

Review of the EQUIP-Tanzania School Readiness Programme

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Executive summary

The report of the EQUIP-Tanzania school readiness programme (SRP) shows how access to quality school readiness education can be increased through a cost efficient, community based approach combined with appropriate training to volunteer facilitators. The school readiness centres enabled children to achieve substantially higher levels of early learning and development than those without any early childhood education intervention and even moderately higher skill levels than children from formal pre-school.

Introduction

The EQUIP-Tanzania SRP works to stimulate demand and to prepare children for primary school while complementing national efforts to increase the provision of formal pre-schools longer term. The school readiness programme has three distinctive features:

- A community-based approach supported by existing local government structures
- The use of active learning pedagogy to develop core early learning and development competencies using mainly stories, songs, poetry, drama and play.
- Support to the development of effective, low cost learning aids at national and local levels.

The SRP enables parents and community leaders to identify local premises for school readiness centres and select volunteers to be trained as school readiness centre facilitators (SRCFs). The SRCFs receive ten days training in two phases using the adult learning model which combines theory and practical aspects. The school readiness centres operate using 12 story book titles and a toolkit for making their own books and other learning materials. Each school readiness centre is linked to a 'mother' primary school (often within around two hours' walk of the centre) which provides coaching to the SRCF and general technical oversight of the centre. The SRP was piloted in 2015 and scaled up in the seven regions supported by EQUIP-Tanzania in 2016. The programme supported over 2700 centres which enrolled 160,888 children (80,651 girls and 80,237 boys).

Early learning and development assessment

An assessment was conducted in March 2017 to assess the early learning and development competencies of children starting Standard I in early 2017 who had attended school readiness centres in 2016 in comparison with children who had attended formal pre-school and those with no access to an early childhood education intervention. The sample size was 1,191 children (606 girls and 585 boys) from 42 primary schools in 14 districts in seven regions.

Overview of the International Development and Early Learning Assessment

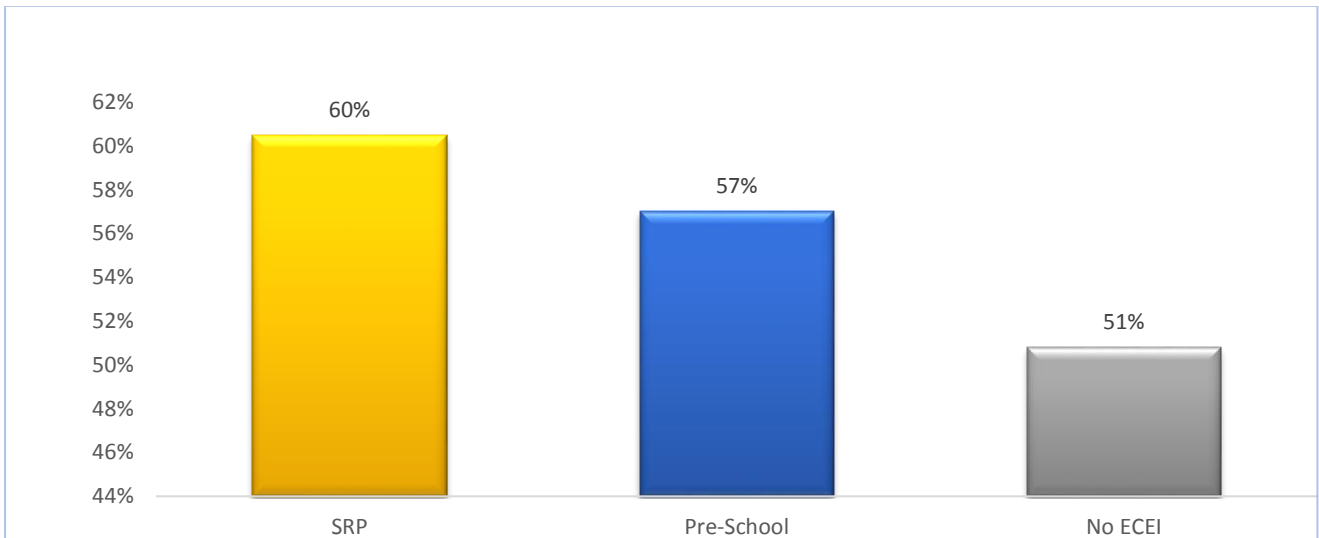
The methodology and tools of the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) were developed by Save the Children and contextualized for Tanzania with technical assistance from the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and the University of Dodoma in collaboration with the Agha Khan Foundation. The tool focuses on assesses four major domains:

1. Gross and fine motor development
2. Emergent literacy and language
3. Emergent numeracy
4. Socio-emotional development

Main results of the assessment

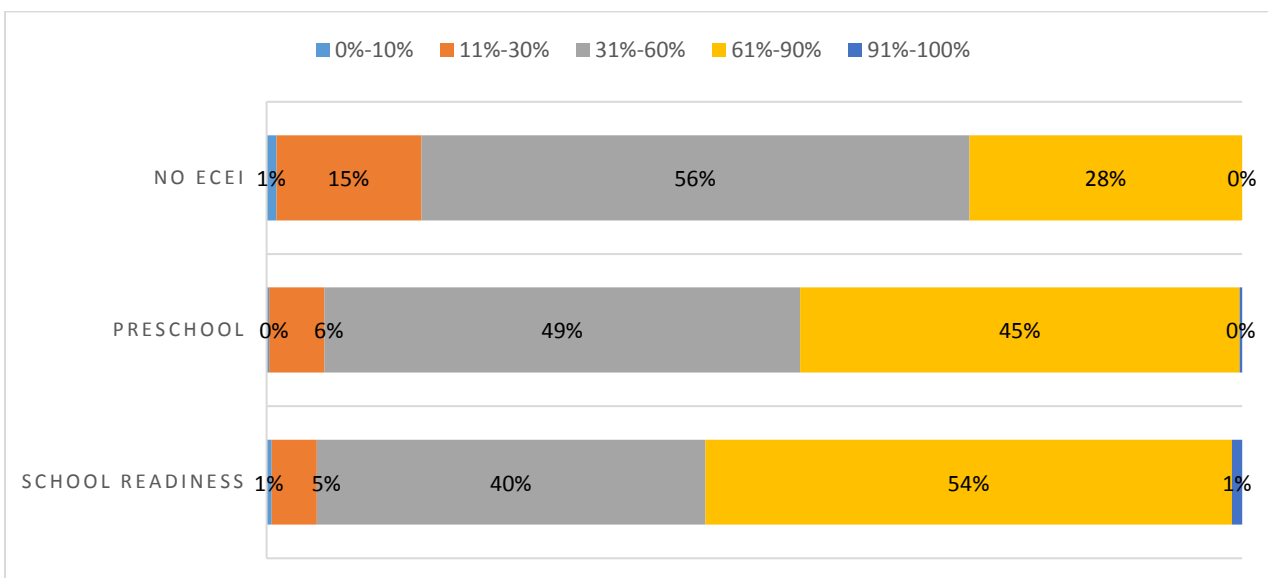
The overall results given in the chart below show that children who had attended school readiness centres had substantially higher skill levels than those who had no access to an early childhood education intervention and even moderately higher skills than those who had attended formal a pre-school.¹

Figure 1: Overall scores for school readiness skills comparing three study groups



The spread of scores also shows the strong skills of children from school readiness centres compared to those with no access to an early childhood intervention and even a moderately stronger range than those from formal pre-school.

Figure 3: Distribution of overall IDELA scores by study group



¹ For overall IDELA scores there was no statistically significant difference between girls' and boys' scores. However when comparing girls' and boys' average scores by domain there was one domain, early numeracy, that showed a moderate but statistically significant difference. This is discussed further in the main report Section 4.5

Inclusion

For overall IDELA scores the differences between girls and boys were not statistically significant. When comparing girls' and boys' scores by domain one domain, emergent numeracy, showed a statistically significant difference with boys having moderately higher scores than girls (57% compared to 54%)². Nevertheless the programme worked to address gender equity and promote inclusion. Training for SRCF included methods for addressing gender imbalance. One story book provided to the school readiness centres focused on the importance of a girl child going to school rather than being kept at home to do household chores. The story ends with the child going to school. Furthermore, SRCFs were trained on conducting very basic assessments for identifying the probability of some forms of disabilities. Methods to include learners at different levels and to adapt teaching to individual learners were part of the training for SRCFs.

Achieving value for money so as to expand access

There are a number of features to the school readiness programme which ensure value for money and therefore enable access to more children sooner while national efforts continue to expand pre-school provision.

- SRCF were volunteers who were not paid unless community members decided to pay them a small allowance³. They were provided with two weeks training when starting in 2016 (with six days refresher training for experienced volunteers who were continuing from the 2015 pilot) and a basic mobile phone which is returnable as soon as they cease to be SRCF.
- The buildings used for the school readiness centres were existing buildings that were provided by communities without any rent having to be paid by the local government authority (LGA) or Managing Agent. These included religious and community buildings used for meetings and social events.
- Simple toolkits were provided to SRCF for making low-cost learning materials, and to reduce the number of printed books needed. The SRCF training included guidance and ideas for making materials from the toolkits as well as from locally available materials.
- The major part of the guidance and the supervision to SRCF was provided by the mother primary school rather than any additional structure supported by the Managing Agent. The overall oversight was also provided by existing cadre within local government.

Building on learning from the school readiness programme

Support to school readiness centres are being scaled up at the national level by the government of Tanzania. The story books and related teaching methods for promoting active learning of core competencies have been incorporated into the national, formal pre-school system with implementation of the new approaches from 2017. Furthermore, support for school readiness has been adopted at the national level.

While school readiness continues to be scaled up it will be important to build on core features of the approach and to consider how these are also relevant to formal pre-schools. In particular the following recommendations are made:

- Explore how to further develop community involvement including promoting parents' learning at home with their children and using community-based facilities for learning.
- Build on teaching approaches that promote active learning especially through play.

