



Childs Play - Strengthening Early Childhood Development Education in Northern Uganda

Baseline Study Report May 2019

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Acknowledgment

Right To Play's social – emotional learning and development measurement efforts would not have been improved without the use of Save the Children's IDELA tool. Special thanks go to Save the Children for having cooperated with us and extended a MoU that sanctioned the use of the IDELA tool.

The RTP team is grateful for the close cooperation rendered by the district local government and partner organizations like: Save the children and World Vision in Adjumani during the ECD selection process.

Special thanks also go to the project team in Adjumani and the team in Kampala that made all the necessary logistical and administrative arrangements possible for the assessment exercise.

The MEL team is grateful to the enumerators who supported the actual field data collection and data entry. The assessment exercise with young children could not have been an easy task without the relentless support from caregivers at selected ECD centers.

Lastly and importantly, we would like to acknowledge the gallant families that allowed their children to participate in the assessment and the ECD centers who actually allowed making time to participate in the assessment notwithstanding all the disruptions caused.

The selfless technical support from Armel Oguniyi (MEL manager) was also very instrumental in guiding the IDELA assessment process.

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Acronyms

DIECD	District Integrated Early Childhood Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
GoU	Government of Uganda
IDELA	International Development and Early Learning Assessment
NIECD	National Integrated Early Childhood Development
PBL	Play Based Learning
RTP	Right To Play
ToT	Trainer of Trainers
TTC	Teacher Training Colleges
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

The Government of Uganda (GoU) recognizes the benefits of investing in early childhood education, which are reflected in the National Integrated Childhood Development Policy Action Plan (2016- 2021). The policy states that all children under 8 years must access quality education to realize their potential wellbeing and future success (UNICEF, 2016). It also includes a commitment to build the capacity of the ECD workforce to deliver quality ECD services (GoU, 2016). However, the GoU does not have the resources to translate these commitments into practice as current ECD services struggle to meet basic standards. These challenges are most pressing in Adjumani District, Northern Uganda, where the refugee crisis has rapidly expanded the population resulting in 22,000 children under the age of 5. This places increased pressure on an ECD system that does not meet the basic requirements and standards for quality. This region already faces limited availability and overcrowded facilities as it has the lowest share of ECD centers in the country (3% compared to a national average of 10%) and there is limited awareness of the importance of ECD amongst caregivers. Right To Play secured funding from LDS charities to implement a "Childs Play - Strengthening Early Childhood Development Education in Northern Uganda" project (Jan – Dec 2019) with the aim of improving access and quality of early childhood education for 3,000 refugee and host community children by supporting ECD centers. The project expected results are;

- Improved quality of ECD provision among 3,000 refugee and host community children in Adjumani district.
- Increased school readiness for primary aged children for children in Adjumani Refugees and host communities.
- Increased access to ECD Centers for children in Adjumani Refugees and host communities.

3,000 children aged 3 to 6 will directly benefit. 100 ECD teachers (50 female) and 30 government education officials will directly benefit through training and mentorship provided by the project. Community members (parents, ECD management committees) will also benefit.

Purpose and scope of the survey

The purpose of the evaluation is to gather baseline data for a set of outcome indicators outlined in the performance measurement framework of the project. The baseline data will inform the development of realistic and achievable targets that are grounded within the local context. Besides, it will inform organizational strategic learning (challenges, lessons and good practices on the use of IDELA framework) and capacity building and contribute to the global body of knowledge of IDELA measurement. The baseline data was collected in the six (6) ECD centers targeted by the project located in refugee settlements and host communities in Adjumani and these included; Agojo, Pagirinya, Mungula, Maaji and Adjumani town council

Methodology

A cross – sectional evaluation design was used to describe the status of the school readiness skills among children in six selected ECD centres. A sample of 328 children were randomly selected and assessed using the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) to measure their school readiness skills. A total of 30 caregivers were interviewed using a caregivers' interview guide and 3 district education officials were also interviewed as Key Informants. A school learning environment assessment tool was used to assess the physical environment of the ECD centres. Secondary data was collected using documentary review method where ECD records were reviewed to ascertain information on school enrolments and transition to primary school for children who had been in top class the previous year (2018).

Key findings

Children School readiness:

Assessment results showed that caregivers vaguely knew some indicators and/ or skills that demonstrated school readiness in children. However it was very clear that they were not conceptually aware about the child school readiness skills as laid out in the IDELA framework such as Motor skills, Emergent Literacy, Emergent Numeracy and Social – Emotional skills.

The total IDELA scores were practically above average with the overall aggregated total score at 64% (65% among boys and 63% among girls). There was no significant difference between boys and girls in the aggregated percentage scores.

The relatively high IDELA total score is in part attributed to the support some of the selected ECDs are already getting from other development actors like Save the Children and World Vision. Considering individual domain scores, motor development skills scored highest with up to 78 percent (78% for boys and 78% for girls). There was no observed difference in percentage scores between boys and girls for this motor domain. Emergent numeracy came in second at 68 percent. (70% among boys and 66% among girls). Social – Emotional development skills were aggregated at 62 percent with 49 percent among boys and 46 percent among girls. Emergent literacy had the lowest aggregated percentage score at 48 percent with 49 percent among boys and 46 percent among girls also not recording a significant difference between boys and girls.

Safe and supportive learning environment:

All ECD centers assessed had safe outdoor play spaces equipped with age appropriate play equipment. Classroom floors had no defects to cause injury or harm to children and the shelters were safe against poor weather conditions save for St. Thereza ECD where baby class was hosted in a makeshift tent. The sanitation and hygiene facilities with a special focus on the latrine environment, had no objects to cause accidents or injury to children. There were relatively proper waste management systems and latrines were accessible to children with disability.

Conclusion

Results showed that the school readiness skills' overall average percentage correct score was relatively above average at 64% (65% among boys and 63% among girls) with no significant difference between boys and girls. Emergent literacy had the lowest aggregated percentage score at 48 percent with 49 percent among boys and 46 percent among girls. Caregivers had a fair understanding of the play based learning concept but none of them had had prior training on Right To Play's concept of play based learning, Caregivers don't integrate RTP's PBL methodology in their teaching practice and district education offices have not taken the idea of advocating for the integration of play based learning approaches in the ECD curriculum and the district development plans and budgets. Emphasis should be placed on the use of more meaningful play based learning games both in class and out-of-class to maximise the full growth potential of children's school readiness and learning outcomes.

Key Lesson learned

All ECD centres are privately funded by either development organisations (NGOs) or community initiatives. So failure by government to take lead in early childhood education investment risks the sustainability of this program and the plight of refugee children in Adjumani district. The Madi language has two different dialects that is the Madi dialect from Moyo and the other from Adjumani.

Translating the IDELA tool in one dialect causes unnecessary inconveniences hence there is always a need to translate the tool in the common dialects of the dominant language. In the refugee settlement environment safe quiet environment where to assess children may not be readily accessible so there could be an inevitably likelihood of disrupting learning activities. Assessment exercises for children in ECD centres should be planned and conducted within the allowable school time before end of class activities or else retaining children beyond that time may be tricky and that could risk resentment of participation in the exercise.

Recommendation

Right To play should collaboratively work with the Adjumani district education office to ensure that necessary evidence based information on ECD needs and challenges are shared such that the later uses the information to integrate ECD priorities and interests in the district development planning and budgeting processes.

RTP should collaboratively engage with other stakeholders to build networks and alliances through which they can effectively advocate and influence policy implementation and/ or amendments that are pro-refugee focused.

A robust monitoring and evaluation plan with a comprehensive child development tracking system should be developed and implemented in order to measure children's early childhood development. RTP should facilitate linkages to certification and licensing entities such that caregivers are supported to acquire certification and ECD centers are supported to acquire legal registration.

Appropriate play learning materials should be made available to support early childhood learning and development and ECD centers should be guided to allocate more resources and time to the development of "Emergent literacy and Maths" skills among children.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Right To Play is an international organization committed to improving the lives of children and youth affected by conflict, disease and poverty. Established in 2000, Right To Play has pioneered a unique play-based approach to learning and development which focuses on quality education, life skills, health, gender equality, child protection and building peaceful communities. With programming in over 20 countries, Right To Play transforms the lives of more than one million children each week through play based methods, both inside and outside of the classroom. In addition to our work with children, Right To Play advocates with parents, local communities, and governments to advance the fundamental rights of all children.

Investing in early childhood education is a cost-effective strategy that can mitigate childhood disadvantage, and produce higher rates of economic return for the individual, community and country (DFID, 2014). Failure to access Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions detrimentally affects children's learning opportunities, and the cognitive, physical, social and emotional gains that improve school readiness in the short term and support development gains in later years (Naudeau et al, 2011). The Government of Uganda (GoU) recognize these benefits, which are reflected in the National Integrated Childhood Development Policy Action Plan (2016- 2021). The policy states that all children under 8 years must access quality education to realize their potential wellbeing and future success (UNICEF, 2016). It also includes a commitment to build the capacity of the ECD workforce to deliver quality ECD services (GoU, 2016).

However, the GoU does not have the resources to translate these commitments into practice as current ECD services struggle to meet basic standards. These challenges are most pressing in Adjumani District, Northern Uganda, where the refugee crisis has rapidly expanded the population resulting in 22,000 children under the age of 5. This places increased pressure on an ECD system that does not meet the basic requirements and standards for quality. This region already faces limited availability and overcrowded facilities as it has the lowest share of ECD centers in the country (3% compared to a national average of 10%). There is limited awareness of the importance of ECD amongst caregivers. More than 90% of the population are not accessing ECD services, which is significantly lower than neighboring countries such as Kenya and Tanzania (54% and 35% enrolment, respectively) (NPA, 2015).

1.2 Project description

Right To Play secured funding from LDS charities to implement the "Childs Play - Strengthening Early Childhood Development Education in Northern Uganda" with the aim of improving access and quality of early childhood education for 3,000 refugee and host community children by supporting ECD centers. The project approach is grounded in research that shows the use of play as a means to improve cognitive development and academic achievement in the early school years (Romano et al, 2010), and empowers children to become engaged and lifelong learners. Learning through play also results in higher academic skills in later life (Bornstein et al, 2013), improved memory and information processing (Pajares, 2002), and reduced school dropout (Moffit et al, 2011).

More specifically the project expected results include:

- Improved quality of ECD provision among 3,000 refugee and host community children in Adjumani district.
- Increased school readiness for primary aged children for children in Adjumani Refugees and host communities.
- Increased access to ECD Centers for children in Adjumani Refugees and host communities.

3,000 children aged 3 to 6 will directly benefit. 100 ECD teachers (50 female) and 30 government education officials will directly benefit through training and mentorship provided by the project. Community members (parents, ECD management committees) will also benefit.

1.3 Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to gather baseline data for a set of outcome indicators outlined in the performance measurement framework of the project. The baseline data will inform the development of realistic and achievable targets that are grounded within the local context. Besides, it will inform organizational strategic learning (challenges, lessons and good practices on the use of IDELA framework) and capacity building and contribute to the global body of knowledge of IDELA measurement. The baseline data was collected in the six (6) ECD centers targeted by the project located in refugee settlements and host communities in Adjumani and these included; Agojo, Pagirinya, Mungula, Maaji and Adjumani town council.

1.4 Evaluation questions

Building on the project's outcomes and indicators, the evaluation is designed to explore and gather baseline data for all the outcome indicators included in the project's PMF and, address the following evaluation questions

- What can the baseline tell us about children's emergent learning and development skills? What does this mean for programming?
- Do children's learning and development skills vary by learner's background characteristics like sex, age, and ECD centers? If so, what does this mean for effectively targeting our learning and development program?
- What can the baseline tell us about caregivers' knowledge of sport and play integration of PBL into teaching practices? What does this mean for programming, future capacity building for the caregivers?
- What can the baseline tell us about the physical and socio-emotional learning environment at the targeted ECD Centers? What does this mean for programming?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Baseline survey design

A cross – sectional evaluation design was used to describe the status of the school readiness skills of selected children. A mix-method (quantitative and qualitative) and participatory approach was used to gather data for the baseline survey. Both primary and secondary data was collected and analyzed using Ms Excel for quantitative data and a descriptive, deductive and inductive approach for qualitative data to produce compelling findings for the evaluation questions and outcome indicators. The Baseline process entailed an in-depth training of enumerators and data entry clerks, followed by a field pilot testing of the IDELA data collection instruments to ensure satisfactory reliability and validity.

