



TRACKING PROGRESS ON FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

Findings from the
RAPID 2023 analysis

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Introduction

With the unprecedented impact left by the COVID-19 crisis, education systems cannot return to the 'business-as-usual' approaches of the pre-pandemic period. School closures have exacerbated the pre-existing learning crisis: simulations suggest that the rate of learning poverty – the share of 10-year-old children who cannot read and understand a simple text – is estimated to have increased from 57 to 70 per cent in low- and middle-income countries between 2019 and 2022.¹ The pandemic presented an opportunity to reset education systems, spurring innovations and interventions that help address widening disparities.² With schools now reopened, education systems must continue to seek new approaches to achieve not only the full recovery of learning, but also the acceleration of learning needed to meet Sustainable Development Goal 4 on universal quality education by 2030.

A transformation of education is needed, and this starts with ensuring foundational learning for all. Foundational learning – literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional skills – provides the fundamental building blocks for all other learning, knowledge and higher-order skills that children and youth need to attain through education. Foundational learning is crucial to enable children to reach their full potential and contribute to inclusive, equitable and prosperous societies.

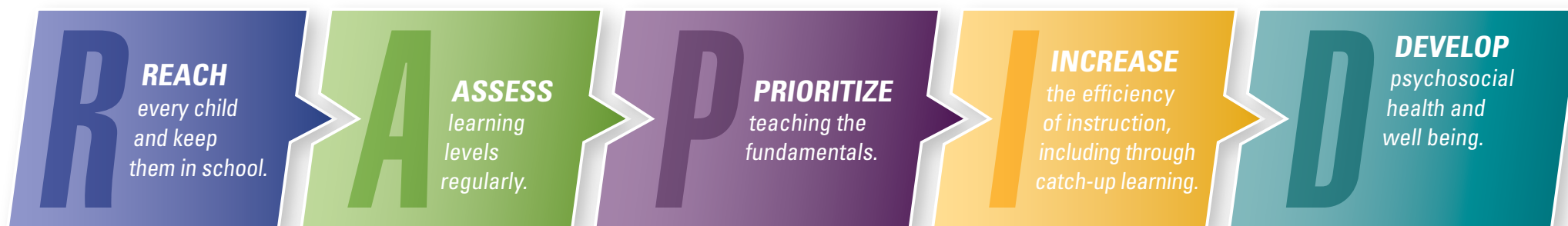
The global coalition that has been established will increase and improve the coherence of support to countries to accelerate the agenda on foundational learning. The World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) have come together to promote a shared commitment to improving foundational learning for all during the [Transforming Education Summit](#) (TES) in September 2022. As a first step, governments and education stakeholders around the world have endorsed the [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#) to ensure foundational learning for all.

The RAPID Framework presents a pathway to accelerate learning, so that all children can acquire foundational learning skills. As the learning crisis is a multi-faceted challenge, the [RAPID Framework](#) offers a guide to navigate the crisis urgently and strategically. This framework was developed to support education systems in response to COVID-19, but it continues to be relevant in response to ongoing challenges, including in addressing foundational learning. The RAPID Framework encapsulates five key actions needed to recover and accelerate learning: (i) Reach every child and keep them in school; (ii) Assess learning levels regularly; (iii) Prioritize teaching the fundamentals; (iv) Increase the efficiency of instruction,

including through catch-up learning; and (v) Develop psychosocial health and wellbeing. The RAPID Framework presents an opportunity for both learning recovery in the short to medium term and learning acceleration in the medium to long term. To effectively implement the RAPID Framework, evidence-based policy measures for foundational learning must be complemented with effective systems to support and sustain them.

This report presents findings on the actions countries have taken to reduce disparities and accelerate foundational learning based on the RAPID Framework. Focusing on low- and middle-income countries, the report aims to provide governments and stakeholders with a snapshot of the progress made, the areas in which increased action is needed, and key considerations to effectively implement the RAPID Framework. This report complements the Foundational Learning Action Tracker, an initiative launched by UNICEF and the Hempel Foundation, which includes country scorecards to monitor progress and foster knowledge sharing on what works to improve foundational learning. It is hoped that this initiative contributes to strengthening countries' commitment, including sustaining policy actions with systemic reforms, to keep foundational learning as a political priority.

The report uses two main data sources. First, data on the implementation of RAPID policy measures was collected through a pulse survey administered between



June to July 2023 with UNICEF country offices in consultation with Ministries of Education. A total of 94 responses from low- and middle-income countries were collected and included in the analysis. The pulse survey builds on previous surveys from which UNICEF and its partners have produced a series of reports on RAPID progress, including the [UNICEF pulse survey](#) administered in March 2022, the [Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures](#) (hereafter referred to as the 'joint survey') in April to July 2022, and the [Global Education Recovery Tracker Survey](#) in May to July 2022. In this report, findings from the recent pulse survey are presented, compared to previous survey results where possible, and transformed to a 'policy action' score to provide insight on the extent to which RAPID policy measures have been implemented.

Second, data on system effectiveness is collected through UNICEF's yearly monitoring exercise with all its programme country offices. The monitoring exercise is based on established criteria for indicators related to equitable and inclusive access to learning opportunities and improved learning, effectiveness of assessment systems, and skills, among others, which have been mapped against the RAPID Framework. The country ratings from this monitoring exercise are used as 'system effectiveness' scores to provide insight on whether enabling and effective systems are in place to support RAPID. The total number of countries with responses varied across each of the five RAPID components, ranging from 77 to 94 countries.

Data from the two sources were combined to provide scores presented in four increasing levels that describe progress on the RAPID: (i) Not yet initiating, (ii) Initiating, (iii) Established, and (iv) Championing. RAPID scores were calculated for a total of 120 countries (see Annex for Methodology). Based on these scores, the report presents the status of each RAPID component and overall.



REACH

EVERY CHILD AND KEEP THEM IN SCHOOL

A critical first step to realizing the goal of foundational learning for all is to reach every child and keep them in school. The impacts of the pandemic have heightened the importance of tracking and improving student enrollment, attendance and progression: in 2022, the joint survey found that nearly two thirds of countries that had collected data on student absences between 2020 and 2022 reported observing an increase in the number of student absences across all education levels during this period.³ Unsurprisingly, children who are out of school tend to lag behind their peers in acquiring foundational learning skills: in an analysis across 25 countries, the median share of children aged 8–14 years with foundational reading skills was 46 per cent for those in school and only 12 per cent for those out of school.⁴ It is therefore critical to identify and eliminate systemic barriers to education for vulnerable and marginalized groups, so that all children can access quality learning opportunities.