² P>0.05 See also Appendix I. See main report Section 4.5 for further information.

³ Community contributions are not included in the direct costs of the SRP programme as shown above.

- Adapt approaches to the development of low cost teaching aids, which encourage activity based learning especially when they are made with learners themselves.
- Regular sharing of practice and learning between the pre-primary teacher and the Standard I teacher.
- Explore how to find a path for recognising the SRCF within the formal pre-school system.

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Table of Acronyms

DEO	District Education Officer
ECEI	Early childhood education intervention
IDELA	International Development and Early Learning Assessment
LGA	Local government authority
MELQO	Measuring Early Learning and Quality Outcomes
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
SRCF	School readiness centre facilitator
SRP	School readiness programme
TIE	Tanzania Institute for Education
WEO	Ward Education Officer

1. Introduction

The EQUIP-Tanzania School Readiness Programme (SRP) works to complement government efforts to increase access to pre-primary education in a cost efficient way through a community-based approach which supports parents and community leaders to set up and support school readiness centres. The centres are run by School Readiness Centre Facilitators (SRCFs) who are volunteers selected by communities with oversight from the Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and the Head Teacher of the ‘mother’ primary school. The EQUIP-Tanzania programme provided the SRCFs with training by District Facilitators (who are trained by zonal teams who were in turn trained by national facilitators). In addition the programme supplied 12 story book titles (which provided the focus for teaching on major themes each week), a toolkit and guidance for developing further books and learning materials. Each school readiness centre was linked to a ‘mother’ primary school within two hours’ walk of the centre. The Head Teacher of the mother school provided overall technical oversight of the school readiness centre and the SRCF visited the school once a week to meet the Head Teacher and Standard I Teacher for mentoring and two-way learning and discussion about planning activities and preparing the school readiness centre children for primary school. The second level of support was from visits to the centres by the WEO and in some cases District Facilitators. EQUIP-Tanzania supported a pilot in 2015 and a scale up programme in 2016 when over 2,700 centres were supported and 160,888 children were enrolled (80,651 girls and 80,237 boys).

EQUIP-Tanzania conducted a review of the SRP in early 2017 using programme monitoring data on implementation and a learning assessment to review the effectiveness of the programme. The learning assessment built on a previous small scale pilot learning assessment of the previous year. In 2017 the assessment was scaled up to ensure that the results could be generalised for the programme across the seven regions. The 2017 learning assessment achieved a sample of 1191 children (606 girls and 585 boys) in 14 districts across the seven regions. The objective and review questions are given below:

1.1 Objective and review questions

The objective of this review is to establish the effectiveness of the EQUIP-Tanzania SRP in enabling girls and boys to develop school readiness skills by the time they start primary school.

The specific review questions are as follows:

- 1 What is the level of school readiness skills of children who have attended EQUIP-Tanzania supported school readiness centres compared to the following:
children who have *not* accessed any early childhood education intervention
children who have attended formal pre-school?
- 2 What are the strongest and weakest school readiness skills of children starting Standard I of primary school?
- 3 What progress did children make over time at school readiness centres until starting at primary school?
- 4 What are the regional differences in the levels of school readiness skills of children from the school readiness centres, pre-school and no access to an early childhood education intervention?
- 5 How was gender and inclusion addressed in the SRP?
- 6 To what extent is SRP cost-efficient?

The findings of the review are expected to inform EQUIP-Tanzania Managing Agent, local government authorities (LGA) and national government on future support to SRP and how approaches from SRP can be incorporated into other parts of the education system – including satellite schools, formal pre-school, Standard I in primary school, and efforts to reach out of school children. Further, the learning assessment informs LGAs of the strengths and gaps in children’s emerging skill areas as they start Standard I and this should show areas where further attention is needed in pre-primary and early primary education.

2. Overview of the school readiness programme implementation in 2016

The SRP supported by EQUIP-Tanzania aims to complement national efforts to expand access to good quality pre-primary education. The SRP contribution has been distinctive in terms of developing a community approach, promoting active learning methods and enabling access to effective learning materials. The programme was piloted in 2015 and from the successful pilot was implemented at full scale in 2016.

2.1 School Readiness Programme Pilot in 2015

The programme pilot in 2015 supported 1,050 school readiness centres across the seven EQUIP-Tanzania programme target regions. In total 49,591 children enrolled in the school readiness centres. The centres were established to pilot an approach as an interim measure to enable more children to develop school readiness skills while expansion of formal government pre-school education was ongoing, and to stimulate demand for primary education. The need for this programme in EQUIP-Tanzania target regions was considered to be especially pressing since the majority of children from these regions come from homes where Kiswahili is not the main language spoken at home, while Kiswahili is the language of instruction in primary schools. The performance gap based on home language was noted in the EQUIP-Tanzania baseline assessment.⁴ The school readiness centres were to enable children to develop some basic vocabulary in Kiswahili and related emergent literacy skills to better prepare them for primary school. The centres provided a 12 week programme (September to December) delivered by community volunteers who had an initial one week's training followed by a further week's training after four weeks of teaching at the centres. Twelve story book titles were provided to support children's development of five key competencies. The content of the programme was developed collaboratively between EQUIP-Tanzania Managing Agent and the Tanzanian Institute for Education (TIE). The implementation of the programme was conducted by LGAs with support from the Managing Agent.

2.2 School Readiness Programme Scale-up in 2016

Following the pilot the story books and related teaching methods for promoting active learning to develop core competencies were incorporated into the national formal pre-school curriculum and materials with school level implementation starting in 2017.

While some of the approaches from SRP were being mainstreamed into the national formal pre-school system, the EQUIP-Tanzania school readiness programme was expanded to enable access in areas where there was no pre-school, with priority given to remote rural areas far from primary schools.

Therefore in 2016 the programme was scaled up to support over 2,700 school readiness centres (including continuing centres from 2015 as well as new centres) across the seven regions. In total the number of children enrolled increased to 160,888 (80,651 girls and 80,237 boys). The duration of the learning programme was increased from 12 to 16 weeks although implementation schedules varied by location. Many of the school readiness centres started in 2015 continued running on the initiative of the volunteers and communities throughout 2016. Nevertheless the more structured learning programme ran from August 2016 for 16 weeks prior to primary school enrollment from January 2017.

The overall approach of the SRP can be summarised in terms of the following key features:

- A community-based approach supported by existing local government structures.

⁴ The EQUIP-Tanzania baseline assessment in 2014 found that 77% of children in the original five target regions of EQUIP-Tanzania (Dodoma, Kigoma, Shinyanga, Simiyu and Tabora) come from homes where Kiswahili is not the main language spoken at home, Oxford Policy Management (OPM) 2014 *EQUIP-Tanzania Impact Evaluation Baseline Technical Report Volume I*

- The use of active learning pedagogy to develop core early learning and development competencies using mainly stories, songs, poetry, drama and play.
- Support to the development of effective, low cost learning aids at national and local levels.

The overview of the implementation of the school readiness programme is described in terms of these key features.

Community-based approach with support from existing government structures

Site selection

Head Teachers and WEO worked with community leaders to select sites for the new school readiness centres - often community buildings used for social events plus religious buildings. The programme funds did not pay for rent. The school readiness centres were in session for four days a week mainly in the mornings so they were able to use spare capacity of community and religious buildings.

Volunteer selection

The school readiness centres were run by community volunteers, SRCFs. Many of the SRCFs who ran the school readiness centres in 2015 continued to run their centres in 2016, which indicates their commitment to the programme. They were not paid by programme funds though in some cases local communities made contributions for their expenses. New SRCFs were selected through collaboration between community members, the 'mother' primary schools that were linked to the school readiness centres and the WEOs, with the District Education Officers (DEOs) having the role of final approval of the selection. The volunteers were Form IV leavers where possible and were interested in community activities. Women were particularly encouraged to apply to become SRCFs given the importance of providing female role models.

Guidance follow-up and monitoring of volunteers

Throughout the implementation the SRCFs had access to a circles of support – firstly from their immediate community and the mother school (the nearest government primary school) with backup from the WEO and some oversight from district level – especially from the District Facilitators (often members of the District Education Office). The school readiness centres were in session from Monday to Thursday with the Friday used for visiting the local primary school for sharing learning between the SRCF and the Standard I teacher and for mentoring support from the Head Teacher or another senior teacher. The day was also used by the SRCF to prepare themselves for the next week's story and activities, visit parents/guardians and visit other stakeholders. In addition the school readiness centres were visited by Head Teachers and WEOs.

The SRCF were provided with simple mobile phones to ensure they could call for assistance in the case of emergencies, receive short reminders about focus topics for the week, and could provide feedback and information in response to simple monitoring questions. The SMS monitoring included questions to the SRCF about the types of support they received and the frequency in the previous month. On average SRCFs in six of the seven regions were visited three times in the previous month by the Head Teacher and two times in the previous month by members of the Parent-Teacher Partnership (PTP) of the nearest school.⁵ Furthermore, the PTPs were often instrumental in encouraging parents to send their children to the school readiness centres.

Promotion of active learning

The training for the SRCFs emphasised methods for enabling active learning by children including song, drama, use of visual aids and constructive play. The training was provided through a cascade starting with

⁵ Further information on the SMS monitoring methodology is provided in section 3 *Overview of Methodology*

EQUIP-Tanzania Managing Agent specialists in up to date methods for pre-primary education based on active learning. The Managing Agent specialists trained a core group of zonal trainers who were experienced in primary and pre-primary education. The zonal trainers in turn trained District Facilitators (mainly from the District Education Offices and some experienced pre-primary teachers) who, in turn, trained the SRCFs. The new SRCFs were provided with two weeks of training (initial week-long training followed by a further week's training after four weeks facilitating the school readiness centre). The SRCFs who had facilitated centres in 2015 participated in three days refresher training initially followed by a further three days training after four weeks (although the implementation schedules varied between regions in practice).

