



**PAL NETWORK**  
People's Action for Learning

# PAL NETWORK 2018 ANNUAL PLAN

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## ASSESSMENT FOR ACTION

### OUR VISION

A world where all children acquire the foundational skills that  
allow them to thrive

### OUR MISSION

To bring learning and measurement to the centre of  
educational policy and practice

## 2018: FOCUS ON ASSESSMENT FOR ACTION

The People's Action for Learning (PAL) network is currently guided by a three-year strategy (2017-2019). The overall focus of the strategy has remained constant - to strengthen the capacity of its members to generate, communicate and use the evidence on children's learning to influence national and global policies and practices on learning outcomes. PAL Network is now in the second year of executing this strategy. In order to allow better focussing of resources, it was decided that each year, a theme would be highlighted. In 2017 the focus was to increase internal and external confidence in the quality of citizen-led assessments by developing a data quality standards framework. By shining a lens on the standards, the network showed its commitment to instituting processes that would enable it to address and improve its own quality. Any work done by members, from policy advocacy to learning interventions is informed by the evidence it generates hence its centrality of the quality of data that members collect.

2018 will focus on assessment for action. PAL Network members are known for generating evidence on learning outcomes. However, the purpose has never been to collect data for its own sake. The intent has always been that each child should read, and should be numerate, as these as basic foundational skills that can germinate more learning. Different member organisations engage in different forms of actions ranging from policy advocacy to actual learning interventions. In 2017, about half of the members decided they wanted to pursue the 'Teaching at the Right Level' approach, pioneered by Pratham. This is an example of the types of actions that we shall focus on in 2018. The focus on action shall also result in the articulation of 'principles for action' which together with the 'principles for assessment' shall be used as guiding principles for admitting and assessing membership.

### Outcomes, Outputs, Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The key outcome areas identified in 2017 have been retained. This section therefore provides a brief summary of the key highlights of 2017, and the focus for 2018.

#### OUTCOME AREA 1

##### **PAL Network capacity to generate high quality data improved**

###### **Key Highlights of 2017**

2017 had two key objectives: to develop data quality standards framework and to mine existing data sets for new insights. The PAL data standards were developed in a consultative manner. Members first agreed to THREE irreducible minimums, and a further FOUR desirable standards that members would strive to achieve. The data quality standards framework (DQAS) has now been published. We had mixed results in data generation. The [PAL Research Fellowship Program](#) was supposed to result in cross national analyses. While the program was well developed, it took most of the year. Hence the fellows only reported in early 2018.

### Plans for 2018

A spill over of a 2017 activity is monitoring adherence to the data standards through self-reporting and peer monitoring. Agreements with the countries will need to be signed. Common metric, with an initial focus on numeracy will also be developed for possible inclusion of a common task across the countries. These activities are in agreement with the five-step process identified earlier (some of which are overlapping): Data quality standards developed → adherence to quality standards monitored internally → Common metrics developed → Open data for all members' uploaded on PAL website → Data Portal (and Data Query Function) finalized.

The PAL fellowship program will also be implemented. Other than the members being supported by in-house expertise from the member countries, an agreement has been reached with REAL centre of Cambridge University whose post-doctoral students will offer academic support to the fellows. While the fellows shall be expected to provide outputs based on existing data, more effort will be put to encourage more PAL products (with multi country analysis) with an initial focus on production of more 4-page policy papers.

### Potential Risks

The risk on lack of adherence was articulated in the 2017 plan, and it remains a potential risk. However, new risks emerge when delving into common metrics. Arriving at a metric that finds commonality across different curricula approaches, and indeed different languages can be a feat, more so in the field of literacy. The process therefore needs to be approached delicately and sensitively for collective buy-in.

### Risk Management Strategies

1. Start with common metrics in numeracy, as numeracy has a more 'universal language' and use this process to build better understanding and approaches for further work on metrics.
2. Engage a technical lead person to steer the process and form agreements with the member countries

## OUTCOME AREA 2

### Network consolidated and positioned to inform global and national monitoring efforts towards SDG4

#### Key Highlights of 2017

In 2017, we sought to build more partnerships to enable better participation in monitoring efforts towards SDG4. We also planned to repackage member countries data to speak more to these efforts. Our contributions in partnerships and communication were more pronounced. Partnerships can be viewed from both individual and organisational levels. The PAL leadership sit and serve in international and national bodies that influence or advise on education. As it is more difficult to track this contribution, we shall highlight the organisational partnerships and contributions made. PAL is a member, and chairs one committee in the Global Alliance for Monitoring Learning (GAML) of UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS). In this capacity PAL participated in crafting a document arguing the case for the promotion of indicator 4.1.1a from Tier 3 to Tier 2. The technical advisory group ultimately rejected the request. A new [4-page Information Brief](#) was launched, demonstrating how citizen-led

assessment data can be used to measure progress towards achieving SDG4.1. The contribution of citizen-led assessment data to monitor progress towards achieving SDG 4.1 was featured in World Bank's World Report 2018, Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2017-18 and The Education Commission Progress Report 2016-17. The PAL Network website, social media and [quarterly newsletter](#) have been important in promoting the visibility of the network digitally.