2.2 Sampling design

Given the small number of ECD centers targeted by the project (6), the survey purposively selected all the six centers as data collection site. This increased the need to give equal chance to all the children of the selected centers to participate in the survey. For the school readiness assessment using the IDELA tool, the survey stratified ECD classes into 1) Baby class, 2) Middle class and 3) Top class. A systematic random sampling technique was used to select children in each strata. In each strata girls and boys were separated to enable sex disaggregated systematic random sampling. The survey's approach was to consider a sample size that would be representative of the total population of the children enrolled in the targeted six ECD Centers. Considering the total population (2,744) of the six selected ECD centers, a 95% confidence level and +/-5 margin error (confidence interval) were applied. A representative sample size obtained for the school readiness assessment was 337. In each ECD center, 60 (30f, 30m) children aged 3-6 were randomly selected for the school readiness assessment. In each ECD Center, five (5) caregivers were purposively selected for the semi-structured interviews to explore their knowledge and perceptions of school readiness skills and play-based learning methodologies in the context of early childhood development. In addition, three (3) Education Officers at district level were also purposively selected and interviewed as Key Informants to explore their perception of the use of play-based approaches in line with the ECD curriculum.

2.3 Data collection methods and tools

Semi-structured interviews were conducted among caregivers using the caregivers' interview guide exploring their knowledge and perception of school readiness and play based learning approaches. District education officials were also assessed using a Key Informant interview guide that explored their perception of using play based learning approaches in line with the ECD curriculum. Since the school learning environment is crucial in sharpening the child's learning outcomes, the evaluation used the school learning environment assessment tool to ascertain the status of each ECD centers' learning environment primarily using the assessor's direct observation. Secondary data was also collected using documentary review where ECD records were reviewed to ascertain information on school enrolments and transition to primary school for children who had been in top class the previous year (2018). An IDELA Tool developed by Save the Children was administered among children to assess their school readiness skills within four domains.

Table 1: Simplified evaluation matrix

Evaluation themes	Data collection method	Data collection tools	Sample size
Children aged 3-6 school readiness	Child survey	IDELA Tool	360 (180f/180m)
Play based learning methodologies	Interview	Semi-structured interview guide	3 District Education Officers 30 Caregivers
Positive and safe learning environment at the ECD Centers	Observation	School environment assessment tool	6 ECD centers targeted by the project

2.4 Assessors training

A four (4) days Training of Trainers (ToT) training sessions were conducted internally within Right To Play preceding the training of assessors/ enumerators. Later on assessors were trained by the Trainer on the administration of the IDELA tool for five (5) days including sessions on role play. After the training, one (1) day pilot testing exercise was conducted in one selected ECD center not included in the evaluation. Prior to the actual field data collection, consent was sought and the head of the ECD centers signed the IDELA principal/ Head teacher consent forms while caregivers signed parent consent forms for the children.

2.5 Data processing and analysis

Quantitative data (IDELA school readiness data) was captured, cleaned, processed and analysed using the IDELA data cleaning and analysis framework provided by Save the Children on the IDELA online platform. Qualitative data analysis was done using the descriptive, deductive and inductive approach of qualitative data analysis. It should also be noted that data triangulation per tool, per site and per category of actors made it possible to verify and validate the opinions, perceptions and concerns of adults interviewed as highlighted in the report.

2.6 Data handling and confidentiality

Data collection supervisor and principal investigator accessed individual item data for the IDELA survey, along with any identifying information. Hard copies of IDELA filled surveys were kept under lock and key in a safe location. The electronic digital data was held on a password-protected laptop only accessible by the data-entrants and the principal investigator. Learners' names with unique identifiers were separated from the main database before sharing the data with anyone beyond the principal investigator. Enumerators were trained on Ethical Standards, RTP Child Safeguarding Policy and on taking consent from children, parents and ECD center administrations that contributed to the data collection. An official letter was sent to the district education office introducing the baseline survey activity and seeking permission to collect data in the district and selected ECD centres.

2.7 Limitations

Like many other surveys, this baseline survey had some limitations. During the planning process, it was realised that the resources earmarked for the activity were limited as compared to the scope of the IDELA framework. Because of budgetary constraints, the survey was not able to assess the home learning environment component. So for that matter there were no household interviews conducted with parents to establish the status of the home learning environment. This data assessment deficit deprived the survey some crucial learning aspects since the home learning environment is vital in shaping childhood early learning and development.

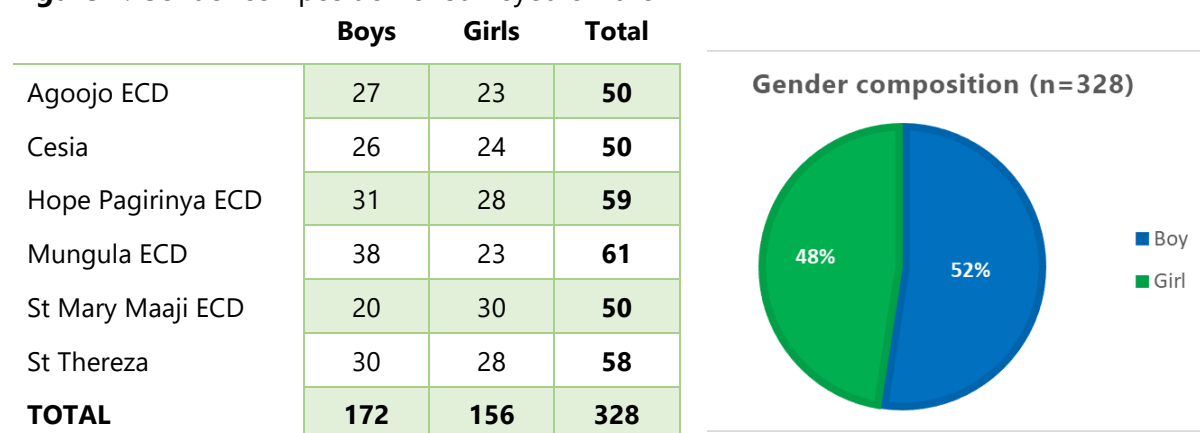
3. BASELINE RESULTS

3.1. Demographics

3.1.1. Sex of the assessed children

The randomised sample selection targeted both boys and girls for purposes of inclusion and gender equality. The evaluation intended to have an equal number of boys and girls to participate in the assessment. However due to the dynamics on the ground, boys were slightly over sampled than their girl counterparts. The majority of the surveyed children 52 percent (n=172) were boys while 48 percent (n=156) were girls.

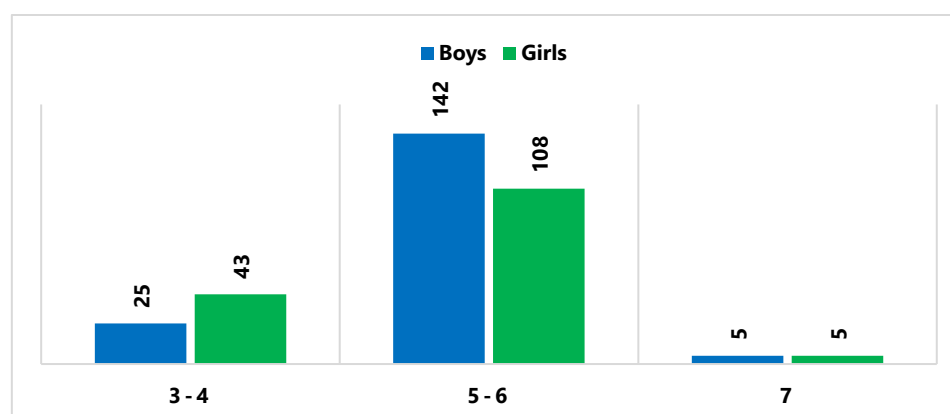
Figure 1: Gender composition of surveyed children



3.1.2. Age of the assessed children

During the survey, children's ages were captured as part of the background information. Children were assessed across the three levels of ECDs that is baby class, middle class and top class. Most of the children 76% (43% Boys and 33% Girls) assessed were between ages 5 and 6. The second largest age group was between 3 – 4 years that constituted 21% of assessed children (8% Boys and 13% Girls) while children aged 7 years who were assessed constituted only 3% with 2% for boys and girls respectively. It is understandable to have more children within age groups 3 – 4 and 5 – 6 because those are the ECD going age ranges. Children aged 7 years were very few because that age is for primary school going children.

Figure 2: Age ranges of surveyed children



3.1.3. Sex and teaching experience of interviewed caregivers

ECD caregivers were interviewed as key informants to explore their perspective on child development, School readiness, Knowledge and use of play based learning approaches, inclusive participation of boys and girls and the provision a Positive learning environment. Table 2 below shows that 30 caregivers were interviewed and out of the 30 interviewed, 19 (63.3%) were female caregivers and 11 (36.7%) were male caregivers. Five caregivers were interviewed in each of the six selected ECD centres, however the number of males and females varied per ECD centre. During the survey, caregivers were asked how many years they had been teaching in their respective ECD centers and out of the 30 caregivers interviewed, 15 (50%) had been in their respective ECD centres for 3 years. The second biggest lot 8 (26.7%) had been teaching at their centers for 2 years. Every few caregivers had had a long stay in ECD service. Data showed that only 3 (10%) had been in service for 4 years and 2 (6.7%) had served for 5 years.

Table 2: Number of interviewed ECD caregivers by sex and ECD center

		Sex of respondent		Total	
		Male	Female		
ECD center	Cesia ECD	Count	2	3	5
		% of Total	6.7%	10.0%	16.7%
	Agojo ECD	Count	1	4	5
		% of Total	3.3%	13.3%	16.7%
	Hope Pagirinya ECD	Count	2	3	5
		% of Total	6.7%	10.0%	16.7%
	Mungula IECD	Count	2	3	5
		% of Total	6.7%	10.0%	16.7%
	St Thereza ECD	Count	3	2	5
		% of Total	10.0%	6.7%	16.7%
	Maaji ECD	Count	1	4	5
		% of Total	3.3%	13.3%	16.7%
Total	Count	11	19	30	
	% of Total	36.7%	63.3%	100.0%	

3.2. School readiness for the pre-primary aged children

3.2.1 Caregivers' knowledge about early childhood school readiness

Early childhood education professionals have not yet agreed upon a single definition of school readiness. Many attempts to conceptualize school readiness focus on the "skills and capabilities" of children in key developmental domains, such as health and physical development, social-emotional development, and approaches to learning. According to UNICEF, advances in science and knowledge have contributed to a growing consensus on a definition of school readiness as "three interlinked dimensions: a) ready children; b) ready schools; and c) ready families. Children, families and schools are considered ready when they have gained the competencies and skills required to interface with the other dimensions and support smooth transitions." School readiness is defined by two characteristic features on three dimensions.

The characteristic features are 'transition' and 'gaining competencies' dimensions are children's readiness for school, schools' readiness for children, and families' and communities' readiness for school. The three dimensions of school readiness are:

- Ready children, focusing on children's learning and development.
- Ready schools, focusing on the school environment along with practices that foster and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and advance and promote the learning of all children.
- Ready families, focusing on parental and caregiver attitudes and involvement in their children's early learning and development and transition to school.

All three dimensions are important and must work in tandem, because school readiness is a time of transition that requires the interface between individuals, families and systems.

During the assessment, caregivers were asked whether they knew the concept of early childhood school readiness and the different skill sets that a child should demonstrate to ascertain whether they are ready for school. All the 30 caregivers assessed knew the different stages of child development but they vaguely knew at what stage a child should be deemed ready to start school. They reported different ways/ methods of determining school readiness. Some reported that they used biophysical measures to determine school readiness.

"When parents bring their children to start school, we test the child by asking him/ her to put his/ her hand across the head and attempt to touch the ear on the other side of the head. If the child is able to touch the ear then he/ she is ready to start school otherwise not." **Caregiver – Hope Pagirinya ECD.**

Other caregivers reported that when children begin holding items and starts scribbling on papers, walls or the ground then that is an indication that the child is ready to start school.

On the other hand, according to many caregivers, age of the child was another crucial yardstick for child school readiness determination. They believed that when a child makes 3 years of age then he/ she is ready for school.

"At my place, my child started crying for my pens and pulling my papers. From my own analysis, I realised that she was demonstrating characteristics of school readiness." **Caregiver – Mungula IECD.**

Caregivers were also asked if they knew the domains of school readiness. Assessment results showed that they vaguely knew some indicators and/ or skills that demonstrate school readiness. It was very clear that caregivers were not conceptually aware about child school readiness skill sets as laid out in the IDELA framework including; Motor skills, Emergent Literacy, Emergent Numeracy and Social – Emotional skills.

