced persons, multilingual learners, and out-of-school children – adaptations to assessments will need to be made to enhance equity and inclusion. This may involve:

- sustaining education during emergencies through mobile schools, temporary learning centres, and contingency planning, ensuring assessments in these contexts remain accessible during crises
- developing assessments that accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds
- implementing Accelerated Basic Education programmes that offer condensed curricula, certified pathways, and tailored assessments to supporting learning

The Education Quality Assurance Framework for Basic Education emphasises the importance of equity and inclusion in the education system. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of various departments at national, state, and district levels in ensuring that quality education standards are maintained and improved. The framework highlights the need for equitable access to education for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances.

The document also stresses the importance of inclusive education, ensuring that all learners, including those with a disability status, have access to quality education. It provides guidelines for developing and implementing assessment tools and materials that are relevant to students with disability status, ensuring their inclusion in the education system.

Overall, these documents aspire to the creation of an education system that is fair, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of all learners, promoting equity and inclusion at all levels of education. They also emphasise the importance of providing assessment tools and materials relevant to students with a disability status to ensure their inclusion in the education system.

Accordingly, a starting point for improving equity and inclusion in assessment is to recognise that tailored interventions are essential for meeting students at their points of need, and ensure that every student is appropriately challenged and extended in their learning journey. Teachers can maximise the probability of successful learning by providing individuals with learning opportunities that are well- targeted to their current levels of readiness and learning needs.

Teachers must therefore closely monitor students' learning at varying degrees of diagnostic detail, similar to how medical practitioners monitor patients' health. This involves understanding where students are in their long-term learning progress and developing tailored interventions and solutions. It is assessment that provides this diagnostic detail.

2.3 A focus on learning progression

Fundamental to all assessments, whether they are for summative or formative purposes, is an approach that focuses on student growth and progress. The ability to identify student learning achievement and progress can be enhanced using learning progressions. A learning progression is an evidenced- informed framework that describes increasingly detailed layers and elements of student learning. Typically, a learning progression is organised by subject and domain.

- Subject. A broad learning area, such as Somali language and Mathematics.
- Domain. Domains are the major areas of knowledge, understanding, and skill within a subject. For example, Mathematics includes domains relating to number and operations (e.g., addition/subtraction/multiplication/division), measurement, and geometry. In Languages, examples of domains include speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Within domains, constructs and subconstructs provide more granular descriptions of domain components. For example, the number and operations domain might include the following constructs and sub-constructs:
 - The construct of whole numbers, and corresponding subconstructs such as a) identifying and counting in whole numbers, and identifying their relative magnitude, and b) solving operations using whole numbers.
 - The construct of decimals, and corresponding subconstructs such as a) representing decimals using objects and pictures, and b) solving operations using decimals.

To assist in interpretations of a learning progression, the stages of a progression are usually grouped into progress levels, sometimes called proficiency levels. A description for each level includes a summary statement, and information about the knowledge, understandings, and skills that are typically associated with working within this level. These descriptions are independent of age and grade. They are designed to provide a frame of reference for teachers to identify where individual students are in their learning so that further support can be provided to progress learning from that point.

A learning progression is most helpful when it contains illustrations within a domain. These provide detailed descriptions and examples of what might be observed from students' behaviours or responses when specific knowledge, understandings, and skills are assessed. As seen in Error! Reference source not found., for example, three proficiency levels (columns) describe learner capabilities with respect to different constructs and subconstructs within the number and operations domain (rows).

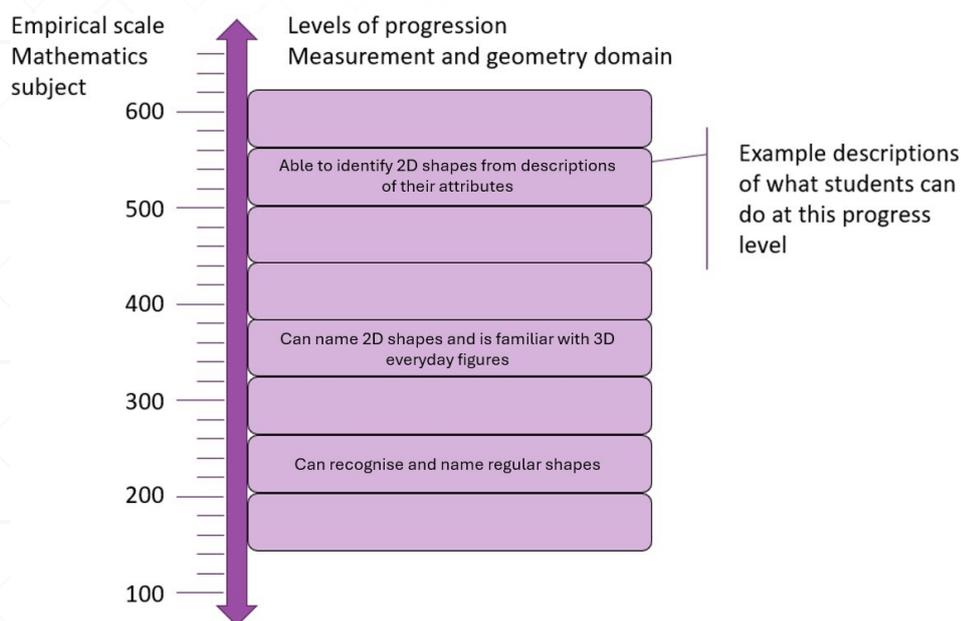
Table 1. Example of learning progression proficiency standards for mathematics domains ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Mathematical domain > Construct > Subconstruct	Grade 1 (Meets proficiency standard)	Grade 3 (Meets proficiency standard)	Grade 5 (Meets proficiency standard)
Number and operations (Domain) > Whole numbers (Construct) > Identify and count in whole numbers, and identify their relative magnitude (Subconstruct)	Compare and order whole numbers up to 30.	Compare and order whole numbers up to 1,000.	Compare and order whole numbers up to 100,000.
Geometry (Domain) > Property of shapes and figures (Construct) > Recognise and describe shapes and figures (Subconstruct)	Recognize and name basic shapes (e.g., recognize a picture of a square, circle, rectangle, or triangle or name a shape when it is pointed to).	Recognize and name two-dimensional shapes and familiar three-dimensional figures in everyday life.	Recognize and name types of triangles (e.g., isosceles, scalene, equilateral, and right angle). Subconstruct renamed Differentiate shapes and figures by their attributes at Grade 5)
Measurement (Domain) > Length, weight, capacity, volume, area, and perimeter (Construct) > Use non-standard and standard units to measure, compare, and order (Subconstruct)	Measure the length of objects using nonstandard units (e.g., identify that the pencil is 5 paper clips long).	Use standard units to compare length and weight when provided the unit of measurement (e.g., identify that the pencil is one centimetre longer than the crayon).	Identify the relationship between the relative size of adjacent units within a standard system of measurement for length and weight (e.g., identify the number of millimetres in a centimetre).

19. Adapted from UIS. (2020, December). Global proficiency framework for mathematics: Grade 1 to 9. <https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/Global-Proficiency-Framework-Math.pdf>

Learning progressions are also most useful when they are built on an underlying, evidence-informed quantitative scale that is aligned with how learning occurs within the classroom and with respect to learning pathways in a domain. These quantitative scales are normally interval-level measurement scales, like the ones that are used to report in international studies such as TIMSS, PIRLS, and SEACMEQ. Notably, the empirical scale is ‘finer grained’ than learner descriptions and outcomes associated with progress/proficiency levels. The use of an empirical scale allows quantification of student progress within and across levels over time. Figure 2 outlines an example of how such a scale might depict student capability based on a scaled score and descriptions of what students can do. For example, scores of 100- 300 indicate that a student possesses less sophisticated mathematic capabilities, while scores of 300 or more would indicate that she possesses more sophisticated mathematical skills and understanding. It is important to note that the values of the scores used to quantify student progress (e.g. 100-600 in the figure below) are arbitrary and that Figure 2 is provided only as an example.

Figure 2. Example of a learning progression for Mathematics.



In summary, learning progressions provide teachers with clear descriptions of students’ current learning levels and what they should be focusing on next in the classroom. They also provide a framework for system stakeholders to monitor aggregated national assessment data and inform educational policy and decision making (see Figure 2). Finally, learning progressions can be used to scaffold and support the use of meaningful and coherent practices for reporting student achievement, progress, and wellbeing.

2.4 The inclusion of essential skills

Teachers and schools need to support students to develop a range of skills that are essential for thriving in the 21st century. While classroom and school assessments have traditionally focused on disciplinary knowledge and skills, there has been less focus on developing assessments that can target those skills that are essential across contexts and that underlie more complex skills and competencies. There are also varying configurations in terms of how such essential skills have been prioritised and integrated across curricula in high performing systems. Critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and collaboration skills are common to these framings, with variable articulation of other skills, such as personal and social skills, self-regulation, resilience, and citizenship ⁽²⁰⁾.

Within the context of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia, the use of reliable essential skills definitions and frameworks will help teachers and head teachers to refine classroom and school assessments so that evidence can be gathered of students’ current skill levels. This

20. Scoular, C., Ramalingam, D., Duckworth, D., & Heard, J. (2020). Assessment of General Capabilities: Skills for the 21st-century learner. Final report. Australian Council for Educational Research. https://research.acer.edu.au/ar_misc/47

information can in turn be used to inform teaching and school practices so that students can develop further expertise with these skills, and be better prepared for learning, working, and living in the 21st century. Examples of essential skills that might be used to refine classroom and school assessments include:

- **Collaboration:** working effectively within a group by sharing responsibilities and working toward common goals. It involves a sense of community and belonging, extending beyond just completing tasks to reflect broader social and cultural contexts. Effective collaboration requires collective problem-solving by combining knowledge, skills, and efforts.
- **Communication:** clearly transmitting information to exchange ideas and achieve mutual understanding. It involves adapting both verbal and non-verbal behaviours to fit social contexts and communicative goals. Effective communication develops through practice and reflection and requires a willingness to interact appropriately for the benefit of all parties.
- **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** analysing and synthesizing information for informed decision-making and effective problem-solving. It involves overcoming cognitive biases and applying relevant strategies to address new situations. Critical thinking also helps engage with complex social, political, and economic problems, fostering a deeper understanding of the world.
- **Creative Thinking:** generating novel ideas and making unconventional connections to explore possibilities. It emphasises creating original, valuable work that aligns with task constraints and the context in which it is applied.
- **Self-Regulation:** taking responsibility for one's learning through careful planning, monitoring, and evaluation of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural actions. It involves understanding one's inner self, roles, and responsibilities within the community, contributing to respectful and positive social behaviour. Self-regulation also includes cyclically adapting one's actions to achieve personal goals.

