



# MULTI-PARTNER COLLABORATION: ICHULI CONSULTING AND THE AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

Up to 70% of Uganda's 3.6 million children between 3 and 5 years enter primary school unprepared to learn. Research has found that poor teaching skills and a widespread lack of accountability ECE are putting child development at risk (Cambridge Education 2018). In Uganda, policy-makers are paying attention to this research and letting it guide their policy objectives. However, ECE is still not mandated in Uganda and there is no universal pre-primary education.

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), in partnership with a private donor, is working to improve the coordination, monitoring and implementation of early childhood services in the Kampala, Wakiso, and Mukono Districts of Uganda. Central to this goal is evidence that the program has a positive impact on children's learning outcomes, caregivers' classroom practices, and the learning environment. The partnership commissioned the Uganda-based research firm, Ichuli Consulting, to complete an evaluation of the program's impact on school readiness, with the goal of understanding the program's effectiveness, to provide government with evidence of impact, and to set the stage for largescale adoption. The evaluation focuses specifically on outcomes associated with improving children's school readiness in ECE centers. The evaluation covers 40 ECE centers in addition to 40 comparison schools and reaches almost 1,500 children across the three districts.

At the start of the study, the partners undertook an analysis of existing school readiness evaluations used globally, in Africa, and in Uganda to measure children's school readiness, including IDELA, EDI and MELQO. IDELA was selected for use in the evaluation as it represents key components of school readiness that have been agreed upon by experts in Uganda – and globally – as representative of the skills children need to succeed in primary school. The nature of the child assessment approach in IDELA was well suited to the Ugandan context and to the skills of the enumerators completing the assessments. Additionally, the IDELA tool had been used in Uganda before, offering a chance for comparison of outcomes amongst the study group with other previous evaluations. Using IDELA provides the partnership with a broad basis for assessment of key school readiness indicators for six year olds graduating from an ECE program aligned to the international literature and a rigorous global standard.

AKF hopes to use the findings (expected in 2020) from this study to inform scalable approaches to effective ECE programming in Uganda implemented in partnership with local governments and communities. Such a rigorous study will provide a base of evidence about what works, what does not, and why, regarding teacher training, support, development of ECE learning environments and curricula.

## Contact

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