

# The LEGO Foundation Childhood Development Activity in Ethiopia

## Accelerated School Readiness Program

### IDELA Baseline-Endline Assessment Study

High-quality early learning opportunities, including evidence-based curricula and playful learning opportunities, are essential for children's success in primary school and beyond.

The LEGO Foundation Childhood Development Activity offers the Accelerated School Readiness (ASR) program, an intensive eight-week play-based, holistic development and learning program for children without pre-primary education exposure.

In the Summer of 2024, 11,141 children aged 6 years or older, in crisis-affected areas of Oromia, Somali, Amhara, Tigray, and Afar participated in the ASR play-based learning program.



### RESULTS IN A NUTSHELL

#### The Accelerated School Readiness Program

- ◆ Trained 429 ASR facilitators in 215 learning centers.
- ◆ Delivered play-based learning activities over eight weeks.
- ◆ 10,462 children (94%) finished the program.
- ◆ 10,327 children (93%) transitioned into primary.
- ◆ Used the International Early Development and Learning Assessment (IDELA) to measure learning skills at baseline and endline.
- ◆ Children participating in ASR improved their early learning skills by 28 percentage points. Learning gains were observed for all measured school readiness domains.
- ◆ After attending ASR, children also demonstrated more attention to instructions, heightened confidence and motivation to complete tasks, and an increase in curiosity and pleasure in participating in the assessment learning tasks.

## Children participating in the eight-week intensive Accelerated School Readiness program significantly improved their early learning skills

Accounting for the increase in IDELA scores that is expected to occur due to eight weeks of natural development, the gains in early learning skills associated with ASR attendance were estimated to be 28 percentage points.

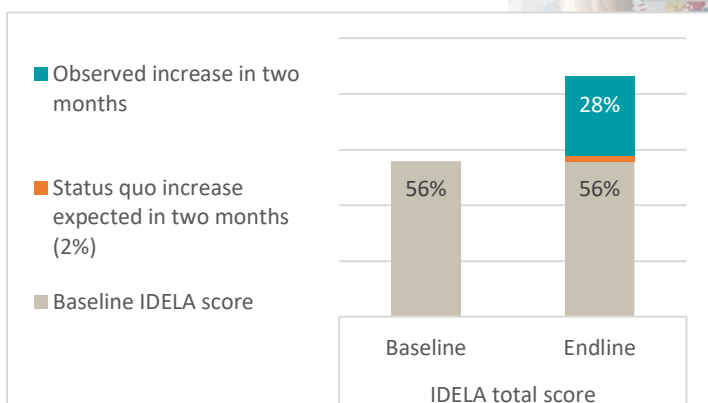


Figure 1: Average early learning score at baseline and endline as measured using IDELA, Ethiopia 2024



Image: ASR class with 6- and 7-year-olds in Mybulit learning center in Sekota Waghimra Zone.

## How was this study designed?

**Purpose:** In alignment with the Childhood Development Activity Theory of Change, the purpose of the study was to understand to what extent children participating in the ASR improved their early learning skills. Additionally, the study also measured completion and transition rates into primary school.

**Design:** The study employed a panel design to follow enrolment, completion, transition into primary school and the learning trajectories of 643 children randomly sampled from 87 ASR learning centers (58 in drought-affected and 29 in conflict-affected areas). Power calculations indicated that this sample would allow detecting an increase of 5 percent points to IDELA scores before and after the ASR program; this is, at least, a change of .25 standard deviations, with a power of 80% and a significance level of  $p=0.05$ .

The study design did not include a comparison group of children, presenting some limitations in estimating the precise effect of ASR on children's learning. To address this limitation, and in the absence of a comparison group from the target population, the study used existing evidence on the expected increase in early learning skills due to eight weeks of natural development in a *status-quo* population<sup>1</sup>. In other words, the study compared the gains to early learning skills observed in children attending the eight-week ASR program with the gains to early learning skills expected from a natural increase observed in the same period of time for a *status-quo* population not participating in any particular intervention.