2.5 A focus on early learning

Children start schooling having experienced varying developmental trajectories. This may lead them to enter the classroom with vastly different knowledge bases and learning skills. There is considerable evidence that without early intervention, children starting school with developmental delays will struggle to make progress in their learning journey. Research tells us that without proactive learning support, the gap between children who start school with developmental delays and their peers without such delays grows throughout primary school ⁽²¹⁾. Children starting school with low levels of knowledge and skills are more likely to disengage from formal education or face barriers to further education by failing formal selection processes such as examinations.

It is essential that children's levels of knowledge and skills are determined as early as possible in their learning journey, ideally from the beginning of the ECE phase, and that they are monitored over time. Assessing children's literacy and numeracy skills is critical, as these domains are foundational for the development of other learning, knowledge, and higher order skills that will be attained over their lifetime ⁽²²⁾. While end of stage examinations can be used formatively to determine strengths and weaknesses, these come too late in a child's educational career to effectively benefit those students who demonstrate low levels of learning outcomes by the end of primary school.

A key principle of this assessment framework is a focus on supporting the assessment of early learning from the point at which a student joins the formal education system. It is therefore important to support teachers to develop their assessment literacy and provide them with supporting assessment materials and resources so that they can identify and monitor students' learning progress from the very beginning of their educational journey.

21. Betts, J., & Lata, D. (2009). Inclusion of children with disabilities: The early childhood imperative. UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000183156>; OECD (2015), Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264233515-en>; Save the Children. (2012). Laying the foundations. Early childhood care and development (p. 12). Save the Children International. <https://image.savethechildren.org/laying-the-foundations-ch11044456.pdf/7e28077vfa81e471h611e7abskrb07cm.pdf>; UNICEF. (2022, June). Early Detection Tools for Children With Developmental Delays And Disabilities. www.unicef.org/mena/media/17716/file/Early%20Detection%20Tools%20For%20Children%20With%20Developmental%20Delays%20And%20Disabilities.pdf

22. UNICEF. (2022, June). Early Detection Tools For Children With Developmental Delays And Disabilities. www.unicef.org/mena/media/17716/file/Early%20Detection%20Tools%20For%20Children%20With%20Developmental%20Delays%20And%20Disabilities.pdf

UNICEF. (n.d.). Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning | UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/learning-crisis/commitment-action-foundational-learning>

CHAPTER 3

3. A balanced assessment system

A balanced assessment system provides all education stakeholders with the information they need to support student learning and progress. This includes providing evidence from a broad range of learning domains, the ability to communicate a shared understanding of what learner progress looks like over time, and supporting educational decision-making by learners through to system stakeholders. Such a system is also less likely to be reliant on traditional tests and examinations for measuring student achievement and ability, and is more likely to place greater emphasis on assessment in complex and applied contexts, using approaches like investigative projects and problem-solving activities.

Importantly, a balanced system is characterised by assessment that has been integrated at different levels (e.g. classroom, school, state, and federal government), and which is anchored to a common model of learning, such as learning progressions. Five criteria that can be used to evaluate whether an assessment system is 'balanced' are:

1. **Coherence.** The various assessments in the system are coherently linked through clear descriptions of the learning targets within a subject.
2. **Comprehensiveness.** Assessments provide a holistic variety of evidence to inform educational decision making, and enable multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning.
3. **Continuity.** Assessments provide information that enable the monitoring and evaluation of student progress over time. Ideally, learning progressions are used to design assessments to ground interpretations of both achievement and growth in terms of a student's location along a learning continuum.
4. **Utility.** The assessment system provides the information necessary to support multiple and diverse stakeholder needs. This requires clear articulation of the intended goals within the assessment system and a considered approach for how the assessment will support desired changes in teaching and learning.
5. **Efficiency.** Assessments serve their stated purposes. There are no redundant, duplicated assessments across the system, and resources are judiciously deployed and used ⁽²³⁾.

Other considerations for a balanced assessment system include the provision of quality reporting and feedback products for various stakeholder groups, and ensuring that such products are tailored to support student learning and progress, and educational decision-making. In this regard, the levels of stakeholder reporting and feedback to be provided must include the student, parents/guardians, and schools. Reporting and feedback at these levels should be communicated using a common model of learning framework, and ensure that the information communicated provides actionable outcomes to support student progress. Additionally, student information provided to system stakeholders should be appropriately aggregated, analysed, and reported. This will enable such information to be readily used for system-level monitoring, policy development and decision-making, capacity building and implementation planning, and addressing the needs of key stakeholder groups, including for addressing education inclusivity and equity ⁽²⁴⁾.

3.1 Levels of reporting

Many different types of educational and developmental assessments will be used throughout schools. Assessment focusing on reporting at the student level includes all assessment activities that are primarily designed to provide meaningful feedback to the individual student and that are usually initiated within the school. Individual assessment provides a rich source of information that can be used to inform planning for teaching and learning. It involves practices such as teacher observation and questioning, review of student work, peer- and self-assessment, formal projects, and

23. Marion, S., Thompson, J., Evans, C., Martineau, J. & Dadey, N. (2019), "A Tricky Balance: The Challenges and Opportunities of Balanced Systems of Assessment", in Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education Toronto, Ontario April 6, 2019, National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment.

24. Kellaghan, T., Greaney, V., & Murray, T. S. (2009). Using the results of a national assessment of educational achievement. Washington, DC: World Bank.

exams. Good quality individual assessment can take the form of teacher-designed assessments, federal/state/school level or commercially designed assessments, and standardised assessments. Specifically, assessment aimed at individual reporting enables teachers to:

- identify the extent of students' knowledge and skill within the assessed subject or domain
- identify and respond to immediate learning needs
- refine teaching approaches for current and subsequent student cohorts
- support the development of broad skill sets to build student capability in learning independently
- observe student learning and provide feedback and support to enhance the learning experience
- support students to set challenging, but achievable learning goals
- provide evidence of learning that can be used for reporting students' learning progress to students, parents, and other teachers.

Assessment aimed at individual reporting enables the student to:

- develop capacity to learn collaboratively with others
- learn to communicate their knowledge and skills in a range of different ways
- be guided in their learning by timely and actionable feedback
- develop skills to become independent, lifelong learners.

Assessment focusing on reporting at the group level includes all assessments designed primarily to monitor and evaluate sub-populations. These sub-populations include those defined by gender, locality, or socio-economic status. Sometimes, groups of students are monitored on a school-by-school basis.

Data obtained from assessment focusing on reporting at the group level can be used to:

- inform education system-related aspirations
- reform and strengthen policies and practices for system improvement
- measure the impact of new programmes, curricula, policies and directions over longer periods of time.

Assessment that can be used to report at both the group and individual levels are also common. Examinations, for example, can be used to report at both levels. However, because of the different purposes of group and individual level reporting, compromises in assessment design or data utilisation may take place.

CHAPTER 4

4. The desired assessment landscape for Somalia

The desired assessment landscape in Somalia is represented in Figure 3. The elements are listed in descending order of direct impact on individual learning, as well as the effort (frequency, resourcing) required to implement. It is classroom-based assessment that requires the most effort, collectively, and provides the opportunity to have the most direct impact on an individual's learning in real time. While the policy value from a national assessment programme can be enormous, it is unlikely to provide immediate impact on individual learning. Accordingly, such an assessment landscape for Somalia is balanced: it is designed with utility and efficiency, and supports multiple stakeholder needs with elements serving different purposes. The major components of this landscape are outlined in the sections that follow.

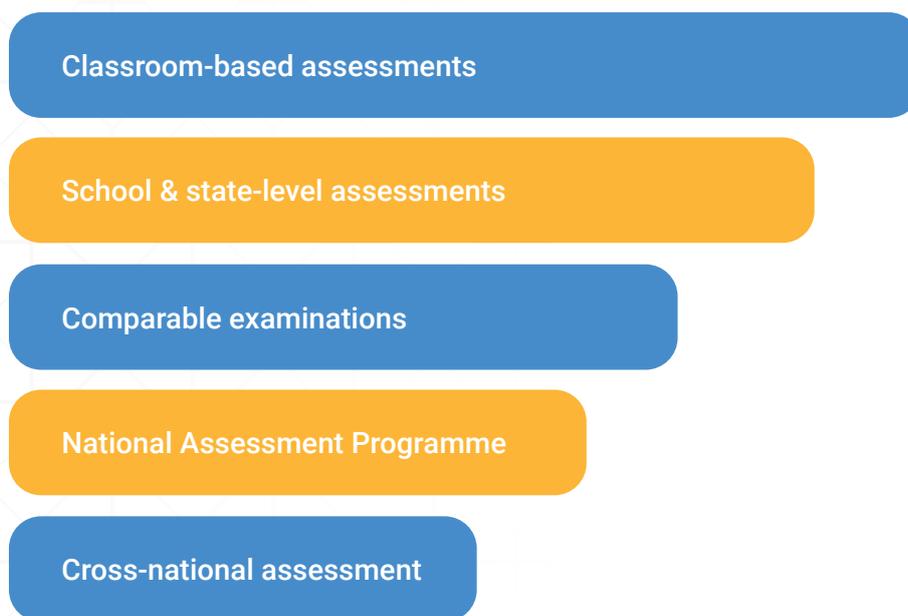


Figure 3: Desired assessment landscape for Somalia

4.1 Classroom-based, individual-level assessments

The role of classroom-based assessment is to provide evidence of what students know and can do over time, support teachers' pedagogical approaches, and inform students' learning strategies. Well designed assessments help students to understand where they are in their learning journey and provide teachers with clear guidance on how to support and improve student learning. This is crucial for supporting learners who begin schooling at an older age, are older than the age expected for a given level of study, or who are out-of-school intermittently or for prolonged periods.

Accordingly, classroom-based assessments should provide meaningful information about students' current learning achievements and progress so that data can be used effectively by teachers and head teachers to inform all aspects of schooling. Teachers and head teachers need the requisite expertise to use classroom-based assessment data to:

- inform planning and practice
- support diverse learning and wellbeing needs
- communicate learning outcomes and next steps for learning to students and parents.

The fundamental purpose of any assessment is to establish where a student is in their learning at the time that the assessment was completed. This means that teachers can apply assessments flexibly to support teaching and learning, regardless of the assessment method or mode. For instance, the same assessment could be used formatively to guide teaching and learning progress, summatively to describe current student achievement, and diagnostically to identify specific student learning needs.

Finally, depending on resourcing and infrastructure, it may be necessary to consider how low-tech (e.g., SMS-based quizzes and radio programmes) and long-term digital solutions for assessment can be integrated into classroom-based assessments to strengthen equity and for scaling across the country. These approaches can help bridge gaps in access and ensure that all students' learning needs, regardless of location or resources, are supported in the assessment process.