The project therefore needs to double check and make sure the project training manual that is used to train caregivers, embraces the entire IDELA readiness skills scope. This will help standardise the understanding of school readiness among caregivers and also aim to instil and impart desired skill sets that have been proven to be pertinent in strengthening childhood school readiness. The adoption of the IDELA skills framework will also make measurement easier since project end-line measurements shall use the same parameters in the IDELA framework to measure school readiness.

3.2.2 IDELA Results (School Readiness Skills)

Save the Children developed a tool to measure ECCD children's developmental outcomes. The tool is commonly known as **International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA)**. It covers six domains that included 22 core items under four (4) domains and two (2) executive functions items and observed approaches to learning.

The IDELA Tool was used to establish baseline information of children's learning and development under this project.

Table 3: IDELA domains and related core items

Gross and Fine Motor Skills	Emergent Literacy	Emergent Numeracy	Socio-emotional Development
Hopping	Print awareness	Size/length identification	Friends
Copying a shape	Expressive vocabulary	Sorting	Recognizing emotions in self
Drawing a human figure	Letter identification	Number identification	Recognizing emotions in others
Folding paper	Emergent writing	Shape identification	Conflict resolution
	Phonemic awareness	One-to-one correspondence	Personal information
	Oral comprehension	Simple operations	
		Puzzle completion	
Executive functions: Inhibitory control and Short-term memory			
Approaches to learning: Persistence, motivation and engagement			

Source: Save the Children, IDELA Guidelines

This IDELA results section describes children's performance on their school readiness, with a particular focus on the differences between skills among children. Domain scores are calculated as an average of sub-task performance (the percentage of correct responses for each sub-task). An unweighted average of domains are calculated to derive a total IDELA score to report children's overall early learning and development.

In addition to the four core domains, assessors also mark additional short-term memory and inhibitory control items as a proxy for Executive Function and report observations on children's persistence and engagement as a measure of their Approaches to Learning. These domains are less rigorously tested and validated than the core IDELA domains and are not yet part of the total IDELA composite. However, these observations can help provide a more holistic picture of children's early learning and development

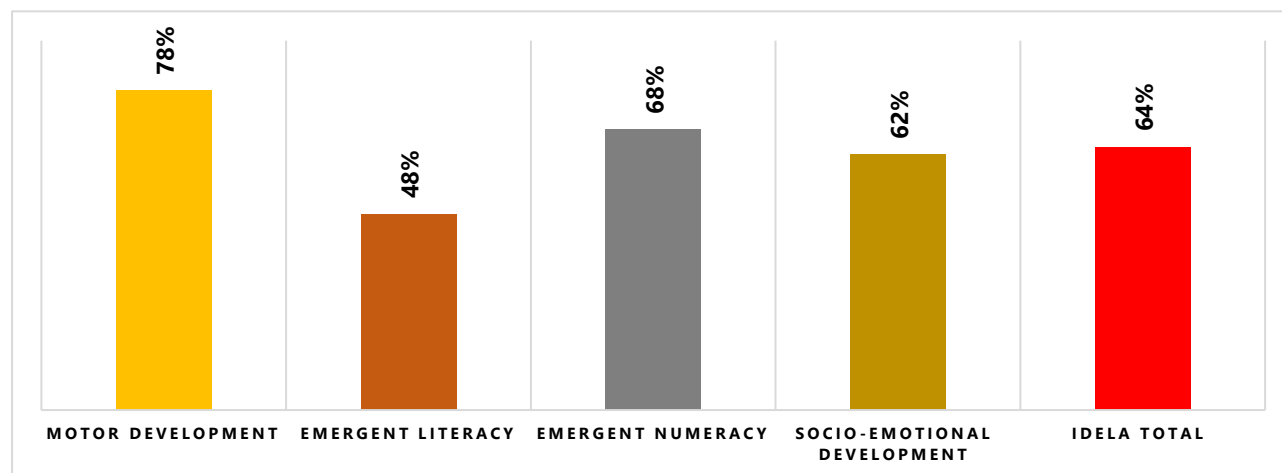
3.2.2.1 IDELA total average percentage correct scores

The total IDELA composite score was calculated by combining scores on Motor development skills, Emergent literacy, Emergent numeracy and Socio-emotional development.

The total IDELA composite score was above average with the overall aggregated total score at 64% (65% among boys and 63% among girls). There was no significant difference between boys and girls in the aggregated percentage scores. The overall total average percentage correct score was high because these assessed ECD centres are currently supported by either World Vision or Save the Children.

This support has tried to elevate the ECD centres to some level in terms of skills development and improved learning environment however they still need critical support in the use of play based learning methods both in class and out-of-class so that children's school readiness skills and learning outcomes improve holistically.

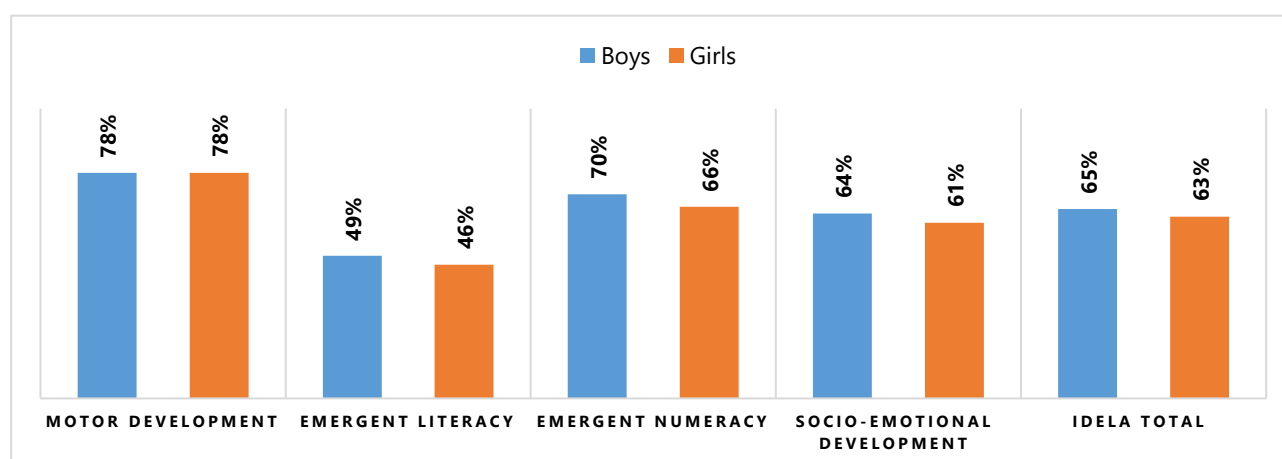
Figure 3: Total IDELA core domains' score



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Considering individual domain scores, motor development skills scored highest with up to 78 percent (78% for boys and 78% for girls). There was no observed difference in percentage scores between boys and girls for this domain. Emergent numeracy came in second at 68 percent (70% among boys and 66% among girls). Social – Emotional development skills were aggregated at 62 percent with 49 percent among boys and 46 percent among girls. Emergent literacy had the lowest aggregated percentage score at 48 percent with 49 percent among boys and 46 percent among girls also not recording a significant difference between boys and girls. These results in way show close opportunities for equal participation for girls and boys. The project needs to none the less over emphasise issues of gender equality, inclusion and equal participation. This will help close the little parity participation gaps.

Figure 4: Total IDELA core domains score disaggregated by sex of the child

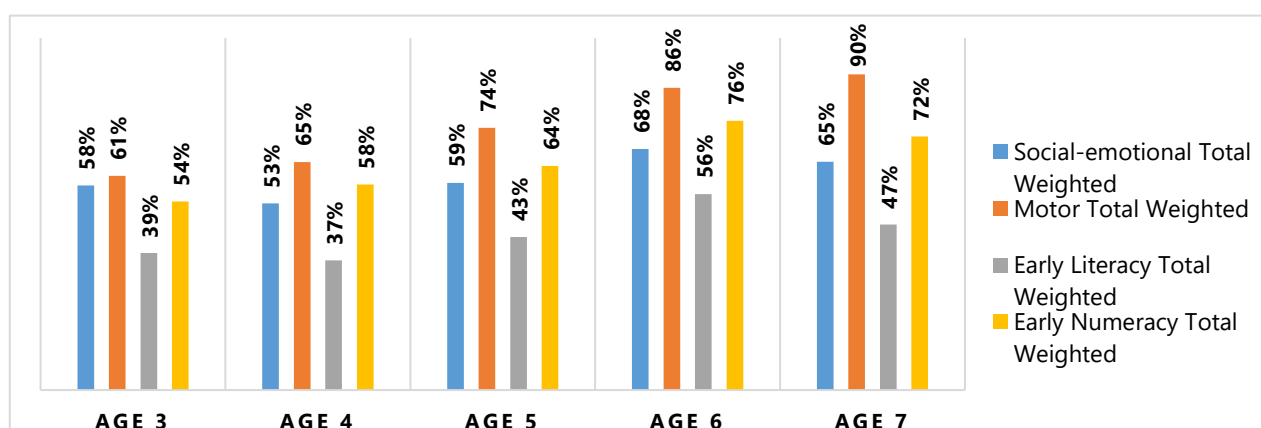


Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Globally the practices of school readiness vary widely across countries and localities within countries, and even among families within small communities.

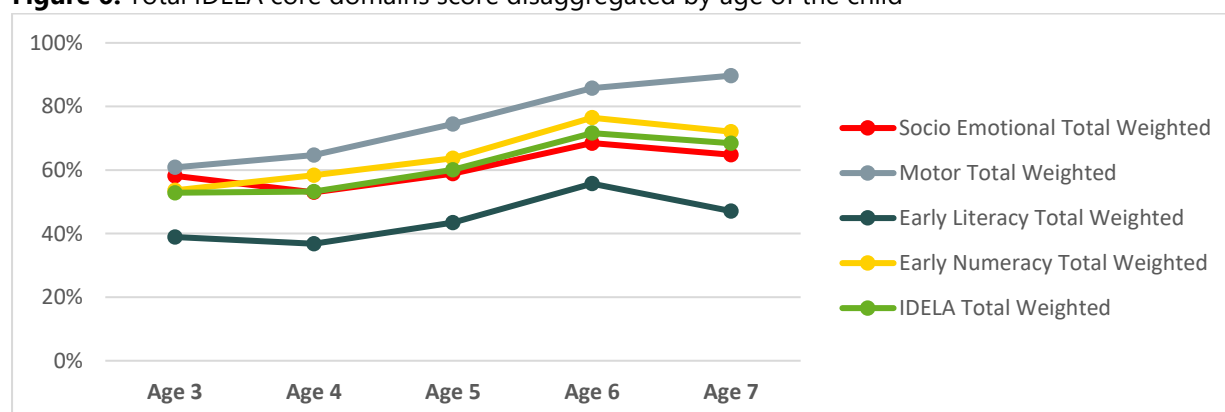
However, there is scientific way that is globally agreed upon as a determining factor for children to join formal schooling. When the child begins to demonstrate development in motor skills, literacy skills, numeracy skills and social-emotional skills then that child is said to be ready to enter formal school program. Development of these skills is manifested as a child grows. Between age 2 and 3 there is a drastic change in the child's growth and at age three (3) a child is most likely to be ready to start formal schooling. Based on this understanding, it is inevitable that the age of the child is a profound predictor of school readiness. However it is pertinent to recognise that the development of these readiness skills will vary per child based on their environmental dispositions. Figure 5 below shows some variations in the average percentage correct scores of the different readiness skills across the different ages of children. Results show that generally there is a positive relationship between the age of the child and motor skills. As the age of the child increases or as the child grows their motors skills develop and strengthen. Older children scored higher average percentage correct scores in motor skills than their younger counterparts. Early numeracy also exhibited higher average percentage correct scores as the age of the child increased. However for the social-emotional and early literacy skills, the trajectory was not linear there were some variations across ages. Early literacy steadily attained increasing average percentage correct scores from age 4 to age 6 and slumped at age 7 while social-emotional skills took the same trajectory. The implication of this result for the implementers is that there is need to prioritise all readiness skills so that a child can get holistic development opportunities to enhance school readiness potential.

