

First Read 0-6 Endline Assessment (2015)

ABOUT FIRST READ (FR)

In 2014-2015, Save the Children piloted FR, an approach focusing on developing emergent literacy skills in children aged 0-6, in Ngororero district. The FR approach aims at addressing the early literacy interventions services gap within the overall Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) framework in Rwanda. For the period of this assessment, FR sessions were given in two categories: one for families of children aged 0-3 years and one for families of children aged 4-6 years. FR delivered key messages regarding playing, reading, talking, singing and counting with children according to their age and emphasized the role of parents in children's learning. Sessions were facilitated by 2 practitioners per site. Parents received at least 2 home visits from practitioner over the course of the program and were gifted with 3 books at the end of the program. Session sites were furnished with toys and age appropriate storybooks. Parents were encouraged to borrow books for reading at home at the end of every session. At the end of the program parents were encouraged to develop a plan to keep meeting, sharing experiences, and organizing playgroup sessions for their children.



FR 0-3 EVALUATION DESIGN

The FR 0-3 program aimed at increasing children's holistic care and development in the first 3 years of life. Parents were meeting weekly in groups of 20 families over 16 weeks to receive sessions on supporting their children's holistic development including cognitive, language, socio-emotional and physical development and child protection.

SAMPLE. At baseline a sample of 439 households was randomly selected from two intervention sectors (Muhororo and Hindiro) and three comparison sectors (Ndaro and Muhanda) in Ngororero district. Only 8% of the original families were missing at endline.

FR 4-6 EVALUATION DESIGN

The First Read 4-6 program aimed to help children acquire emergent literacy, numeracy and other school readiness skills. Parents were meeting weekly in groups of 15 families over 9 weeks to receive training on supporting their children's learning at home.

SAMPLE. At baseline, a random sample of 300 children was selected from two intervention sectors (Muhororo and Ngororero) and two comparison sectors (Kageyo and Gatumba) in Ngororero district. In total, 9% of the baseline children were not able to be located at endline.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE FR 0-6 ENDLINE

- Both FR 0-3 and 4-6 programming increased mother-child learning, stimulation and play activities, but overall, did not increase father-child learning and play activities. **Future programming should continue successful work with mothers but also try to engage more with fathers in parenting sessions.**
- FR 0-3 programming did not impact health or feeding activities. This may suggest that specific focus on these activities may not be required as other interventions, such as those led by the Ministry of Health, are already supporting these activities.
- Children benefiting from FR 0-3 had stronger gains on child development outcomes in the 24-month age group amongst those who received the same assessment at baseline and endline. Additionally, 36-month old children whose parents attended at least one session or received a home visit, and children whose mothers engaged in more home learning activities at endline, scored significantly higher than children experiencing fewer learning activities at home. **These findings highlight the importance of parenting sessions, home visits, and parental engagement in home learning activities on child development.**
- The FR 4-6 assessment found that children receiving both formal early childhood services and parenting interventions had the strongest early development and children receiving neither intervention were the most disadvantaged. The neediest children are those whose families cannot afford pre-primary school fees. For children not attending formal services, the primary driver of learning gains was paternal literacy. **The neediest children are those who cannot afford ECCD center / pre-primary fees and who are coming from illiterate households. More attention is needed to the issue of access to early childhood services and specifically to supporting children who are not able to enroll in ECCD centres or pre-primary classes.**

FIRST READ ENDLINE INSTRUMENTS & METHODS

0-3 Endline: Mothers and fathers were asked a series of questions about their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to nutrition and child development. Three modules of the Child Emergent Literacy List (CELL) questionnaire about emerging language skills for children aged 12-months (babbling, listening and basic imitation), 24-months (identification of words linking to real objects and imitation), and 36 months (easy linguistic expression and differentiation) were used to measure children's development.

4-6 Endline: The International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) tool (including questions on motor development, emergent literacy and numeracy, social-emotional development, cognitive functioning and children's approaches to learning) was used for children aged 4-6 and the revised IDELA Caregiver questionnaire was used for parents asking about background, home learning environment for children (materials and activities), education aspirations for their child, parental attitudes about their role in child development, and family socio-economic status.