4.1.1 Teacher-designed assessment

Teachers are well positioned to design and use a range of assessments that provide meaningful data about their students' learning because they know their students and they know what has been taught in their classroom⁽²⁵⁾. This means that teachers also have the contextual information needed to design targeted assessments that meet the immediate needs of their students and do not need to rely on data from termly exams. Assessments can also be used to provide feedback to inform daily teaching and support student learning. To achieve this, pre-service and in-service teachers need skills in assessment literacy and design to ensure that the assessment methods and tools they develop are fit for purpose.

Assessment rubrics

It is essential for teachers to develop or apply clear assessment evaluation criteria. When well-designed rubrics are used in assessment, the assessment data that are collected have greater validity, reliability, and objectivity and reflect student learning more accurately. Rubrics can also be used by teachers to predict the next steps in learning and provide feedback to students. If assessment tasks are developed externally to the school setting, rubrics should be provided to teachers to enable transparency in the assessment process.

It is important for students to have a clear understanding of how assessment tasks will be evaluated with respect to disciplinary understanding and competencies and general capabilities. Rubrics provide students with clear guidelines to work toward, and meaningful feedback on their performance so that they can reflect on their learning and plan accordingly.

When developing assessment rubrics, it is important to:

- Identify the knowledge, understanding, and skills that a student can demonstrate, and teachers can observe.
- Ensure that assessment criteria are aligned with learning outcomes and relevant to the task to evaluate student performance.
- Ensure that students, parents, and teachers understand what learning outcomes are expected and valued.
- Articulate how knowledge and skills increase in sophistication for each level of performance.

An assessment rubric is typically developed in a matrix form. In the example provided in Table 1, an early-years rubric for counting is presented that outlines assessment evaluation descriptors across five ability levels. These descriptors are related to curricular statements. Level 1 describes children who possess basic counting knowledge and skills, while Level 5 outlines much more sophisticated counting capabilities.

25. Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4–14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1175860>

Table 2: Example of an early-years assessment rubric for counting

Ability level	Evaluation descriptors
Level 5	The child can count, add, subtract, compare, and share collections up to 20. They are exploring more efficient methods like counting on, grouping, subitizing, and using doubles. They can identify the next number up to 20.
Level 4	The child accurately counts up to 12 and understands the final count. They can state the total quantity without recounting and use counting by ones (inefficient strategy) to compare, add, and subtract items, describing their actions clearly.
Level 3	The child accurately counts up to 10, understanding that the total remains constant even when objects are rearranged (conservation). They use triple counting for adding or removing objects.
Level 2	The child counts up to 5 objects, assigning a number to each in order and stopping at the last object. They follow instructions with numbers up to 5 and use 'more' or 'less' to compare clear differences between quantities.
Level 1	The child is currently learning to count a few objects. With assistance, the child can assign one number per object, count in sequence, and stop counting at the last object.

Informal assessment

Teachers assess and monitor their students' learning continuously during class through informal questioning and activities. This enables moment-to-moment observation and correction of misconceptions, extension of student knowledge, and the opportunity to lead students towards higher-order thinking. Informal assessment can include expert teacher questioning and observations. Teachers may use their informal observations to inform the next steps in their planning for teaching and learning.

Judgement-based assessment

Many forms of assessment require teachers, and sometimes students, to make judgements about the quality of student work. These assessments may include essays, projects, performances, and portfolios. Judgement-based assessments are important because they enable students to develop higher-order thinking, communicate their knowledge in different ways, and learn a range of skills that are necessary for living in contemporary society. Judgement-based assessments also enable teachers to assess the development of complex skills and knowledge. Tools and processes to support observations can enhance the reliability of judgement-based assessment. Assessment rubrics are important tools that enhance consistency in judgement-based assessment. They provide students and teachers with a single reference point that outlines assessment task criteria.

Authentic, project-based, and performance-based assessment tasks

Students can develop a range of important skills and knowledge by undertaking project- and performance-based assessment. These forms of assessment can support students to integrate a range of skills and knowledge that are needed for higher-order thinking across different subjects, as well as student collaboration. Project- and performance-based assessment are examples of authentic assessment tasks when they are designed to address real-world contexts, scenarios, and problems.

Authentic assessment tasks assess students' higher-order thinking skills using real-world scenarios, and/or contexts. Authentic assessment tasks provide opportunities for students to apply what they know and can do and take ownership of their learning.

Authentic assessments characteristically emphasise essential skills:

- Collaboration and communication. Group projects can support students to develop perseverance, contribute to team knowledge, practise how to transmit information and exchange ideas, value the contributions of others and develop a shared understanding, develop the skills needed to resolve differences, and learn how to assign work to group members.
- Critical thinking. Performance tasks that incorporate aspects of inquiry, experimentation, or simulation can encourage students to construct new knowledge, understandings, hypotheses, and beliefs, and make decisions.
- Creative thinking. Tasks that incorporate design thinking, problem-solving, role playing, and the production of artefacts can lead to creative thinking, and be assessed using portfolios, presentations, and persuasive essays.
- Self-regulation. Individual project work that cuts across subjects, and that takes place over several weeks, can provide the platform to assess to how students plan and monitor their learning, while engaging in self-evaluations regarding their behavioural, cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes.

Student self-assessment and peer assessment

Classroom-based assessment includes self-assessment and peer assessment tasks. Self-assessment requires a student to make evaluative judgements about their own learning, while peer assessments require students to make evaluative judgements about other students' learning. Both approaches allow students to become more critical of their own learning relative to the curriculum, and reflect and plan for what it takes to progress on their learning journey⁽²⁶⁾. Assessment rubrics should be provided for both approaches and be developed using key principles. These principles include promoting the development of critical thinking skills for self-assessment and structured, respectful communication for peer assessment.

Tests and quizzes

Traditional forms of assessment, such as well-designed tests and quizzes, can be time-effective methods of assessment. They may consist of oral and non-oral closed-ended questions, short answer questions, or extended response questions, and can be incorporated into class discussions to determine students' understanding and guide lessons. They can provide teachers and students with information about what students have learned, as well as common misconceptions and gaps in learning. Tests and quizzes can also help students to learn time management skills and demonstrate what they know and can do under time constraints. However, some students may not be able to demonstrate their learning through traditional forms of assessment. In addition, there are many skills that cannot be developed and assessed in this way. This means that traditional forms of assessment should be part of a much wider and varied assessment system that incorporates judgement-based assessment, informal assessment, and standardised assessment.

4.1.2 Standardised assessment

Standardised assessments can provide individual students with information about their current learning achievement and progress in comparison to their peers and key populations. These assessments also provide schools with information about their performance and growth relative to other schools that have similar student intake, resources, and location. This information helps to support a school improvement agenda.

Standardised assessments are a valuable part of the classroom-based assessment system for several reasons. Standardised assessments can:

26. Yan, Z., Lao, H., Panadero, E., Fernández-Castilla, B., Yang, L., & Yang, M. (2022). Effects of self-assessment and peer-assessment interventions on academic performance: A meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, 37, 100484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2022.100484>

- be applied consistently across all levels, schools, and populations. They can deliver feedback within short timeframes so that data can be utilised by teachers and schools.
- be used by teachers and schools to compare a student's progress with grade level peers within the same school and against key sub-populations across Somali schools. Aggregated grade- and school- level assessment data can also be reported to inform school and system improvement.
- be used as reference points in the moderation process of teacher-developed assessments.

4.1.3 Developing teachers' assessment literacy

Teachers with high assessment literacy are proficient in developing, delivering and utilising the outcomes of assessments, and possess subject-specific assessment knowledge. They also understand the contextual factors that impact on assessment outcomes, like gender, language, and culture.

Educators benefit from high-quality professional learning that builds their assessment literacy and data capabilities. They apply this knowledge to design fit-for-purpose assessment, and can successfully evaluate whether assessments are used appropriately and are suited for different student populations.

Crucially, teachers with high assessment literacy can design assessment tasks that produce valid, reliable, and objective information about their students' learning. They can analyse a range of assessment and wellbeing data using appropriate methods, and interpret their findings accurately. The opportunity to discuss these data with colleagues is also very important. When teachers have the knowledge and skills to use data effectively, they can target their teaching to improve learning, their teaching practice, and student outcomes. For example:

- diagnostic assessments can be used to identify specific learning needs at a point in time. Teachers might use early-grade literacy and numeracy tools at the start of the school year to determine students' foundational skills. This is important for learners who enter school late, have experienced interrupted schooling, or come from multilingual or displaced backgrounds. Diagnostic assessments help teachers understand where students are in their learning journey and tailor instruction accordingly.
- formative assessments guide teaching and learning progress. These include informal observations, questioning, peer and self-assessments, and project-based tasks. Teachers can use rubrics to evaluate student work and provide feedback that helps learners understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Formative assessment can be useful for supporting vulnerable learners who may face cultural or linguistic barriers in traditional assessment formats. By using flexible and inclusive methods, teachers can ensure that all students are appropriately challenged and supported.
- summative assessments describe current student achievement and are typically used at key points during the academic year or at the end of academic stages. While summative assessment can be applied to an entire grade level, for example at the end of a school term, they can also be used complementarily as regular classroom summative assessment to showcase students' learning achievement.

4.2 Refining school and state-level assessments

4.2.1 Considerations for an EMIS

An important element of any education system is the EMIS. As outlined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) ⁽²⁷⁾, an EMIS is:

27. UNESCO. (2019). Educational Management Information System (EMIS). <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/glossary/educational-management-information-system-emis>

a system for the collection, integration, processing, maintenance and dissemination of data and information to support decision-making, policy analysis and formulation, planning, monitoring and management at all levels of an education system. It is a system of people, technology, models, methods, processes, procedures, rules and regulations that function together to provide education leaders, decisionmakers and managers at all levels with a comprehensive, integrated set of relevant, reliable, unambiguous and timely data and information to support them in completion of their responsibilities.

Developing a robust EMIS is therefore crucial as education systems mature, as upgrades to infrastructure and processes are needed to handle complex reporting needs. For the FGS, which is responsible for the overall development, management, and security of the EMIS, this includes ensuring that this system is secure and reliable for effective education planning, policy decisions, and management ⁽²⁸⁾.