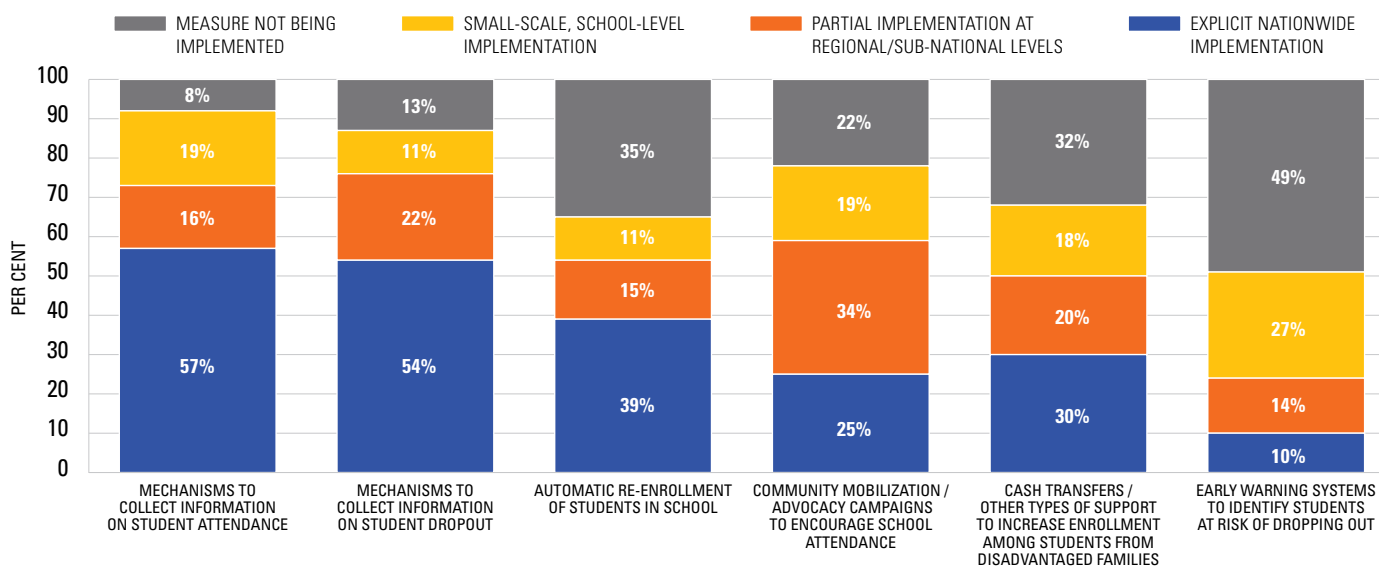
To ensure barriers to learning are addressed, it is important to understand which groups of children are not in school, including those who have dropped out. Education systems can do so by collecting comprehensive and disaggregated data through education management information systems (EMIS). Nearly all 94 pulse survey country respondents reported that their EMIS collects data disaggregated by gender (95 per cent), education level (97 per cent) and urban/rural location (85 per cent). However, only about a fifth reported disaggregation by language/indigenous status (20 per cent) and refugee/displaced status (16 per cent), and none by disability status – revealing huge data gaps to monitoring progress on equality and inclusion.

Issues in data gaps and usage are further highlighted by countries’ lack of implementation of early warning systems to identify students at risk of dropout. By investing in real-time EMIS that goes beyond mere annual school census and statistical collection, education systems can develop early warning systems to understand which groups of students need targeted interventions, prevent dropout and support effective school management. In the pulse survey, only 10 per cent of countries – and none among low-income

countries – reported implementing early warning systems on a nationwide scale.⁵ Nearly half of respondent countries reported early warning systems were not being implemented on any scale (see Figure 1).

Over half of countries reported implementing mechanisms to collect information on student attendance and student dropout on a nationwide scale. However, only a quarter of countries reported implementing nationwide community mobilization or advocacy campaigns to encourage school attendance – a decrease compared to the 2022 joint survey, wherein 49 per cent of countries reported implementing national-level campaigns for primary to upper secondary levels.⁶ Sustaining policy measures to reach every child even beyond the COVID-19 recovery period is critical to accelerating learning for all children.

FIGURE 1. Share of countries reporting implementation of policy measures under the Reach component of the RAPID Framework



Source: UNICEF’s 2023 pulse survey.



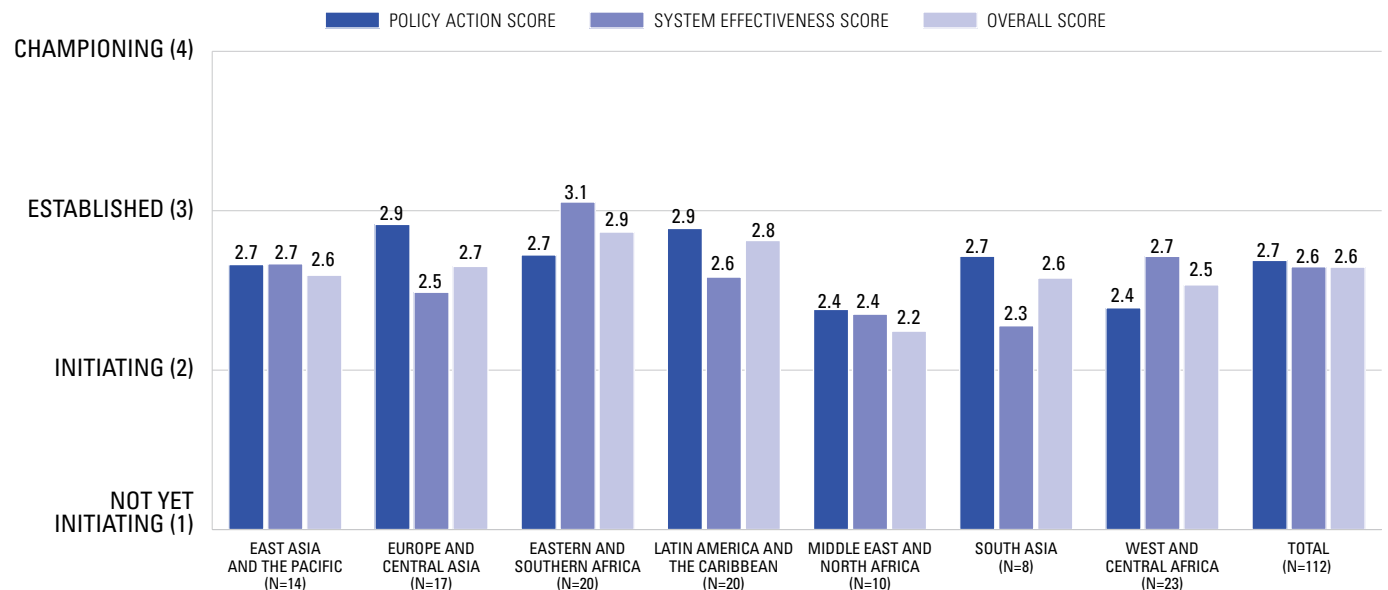
Overall, countries have begun establishing progress to reach every child and keep them in school.

First, data from the pulse survey suggests a policy action score at the Established level, on average across countries with data. At this level, at least half of countries reported implementing policy measures on either a nationwide or sub-national scale. Second, data from UNICEF’s internal monitoring exercise, which describes the extent to which evidence-based education sector plans address inequities, suggests an average system effectiveness score at the Established level. At this level, countries typically have a national education sector plan to address inequities in access, participation and retention that meets four out of five criteria: (i) evidence-based, including identification of the most marginalized groups and causes of disadvantage; (ii) relevant; (iii) coherent; (iv) measurable; and (v) implementable. Together, the policy

action score and system effectiveness score suggest that countries are progressing at the Established level for the Reach component of the RAPID Framework.

Scores for the Reach component varied across regions (see Figure 2). For countries in Europe and Central Asia (ECA), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and South Asia (SA), policy action scores tended to be higher than system effectiveness scores, suggesting that systems for addressing barriers to education must be reinforced to ensure a true and deep ‘reach all’ effort. For countries in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) and West and Central Africa (WCA), system effectiveness scores tended to be higher than policy action scores, indicating that while systems are in place to help reach every child, a stronger and wider implementation of concrete actions is still needed.

FIGURE 2. Average scores for the Reach component of the RAPID Framework, by region



Source: UNICEF’s 2023 pulse survey (policy action score) and 2023 internal monitoring and reporting exercise (system effectiveness score). Sample sizes indicated in the graph reflect the number of countries for which an overall score is calculated. Due to missing data on policy action/system effectiveness scores for some countries, the regional overall score might not necessarily be the mean of the two scores. See Annex for Methodology.

ASSESS

LEARNING LEVELS REGULARLY

Assessments are essential at both the classroom level, to help target instruction to children’s needs, and the system level, to inform decisions on where and how to mobilize resources to tackle the learning crisis. When children are not assessed where they are in their learning, they are more likely to miss out on the foundational knowledge and skills upon which all future learning is built. To support the assessment of learning levels, countries must have effective learning assessment systems in place, including institutional capacity for assessment development, administration and data utilization, at both system and classroom levels.

Most countries reported collecting data on foundational learning outcomes through national learning assessments. In the pulse survey, about two thirds of respondent countries reported collecting data on foundational learning outcomes through national assessments (67 per cent). However, only a little over a third reported data collection through large-scale regional/global assessments (35 per cent), which provide internationally comparable data, and formative assessments (39 per cent), which provide ongoing feedback to teachers and students.

