

# Ethiopia 2015 ELM Results

## International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA)

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programs ensure that young children fulfill their right to healthy development, including engaging education, to help them reach their full potential. There is mounting evidence from around the world proving that the first years of life are critical in the development of the child as they shape cognitive, social and language skills, as well as lifelong approaches to learning.



### Intervention Summary

Save the Children's Early Literacy and Math initiative (ELM) began in the West Showa region of Ethiopia in early 2012. In recognition of the increased interest and commitment by the Government of Ethiopia to

increasing access to ECCD services, a project was designed to focus on the quality of service delivery as this relates to school readiness outcomes for children.

ELM aims to demonstrate techniques that are pedagogically sound, scalable, and which will ensure that during the critical early years Ethiopian children benefit from inclusive, effective teaching and learning opportunities that support early literacy and math skills development at the pre-primary level, and improve school readiness and long-term learning outcomes for young learners. Further, recognizing that ECCD expansion will take many years to reach remote areas of the country as well as the important role caregivers play in their children's development, a pilot program also included an introduction of ELM-specific techniques for caregivers in communities with and without ECCD Centers.

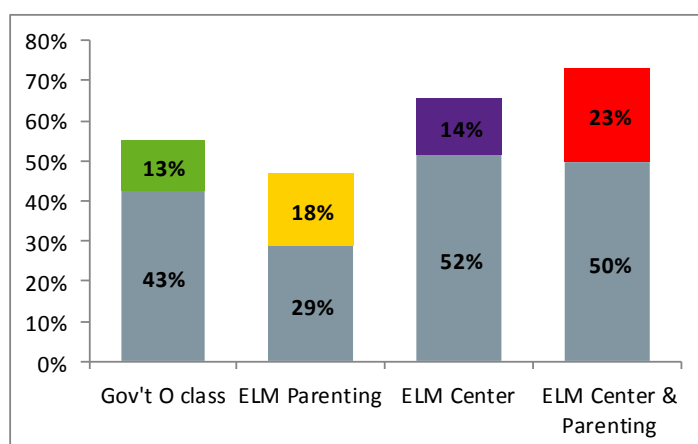
### Methodology

This study sought to understand the gains in learning and development, with a specific focus on literacy and math, of children who participated in the ELM program from the beginning of their ECCD year (November 2014) through the end of the school year (May 2015). Children were divided into four groups: 1) Attending ECCD centers supported by the ELM program, 2) Attending ECCD centers supported by ELM and caregivers receiving ELM at home training, 3) Caregivers receiving ELM at home training only, and 4) Children attending government "O" classes.

Learning gains for each groups were measured using Save the Children's International Development and Early

Learning Assessment (IDELA), as well as the accompanying caregiver questionnaire. The same group of 682 children were assessed at the beginning and end of the school year, with only 9 percent attrition over time.

**Figure 1. Learning gains from the beginning to end of the school year, by group**



## Results

### ELM Skills Gains

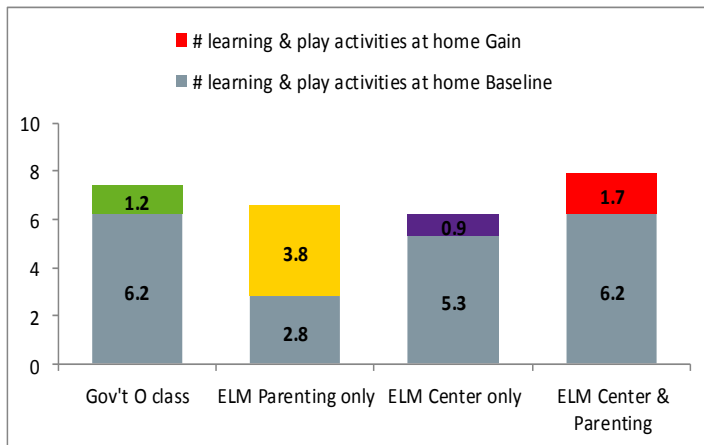
Analyses find that across all IDELA domains, children in the ELM Center and Parenting group made significantly greater gains than children in all other groups\*. Overall, children in the ELM Center only group learned more than children in Government "O" classes and children in the ELM Parenting only groups. However, there was no significant differences between the gains made by children in Government "O" classes and children in the ELM Parenting only group. Also, there were no significant differences between gains made by boys and girls in any group.

\*Controlling for sex, age, maternal literacy, play materials in homes, learning activities at home, possessions and baseline scores.

## Home Learning Environment

Having a strong home learning environment has been shown to be a strong predictor of children's early learning and development. In addition to strong learning gains for children, this study also finds that children of parents in the ELM Parenting group gained more strength in their home learning environments than children in other groups.

**Figure 2. Home learning environment gains from the beginning to end of the school year, by group**



At baseline, parents in the ELM Parenting only communities (villages without access to government “O” classes or previous SC ECCD programming) reported engaging in the fewest play and learning activities at home with their children. However, after a few months of attending ELM Parenting sessions, these parents made substantial improvements in the stimulating behaviors they engaged in with their children. In addition, analyses find that within the ELM Parenting group children from families with more education, higher socioeconomic status or stronger home learning environments did NOT gain more than others with less of these resources.

## Discussion

Focusing on learning gains, analyses find that that even without access to an ECCD center, children whose parents receive the ELM program at home gain substantial emergent literacy and math skills. While their overall scores are still lower than those of children in communities with access to ECCD services, the magnitude of the gains made by children in ELM Parenting group are similar to those seen for children enrolled in ECCD centers. Given that the extension of ECCD services to children throughout Ethiopia will take time, it is important to know that ELM Parenting can serve as an effective, low cost way to

improve children's early learning experiences and help to prepare them for the transition to primary school.

Further, children who received both the ELM Center and ELM Parenting programs show stronger gains than any other group. Given that these children began the year with relatively strong early learning skills it's impressive that they continued to gain even more advanced skills at a faster pace than children in ELM Centers only or in Government “O” classes. This suggests that where possible, parenting sessions should be added to existing center-based early learning programs to further enhance children's early skill development.



It should also be noted that parents of children in the ELM Center and ELM Center and Parenting groups reported that many of their children were in their second year of an ECCD program. The stronger scores at the beginning and end of the school year for children in these groups compared to children in Government “O” classes could suggest that more than one year of preprimary education is more beneficial than one year of exposure to an early learning program for children in these communities. Further research should be done to try to replicate the findings of this pilot study and to continue to investigate the impacts of home and center-based ECCD programs on children's early learning.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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