

Collaboration for Change: Strengthening Education Quality Across Low- and Middle-income Countries

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From Measuring to Improving Foundational Learning

An African perspective

Albert Nsengiyumva, Executive
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- IEA General Assembly Panel | Warsaw, 6 October
2026



Ushirika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika

الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا

Association for the Development of Education in Africa

Association pour le Développement de l'Éducation en Afrique

Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação em África

About ADEA

Who we are



A pan-African international organization for education development, and a leading voice for education in Africa

Convening ministries, partners and researchers through knowledge mobilization, policy advocacy, and policy dialogue

Vision



“A high-quality education and training system for accelerated sustainable development of Africa”

Goal



Help African countries transform schooling into meaningful learning

Strategic Plan 2024–2028



Four strategic initiatives:

1. Foundational learning
2. TVSD with secondary education
3. Higher education, research and QA
4. Education resilience: data, EdTech, access and inclusion



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Learning is declining globally, not only in Africa

PIRLS 2021

21 of 32

countries saw Grade 4
reading decline, 2016 to
2021

Only 3 improved

TIMSS 2023

14 of 34

countries saw Grade 8
maths decline, 2019 to 2023

Only 3 improved

PISA 2025

-28 / -22

OECD reading / maths
points, 2015 to 2025

Lowest averages ever
recorded

**The decline is widespread, steeper in older grades, and began before COVID-19.
It is a systems problem, not a poor-country problem.**



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Sources: IEA PIRLS 2021 and TIMSS 2023 international results; OECD PISA 2025 Results
(Sept 2026).

Africa's blind spot: barely measured

4

African IEA members among 60+ member institutions

Botswana, Egypt, Morocco, South Africa

3

non-member African countries joined LaNA in 2023

Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Senegal

Wider engagement: Ghana in earlier TIMSS cycles; Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda in IEA's post-COVID Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS)

The demand is real; continuity is missing. The task is to turn episodic participation into a lasting partnership, and data into use.



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Sources: IEA, Introduction to IEA and LaNA (September 2026); IEA (D. Kelly), pers. comm., October 2026.

The bottleneck is use, not just collection



Where African systems get stuck

Collection

Weak EMIS and irregular, non-comparable assessments

Analysis

Limited national capacity to analyse and interpret results

Use

Findings rarely reach budgets, teacher support or classrooms

“A country can have high-quality data and still struggle to improve teaching and learning.”



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A score does not explain itself

1 Language of instruction

2 Class size and multigrade teaching

3 Teacher preparation

4 Poverty and household conditions

5 Gender and disability

6 Geography and remoteness

Same result, different causes

International comparability works best alongside regional and national assessments, qualitative research and implementation evidence. Context makes results usable.



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Convenings as platforms for accountability

FLEX2026, Lilongwe: six ministerial recommendations

1. Political leadership and ownership
2. Financing and equitable resourcing
- 3. Data, assessment and accountability**
4. Results at scale
5. AI and EdTech
6. Whole-child access and transitions

From declarations to scorecards

Countries report back on their commitments at the next convening, using shared tracking tools.

Every convening becomes a mirror, not a stage.



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AI: an accelerator, not a shortcut

What it can do

Faster scoring and analysis of assessments

Quicker, more targeted feedback to teachers

EMIS data that is closer to real time

What it depends on

Connectivity, power and cost: paper still matters (LaNA is paper-based by design)

Data protection and national ownership of data

Teachers and officials able to act on the results

Technology should speed up the path from data to learning, not replace the system work behind it.



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Doing more with less: results first

From

To

Workshops as the output



Capacity built on live tasks

People trained



Decisions informed by data

One-off events



Report-back cycles on commitments

Parallel projects



Shared tools and open data

Every engagement should end in a decision: a benchmark, a budget line, a reform.



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What ADEA is doing about it

The problem	ADEA's response	Results and aims
Africa does not measure foundational learning consistently	AFLAI: Africa Foundational Learning Assessment Initiative, with PASEC, PAL Network, SADC and EARC. Knowledge exchange, common resources portal, technical assistance facility	Nationally owned reading benchmarks in multilingual contexts (Kenya, South Africa)
Data does not reach decisions	ESDC: Education and Skills Data Challenge in 25 countries, building quality data and its use in policy, programmes and M&E	Rwanda: increased political demand for data in decision-making
Convenings do not create accountability	Promoting Better Governance: Enhancing Accountability & Capacity in FL in Africa: 6 countries reporting through the FL Action Tracker and FLEX accountability tool	By 2027: FL data in planning and budgets; concrete policy or budget actions per country



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ADEA and IEA: three areas to explore

1

LaNA as an entry point

Link LaNA to AFLAI's technical assistance and peer exchange so more African countries take part and build lasting capacity

2

Evidence that reaches ministers

Present IEA findings through FLEX, the Ministerial Coalition and ADEA's country networks, with commitments tracked

3

Joint work on data use

Connect IEA's contextual data with country data-use work under ESDC

IEA measures the state of learning. ADEA helps turn that evidence into reform.