Although fundamental to learning, socio-emotional skills are not being assessed by most countries. Socio-emotional skills, including attention and self-regulation, among others, have been found to be strongly linked to academic performance.⁷ Measuring these skills is thus critical to supporting children’s learning and overall development. Yet, results from the pulse survey reveal

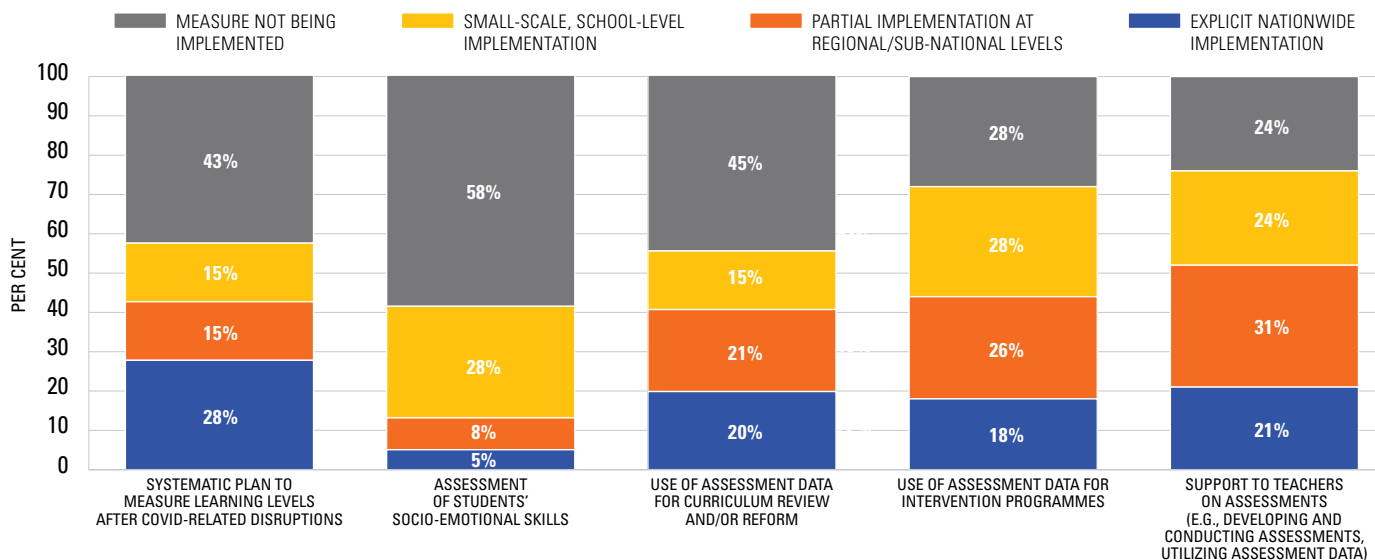
that only 42 per cent of countries reported implementing measures to assess socio-emotional skills, with just 5 per cent of all countries – and no low-income country – reporting so on a nationwide scale (see *Figure 3*).

Encouragingly, most countries reported implementing measures to support teachers through the assessment process. Over half of countries reported

implementing nationwide or sub-national measures to provide teacher support related to assessments, such as developing assessments and utilizing assessment data (52 per cent). However, fewer than half of countries reported nationwide or sub-national measures to use assessment data for curriculum review and/or reform (41 per cent) and for intervention programmes (44 per cent). While it is essential to collect data through learning assessments, it is equally important to effectively use the data to inform educational planning, so that all children are supported in acquiring foundational learning.

Overall, countries are initiating progress to assess learning levels regularly. Results from the pulse survey suggest a policy action score at the Initiating level,

FIGURE 3. Share of countries reporting implementation of policy measures under the Assess component of the RAPID Framework



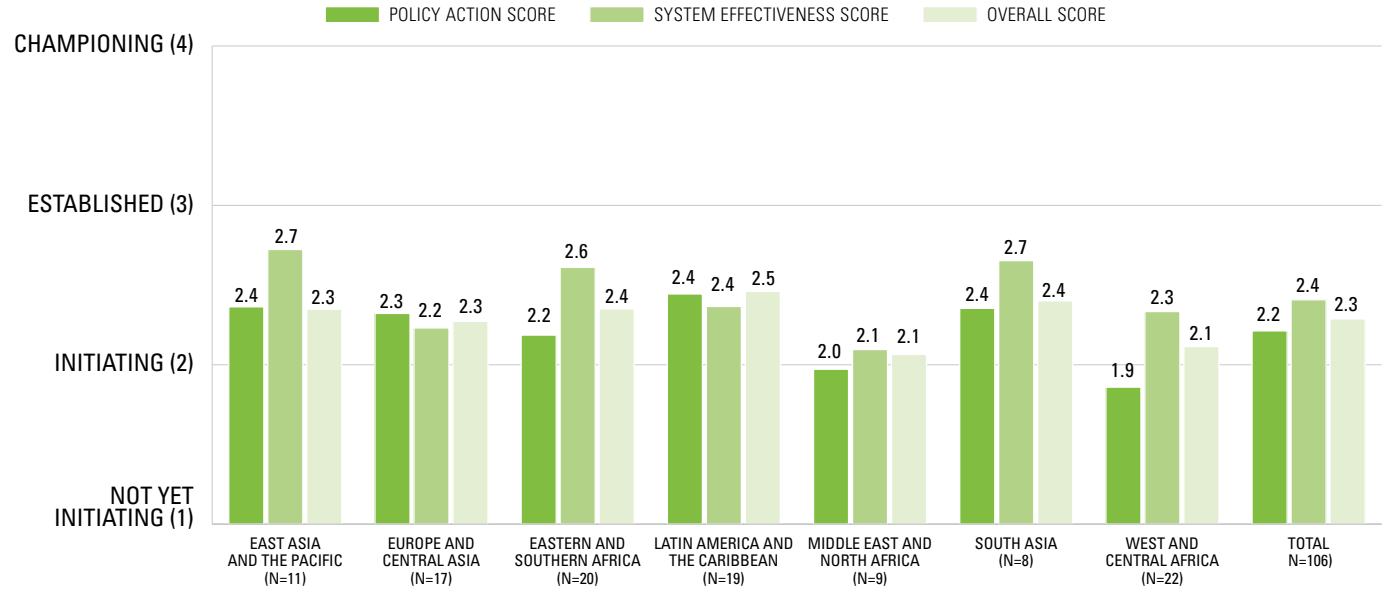
Source: UNICEF’s 2023 pulse survey.



on average across countries with data. At this level, most countries tend to report that policy measures are implemented on only a small scale or not at all. Similarly, data from UNICEF’s internal monitoring exercise indicates an average system effectiveness score at the Initiating level. This level is characterized by weak system-wide institutional capacity to support, administer and ensure the quality of school-based classroom assessment practices and country-wide standardized examinations. Together, the policy action score and system effectiveness score suggest that countries are progressing at the Initiating level for the Assess component of the RAPID Framework.

In most regions, system effectiveness scores tended to be slightly higher than policy action scores (see Figure 4). For instance, in East Asia and the Pacific (EAP), ESA, and SA, average policy action scores were categorized under the Initiating level, while system effectiveness scores reached the Established level. These findings indicate that while most countries have the systems in place to support assessment, concrete policy actions are still needed to ensure these systems translate to progress.

FIGURE 4. Average scores for the Assess component of the RAPID Framework, by region



Source: UNICEF’s 2023 pulse survey (policy action score) and 2023 internal monitoring and reporting exercise (system effectiveness score). Sample sizes indicated in the graph reflect the number of countries for which an overall score is calculated. Due to missing data on policy action/system effectiveness scores for some countries, the regional overall score might not necessarily be the mean of the two scores. See Annex for Methodology.