Monitoring visits to the school readiness centres showed that the active learning methods were being effectively implemented by the SRCF who were also adapting these to their context. Quality down the cascade was maintained, and demonstrated by district facilitators sharing monitoring pictures and videos through their WhatsApp facilitator network.

Support of high quality appropriate learning aids

The support to the school readiness centres included provision of story books (large read aloud and standard-sized book for each title) procured in collaboration with TIE, and produced by a trained writer from TIE and region and national illustrators. The books were centred on conveying the key competencies in the curriculum as well as being designed to be engaging to children, appropriate to the context and to convey messages on life-skills, the importance of education and inclusion. In addition to the learning books the SRCFs were provided with a toolkit for making books and materials and the training included skills in making these from the toolkits and from locally available resources.

Challenges in implementation in 2015 and 2016

In 2015 the major challenges identified by the SRCFs through the SMS monitoring and through reflection days were large class sizes, diverse age ranges and limited learning resources in relation to student numbers. The 2015 pilot had highlighted the limited access to primary education in more remote areas where parents were concerned about their children walking long distances to primary school – sometimes with difficult terrain and impassable areas with rivers or marshes. This meant that older children attended the school readiness centres and the classes were often large (often between 50 and 100). This challenge could not be entirely addressed by 2016 since new SRP centres were set up in new remote areas where there were similar un-met needs for both primary and pre-primary education. Therefore similar challenges were reported by SRCF in 2016. In broader terms the EQUIP-Tanzania programme is supporting satellite schools to seek to address the unmet demand for primary education in some remote areas.

3. Overview of methodology

For implementation data (for section 2 above) the review draws on monitoring by the LGAs and from the central SMS survey of SRCFs. For the learning assessment the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA)⁶ methodology for assessing school readiness was used for a survey of school readiness skills.

3.1 Implementation data

In addition to routine training data and attendance data from the LGAs on SRCFs trained and girls and boys attendance at school readiness centres, EQUIP-Tanzania conducted an SMS survey of SRCFs to gain further information on implementation (The survey was conducted with support from a sub-contracted phone

⁶ Developed by Save the Children and contextualised with technical assistance from University of Dodoma, TIE and the Aga Khan Foundation.

survey company)⁷. Survey questions were sent regularly to all SRCFs and had a response rate of 52% (average across questions). Most questions were closed-ended short questions which provided snapshots of implementation. The SRCF were provided with simple mobile phones (not smart phones and with a cost of approximately GBP23 each). Questions covered issues such as attendance, use of materials, frequency of support from PTP members, frequency of visits from the mother school.

In addition qualitative insights were gained from visits to training of SRCFs and visits to school readiness centres by the WEOs, District Facilitators and EQUIP-Tanzania Managing Agent staff. Videos, photos and first-hand accounts of visits to school readiness centres were also shared on a WhatsApp network for District Facilitators. Furthermore reflection days were held at district level to enable SRCFs to share experience of facilitating the centres.

3.2 Learning assessment

Tools

The learning assessment used the IDELA tools for assessing children's readiness for primary school. This was developed and extensively tested by Save the Children so as to ensure its suitability internationally. IDELA is a tool for assessing children's readiness for primary school based on a broad view of school readiness including socio-emotional development, and not only cognitive skills. The tool includes 22 items in five domains of development: gross and fine motor development, emergent literacy and language, emergent numeracy, socio-emotional development and the related issues of following instructions (executive function) and approaches to learning.

IDELA is skill-oriented and enables assessment over time in specific skill areas. Scoring is largely continuous (not based on yes/no answers) and the items enable children of varying abilities to answer meaningfully. The tool uses minimal equipment and can be administered by enumerators with varying backgrounds following short training (normally a week). The tool is designed to take approximately 30 minutes to administer.

IDELA is not the only instrument for assessing early learning. However the other major set of instruments, Measuring Early Learning and Quality Outcomes (MELQO) was still under development for Tanzania so IDELA was proposed since the instruments were ready to use. (The full IDELA instrument is available for review in Appendix II.)

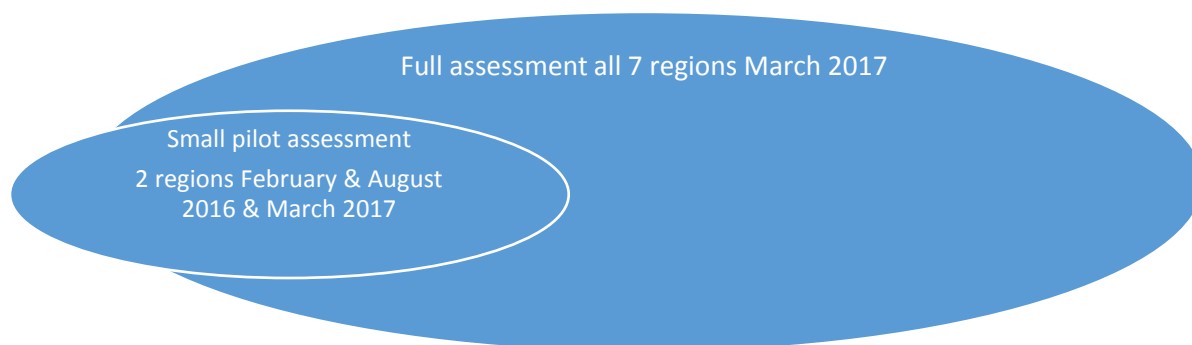
The whole IDELA package was used – which included the assessment guide for face to face assessments of children, plus a training package, guidance on consent and guidance on data entry, analysis and use. The IDELA training package was translated into Kiswahili and adapted for use with District Facilitators and EQUIP-Tanzania Managing Agent regional staff who conducted the assessment.

⁷ The sub-contracted company, PUSH Mobile, issued the SMS messages and questions and provided the raw data from responses. EQUIP-Tanzania Managing Agent designed the questions and sequencing of questions and compiled the data.

Sampling and approach

The learning assessment had two connected aspects: a small pilot assessment in two regions (Tabora and Dodoma) and a larger assessment across all seven regions including Tabora and Dodoma as well as Kigoma, Lindi, Mara, Shinyanga and Simiyu.

Figure 1 Pilot and scaled up learning assessments



Small pilot assessment in Tabora and Dodoma August 2016

The learning assessment for review of the 2016 SRP started with a small baseline in August 2016 in two regions, Tabora and Dodoma, in four districts (two per region) and six SRP centres linked to six mother schools (three per district) and a sample of 91 children. The school readiness centres were linked to mother schools that had participated in the pilot assessment in February 2016 when children from the centres set up in the 2015 pilot SRP entered Standard I as part of the early 2016 enrollment. The districts were chosen in January 2016 for being broadly representative of the regions in terms of predominant livelihoods and levels of Kiswahili as the main language spoken in children's homes. The schools were chosen for being accessible from district headquarters and for having sufficient numbers of children from the three study groups:

- children from the pilot school readiness centres;
- children who had *not* accessed any early childhood education intervention;
- children who had attended formal pre-school?

In August 2016 the small baseline was conducted of children at school readiness centres (part of the 2016 SRP scale-up), to enable assessment of children's learning over time. This was a small-scale continuation of the IDELA learning assessment pilot in February 2016 prior to the process for allocating resources for scaling up the assessment across the seven regions.

Full assessment across seven regions

The full assessment compared school readiness of the three study groups of pupils enrolled in Standard I by March 2017 i.e. children who had attended school readiness centres in 2016 compared to those from formal pre-school and those who had *not* accessed any early childhood education intervention. The full target sample was: 1200 with 400 in each of the three categories with even numbers of girls and boys. The actual sample achieved was 1191 (shortfall of 1%). The target and achieved samples in each study group sex disaggregated given in the table below:

Table 1: Target and actual achieved sample per study group and sex disaggregated

Study group	Total			Girls			Boys		
	Target	Actual	Shortfall	Target	Actual	Shortfall	Target	Actual	Shortfall
School readiness centres	400	389	3%	200	195	3%	200	194	3%
Formal pre-school	400	405		200	209		200	196	2%
No access to pre-school or school readiness centre	400	397	1%	200	202		200	195	3%
Totals	1200	1191	1%	600	606		600	585	3%

The sample was designed to give a confidence level of 95% assuming disaggregation by study group and sex only (not further disaggregated by study group and region or district)⁸. The scope of the assessment included all of the seven regions where the school readiness programme was implemented, Dodoma, Kigoma, Lindi, Mara, Shinyanga, Simiyu and Tabora. The sample per region was weighted based on the distribution of Standard I children across the 7 regions. (The table showing the sample per region and districts is given Appendix I.)

In each region it was necessary to sample children in a limited number of schools to minimise costs as far as possible. For the five regions that had no previous school readiness learning assessment, the strategy of purposively sampling two broadly typical districts within each region was used. Within each district between one and three schools were selected depending on the number of Standard I children to be sampled. The schools were shortlisted for the following criteria:

- Within approximately one hour's drive from the district headquarters;
- Having sufficient numbers of children from the three study groups.

From the shortlist of schools the selection was random. Within each school the selection of children was random after they were identified according to which study group they were in by the pre-school teacher and in some cases by the SRCF from the linked school readiness centre. The children in each group lined up in further sub-groups of girls and boys and then were called to pick manila cards for the last part of the selection which was random.

3.3 Limitations of the review

The limitations of the review are considered in terms of scope, operational limitations, and challenges of conducting an internal programme review.

Limitations in scope

In terms of scope, the review did not include the economic context of the SRP in terms of the economic status of parents of children in the three study groups, the opportunity cost of SRCF for the time they spent working with the school readiness programme and the value of other contributions in kind made by communities such as access to community buildings, floor mats and in some cases construction materials to build or refurbish school readiness centres. The reasons for this limitation are largely related to cost. For

⁸ Any regional comparisons made in the report are tentative only and give an indication of issues to be considered and researched further.

example adding an interview of parents to assess their economic status would have doubled the field time of the survey team with related cost implications.

