Applied Research Results

*Investing in Transition: A Path to Sustainable Early Childhood Development and Education*

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Outline

• Research Design
  • Program Intervention
  • Approach
  • Key Findings
• Context and Need for the School Readiness Camps
• Goals and Design of School Readiness Camp
• Evaluations and Findings
• Recommendations
Research Design

• CRS partnered with the American Institute for Research to co-design a child literacy program which will address the low student reading levels in Laos.

  • **Why:** 2012 National Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes showed only 23% of Grade 3 children read at an “independently proficient level.”
  
  • **How:** Creation of classroom-based formative assessments on literacy and teacher development on remedial metrologies to improve weak literacy skills
    • The package focused on the unique nature of alpha-syllabic languages and responsive instruction
  
  • **What:** improve the way teachers teach reading (literacy instruction) in Grades 1 and 2 in order to improve children’s reading outcomes
Program Intervention

The program pairs classroom-based assessments with simple, targeted remedial teaching activities. It is unique in three ways:

1) Focuses on emergent literacy skills
2) Tailored to the writing systems of South and Southeast Asian orthographies
3) Focuses on second (or later) language learners
Approach

• **Community**: Engaging Village Education Development Committees (VEDC) and parents to support children’s literacy outside of school.

• **Classroom**: Building the capacity of teachers in the use of both Reading Readiness and Formative assessments and targeted remediation activities
Study Approach

• Qualitative: KII, FGDs, Classroom Observations, & Coaches Observation Notes
  • Themes: Toolkit usability, implementation processes, strengths and weaknesses of program model, and overall sustainability
  • Participants: Teachers, principals, district- and provincial-level officials (DESB and PESS), CRS staff, program coaches (CM/PAs), and G2 students

• Quantitative: Student Assessment Data, Coaches Monitoring Data, & Teacher Surveys
  • Indicators: Student literacy skill levels, teachers classroom performance & skill levels
  • Assessment and coaches monitoring data were collected throughout the program lifecycle. Qualitative data were collected at midline (February ‘18) and endline (May ‘18).
Key Findings from Research Study

**Teacher Training and Coaching:**
- Respondents found the training and coaching to be useful.

**Effects on Students:**
- Nearly all respondents perceived some effect on students. The perceived effects were largely:
  - Students showed an increased motivation to learn and greater engagement in the classroom
  - Students’ overall reading ability was also perceived to improve as a result of the program

However.... Non-Lao speaking children still entered Grade 1 and Grade 2 with lower Lao-language skills and struggled to develop Laos literacy skills.
Context and Need for School Readiness Camps

Responsive Programming through Research Translation
Context of School Readiness Camps

• The unique context of Laos PDR requires all classroom instruction beginning Grade 1 (G1) to be in Laos language

• Dropout rate in Savannakhet Province is more than double the national average

• For most children in Savannakhet, Grade 1 is their first exposure to a classroom setting

• High percentage of children do not speak Lao as their first language
Need for School Readiness Camps

Savannakhet Province

Grade 1 dropout (2014/15)

- Grade 1 dropout: 23%
- Grade 1 dropout rate: 77%

Laos Nationally

Grade 1 dropout rate (2014/15)

- Grade 1 dropout: 10%
- Grade 1 dropout rate: 90%
Need for School Readiness Camp

Responsive Programming through Research Translation: With the high rate of drop-out, CRS designed a small pilot program and research study focused on children entering G1

School Readiness Camp goals

- Provide children with early exposure to a classroom-like setting
- Provide children with early exposure to reading, writing, and print
- Support Lao-speaking and non-Lao speaking children to develop receptive and expressive Lao language skills before G1
- Improve, in the longer term, the literacy of school age children by improving their chances of success in G1, thereby decreasing drop out rates
Goals and Design of School Readiness Camp
Goals of School Readiness Camps

To enhance students *receptive* and *expressive* Laos language before entry in G1.

**End of camp learning objective:**
1. Child understands and responds to increasingly complex Lao language and communication from others

2. Child understands and uses a variety of Lao words for a variety of purposes

3. Child shows understanding of word categories and relationships among words
Design of the Camp

**Where:** Small sample of schools in Phin District of Savannakhet Province

**When:** Camps ran in July and August of 2018 for 6 weeks, 2 sessions a week, 2 hours each session

**Who:**
- Facilitated by Community Volunteers (CVs)
- Average age of camp enrollee: 5 ½ years
- Even split between boys and girls (boys: 50.4%, girls: 49.6%)
Design of the Camp

Week 1: Welcome to Camp
Week 2: My Body
Week 3: My Family
Week 4: Animals
Week 5: Colors and Shapes
Week 6: Numbers and Nature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Welcoming children, talk with them and with parents, free play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Circle time: songs, games, and/or books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Bathroom break/washing hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Desk time: activities that align with basic ‘school’ behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Movement activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Clean up and good byes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation Findings
Evaluation Findings

Between Baseline and Endline, data was collected from:

- 609 camp participants from 23 schools
- 159 non-intervention students from 11 schools
Quantitative: Semantic Fluency Results
Recommendations

• Increase the duration of the camp beyond the 24 hours of instruction

• Use experienced community volunteers to maximize community ownership and past experience

• Revise the curriculum to add additional time for more complex activities and increase the use of visual aids and games