Report on The Results of Early Learning and Development Assessment

June 2019

Hargeisa Somaliland
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1. Introduction

Education in Somaliland has suffered from great setbacks resulting from prolonged civil wars. All along, the need for ECE, among other developmental gaps felt, but other sectors, sub-sectors took precedence. More recently, however, ECE is gaining well-deserved attention from the government, development partners, parents and other stakeholders. The sub-sector now firmly integrated in the National Education Policy and identified as a priority area and a key cornerstone in improving national education outcomes.

Although there is no nationally agreed working definition for ECE yet, there are three pre-school service delivery mechanisms in Somaliland. Traditional Quranic schools (TQS), Integrated Quranic schools (IQS) and kindergartens (KGs). While the latter two are mainly found in urban and semi-urban areas, the TQS are widespread in rural and pastoralist areas and they cater for the majority of children. The Pharo Foundation introduced a new ECE delivery mechanism by integrating ECE centres into public primary schools. This has enabled children from poor and middle-income families access to quality pre-school education.

2. The Pharo Foundation ECE Programme

The Pharo Foundation started implementing its first Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme in 2016 in collaboration with the Somaliland Ministry of Education & Higher Studies (MoEHS). The overall aim of the programme is to increase access to quality ECE for children from poor and middle-income families, through the integration of ECE into the public education system.

The programme has enabled the establishment of an ECE unit at the MoEHS, the development of the provisional ECE curriculum and training of the first 28 ECE teachers. Moreover, the project has established model ECE centres in seven public primary schools in Hargeisa. In the last three years, more than 1260 children have had the opportunity to develop their cognitive, emotional and social skills enhancing their readiness for school.

Considering the Somaliland National Provisional ECE curriculum as the guiding framework, the Pharo Foundation employs a child-centred approach in all its ECE centres. Focusing on pre-school children (age 4-6) it aims at providing opportunities and support for children to acquire and develop a wide variety of skills that facilitate their transition to school and to the wider world. At the Foundation’s ECE centres, children are supported and challenged to:

- Develop language through talking, storytelling, being read to, singing etc.
- Learn and practice co-operation, helping each other, sharing etc.
- Experiment writing, reading, painting
- Explore for learning through action and play
- Practice taking responsibilities and making choices
- To become self-reliant in personal care
- Develop creativity, self-control and persistence in completing a task
3. Purpose and Scope of the Assessment

Purpose:

- To assess children’s emergent learning and development skills and make necessary adjustments in the Foundation’s ECE programme.
- To assess the average learning gains of children who have completed a one-year Pharo Foundation ECE programme.

Assessment tool:

The International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) used to measure children’s development and early learning. Launched in 2014 and currently in use in 40 countries, IDELA is a rigorous global assessment prototype that measures children aged 3-6 years early learning and development. It contains 24 tasks clustered into four main domains and two optional assessment items as presented below. This report presents the assessment results on the 4 main domains and 22 subdomains.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Emergent Numeracy</th>
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<td>Print awareness</td>
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<td>Emergent writing</td>
<td>Shape Identification</td>
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<td>Initial sound discrimination</td>
<td>One-to-one correspondence</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Listening comprehension</td>
<td>Simple operation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Executive Functions (short-term memory and inhibitory control)

Approach to learning

Sampling and data collection:

The assessment was conducted among 83 children, 41 boys and 42 girls aged five and six years. The children were randomly selected from the seven ECE centres. At the time of the assessment there were 415 children enrolled in the seven ECE centres. However, only 369 were taken as a sampling frame excluding all children younger than 5 and older than 6 years of age as well as those who are repeaters.

The Pharo Foundation Somaliland ECE team members who are also native speakers of the language assessed children in their native language Somali. The team has also re-translated the IDELA tool into Somali. On average, the assessment per child took around 35 minutes. Enumerators worked in teams of two and one ECE centre teacher assisted in logistical matters allowing the assessor to fully engage with the child.