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Our Partnerships Ecosystem

Ministries of Education of
African Member Countries

- Member of Tech4Ed Global Reference Group (GRG) under the GPE.
- Steering & Technical member of RTIA (Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa) funded by the EU



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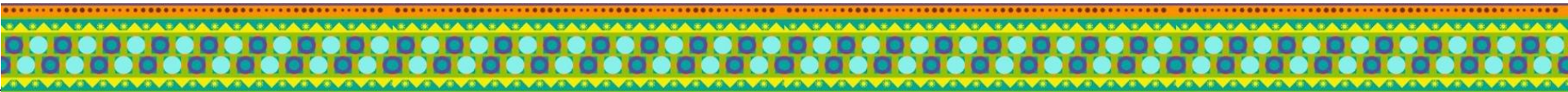
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STRENGTHENING EDUCATION QUALITY ACROSS LOW- & MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

A perspective from the Global Partnership for Education

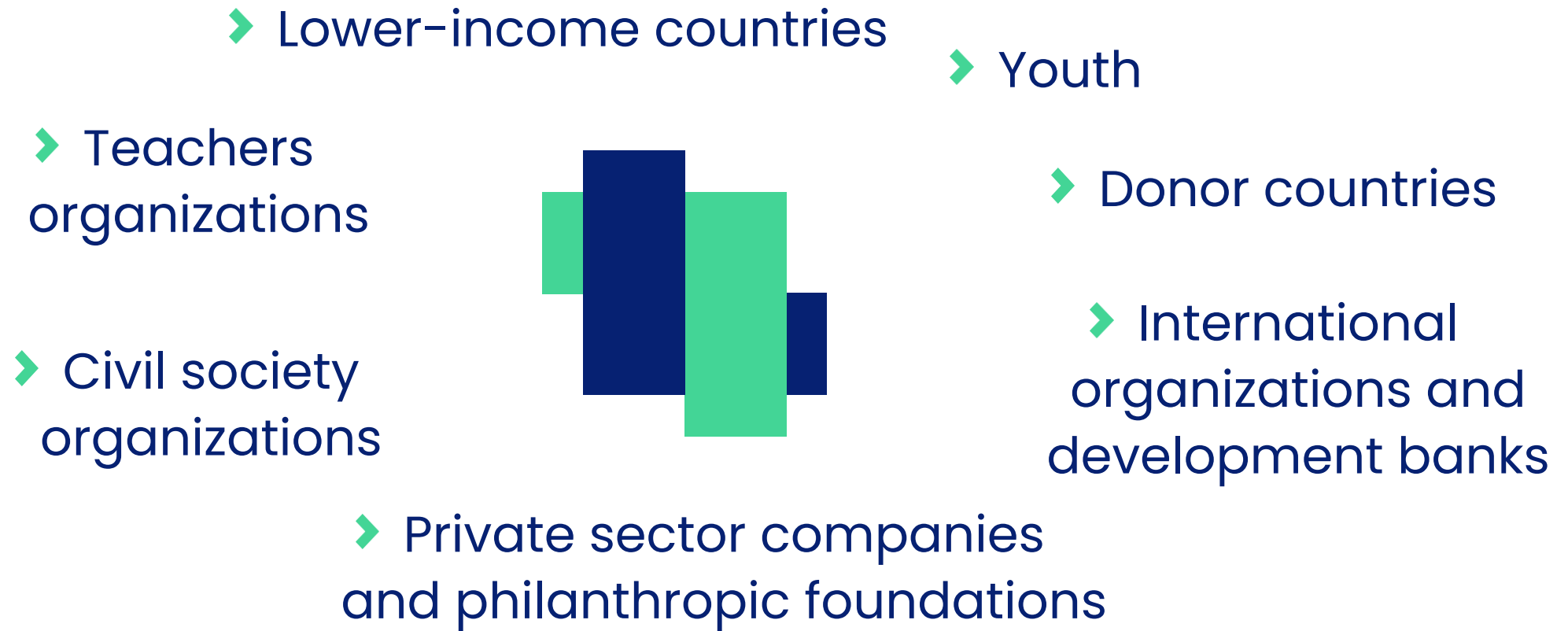
67th IEA General Assembly
October 2026

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION?

