

8. Epilogue ¹

The meeting convened by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) for 'consensus building on proficiency levels with performance descriptors' in UNESCO Paris in September 2018 inviting all leading global stakeholders in assessments became a game changer for the PAL Network, where two of its core members were invited (UIS Concept Note-Sept. 2018). The meeting's objective was to build consensus on minimum proficiency level descriptors to report on three education levels: in Grade 2 or 3 (4.1.1a), at the end of primary education (4.1.1b), and at the end of lower secondary education (4.1.1c), in two subject areas (reading and mathematics) as specified in indicator 4.1.1. This consensus framing helped the PAL Network to analyse its citizen-led tools from each country context. After 18 months of hard core reviews, addition of new items, pilots and adjustments the PAL Network is proudly presenting ICAN (International Common Assessment of Numeracy) to the world.

Developed and implemented by the PAL Network member organisations, ICAN is a cross national, comparative assessment tool, covering diverse regions of the Global South. It is an assessment of foundational numeracy using common items, providing data on early grades/lower primary and further highlighting gaps in foundational numeracy even for older children. PAL Network member organisations prepared the tool for ICAN spread across 11 languages, agreeing to retain the core consistent principles that distinguish the network.

ICAN is being scaled further and leveraged as an innovation, supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). ICAN can provide valid and reliable estimates of the status of children's schooling and foundational abilities for comparison and monitoring trends across the PAL Network countries aligned with the requirements of SDG 4.1.

COVID-19 and implications for ICAN and SDG 4.1.1

The global disruption to education and learning due to the apocalyptic COVID-19 has been an unimaginable scenario for all the architects of SDGs/SDG 4 globally. These shifts are here to stay; new social assets have been created in the 'new normal'; and adjustments will continue.

Rukmini Banerji, CEO of Pratham Education Foundation and founder of CLAs, rightly asserts, **'In this context ICAN provides an ideal opportunity to re-visit the learning crisis and re-engage in new and stronger ways to ensure every child is in school and learning well. Through ICAN, we can look forward to families and communities, teachers and schools working together for rebuilding our children's futures'**.

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Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), Pakistan and Chairperson, PAL Network Advisory Group

¹Extracted from "Introducing ICAN (International Common Assessment of Numeracy) as a Global Learning Metric", blog post on the PAL Network website (<https://palnetwork.org/introducing-ican-international-common-assessment-of-numeracy-as-a-global-learning-metric/>)