In seeking to support a dynamic assessment framework for Somali school and state-level assessments in the decades to come, it will be necessary to address considerations aimed at enhancing the present EMIS ecosystem and futureproof this system from emerging challenges. Low-tech solutions and long-term digital solutions should also be considered where relevant and where resourcing/infrastructure allow. Specifically, the considerations most relevant to the assessment landscape include ⁽²⁹⁾:

- developing a robust digital platform for data collection and analysis
- ensuring that learning outcomes data can be reliably input into this platform, as well as managed and utilised in timely and efficient ways.
- the inclusion of a broad set of information on factors that may have an effect on learning outcomes, such as student demographics, school facilities, teacher training and classroom resources.

4.2.2 Considerations for reporting

The primary purpose of assessment and assessment data is to support and enhance student learning and progress. The outcomes of reporting student assessment data should likewise be focused on student growth and emphasise ‘next steps’ for learning. When this data is aggregated – for example, across grades or student groups – the information derived at a group level can provide insights on trends or lessons learned, and highlight broad challenges and strengths at the school level. When used in an informed and effective manner, this information provides opportunities for teachers and head teachers to reframe their classroom and school practices/processes so that they can be focused on student learning outcomes and overall school improvement.

Key considerations when seeking to report and use assessment data include the need for technical expertise to collect, analyse, report and interpret ‘what the data means’ and ‘what it can be used for’. This requires capacity building at the system level to appropriately collect, analyse, and report data, as well as at the school level where teachers and head teachers need to learn how to interpret and use data to inform their practices and processes.

Capacity building should also be provided to system stakeholders who will use group assessment data to:

- inform education system-related aspirations
- guide reform and strengthen policies and practices for system improvement
- measure the impact of new policies and directions over longer periods of time.

28. Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. (2023). National Education Policy 2024. Federal Republic of Somalia

29. UIS. (2020). Education Management Information Systems. Efficiency and Effectiveness in Choosing and Using an EMIS. Guidelines for Data Management and Functionality in Education Management Information Systems (EMIS). <https://emis.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/09/EMIS-Buyers-Guide-EN-fin-WEB.pdf>

Another consideration for reporting is the EMIS. Although assessment data plays a key role in informing stakeholders about learner progress and providing a general view of overall school performance, it is just one of many data sources. To improve reporting and reporting processes, there may be a need to consider how a range of data sources might be integrated with the EMIS to provide a more holistic view of student and school performance. Updates to the EMIS might consider including/integrating:

- a wider range of student (e.g., learner grade and demographics, linguistic group, and disability status), teacher (e.g., experience, qualifications, and appointments), and school data (e.g., classrooms, physical facilities, and general information)
- broader education sector data (e.g., availability of learning materials, teacher and school administrator salaries, and school funding)
- data from other ministries or government departments (e.g., data about student health statistics from the Ministry of Health, poverty data from the Department of Social Services, or data about adult training programmes from the Ministry of Labor and Employment).

4.3 A National Assessment Programme for Somalia

4.3.1 Purpose of a National Assessment Programme

The purpose of a National Assessment Programme is primarily to monitor learning outcomes and inform policy issues.

Overall populations of policy interest are usually defined by grade, or less commonly, age. In this framework, populations at key stages of schooling are of interest, specifically those relating to reporting against the SDG global goals. These populations are students in schools at the end of lower primary, upper primary, and lower secondary (see Section 4.3.2. Linking to the sustainable development goals on education).

A robust monitoring program focusing on these populations will track the differences in learning outcomes in these populations over time. Many factors may have an effect on changes in learning outcomes over time. For example, increasing teacher effectiveness over time may lead to better outcomes, while an influx of children into the school populations may bring challenges that result in decreased overall population outcomes.

When the populations of interest and content of the assessments are aligned to global standards (SDG targets), the monitoring program will establish where these populations are in their learning relative to populations in other countries.

A well-designed and executed national assessment programme will inform relative strengths and weaknesses of sub-populations in Somalia. For example, difference in outcomes between girls and boys in schools can be quantified and tracked over time. It is important to identify sub-populations of policy interest from the outset, so that the program can be appropriately designed. Some sub-populations for consideration include those defined by:

- gender
- linguistic or cultural group
- federal, state, or region
- geography (urban / rural)
- socio-economic status
- disability status
- displacement

To monitor learning in populations and sub-populations over time, a cyclical program will be adopted whereby each population of interest is assessed regularly. The MoECHE will also establish a national student learning assessment unit that will generate credible and reliable data on student learning based on the national curriculum. This data will enable this unit to monitor trends in assessment data that can be used to inform policy decision making and support continuous improvement in education. The student learning assessment unit will design and implement reporting and monitoring mechanisms for a range of purposes and stakeholders. These include mechanisms for informing assessment policy and practice, supporting stakeholder capacity building and implementation planning, and ensuring that assessment data can be used to strengthen inclusivity and equity for all learners.

4.3.2 Linking to the sustainable development goals on education

The MoECHE has expressed a commitment to providing learning data suitable to report against SDG 4, in particular against SDG indicator 4.1.1.

SDG 4 is a commitment to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. This goal is a pivotal driver for positive change, emphasising the transformative power of education in fostering a sustainable and equitable world.

Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Indicator 4.1.1: Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level [MPL] in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex. ⁽³⁰⁾

The terminology used in SDG Indicator 4.1.1 has been interpreted, refined and exemplified by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics ⁽³¹⁾. For Somalia the populations of interest will be those in Grades 4 and 8, and Form 2.

To officially report against any SDG4.1.1 MPL, an assessment program has to meet the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) criteria. These criteria provide principles and consideration in general as well as laying out technical criteria specifically relating to:

1. Alignment to the MPL and construct validity
2. Item content and quality
3. Population coverage and sampling
4. Assessment administration and data custodianship
5. Reliability
6. Benchmark-based linking to the MPL
7. Maintaining standards over time

As outlined in the National Education Policy 2024, the Federal Republic of Somalia – working through the MoECHE and FMS – maintains a strong commitment to SDG4 by aiming to ensure that an inclusive, equitable, and quality education is accessible to all Somali citizens from the ECE to the post-secondary education and training sectors. This commitment provides a harmonised and coordinated approach to education nationwide, ensuring equal opportunities and respect for human rights, while being anchored to Islamic principles.

30. UNESCO. (2024). Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). <https://www.unesco.org/sdg4education2030/en/sdg4>
31. UNESCO. (2022). Minimum Proficiency Levels unpacked. https://research.unesco.edu.au/monitoring_learning/63/

4.3.3 A focus on reading and mathematics

To align with SDG Indicator 4.1.1, an initial focus of the monitoring program will be on reading (Somali language) and mathematics. Once established, the monitoring program will be reviewed and potentially expanded into other subjects or domains such as Islamic studies, Arabic language, and science

An additional rationale for starting with reading and mathematics is that there is a wealth of research and resources available on the construction of reading and mathematics assessments.

4.3.4 A sample-based design

A sample-based design is the most efficient and cost-effective way to provide valid and reliable learning data on populations and sub-populations within a national assessment programme.

An accurate, complete and well documented sample frame is required for each population of interest, grade 3 and grade 6, in order to gain a clear picture of a country's educational landscape. Each sample frame should include estimates of number of students in the population of interest, within each school in Somalia. However, as the MoECHE currently lacks a database management system that can provide comprehensive and up-to-date information about schools and students across FMS and regions, alternative methods of population estimation will be required.

In a sample-based approach, and with any complex test design, reporting at the school or individual level is not possible. In line with the purpose of the monitoring program, reporting will occur at the population level and the sub-population levels of policy interest. It is important to identify sub-populations of policy interest from the outset, so that the program can be appropriately designed. It is also critical to ensure the program design will meet the UIS eligibility criteria for reporting on the SDG4.1.1 MPL.

4.4 Comparability of examinations

In the current context of Somalia's education system there are two examination points. One is at the end of primary schooling at Grade 8, and the other is at the end of secondary school at Form 4. Specifically, the Grade 8 examinations are set, administered, and managed differently by FMS, while the Form 4 examinations are developed and administered at federal level. This means that the Grade 8 examinations contain different items across the states, raising issues of comparability. Additionally, comparability of both the Grade 8 and Form 4 examinations over time is problematic as the examinations will contain different items, which will likely differ in difficulty from year to year.

To better support policymakers, it is necessary to ensure that examinations can be compared to inform decision making. For example, if policymakers wish to compare different cohorts of learners, then a national assessment approach should be considered to support this government priority. However, if policymakers wish to prioritise other policy demands, such as interstate mobility and qualification recognition, then FMS examination comparability should be pursued.

Comparability of examinations is a challenge for many education systems. Issues of comparability arise whenever any two examinations contain different items. Attempts can be made to construct equivalent examinations by using the same blueprint for content and statistical specifications. However, these 'equivalent forms' are typically not of 'the same' difficulty⁽³²⁾. This means that the students who are administered the harder examination are disadvantaged relative to the students who take the easier examination, if only the raw scores or percentage correct are compared.

Even when two examinations contain the same items, comparability can be affected by the conditions in which the examinations were administered (e.g. more time allowed to one group than another).

32. Kolen, M.J. & Brennan, R. L. (1995). *Test equating: Methods and practices*. Springer Verlag, van der Linden W. J. (2005). *Linear models of optimal test design*. Springer.

Equating of examinations is one way to adjust reported outcomes for examinations that differ in difficulty. Linking examinations with modern psychometric methods is the most robust and complete approach to dealing with examinations that have different difficulty levels.

Equating of examinations is a highly technical and complex topic. There are many well established statistical methods and variants for equating any two assessments (e.g., examinations). Many of these methods involve transforming the outcome distributions of two assessments to match each other. Generally, these methods are applied to assessments where results are created under the Classical Test Theory assumption that the observed score on the test represents the 'true score'. Such methods adjust for differences in difficulty but not differences in content. These methods are appropriate to equate examinations over time because linking with a core set of items (see below) from year to year is generally not feasible.

A more robust set of procedures to achieve comparability involve the use of methods derived from Item Response Theory (IRT) to link two assessments through a set of common items administered in each assessment. This allows both assessments to be reported on a common empirical scale.

Psychometric linking would typically be achieved through having a set of identical items within every examination to form a 'core'. This is known as common-item linking. For example, in Somalia the Grade 8 examinations are developed by the FMS. A centrally developed core of items could be administered within each state examination alongside items developed by individual FMS. An IRT based psychometric method applied to the data would place all items on the same empirical scale, through having the 'core' items as anchor points on the scale.

In addition to ensuring that any two assessments are empirically comparable, IRT methods allow the commonality of the content to be assessed through analysis of unidimensionality. In other words, the different examinations can be analysed to determine whether they are all measuring the same underlying construct.

4.4.1 Collecting examination data for equating

Equating or linking could be achieved through the analysis of the entire set of examinations data or on a sub-sample of the examinations data. If using a subset of the data, a concordance table would be built so that the reporting scale could be applied to the remainder of the data.

