Introduction

Over the past 11 years, PAL Network member countries have collectively recruited and trained more than half a million citizen volunteers to conduct simple learning assessments. Historically, volunteers have given between 1 and 3 days of their time to be trained, and approximately 2-3 additional days to conduct the assessment. Beyond training volunteers to conduct learning assessments, different PAL Network member countries recruit and train citizen volunteers for a number of projects and programs in the ‘next steps’ – typically assisting with the dissemination of assessment results or facilitating and supporting learning intervention programs. This has happened in different ways, at different levels, and at different points in the process.

What Are The Facts?

- In every PAL Network country, citizen volunteers are recruited and trained to conduct the assessment in their local community for between 2-3 days.
- In some PAL Network countries, recruiting and training citizen volunteers to participate in the assessment is the first step towards facilitating citizen action to improve educational outcomes. In other countries, the assessment is a standalone process. And in others, citizen-led assessments are one of several parallel strategies to encourage citizen engagement with educational outcomes.
- Different member countries have different expectations about the extent to which volunteers may be motivated to take individual or collective actions to improve learning outcomes as a direct result of their involvement in the assessment.
- Over the years, several member countries have been exploring opportunities to engage citizen volunteers into the ‘next steps’.

What Do We Already Know?

- Across the PAL Network, we have a large database of citizen volunteers who have given up their time to conduct household-based assessments.
- The profile of PAL Network volunteers is as diverse as our communities themselves: in age, in occupation, in level of education, in socio-economic status, and many other indicators.
- PAL Network volunteers have different reasons and motivations for volunteering their time to conduct the assessment.
- Not all existing and past volunteers may be able, willing, or well equipped to participate or volunteer their time beyond conducting the assessment.
- Volunteers who are willing and able to participate in different types of activities like disseminating findings or in facilitating and supporting learning intervention programs may not be the same volunteers who conduct the assessment.
Questions To Discuss During Group Session

What Are Network Members Already Doing?

• What opportunities do network members provide for the engagement of citizen volunteers beyond conducting the assessment? Do we have examples of this across the network? What are our challenges and limitations?
• How do we document and advertise volunteering opportunities beyond conducting the assessment? What more can we do?

What Is The Role Of The PAL Network?

• Is there something we can do at a network-level to learn more / share more about retaining citizen volunteers beyond the assessment? What would that look like?
• What are the challenges or limitations of retaining citizen volunteers beyond the assessment and how can we overcome these challenges?
• At a network level, how can we better understand the impact of involving volunteers beyond the assessment?

What Might The Future Look Like?

• What more can we do to better understand and document the path of individual growth from concerned citizen, to activist to community leader?
• Should we expand the network to include organizations and individuals that are using citizen volunteers to improve learning outcomes using CLA tests and tools? What would that look like?
• Are there potential opportunities for engaging and retaining volunteers that we have not yet explored? What are they?