

Terms of Reference

Phase II: Improving Children's Literacy in Sri Lanka

Impact Evaluation (2018 – 2022)

1. BACKGROUND

Save the Children International (SCI) was founded in the U.K. in 1919 by Eglantyne Jebb to aid young victims of World War I in war-ravaged central Europe. More than 100 years, Save the Children International has helped hundreds of millions of children overcome poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy, natural disasters and violence. Save the Children believes every child deserves a future.

In Sri Lanka, Save the Children has been contributing to both humanitarian and development needs, and we have a strong engagement with government stakeholders, civil society organizations and the private sector. Our work has a strong advocacy focus, with programs designed to test methodologies and approaches that can be incorporated into national practice. Especially with regard to education programs in Sri Lanka, there has been considerable work conducted by Save the Children post-tsunami to reconstruct schools and refurbish classrooms. Our focus has shifted to addressing issues of educational quality and relevance, as well as access for marginalized children, and children with disabilities.

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Phase II: Improving Children's Literacy in Sri Lanka, funded by Dubai Cares, is Save the Children's signature early grade reading intervention that works with teachers and communities to improve children's reading skills. We implement a Literacy Boost model that includes the Special Needs Action Pack (SNAP) and provides training, technical support and guidance for a national roll-out by the Ministry of Education. A major focus of the program is centered around strengthening partnerships with existing government structures and networks at national, provincial, zonal and divisional levels.

Phase II of the program builds on the foundation set during the Phase I (2013-2016). During Phase I, we piloted the Literacy Boost model, including SNAP. However, during Phase II of the program, we worked closely with the Ministry of Education to support the creation of realistic and competency-based curricula, standards and teaching strategies, and ensured teachers are prepared to use them effectively in the

classrooms. This also includes pre-service and in-service teacher trainings, incorporating specific instructions in promoting reading skills and supporting teachers to use formative assessment results in lesson design, and enhancing classroom learning environments with adequate teaching-and-learning material, furniture to store and showcase the books, and posters for engaging and encouraging children to read more. Save the Children also works to ensure that schools and teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and orientation to provide quality education for children with disabilities.

The program focus on 3 key outcomes:

- Outcomes 1: Teacher competencies improved to support children’s learning and literacy
- Outcomes 2: Evidence produced to develop effective reading pedagogy
- Outcomes 3: Government policies strengthened to reflect improved literacy teacher training curriculum

Phase II: Improving Children’s Literacy in Sri Lanka has been implemented since September 2018 in 175 schools across 3 districts in the Northern and Southern provinces. The table below includes detailed information:

Provinces	Districts	Zone	Number of Intervention Schools
Northern Province	Kilinochchi	Kilinochchi North	14
		Kilinochchi South	24
	Mullaithivu	Thunukkai	37
Southern Province	Galle	Elpitiya	50
		Udugama	50
Total			175

Over a period of four years, the project supports 100 In-Service Advisors (ISA), 175 principals, 1000 primary grade teachers, primary grade students from those 175 schools, local educational officials and communities in the 3 target districts.

3. PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE OF ASSIGNMENT

The Impact evaluation (Endline) will be conducted in order to evaluate program-end impacts, implementation of literacy improvement, and learning outcomes of sample learners in targeted schools, including control schools where Phase II: Improving Children’s Literacy in Sri Lanka is not implemented, to compare any differences/gaps in both quality and quantity of project implementation, while focusing on children’s literacy improvement, as well as reading with comprehension.