- GPE is the world's only **partnership and fund** entirely dedicated to education in lower-income countries.
- We support governments to lead education reform, align partners behind national priorities and build the institutions, financing and capacity needed to sustain progress.
- We leverage **national and global resources** to transform education and reach the most vulnerable children.

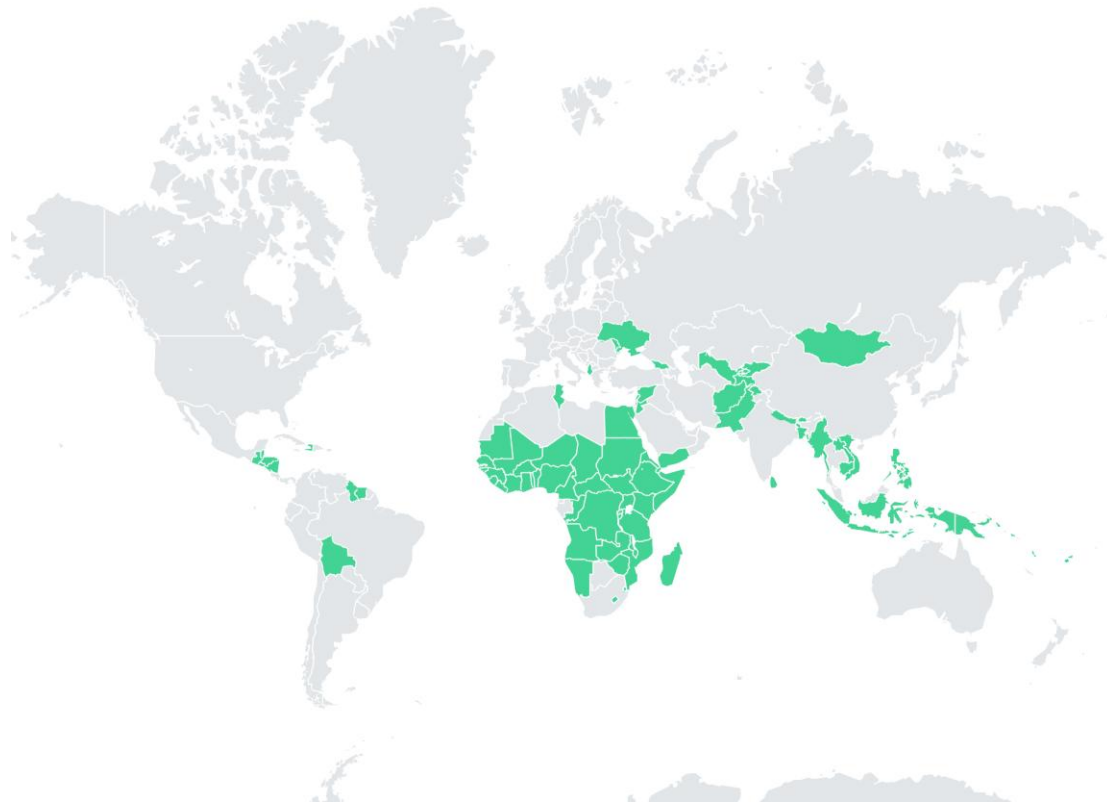


THE PARTNERSHIP



WHERE WE WORK

GPE works with 94 low- and middle-income countries around the globe.



Including:

Albania, Cote d'Ivoire,
Egypt, Georgia,
Indonesia, Jordan,
Kenya, Morocco,
Pakistan, Philippines,
Tajikistan, Uzbekistan,
West Bank & Gaza
(eligible)

THE CONTEXT OF GPE PARTNER COUNTRIES

- An estimated **7 in 10 of all children** in low- and middle-income countries cannot read a simple text with comprehension by age 10 (World Bank, 2023).
- A lack of quality, reliable data on children's learning, *particularly* (but not only) in the early grades.
- To the extent that such data do exist, they are often not:
 - comparable over time
 - embedded within national systems
 - used to inform policy and practice
- Additional challenges include: the lack of alignment with broader data systems, a plethora of different/ad-hoc assessments that are sometimes fragmented and incoherent and gaps in funding and capacity.
- ***Yet we cannot improve learning outcomes without data on whether and how children are learning!***