Figure 5: Total IDELA core domains score disaggregated by age of the child



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

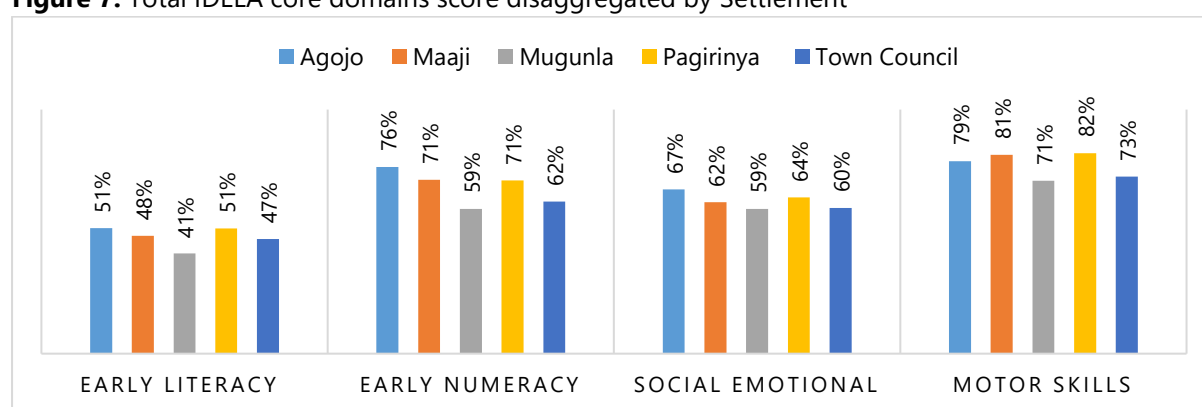
Figure 6: Total IDELA core domains score disaggregated by age of the child



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Considering disaggregation of the overall IDELA results by ECD center, figure 7 below shows that early/emergent literacy was poorly performed across all ECD centers and therefore resources should be allocated to stimulate early literacy in ECD centers in Adjumani in general. Critical observation of the results show that Mungula IECD centre had the worst average percentage correct score across all readiness skills domains. Cesia ECD centre that is located in the town council and is mainly serving the host community children without any external support (supported by the community) performed second worst across all domains. Maaji III ECD centers was the third last worst performing ECD center across all domains. What this would mean for the project is that more resources and support needs to be rendered to Cesia ECD that is community led with little or no external such that children within this ECD access equal opportunities for improved early childhood education. Cesia needs more support especially on in-door and/ or classroom play based learning pedagogical materials and caregivers' technical support on play based learning approaches. Mungula IECD and Maaji ECD centres also need to be prioritised in the allocation of caregivers' technical support and periodical couching and mentoring.

Figure 7: Total IDELA core domains score disaggregated by Settlement



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

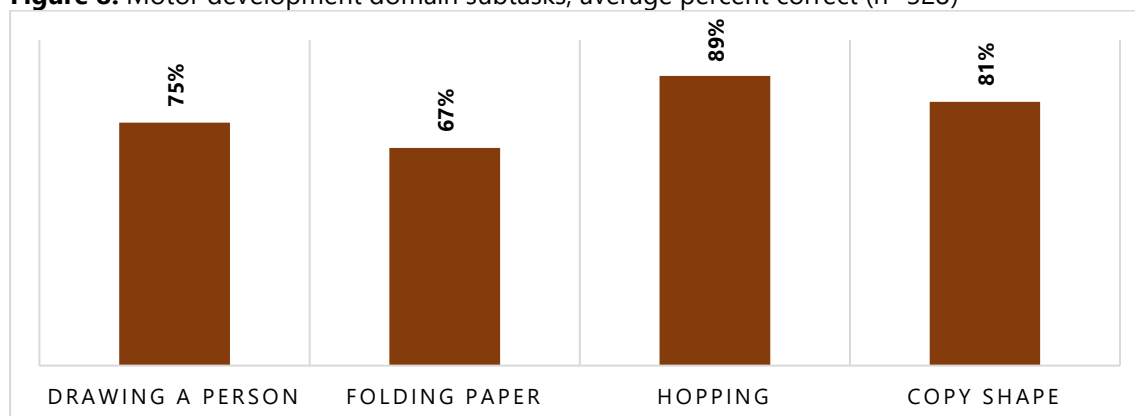
3.2.2.2 Motor Development Skills

A major characteristic of play is being active through dancing, jumping, throwing, running, and generally moving around. And children often strengthen their gross motor development through the use of their large muscles in these activities (Gallahue, 1982). Other types of play activities, such as cutting, eating, writing, buttoning, painting, and dressing, provide for their fine motor development, or refinement of the skills that require the use of smaller muscles.

During the assessment, children's motor development skills were assessed using four (4) subtasks that included; hopping, copying a shape, drawing a human figure and folding a paper. Results in figure 8 below show that the aggregate average percentage correct score for the motor development skills was 78 percent with equal percentage scores for boys and girls at 78 percent respectively.

Hopping had the highest average percentage correct score (89%) followed by copy shapes at 81 percent and drawing a person at 75 percent. Folding paper score the lowest at 67 percent. The implication of the results for the programme is that play based learning approaches have to be overly emphasised in the classroom during learning sessions such that through play, children are naturally able to use and learn to refine their gross and fine motor skills.

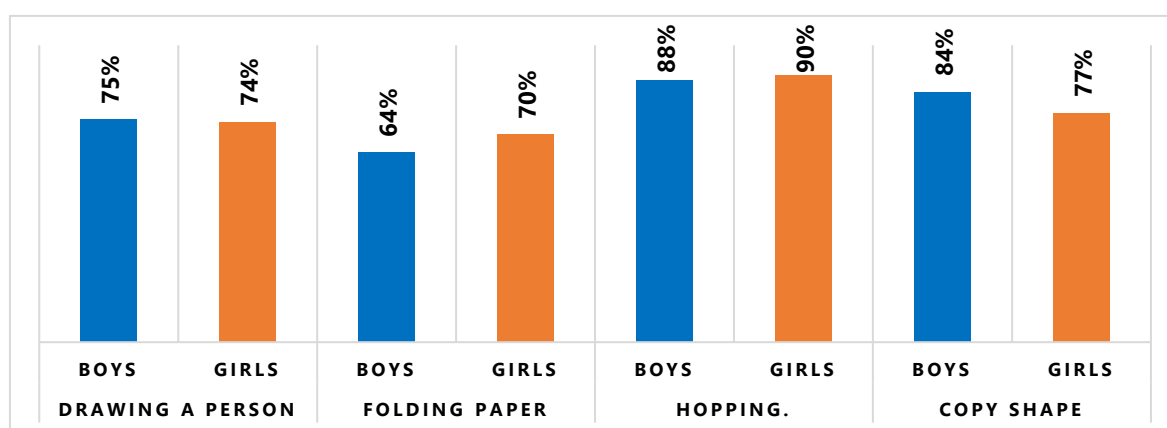
Figure 8: Motor development domain subtasks, average percent correct (n=328)



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Figure 9 below presents the percentage correct scores for the four subtasks by sex of the children. Hopping emerged with the highest score at 89 percent (88% among boys and 90% among girls). Folding papers was the lowest scoring subtask with 67 percent (64% among boys and 70% among girls). Among the subtasks was one gross motor skills item and three fine motor skills items. Comparing the average correct scores between the two forms of physical skills, results showed that gross motor skills (Hopping) scored highest than fine motor skills. Boys on the overall performed better than girls for all subtasks save for the paper folding where girls scored better than boys at 70 percent compared to 64 percent by boys. Ideally caregivers must be taken through gender sensitive programming as they train on play based learning such that they adopt a practice of equal gender involvement and participation of children during learning and play sessions such that there is an increased balance in the development of physical skills for boys and girls.

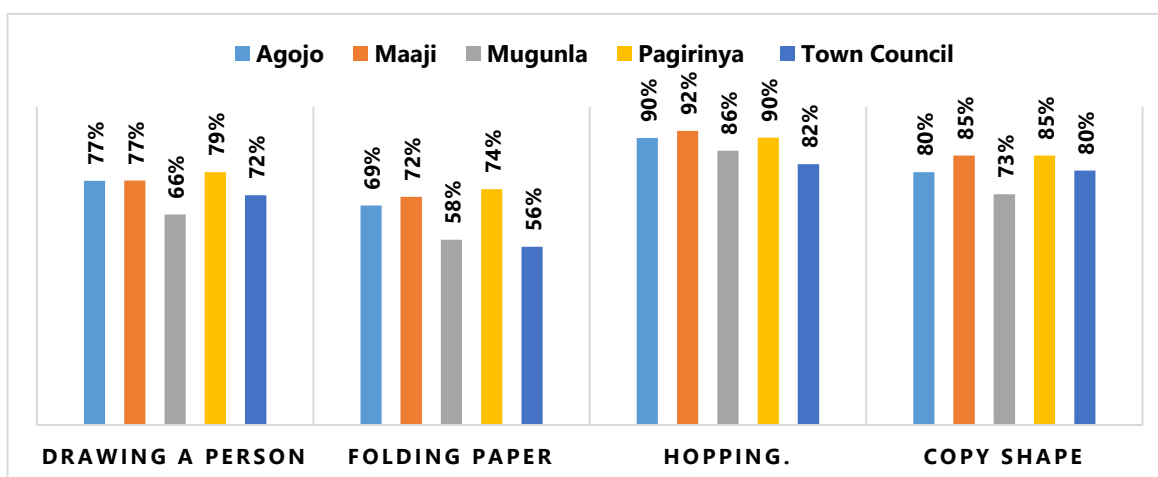
Figure 9: Motor development skills – Subtasks average percentage correct scores by sex



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

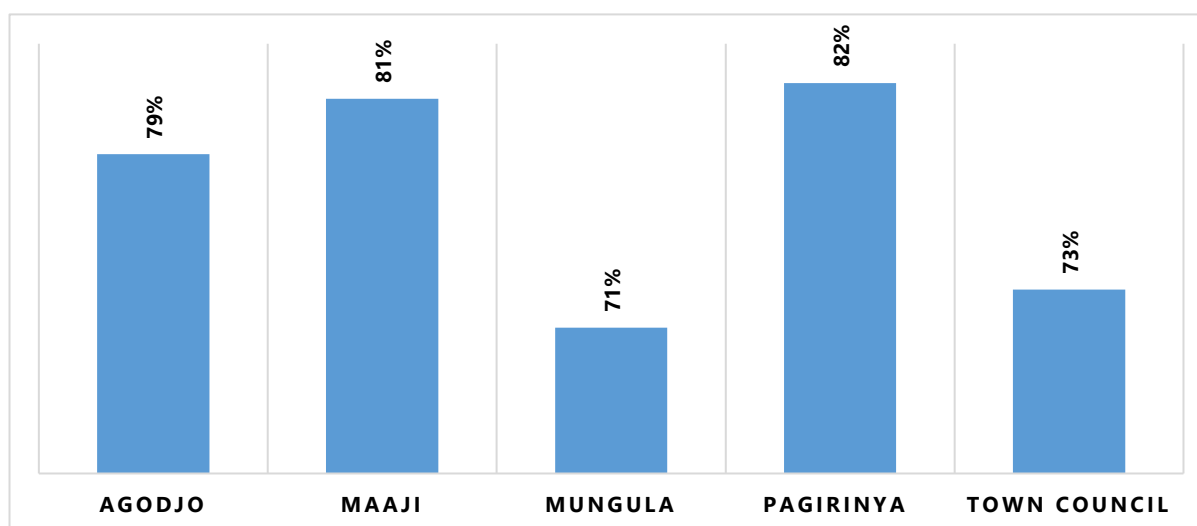
Figure 10 below shows that across all sub- tasks, Pagirinya ECD performed the best with the highest average percentage correct score followed by Maaji ECD. This result is confirmed by figure 11 that show Pagirinya with an overall of 82 percent and Maaji with 81 percent. Results also reflected Mungula ECD and Cesia ECD to have recorded the lowest average percentage scores. We can therefore assert that children from the host community who are dominantly in Cesia ECD generally demonstrated poorer motor skills than South Sudanese refugee children in settlement based ECDs. The implication here could be as it turns out to be that Cesia ECD could have performed poor because it is not supported by NGOs as others and therefore it grossly lacks age appropriate in class children play materials that comprises the integration of play into learning sessions in class.

