Continental Assessment Framework for AFRICA

SUMMARY

African Union | LEARN Leveraging Education Analysis for Results Network

ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT IN AFRICA AEAA

FOREWORD

Education is the cornerstone of Africa's future. It is the key to unlocking the ambitions of Agenda 2063, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), and the global commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4. Yet, despite important progress, one major obstacle has persisted: the absence of reliable, comparable learning data across our continent. Many countries assess learning at the national level, and regional initiatives such as PASEC and SEACMEQ provide valuable insights. But taken together, these efforts are fragmented, leaving us without a unified picture of how well Africa's children are learning.

This gap is not simply technical — it strikes at the heart of our ability to ensure quality education for all. Without trustworthy and comparable data, policymakers cannot track learning effectively, education systems cannot be held accountable, and investments risk being made in the dark. Recognizing this urgent challenge, African Union Member States, at the 2023 meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology, called for a continental solution.

Through the AU Leveraging Education Analysis for Results Network (LEARN), the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA), working with, the Global Education Monitoring Report, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), developed the Continental Assessment Framework for Africa (CAF-Africa). This framework, rooted in Africa's realities and shaped by the review of national curricula across diverse countries, represents a turning point. Its official launch at the 41st AEAA Conference in Addis Ababa in August 2025 is not just a milestone for education assessment — it is a statement of Africa's determination to lead with homegrown solutions.

CAF-Africa offers more than proficiency standards in mathematics and reading at Grades 3, 6, and 9. It provides countries with the tools to generate robust, comparable evidence; to strengthen assessment capacity; and to ensure that policy choices and investments are guided by facts, not assumptions. Most importantly, it reaffirms that every child in Africa deserves the chance to learn — and for their learning to be measured and valued.

As we enter the African Union's Decade of Education, CAF-Africa symbolizes our collective resolve to move beyond rhetoric to action. It will equip us to track progress, drive reforms, and hold ourselves accountable to Africa's children. Above all, it embodies our vision of an Africa where education empowers every learner to thrive, innovate, and contribute to building the Africa we want.

H.E. Gaspard Banyankimbona
Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union Commission

Dr. Michael M. Chilala
Chief Executive Officer, Examinations Council of Zambia,
Executive Secretary, Association for Educational Assessment in Africa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Continental Assessment Framework for Africa sets out a bold vision for education, developed in partnership under the African Union's Leveraging Education Analysis for Results Network (LEARN). We are grateful to the many individuals and organizations that came together to shape this vision.

At the African Union, the work was led by Adoumtar Noubatour, Coordinator, Pan-African Institute for Education for Development, alongside Sophia Ashipala, Head of Education Division at the African Union Commission. At the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA), it was carried forward under the overall guidance of Michael Chilala, Chief Executive Officer of the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ), and Executive Secretary, AEAA, with Shadreck Nkoya, Director, Research, Planning and Information, ECZ, as the overall lead and focal point.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Silvia Montoya for championing this vision and for sharing her technical expertise and guidance, which ensured that the Continental Assessment Framework for Africa could move from concept to reality.

Special recognition to the Global Education Monitoring Report for leading the implementation partnership agreement with Stellenbosch University, in particular, Manos Antoninis, Director, and Josephine Kiyenje, Senior Project Lead for the Spotlight series on Africa, whose dedicated efforts and commitment were instrumental to the success of this initiative.

At Stellenbosch University, we are grateful to a team of specialists in assessment and evaluation for their indispensable expertise. Professor Sarah J. Howie led the coordination and analytical support, with the support of Brent Abrahams and Ibukun Balogun. Mathematics was led by Ingrid Sapire with support from Annie Savard, while reading was led by Lisa Zimmerman with support from Sarah J. Howie and Rinelle Evans.

At the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Albert Nsengiyumva and Shem Bodo guided the positioning of this work at the continental level, through the CESA planning cluster. Hellen Inyega provided valuable insights.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of the AEAA technical reference group and national assessment experts who validated this framework: Letso Dibeela (Botswana); Rachel Eko and Kenneth Foncha (Cameroon); Clement Osei Antwi (Ghana); Samuel Mwambura, Epha Ngota and Jacqueline Onyango (Kenya); Sekhosana Judith Mpho (Lesotho); Fannie Chilunga (Malawi); Annet Mugoboka (Rwanda); Massar Diop (Senegal); Matthias Miti (Uganda); Collin Masiye and Stella Ncube Sakala (Zambia). We are grateful to CONFEMEN, in particular Abdel Rahamane Baba-Moussa, General Secretary, and Ousmane Birba, Technical Advisor at PASEC, for their engagement and support.