Further there was no analysis of difference in difference between the children attending pre-school and school readiness centres from baseline to endline of the two groups. For the pre-school children this was related to resources as well as planning. By assessing both study groups at the same time soon after they started primary school it was possible to achieve assessments in one location with one day per primary school.

Operational limitations

In terms of assessing a children's learning over time the challenges associated with this were largely operational. A learning assessment in school readiness centres was conducted within the pilot sites with a smaller sample of 91 children within six centres in two regions in August 2016. This was done partly as formative monitoring - to enable the SRCFs and District Facilitators to identify strengths and gaps of children at the school readiness centres. In addition it was intended to assess the same children again when they entered primary school by the completion of enrollment in March 2017. Given the relatively small sample size it was preferable to assess the same children again in March 2017. However there were operational challenges that prevented this. In some cases some of the children were not present on the day of the assessment, and some gaps in the training for the assessment team meant that they were not always targeted for repeat assessment. Further there was a challenge in linking names for data analysis. The assessment teams recorded two names so if the children had three names there would be one name missing from the assessment lists which made it difficult to identify specific children assessed in August 2016 and again in March 2017.

For the SMS monitoring with SRCFs there was a delayed start due to adjusting to a new regulation for mobile phone companies gaining permission for such surveys. This meant that the survey was compressed and questions were sent close together (sometimes with several questions being asked on the same day) and this may have led to reduced response rate due to inconvenience for respondents. Overall the response rate was 52% which is considered high for SMS surveys and the absolute numbers of responses was close to 1,400 each week. However the areas with more limited coverage (with weak signals or no signals) may be more remote areas and this could have led to an inherent bias against remote areas. Further the SRCF who responded may have been more active or they may have had more contact with District Facilitators or other LGA officials who had a role in following up to encourage response to the SMS survey. This could have brought in a further inherent bias in favour of more active SRCF with more follow-up support.

The duration of children's attendance at school readiness centres and pre-schools was not assessed, largely due to the cost implications of viewing individual child attendance records that were largely paper-based. Formal pre-school is normally a one or two-year programme. School readiness was established as a 16 week programme but 25 out of the 42 centres that were included in the 2016 assessment had been running since January 2016 since they continued operation since the end of the 2015 pilot due to the initiative of volunteers and communities. For new centres starting in 2016 there were delays in some cases so that the opening dates varied between districts. Nevertheless the school readiness centres were formally supported for the more structured programme from the start of August 2016 and there was guidance to WEO to encourage enrollment into the centres at that time.

Limitations in conducting an internal review

The review was essentially an internal programme review conducted by local government District Facilitators who had trained the SRCF. As such they may have had an interest in providing a positive assessment of learning of the children from school readiness centres run by volunteers they had trained. Conducting an

internal review also has strong advantages in terms of potential for formative use of data and for enabling LGA officials to develop skills in school readiness assessments, but the risk of bias is also present. To reduce this risk of bias the District Facilitators were allocated to conduct the assessment in districts where they did *not* normally work (though within the same region). The IDELA tool itself may counteract some of the potential biases through its objective approach to assessing children’s development.

4. Findings of the learning assessment

The findings of the learning assessment are presented for each review question 1-5 as listed below.

1. What is the level of school readiness skills of children who have attended EQUIP-Tanzania supported school readiness centres compared to the following:
children who have *not* accessed any early childhood education intervention
children who have attended formal pre-school?
2. What are the strongest and weakest school readiness skills of children starting Standard I of primary school?
3. What progress did children make over time at school readiness centres until starting at primary school?
4. What are the regional differences in the levels of school readiness skills of children from the school readiness centres, pre-school and no access to an early childhood education intervention?
5. How was gender and inclusion addressed in the SRP?

The last review question on cost-efficiency of SRP was not directly part of the learning assessment and will be discussed in section 5.

4.1 Level of school readiness skills of children from SRP compared to the other study groups

This section addresses the first review question:

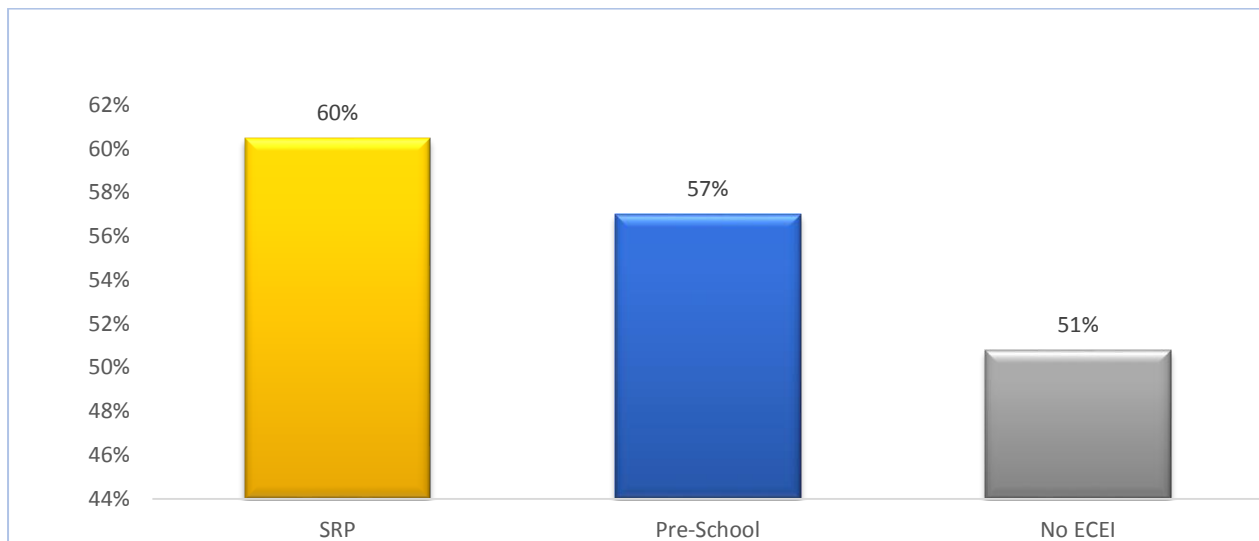
What is the level of school readiness skills of children who have attended EQUIP-Tanzania supported school readiness centres compared to the following:

*children who have not accessed any early childhood education intervention
children who have attended formal pre-school?*

The main result is that children from school readiness centres achieved substantially higher overall levels of school readiness skills than those children who have not accessed any early childhood education intervention and slightly higher than those from formal pre-school as shown in the chart below.⁹

⁹ The sex disaggregated results are given in section 4.5. There were no statistically significant differences between girls’ and boys’ results overall and for the three study groups sex disaggregated, but there was a moderate but statistically significant difference between girls’ and boys’ scores for emergent numeracy. See section 4.5 for further information.

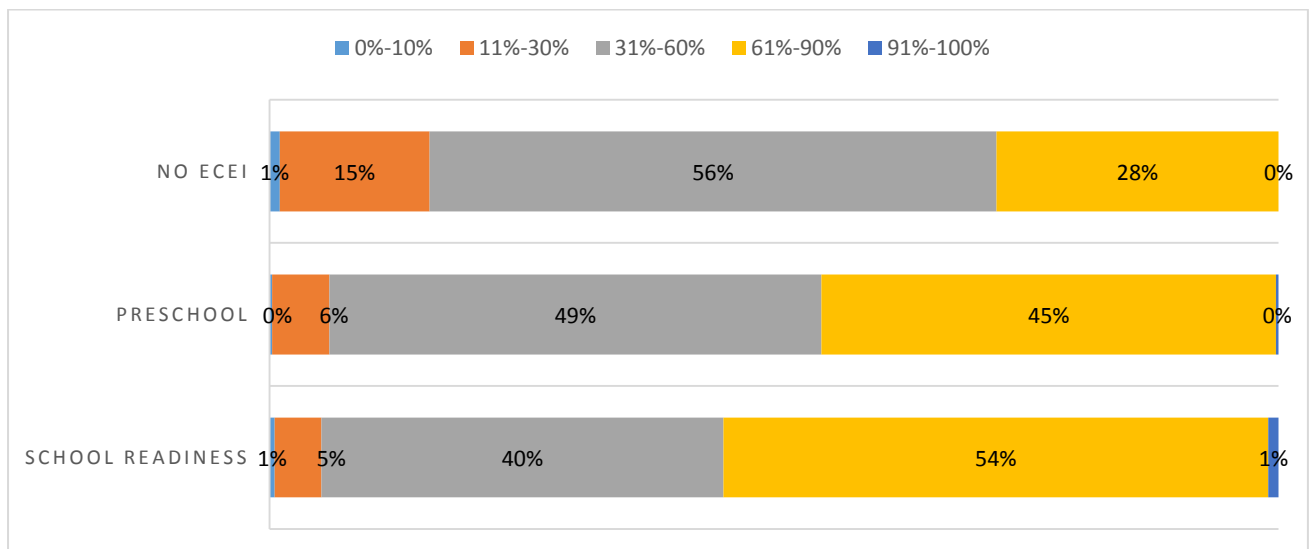
Figure 2 Overall IDELA scores by study group



The chart shows that scores for children from SRP centres were higher than those with no access to an early childhood education intervention by 9 percentage points and even slightly higher than children from formal pre-school – the difference is moderate but statistically significant nevertheless.¹⁰

A similar pattern is evident for the overall spread of results as shown in the chart below. The scores of children from school readiness centres show a substantially stronger range than for children with no access to an early childhood education intervention as well as a stronger spread than children from pre-school.