If a robust sample of the scored response data was provided from each of these examinations, they could be equated or psychometrically scaled together. Concordance tables could be built and applied to remaining data. Reporting would then be comparable in terms of difficulty. The psychometric method has the additional advantage of determining whether the different examinations are measuring the same underlying construct.

4.4.2 Standardisation of procedures

The standardisation of examination procedures is essential to ensure that each participant is assessed under the same conditions, marking is reliable, and data are processed and analysed in the same way. Standardisation helps to guarantee that differences in results are inherent to the participant, and not a result of testing conditions, biased marking, or differences in data treatment.

Standardised administration of examinations includes standardised formal training for all exam invigilators, the same timing schedule for all participants to complete the examinations, and strategies for ensuring the security of test materials.

High quality linguistic quality control procedures are also essential if adaptations need to be made to languages other than Somali, such as Arabic or English.

To enhance comparability, the data cleaning and processing of all variants should follow the same basic procedures. For example, the treatment of missing data must be consistent. The production of datasets that follow consistent codebooks and structures will facilitate equating or psychometric linking, enhance the consistent storage and retrieval of data, and better ensure that personally identifiable information is treated in a standard way.

Many examinations will contain materials that need to be human-marked (e.g. essays). The training of markers in a standardised and formal way, the monitoring of inter-rater reliability, and other quality assurance procedures will need to be put in place.

As with data processing, the analysis of data, including equating, psychometric linking and the application of concordance tables if they are used, should follow a standardised process for all examination variants.

An important aspect of standardisation is that it maintains conditions over time, enhancing comparability from year to year.

Standardisation of all the above procedures will help ensure that the reporting of examination outcomes leads to comparable marks, levels or gradings across examination variants.

4.5 Towards cross-national assessments

Cross-national assessments provide valuable insights into student knowledge and skills, as well as the framework for enabling comparisons between student groups (e.g., rural vs. urban, girls vs. boys) and across education systems. These assessments allow countries to learn from one another and track progress on internationally recognised benchmarks for quality and equity.

Cross-national assessments also enable monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of elements within the Somali education system. Specifically, cross-national assessment frameworks and data can be used to support the following priorities, as outlined in the National Education Policy 2024:

- The “Establishment and preparation of educational standards” (Section 2.1. Federal Level Administration of Education)
- “Monitoring and evaluating policy, plans and standards at the federal level.” (Section 2.1. Federal Level Administration of Education)
- “Developing state-level policies, regulations and strategic plans” (Section 2.2. Regional Level of Administration of Education).

Other features of cross-national assessments are that they offer the possibility, but not the obligation, to undertake national analyses and reporting. For example, some international assessments may be used to report against single levels of the SDG Indicator 4.1.1 MPL. These assessments – generally managed by international organizations – may also provide additional benefits with respect to producing publicly available subject-based assessment frameworks, research databases, and detailed analysis and comparative reporting. When preparing to deliver or implementing cross-national assessments, the infrastructure and resourcing needed are similar to national assessment programmes. The main differences are that cross-national assessments may require fewer resources than national assessments because the following aspects are usually undertaken by an international organisation:

- drawing the school sample
- providing the assessment items and test design
- providing hardware for within school sampling and data management
- undertaking the psychometric analysis, providing population ability estimates, providing sample weights
- cleaning the data and constructing the results database
- undertaking secondary analyses of the data
- providing a final (international) report

While there are several benefits for implementing cross-national assessments within an education system, the limitations of most of these assessments are that:

- All participating education systems administer the same assessment. Although these assessments are adapted and translated to be relevant for the system within which it is administered and to maintain comparability, there is limited scope for national or regional contextualisation.
- Very few cross-national assessments are vertically linked, and near all utilise cross-sectional designs that examine learning at one grade or age at a time.
- Timelines for implementing these assessments are prescribed. This can be challenging for countries that have not previously entered these assessments, though international organizations that manage larger-scale cross-national assessments typically provide extra supports to first-time participating countries.
- Some cross-national assessments are targeted at learners of higher ability learners than those are present in the specified grade or age level populations of some countries – limiting the value of the assessment because the results do not differentiate well between sub-population groups.

These benefits and limitations should be weighed carefully by system stakeholders seeking to implement cross-national assessments, and relative to resourcing opportunities and national issues. These include:

The opportunity to leverage capacity building from international organisations. Capacity building is a key challenge within the Somali education system. System and school-level stakeholders involved in administering cross-national assessments need to develop expertise and practice with preparing for and implementing these assessments successfully. In many instances, capacity building can be provided by international organisations managing these cross-national assessments, so that stakeholders can implement the full project cycle of these assessments and to ensure that technical standards associated with cross-national assessments are maintained. Capacity is built in many technical areas including linguistic quality control, sample design, field operations, and data management. Maintaining these high technical standards is crucial for reliable and comparable reporting. These opportunities, where required, should be leveraged by education stakeholders in Somalia.

Managing funding demands and opportunities across the education sector. It is essential to collaborate closely with international development partners to enhance efficiencies in managing education funding and capacity building. Such partnerships will enable more strategic policy and practice goal setting, management, monitoring, and sustainability planning across both the short and long terms. Moreover, by strengthening Somalia's assessment system through collaboration, and supporting its participation in cross-national assessments, the FGS and FMS can better ensure overall system improvement and that policy decisions are informed by robust, evidence-based data. Enhancing education access and inclusivity. By improving access and inclusivity in education, more learners can participate in cross-national assessments and provide policymakers with reliable and representative learning data. This data can inform policies and practices aimed at enhancing education systems and schools. Key considerations for improving access and inclusivity include:

- Building the ECE sub-sector to enhance student learning and access to primary education
- Supporting children from rural and nomadic communities, internally displaced persons, girls, and children with disabilities to gain access to schooling.

4.6 Stakeholder roles and engagement

The task of introducing a National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia is best supported by identifying key stakeholders and articulating their roles and engagement in the assessment process. This approach ensures that stakeholders are aligned with the purposes and goals of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia, and that they maintain a shared understanding and commitment to meeting the needs of other stakeholder groups.

In seeking to engage these stakeholders, a communication strategy and targeted campaigns (e.g., improving girls' education through assessment; community focused and led messaging about assessment; and information sessions targeting parents and guardians) should be developed by the FGS and FMS, with input from other local, national, and international partners. This approach will help ensure that those most impacted by and engaged with the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia will be reached, and help promote inclusivity, strengthen trust, and reinforce the sustainability of this framework among stakeholder groups. Specifically, the communication strategy should incorporate students, teachers, parents and guardians, community education committees, private school associations, head teachers, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education, and the Federal Member State Ministries.

4.6.1 Students in the assessment process

At the core of a student-centred approach to assessment is the student and their learning needs. Accordingly, assessment must always support students to learn successfully by:

- encouraging them to take ownership of their learning journey and plan actions for the future
- providing opportunities to reflect on their learning progress, for example with teachers and parents, who can help motivate students
- supporting them to have a clear understanding of what they need to demonstrate to provide evidence of their learning. For example, students should be provided with assessment rubrics when asked to complete an assessment task. Teacher–student conversations are essential in ensuring shared understandings of expectations and notions of what quality looks like.
- providing access to meaningful descriptions of what they are to learn and have opportunities to evaluate their progress against these descriptions
- providing opportunities for them to rate their own learning progress or wellbeing, through self-assessment
- providing options to engage in different forms of assessment to best demonstrate their learning, including collaborative tasks, written assessments, verbal presentations, and discussions.

4.6.2 Teachers in the assessment process

Teachers support student learning by creating environments that are engaging, inclusive, and responsive to learners. Ideally, teachers guide students through tailored instruction designed to anticipate and be responsive to diverse learner needs and abilities, and support learning growth. This student-centric approach to learning (See Section 2.1), supported through active and informed teacher involvement, is aligned with established research and best practices⁽³³⁾. In particular, one crucial element involves teachers' ability to use a range of assessments and assessment data to provide evidence of what students know and can do. Specifically, assessment data can be used to highlight learners' achievement levels, learning needs, and what they need to learn next. At the classroom and school levels, this assessment data can support lesson planning for differentiated teaching and learning, and guide overall school improvement, respectively. To support teachers in these activities, capacity building and assessment resources (e.g., assessment tools, approaches, and exemplars) should be made available at pre-service and in-service levels to enable teachers to:

- enhance their assessment literacy
- design assessments and use assessment data to inform classroom teaching and support individual learning growth
- work with head teachers to develop assessment and reporting approaches for monitoring student and cohort progress over time
- meaningfully communicate assessment outcomes to students, parents/guardians, and other education stakeholders.

33. Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203887332>

4.6.3 Parents and guardians in the assessment process

Parents and guardians can play a crucial role in supporting their children's education. They can instill important values associated with lifelong learning, and reinforce the agenda set by head teachers and teachers in the home. Parents are also well positioned to assist their child with setting learning goals and to encourage discussions about future careers and aspirations. Reflecting on learning progress and celebrating progression toward goals, as opposed to focusing on whether a result was a pass or fail, can help motivate students to invest more effort in their learning, and empower them to pursue mastery and the application of what they know.

4.6.4 Community involvement in the assessment process

Communities are crucial for motivating learners, mobilizing resources to support schools, and ensuring the sustainability of supports and resources provided. Given the challenges facing the Federal and State governments to support schools, community groups – particularly Community Education Committees (CEC) – have taken some of the responsibility of initiating and maintaining educational institutions. CEC can help ensure that learning outcomes are prioritised by supporting cooperation between non-state actors, such as NGO, and education authorities. This, in turn, can help strengthen partnerships and communication between system-level stakeholders and CEC to ensure that schools have the assessment-related resources they need, and that teachers possess the skills required for diagnosing and supporting students' learning needs.

4.6.5 Head teachers in the assessment process

Assessment data provide head teachers with key information about student performance, teaching, and the curriculum, as well as insights about how these elements are interrelated and can impact a student's learning progress.

It is necessary that head teachers are trained and able to use classroom-based assessment data to:

- ensure that information about student learning is holistically and meaningfully communicated to students and teachers
- monitor student achievement at a cohort level to ensure that strategies and resources are available to support student learning and their wellbeing
- help guide teachers' classroom pedagogy and delivery of the curriculum.

4.6.6 The role of the MoECHE

The MoECHE plays a pivotal role in the National Learning Assessment Framework. As the federal body tasked with overseeing education nationally, it is responsible through its various departments and units for education-related planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting activities, all focused on system and learner improvement. The Ministry, for example, is planning to design and provide head teacher materials and training sessions for Continuous Professional Development in assessment. These sessions will be conducted and monitored by each FMS' quality assurance department, which is empowered to delegate and implement these sessions at the school level. This devolved approach will help ensure that regional leaders and head teachers will receive the assessment training and support needed to improve the quality of education in their respective regions, and strengthen efforts to devolve education services across Somalia. Additionally, the Department of Examinations and Certification leads the development of test items for national examinations, by maintaining a pool of expert teachers who have been trained to develop items for different subjects.

