

A Case Study

Interventions Promoting Early Childhood Development in South Africa



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Prepared by Tulane University:

Kristin Neudorf

Tonya R. Thurman

Tory M. Taylor

August 2011



Support for this project is provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID/Southern Africa) under contract No. GHS-I-00-07-00002-00 under Task Order No. GHS-I-03-07-00002-00. Enhancing Strategic Information Project (ESI) in South Africa is implemented by John Snow, Inc. in collaboration with Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of USAID or the United States Government.

Tulane International LLC South Africa
A subsidiary of Tulane University

Suite 112 Granada Centre
16 Chartwell Drive
Umhlanga Rocks, 4320
South Africa

Phone: (031) 561 5170

**Electronic copies of this case study may also be obtained upon request
via email to ovcteam@tulane.edu**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the all staff and volunteers at the five partner organizations, Nurturing Orphans AIDS for Humanity, Save the Children, Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference, World Vision and Woz'obona for their contributions to this case study. We are particularly grateful to the following individuals for their assistance in coordinating site visits, interviews and focus group discussions: Daisy Kekana, Karen Krakowitzer, and Rachel Compaan of Nurturing Orphans AIDS for Humanity; Avie Charington of Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference; Gloria Ifeoma Francis and Rachel Mataboge of World Vision; and Lucy Thornton and Selinah Renala of Woz'obona. We would like to thank the following staff and volunteers for taking the time to participate in interviews, and share their insights and experiences with the program: Annah Ratau, Thamaga Ratau, Pauline Mashu, Sina Sithole, Dolly Makuwa, Ledile Mphahlele, Francina Mmola, Linah Sekgoka, Sylvia Malomane, Margaret Noge, Belina Sekwele, Anna Mathibedi, Harold Msiza, Lucy Masingi, Maria Mathebula, Thembi Aphane, Jabulile Nkoyi, Philemon Tjeba, Joanna Tsatsi, Phindile Mabena, Lebogang Marobe, Geneva Mogamme, Cecilia Mamene, Maria Madikologa, Aletta Senwelo, Elizabeth Makhaya, Helen Masumpa, Mitta Mathibe, Florence Mohale, and Mimi Maretele. Lastly, we thank the Academy for Educational Development and PACT International for providing logistical support, and USAID Southern Africa for providing the technical and financial support that enabled this activity.

ACRONYMS

ADP	Area Development Program
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAC	Child Activity Coordinator
CBO	Community-based Organization
CCF	Community Childcare Forum
DOE	Department of Education
DSD	Department of Social Development
EASEDA	Education and Small Enterprise Development Association
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ESI	Enhancing Strategic Information
FMSLL	Family Math, Science, Literacy and Life Skills
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IGA	Income Generating Activity
JSI	John Snow Incorporated
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NGO	Non-government Organization
NIP	National Integrated Plan
NPO	Non-profit Organization
NOAH	Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PEPFAR	U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PLWHA	Person Living with HIV and/or AIDS
SACBC	Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference
SETA	Services Sector Educational Training Authority
SGB	School Governing Body
TSPH	Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An estimated ten million children in South Africa live in extreme poverty, placing them at serious risk of stunted physical and cognitive development (UNICEF, 2007). Physical growth and cognitive development during the first five years of a child's life can have profound effects on lifetime educational achievement and economic potential (Walker et al, 2007), and early developmental delays may perpetuate intergenerational cycles of poverty. The past decade has seen an increase in resource mobilization for early childhood development (ECD) programs in South Africa targeting the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children, but there has been relatively little systematic research to document these efforts. This case study aims to contribute to the knowledge base on ECD programming through a detailed report on the activities of five organizations providing ECD services to young children in South Africa. Rather than daycare or other more general support services for young children, this case study showcases formal ECD programs including school readiness curricula for children and training initiatives for parent and community care providers. The partners include: Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity (NOAH), Save the Children, the South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC), World Vision and Woz'obona.

Four of the partner organizations have developed formal, center-based ECD programs focusing on cognitive development for preschool age children. NOAH, SACBC, and Woz'obona offer structured school readiness programming at the preschools and centers they operate. These programs are full-time and provide a Grade R-level education (the reception year at primary school) based on national curriculum standards. World Vision offers a part-time school readiness program in their drop-in centers that focuses on participants acquiring numeracy and literacy; in addition, they are training teachers to implement Grade R curricula in local primary schools. NOAH and Woz'obona also include a formal physical development program as part of school readiness services, which aims to help children develop motor skills and coordination.

Both NOAH and Woz'obona facilitate structured services at more than 100 centers. NOAH's program is targeted to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), whereas Woz'obona focuses on young children in resource-constrained environments more generally. World Vision's center-based program also concentrates on serving OVC, while their expanded teacher training efforts benefit the broader community. SACBC also supports both OVC specifically and the community more generally through the provision of a standardized school readiness curriculum at seven sites, two of which have become registered primary schools.

Save the Children and Woz'obona have developed workshops and training programs to help parents and primary caregivers become more active participants in their children's cognitive and physical development. Save the Children offers education and training about children's health and development, for parents who

participate in its parent support groups at resource and drop-in centers. Woz'obona trains community facilitators and teachers in Family, Math, Science, Literacy and Life Skills (FMSLL) workshops, which teach parents how to stimulate cognitive development in their young children using items commonly found in the home and through daily household activities. Save the Children also provides ECD-specific training for volunteer home visitors, who in turn share this knowledge with parents during home visits.

All of the organizations offer some form of ECD training for teachers, volunteers, and others who work with preschool age children in their communities. With the exception of Woz'obona's intensive accredited three-year program, training offered by partners is typically one to two weeks in length. Several organizations have additionally facilitated opportunities for some of their center-based staff to obtain basic level accredited ECD certifications.