Figure 3 Distribution of overall IDELA scores by study group



For the stronger IDELA scores of 61-90% (marked in yellow) 54% of children from school readiness centres are in this range compared to 45% from formal pre-school and 28% with no access to an

¹⁰ $p > 0.05$. The full list of averages presented in this report and significance of the differences between the averages are given in Appendix I.

early childhood education intervention. The level in the lower range with 11%-30% IDELA scores are similar between children from school readiness centres and pre-school (5% and 6% respectively). In contrast a substantially higher proportion of children with no access (15%) have IDELA scores within this lower range.

A few examples of different skills of children according to their scores are provided to give a picture of what the different levels of scores mean in practice. Children with 61% scores were more likely to be able to identify two out of four common shapes than children with 51% score who often identified only one shape. Children with a 61% score more often identified more than five letters out of 20 letters and more than 15 numbers from one to 20 compared to their peers with 51% scores.

The qualitative data gives insight into how the stronger scores of children from school readiness centres was achieved. The training of SRCF gave strong emphasis to promoting active and socio-emotional learning and a focus on themes through story books provided to the school readiness centres. Visits to school readiness centres showed that the teaching was of good quality and the active learning methods were generally being well implemented. The curriculum and the story book materials from the school readiness centres have now been adopted for formal pre-school from 2017 but these had not been in place in the mainstream system during 2016 when the SRP was scaled up.

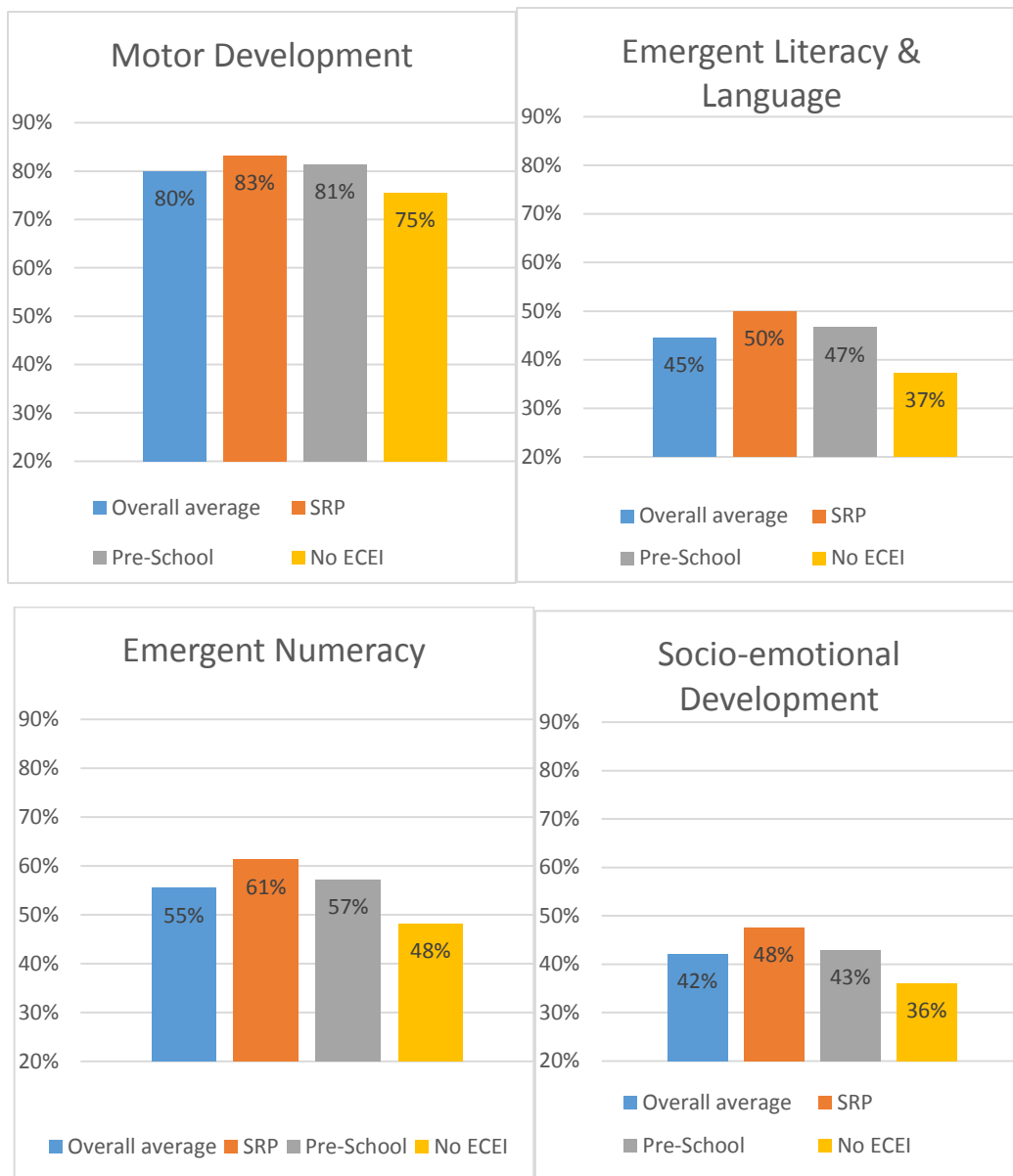
4.2 IDELA results by domain

The breakdown of results and by domain and skill area is relevant to the first study question explored above and also the second study question:

What are the strongest and weakest school readiness skills of children starting Standard I of primary school?

The breakdown of IDELA skills by domain shows that the strongest domain is motor skills with an average of 80% and the weakest are of socio-emotional development with 42% average scores with literacy skills just above the lowest level at 45%.

Figure 4 : IDELA scores by domain and by study group



In terms of the differences between the study groups there is a consistent pattern with the children from school readiness centres having substantially higher scores than children with no access to an early childhood education intervention and moderately higher scores than those from formal pre-school. The pattern is less pronounced for motor skills where the difference between the SRP group and those with no access to an intervention is 8 percentage points whereas for the other three domains the difference is between 12-13 percentage points. Similarly the difference between scores between the SRP group and pre-school group is not statistically significant for motor skills, and is most pronounced for socio-emotional development where the difference is 5 percentage points.¹¹ These results may suggest that motor skills are more easily developed prior to exposure to an early education intervention.

¹¹¹¹ $P < 0.01$ see also Appendix I

The lower results for socio-emotional development may be due to these skills being associated with command of Kiswahili to describe emotions and family and friendship and this may account for the scores for this domain being relatively close to scores for emergent literacy and language. The high proportion of children from homes where Kiswahili is not the main language spoken in the EQUIP-Tanzania regions has been noted above (Section 2).¹² The expectation that the school readiness centres would equip children with some emergent language and literacy skills in Kiswahili has also been noted. The difference in scores between the study groups for language and literacy and socio-emotional development suggests that this expectation was achieved to some extent, although this areas requires further study and more progress is needed in these areas since even the school readiness group scores only reached 50% (literacy and language) and 48% (socio-emotional development). It is also worth noting that the school readiness centre gave specific attention to socio-emotional development which has not been a feature of the pre-school curriculum.

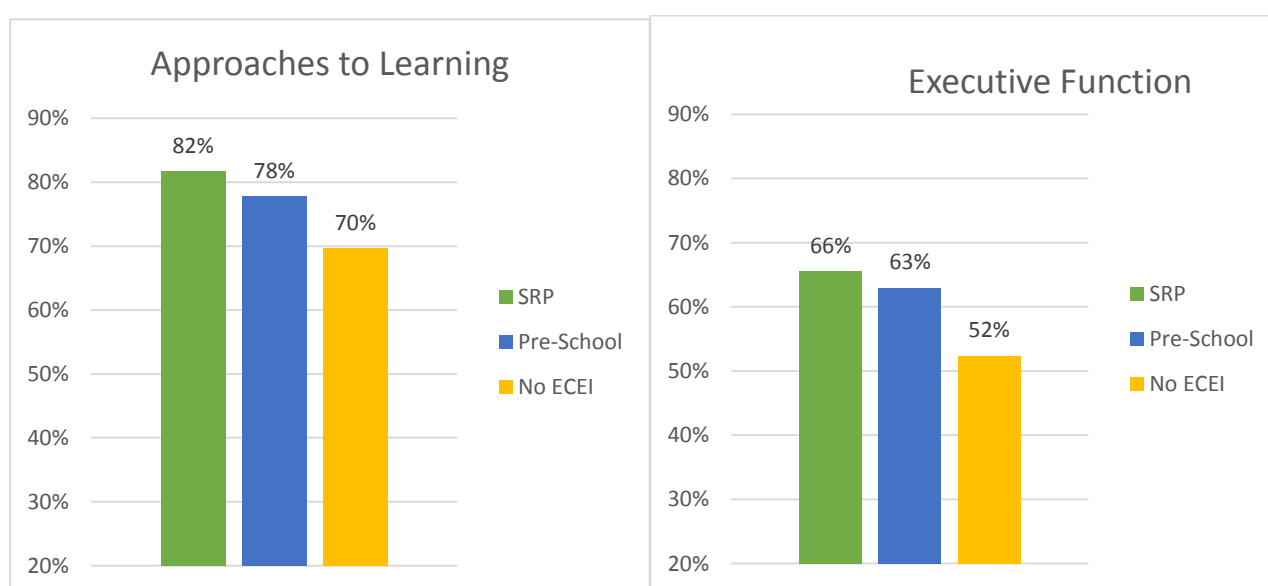
Results for cross-cutting issues

In addition to domains for different types of skills there were two cross-cutting issues:

- **Approaches to learning** related to persistence and focus in attempting the questions for each skill domain
- **Executive function** related memory, mental flexibility and self-control.