Primary Objectives of this Impact evaluation (Endline):

- A. To understand the extent to which the project interventions achieved their intended goal and effects on the target population of the project compared to other non-targeted audiences.
 - How reading with comprehension skill/ability of learners has changed over time, especially among girls and boys in specific.
 - Changes in knowledge and skill set among the teachers to support children's learning and literacy. (Understand the adequacy and effectiveness of the knowledge developed among teachers to support learning)
 - Adequacy and appropriateness of the evidence to support the development of effective reading pedagogy.
- B. To review other intervening factors such as demographic, socio-economic background, home learning environment, and activities in children's literacy development:
 - How comparable are endline background characteristics and reading skills among project school learners versus comparison learners?
- C. To evaluate the project relevance, implementation, and effectiveness:
 - Understand the need for such interventions to build the capacity of the teachers and improve learning among children.
 - Did the project exhibit impact on learners' literacy skills?
 - For which types of learners are the impacts greatest/least?
 - Whether the processes (intervention model) identified to deliver the change are appropriate, especially in meeting the knowledge and skill levels of the teachers and children. (Mini-processes evaluation)
- D. To determine the effectiveness of the Literacy Boost model:
 - Understand whether the actions/interventions selected to deliver the expected change are efficient compared to other modalities.
 - What does this mean recommending Literacy Boost programming in other areas with similar characteristics?

Scope of the Study

Endline evaluation will be done in 88 schools (44 intervention schools and 44 control schools) which are sampled in the baseline assessment, across the 3 districts. The table below gives a detailed description of the scope.

District	Sampled Intervention School	Sampled Comparison School
Galle	26	26
Kilinochchi	09	09
Mullaithivu	09	09
Total	44	44

4. DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The Endline study uses a mixed method approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess impact and track progress for targeted performance indicators throughout the project.

Quantitative Design and Sampling

Literacy Assessment, the key assessment design, is based on a quasi-experimental approach. A matched-comparison group design is considered. The matched-comparison group design consists of (1) a treatment group and (2) a comparison group whose characteristics are similar to those of the treatment group at the beginning of the intervention. The sample for the Endline Literacy assessments will include all children who were sampled at baseline. The baseline consists of random sample of 888 grade 2 students in 88 schools in three intervention districts. 10 children (5 boys and 5 girls) per school are randomly selected as the sample. When a school has more than 10 students in the class, samples were selected randomly, and when there are less than 10 students in the class, all of them were considered.

Qualitative Design and Sampling

Focused group discussion (FGD) with local education officials, principals, teachers and parents will be conducted. This qualitative data collection will happen in 10 schools (2 schools/communities each in Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu districts and 6 schools in Galle district). This will allow us to reach data saturation in different respondent categories while incorporating purposive sampling for variation factors such as geographical distribution, language, socio-economic status of communities, and school performance.

5. MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Quantitative Tools

The evaluation will include the following quantitative data collection tools to establish Endline indicator values and measure outcomes across all data collection waves:

- Literacy Assessment: A literacy assessment of sampled learners in grade 5 (at Endline). The table below shows the subtask and items included in this assessment.

#	Construct/Subtask	Items
Student Background		
1	General	Name, parent/caregiver name, sex, age, ECD attendance, grade repetition, home language
2	School-related	School absence
3	Socio-economic status	Household size, household assets/possessions
Home Literacy Environment		
4	Reading materials at home	Materials present at home, types of materials, languages of materials Note: Understand the change in resourcing materials to support children's reading compared to pre-project intervention and additional reading materials resourced by the family alone.
5	Reading habits at home	Presence and interactions with family members whom children see read, members who engage in literacy activities with children, either child use reading skills at home, whether children help others with reading skills, which languages used in reading interactions. Note: Changes in reading habits among children when compared to pre-project intervention have been observed by parents/primary caregivers in particular.
Participation in Community Literacy Activities		
6	Self-reported participation in community reading activities	Read outside of the school, help someone to read, share books, reads books to someone, anyone reads to you, available reading corner or study place, and attend after-school programs. Note: Any evidence of reading responsibilities taken up by the children, such as in religious or social events.
Literacy Outcomes (Sinhala and Tamil)		
7	Letter identification	Number of letters correctly identified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of items TBD

8	Common word identification	Number of single words read correctly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of items TBD
9	Oral passage reading	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to read independently: Ability to read at least 5 words correctly in 30 seconds Fluency: Number of words in a short story read correctly in a minute Accuracy: Percentage of words in a short story read correctly Comprehension: Questions related to a short story read aloud by the study or assessor
10	Name writing	Ability to write own name <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 item
11	Sentence writing	Ability to write sentences read aloud <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of items TBD