Figure 10: Motor development skills average percent correct scores by subtasks and Settlement



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Figure 11: Total Motor development average correct per settlement

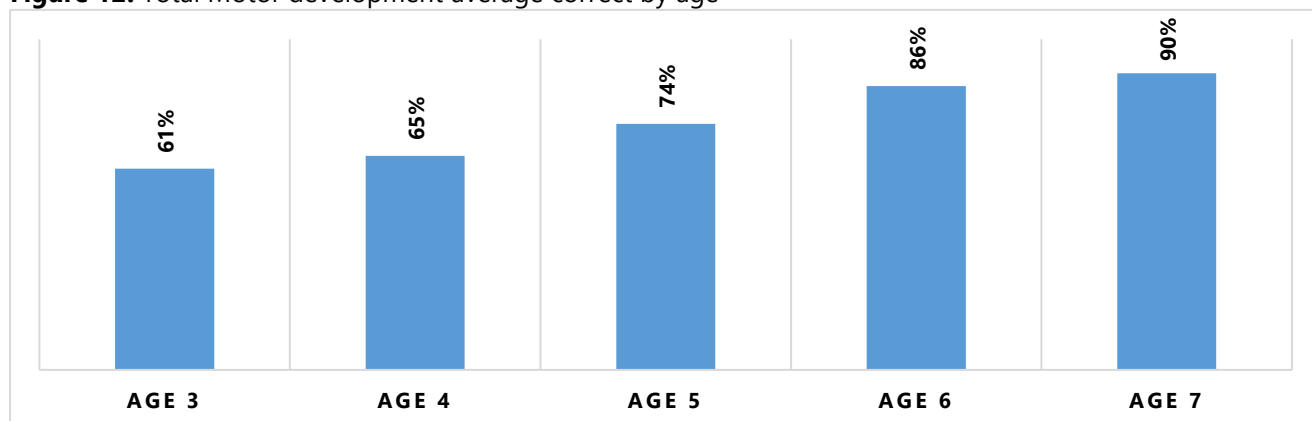


Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

While all children are different, and develop physical skills, from walking up stairs to jumping rope to catching a ball, at different speeds. Most, however, will acquire motor skills along the age-by-age basis and will physically develop at slightly different rates.

Figure 12 below shows quite clearly that there was a registered increasing trend in the average percentage correct scores as age of the child increased. This demonstrates a positive relationship between the age of the child and the development of physical skills.

Figure 12: Total Motor development average correct by age

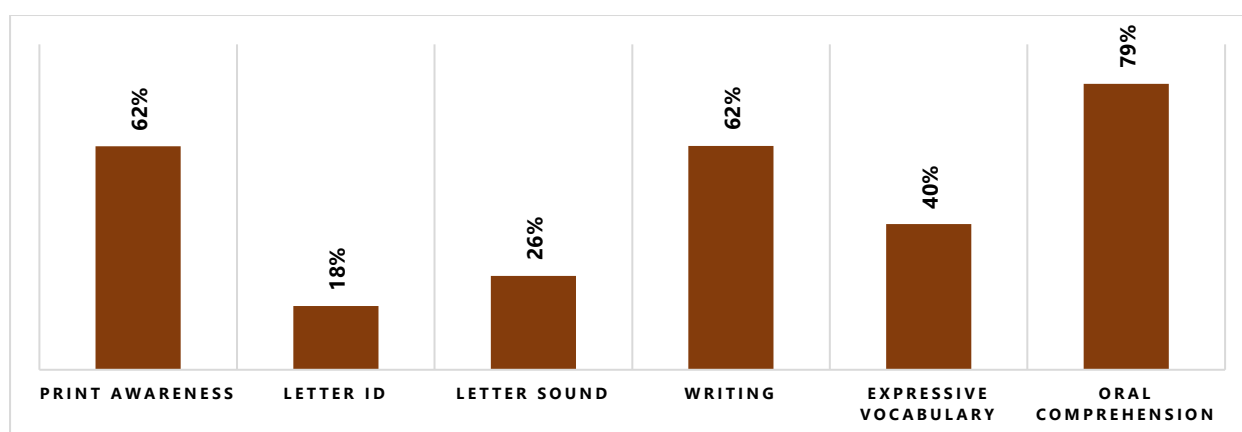


Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

3.2.2.3 Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy skills were assessed using six (6) items or subtasks. These included Print awareness, Expressive vocabulary, Letter identification, Emergent writing, First letter sounds and Oral comprehension. Figure 13 below shows that Oral comprehension had the highest average percentage correct score (79%) compared to print awareness and writing that recorded 62 percent respectively. The rest of the sub-tasks were scored below average with expressive vocabulary at 40 percent, letter sound at 26 percent and letter identification at the lowest percentage (18%). Considering experiences elsewhere, emergent literacy usually is the worst scored readiness skills domain among children. So the project should support caregivers to allocate more resources in terms of time and play materials that enhance early literacy. For this study in particular, within the emergent literacy domain, the project should collaboratively work with caregivers and support them to provide play based learning games that enhance skills in letter identification, letter sound and expressive vocabulary.

Figure 13: Emergency literacy domain subtasks, average percent correct (n=328)

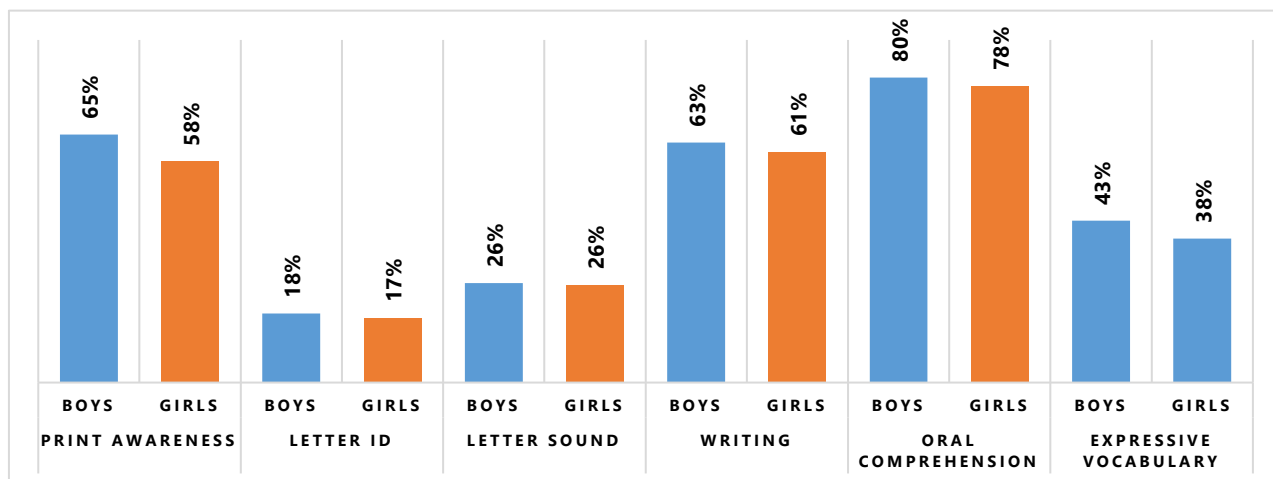


Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Considering the emergent literacy was the most poorly scored domain, the aggregated average correct scores for this domains was 48 percent with 49 percent score among boys and 46 percent score among girls. Figure 14 below shows that the highest performing subtask was oral composition with an average percent score at 79percent (80% among boys and 78% among girls). Letter identification came out with the lowest average percentage score at 18 percent (18% among boys and 17% among girls).

Children did not score well on the letter sounds as well where the average percentage score was of 26 percent with 26 percent among boys and girls respectively. Letter identification is usually worst poorly scored among children we need to understand why it is often times poorly performed.

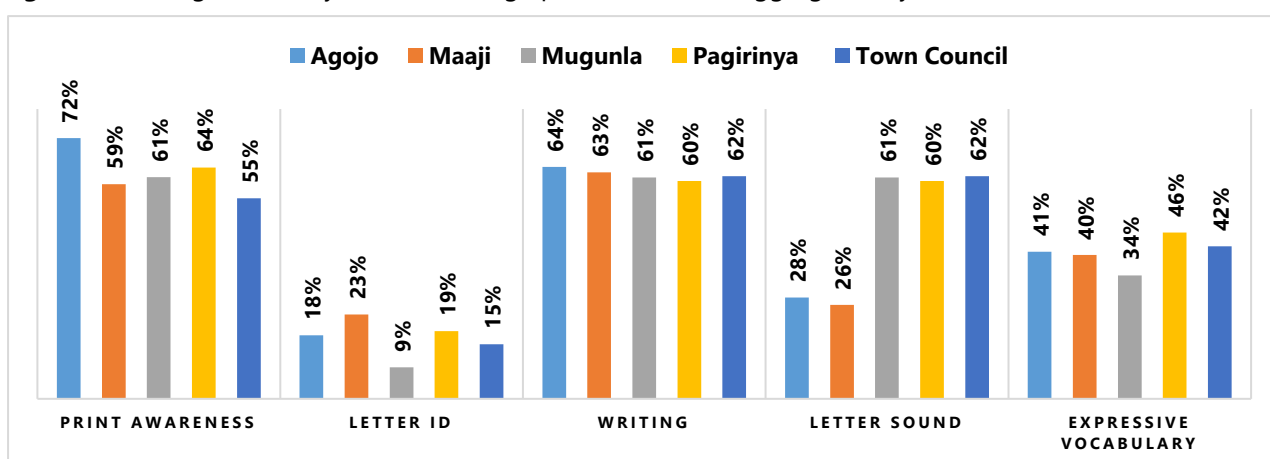
Figure 14: Emergent literacy skills average percent correct scores by subtasks and sex



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

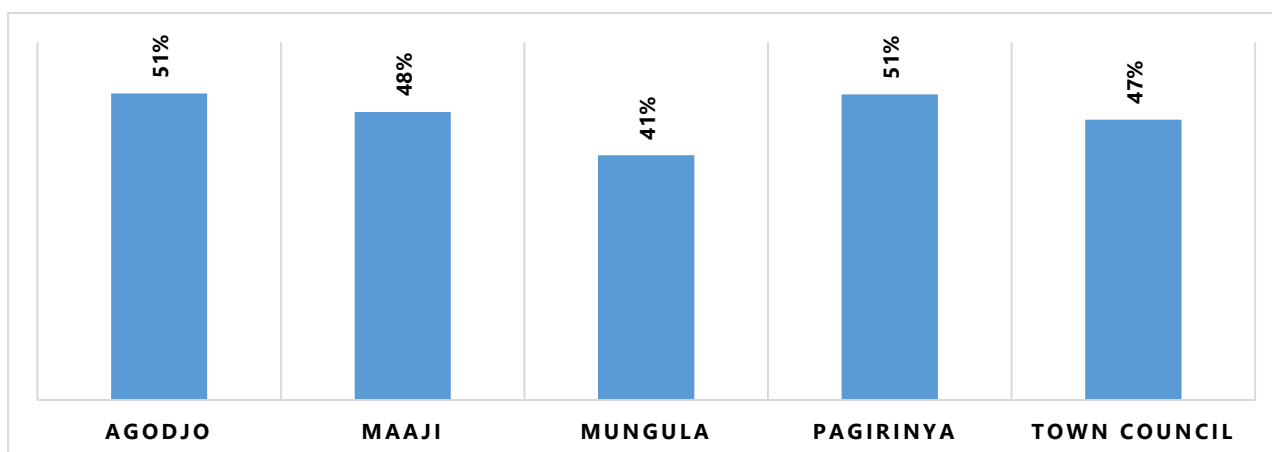
Emergent literacy results were also disaggregated by ECD centre and sub-tasks. Results in figure 15 below shows that children in Cesia and Maaji did not score well on print awareness compared to other ECD centres. On letter identification, Mungula IECD and Cesia ECD centres had the lowest average percentage correct scores however across all ECD centres, writing was exceptionally done well. Letter sound was a little problematic to children in Maaji and Agojo. Expressive vocabulary was generally poorly performed across ECD centres. The implication for the project is that caregivers are hugely supported to integrate play based learning games into their teaching practice and avail them play based materials that serve to enhance children's visual identification abilities. This will help children not only know how to recite letters but also have the ability to visually identify the letters when placed before them.