We also deeply appreciate the financial support provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) for the workshop. Shailendra Sigdel and Yanhong Zhang organized this support and contributed to the validation process. We are sincerely grateful to Lovemore Ndlovu and Jesca Makanyara Chikopa of UNESCO Harare for the exceptional coordination of the validation workshop's planning and execution.

This work owes its success to the collective dedication of these experts and institutions, whose collaboration demonstrates the power of partnership in addressing Africa's most pressing educational challenges. Together, they have laid the foundation for a Continental Assessment Framework that reflects Africa's priorities, strengthens accountability, and ensures that every learner can thrive — reflecting the commitment that African children are born to learn.

BACKGROUND

Relatively few African countries participate in cross-national assessments, including the two assessments based in Africa (PASEC and SEACMEQ). Where countries have national assessments, these are not comparable between countries. In total, data on reading proficiency *levels* at the end of primary school, as defined by the SDG global indicator 4.1.1, have been collected at least once since 2015 for only 1 in 3 African children, while trends are known for just 1 in 4 children. Data availability is even lower at the other two measurement points: early primary and end of lower secondary education.

Learning data gaps in Africa hinder effective education policy and progress tracking. Addressing this challenge is therefore critical for achieving the shared vision under Agenda 2063, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. In October 2023, at the African Union's (AU) Specialised Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST), Zambia with support of the Gambia, Kenya, Rwanda and Senegal called for a continental initiative to address the learning data gap.

Led by the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA), a Continental Assessment Framework (CAF) has been developed through an implementation partner agreement between the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report and Stellenbosch University, with technical guidance from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

The importance of a Continental Assessment Framework rests on the following elements:

- It would enable standardised, comparable data across African countries, aligned with CESA indicator 4.5.1 and SDG indicator 4.1.1.
- It supports evidence-based decision-making and investment in education systems.
- It can address the paucity of national assessment frameworks and enhance the reliability of learning data through sample-based assessments.

The Global Proficiency Framework (GPF) served as the analytical framework for the analytical work. The GPF defines four proficiency levels (Below, Partially Meets, Meets, Exceeds Minimum Proficiency levels). It provides a structured progression of skills in reading and mathematics from Grades 1 to 9 and serves as a benchmark for aligning national curricula and assessments. It was field-tested in several African countries but not yet adapted continentally.

In brief, the CAF is a critical step toward closing Africa's learning data gap, enabling systematic monitoring, policy alignment, and educational improvement. It leverages global standards while tailoring them to the African educational landscape, ensuring that no child is left behind in the pursuit of quality education.

The analytical work was coordinated by a team of disciplinary specialists in reading, mathematics, assessment and evaluation at Stellenbosch University. The tasks included:

- Compiling curriculum and assessment frameworks from 10 African countries.
- Mapping these against the GPF.
- Drafting a CAF for mathematics and reading for Grades 3, 6 and 9.

At the continental level, the Leveraging Education Analysis for Results Network (LEARN), a collaboration between the AU, the GEM Report and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) engages three key CESA clusters – Curriculum, Teacher Development and Planning – to promote peer learning, collaboration and common action in support of national policies, which enhance primary education outcomes across Africa. Under the Planning cluster and the LEARN initiative, AEAA has led efforts to address learning data gaps across Africa. The UIS, as custodian of SDG 4 indicators, has led global efforts to define and measure Minimum Proficiency Levels in reading and mathematics through the GPF.

COUNTRIES

The curricula from 10 African countries were analysed towards the development of the CAF.

Table 1. List of countries analysed

Region	Country	Language analysed
North	Morocco	Arabic
West	Senegal	French
	Ghana	English
	Gambia	English
East	Kenya	English
	Rwanda	English
Central	Cameroon	English
	Chad	French
South	Lesotho	English
	Zambia	English

Information regarding the structural, curricular, and linguistic features relevant to education systems and assessment readiness were analysed for important contextual data against which the curriculum analysis could be interpreted. The following are the key comparative insights from the analysis:

The diversity in education systems, languages, and curricular priorities across African countries underscores the need for a context-sensitive yet harmonised CAF. This framework accommodates linguistic diversity, curriculum structures and national priorities, while enabling comparability and alignment with global proficiency standards.

METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive methodology was used to develop the CAF, focusing on sourcing, analysing, and mapping national curricula and assessment frameworks across African countries.

Data sources and collection

- Documents included national curricula, syllabi, assessment frameworks, policy and strategic documents, and international reports.

Analytical framework

- The GPF for reading and mathematics served as the primary analytical tool.
- Countries were selected to represent diverse regions and languages across Africa.

Analytical process

- *A five-step process was followed:* data preparation, familiarisation, coding of competencies, mapping to GPF, and cross-country analysis. There were slight differences in the approach given the significant differences in the nature, format and contents of the curricula.
- *Mathematics:* A content analysis with deductive coding was used based on GPF descriptors.
- *Reading:* A content analysis was applied combining deductive and inductive coding to capture both GPF alignment and broader reading competencies.

Challenges

- Curriculum structure, detail and terminology varied across countries.
- There was limited availability of detailed reading indicators (e.g., genres, text complexity).
- Non-language goals (e.g., civic education, life skills and numeracy) were integrated within language curricula.

MATHEMATICS

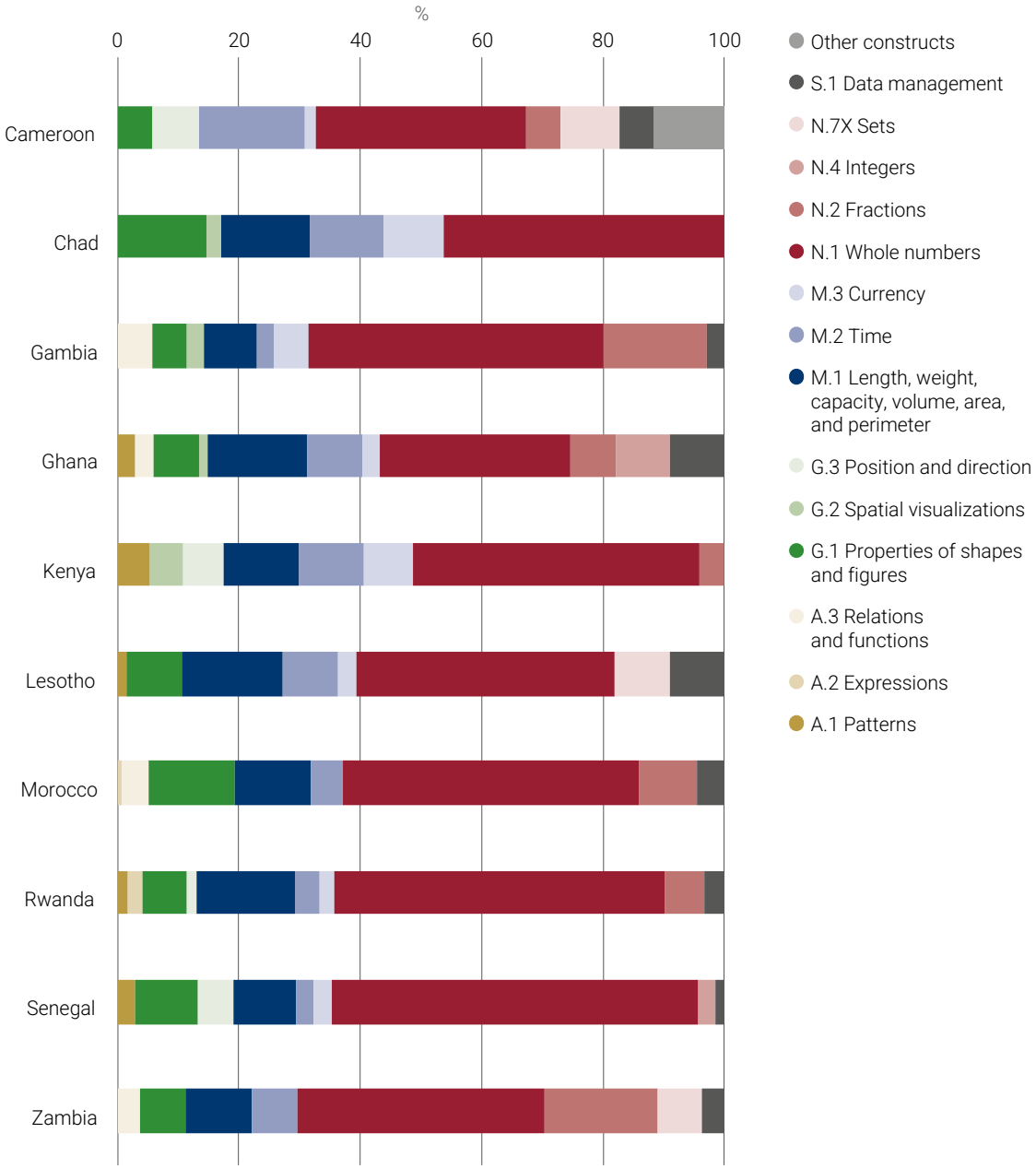
The analysis of mathematics curricula mapped against the GPF showed the following.

