

Rwanda 2015 ELMI 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 (ELMI), a project supported by Innovation for Education, a partnership between the Governments of Rwanda and the UK, was initiated in

Rwanda in early 2013. In recognition of the increased interest and commitment by the Government of Rwanda to increasing access to ECCD services, the project was designed to focus on the quality of service delivery as this relates to school readiness outcomes for children.

ELMI aims to demonstrate techniques that are pedagogically sound, scalable, and which will ensure that during the critical early years Rwandan children benefit from inclusive, effective teaching and learning opportunities that support literacy and math skills development at the pre-primary level, and improve school readiness and long-term learning outcomes for young learners. This includes piloting the introduction of ELM-specific techniques for caregivers in existing ECCD Centres as well as designing and piloting a new parent outreach component for parents in communities where children are not able to attend ECCD Centres.

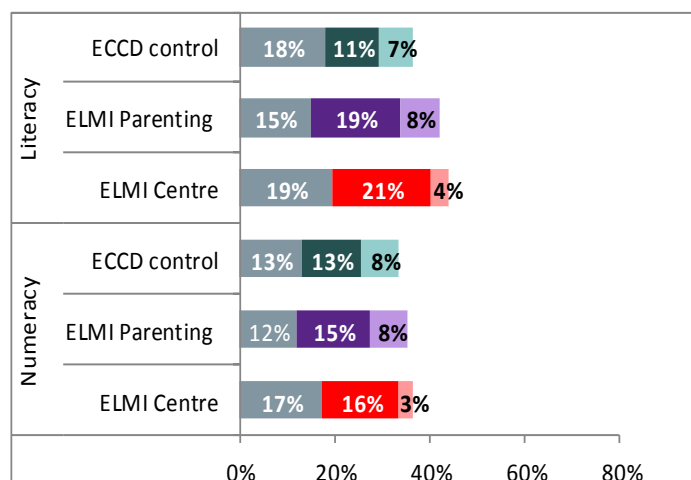
Methodology

The endline data collection sought to understand the gains in learning and development, with a specific focus on literacy and math, of children who participated in the ELMI program from the beginning of their ECCD year (May 2013) through their first term of primary school (May 2015). Children were divided into two intervention groups, one attending ECCD centres supported by the ELMI program and one not attending ECCD centres but receiving ELMI Parenting support. The intervention children were compared to children in nearby communities who attended non-ELMI ECCD centres and those who didn't benefit from any form of ECCD services.

Results

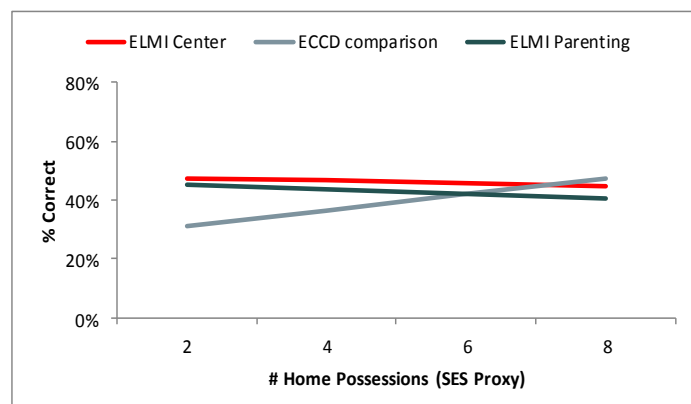
ELMI Skills Gains

Figure 1. Learning gains from the beginning of ECD to the first half of grade 1, by group



Save the Children's International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) was used to measure learning gains for children and study findings demonstrated that children in the ELMI Centre and ELMI Parenting groups showed statistically significantly higher scores at endline in both literacy and math compared to children in the Non-ECCD control group.

Figure 2. Learning gains for ELMI groups are more equitable than within standard ECCD centres



ELMI Parenting children started with the lowest scores of all groups across all IDELA domains at baseline and over time caught up almost entirely with their ELMI ECCD peers, closing the gap from baseline. Furthermore, we see that not only do the ELMI Centre and Parenting programmes produce strong learning gains on average, but these interventions are benefitting all families and children equally, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Enrollment

In addition, to strong learning gains this study also finds that children in the ELMI Parenting group were the most likely to enroll in Grade 1 at the intended age. Many children from the ELMI Centre and standard ECCD groups enrolled in Grade 1 early, whereas children from the ELMI Parenting group were significantly more likely to enroll on time (37 percent v. 16 percent early enrollment). Further, numerous children who enrolled in Grade 1 early were found to be repeating Grade 1 during the final assessment in Spring 2015.

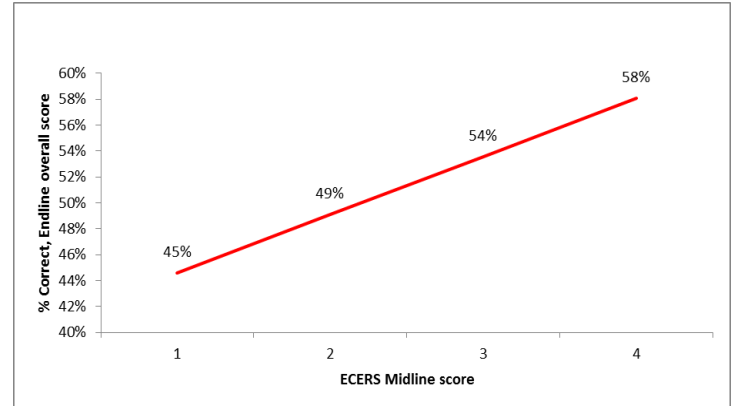
Discussion

Despite gains for children in the ELMI group, looking at the literacy and math outcomes of children at endline, data shows a concerning overall trend. Notably, the gains between midline and endline were very modest, often far less than gains seen between baseline and midline (when ELMI Centre and Parenting children were part of the ELMI intervention). In addition, literacy and math scores across the groups are barely reaching 50%, confirming the fact that even in grade 1, children are still working on gaining what are considered foundational preschool skills and are not ready for more complex or sophisticated learning.

It is clear that the grade 1 experience of many children, especially those who enter early, is not marked by success and in fact might be spinning children into a negative downward trajectory. The findings of this study demonstrate that little learning of fundamental literacy and math skills is happening in grade 1. Our data on classroom observations in grade 1 also reiterate the need for further and serious attention to grade 1 learning environments and the transitions of children between preschool and primary school. Classrooms generally appeared under-resourced with class sizes of 50+ children, higher than what would be considered optimal for learning.

Interestingly, we re-confirmed that ECCD centre quality matters even for endline scores. This suggests that children who attended high quality ECCD centres were not only better prepared for Grade 1, but also retained their

Figure 3. Learning gains from midline to endline are positively related to ECCD centre quality



advantage into Grade 1 and had double the gains of their peers who attended low quality ECCD centres.

Policy Implications

Despite the generally low overall achievement, children in the ELMI Centre and ELMI Parenting groups showed statistically significantly higher scores at endline on both literacy and math compared to children in the Non-ECCD control group. In addition, the ELMI Parenting children began with the weakest skills in all domains at baseline and over time caught up almost entirely with their ECCD centre peers, closing the gap from baseline. This very promising finding has strong implications for future programming. The ELM Parenting component was much less resource intensive yet seems to have produced almost the same gains as the ELMI ECCD centre program, suggesting that as the government attempts to scale up ECCD provision nationally in the years to come, the ELM parent outreach model should be considered seriously as an alternative to the more traditional approach. ELMI Parenting may be especially relevant for hard to reach populations or alternately for areas with more children than an ECCD classroom can accommodate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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