PRIORITIZE

TEACHING THE FUNDAMENTALS

To accelerate learning and narrow disparities, curricula and teaching plans must prioritize skills that are fundamental to learning, including literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional skills. Basic reading skills are a gateway to learning; without them, children fail to learn other subjects. Numeracy skills are equally important, laying the groundwork for problem solving, logical reasoning and critical thinking. In addition to literacy and numeracy, socio-emotional skills are fundamental to learning; a vast global literature highlights their association with a host of positive life outcomes, including academic achievement and educational attainment. Prioritizing these fundamentals can entail adjusting the curriculum within subjects (e.g., a curricular focus on fundamental skills and competencies for each subject) and across subjects (e.g., a curricular focus on foundational literacy and numeracy), as well as making available adequate teaching materials and practical teacher support. To sustain these efforts, education systems can support the institutionalization of holistic skills development, which include not just literacy and numeracy, but also socio-emotional skills.

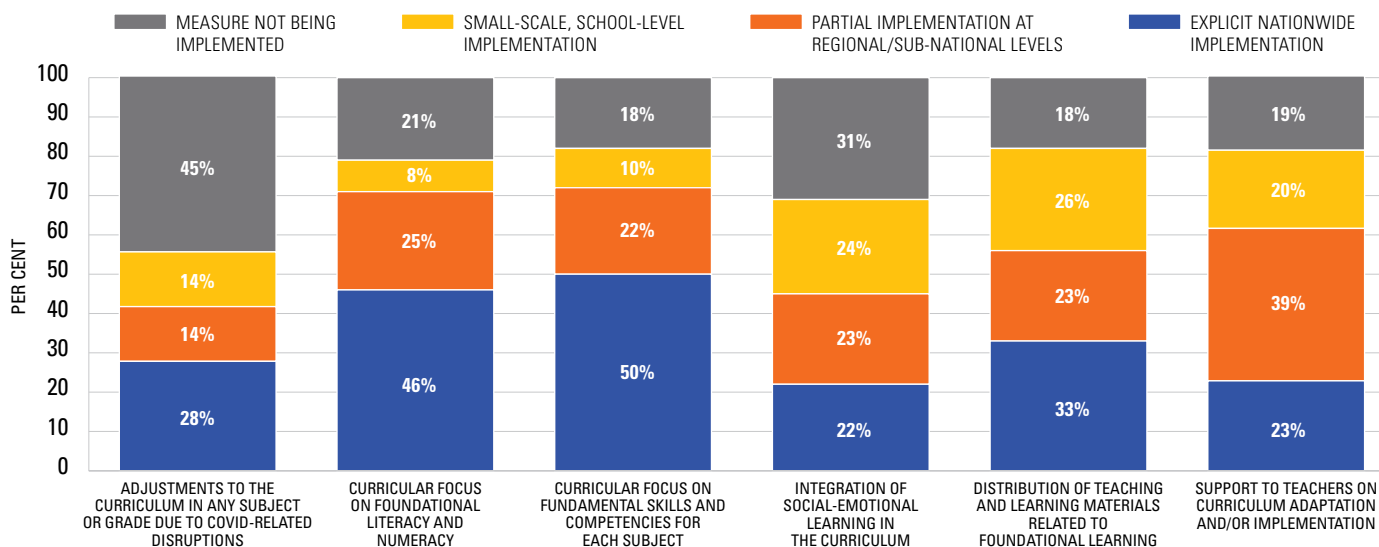
Most countries reported a curricular focus on foundational literacy and numeracy, but fewer reported the same for socio-emotional skills. About three in four countries reported nationwide or sub-national curricular focus on foundational literacy and numeracy (71 per cent) and on fundamental skills and competencies for each subject (72 per cent) (*see Figure 5*). In contrast, fewer than half of countries reported the same for the integration of social-emotional learning in the curriculum (45 per cent).

Given the immense value of socio-emotional skills, it is important for education systems to consider promoting social-emotional learning through the curriculum, ensuring its alignment with pedagogy and assessments.⁸

Most countries reported implementing nationwide or sub-national measures related to instructional support on prioritizing the fundamentals. Over half

of countries reported providing support to teachers on curriculum adaptation and/or implementation (62 per cent) and distributing teaching and learning materials on foundational learning (56 per cent), on either a nationwide or sub-national scale. However, fewer than half of countries reported nationwide or sub-national adjustments to the curriculum in response to COVID-related disruptions, showing no change from the March 2022 survey.⁹ Reviewing and redesigning the curricula, which in many countries are often overloaded or overly ambitious, can help ensure students build the fundamentals they need to progress in their learning. Additionally, alignment among curriculum, teaching materials, teacher training and assessments is critical to accelerating progress in learning.¹⁰

FIGURE 5. Share of countries implementing policy measures under the Prioritize component of the RAPID Framework



Source: UNICEF's 2023 pulse survey.

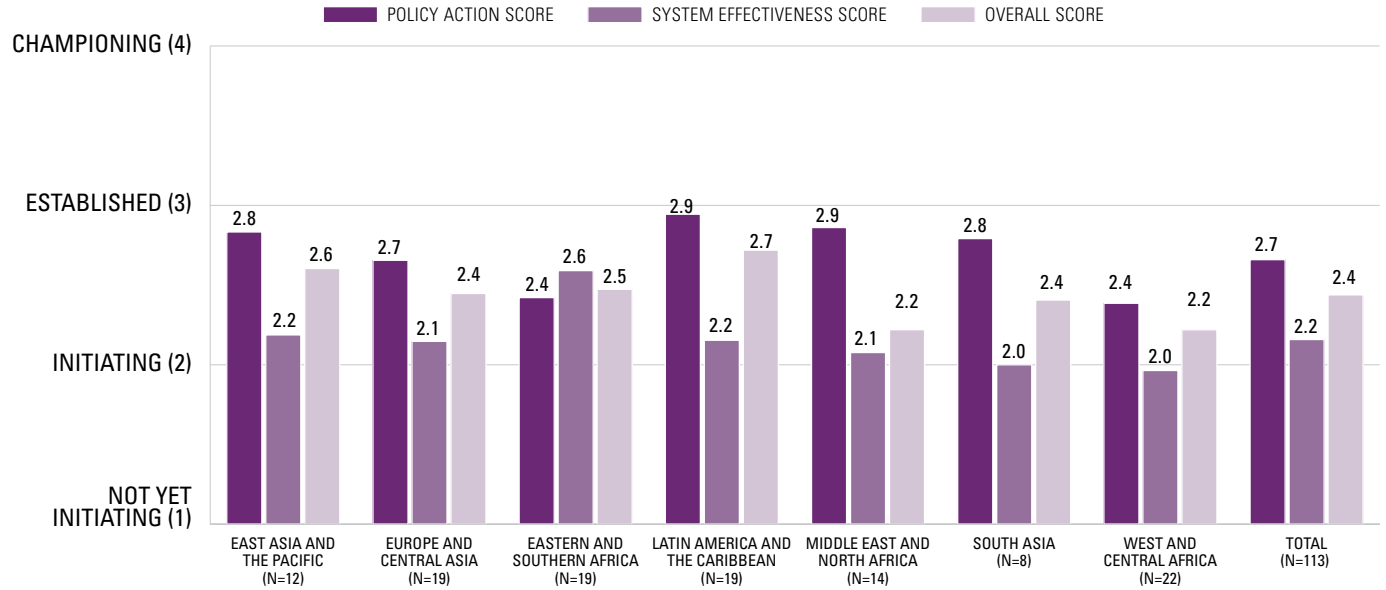


Overall, countries are initiating progress to prioritize teaching the fundamentals. On average across countries with data, findings from the pulse survey indicate a policy action score at the Established level, with most countries reporting nationwide or sub-national implementation for nearly all policy measures. However, data from UNICEF’s internal monitoring exercise, which captures the extent to which the development of transferable skills (also known as socio-emotional skills) has been integrated in formal and non-formal education systems, suggests a system effectiveness score at the Initiating level. At this level, transferable skills are partially integrated in formal and non-formal education systems, and budgeting and human resource gaps remain.

Combined, the policy action score and system effectiveness score suggest that countries are progressing at the Initiating level for the Prioritize component of the RAPID Framework.

In most regions, policy action scores tended to be higher than system effectiveness scores (see Figure 6). In EAP, ECA, LAC, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and WCA, average policy action scores reached the Established level, while system effectiveness scores were lower at the Initiating level. Without systems in place to support structural reform – for instance, integrating the development of socio-emotional skills in national curricula – policy actions on prioritizing the fundamentals may not be sustained long-term.