Figure 15: Emergent literacy domain average percent score disaggregated by subtask and settlement



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

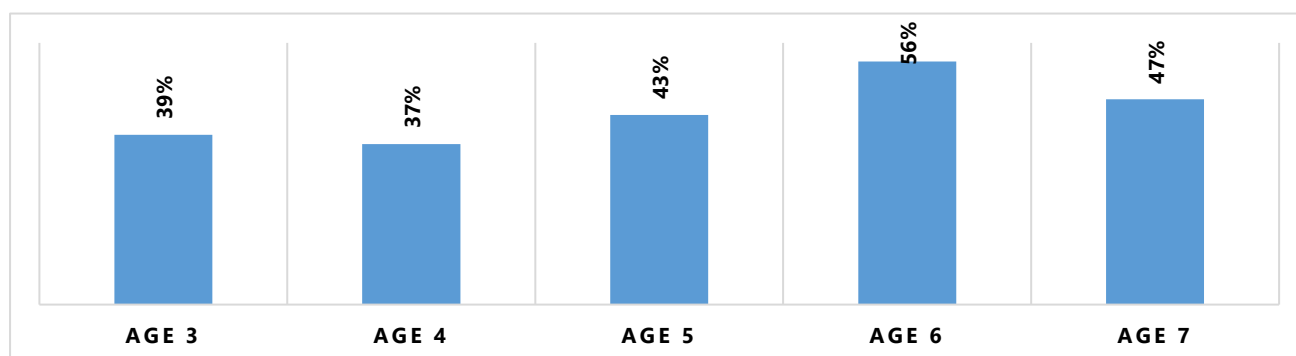
Figure 16: Emergent literacy average correct per settlement



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Studies have shown that a child's development age is a strong predictor of their early literacy learning. There is a positive relationship between the age of the child and their reading abilities. Children at an older age are mostly likely to read better than those at early ages. Figure 17 below shows that there is a general increase in the average percentage correct scores as age increases from age 4 to age 6. Early language and literacy (reading and writing) development begins in the first 3 years of life and is closely linked to a child's earliest experiences with books and stories. The interactions that young children have with such literacy materials as books, paper, and crayons, and with the adults in their lives are the building blocks for language, reading, and writing development. So based on this understanding of early literacy development, the project will need to support ECD centers with literacy materials such as books, paper e.t.c that are age appropriate so that children's language and literacy skills are developed.

Figure 17: Emergent literacy average correct by age



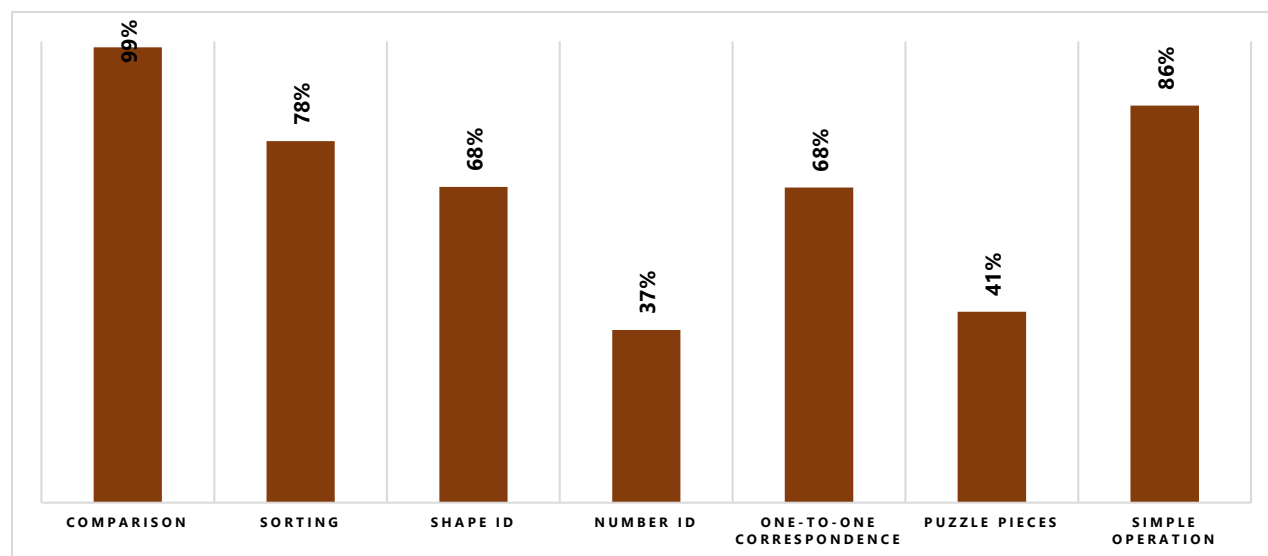
Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

3.2.2.4 Emergent Numeracy

Emergent numeracy was assessed focusing on seven items which included; puzzle completion, simple operations (addition and subtraction), one-to-one correspondence, number identification, shape identification, sorting and classification and comparison by size and length. Figure 18 below shows that children had high comparative numeracy skills (99%). Simple operations where children were tested on addition and subtraction skills, was the second highest item with 86 percent average percentage correct scores. Number identification and puzzle pieces had the lowest average percentage correct score at 37 percent and 41 percent respectively. Caregivers could be supported more with age appropriate teaching aids especially visual materials such that children can get used to visual elements of learning.

This will stimulate their visual identification skills and will therefore be able to identify objects when placed before them rather than only knowing them imaginatively. For instance they will be able not only to count the numbers but also be able to identify them visually.

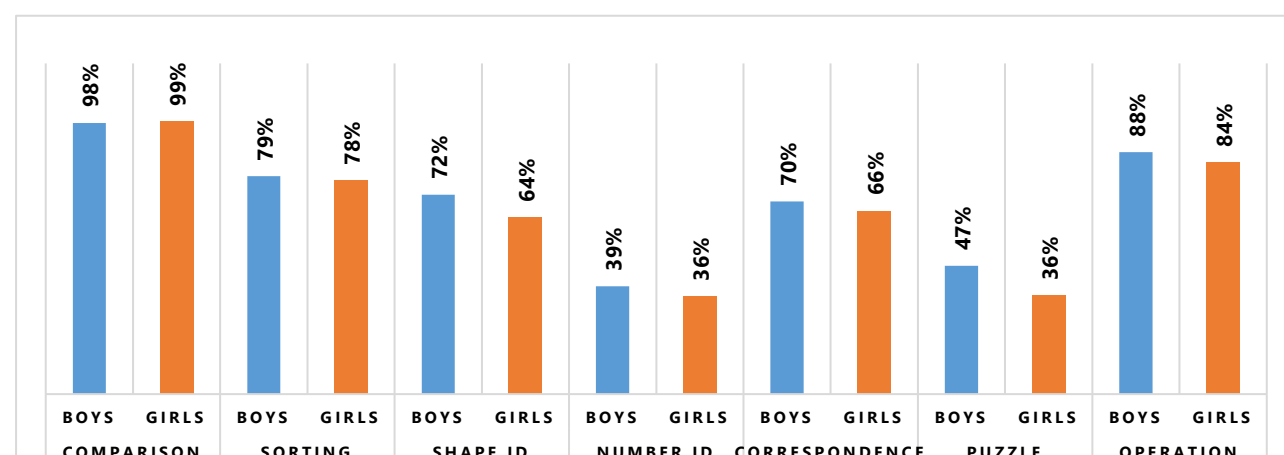
Figure 18: Emergent numeracy domain subtasks, average percent correct (n=328)



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Emergent numeracy scored relatively well at 68 percent with 70 percent score among boys and 66 percent score among girls. Figure 19 below shows that comparison by size and length was the highest scored subtask at 99 percent (98% among boys and 99% among girls) followed by simple operations (addition and subtraction) at up to 86 percent with 88 percent among boys and 84 percent among girls. Number identification was the lowest with a score as low as 37 percent (39% among boys and 36% among girls). Puzzle completion was also poorly done according to the assessment and it scored 41 percent with 47 percent among boys and 36 percent among girls.

Figure 19: Emergent numeracy average percentage correct scores by subtasks and sex

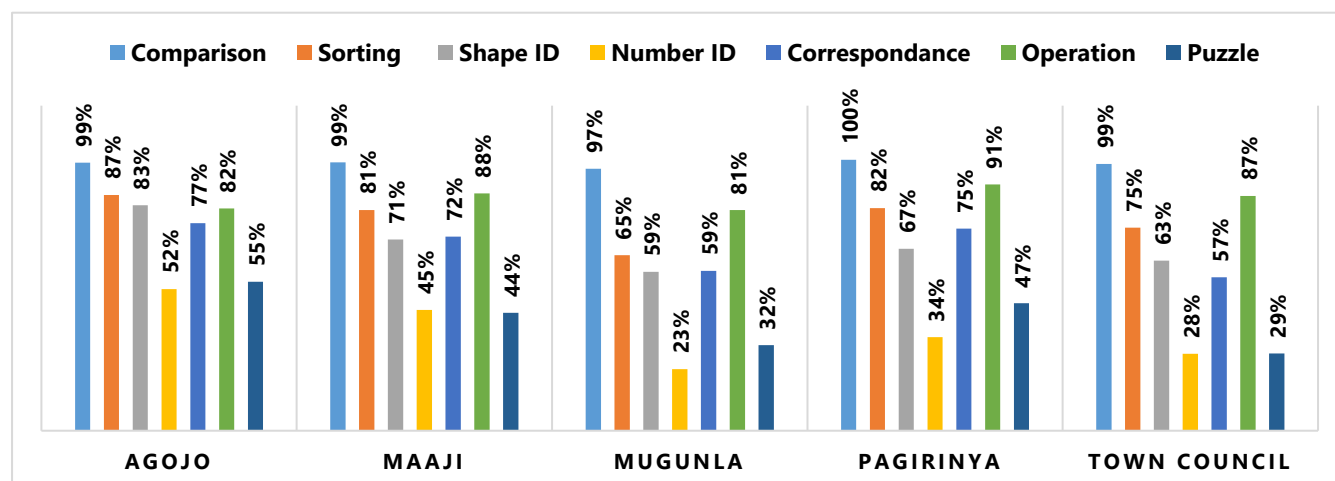


Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

The average percentage correct scores varied across ECD centres. Figure 20 below shows that basically children from all ECD centers could ably articulate comparison in sizes of the objects placed before them. They could also demonstrate the addition and subtract tasks easily across ECD centres.

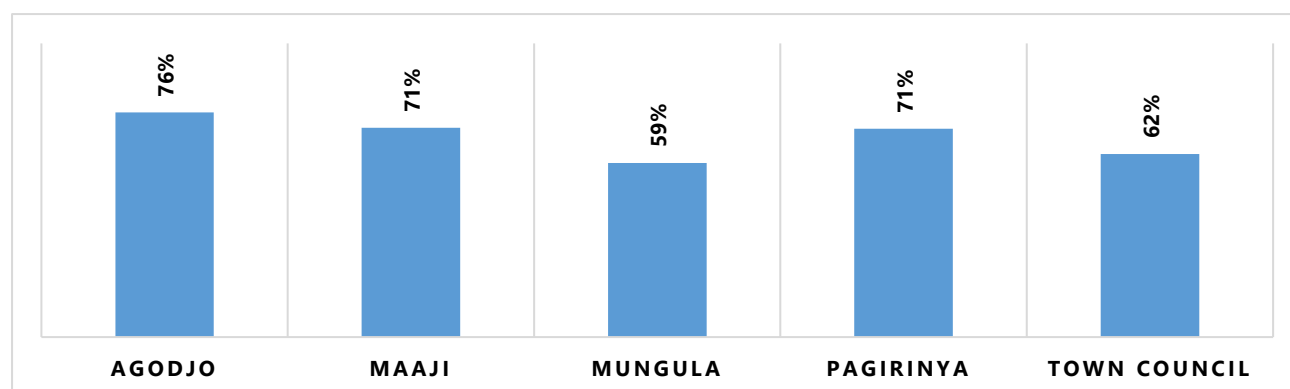
Children in Mungula, Cesia and Pagirinya performed poorly on number identification. All ECD centres performed relatively well on the sorting game demonstrating ability to identify similar shapes. Figure 21 shows that children in Agojo ECD presented the highest average percentage correct scores at 76 percent while Pagirinya and Maaji scored at 71 percent respectively. Mungula scored the lowest at 59 percent.