The main limitation of the assessment is that we do not have a baseline or control group to compare it to, so it is difficult to ascertain and attribute the gains. However, it has generated valid and credible data for programme learning and improvement.
4. Results

This section presents the children’s results of the IDELA. The total domain scores were calculated by adding the weighted score of each item in the domain ensuring all items equally contributed to the domain score. Again to ensure that all domains are equally contributing to the total development and learning assessment measurement, each domain weighted score (motor, numeracy, literacy and social-emotional) is added to get the IDELA total score.

As can be seen from the chart below, children generally scored above average in all four domains of IDELA. The strongest skill displayed was Motor skills with 70% and the lowest was Early Literacy 57%. The results for each sub-domain of the main domains presented on subsequent pages.

Figure 1. Total IDELA by domain
4.1. IDELA Total by Gender

In this assessment, there was not much of a difference observed in the performance of boys and girls. They scored equally 60% and 57% correct answers in early literacy and Social-Emotional domains respectively. A slightly higher gap was observed in Motor skills (73% boys, 67% girls) and early numeracy (65% boys, girls 58%).

Figure 2. IDELA Domains total % correct by gender (# boys 41, girls 42)
4.2. IDELA total by Age

IDELA is a measure of early learning and development, and it is expected that the older child usually scores significantly higher than their younger counterparts do. In this case no significant difference was observed in Motor and Social-Emotional development domains. In reading the score, it is important to understand a year is a long time in a child’s life. On average, one additional year is associated with 2.4 percentage point correct in overall IDELA score.

Figure. 3 IDELA domains to total % correct by age, (# 5 year olds 37 and # 6 year olds 46)

![Graph showing IDELA domains to total % correct by age.](image)

Children’s attempt of drawing a human figure standing

Children’s attempt of copying a triangle

![Children's drawings](image)
4.3. Gross and Fine Motor Development

The assessment consisted of testing the children on their ability of:

- Copying a triangle
- Drawing a human figure standing
- Folding paper into four folds
- Hopping on one foot: how many steps they could hop

The development of motor skills is largely associated with access to and use of developmentally appropriate in-and-outdoor learning materials as well as a free play area and time at home. Low physical activity is reflected on the performance of children in motor skills. Many children struggled to draw a human figure (55%) and folding paper (59%) but they did relatively well in copying a shape (72%) and hopping (94%). Indicating limited development in fine motor skills.

Figure 4. Gross and Fine Motor Development % correct

Folding a paper:
A child making the second fold
4.4. Early Literacy

- **Expressive vocabulary**: Are children able to recall and talk about items they would buy in the market or the animals they are aware of?
- **Print Awareness**: Can the child open the book appropriately, recognizing where the text begins and the direction of the text?
- **Letter Identification**: Are children able to identify the alphabet in Somali in no particular order?
- **Phonetic Awareness**: Can a child identify the sound of the first letter?
- **Writing**: Can a child write her/his name?
- **Listening**: A story of ‘a cat and a mouse’ was recited to each child and later they were asked if they understand the story, recognized the sequence, and recalled the story and to analyse the actions of the character.

The majority of the children correctly replied to the listening and comprehension questions with a significant difference from other questions in this domain. However, only 35% correctly identified one or more letters and only 45% demonstrated emerging writing skills.

**Figure 5. Early Literacy % correct**

Print awareness: A child correctly opening a book
4.5. Emergent Numeracy

- **Measurement**: identifying biggest/smallest and longest/shortest
- **Sorting**: arranging cards according to shape and colour
- **Shape Identification**: identifying shapes-circle, rectangle, square, triangle and something that looks like a circle from the options
- **Number Identification**: identifying numbers 1 to 20 in no particular order
- **One-to-one correspondence**: identifying 3, 8, 15 items and understanding that they represent quantity

Children scored higher in measurement and simple operations i.e identifying big and small as well as simple addition and subtraction. In contrast, they scored significantly low in number and shape identification as well as problem solving. As this corresponds to the low score of letter identification, it may be associated to the traditional way of teaching continued in our ECE centres. i.e recitation without understanding.