FIGURE 6. Average scores for the Prioritize component of the RAPID Framework, by region



Source: UNICEF’s 2023 pulse survey (policy action score) and 2023 internal monitoring and reporting exercise (system effectiveness score). Sample sizes indicated in the graph reflect the number of countries for which an overall score is calculated. Due to missing data on policy action/system effectiveness scores for some countries, the regional overall score might not necessarily be the mean of the two scores. See Annex for Methodology.

INCREASE

THE EFFICIENCY OF INSTRUCTION, INCLUDING THROUGH CATCH-UP LEARNING

To ensure all children attain foundational learning, countries must implement evidence-based strategies that can increase the efficiency of instruction. Education systems must scale up proven interventions – such as structured pedagogy (specifically designed, coherent package of activities implemented together, such as structured lesson plans and student materials), targeted instruction (providing instruction appropriate to the learning level of each student), and catch-up programmes for children who have dropped out – to make instruction more effective and mitigate the widening disparities in learning outcomes. Critical to the success of these learning acceleration strategies, however, are teachers. To maximize the efficiency of instruction, adequate support for teachers must be provided in classrooms and schools, as well as at policy level.

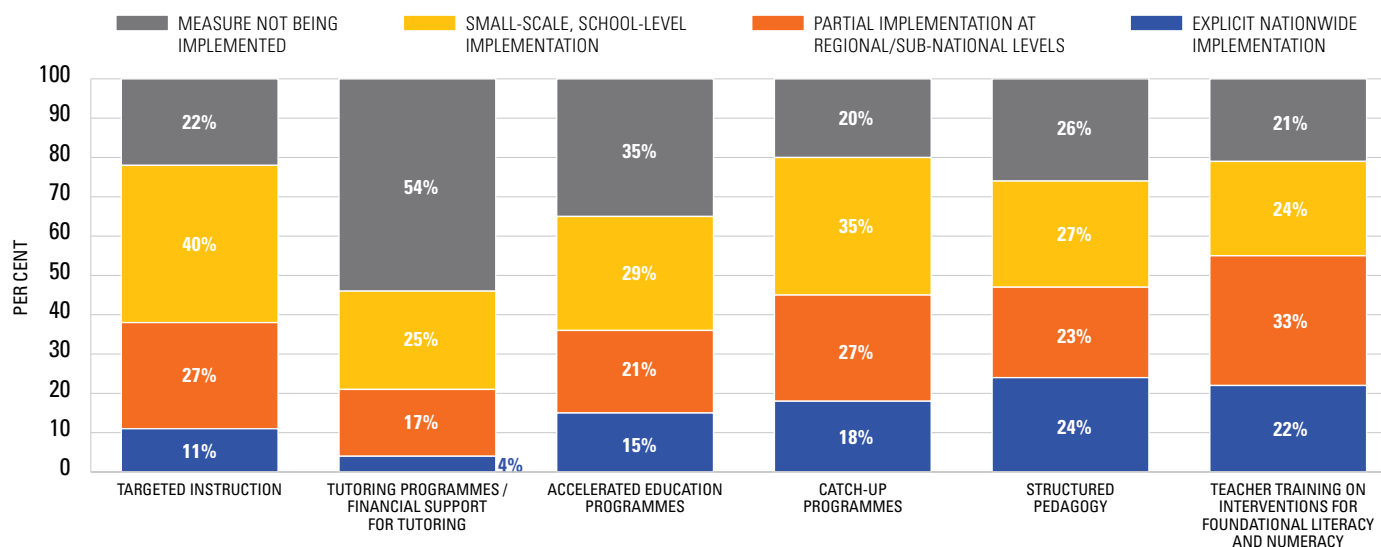
Although countries are using a variety of policy measures to increase the efficiency of instruction, most countries reported doing so through small-scale, school-level implementation. Fewer than half of countries reported implementing nationwide or sub-national measures such as structured pedagogy (47 per cent) and catch-up programmes for children who dropped out and/or are behind expected learning competencies (45 per cent) (see Figure 7). Moreover, despite being one of the most cost-effective approaches to improve learning outcomes,¹¹ targeted instruction was reported to have nationwide or sub-national implementation in only 38 per cent of countries. Only 11 per cent of countries reported doing so at a national level, representing almost no change from the 2022 joint survey.¹²

With the vital role teachers play in learning acceleration, a key ingredient to transforming education systems is investing in teacher professional development. In the pulse survey, over half of countries reported nationwide or sub-national implementation of teacher training on interventions

related to foundational literacy and numeracy (55 per cent). Systemic reforms such as effective and efficient compensatory systems, opportunities for continuous professional development, and improved working conditions in schools – including addressing barriers such as low teacher supply and excessively high pupil-teacher ratios – can help ensure these policy actions are supported in the long term.

Overall, countries are initiating progress to increase the efficiency of instruction. On average across countries with data, results from the pulse survey suggest a policy action score at the Initiating level, with most countries implementing policy measures on only a small scale or not at all. Similarly, results from UNICEF's

FIGURE 7. Share of countries implementing policy measures under the Increase component of the RAPID Framework



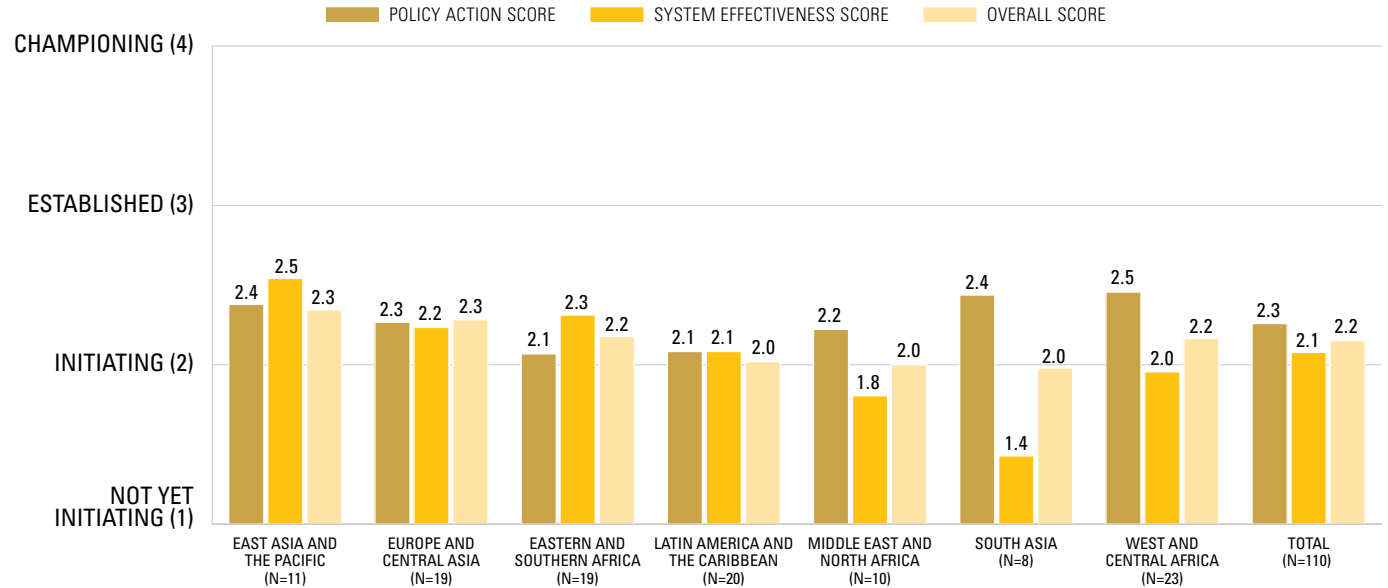
Source: UNICEF's 2023 pulse survey.



internal monitoring exercise, which measures the extent to which systems are in place to support pedagogy and promote teacher accountability, suggest an average system effectiveness score at the Initiating level. At this level, countries have an inconsistent system to inform instructional practices, there are no official standards for teachers' competence, and teachers' roles and responsibilities are not clearly scoped. Together, the policy action score and system effectiveness score suggest that countries are progressing at the Initiating level for the Increase component of the RAPID Framework.