The results for these two areas are given below:

Figure 5 IDELA scores for approaches to learning executive function by study group



The approaches to learning were at a relatively high level across the board. This is consistent with the survey teams' observation that children were engaged during the sessions and these were on school premises with few distractions and with trained IDELA assessors who were experienced with children. Nevertheless there were differences between the three groups with children from the school readiness centres with scores

¹² The proportion of children from homes where Kiswahili was not the main language spoken stood at 76% in 2016 for the five original target regions of Dodoma, Kigoma, Shinyanga, Simiyu and Tabora (77% at baseline in 2014), Oxford Policy Management (OPM) *EQUIP-Tanzania Impact Evaluation Midline Technical Report Volume 1* page 28

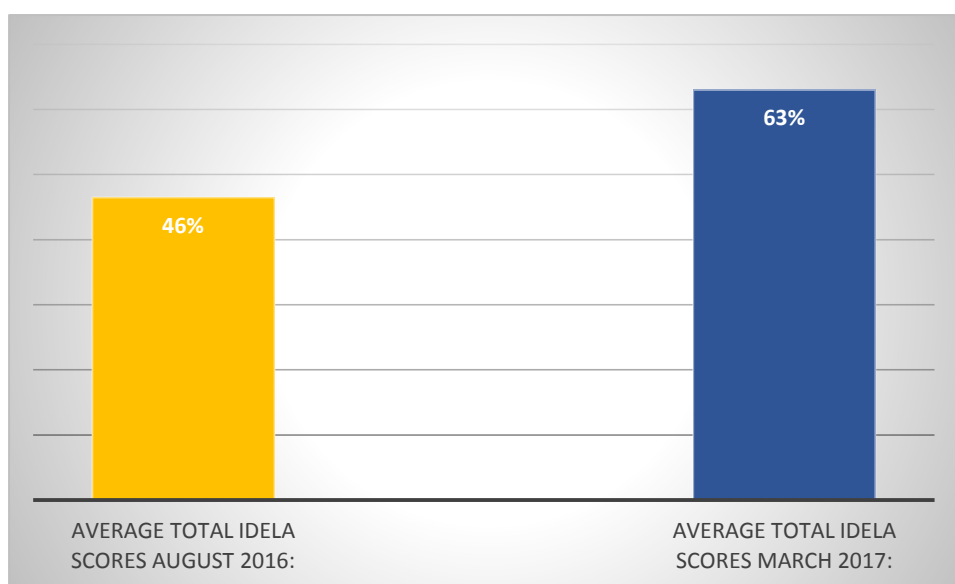
above the two other groups for approaches to learning. For executive there was also a substantial difference between children with no access to an early childhood education intervention and school readiness children.¹³

4.3 Children’s learning progress over time

IDELA assessments of children in school readiness centres in August 2016 were conducted as part of the smaller pilot study in Dodoma and Tabora shortly after the start of the main SRP structured learning programme for the year. This small assessment included 12 school readiness centres in the two regions (six centres per region in two districts per region, three centres per district). In total 91 children were assessed in these centres in August 2016. The August assessment was carried out to gain an approximate estimation of children early in the structured SRP learning programme. This was to inform the SRCF of priority learning needs of children and to enable comparison with results of the assessment in March 2017.

The assessment in March 2017 included children from the same 12 school readiness centres in Dodoma and Tabora although challenges with sampling procedures and name tracking meant that it is not known what proportion of the children were the same individuals. During the assessment in March 2017 134 children who had attended the 12 pilot review school readiness centres were sampled from Dodoma and Tabora. Despite the challenges the results are statistically significant¹⁴ given the sample sizes and the magnitude of the difference in scores between August 2016 and March 2017 follow-up assessments.

Figure 6 Comparison of scores to assess progress over time of children from school readiness centres



The graphs shows a 36% increase in scores between the August 2016 and March 2017 (with a difference of 17 percentage points) which indicates strong progress. Taking these results together with the comparison of results between children who attended school readiness centre and those who had access to an early childhood education intervention builds a picture of the apparently positive effect of the school readiness centres.

¹³ The difference between SRP and pre-school groups for following instructions was not significant. See also Appendix I.

¹⁴ P<0.5 See also Appendix I.

4.4 Regional differences

In this section there will be a consideration of the review question:

What are the regional differences in the levels of school readiness skills of children from the school readiness centres, pre-school and no attendance of a pre-primary education programme?

Answers to this question are tentative since the sample sizes for the smaller regions when subdivided further by study group do not support statistically significant comparisons. Nevertheless the regional patterns of results gives an indication of apparent inequalities that may need further investigation as well as an indication of the effectiveness of SRP in different regional contexts. Therefore the regional findings are presented below in three categories – regions with the highest scores with the SRP group with scores above 65%, mid-range with SRP group between 60 and 65% and lowest scores of one region where the SRP group had scores of 44%.

Figure 7 Regions with highest scores: Kigoma and Lindi

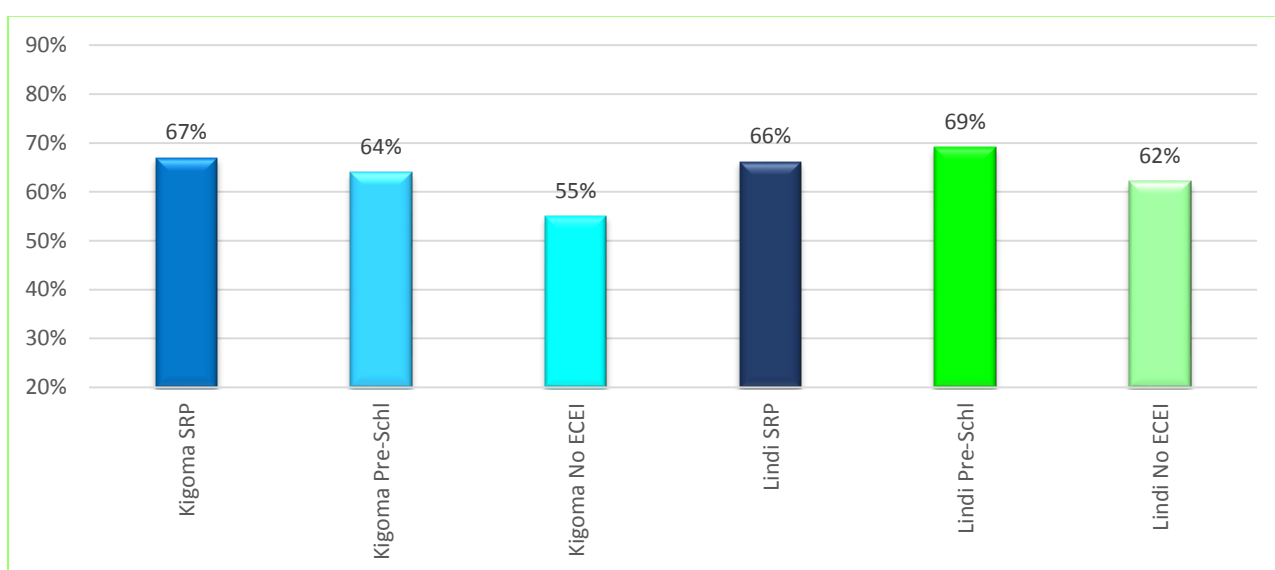


Figure 8 Regions with mid-range scores: Dodoma, Tabora, Mara, Simiyu

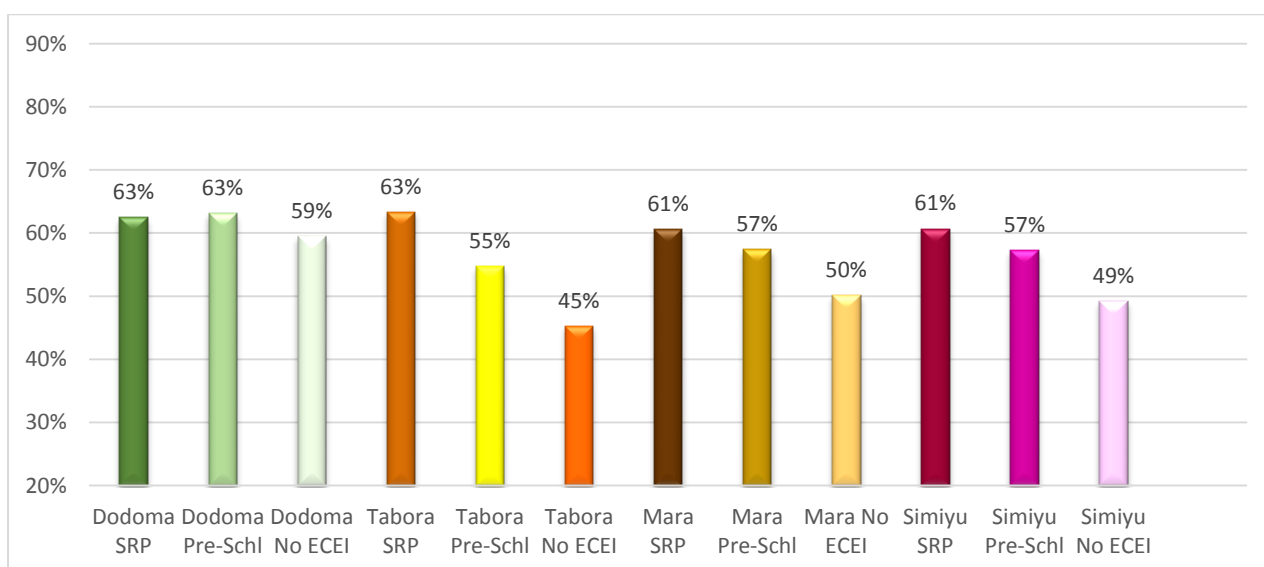
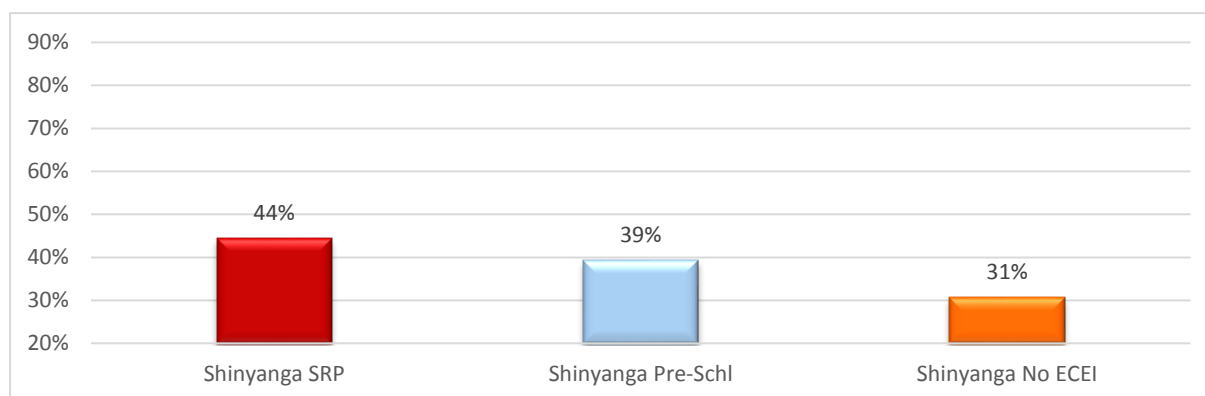