- All countries cover the five GPF domains: Number and Operations, Measurement, Geometry, Statistics and Probability, and Algebra.
- Most countries show strong alignment with GPF expectations at the domain level, with variation increasing at the construct and subconstruct levels.
- Some countries exceed GPF expectations, introducing alternative (e.g., sets) or advanced content (e.g., exponents) earlier than the minimum proficiency should be demonstrated.
- In total, 823 Grade 3 and 878 Grade 6 competencies were analysed.
- In *Grade 3*, there is high alignment across countries in core constructs (Table 2 and Figure 1) and subconstructs. Some countries include advanced topics not expected at this level.
- In *Grade 6*, there are similar trends with broader coverage and more variation. Most countries meet and some exceed GPF expectations.

Table 2. Presence of construct by country, Mathematics, Grade 3

Construct	Cameroon	Chad	Gambia	Ghana	Kenya	Lesotho	Morocco	Rwanda	Senegal	Zambia
A.1 Patterns										
A.2 Expressions										
A.3 Relations and functions										
G.1 Properties of shapes and figures										
G.2 Spatial visualizations										
G.3 Position and direction										
M.1 Length, weight, capacity, volume, area, and perimeter										
M.2 Time										
M.3 Currency										
N.1 Whole numbers										
N.2 Fractions										
N.4 Integers										
N.7X Sets										
S.1 Data management										

Figure 1. Competencies by country and construct, Mathematics, Grade 3



READING

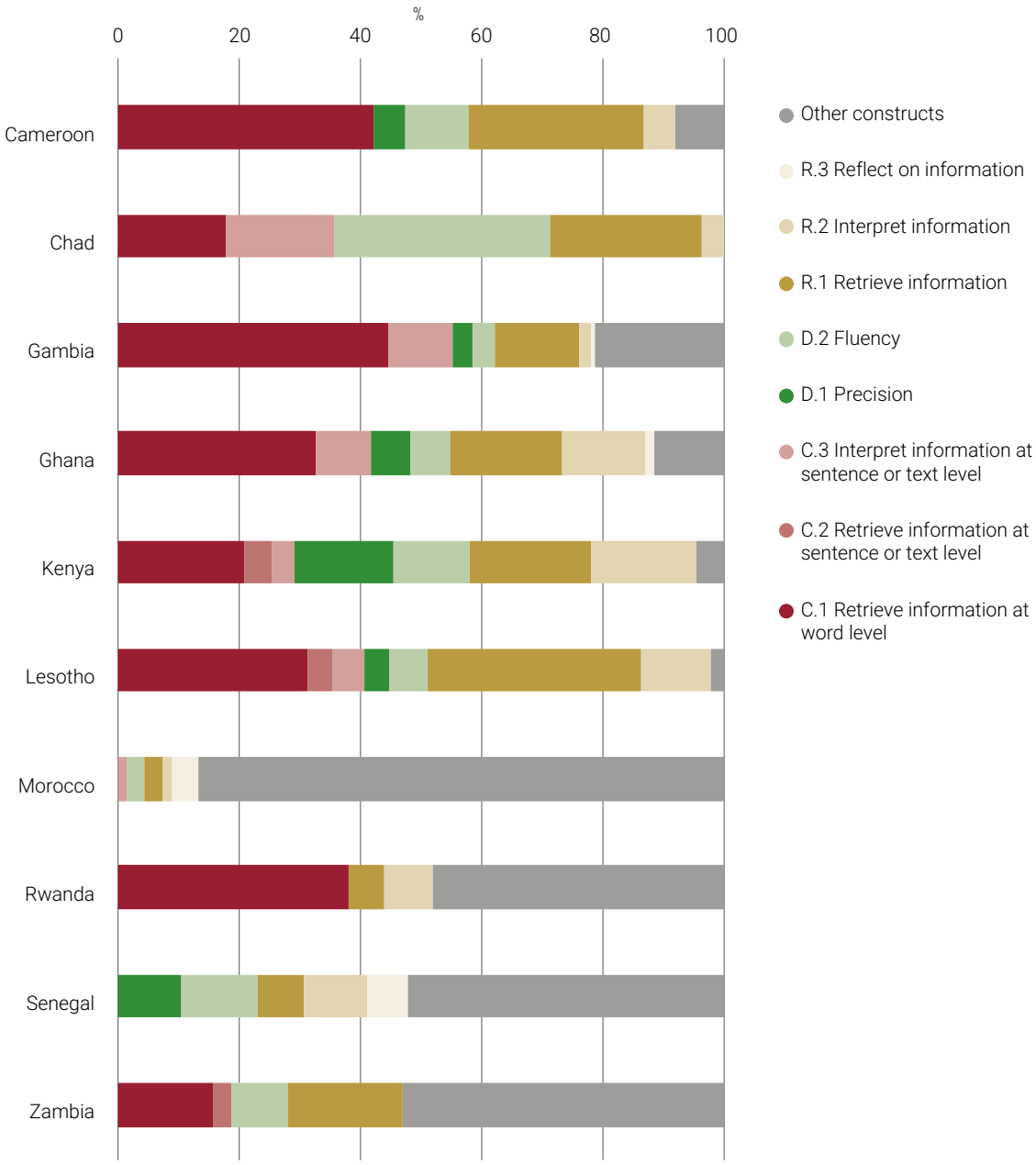
The analysis of mathematics curricula mapped against the GPF showed the following.