Disparities in average policy action and system effectiveness scores were observed for certain regions (see Figure 8). For SA, the gap was wide to the extent that average policy action and system effectiveness scores were at different levels: the average policy action score reached the Initiating level, but the average system effectiveness score remained at the Not yet initiating level. For countries with relatively weak system effectiveness scores, reinforcing teacher development systems can help sustain policy actions being implemented to increase the efficiency of instruction.

FIGURE 8. Average scores for the Increase component of the RAPID Framework, by region



Source: UNICEF's 2023 pulse survey (policy action score) and 2023 internal monitoring and reporting exercise (system effectiveness score). Sample sizes indicated in the graph reflect the number of countries for which an overall score is calculated. Due to missing data on policy action/system effectiveness scores for some countries, the regional overall score might not necessarily be the mean of the two scores. See Annex for Methodology.

DEVELOP

PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

In addition to providing education, schools promote children’s overall wellbeing through essential services that help ensure they are ready to learn.

Focusing on the health, safety and wellbeing of children contributes to increased attendance and retention and helps ensure all children are better able to learn. Providing holistic support is especially critical following the large and documented impacts of the pandemic on students’ overall wellbeing, including [nutrition](#) and [mental health](#), which could have lingering effects. To create enabling environments for comprehensive, whole-child support, approaches to promoting children’s overall wellbeing must be embedded, integrated and sustained within education systems.

Most countries reported implementing measures to support water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and school nutrition. In March 2022, 91 per cent of countries reported implementing significant or small-scale additional measures for WASH and 45 per cent for school nutrition.¹³ While the pulse survey found almost no change in the share of countries reporting strengthened/additional WASH services (93 per cent), the findings show a substantially larger share of countries reporting the same for school nutrition (79 per cent) (see Figure 9).

Psychosocial and mental health support is important for both students and teachers.

Research has shown that school-based mental health programmes are associated with improved learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of providing

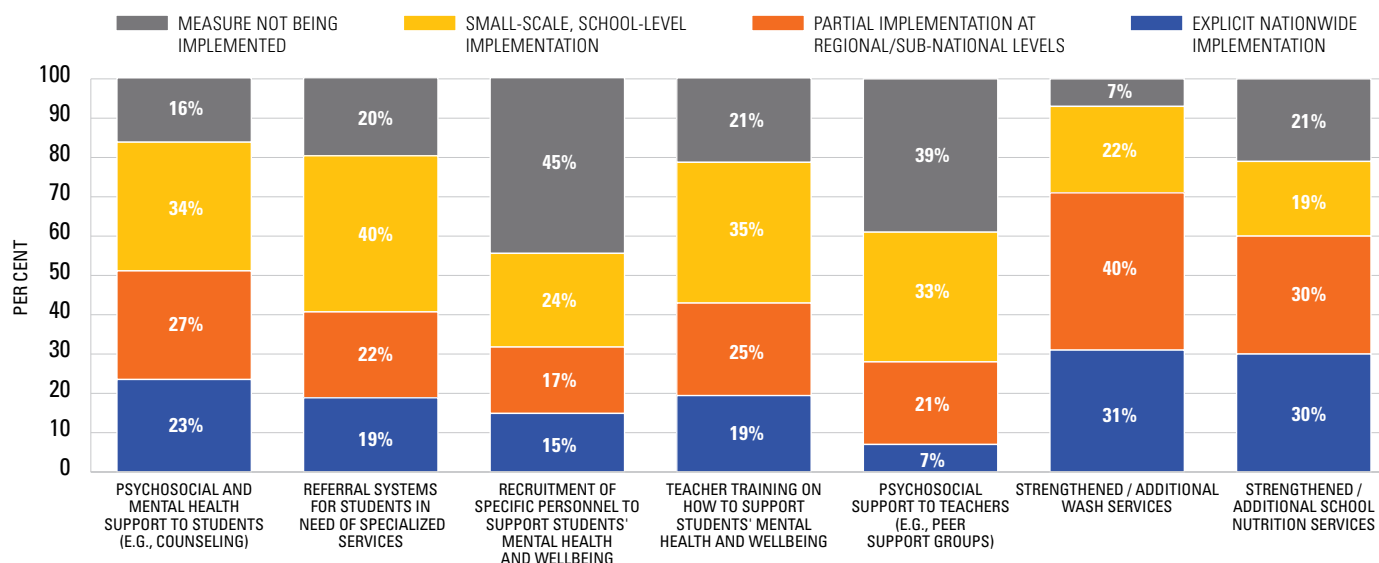
mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to students.¹⁴ At the same time, addressing teacher wellbeing is critical to helping educators cope with stressors they face, so that they can be better supported to provide quality instruction. In the pulse survey, half of countries reported implementing nationwide or sub-national measures related to MHPSS for students. However, only 28 per cent of countries

reported providing the same to teachers, suggesting a need to increase holistic teacher support.

Overall, countries are initiating progress to develop psychosocial health and wellbeing.

Data from the pulse survey suggests an average policy action score at the Initiating level: for nearly all policy measures, most countries reported implementation on only a small scale or not at all. Similarly, data from UNICEF’s internal monitoring exercise, which reflects the extent to which education systems develop MHPSS in education, suggests a system effectiveness score at the Initiating level. At this level, community members are engaged in promoting MHPSS, but strategies and plans to address MHPSS needs are only partially implemented

FIGURE 9. Share of countries implementing policy measures under the Develop component of the RAPID Framework



Source: UNICEF’s 2023 pulse survey.

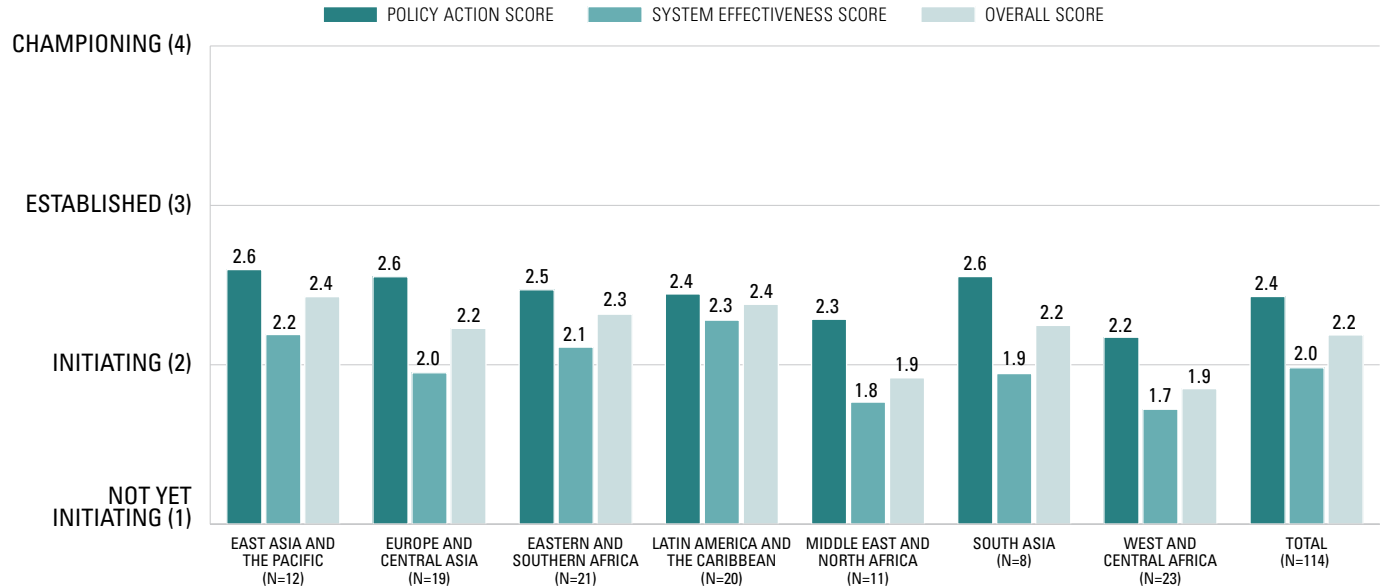


and fewer than 20 per cent of primary and secondary schools are implementing a training curriculum around MHPSS. Together, the policy action score and system effectiveness score suggest that on average, countries are progressing at the Initiating level for the Develop component of the RAPID Framework.