- **School Observation:** A school observation checklist will be completed in all 88 sample schools. This checklist will collect information on the schools' GPS coordinates, student enrollment profile, teacher profile, government school meal program status, principal contact information, language medium, school type, grade levels of school, physical infrastructure, including the availability and quality of WASH resources.
- **Classroom Observation:** A classroom observation will be conducted by the In-Service Advisors who are responsible for teacher capacity development to assess the classroom teaching and learning activities and pedagogy.

Qualitative Tools

The evaluation team will conduct focus group discussions and key informant interviews with teachers, principals, district officials, and parents. This qualitative component of the evaluation at Endline will provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which the program is affecting target schools.

Target audience	Question focus
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is there a need for a literacy boost, and why is it relevant or important? What are the Literacy Boost module activities most useful and/or appropriate for children in your classroom? Why? What are some of the innovative in this modality or the innovative components in this method (What is new in this model of the project?) What are the biggest challenges you faced during the program? Why do you believe that this particular model can be sustained? What are some of the complementing capacities among teachers to continue the work?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the value proposition for the literacy boost project model based on your perspective? <i>Example – Literacy boost can be valued against children getting scholarship.</i>
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think this program is useful (relevant)? • How has the Literacy Boost helped your child’s literacy development? • What are some of the changes you have seen in your children, in particular, have their reading habits changed, in comparison to the pre-project phase? • How do you think the monitoring or parent to ensure children engaged in reading can continue? • Why do you think children can continue improving their learning or reading habits even after the project stops? • What is your belief or perspective about the importance of reading that has changed since the project? • What is the value proposition you can provide for this initiative? (To what you can compare the value of the intervention to – <i>Example, Value of literacy boost to our children is like they have completed their university degree.</i>
Educational Officials – Provincial, Zonal, & school level (excluding teachers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think this program is useful (relevant)? • Why this particular model of the project or what are the components in the methodology of the project is unique (innovative) or is very different from another traditional model? • How could we make the program stronger? • What will be your plan for continuing this program after SCI stop supporting it? • What are the Literacy Boost components most useful and/or most appropriate for your school/zone/province? Why? • What is the value proposition of the intervention? <i>Example – Literacy boost is like upgrading of our level of learning methods to a country.</i>

6. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The TOR has been designed to hire a consultant to support the evaluation process including data collection, data analysis and final report writing.

SCI Deliverables:

- Inception report
- Evaluation instruments/assessment tools
- Primary set of data from the baseline including sample details of both intervention and control school
- Field arrangement to conduct the assessment

Consultant Deliverable:

- Desk review
- Data analysis
- Completed Endline evaluation report
- Power point presentation of key finding and recommendation
- All encrypted raw data, given database, analysis outputs

7. REQUIREMENTS

- Clearly demonstrate the quality of evaluation performance- from the extensive experience (minimum of 5 years of experience) in conducting evaluations with early childhood education programs
- Prior work experience utilizing statistical analysis software is required, and any prior experience in assessing student learning outcomes is an added benefit
- Strong quantitative (descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, etc.) and qualitative analytical skills
- Proven experience in conducting evaluations for international organizations, particularly utilization and learning-focused evaluations
- Strong communication skills with fluency in English is required. Sinhala and Tamil language skills are an advantage

8. ENDLINE EVALUATION TIMELINE

We propose the consultant to carry out the Endline evaluation over a period of 90 days, from October to December 2022.

Key Activity Timeline:

Activity	October	November	December
Research protocol / data collection methodology	completed		
Data collection tool: Finalizing tools, consent forms, data collection work plan, etc.	completed		
Ethical Approval (SCUS)	completed		
Enumerator Training and Pilot testing			
Data collection			
Data Analysis			
Final Report, Knowledge Translation Materials: Power-point presentation, data analysis sheets, evidence to action brief, collected data, etc.			