As the MoECHE seeks to fulfil its mandate to provide an accessible and equitable quality education for all Somali students ⁽³⁴⁾, it is noted that assessment-related initiatives developed by this ministry could include:

34. Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education. (2024). Wasaaradda Waxbarashada, Hiddaha Iyo Tacliinta Sare. <https://moe.gov.so/en/about-us/>

- Developing/Delivering training session/workshops for FMS stakeholders that address:
 - o Assessment approaches and methods
 - o Item writing for multiple-choice, closed response, and open items
 - o Developing marking schemes and scoring frames
 - o Marking and moderation
 - o Managing assessment operations
 - o Data capture, analysis, and reporting
 - o Assessment record keeping.
- Designing and providing Continuous Professional Development resources so that:
 - o MoECHE stakeholders can run regional capacity building sessions for head teachers
 - o Head teachers can run local capacity building sessions in districts and within schools for teachers.
- Rolling out early grades standardised assessment materials and supporting resources
- Developing and implementing assessment training into pre-service teacher training programs to ensure that the next generation of professionals will have the skills needed to assess students and support individual learning

The MoECHE will also leverage the expertise of international organisations and development partners to strengthen the capacity of FGS and FMS stakeholders. By collaborating with these organisations, the MoECHE will be able to deliver workshops and training initiatives that meet international standards, while addressing regional and local challenges.

4.6.7 The role of the FMS Ministries of Education

FMS are responsible for implementing national assessment policies and standards established by the MoECHE. This includes conducting regular assessments to monitor student learning outcomes and ensuring alignment with national educational priorities. In particular, FMS can provide training and resources to key stakeholders, head teachers, and teachers to enhance their capacity to administrate and evaluate assessments, while collaborating with local educational institutions to develop contextualised assessment tools that reflect the regional needs. States will also be actively involved in gathering and analysing data from assessments to inform policymaking and improve educational practices. This decentralised approach allows for more tailored and effective assessment strategies, promoting a higher quality of education across the regions in Somalia. The FMS will also facilitate the sharing of best practices and innovations in student assessment among the states, fostering a collaborative environment for continuous improvement in educational standards.

CHAPTER 5

5. Planning priorities

The implementation of the National Learning Assessment Framework (NLAF) is a substantial and long-term undertaking that will help improve education quality for all Somalis. Training and support materials will therefore need to be developed to support key stakeholders – especially teachers, headteachers, and school leaders – to implement the NLAF, and under supervision of the MoECHE.

As a starting point, 3 priorities provide an immediate way forward for implementing the NLAF:

1. Improving the assessment literacy of teachers
2. Provision of standardised assessment tools for early grades
3. Development of a National Assessment Programme

Improving the assessment literacy of teachers, and providing them with standardised tools to utilise from the early primary grades onwards, is an efficient way to strengthen classroom-based assessment – the foundation of the Somali assessment system. The focus on early primary grades is fundamental to influencing student learning throughout their educational careers. Specifically, the provision of assessment tools that provide clear feedback will allow teachers to tailor their teaching, and provide learners with the information they need to be supported on their learning journey. Additionally, the use of standardised tests from school entry through to grade 6 promotes sustainable assessment and record keeping, and crucially, will improve the quality of education practices and learner outcomes in Somalia.

The development of a National Assessment Programme (NAP) is also an efficient way to inform higher policy goals. A good, well-designed NAP can provide information about differences between FMS, especially in the absence of comparable examinations, and can be used to report against SDG Indicators

4.1.1. The MoECHE has indicated that national assessments focused on grade 3 and 6 students will be implemented once every three years under the NAP. This frequency of testing will enable sufficient time for designing and updating test items, piloting testing items, and monitoring the progress of target populations to identify gaps and relative progress between sub-groups (e.g., such as girls and boys, urban and rural).

A National Assessment Advisory Committee should be established to oversee all three priorities, and maintain NLAF policies and practices. This committee will ensure consistency and quality, offer expert guidance, monitor progress, and address challenges, supporting continual improvement in assessment across regions.

5.1 Improving assessment literacy

Improving assessment literacy is crucial for teachers as it enhances their ability to make informed instructional decisions and tailor their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of students. Moreover, it ensures that they can effectively use assessment data to identify areas for improvement, support student learning, and contribute to the educational goals set by the national framework.

The MoECHE will develop policy to ensure that key assessment topics and requirements will be added to pre-service and in-service teacher training courses to improve their assessment literacy. These requirements ⁽³⁵⁾ for training pre-service and in-service teachers could include/address:

- selecting appropriate assessment methods for instructional decisions
- developing fit-for-purpose assessment methods for instructional decisions
- administering, scoring, and interpreting a range of teacher, school, state, federal, and commercially produced assessments

35. Brookhart, S. M. (2011). Educational assessment knowledge and skills for teachers. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 30(1), 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-3992.2010.00195.x>

- using assessment results to make decisions about individual students, plan teaching, and improve school practices
- creating valid grading and reporting procedures based on student assessments
- communicating assessment results effectively to students, parents, and education stakeholders.

These requirements are aligned with the revised National Education Policy 2024, which highlights objectives that aim to “improve the quality of teacher training programs” and “ensure regular in-service training for teachers ...to improve [their] knowledge and competence” (Section 4.8.3, p. 21-22).

5.2 Standardised assessments for early grades

Research shows that early literacy and numeracy skills are strong predictors of later academic achievement. Studies have found that children’s knowledge and learning around the time they start school, or in the first year of school, are very strong indicators of their levels of achievement in reading and mathematics several years later. This underscores the importance of early assessment for identifying students’ strengths and areas for improvement, allowing for timely interventions to support their learning.

Following the principles of focusing on the early primary years, and monitoring learning progression, the MoECHE will provide teachers with access to standardised emergent literacy and emergent numeracy assessments. The development of these standardised assessments may be supported by organisations that have the capacity to develop standardised tests and support capacity building for MoECHE stakeholders, or provision could be outsourced to organisations as part of a development plan. Alternatively, commercial literacy and numeracy assessments could be acquired and used by teachers in the classroom.

In practice, students may be assessed using standardised tools at primary school entry, and the beginning of grades 3 and 6. The results will be recorded in the EMIS and form a record of progression that follows the student through the first six years of primary schooling. Such assessments could be administered at the beginning of each grade, so that the teacher and student can plan for that grade year accordingly. Where appropriate, the MoECHE understands that Somalia could also participate in shared assessment networks between countries in East Africa or Africa at large.

5.3 Development of a National Assessment Programme

To improve education quality nationwide, it is essential that the results from periodic national assessments are reliably reported to inform a range of system and school priorities. These include supporting policy and practice development, strategic planning (including capacity building and implementation), curriculum reviews, and strengthening teacher training programs and teaching methodologies. Assessment results should also be used to strengthen learner inclusivity and equity, particularly on issues relating to gender and linguistic and cultural demands. This ensures that the results from national assessments can be directly translated into actions that enhance learning outcomes and system accountability.

The MoECHE has prioritised the assessment of grade 3 and grade 6 students under the NAP, focusing on the Somali language and mathematics. The frequency of these national assessments will be once every three years to enable:

1. sufficient time to develop and trial new test items, including:

Year 1: undertake analysis and reporting from the previous cycle

Year 2: prepare and trial test items

Year 3: conduct sampling and data collection.

2. tracking of cohort progress; i.e., the student cohort assessed in grade (Pre-primary, Grade 1, 2), while student’s in Grade 6 will assessed in Grade 3,4 and 5.

3. Accordingly, the design of a National Assessment Programme (NAP) ⁽³⁶⁾ for Somalia will incorporate an assessment framework and specifications that include:
- defining the purpose of the assessment and specifying what data is reported where to meet the purposes
 - addressing criteria on reporting on SDG indicators
 - defining the target populations at grades 3 and 6 to be assessed once every three years
 - defining the subject or domain of assessment for grade 3 and grade 6. Based on the MoECHE's consultations with national stakeholders, subject based assessment frameworks will be developed for the Somali language and mathematics. First, each assessment framework should be used to define the construct to be measured. For example, the subject may be as broad as the Somali language and include speaking, listening, reading and literary knowledge. Alternatively, the construct may be narrower and aimed at early learners. For example, reading may be the construct and include precursor skills in domains such as decoding, letter and word recognition, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and fluency. Consideration must also be given to how subject based assessments need to be adapted for children with special needs and those from marginalised groups. Second, in defining the subject, a subject based assessment framework will generally indicate the relationship between the assessment and the curriculum. This can be achieved in various ways from mapping sub-constructs to curricula content, to using curriculum definitions and expected learning outcomes to derive the meaning of the construct to be measured.
 - informing progress towards SDG4, particularly policies and practices for monitoring and reporting learning, and strengthening inclusive and equitable approaches so that a quality education is accessible for all. This programme must therefore be developed from the outset to be consistent with reporting requirements for SDG4, without compromising on national policy priorities for assessment. Documentation should be developed to guide comprehensive data collection, support the use of standardised assessment tools, enable inclusive practices, and support capacity building for teachers, head teachers, and other key stakeholders. It must also address regular monitoring and transparent reporting of educational progress, stakeholder engagement, and the use of technology to enhance efficiency. Implementing these components will serve to contribute to achieving SDG4 for Somalia.
 - a test design or blueprint. The test design will address some of the technical and psychometric aspects of the program. In particular, it will usually indicate the balance of item content – for example, the number of items measuring geometry, statistics or data representation within a mathematics assessment. It will also specify aspects of horizontal and vertical linkage between assessments – for example, through the use of a core set of items or via rotating booklet design – and indicate any need for booklet rotation. Consideration should be given to the intended distribution of items at various levels of difficulty, as well as to content areas, for each subject and grade level to be assessed.
 - a focus on contextual information gathered to help researchers and policy makers understand differences in learning outcomes. At the very least, demographic information is usually collected such as gender and age. There are other important contexts to consider about the student (e.g. family size, language at home), school (e.g. class size, teacher qualifications) and community (e.g. community engagement in school governance) that may warrant the collection of contextual information, pending the requirements of the MoECHE. Contextual data collected should be informed by relevant literature and expected associations with student achievement in the assessed domains. These should be described clearly in the assessment framework or specifications documentation. As well as identifying the contextual variables to be gathered, the framework should describe how the data will be gathered – i.e., describing the questionnaire or other methods for collecting data and how they will be presented to participants.