Figure 9 Region with the lowest scores



The results may indicate a correlation between school readiness scores and the extent of Kiswahili spoken in the regions. While data on the extent of Kiswahili as a first language is limited the higher scoring regions of Kigoma and Lindi are known for Kiswahili being more widely used with Lindi being a coastal region and Kigoma being a border region with trade routes to neighbouring countries and Kiswahili being used for trade. There is other evidence to indicate the effects of home language on learning performance in EQUIP-Tanzania target regions. The EQUIP-Tanzania Midline Assessment showed a significant performance gap between Standard III children with Kiswahili spoken as the main language at home and those where Kiswahili was *not* spoken as the main language at home. Children from homes where Kiswahili was *not* the main language spoken were more likely to be in the lowest performance bands.¹⁵ The findings suggest that research on effects of home language on school readiness skills would be valuable.

The pattern for the results between study groups at the regional levels largely reflects the pattern for the whole sample – with SRP results moderately higher than for pre-school (except for Lindi where the reverse is the case) and substantially higher than for the group with no access to an early childhood education intervention in all the seven regions. This suggests that SRP was effective across different regional contexts.

4.5 Measures to address gender inequality and inclusion within the SRP

In this section the following review question will be considered:

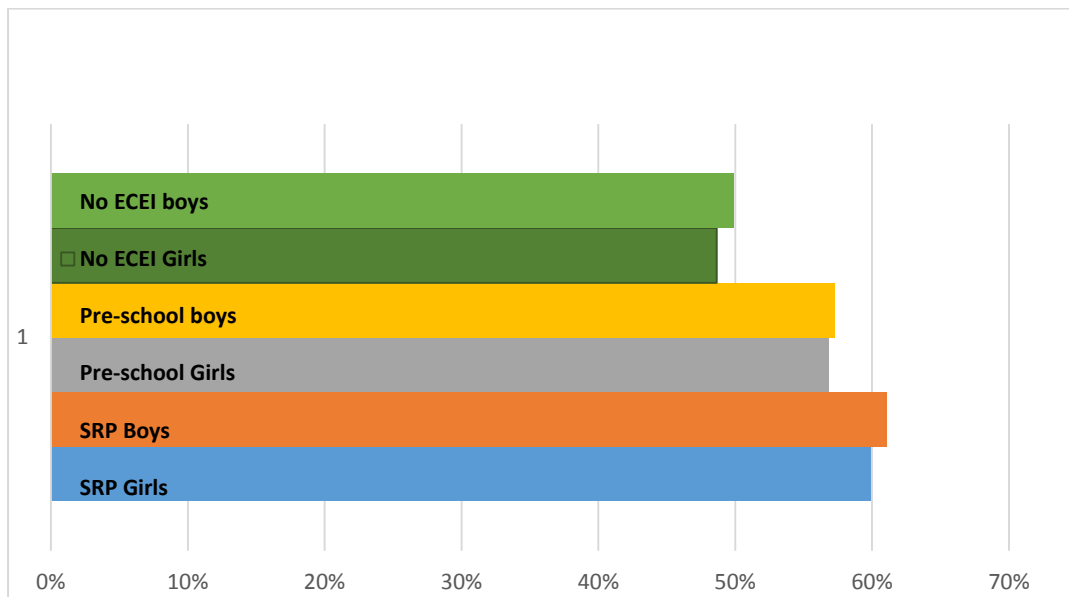
How was gender and inclusion addressed in the SRP programme?

The overall IDELA results showed sex balance for all categories. There was no statistically significant difference between girls and boys scores in any of the three study groups as shown below.¹⁶

¹⁵ Oxford Policy Management (OPM) *EQUIP-Tanzania Impact Evaluation Midline Technical Report Volume I* page 28

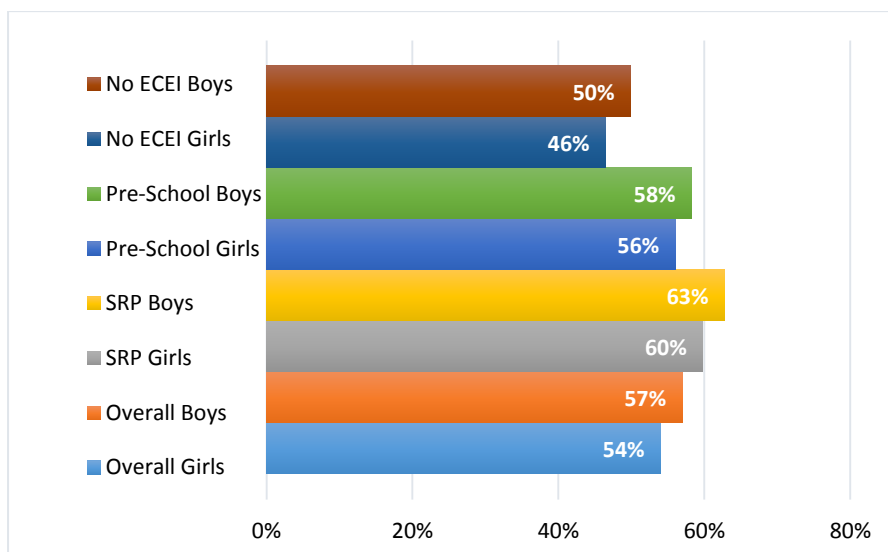
¹⁶ All P values were greater than 0.05.

Figure 10 : IDELA scores by sex and study group



However when considered by domain the overall average for emergent numeracy did show a slight imbalance with boys scores higher than girls scores, as shown in the chart below.¹⁷

Figure 11 IDELA scores for emergent numeracy by sex and by study group



Efforts were made to address gender equity in a number of ways. During the training of SRCFs practices to promote gender equity were identified and discussed. Furthermore the story books were designed to address gender inequality to some extent. For example one story book focused on the importance of a girl child going to school who was being kept at home to do household chores. The story ends with the girl going to school.

¹⁷ Given that the difference was moderate the tests on the data only showed significance for the overall averages of girls and boys $P < 0.05$ and not the disaggregated sample by sex and by study group.

The training of the SRCFs provided very basic skills in identifying the probability of some forms of disabilities. This was used as a preliminary step towards developing better screening for disabilities and to complement efforts towards screening in primary schools.

The training included guidance on general inclusivity in teaching rather than specific methods for including children with particular types of disability. SRCFs were also encouraged to observe and record children's progress and developmental delays in 'professional diaries' for discussion at the 'mother' school.

5. Cost efficiency of the school readiness programme

This section considers the final review question:

To what extent is SRP cost-efficient?

Given the need to extend access to pre-primary education in a context of very limited resources, it is important to consider the cost efficiency of the programme. Costings for the SRP supported by EQUIP-Tanzania have been made for 2016 which represents the first full year of scaleup. The estimate does *not* include the initial development costs which were incurred in the pilot year in 2015.

The direct cost per child paid by the Managing Agent (mainly via LGA) for implementation in 2016 was GBP9.60. Assuming the recommended implementation schedule of centres being in session for four days per week for 16 weeks the cost is GBP0.15 per child per day of implementation.

The support costs were mainly for training of the SRCF through the cascade, mobile phones, printing and distribution of the story books and monitoring forms, kits for making learning materials, basic mobile phones for the SRCF and some monitoring costs.

There were a number of features that enabled direct costs of SRP to be kept low.

- SRCF were unpaid volunteers unless community members decided to pay them a small allowance¹⁸. They were provided with two weeks' training when starting in 2016 (with six days refresher training for experienced volunteers who were continuing from the 2015 pilot) and a basic mobile phone which is returnable as soon as they cease to be SRCF. (Any calculation of the opportunity costs of the SRCF is beyond the scope of the review.)
- The buildings used for the school readiness centres were existing buildings that were provided by communities without any rent having to be paid by the LGA or Managing Agent. These included religious and community buildings used for meetings and social events.
- Simple toolkits were provided to SRCF to make low-cost learning materials, and to reduce the number of printed books needed. The training of SRCF included guidance and ideas for making materials from locally available materials.
- The major part of the guidance and the supervision to SRCF was provided by the mother primary school rather than any additional structure supported by the Managing Agent. The overall oversight was also provided by existing cadre within local government (especially WEO and DEO).

The duration of the school readiness programme is a nuanced picture in terms of cost implications. The programme was designed to provide a short intervention as an interim measure on the assumption that this is less expensive than longer learning programmes. In 2015 the programme was for 12 weeks with one story book title for the SRCF and children to focus on each week plus a toolkit for making low cost supplementary teaching and learning materials. In 2016 the programme was for 16 weeks but the additional stories and

¹⁸ Community contributions are not included in the direct costs of the SRP programme shown above.

materials were to be provided by the SRCF using the toolkit and locally available materials. In reality many school readiness centres have been continued all year on the SRCFs' own initiative with support from their communities. This has not led to extra direct costs being incurred centrally by the EQUIP-Tanzania programme. Since volunteers are providing the teaching and communities provide buildings and other support and existing school and LGA structures provide monitoring follow-up, recurring monetary direct costs for extending the time that the school readiness centres' are open are minimal.