Figure 1. FR 0-3 Gains in mother and father-child interactions

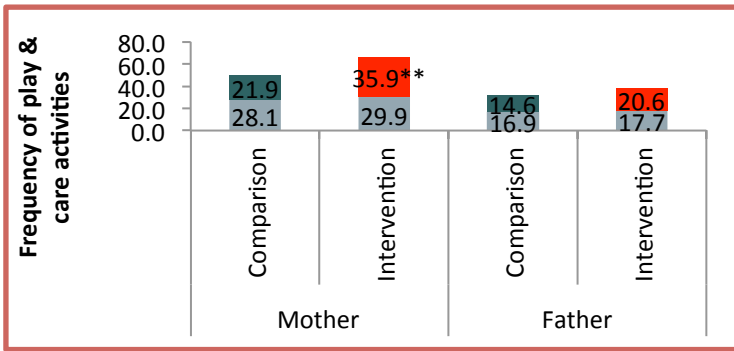


Figure 1 shows that mothers in the FR 0-3 intervention group reported significantly greater gains in 8 out of 18 learning and play activities than mothers in the comparison group and the overall level of mother-child interactions also differed significantly between the comparison and intervention groups. Fathers in the intervention group showed significant gains in parent-child activities in three areas but overall there were no differences between changes in comparison and intervention father-child activities.

Figure 2. FR 0-3 Child Emergent Literacy List Average Scores

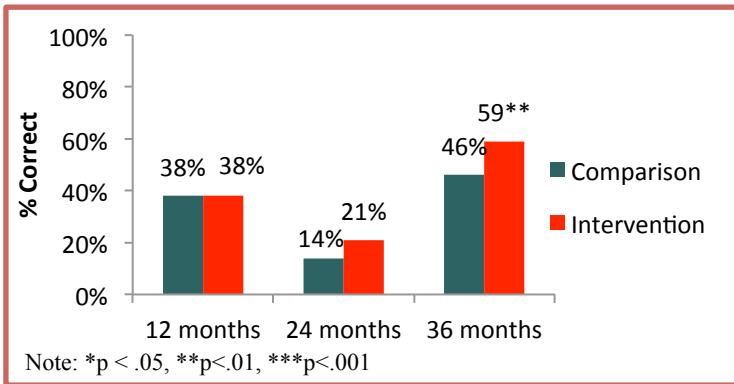


Figure 2 shows that in the 36-month group intervention children scored significantly higher than comparison children at endline. In the 24-month age group, children who received the same assessment at baseline and endline show significantly stronger gains than children in the comparison group.

Figure 3. Variety of toys and reading materials at FR 4-6 baseline and endline

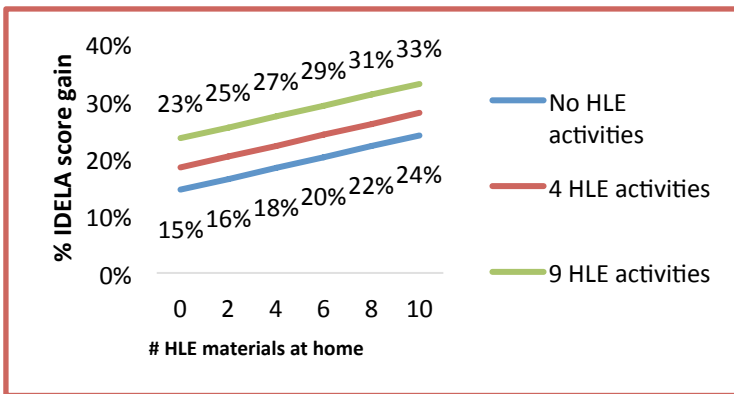


Figure 3 shows a significant positive effect on increases in the types of materials children have at home for children in First Read 4-6 intervention groups. This demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between the presence of reading and play materials and children's developmental gains.

Figure controls for children's age, sex, First Read enrollment, ECCD center / pre-primary enrollment, father literacy and baseline scores.

Figure 4. Average number of FR 4-6 family member-child activities at baseline and endline

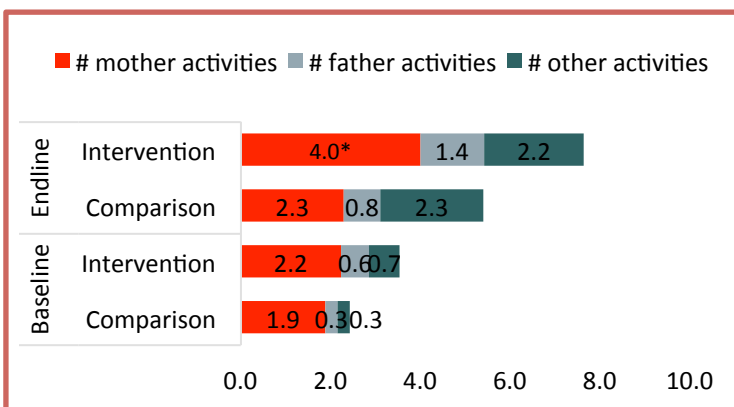


Figure 4 shows that mothers in the FR 4-6 intervention group reported significant increases in mother-child activities, such as the frequency with which they name new things and teach numbers, compared to mothers in the comparison group.

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001