Figure 20: Emergent numeracy average percentage correct scores by subtasks and Settlement



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

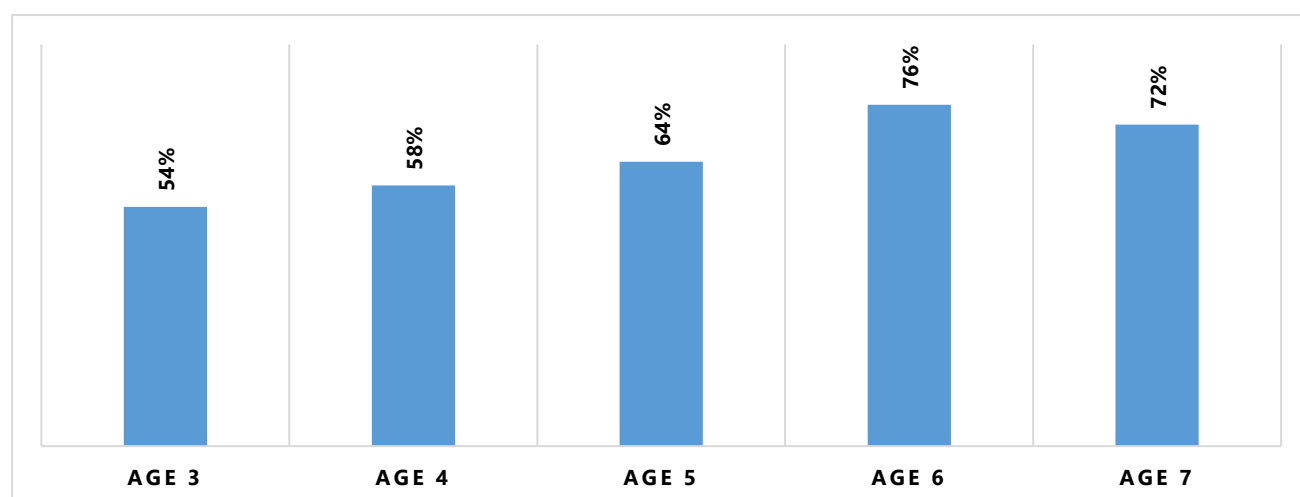
Figure 21 Emergent numeracy average correct per settlement



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Number skills vary for both younger and older children. So the age of the child may determine the emergent numeracy skills of the child. Early numeracy performance for younger children is largely influenced by receptive language skills while phonological awareness influences the same among older children. Figure 22 below shows that early numeracy performance scores increased as the age of the child increased. The project ought to focus on strategies and play activities that stimulate children's receptive language development in children to enhance their early numeracy performance in early years.

Figure 22 Emergent numeracy average correct by age

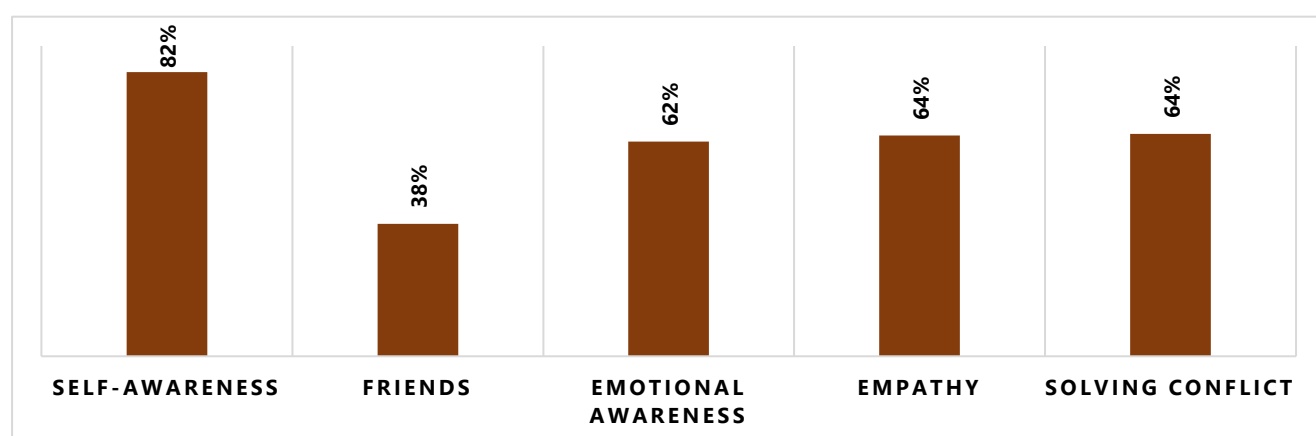


Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

3.3.2.5 Social-Emotional Development Skills

Social emotional skills were assessed using five (5) subtasks that included; solving conflict, Empathy, Emotional awareness, Friends and Self-awareness. Figure 23 below shows that expression of self-awareness among children had the highest average percentage correct score (82%) while empathy and solving conflict had 64 percent respectively. Making friends had the lowest average percentage correct score at 38 percent while emotional awareness was recorded at 62 percent. The interpretation of this result is that children especially refugee children still have some psychosocial needs borne out of the adversities of war and are still expressing distrust and poor positive relationships amongst themselves. Caregivers have to render more efforts towards exposing children to play based learning games that stimulate emotional awareness and establish/ maintain positive relationships and friendships.

Figure 23 Socio-emotional domain subtasks, percent correct

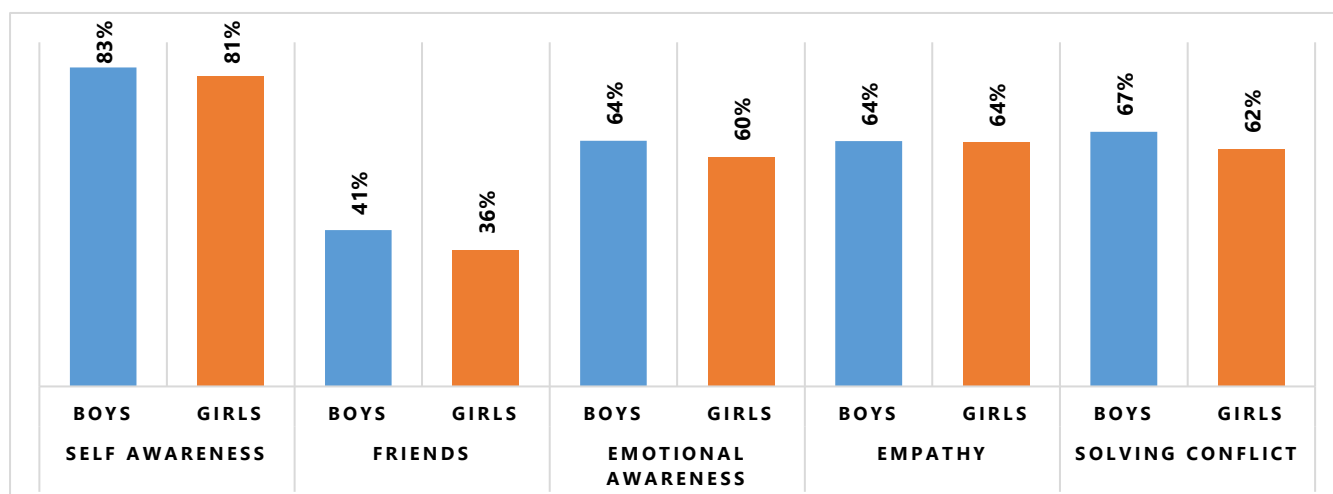


Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

The aggregated average percentage correct score for the social emotional skills was 62 percent with 64 percent among boys and 61 percent among girls. Figure 24 below presents the percentage correct scores for the five subtasks. Self – awareness came out to be the highest scored sub – task with 82 percent average score (83% Boys and 81% Girls).

Children also scored well on the conflict solving skills with up to 65 percent (67 Boys and 62 Girls) while “Empathy” ran it a close second with 64 percent (64% Boys and 64% Girls). Friends was the lowest scored sub-task with 39 percent (41% Boys and 36% Girls). There was no significant observed difference between boys and girls the difference was negligible.

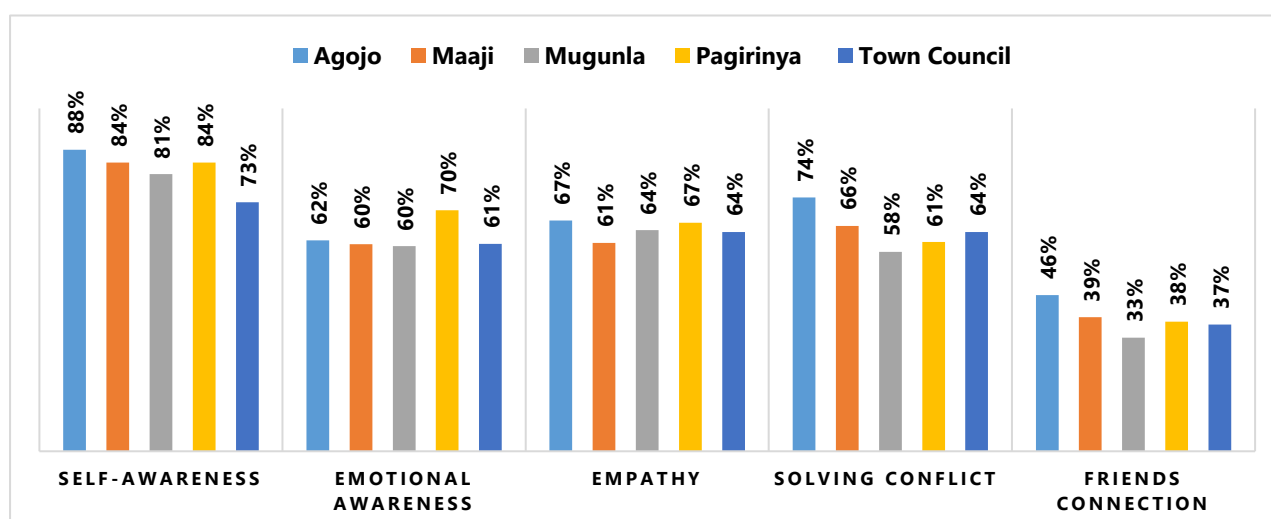
Figure 24: Social - Emotional domain average percent scores by subtasks and sex



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

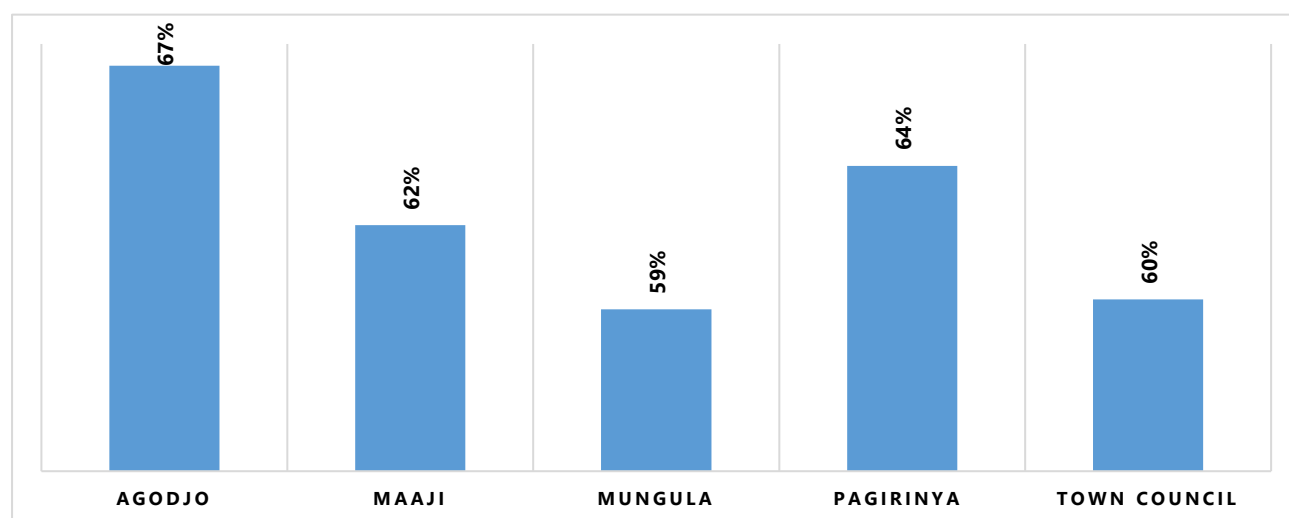
Considering the performance of children across ECD centers, figure 25 below shows that Agojo relative had children with the highest social – emotional average percentage correct scores across all items/ sub-tasks. Pagirinya also performed very well. Mungula, Cesia and Maaji had the lowest average percentage correct scores in the social – emotional domain. Caregivers in these ECD centres have to be supported to introduce more play based learning games that aim to cultivate the spirit of friendliness and emotional awareness among children since those were the worst items demonstrated.