HOW WE ARE RESPONDING

- **GPE has a long history of supporting learning assessment systems** in partner countries.
- Under GPE 2030, there is an **increased focus on foundational learning assessment** specifically. Why?
 - Low levels of learning at the foundational levels translate into low learning outcomes at later stages.
 - Many countries are not capturing adequate data on foundational learning:
 - The inability to report on basic data, and to demonstrate progress, undermines the sector's ability to raise and target resources.
- As part of this focus, we will incentivize the collection, reporting (against indicator SDG 4.1.1a) and use of data on foundational learning through **enhanced monitoring of progress and results-based financing** ("top-up") for eligible countries.
- The ultimate goal of the top-up funding is to support **stronger and more sustainable foundational learning assessment systems** that generate high-quality, comparable data and use evidence to inform policy, practice, and resource allocation

REFLECTIONS ON COLLABORATION

- Sharing **the opportunity of LaNA** with GPE partner countries and helping to connect the dots
- **Learning from IEA member/participating countries' experience** in terms of
 - improving the use of learning data
 - synergies with national assessments and systems
 - capacity development
- Exploring **potential training and capacity development** modalities, drawing on IEA's long and rich history and experience (workshops, IERI Academies, etc.)

THANK YOU

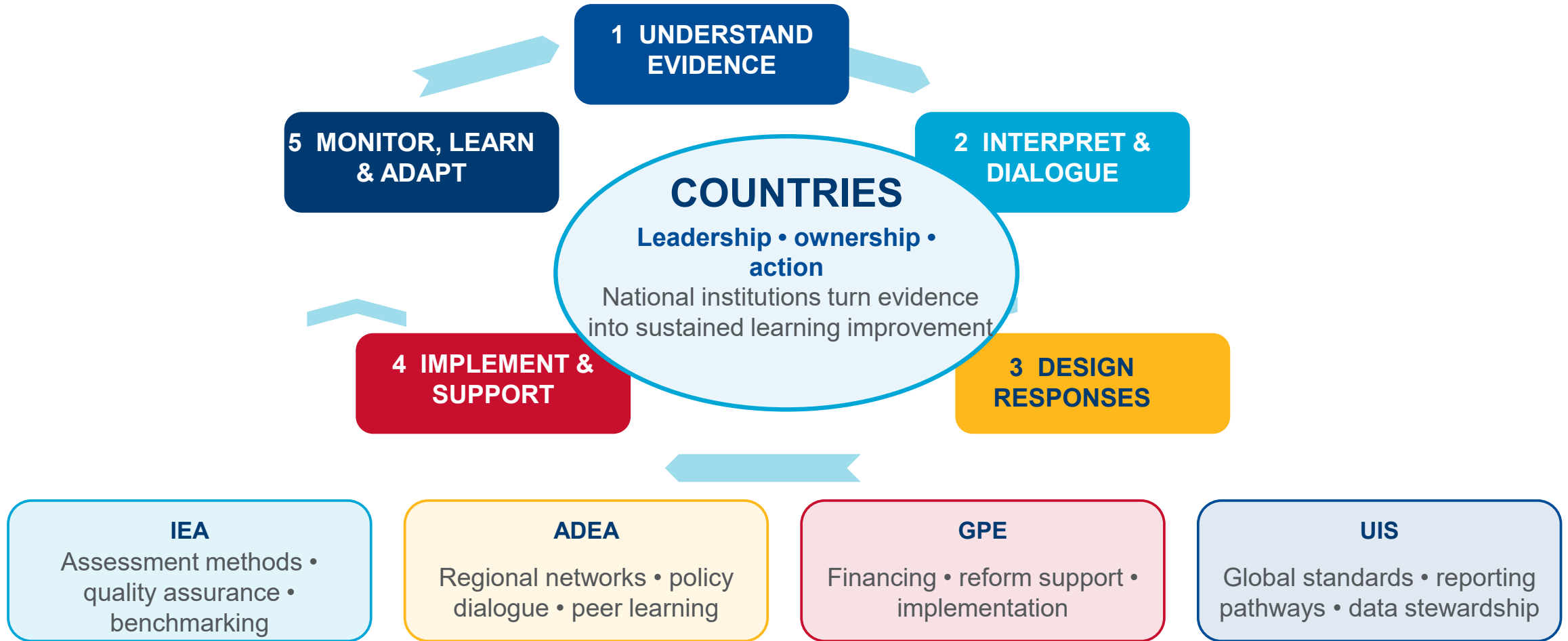


Visit our website:

