



UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S READINESS FOR SCHOOL IN MOZAMBIQUE

Background

Despite a twofold increase in primary school enrolment in Mozambique over the past 15 years, educational outcomes remain largely disappointing (Martinez, Naudeau, & Pereira, 2012). Statistics from the Ministry of Education and Human Development (MINEDH) show that a mere 4% of children aged 0 to 5 participated in formal pre-primary education programming ((Ministry of Education, 2012). Children who enter primary school after a successful preprimary education program demonstrate higher test-score performance, class participation and effort, and high school completion rates. However, limited implementation and evaluation of accelerated school readiness (ASR) programs to date necessitates further testing to validate their effectiveness.

In Zambezia, Mozambique, Save the Children and UNICEF, in partnership with the Mozambican Ministry of Education, are implementing an ASR program. The program aims to improve readiness in three spheres: children's readiness for school, school's readiness for children, and families' readiness for school. American Institutes for Research (AIR) is conducting the evaluation (Bonilla et al., 2018) to test the effects of the ASR pilot program on children's school readiness and successful transition to primary school.

Research

AIR used a cluster randomized controlled trial in 60 communities from two districts in Zambezia in their study. In all 60 communities, children's school readiness was assessed at baseline (November 2017), just prior to entering Grade 1 (March 2018), and at the end of the academic year (November 2018). An impact analysis allowed AIR to assess if the ASR pilot program had improved school readiness, relative to the control group. The evaluation used IDELA to measure school readiness not only because the tool was closely aligned to the intervention developed, but also because IDELA had already been tested in Mozambique in areas similar to the evaluation sites.

Results

The midline results indicate that children attending the ASR summer school demonstrated new knowledge and skills. AIR found that the ASR summer school had a significant impact on children's learning and development. AIR also found that the program had a significant positive effect on the likelihood the children in ASR program schools would enroll in first grade.

The results to date are short-term impacts and it remains to be seen if they will be maintained. It is important to note that despite important short-term gains for participants, program beneficiaries still show low levels of mastery in most school readiness constructs, indicating that more work is needed to have children fully prepared for primary school. Nonetheless, the short-term results are being used by the Ministry of Education to assess program scalability, representing a new opportunity to contribute to children's school readiness and successful transition to primary school.

Contact

If you have questions or require further information please contact Frannie Noble (fnoble@savechildren.org).