**Study hypothesis:** Children participating in the eight-week ASR program will gain at least 0.50 standard deviations in IDELA scores; in other words, their score would increase at least 10 percent points between base- and endline.

**Hypothesis rationale and analytic approach:** Previous research has indicated that one year of age is associated with an increase of around .50 standard deviations in IDELA scores<sup>1</sup>. This means that children would naturally gain around 0.08 standard deviations in two months, which corresponds to around a 2 percent points increase in IDELA scores. By comparing the increase in early learning skills of children participating in ASR with that of children not participating in any intervention (the *status-quo* population) and discounting the natural development expected for two months, the analysis provided a reasonable approximation of the impact of the ASR program.

**The ASR program** is an intensive eight-week pre-primary initiative aligned with the minimum learning competencies established by the Ministry of Education.

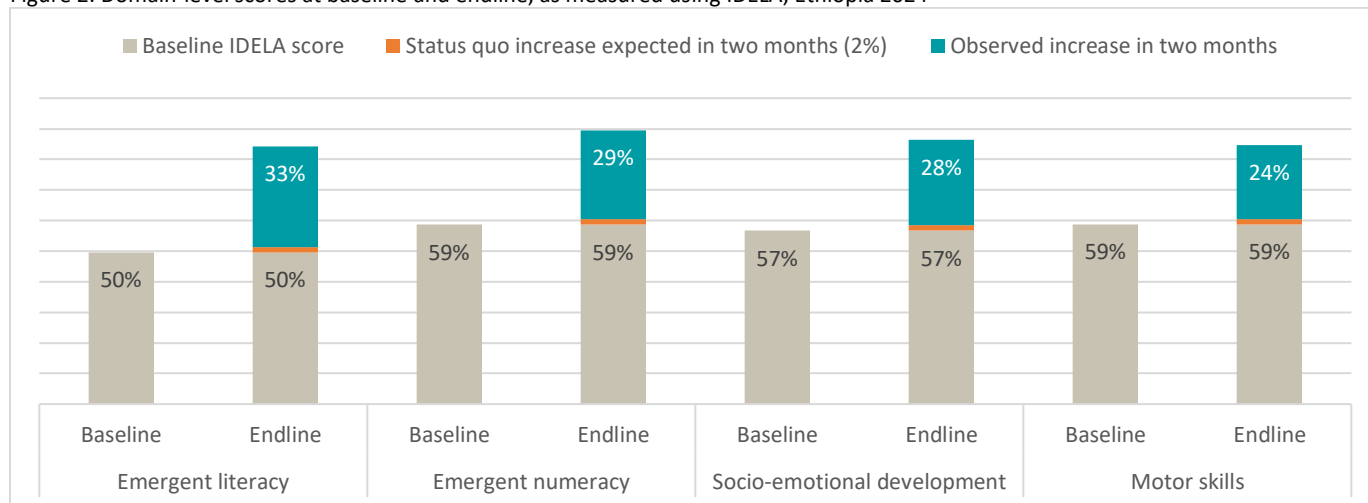
It emphasizes children's holistic development through a structured daily schedule that integrates play-based activities—conversation cards, storytelling, songs, indoor and outdoor play, self-guided individual activities, and creative tasks—that maximize exploration and learning opportunities for children.