### Plans for 2018

The proposal is to continue in a similar direction as the previous year. The website will continue to serve as a key avenue for increasing PAL visibility and sharing communication. Now that PAL is registered, it can become a member of UN related agencies such as CCNGO, and can seek direct membership in coalitions undertaking similar work.

### Potential Risks

For one to fully benefit from a partnership, one needs to engage and make contribution to the agreed activities. Partnerships become beneficial if one invests resources, be it staff time, financial or otherwise. This therefore needs to be adequately planned for in the budget and plans.

### Risk Management Strategies

With proper planning, the potential risk of not engaging in meaningful partnerships can be mitigated. It may not be possible to assign fulltime staff members. However, the tasks will be spelled out in the job descriptions and due staff time allocated. Alternatively, this task can be assigned to a technical lead.

## OUTCOME AREA 3

### Actions to improve learning understood and ideas pollinated across the network

#### Key Highlights of 2017

To allow better focussing, we delimited ourselves to understanding and documenting actions undertaken by PAL members that directly emerge from the citizen led assessment (CLA) evidence, or tools and/or approaches. The REAL Centre at the University of Cambridge are finalising mapping member countries' current conceptualization and understanding of how the different action patterns pan out by exploring the country theory of changes. The documentation attempt resulted in the identification of 17 Case Studies from 8 member countries and these were summarised into a the ['Assessment to Action' publication](#). Several member countries expressed interest in the 'Teaching at the Right Level' (TaRL) approach pioneered by Pratham in India, and this led to a learning exposure meeting being undertaken which attracted participants from 12 countries 9 of whom were from the network. The other countries included countries that J-PAL is supporting to implement TaRL.

### Plans for 2018

There will be heightened emphasis on this outcome area, exploring how assessment informs the action, hence the new framing of 'assessment for action'. We will seek new ways to communicate our dual identify that we are a network of citizen led assessment and citizen led action. Renewed clarity will allow the network to embrace those members who are currently only undertaking actions and consider them for membership. A prerequisite to this will however be to get the network to articulate and agree on 'principles of actions' which together with the 'principles of assessment' will be used as

guiding principles for admitting and assessing membership.

The action space has many players and PAL shall be intentional in building partnerships and entering into coalitions. Pratham will be the key learning partner for countries interested in furthering their expertise on TaRL. To avoid duplication of effort, collaborations with J-PAL who have invested in supporting governments and organisations to implement TaRL will continue. PAL shall join coalitions, such as the Regional Alliance for Learning Initiative (RELI) that brings together organisations from East Africa.

### **Potential Risks**

While PAL can strengthen members' capacities, the actual implementation rests on countries. A key challenge faced by new members is fund raising, and inability to raise funds has curtailed their efforts. Action members may also be very diverse implying that the criteria for admission needs to be well thought out.

### **Risk Management Strategies**

The secretariat will identify and support those countries that need greater support to fundraise while continuing to support joint learning sessions. The Fundraising and Partnership working group will take a lead in sharing the fundraising strategies. PAL shall also actively participate in bids to facilitate work in specific areas. A mapping exercise on types of members will be undertaken and used to inform decision making.

## **OUTCOME AREA 4**

### **Network strengthened, bolstered by responsive governance and diversified resourcing**

#### **Key Highlights of 2017**

This outcome sought to strengthen the network through responding to the learning needs of members; strengthening governance and working structures and expanding and diversifying funding. In June 2017, Uwezo Uganda hosted a learning 'exposure visit' for 6 representatives from Cameroon and 1 from Swaziland. In March 2018, MIA in Mexico hosted a learning 'exposure visit' for 4 representatives from Nicaragua, 2 from Venezuela and 1 from El Salvador. In November 2017, the network's first 'Test Development' workshop took place in Nigeria with 28 participants from 14 member countries. Regional hubs emerged as a new pathway for members to contribute to the implementation of the strategy, augmenting the working groups and the 'South Asia' Regional Hub led the way. The PAL Network formally received its registration under the NGO Board of Kenya in January 2018. The board is now in place. In order to ensure the network is still member-led, the PAL Steering Committee was transitioned to the Advisory Group. Its function will be to offer advice to the PAL Board on the strategic direction of the network and support the implementation of activities. Efforts to diversify funding continued. The Hewlett Foundation remained the majority funder with funding being received from the Open Society Foundation, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund and a family foundation.

#### **Plans for 2018**

Focus on strengthening the network and developing a thriving learning environment will continue. Members will continue to convene to share learning, challenges, experiences, and opportunities for further collaboration leading to a thriving network of horizontally-facilitated activities across and between countries in the global South. Board meetings will be held quarterly, with the AGM and Advisory Group meeting annually. Additionally, Working Groups will be formed and disbanded around specific time-bound goals or projects in order to optimize their efficiency and contribution to the network. Regional Hubs will meet annually, creating and executing a regional work plan. Planning for the 2019 research conference will be initiated. Lastly, relationships with existing and new donors will continue to be built through networking, in-person meetings, communication and responding to calls for funding as PAL seeks to expand and diversify the pool of funders.