➤ globalpartnership.org

From learning assessment to learning improvement

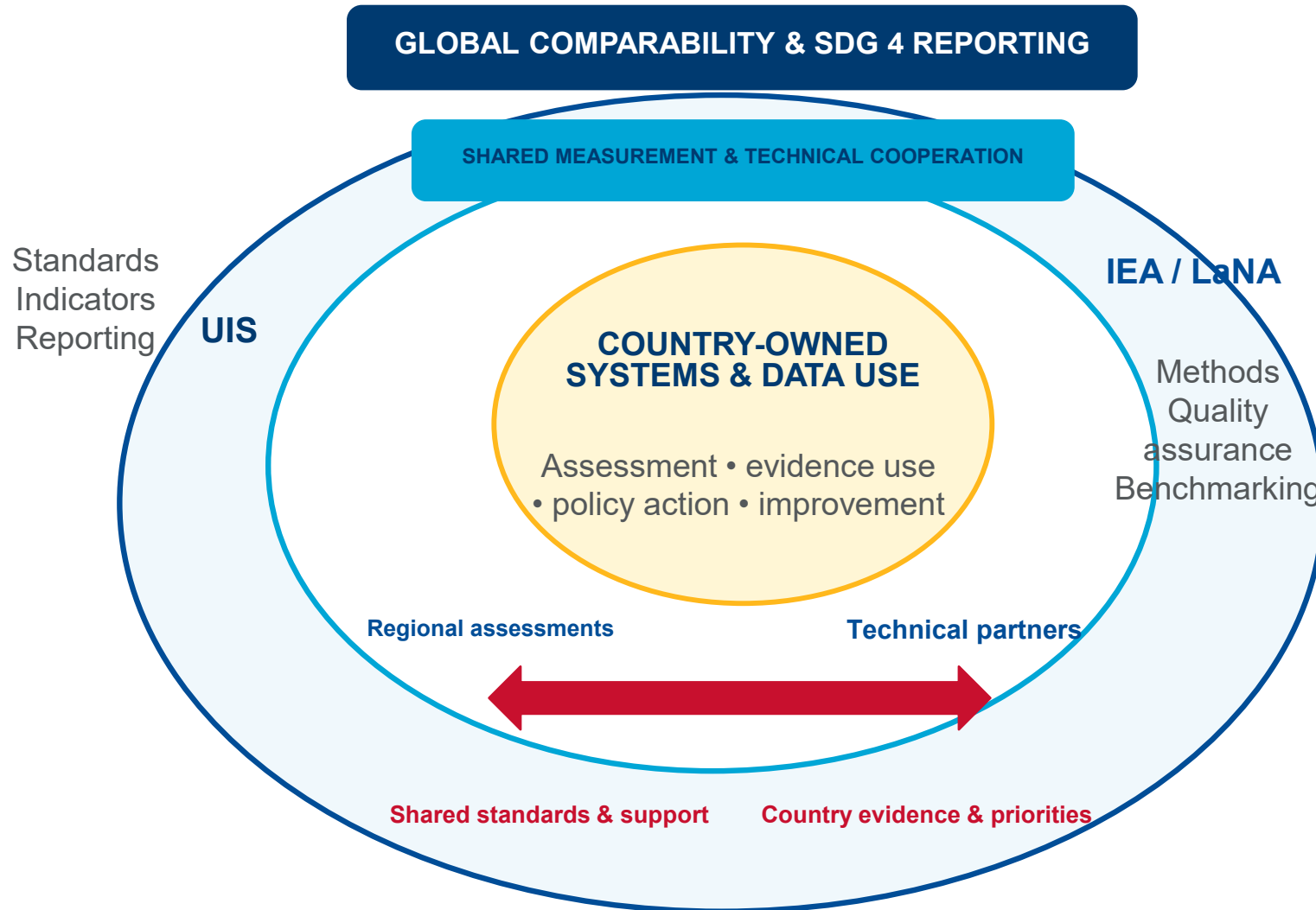
Countries at the centre, supported by complementary strengths



Partners contribute across the cycle, according to their mandates and comparative strengths.

A connected learning measurement ecosystem

Country-owned evidence linked to shared measurement and global SDG 4 reporting



UIS PUBLIC GOODS

Standards
Common definitions & quality expectations

Benchmarks
Minimum proficiency & linking approaches

Tools
AMPL & practical measurement resources

Reporting support
Readiness review & country guidance

Countries generate and use evidence; partners strengthen measurement; UIS supports comparability and global reporting.

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