



EARLY LITERACY AND MATHS INITIATIVE (ELMI)

“Improving school readiness and long-term learning outcomes”

THE SITUATION FOR CHILDREN IN RWANDA

Pre-primary education has been linked through extensive international studies to improved school achievement, lower repetition rates, increased likelihood of graduation and eventually higher productivity in adulthood. However, even when early childhood care and development (ECCD) is available in countries, often not enough emphasis is given to early literacy and maths (ELM) skills development, which is crucial in order for children to attain the necessary school readiness skills.

In Rwanda, the ECCD gross enrolment rate is only 13% (MINEDUC, 2013). Moreover, ECCD facilitators as well as parents and communities lack awareness of the support they can offer to their children in developing their foundational skills, including in emergent literacy and maths. The challenge in Rwanda is compounded by a lack of initiatives specifically targeting ELM skills as well as a shortfall of resources, expertise and investment in ECCD. Even though the Government of Rwanda investment in this area has increased, it remains far below the OECD recommendation of 1% of GNP.

PROJECT AIM

As part of Save the Children’s ‘Advancing the Right to Read’ programme in Rwanda, our ELMI project aims to develop a Rwanda-specific, pedagogically sound ELM curriculum for both centre-based care and care at the home. This will ensure that during the critical early years Rwandan children benefit from inclusive, effective learning opportunities that support ELM skills development at pre-primary level, and improve school readiness and long-term learning outcomes for young learners.



The project works within four Districts in Rwanda: Burera, Gicumbi, Ruhango and Rubavu.

Adapting and building on the success of Save the Children approaches in other contexts, ELMI in Rwanda is piloting the following project components through the Innovation for Education fund, a partnership between the Governments of Rwanda and the UK:

- Introducing ECCD Centre Caregivers to simple, activity-based methods for developing children's literacy and maths skills, drawing primarily on locally resourced materials.
- Working with parents of children not attending ECCD Centres, introducing them to ways they can support their children's ELM skills, even if the parent is unable to read;
- Engaging with Government in the design, implementation and supervision of ELMI – crucial to scalability beyond the project cycle.

Using evidence generated through the project, Save the Children expects to demonstrate the impact of targeted ELM support on children's performance in primary school, comparing the performance of children who have benefited from centre-based support and those targeted through the parenting training with children who have not had any exposure to ELM before primary school. It is expected that this evidence can be used to demonstrate the long-term benefits and cost-effective approaches that could be adopted by the Government of Rwanda.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Developing contextualised toolkits for ELM in centres and for parent facilitators;
- Training caregivers in 21 ECCD centres to enable them to support their students in developing their ELM skills;
- Training of communities of parents in areas without access to an ECCD Centre to enable them to support their children's ELM skills development;
- Engaging teacher training colleges and government officials, e.g. Sector Education Officers, to achieve sustainability and scalability;
- Generating robust evidence of ELMI's effectiveness by assessing learning outcomes using baseline, midline and endline data and qualitative case studies.
- Engaging with Government to support the development of the national ECCD curriculum.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 1) Improved environment and practices in the ECCD centres that support children's' ELM development;
- 2) Improved parenting practices in supporting ELM skills;
- 3) ELMI approach included in revised Government of Rwanda's ECCD curriculum.

Ultimate outcome: ECCD age children in Rwanda have improved foundational ELM skills and perform better in Grade 1.