### **Potential Risks**

After independent registration, renegotiation of funding arrangements and transitions may take time and impact on financial health of the organization. Current staffing lean and insufficient to respond to the variety of funding possibilities.

### **Risk Management Strategies**

Ensure enough funds remaining from existing grants will cover transition period  
Do not transition all existing donors at the same time but employ a staged approach to transition.  
Expand the fundraising team so that it can ably support both the secretariat and member countries.

## **OUTCOME AREA 5**

### **Organisational competence grown and learning, monitoring and evaluation planned for and conducted**

#### **Key Highlights of 2017**

The 2017 plan had modest ambitions; to grow the organisation by strengthening systems and instilling a learning posture among the staff members, and developing a monitoring and evaluation framework. Both activities were done. Staff inductions and retreats have been held regularly in January of each year. Weekly learning sessions are held and key organizational policy documents (Finance, Human Resource, Procurement, have been developed. Financial reports and budgets have been created and annual plans developed and approved by the board.

#### **Plans for 2018**

As we progress to execute the current strategy Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Sharing (MELS) will become increasingly important. We propose to track fidelity to the planned activities but also go a notch higher by tracking the effects in order to better understand the impact. The four areas are Policy effects, Conceptual effects (on influencing way of thinking at a broader level, new insights), Capacity building (to track impact at individual level) and Network Effects (to track impact of PAL as opposed to impact of individual countries). A plan to implement the Monitoring and Evaluation framework will be developed, a staff member designated to support MELS. Training opportunities to improve capacity for internal monitoring will be identified. Lastly plans to start developing the 2020 strategy will be initiated using outcome harvesting; a methodology that allows reflection in order to plan ahead.

## 2018: PLAN AND BUDGET

Accounting Code	Planning Code	Output	Narrative description of 2018 activities	Total USD
	1	<b>PAL NETWORK CAPACITY TO GENERATE DATA OF GOOD QUALITY IMPROVED</b>		271,114
	1.1	<b>NETWORK DATA QUALITY STANDARDS FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED</b>		
		Sub total		63,954
	1.2	<b>EXISTING DATASETS MINED FOR NEW INSIGHTS WITH AN EQUITY FOCUS</b>		
		Sub total		207,161
	2	<b>NETWORK STRENGTHENED TO POSITION ITSELF TO INFORM GLOBAL MONITORING EFFORTS TOWARDS SDG4</b>		155,968
	2.1	<b>PAL DATA AND PROCESSES CONSOLIDATED AND REPACKAGED TO AID MONITORING EFFORTS</b>		
		Sub total		133,067
	2.2	<b>PARTNERSHIPS WITH GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH: EDUCATION MONITORING, ASSESSMENT, DATA AND CITIZEN-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS PURSUED</b>		
		Sub total		22,901
	3	<b>ACTIONS TAKEN BY MEMBERS TO IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES UNDERSTOOD AND IDEAS POLLINATED ACROSS THE NETWORK</b>		361,776
	3.1	<b>DOCUMENTATION OF ACTIONS EMERGING FROM CITIZEN-LED ASSESSMENT DATA UNDERTAKEN AND SHARED</b>		
		Sub total		162,204
	3.2	<b>INTERNAL MATCHMAKING FACILITATED FOR LEARNING, SHARING AND ADAPTATIONS</b>		
	3.3	<b>INFORMATION FROM REPORTS AND CASE STUDIES APPORPRIETLY REPACKAGED FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES</b>		
	3.4	<b>NETWORK OF ACTORS USING CLA TO INFORM ACTION PROGRAMS ENGAGED</b>		
	3.5	<b>FUNDRAISING UNDERTAKEN FOR ACTION PROGRAMS</b>		
		Sub total		199,572
	4	<b>NETWORK STRENGTHENED BOLSTERED BY RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE AND DIVERSIFIED FUNDING</b>		338,068
	4.1	<b>NETWORK STRENGTHENED THROUGH SHARED LEARNING AMONGST EXISTING AND POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS</b>		
		Sub total		237,921
	4.2	<b>GOVERNANCE AND WORKING STRUCTURES CONSOLIDATED TO ENSURE WELL FUNCTIONING NETWORK</b>		

Accounting Code	Planning Code	Output	Narrative description of 2018 activities	Total USD
		Sub total		94,148
	4.3	<b>NETWORK INVESTS IN UPDATING AND INTERESTING POTENTIAL NEW DONORS TO FUND CLA</b>		
		Sub total		6,000
	5	<b>ORGANISATIONAL COMPETENCE GROWN AND LEARNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION CARRIED OUT</b>		11,650
	5.1	<b>LEARNING TO IMPROVE COMPETENCIES IN KEY AREAS UNDERTAKEN</b>		
		Sub total		
	5.2	<b>PLANS AND BUDGETS PRODUCED IN A TIMELY MANNER</b>		
		Sub total		6,650
	5.3	<b>MONITORING AND EVALUATION UNDERTAKEN</b>		
		Sub total		21,501
		Subtotal Implementation		1,155,077
	6	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS</b>		76,824
		Grand Total		1,231,901