Figure 25: Social emotional skills average percentage correct scores by sub-tasks and settlement



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

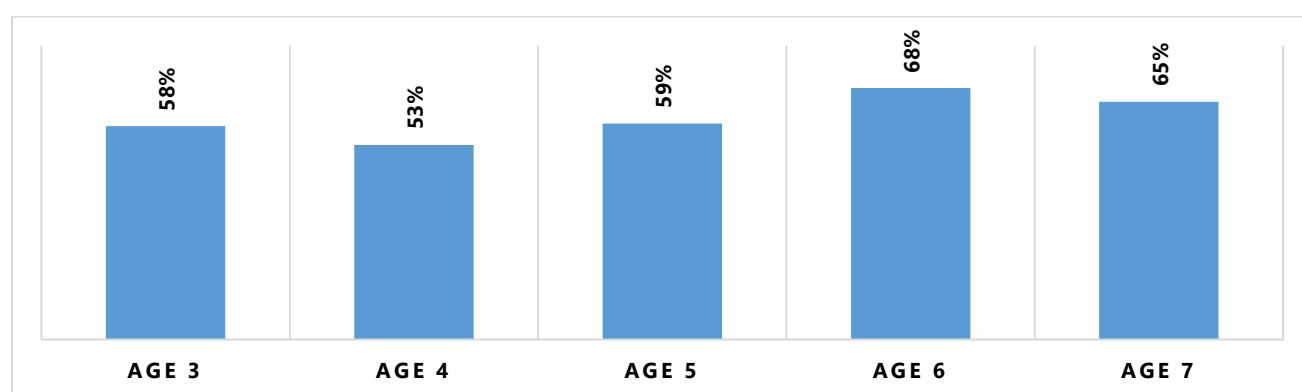
Figure 26 Socio-emotional average correct scores per settlement



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

Kids mature and develop at different paces, but there certain social and emotional milestones that are observed at different ages. Keeping track of children's progress as social and emotional skills develop helps to reveals potential issues. There is a positive relationship between age of the child and development level of social and emotional skills. As children advance in age, their social and emotional skills grow. In figure 27 below, there is relatively a general increase in the average percentage correct score as age increases save for ages four and seven. The implication of the findings is that at age 7 and slightly above children become more aware of themselves and the perception of others and they also try to express their feelings with words but may resort to aggression when upset so a slump in the average percentage correct score could have been due to increased emotional awareness. There is need to emphasise conflict resolution play based games in the final ECD class (Top class). At early ages 3, 4 and 5 the project has to emphasise games that focus on creating empathy and that create a more sense of building positive relationships.

Figure 27 Socio-emotional average correct scores by age



Source: IDELA Baseline Study Data, 2019 (n =328)

3.3. Access to ECD Centers for children in Adjumani Refugees and host communities

- **# Children with better access to ECD centers that provide positive and safe learning environment**

The way the physical environment is designed and configured influences how children feel, act, and behave. The physical environment allows growth and development through activities and materials in defined play areas. Room arrangement for play activity plays an important role in students' social and language interactions. Poorly designed classrooms can cause disruptions and negative social interactions among students and/or between students and the teacher. Environment is defined as the physical environment, its surroundings, and a specific setting (Vickerius & Sandberg, 2006). The play area of infants needs to be configured so that they can grasp and reach age-appropriate toys or pull themselves up when practicing standing or walking (Vance & Boals, 1989). Infants will need to be down on the floor exploring their environments with toys to look at, listening to things around them, feeling, chewing, pushing, pulling, stacking, rolling, turning, squeezing, and shaking (Vance & Boals, 1989). A safe environment encourages exploration and play behaviors in young children. Therefore, a safe environment is very important for teachers of young children and child care centers. When parents bring their children to a child care center, they expect them to be safe. They assume the playground, equipment, toys, and other materials will be safe for children to use and that teachers will carefully supervise their activities (Wellhausen, 2002).

More recent approaches stress the bi-directionality between the child and her or his environment (Murphy and Burns 2002). As per these newer perspectives, it is the 'goodness-of-fit' between the child and the environment that supports and promotes optimal development (Graue 1992; Meisels 1995). In other words, school readiness is a product of the interaction between the child and the range of environmental and cultural experiences that maximize the development outcomes for children.

The assessment explored the learning environment for children in classrooms and 27 (90%) of surveyed caregivers reported that they tried to make the school learning environment safe and supportive for children. They reported that they endeavour to introduce children to age appropriate games that do not threaten their dignity and wellbeing. Caregivers try to ensure that children are well spaced in class and are not congested. Every child has to have a seat and are seated comfortably.

"In class I make sure the class is well arranged and children are seated in an organised way such that they are free and can interact with me." **Caregiver – Cesia ECD**

Caregivers reported that in class they ensure observance of discipline. They add that in an event of errant children hurting other children they encourage positive discipline measures where both the aggrieved and aggressor are counselled and asked to restrain from such behaviour. During class lessons, caregivers indicated that they are usually two (a pair) so that they can ably monitor each child. Caregiver reported that they often try to keep classes and play spaces secure and free of objects that could injure or harm children.

- **# ECD centres that meet positive learning environment standards**

Beyond measuring requisite school readiness skills using the IDELA tool, the survey used a School Learning Environment Assessment Tool to explore the physical learning environment learners were exposed to. Various studies have documented the importance of the School Learning Environment for children's early learning and development.

The School Learning Environment Assessment Tool sought to explore the status of key school areas like the general school environment, the classrooms, the indoor play spaces, the outdoor play spaces and the school latrine environment.

All ECD centers assessed had outdoor play spaces rather than indoor play spaces and they were all practically fenced off. These play spaces were somewhat well equipped with play equipment and were free from solid, airborne and liquid contaminations that would otherwise expose the child to harm. Considering Water, Sanitation and Hygiene component, all assessed ECD centers had access to safe drinking water. Out of the six ECD centres assessed, only two (Cesia and Maaji III ECD) had water and soap at the hand washing stances. The rest of the centers (Agojo ECD, Hope Pagirinya ECD, Mungula IECD and St Thereza) had water at the hand washing stances but no soap.

Classroom and play spaces assessment results showed that all classroom floors and play spaces had no defects to cause injury or harm to children. All ECD centers had safe shelters against poor weather conditions save for St. Thereza ECD which instead had a make shift tent for the very young ones in baby class. Considering the seating needs of ECDs, all assessed ECD centers had secure desks for children except for Maaji II ECD center.

From the perspective of sanitation and hygiene, the latrine environment was assessed for the selected ECD centers. All assessed centers had no objects within their environment to cause accidents or injury to children and were relatively in good condition. There were relatively proper waste management systems surrounding these latrines and in terms of accessibility and inclusion these latrines were accessible to children with disability.

4. CONCLUSION

Results from the baseline survey show that the school readiness skills' overall average percentage correct score was relatively above average at 64% (65% among boys and 63% among girls). There was no significant difference between boys and girls in the aggregated percentage scores. Emergent literacy had the lowest aggregated percentage score at 48 percent with 49 percent among boys and 46 percent among girls. Caregivers had a fair understanding of the play based learning concept but none of them had had prior training on Right To Play's concept of play based learning, Caregivers don't integrate RTP's PBL methodology in their teaching practice and district education offices have not taken the idea of advocating for the integration of play based learning approaches in the ECD curriculum and the district development plans and budgets. Emphasis should be placed on the use of more meaningful play based learning games both in class and out-of-class to maximise the full growth potential of children's school readiness and learning outcomes.

5. KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- **Early Childhood Education still at stake due to low investment:** There is little investment in the Early Childhood education in the district in any by the central and local governments. The government of Uganda has not fulfilled its commitment to providing quality early childhood care and development opportunities for all children in Adjumani district. The ECD focal point person and the multi-level ECD committees provided for in the NIECD policy are non-existent. All ECD centres are privately funded by either development organisations (NGOs) or by community initiatives. The low investment in these early learning centres by government puts refugee children's early learning opportunities at a risk in the event that NGOs secede their support. Quite a lot of lobbying and advocacy needs to be done to get central and local governments to re-prioritise and consider serious implementation of the NIECD policy action plan in totality. Failure of government to take lead in early childhood education investment is risking the sustainability of this program and the plight of refugee children in Adjumani district.
- **One language - different dialects:** Prior to the assessment exercise, consultations were done on the most spoken local language among children in refugee settlements. Results showed that Madi was the most spoken local language and that even refugees understood it better. However little did we know that the Madi language had two different dialects that is the Madi dialect from Moyo and the other from Adjumani. So at the advent of the assessment, the IDELA tool was translated into the Madi dialect of Adjumani. On pre-testing the tool, enumerators learnt that some children used the Madi dialect from Moyo so they could not understand some of the assessment questions and instructions asked in the Adjumani – Madi dialect. So at that point there was a slim risk of comprising standardisation of assessment questions. To encounter the risk we adopted a strategy of using ECD caregivers as on spot translators. So the learning is that whenever possible the tool should be translated in the common dialects of the dominant language and that will preserve standardisation.
- **Disruption of class activities:** Through the district education department, caregivers and parents were mobilized to get selected children to participate in the assessment. All participating ECD centres were requested to sign off a consent form on behalf of parents since they were seen to be closer to the children. These caregivers also guaranteed confidence in participating children to accord consent to participate in the assessment. Children often times get disorganised and in this case caregivers were always compelled to call them to order and this inevitably disengaged caregivers from class activities leading to unnecessary disruption of school activities. Some of the ECD centres don't have those big spaces where assessors would secure safe and quiet environments to interview children. At times ECD administrations preferred to ask children to go out and play as classrooms were secured for the assessment exercise, which also contributed to the disruption of classroom learning activities.
- **Timing for the assessment:** Many times the assessment team couldn't complete interviews within the available school time and thus they would be compelled to continue with the assessments beyond lunch time. This however came with misgivings like children refusing to continue with the assessment because the lunch time bell to them is an indication of going home. So it often times became hard to retain children especially when the bell for lunch has been sounded. Caregivers had to support the assessment team motivate the children to stay without compelling them to. The learning is that while planning to conduct an assessment of this nature with young children, we need to have more days and less assessments per day in order to cover the selected sample within the allowable school time before lunch.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the core purpose of the IDELA measurement framework, the baseline survey laid out key fundamental recommendations that should be keenly adopted to improve ECD service provisioning in Adjumani district refugee settlements and host communities.

Training and capacity strengthening: There is a general gap in the number of qualified/ certified ECD caregivers and legally registered ECD centers in Uganda. There is need to support the strengthening of caregivers by giving them extra knowledge on school readiness and how to use play based learning approaches to stimulate school readiness skills among children. Right To Play could also create and/ or facilitate linkages to certification and licensing entities such that caregivers are supported to acquire certification and also ECD centers access legal registration.

Communication and Advocacy: The NIECD policy states that there is need to use a strategic communication and advocacy approaches at all levels to raise the profile of ECD, promote greater awareness on the benefits of ECD and propel the interest and visibility of IECD work. In the same vein, Right To Play should engage in continuous learning processes aimed at gathering evidence based information that can be used to fulfil the commitment of government to provide quality early childhood care and development opportunities for refugee and host community children. Right To Play should develop and maintain an effective reporting and communication mechanism that will increase the understanding of the requirements and benefits of a comprehensive early childhood development program within the district. Right To Play should collaboratively engage with other stakeholders to build networks and alliances through which they can effectively advocate and influence policy implementation and/ or amendments that address pro-refugee learning interest.

Resource Mobilization: Right To play should collaboratively work with Adjumani district education office to ensure that necessary evidence based information on ECD needs and challenges is shared such that the later uses the information to integrate ECD priorities and interests in the district development planning and budgeting processes. Through the district ECD focal point person, Right To Play could monitor and/ or follow up to ensure that ECD priorities and interests are allocated sufficient resources in the district budget allocations. This will support the delivery of integrated ECD services in a comprehensive manner to the disadvantaged refugee children and also afford adequate inspection and supervision services for centers.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Right to play should develop and implement a robust monitoring and evaluation plan with a comprehensive child development tracking system in order to measure children's early childhood development under the project. The system will ensure accountability through systematic and periodical data collection, data analysis and reporting on progress against a set of selected measurement metrics. Regular and ongoing review and use of data will guide continuous improvement and inform strategic sustainability strategies.

Continuous project improvement to better support children: Right To Play should take stock of the available play materials at selected ECD centers and also establish gaps such that appropriate play learning materials are made available to support child learning and development. The issue of deficits in play materials was prominently raised among the challenges ECD centers faced. ECD centers should also be guided to allocate more resources and time in the development of "Emergent literacy" skills that were poorly demonstrated during the assessment. Sub- tasks like; letter identification, letter sound and expressive vocabulary should be accorded special attention. Experience has shown that Emergent Literacy and Math (ELM) enables preschool programs to boost critical aspects of children's school readiness and ensure that they begin primary school ready to succeed.

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