- All countries cover the three GPF reading domains: Comprehension of Spoken or Signed Language, Decoding, and Reading Comprehension.
- In *Grade 3*, there is strong emphasis on oral comprehension and decoding; some countries include higher-order skills like reflection, not expected at this level. Reading comprehension receives minimal attention.
- In *Grade 6*, there is increased focus on reading comprehension, but this is less than optimal; some foundational skills (e.g., decoding) persist, and higher-order comprehension skills (e.g., evaluating claims) are underrepresented (Table 3 and Figure 2).
- In *Grade 9*, the emphasis shifts to advanced comprehension, interpretation and reflection, which aligns closely with international benchmarks (e.g. PISA).
- In total, 944 competencies were analysed across 20 curricula in 10 countries.
- Some countries exceed GPF expectations, while others omit key skills, highlighting the need for a harmonised framework. Reading comprehension development is generally not foregrounded as a fundamental skill; its development is subsumed in other language foci.

Table 3. Presence of construct by country, Reading, Grade 6

Construct	GPF Grade level	Cameroon	Chad	Gambia	Ghana	Kenya	Lesotho	Morocco	Rwanda	Senegal	Zambia
C.1 Retrieve information at word level	1-2										
C.2 Retrieve information at sentence or text level	1-3										
C.3 Interpret information at sentence or text level	2-3										
D.1 Precision	1-9										
D.2 Fluency	2-9										
R.1 Retrieve information	1-9										
R.2 Interpret information	3-9										
R.3 Reflect on information	4-9										

Figure 2. Competencies by country and construct, Reading, Grade 6



CONTINENTAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The CAF aims to offer a harmonised yet flexible approach to monitor learning outcomes in mathematics and reading across Africa. It balances global standards with regional realities and provides a foundation for evidence-based decision-making, curriculum alignment and improved educational outcomes.

The mapping process of the 10 countries' curricula shows that:

- All countries essentially cover the spread of five **mathematics** domains and constructs of an expected global mathematics curriculum when compared to the GPF. This is important to bear in mind in the discussion of global, or more focused continental teaching, learning and assessment of mathematics.
- In contrast, the levels of **reading** comprehension needed to enhance the higher order thinking and reasoning for development across schooling subjects are not prominent. There is minimal alignment to GPF indicators. Many of the comprehension skills and knowledge indicators addressed non-text-aligned vocabulary development/word meaning making.

The findings of the mapping should be considered with an awareness that the competencies outlined in the GPF are not meant to be exhaustive. All countries have contextual needs and priorities, that may require the addition of competencies not listed in the GPF. For each country, particularities are noted where these provided useful contextual insights for consideration in drafting the CAF.