Across all regions, average policy action scores were higher than system effectiveness scores (see Figure 10).

In EAP, ECA, ESA and SA, average policy action scores reached the Established level, while system effectiveness scores were at the Initiating level. These findings suggest a need for stronger systems to promote mental health and wellbeing – for instance, ensuring MHPSS is mainstreamed in national education curricula and training systems – to support and sustain the implementation of related policy actions.

FIGURE 10. Average scores for the Develop component of the RAPID Framework, by region

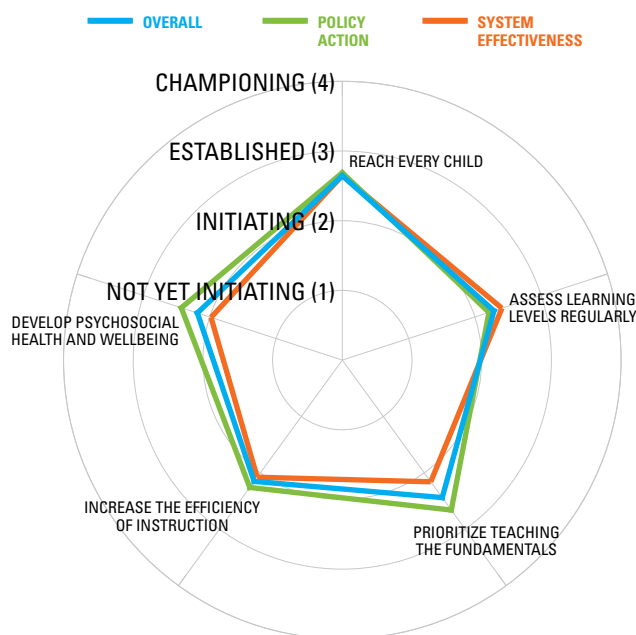


Source: UNICEF’s 2023 pulse survey (policy action score) and 2023 internal monitoring and reporting exercise (system effectiveness score). Sample sizes indicated in the graph reflect the number of countries for which an overall score is calculated. Due to missing data on policy action/system effectiveness scores for some countries, the regional overall score might not necessarily be the mean of the two scores. See Annex for Methodology.

Conclusion

On average, countries are progressing at the Initiating level towards the RAPID Framework. Average overall scores were highest for the Reach component, which is at the Established level, and lowest for the Increase and Develop components, which are at the Initiating level (see *Figure 11*). Average policy action scores were lowest for the Assess component, suggesting a need to reinforce implementation of measures to assess learning, including socio-emotional skills. Average system effectiveness scores were lowest for Increase and Develop components, indicating a need to strengthen systems to support areas such as teacher professional development and MHPSS.

FIGURE 11. Status of RAPID



Source: UNICEF's 2023 pulse survey (policy action score) and 2023 internal monitoring and reporting exercise (system effectiveness score). See Annex for Methodology.

Education systems must be aligned toward learning recovery and acceleration. For all RAPID components except the Assess component, average policy action scores appeared higher than system effectiveness scores. These findings suggest that while countries have carried out policy measures related to RAPID (see *Box 1*), there is still a need for

stronger systems to support, coordinate and sustain their implementation. By doing so, countries develop an enabling environment to not only recover learning in the short to medium term but also accelerate learning in the medium to long term, so that all children can acquire the foundational skills they need to learn and reach their full potential.

BOX 1. Pulse survey country examples of RAPID implementation

Along with information on the scope of implementation of policy measures, qualitative information on how countries are implementing RAPID was collected through the pulse survey. Below are some examples of what countries are doing for each RAPID component, toward securing foundational learning for all children.

Reaching every child and keeping them in school ensures no child is left behind in acquiring foundational learning. In Cameroon, the Government and its partners are providing financial support for the most vulnerable families, along with supporting the distribution of school materials and the establishment of school feeding to promote the schooling and retention of vulnerable children. In Cuba, a preventive task force identifies and works with children who may potentially drop out of school or are out of school. Early warning systems are being developed or implemented in several countries, including the Dominican Republic, [Kazakhstan](#), Montenegro and Tajikistan.

Assessing learning levels regularly is critical to meeting every child where they are and providing the necessary support for foundational learning. In Jordan, nationwide assessments supported by UNICEF and sample-based assessments supported by USAID were conducted for Grades 4 to 11 in mathematics and Arabic, with results from both studies informing intervention planning. In Equatorial Guinea, a second national learning assessment for Grades 3 and 6 will be implemented in 2023; moreover, a comprehensive study to identify gaps and challenges in the teaching and learning process is being planned to advocate for education reform. In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF recently conducted learning sessions for teachers on learning assessments for Grades 5 to 6, and the Government is working on improving the national learning assessment ahead of participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment in 2025.

Prioritizing teaching the fundamentals not only ensures students learn essential missed content, but also acquire the foundational skills needed for further learning. In Armenia, the Government approved a

new national curriculum and revised subject standards in 2021, with modernization of educational programmes focused on foundational skills and competencies for each subject. In Belize, the integration of social-emotional learning in the curriculum has been rolled out nationally in 2023 for Grades 1 and 2 with [Think Equal](#), and the distribution of teaching and learning materials related to foundational learning continues at school level with partners such as [RESTORE Belize](#). In the Philippines, a new curriculum for kindergarten to Grade 10 is being developed with a strong emphasis on foundational skills, along with ongoing focus on foundational learning in teacher training programmes.

Increasing the efficiency of instruction supports children to catch up on missed learning and accelerate progress, such that all children acquire foundational learning. In Eritrea, intensive preparations are underway to run national foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) and Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) interventions at scale, with support from UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). In Nepal, the [Recovery and Accelerated Learning Plan](#) aims to improve FLN by focusing on capacity building of teachers, school leadership and local levels. In Sierra Leone, teacher training and the Community of Practice (CoP) under the GPE programme help strengthen the instructional core on foundational learning for Grades 1 to 3 teachers in 10 target districts; mentoring and coaching are provided to teachers to apply skills and learning from training, discuss issues in early grade classrooms, and look for solutions together.

Developing psychosocial health and wellbeing ensures all children are ready to master the foundational skills that lay the groundwork for future learning. In Cambodia, mental health and counseling systems have been introduced in schools as one of the components under the [Local Life Skill Education Programme](#). In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF supported government efforts to improve WASH services and facilities on school level, providing 460 of the 2,300 schools in the country with soaps, sanitizers, hand dryers and thermometers. In Rwanda, psychosocial support services are integrated in schools through career guidance and the School Health and Nutrition Program, which aim to provide counseling, guidance, and mental health support to children.

Progress on foundational learning cannot be realized without political commitment. Ensuring foundational learning for all children requires substantial political support. This includes recognizing the magnitude of the learning crisis and committing to take action, as countries have done through the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning and other commitments made during the Transforming Education Summit (see Box 2). Leaders must take action to follow through on these commitments, including having systems of accountability in place to monitor progress. To sustain the progress made, countries will need to ensure learning recovery and acceleration programmes are not short-lived but rather remain a political priority.