36. See Appendix B. Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment for a brief presentation of key areas that need to be addressed to design, implement, and monitor a robust assessment program, aligned to SDG4.

- technical standards and quality assurance procedures. These describe the expected technical quality for all aspects of the learning assessment and indicate how standards can be used as part of quality monitoring and reporting⁽³⁷⁾. Technical standards should be set and monitored for all assessment programs, from national assessment programmes, to census based collections using standardised tools in the classroom. This should include a description of standardised administration procedures in all schools/classrooms to ensure that the assessment is conducted in the same way in all locations. It could also include a quality monitoring programme involving observation of testing sessions in all or a subset of schools, which can be used to report on how successfully administration procedures were followed and document challenges that occurred.
- a set of plans and procedures that will need to be developed in key areas. Aside from reporting and dissemination, which are generally relevant to main data collection, each of the following tasks should be planned for in preparation for both the pilot study (field trial) phase and the main study phase:

- o sample design (including oversampling of regions or key subgroups, as needed), implementation and weighting

- o item, test, and questionnaire development and review

- o materials production, logistics, field operations and test administration

- o data management, including data entry and data cleaning

- o coding and/or marking of open-ended responses, including expected human resource requirements (e.g., X coders for Y days based on the number of items and student responses to be coded)

- o communications with schools, parents, media, and other stakeholders

- o analysis, both psychometric (e.g., scaling, examination of potential issues such as differential item functioning) and secondary analysis

- o reporting and dissemination

Finally, it will be essential to conduct a pilot of the proposed grade 3 and 6 learning assessments in Somali language and mathematics in selected regions, and using representative sampling approaches, to ensure the effectiveness and validity of the tools and processes prior to a nationwide rollout. A well-structured pilot allows for the identification and resolution of potential challenges related to instrument design, administration logistics, data management, and contextual relevance. It provides an opportunity to refine test items, ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness, and train field staff, thereby enhancing the reliability of the assessment outcomes. Most importantly, psychometric analyses of pilot data will establish whether the assessments accurately measure student learning and whether any test items can be implemented successfully at scale to support informed decision-making and system improvement. As the assessment changes and develops from cycle to cycle, piloting should be repeated accordingly.

For further details on these aspects refer to reference documents such as the Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment⁽³⁸⁾.

37. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2017). Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment. <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/principles-good-practice-learning-assessments-2017-en.pdf>

38. Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

6. Planning considerations

Strengthening Somalia's assessment system requires careful consideration of several key issues. Specifically, to ensure the successful implementation of the 3 priority areas outlined in Section 5, stakeholders should consider a range of issues that include determining the most effective approach for developing tools and processes, whether through outsourcing, insourcing, or a hybrid model. Costing and budget planning are also critical to ensure sustainable financing of the assessment initiatives. Additionally, clear organisational roles and responsibilities must be established to facilitate effective implementation, supported by a robust mandate, policy, and legal authority. Finally, effective communication strategies are essential to engage stakeholders and disseminate information.

In the present context, the three considerations that follow should be prioritised to support the focal areas addressed in Section 5. Firstly, it is important to address finance and provision, such as devolving the management of education funds towards Federal Member States, and the strategic allocation of non-governmental funds. Secondly, a monitoring and evaluation programme for the implementation of the National Learning Assessment Framework will sharpen programme goals, enhance activities, and build the capacity of stakeholders involved in the programme design. Finally, the need to maintain and strengthen data privacy and management of assessment data involves ensuring that international standards and frameworks for data privacy and management are in place nationally.

6.1 Financing and provision

Various finance-related contexts will need to be considered to successfully develop guidelines and plans for supporting the implementation of a NLA for Somalia. In brief, these considerations include:

- Managing how responsibilities can be shifted from FGS towards FMS, in parallel with the management of resources (e.g., funds and budgets). Currently, most spending is managed by the FGS. More discussion is needed to empower FMS, especially in taking on a larger share of education spending.
- Closing the gap between public spending on education in Somalia, at 5.2% in 2020, and achieving the goal of spending at least 15-20% of the public budget on education as aspired to in the 2015 Incheon Declaration ⁽³⁹⁾. This increase is crucial to achieving global education goals, such as inclusive and quality education for all.
- Supporting actions focused on fully utilising approved public budget spending on education. This will involve addressing budget credibility concerns and process inefficiencies to improve planning and predictability over budgets and expenditure, as well as policymaking and decision making.
- Strengthening collaborations with development partners and stakeholders so that education investment can be strategically directed for the short, medium, and longer terms.

In addition to public provision, the roles and responsibilities of international organisations, NGOs, and other non-governmental stakeholders in Somalia's education sector must be organised, aligned and monitored to ensure that education and assessment system priorities are centred on Somali learners and target system strengthening. This approach will also ensure that all such programs avoid replication and that resources are sustainably and judiciously deployed.

39. UNESCO. (2015). Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All [ED-2016/WS/28]. https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf

It is essential that the allocation of public and private education spending is strategically directed towards learners, teachers and head teachers, schools, initiatives, and other relevant areas and stakeholders that demonstrate the highest potential for impact. This requires an alignment with national priorities and international standards that articulate clear short, medium, and long-term education goals. By fostering a collaborative framework where funding and resources are judiciously managed and transparently tracked, these organisations can contribute effectively to the sustainable development of Somalia's education infrastructure, ensuring that all efforts are unified towards the common goal of advancing educational outcomes for Somali learners.

6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

There are several ways to develop a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) program for an initiative, policy, or program. For example, a typical contemporary application of a monitoring program includes an additional emphasis on research, which can improve the program as it develops by identifying and documenting problematic issues and innovative solutions.

Developing an M&E plan requires specialist skills and knowledge. Often, M&E specialists are commissioned or assigned to work with program developers, and this can:

- bring a sharper focus to the goals of the program
- shape the design of the program development activities
- raise the capability of those involved in the program design. Typically, an M&E plan will be built around:
 - establishing a set of goals or desired end-state, often with intermediate goals
 - establishing a program logic or theory of change, which outlines the activities and actions that are posited and how they will move conditions from a current state toward the desired state
 - establishing a set of measurable indicators that are used to determine the degree to which the goals are being met
- determining a method and plan for collecting data to measure and report upon the indicators.

Crucially, an M&E program should be designed to collect, analyse, and report learner data that are aligned with system priorities and based on measurable indicators. For example, system priorities might include the need to determine foundational literacy and numeracy in key demographics using measurable indicators that track learner and cohort outcomes over time. These indicators might include:

- **Literacy indicators:** the ability to recognise letters, decode words, and comprehend text.
- **Numeracy indicators:** number recognition and counting, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

More broadly, an M&E program must also consider:

- **Monitoring:**

- o adherence to technical standards, for example, sampling, test administration protocols, and data capture procedures

- o test item development and adaptation/translation

- o participation response rates and coverage

- o assessment coverage, data use rate, and gender parity index in results

40. Association for the Development of Education in Africa, & Human Capital Africa. (2024, July). The foundational learning starter pack. [https://knowledgehub.adeanet.org/elibrary/adea2024d006#:~:text=The%20%22Foundational%20Learning%20S](https://knowledgehub.adeanet.org/elibrary/adea2024d006#:~:text=The%20%22Foundational%20Learning%20S%20arter%20Pack%22%20aims%20to%20support,and%20strategies%20to%20improve%20foundational%20learnin%20in%20Africa) [arter%20Pack%22%20aims%20to%20support,and%20strategies%20to%20improve%20foundational%20learnin](https://knowledgehub.adeanet.org/elibrary/adea2024d006#:~:text=The%20%22Foundational%20Learning%20S) [g%20in%20Africa](https://knowledgehub.adeanet.org/elibrary/adea2024d006#:~:text=The%20%22Foundational%20Learning%20S)

- **Evaluating:**

- o annual reviews and the utility of assessment platforms and EMIS

- o the fit for purpose case for assessments, such as providing data for reporting against SDG4 indicators

- o the reliability and validity of instruments, through piloting and conducting psychometric analysis (using techniques like item response theory)

There is a need to ensure that monitoring and evaluation are not overlooked during the program design process and ensure that established processes support the collection of reliable, valid, and usable baseline data. Hence, the development of an M&E plan is recommended in the very first phase of implementation of the NLAF for Somalia.

6.3 Data privacy and management

At a system level, data privacy and effective management of education data are crucial for maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of student information. All data management practices should comply with internationally recognised standards to prevent data breaches and misuse. Compliance with these standards ensures the protection of sensitive student data and supports responsible data governance, which is essential for transparency and accountability. Across the African Union, the Convention on Cyber Security and Data Protection Policy, also known as the Malabo Convention, provides a standards framework to secure data privacy and management. It is aligned with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and aims to uphold principles for maintaining student information confidentiality. These frameworks provide the basis for supporting education data privacy and management in Somalia, where this field is still nascent⁽⁴¹⁾.

Within schools, good record keeping practices allow teachers and head teachers to efficiently and reliably monitor student learning and wellbeing and respond to students' needs. This involves standardising data management processes to address data capture, data security, and privacy.

Records of individual students should cover evidence gathered using multiple methods. This includes test scores and observational notes that provide evidence of students' learning levels and academic, social, emotional, and/or behavioural development. These descriptions may be formal or illustrative examples of application. Together, these records can be triangulated and interpreted holistically, and used by teachers and other school staff, students, and parents to monitor learning and wellbeing.

In summary, the evolving needs of the Somali education system necessitate progressive principles and standards for data privacy and management. Such principles and standards should address, for example, transparency, consent, data security, access and control, accountability, purpose limitation, data quality, and children's privacy. These principles aim to ensure that all stakeholders are fully informed about data collection and use, and that data is securely managed, accurate, and utilised for intended purposes. Special attention should be also given to protecting the privacy rights of children, with additional safeguards in place to handle sensitive information. These principles will support the responsible management of educational data and the protection of learners' privacy⁽⁴²⁾.

41. Babalola, O. (2022, February). Data Protection Legal Regime and Data Governance in Africa: An Overview. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-24498-8_4; Vallée, E., & Hsu, Y.-C. (2023). Protecting Students: Data Privacy in the African Union. *TechTrends*, 67(2), 203–206. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-023-00834-0>

42. UNESCO. (2022). Minding the data: Protecting learners' privacy and security. UNESCO. <https://doi.org/10.54675/NNAA4843>

CHAPTER 7

7. Next steps

Next steps for implementing the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia involve developing programmes, tools, and processes, leveraging both internal and external expertise. Planning for these activities should:

- ensure that the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia is supported by a strong mandate, policy, and legal authority to secure its legitimacy, structure, and sustainable implementation at every level.
- prioritise the establishment of a National Assessment Advisory Committee, and consider the creation of national assessment unit
- set out clearly designed leadership and operational roles and responsibilities for all national, state, regional, district, and school level stakeholders to support communication and accountability
- clearly outline project timelines, deliverables, and deliverable ownership. The plan should also establish a staged approach for capacity building among key stakeholder groups, such as teachers, examiners, and ministry officials. Capacity building activities could include short- and medium-term training programs and certifications, as well as sustained institutional development support, provided by key partners.
- develop training and support materials needed to support teachers, headteachers, school leaders, and other key stakeholders, with implementing the National Learning Assessment Framework.