The frameworks for mathematics and reading are presented in terms of their domains and constructs per grade. For each framework, the distribution of the domains and constructs is presented across grades 3, 6 and 9 in terms of the weighting (target percentage of testing score points).

The framework for **mathematics** includes 5 domains and 16 constructs; not all of the latter are included at all three grade levels (3, 6 and 9). The distribution of weighting (i.e. target percentage of testing score points) at each grade level across the five domains totals 100%. The recommended percentages for the associated constructs under the two grouped domains (Number and Operations and Algebra, and Measurement and Geometry), and Statistics and Probability also add to 100%. For example, for Grade 3, the grouped domains Number and Operations and Algebra comprise 60% of all the expected score points out of the domains targeted, whilst 'N.1 Whole numbers' comprises 60% of the expected score points when this pair of domains is assessed.

The framework for **reading** includes 3 domains and 8 constructs; not all of the latter are included at all three grade levels (3, 6 and 9). The distribution of the weighting (i.e. target percentage of testing score points) at each grade level across the three domains totals 100%. Within each of the domains presented, the associated constructs add to 100%. For example (for Grade 3), the domain Comprehension of Spoken or Signed Language comprises 20% of all the expected score points out of the domains targeted whilst 'C.1 Retrieve information at word level' comprises 20% of the expected score points when Comprehension of Spoken or Signed Language is assessed.

Table 4. Domains and constructs for mathematics with weightings, by grade

Domain	Construct	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grade 9
Grouped: N and A		**60**	**60**	**60**
N. Number and Operations	N.1 Whole numbers	60	25	0
	N.2 Fractions	15	25	0
	N.3 Decimals	0	15	0
	N.5 Exponents and roots	0	0	30
	N.6 Operations across number	0	0	20
A. Algebra	A.1 Patterns	20	20	0
	A.2 Expressions	0	0	15
	A.3 Relations and functions	5	15	35
Grouped: M and G		**35**	**30**	**20**
M. Measurement	M.1 Length, weight, capacity, volume, area, and perimeter	20	30	35
	M.2 Time	20	15	5
	M.3 Currency	10	0	0
G. Geometry	G.1 Properties of shapes and figures	30	30	30
	G.2 Spatial visualizations	10	10	10
	G.3 Position and direction	10	15	20
Grouped: S		**5**	**10**	**20**
S. Statistics and Probability	S.1 Data management	100	90	70
	S.2 Chance and probability	0	10	30

Table 5. Domains and constructs for reading with weightings, by grade

Domains	Constructs	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grade 9
Comprehension of Spoken or Signed Language		**20**	**10**	**0**
	C.1 Retrieve information at word level	20	10	0
	C.2 Retrieve information at sentence or text level	30	20	0
	C.3 Interpret information at sentence or text level	50	70	0
Decoding		**20**	**20**	**10**
	D.1 Precision	50	40	30
	D.2 Fluency	50	60	70
Reading Comprehension		**60**	**70**	**90**
	R.1 Retrieve information	50	25	20
	R.2 Interpret information	40	50	50
	R.3. Reflect on information	10	25	30

IMPLEMENTATION

The Continental Assessment Framework (CAF) for Africa should not be viewed as the end goal but rather an essential first step toward a coordinated, African-led and sustainable approach to learning assessment. The following considerations have been identified to guide its implementation.

- Countries will need to review the CAF to become familiar with its contents and benchmark their own curricula (and, if any, assessment frameworks) against it for contextualisation.
- Given the absence of national assessment frameworks, the CAF should be used as an input to guide the development of a national assessment framework that takes national curricula, languages and resources into account.
- Countries may require specific training to develop their own assessment frameworks, using the CAF as a guidance. The strategic plan of the Association for Education Assessment in Africa (AEAA) is aimed at information sharing, training, and support activities required for country-level implementation.
- AEAA and the IPED-AU should accordingly develop and regularly review a plan for reporting back on the implementation of the CAF-Africa across countries and the related activities.
- More dialogue is needed with the two Africa-based regional assessments (PASEC and SEACMEQ) to support cross-country collaboration. This will also enable alignment in the design of current and future regional assessment frameworks with the CAF.

Instrument design and item development

The CAF is consistent with the eligibility criteria of the Education Data and Statistics Commission / Global Alliance to Monitor Learning for a country to be able to report on SDG global indicator 4.1.1. Countries have a variety of options if they choose to develop their national assessment and a variety of options if they choose to take part in a cross-national assessment.