Finally, ensuring sustainable and sufficient levels of funding for education is key to the success of comprehensive, long-term solutions for foundational learning. The RAPID Framework

presents a mix of evidence-based strategies, and countries must assess which policy options are most suitable to their context, considering budgetary and capacity constraints. To accelerate foundational learning, governments need adequate financial resources and must use them efficiently with an equity perspective. Available evidence reveals that underinvestment remains a serious challenge, with only 4 in 10 countries meeting the benchmark of allocating at least 15 per cent total public expenditure to education.¹⁵ Public spending on education also remains inequitable: in 1 out of every 10 countries, learners from the richest 20 per cent of households receive four or more times the amount of public education spending compared to those from the poorest households.¹⁶ Highlighting the critical role equitable education financing plays in response to the ongoing global learning crisis, a recent analysis has found that a one percentage point increase in the allocation of

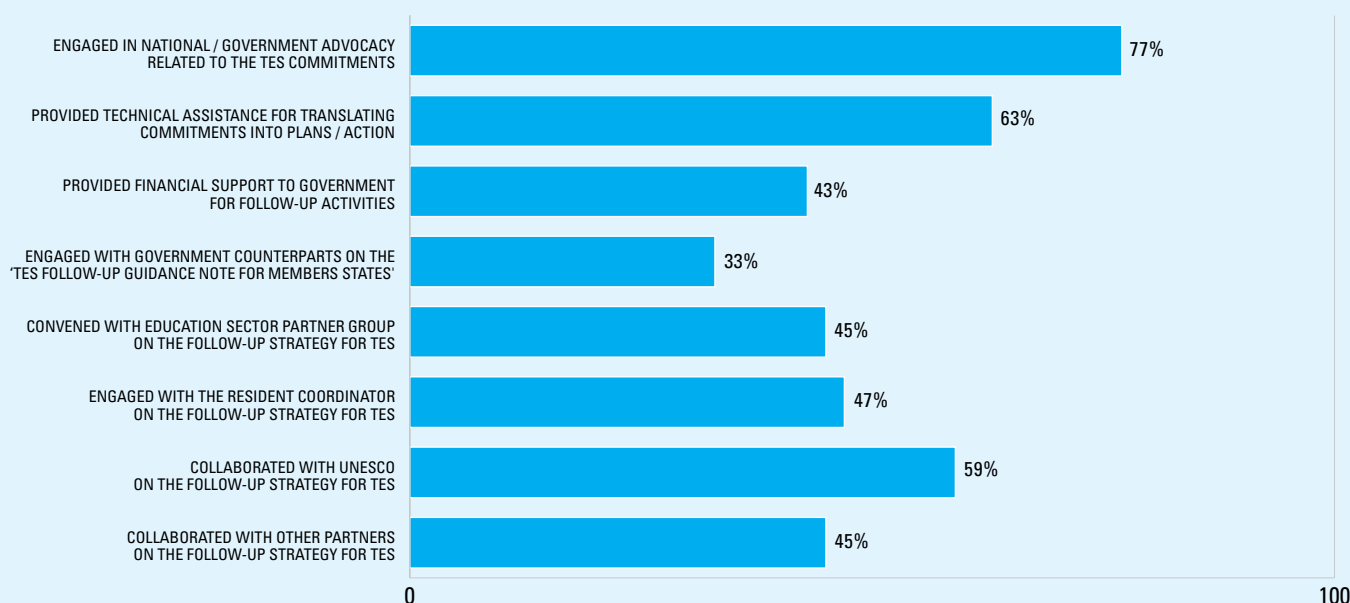
public education resources to the poorest 20 per cent is associated with a 2.6 to 4.7 percentage point reduction in learning poverty rates – potentially pulling up to 35 million primary school-aged children out of learning poverty.¹⁷

The global learning crisis requires urgent action, supported by enabling systems, political commitment and sustainable financing. To this end, countries and education stakeholders are invited to endorse the [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#) to signify their support for the promise of foundational learning for all and their commitment to take urgent and decisive action towards this shared vision. With foundational learning as a national and global priority, all children, especially the most marginalized, can be given the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to a more prosperous and sustainable future for all.

BOX 2. Pulse survey results on Transforming Education Summit (TES) country follow-up

In addition to examining progress on RAPID implementation, the pulse survey asked questions regarding actions countries have taken following the Transforming Education Summit (TES) in September 2022. Respondents were asked to indicate what concrete steps UNICEF country offices have taken to support the government in following up on their TES commitments and/or the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning. Among 96 countries with data, over three in four countries reported they engaged in national or governmental advocacy related to the TES commitments (77 per cent). In contrast, only a third engaged with government counterparts on the ‘[TES Follow-Up Guidance Note for Member States](#)’ (33 per cent).

Among 72 respondents with valid responses, only over a third (35 per cent) indicated that the country has signed the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning. The pulse survey also asked countries to identify areas in which governments have taken concrete steps to advance following the TES. Among 85 countries with valid responses, over two thirds (69 per cent) identified foundational learning as an area in which governments have taken action.



Source: UNICEF's 2023 pulse survey.

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Annex: Methodology

This report presents findings from two main data sources: (i) a pulse survey administered with UNICEF country offices, and (ii) UNICEF's yearly monitoring exercise with its programme offices. Each data source is described below, along with the method of calculation for their respective scores presented in this report.

Pulse survey

The pulse survey builds on previous surveys that UNICEF and its partners have conducted to monitor progress against the RAPID Framework. These surveys include the [UNICEF pulse survey](#) administered in March 2022, the [Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures](#) in April to July 2022, and the [Global Education Recovery Tracker Survey](#) in May to July 2022. This report presents findings from the recent pulse survey, which collected data on the extent to which countries are implementing policy measures organized around each of the five key components of the RAPID Framework. The survey was conducted between June to July 2023 with staff from UNICEF country offices, who were requested to consult with their Ministry of Education counterparts to ensure the information provided is as accurate as possible. Responses from a total of 94 low- and middle-income countries were included in the analysis.

UNICEF yearly monitoring exercise

UNICEF conducts a yearly comprehensive country monitoring and reporting exercise with all programme country offices for its performance management and reporting. The annual reporting includes indicators (with multiple sub-dimensions) related to equitable and inclusive access to learning opportunities and improved learning,

effectiveness of assessment systems, digital learning, skills, and adolescent participation and engagement. For the purposes of this report, relevant indicators have been mapped against each component in the RAPID Framework to be used for analysis. The total number of countries with data varied across each of the five RAPID components, ranging from 77 to 94 countries.

Method of calculation

For each component in the RAPID, a policy action score, system effectiveness score and overall score were computed for each country. **For each of the five RAPID components:**

1. To compute **policy action scores**: responses to the pulse survey items were transformed to a 1 to 4 rating based on the scope of implementation reported for each policy measure, ranging from 1 ('Measure not being implemented') to 4 ('Nationwide implementation'). For certain items where countries are asked to select all measures that apply rather than a scope of implementation, responses were transformed based on the number of measures selected (e.g., where six measures are presented, countries are given a rating of 1 if they report implementation of none of the measures and a rating of 4 if they report 5–6 of the measures). The average of the resulting scores were then calculated for each RAPID component, serving as the country's policy action score.
2. To compute **system effectiveness scores**: the data from UNICEF's yearly monitoring exercise are already given on a 1 to 4 rating, based on existing rating

criteria and methodology for calculating scores per indicator. Thus, for each component in the RAPID, data on the existing 1 to 4 rating from the relevant indicator in UNICEF's yearly monitoring exercise served as the country's system effectiveness score.

3. To compute an **overall score**: for each component in the RAPID, the average of the policy action score and the system effectiveness score was calculated to produce an overall rating. In cases where a country had only either a policy action score or a system effectiveness score, the available data point was used as the overall score.

This process results in a 4-scale rating for the policy action, system effectiveness and overall scores. The 4-scale rating corresponds to the following increasing levels of progress: (1) Not yet initiating, (2) Initiating, (3) Established, and (4) Championing.

Then, to compute for an **overall RAPID score** for each country:

1. The average of the resulting five policy action scores (i.e., one per RAPID component) were computed to produce a single RAPID policy action score for the country.
2. The average of the resulting five system effectiveness scores were computed to produce a single RAPID system effectiveness score for the country.
3. The average of the five overall scores were computed to produce a single overall RAPID score for the country.

Overall RAPID scores were computed for a total of 120 countries. The same 4-scale rating outlined above is then applied to the resulting RAPID policy action, system effectiveness and overall scores to describe country progress on the RAPID Framework.

Endnotes

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Email: education@unicef.org
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