



RESEARCH BRIEF: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING/SOFT SKILLS (SEL/SS) MEASUREMENT ACTIVITY & GAP ANALYSIS

BACKGROUND

The SEL/SS Measurement Activity & Gap Analysis is a product of SEL/SS Measurement Taskforce outreach and research efforts. The taskforce brings together more than 200 individuals in 35 countries seeking to measure important SEL/SS competencies for children and youth. Unlike the other foundational skills of numeracy and literacy, there is less consensus and cohesion around what to measure and how to measure it to demonstrate learning of SEL/SS competencies.

Taskforce Mission: Promote coordination, organization, and advocacy around the use and availability of assessment tools and approaches to measure SEL/SS, so all countries can mitigate challenges, effectively measure SEL/SS, and strengthen their education and learning systems.



PURPOSE

The Activity and Gap Analysis aims to fill a void in clarifying the sorts of challenges that actors face in SEL/SS measurement and identify current practices and recommendations that can help address them.

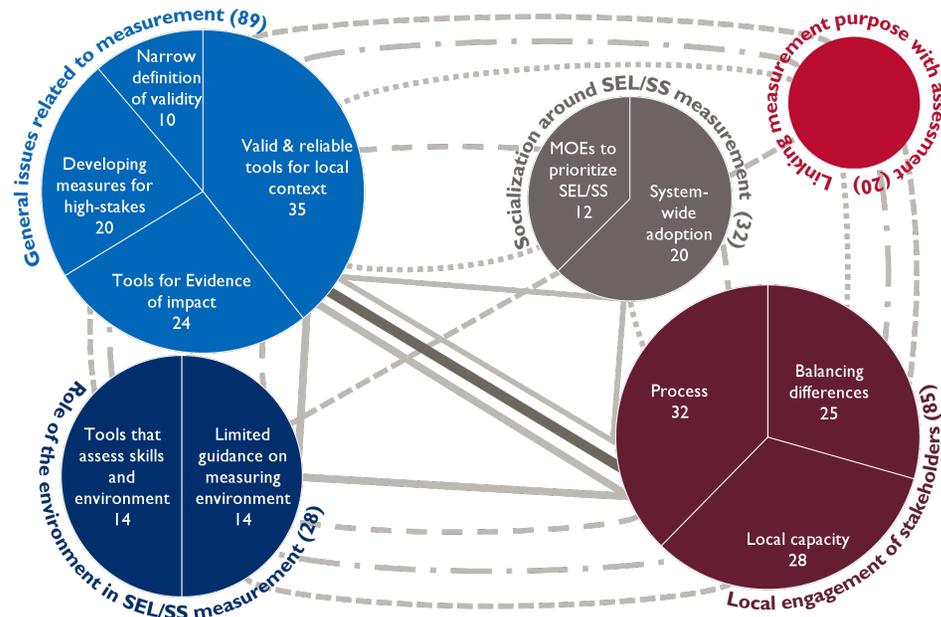
METHODS & PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

The analysis relied upon a mixed-methods sequential design comprised of:



Survey respondents represented 47 organizations, including donors, international nongovernment organizations (NGOs), local NGOs, research institutes, and universities. Projectsⁱ reflect work being carried out in six regions of the world, across all levels of education and in formal, nonformal, and informal contexts. Projects targeted a wide range of SEL and soft skills, with the most common skills being self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, perseverance, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. Participants in brainstorming sessions drew from the pool of survey respondents. The Experts Meeting was a convening of taskforce leadership.

Exhibit 1: Mapping of Challenges Projects Address





HIGHLIGHTS

- Projects report facing challenges centered around five broad areas: (1) local engagement of stakeholders, (2) linking measurement purpose with social and emotional learning/soft skills (SEL/SS) assessment tools, (3) general issues related to measurement, (4) the role of the environment in SEL/SS measurement, (5) and socialization/buy-in related to measurement.
- The most common SEL/SS measurement challenges were related to identifying valid and reliable assessment tools for the local context, developing local capacity, balancing local and regional differences (e.g., in language, values, education levels), and identifying a clear process for contextualizing tools that works for all stakeholders (e.g., administrators, respondents, educators).
- Projects reported facing multiple challenges simultaneously, thus demonstrating a high level of interconnectivity between broad challenges.
- Projects are engaging in innovative approaches to mitigate the challenges they face. Examples include developing and aligning tools to simultaneously address multiple purposes; conducting deep consultations with local stakeholders to develop assessments that respond to specific needs; creating a multidisciplinary team to develop SEL/SS assessment tools. See Annex C for additional detailed examples.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Engaging local stakeholders in all stages of SEL/SS measurement is central to the efficacy of SEL/SS measurement.
- A combination of diverse teams of stakeholders and experts and the collection and use of multiple sources of SEL/SS data are effective in enhancing the validity of SEL/SS measures in context.
- Examples of stakeholders include researchers, educators, parents, learners, community members, and employers. Common types of experts are literacy, numeracy, and SEL/SS specialists. Learner assessment, adult survey, and observation are examples of data sources.
- Socializing stakeholders at all levels enhances buy-in around the value of SEL/SS measurement. Levels include: the system level (ministry of education), the community, the school, the family, the individual.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Investigate the promise of developmental benchmarks;
- Invest in better understanding of the role of the environment in SEL/SS measurement;
- Improve adult, and specifically educator, SEL/SS measurement;
- Initiate long-term funding to support SEL/SS measure development; and
- Generate meaningful donor recognition of the time and resources needed to carry out high-quality SEL/SS measurement work.

ⁱ For readability we use the term "project" to refer more generally to projects, programs, and initiatives.