Assessing the opportunity cost of volunteers and the monetary value of community contributions (for example where new building were constructed and materials donated) is beyond the scope of this review. Nevertheless these community costs and the commitment they represent should not be underestimated.

6. Conclusion

The overall results of the school readiness learning assessment show a clear pattern of children from school readiness centres achieving substantially higher scores than those without access to any early childhood education intervention and even modestly higher scores than those from formal pre-school. This pattern is most evident for the overall IDELA scores and for three of the domains of learning – emergent literacy and language, emergent numeracy and socio-emotional development, and also for the cross-cutting issue of approaches learning.

The positive results are consistent with qualitative monitoring which shows that the volunteer SRCFs provide sound teaching based on active learning to build children's competencies while using effective low cost materials.

Nevertheless there is more progress needed especially in the areas of emergent language and literacy and socio-emotional development where the scores of all study groups are low and the SRP group scores do not exceed 50%. Further progress is also needed in the area of emergent numeracy, for girls especially. Furthermore, the SRCFs face challenges of meeting strong demand for pre-primary education with limited resources.

The successes from the school readiness centres are being built on at the national level. The story books and related teaching methods for promoting active learning of core competencies have been incorporated into the national, formal pre-school system with school level implementation started in 2017. Furthermore, school readiness programmes as a means for expanding access to pre-primary education have been adopted at national level.

While school readiness programmes continue to be scaled up it will be important to build on core elements of the approach and to consider how these are also relevant to formal pre-schools. The following recommendations are made.

- Explore how to further develop community involvement including enabling parents learning at home with their children and using community-based facilities for learning.
- Build on teaching approaches that promote active learning especially through play.
- Adapting approaches to development of low cost teaching aids, which encourage activity based learning especially when they are made with learners.
- Sharing of practice between the pre-primary teacher and the Standard I teacher.
- Explore how to find a path for recognising the SRCF within the formal pre-school system.

Appendices

Appendix I:

Tables of target and achieved samples, response rates and tables of averages with significance

IDELA learning assessment target versus actual sample by region, district, school and sex

Region	District name	School name	Girls target	Girls actual	Boys target	Boys actual	Total target	Total actual	Region % of total sample target	Region % of total sample actual
Dodoma	Mpwapwa DC	Kazania	13	15	13	12	26	27		
		Berege	13	15	13	12	26	27		
		Makutupa	13	8	13	9	26	17		
	Bahi DC	Nagulo Bahi	13	14	13	13	26	27		
		Bahi Sokoni	13	16	13	14	26	30		
		Mpamantwa	13	12	13	16	26	28		
Totals			78	80	78	76	156	156	13%	13%
Kigoma	Uvinza DC	Chemchemi	17	18	17	18	34	36		
		Mganza	17	15	17	20	34	35		
		Mpeta	17	18	17	18	34	36		
	Kigoma DC	Mgogo	16	18	17	18	33	36		
		Kizenga	17	18	16	18	33	36		
		Bweru	16	18	17	17	33	35		
Totals			100	105	101	109	201	214	17%	18%
Lindi	Nachingwea DC	Likwela	6	5	5	6	11	11		
		Kaloleni	5	6	6	5	11	11		
		Mkotokuyana	6	5	5	7	11	12		
	Lindi DC	Hingawali	5	5	6	6	11	11		
		Mnolela	6	6	5	5	11	11		
		Rutamba	5	6	6	5	11	11		
Totals			33	33	33	34	66	67	5%	6%
Mara	Bunda DC	Chiringe A	18	19	19	19	37	38		
		Bulamba	19	17	18	20	37	37		
		Nyamuswa B	18	18	19	19	37	37		
	Serengeti DC	Mapinduzi B	19	18	18	16	37	34		
		Gusuhi	18	5	19	5	37	10		
		Majimoto	19	23	18	15	37	38		
Totals			111	100	111	94	222	194	18%	16%
Shinyanga	Ushetu DC	Ulowa	13	13	14	15	27	28		
		Ngokolo	14	15	13	16	27	31		
		Butibu	13	13	14	15	27	28		
	Kishapu DC	Nhobola	14	15	13	14	27	29		
		Bulimba	13	18	14	11	27	29		
		Ngofila	14	13	13	6	27	19		
Totals			81	87	81	77	162	164	13%	14%
Simiyu	Bariadi DC	Mwadobana	13	14	14	13	27	27		
		Mwamlapa	14	14	13	14	27	28		
		Igegu	13	14	14	13	27	27		
	Busega DC	Ihale	13	13	14	14	27	27		
		Nyamagana	14	15	13	12	27	27		
		Kabita	13	13	14	12	27	25		
Totals			80	83	82	78	162	161	13%	14%
Tabora	Igunga DC	Itale	19	20	20	20	39	40		
		Ulaya	20	21	19	18	39	39		
		Kitangiri	19	20	20	19	39	39		
	Urambo DC	Nsenda	20	21	19	18	39	39		
		Isongwa	19	17	20	22	39	39		
		Katuli	20	19	19	20	39	39		
Totals			117	118	117	117	234	235	19%	20%
Totals			600	606	603	585	1203	1191		

SMS monitoring response rate by district and week

District	% Response rate -Week 1	% Response rate -Week 2	% Response rate -Week 3
Chamwino	59	59	59
Uvinza	38	67	31
Ushetu	69	69	71
Tarime TC	44	44	44
Tarime DC	62	58	61
Shinyanga MC	83	83	88
Shinyanga DC	70	71	66
Serengeti	44	41	46
Ruangwa	34	34	45
Rorya	25	35	31
Nachingwea	24	27	29
Musoma TC	66	59	69
Musoma DC	75	77	73
Msalala	68	66	64
Mpwapwa	47	44	41
Maswa	36	40	48
Liwale	33	33	30
Lindi TC	80	80	20
Lindi DC	33	30	40
Kongwa	55	53	47
Kondoa	49	51	48
Kishapu	59	63	66
Kilwa	41	41	47
Kigoma Ujiji	35	29	35
Kigoma DC	51	53	49
Kibondo	29	36	31
Kasulu	72	72	70
Kakonko	50	47	47
Kaliua	65	66	59
Itilima	36	40	42
Dodoma MC	48	54	52
Chemba	53	53	53
Butiama	44	46	42
Bunda	56	56	52
Buhigwe	30	33	37
Bahi	57	51	53
Uyui	63	70	60
Urambo	61	64	58
Tabora MC	55	67	58
Sikonge	59	60	53
Nzega TC	47	53	60
Nzega DC	58	59	58
Igunga	38	41	38
Msalala	72	66	64
Bariadi DC	0	0	0
Bariadi TC	29	43	43
Kahama	77	71	71
Total % response rate	52	53	51

	Response rate between 0-50%
	Response rate between 51-75%
	Response rate between 76-100%

Tables of mean average IDELA scores by domain and cross-cutting issue with significance

Mean average scores SRP	Mean averages scores Pre-school and No ECEI	Significance
Overall IDELA scores		
SRP	Pre-school	
60%	57%	**
SRP	No ECEI	
60%	51%	***
Motor skills		
SRP	Pre-school	
83%	81%	
SRP	No ECEI	
83%	75%	***
Emergent literacy and language		
SRP	Pre-school	
50%	47%	*
SRP	No ECEI	
50%	37%	***
Emergent numeracy		
SRP	Pre-school	
61%	57%	**
SRP mean	No ECEI	
61%	48%	***
Socio-emotional development		
SRP	Pre-school	
48%	43%	**
SRP	No ECEI	
48%	36%	***
Approaches to learning		
SRP	Pre-school	
82%	78%	**
SRP	No ECEI	
82%	70%	***
Executive function		
SRP	Pre-school	
65%	63%	
SRP mean average score	No ECEI	
65%	52%	***

Key: *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Mean averages IDELA scores by region and by study group with significance

Averages SRP	Averages Pre-school and No ECEI	Significance
Dodoma		
SRP	Pre-school	
63%	63%	
SRP	No ECEI	
63%	59%	
Kigoma		
SRP	Pre-school	
67%	64%	
SRP	No ECEI	
67%	55%	***
Lindi		
SRP	Pre-school	
66%	69%	
SRP	No ECEI	
66%	62%	
Mara		
SRP	Pre-school	
61%	57%	
SRP	No ECEI	
61%	50%	***
Shinyanga		
SRP	Pre-school	
44%	39%	
SRP	No ECEI	
44%	31%	***
Simiyu		
SRP	Pre-school	
61%	57%	
SRP	No ECEI	
61%	49%	***
Tabora		
SRP	Pre-school	
63%	55%	***
SRP	No ECEI	
63%	45%	***

Key: *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Mean averages of IDELA scores by sex for overall scores and for early numeracy and significance

Overall IDELA scores								
Girls all 3 groups	Boys all 3 groups		SRP girls	SRP boys	Pre-school girls	Pre-school boys	No ECEI girls	No ECEI boys
55%	56%		60%	61%	57%	57%	49%	50%
Emergent Numeracy								
Girls all 3 groups	Boys all 3 groups		SRP girls	SRP boys	Pre-School girls	Pre-School boys	No ECEI girls	No ECEI Boys
54%	57%	*	60%	63%	56%	58%	46%	50%

The tests were run for the comparison of averages between girls and boys in the equivalent tables for all the other domains and cross, cutting issues. It was only for emergent numeracy for girls in all three study groups compared to boys in all three study groups that any statistically significant difference as found.

Key: *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001