**Figure 6. Emergent Numeracy % correct**

![Emergent Numeracy bar chart]

**Sorting/classification:**

A child correctly sorting shapes by colour
4.6. Social-Emotional

- **Self-awareness**: children are able to talk about themselves.
- **Social connections**: children are able to identify their friends to understand their social behaviour.
- **Emotional awareness**: children are able to identify when they are sad or happy and what their coping mechanism is.
- **Empathy**: children are able to recognize when their friend is upset and able to empathize and offer help.
- **Conflict**: to understand how children react to conflict; whether they will be positive towards it and understand and they need to share and play or they behave inappropriately by feeding the conflict.

Generally, children perform better in the social and emotional domain. Significantly, high score was registered in self-awareness and conflict resolution 73% and 71% respectively. However, further analysis of self-awareness shows only 18% know their country and 65% did not know their village/neighbourhood.

**Figure 7. Social-emotional % correct**

![Social-emotional graph]

**Figure 8. Self-awareness % correct**

![Self-awareness graph]
5. Programme learnings and recommendations

- Purposefully design and implant activities that target final motor skills development is important.
- Lower score in letter and number identification can be associated to the continued traditional rote learning and mere recitation.
- More age appropriate literacy and numeracy skills development should be enhanced.
- Children should be encouraged and supported to learn about their locality/country/ and culture.
- Continuous supportive supervision and capacity building of teachers to implement child centred interactive learning.
- Both boys and girls receive equal support in ECE centres and at home.
- Working with parents and communities to support children learning at home.
- Frequently check the student register and attendance data for absentees, dropouts and new entrants and update the database accordingly.
- Undertake a baseline-using IDELA at the beginning of the year and end line to effectively assess the gains of the programme.
Annex I

- List of Pharo ECE Centres assessed and their spatial distribution in Hargeisa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE centre</th>
<th>Remark</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 31st May</td>
<td>Assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Mohamed Ali Dayib</td>
<td>Assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ahmed Dhagah</td>
<td>Assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Sheik Ali Ibrahim</td>
<td>Assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mohamed Moge</td>
<td>Assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Sheik Yusuf Alkawnain</td>
<td>Due to start August 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Sheik Bashir</td>
<td>Assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Gacma Dheere</td>
<td>Due to start August 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Fadumo Bixi</td>
<td>Due to start August 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Gadhyare</td>
<td>Due to start August 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Annex II

- **Pharo Foundation ECE programme components**

**Building and equipping ECE centres:** Children need a safe and nurturing in-and-outdoor environment where they can play, explore and learn. Since 2016, the Pharo Foundation has been running seven ECE centres, which it has built in seven public primary schools in Hargeisa.

The centres have been built to a good standard and are organised to stimulate critical aspects of children’s developmental growth. Each centre has two classrooms and accommodates 60 children, allowing good space for children and teachers move around and interact.
Training of ECE Teachers: Well-trained and motivated teachers are critical to the quality of early childhood education. The Foundation facilitates professional development opportunities for teachers and ensures that they have the necessary support and resources they need to provide quality learning. The Pharo Foundation trained the first 28 ECE teachers currently working in the seven centres.

Parents and community engagement: Families are essential to the children’s educational success and it is important that ECE programmes continuously engage families and communities in children’s learning. The Foundation employs various ways to encourage parents to actively participate in their child’s learning. The goal of this component is to build trust and positive relationships between teachers, families and the Foundation, to address any concerns including behavioural and learning difficulties of children in real time.
Health check and deworming: The Foundation conducts a health assessment of each child attending the ECE centres twice a year. A nurse conducts the assessment. Once the assessment done, the nurse compiles this information in the child’s health booklet and shares the findings with parents. The Foundation works with local health service providers to conduct the deworming.

Nutritional support: Children’s survival, growth and development largely depends on the adequacy and quality of food they consume. Children in the Foundation’s ECE centres are provided with a daily nutritional snack. The snack varies from day to day but always consist of milk, a fruit, and a healthy carbohydrate.