Considerations should be made for promoting and monitoring equity and inclusion across the system. This will ensure that inclusive assessment tools and accommodations for girls, nomadic learners, children with disabilities, and other marginalised groups, are planned for and implemented to support learning. Assessments must also be culturally, linguistically, and contextually appropriate, with teacher training and community support provided to ensure greater access and participation for all learners.

Costing and budget considerations will focus on ensuring efficient allocation of resources. Financing will involve advising on the strategic allocation of government and non-governmental funds to improve efficiencies. Organisational roles and responsibilities will need to be clearly defined and mandated, with MoECHE overseeing policy development and coordination at the federal level, while state-level ministries implement these policies locally.

Consultation and effective communication strategies will be essential to keep all stakeholders engaged and informed throughout the implementation process.

CHAPTER 8

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CHAPTER 9

9. Appendix A. Methodological approach for developing the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia

The methodological approach taken to draft the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia involved a range of activities undertaken across three phases. Phase 1 involved FGS and FMS MOECHE delivering a range of inclusive stakeholder workshop engagements, a desktop review, and ongoing consultations with the MoECHE, to develop a draft of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia. Phase 2 involved the FGS MoECHE conducting in-depth stakeholder consultations to gain feedback about the draft National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia and provide stakeholder recommendations for inclusion into this framework. During Phase 3, MOECHE was tasked with refining the draft National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia based on recommendations derived from Phase 2 stakeholder consultations, and further consultations with the MoECHE. A brief description of each phase is outlined below.

Phase 1

Stakeholder workshops. MOECHE delivered two online workshops (2-hrs each) across two days to education stakeholders working in Somalia. These stakeholders brought a diverse range of specialist knowledge and experience regarding curriculum, pedagogy, education policy, school leadership, and monitoring and evaluation. Workshop attendees were drawn from the MoECHE at the federal and state levels, universities, private sector, and private non-governmental organisations (NGO).

On Day-1, MOECHE introduced the concept of a National Learning Assessment Framework and its significance. The focus was on an integrated, student-centred approach to assessment, aligning curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to achieve learning goals. The discussions emphasised the importance of assessments in identifying students' understanding and capabilities, and how best to support their learning in the classroom. The goal was to promote growth over time, recognising that every student can make learning progress, irrespective of their starting point.

On Day-2, the workshop discussions delved deeper into the components of an assessment system. Various types of assessments were covered, including classroom-based, school and state, national monitoring, and cross-national assessments. The importance of quality assessment and monitoring to inform educational decision-making at all levels was stressed. The discussions also focused on the need for early and regular feedback, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and the importance of developing assessment literacy among teachers. Standardisation of exams for comparability and the evaluation of schools and teacher accountability were also key topics.

These workshop sessions were crucial for gathering initial insights and feedback from stakeholders. This information was then analysed and presented to the MoECHE to gather further feedback, which was then used to refine and inform the development of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia.

Desktop review. Following the stakeholder workshops, a desktop review on the education system in Somalia, and assessment system in particular, was conducted. This involved an analysis of existing policy documents, practice guidelines, reports, and data, to understand the current state of education and assessment practices. This review aimed to identify key challenges, opportunities, and strategies within the system. It examined the contextual structure and effectiveness of the assessment system, including classroom-based assessments, school, and state assessments, national monitoring programs, and cross-national assessments. The findings from this review provided valuable insights for informing the development of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia, ensuring that it would be tailored to address the unique needs and contexts of Somalia's education system.

Consultations with the MoECHE. From August 2024 to January 2025, QASD MoECHE met regularly to shape the development of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia. These consultation meetings involved reporting on the findings from the stakeholder workshops and desktop review, providing updates and seeking feedback on the development of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia draft, and ensuring that all activities and deliverables were completed on-time and with accountability to the MoECHE.

Phase 2

Following the activities above, the draft National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia was shared with the MoECHE to gather stakeholder feedback. Preparations were made by the MoECHE during 2025 to organise a Consultation of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia event to gather stakeholder feedback that would:

- provide diverse perspectives and inputs to ensure that the National Learning Assessment Framework would reflect Somalia's varied educational contexts
- raise awareness of the framework's goals
- identify challenges in current assessment practices
- promote collaboration across education sectors
- compile actionable recommendations for finalising the National Learning Assessment Framework.

By accomplishing these objectives, the MoECHE envisioned that the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia would not only serve as a technical instrument, but a national symbol of progress, unity, and the shared aspiration for a better future through education. The MoECHE-led stakeholder consultations were thus conducted over five consecutive days, and engaged 540 key education stakeholders from across the Federal Member States (FMS), including Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Southwest, Banadir, and SSC-Khaatumo.

Stakeholders comprised of representatives from Regional Education Officers, Officials from State Ministries of Education, District Education Officers, and Community Education Committees. Other key stakeholder groups included university lecturers, teacher associations, academic experts, teachers and school headteachers, parents, and representatives from civil society and local and international NGOs.

The approaches used to elicit stakeholder feedback involved group work and focus group discussions; brainstorming, interviews, and experience sharing; lectures, interactive workshops, and feedback sessions, and the use of resource materials and documentation of feedback. The types of questions and issues raised over the course of this consultation process addressed:

- national educational priorities
- long-term education development
- benefits of an Assessment Framework
- impact of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia priorities on educational outcomes
- challenges in implementation
- strategies for nationwide scaling
- ensuring inclusivity and equity
- balancing national cohesion with regional autonomy
- challenges in assessment literacy
- support for standardized assessments

- effectiveness of standardized assessments
- challenges in national monitoring program
- beneficial policy areas.

The findings arising from the MoECHE's Consultation on the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia addressed a broad range of challenges. These included enhancing reporting mechanisms to better inform policy and practice, strengthening capacity building and implementation strategies, and promoting inclusion and equity within education and assessment. The findings also highlighted the need to prioritise teacher training and the development of materials for the framework's rollout, adapting assessments for children with special needs and marginalised groups, and updating the framework to reflect gender, linguistic, and cultural sensitivity.

In general, stakeholder consultations resulted in recommendations that proposed forming a national assessment advisory committee for ongoing oversight, piloting the learning assessment in selected regions before nationwide implementation, and developing a comprehensive digital platform for data collection and analysis. Crucially, the key recommendations prioritised for inclusion into the National Learning Assessment Framework were:

- **Subjects for assessment.** Stakeholders collectively recommended Somali Language and Mathematics as the core subjects for national learning assessments. These subjects were selected due to their significance in developing students' cognitive abilities, moral values, and language proficiency. Somali is essential for foundational literacy and national identity. Mathematics strengthens logical thinking and numeracy.
- **Target grades.** Grades 3 and 6 were emphasised and agreed upon by stakeholders to be the most appropriate levels for conducting learning assessments. Grade 3 serves as a key stage to evaluate early foundational skills, while Grade 6 marks the end of primary education and offers an important checkpoint before transitioning to secondary school. These two levels allow for effective tracking of student progress at both early and upper stages of basic education.
- **Assessment frequency.** A biennial (every two years) schedule was recommended by stakeholders across all regions. This frequency was deemed effective in allowing sufficient time for planning, implementation, and meaningful use of the results. It supports evidence-based decision-making and allows for timely educational interventions to address learning gaps without overwhelming the system with excessive testing.
- **Use of results.** Stakeholders agreed that the assessment results should be used to improve the quality of education nationwide. The data generated will guide curriculum reviews, inform teaching methodologies, strengthen teacher training programs, and support strategic education planning and policy development. This ensures that assessment findings are directly translated into actions that enhance learning outcomes and system accountability.

Phase 3

In seeking to refine the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia, the MoECHE shared its findings from the Consultation of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia event with World Bank team. Using this information, and further consultations with the MoECHE, FGS subsequently redrafted the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia and shared this document with the MoECHE for consideration, final edits, and dissemination.

CHAPTER 10

10. Appendix B. Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment

Developing a successful national learning assessment program requires careful consideration and planning. The Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment (GP-LA) (World Bank) provide an excellent starting point and comprehensive guide for policymakers and stakeholders who are involved in designing, implementing, and evaluating technically rigorous, ethically sound large-scale learning assessments. The GP-LA is also aligned with international standards, particularly in support of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aim to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The GP-LA comprises three main sections:

- a. The broader quality context section describes the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics as the broader framework guiding the principles seen in the GP-LA;
- b. The key quality concepts for learning assessment section presents specific cross-cutting terminology that are relevant for designing, implementing, and evaluating technically rigorous, ethically sound large-scale learning assessments. These terms are fitness for purpose, clarity, consistency, objectivity, independence, transparency, accountability, technical rigour, ethical considerations, and fairness;
- c. The good practice in learning assessment section outlines 14 key areas of a robust assessment program. Each area details its corresponding definition, objective, and how this objective can be achieved.

The 14 key areas addressed in the GP-LA are:

1. Formulating policy goals and priorities to be addressed with the learning assessment
2. Establishing and managing an assessment team responsible for designing and implementing the learning assessment
3. Formulating and articulating technical standards to guide assessment activities
4. Developing an assessment framework
5. Developing high quality cognitive instruments
6. Developing high quality contextual instruments
7. Linguistic quality control for translation of cognitive and contextual instruments
8. Designing the cognitive and contextual instruments
9. Sampling
10. Standardised field operations
11. Managing data
12. Scaling cognitive and contextual data
13. Analysing data
14. Reporting and dissemination

Ensuring national assessments are grounded in solid methodology across these steps is essential for achieving robust and reliable results. By following these best practices, assessment agencies can generate high-quality data and deliver insightful analyses that meaningfully inform educational monitoring, policy decisions, and classroom practice. The Principles of Good Practice in Learning Assessment can be accessed [here](#).

CHAPTER 11

11. Appendix C. Additional resources

The following resources were used to inform the development of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia, but have not been included in the Reference list as they were not cited. These resources comprised of government policies, reports, statistics, and documents, as well as those obtained from non-government organisations and the scholarly literature. The insights and best practices derived from these resources were used to inform the design of the National Learning Assessment Framework for Somalia. ss

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