Image: Children playing puzzle at Mybulit LC in Sekota Waghimra Zone

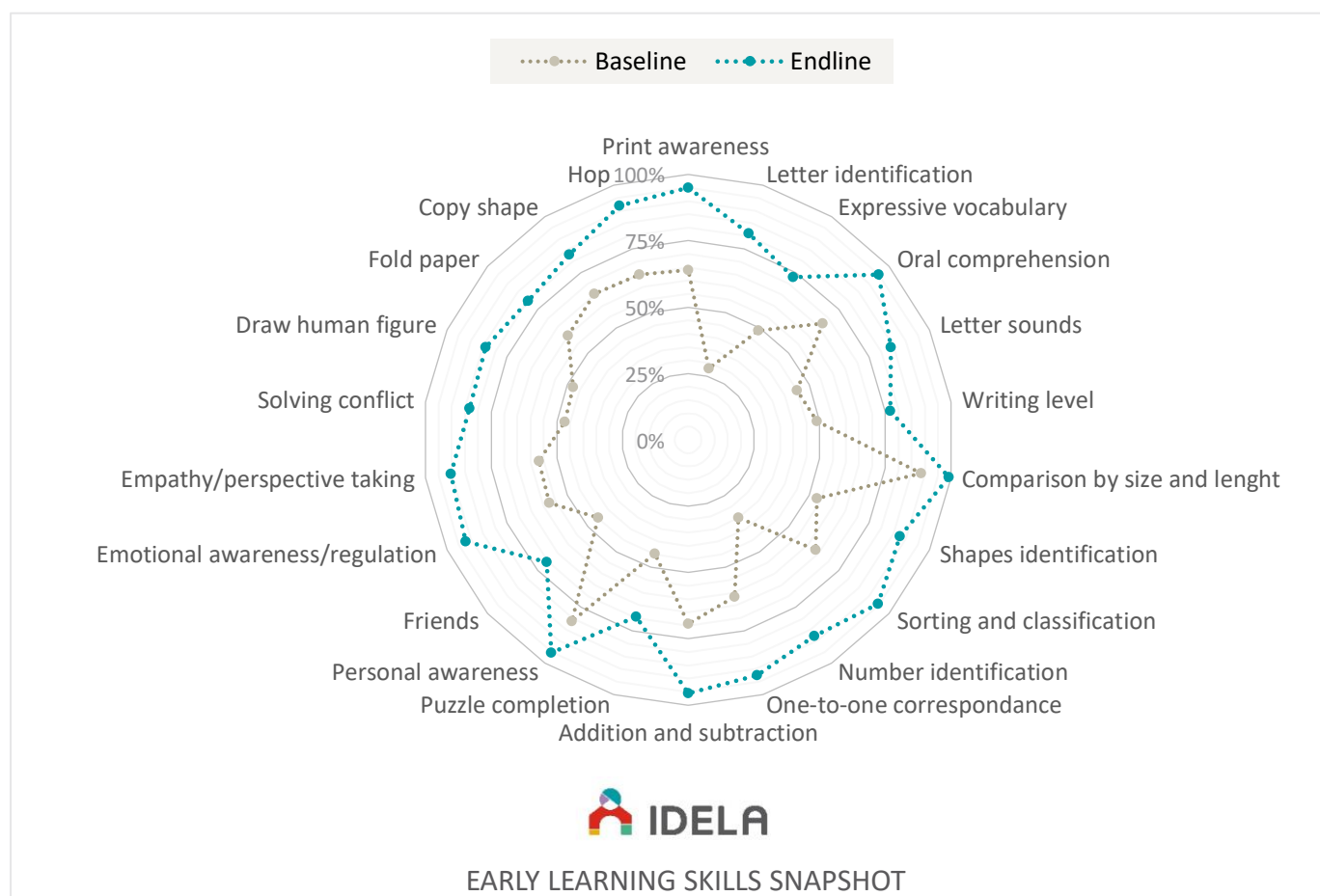
## Gains from participating in the Accelerated School Readiness program were observed for all domains of early learning and development

Figure 2: Domain-level scores at baseline and endline, as measured using IDELA, Ethiopia 2024



After attending ASR, children significantly improved their performance for all tasks assessed by IDELA. Notable improvements were observed for letter and number identification, print awareness. At endline, nearly all children have mastered concepts about personal identity (like their names, age and sex), size and length, print and were able to understand the content of simple stories.

Figure 3: Task-level scores at baseline and endline, as measured using IDELA, Ethiopia 2024



For more information on the IDELA Toolkit, visit:

<https://idela-network.org/>

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