While the partner organizations have experienced some notable successes providing ECD education to disadvantaged children throughout South Africa, challenges remain. Inconsistent program attendance has been a problem, especially among children whose families experience serious economic hardship or where parents or caregivers are chronically ill. In other cases, children are enrolled in ECD only a few months before they are to start primary school, with the expectation that the preschool will be able to prepare them fully for Grade One, despite insufficient time to do so. Raising awareness about the importance of ECD and implementing parent-centered programs, or increasing the scope of existing parent-centered programs, would help organizations reach more children. In rural and low-income communities organizations often struggle to find qualified ECD teachers. There is also a common need for more resources for infrastructure, and for administrative support, which would better enable centers to obtain government registration, and relieve teachers from the many administrative duties that interfere with their teaching time. For children who have cognitive or physical challenges, inadequate assessment and support are frequent issues, and many are unable to cope in a regular classroom setting without specialized assistance. Additional training on effective techniques for working with children who have cognitive or physical challenges would benefit these children and their teachers alike.

Information gathering activities for the report began in April 2011 with a document review, following which, 37 key informant interviews and two focus group discussions were conducted. Eighteen site visits were carried out in May 2011 in Limpopo, Gauteng and North West provinces of South Africa. The case study was made possible by technical and financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Southern Africa. The authors hope that this project will produce knowledge that can improve existing services and guide future investment in early childhood development programs, in South Africa and elsewhere around the world.

INTRODUCTION

An estimated 220 million children worldwide live in poverty; one-third of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa (Grantham-McGregor et al, 2007). Ten million children in South Africa alone experience extreme poverty (UNICEF, 2007). Poor children are at high risk for delayed cognitive and physical development, making increased access to school readiness and developmental support services of paramount importance in countries where poverty and limited access to education remain overwhelmingly common (Grantham-McGregor et al, 2007; Walker et al, 2007). Cognitive stimulation during the first five years of life, including activities geared towards social-emotional and sensory-motor development, can have profound positive effects on educational achievement in childhood and adolescence. Educational achievement, in turn, improves individuals' economic potential and sharply reduces risk of poverty later in life (Walker et al, 2007). Early childhood development (ECD) programs that provide an integrated package of services to address the health, nutrition, education, social and economic needs of the most disadvantaged children have been found to produce tremendous improvements in children's early cognitive development (Engle et al, 2007). Programs involving family and community capacity building initiatives have been shown to be particularly effective (Marfo et al, 2008).

In 2007, only 23% of children under the age of four in South Africa had access to an ECD facility, and only 50% of five year olds were enrolled in Grade R (Statistics South Africa, 2007b; Department of Education, 2008). In a focused effort to mitigate the effects of severe poverty and impaired child development, the South African government developed a five-year National Integrated Plan (NIP) for ECD in 2005, extending it in 2010 for additional five years. The plan focuses on children from infancy to five years of age, with the aim of improving access to ECD services and making Grade R available to all five year-olds in the country through a combination of support for government-run programs in schools, community-based ECD programs, and private ECD centers (NIP, 2005). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) have played an important role in increasing access to ECD services in South Africa to date (Marfo et al, 2008), and many of the organizations that provide ECD services are reaching OVC. Despite these efforts, making ECD/preschool education and Grade R universal will require expanded efforts to reach the many children who still face significant barriers to access.

The purpose of this case study is to examine the formal ECD programs of five organizations working with disadvantaged populations in areas where access to education and other social services is severely limited. These organizations include: Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity (NOAH), Save the Children, the South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC), World Vision, and Woz'obona. Each offers an array of services designed to enhance young children's general health and development. For instance, all provide children with daycare that includes adult

supervision, recreational opportunities and nutritious meals or snacks on-site. This case study, however, concentrates on showcasing the organizations' specialized ECD services. It includes details on formal center-based programs for children that aim to prepare them for school, and specially tailored activities designed to enhance children's physical development. ECD-related training programs for parents and other primary caregivers are also described. Finally, the report details capacity-building efforts in the broader community intended to establish a competent, qualified workforce for ECD service provision.

This case study was made possible by financial support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Southern Africa, as part of the Enhancing Strategic Information (ESI) project. ESI supports the availability of high quality health systems information that contributes to sustainable policy planning and programmatic decision-making. The Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (TSPH) works in partnership with the prime ESI funding recipient, John Snow Incorporated (JSI), to produce knowledge that will improve existing practices and guide future investment in programming for vulnerable populations. It is hoped that this report on ECD program models and lessons learned from their implementation will contribute to the growing knowledge base on early childhood interventions, and support the scale-up of quality service provision.

PARTICIPATING PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



The five organizations chosen for this case study—NOAH, Save the Children, SACBC, World Vision, and Woz’obona—have developed unique programs for preschool age children and their home-and center-based caregivers. Many of these organizations provide ECD programming as a component of their overall OVC service package, which typically includes home visiting, material and nutritional support, educational assistance, and psychosocial support. Save the Children and World Vision introduced ECD activities into their service repertoire in 2009, NOAH did so in 2005. SACBC has been conducting ECD activities for over a decade, and Woz’obona has offered these services since the organization’s inception in 1989. NOAH and Save the Children started as organizations with the principal aim of meeting the needs of vulnerable children. SACBC and World Vision similarly began with the intention to serve impoverished communities, and later added services to address the needs of children and families affected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) specifically. Woz’obona, conversely, began with a primary mandate to bring ECD services to rural, low-income communities and more recently expanded to address the specific needs of OVC. The history and services of each organization are summarized below and subsequent sections provide details on their ECD activities.

NOAH was established in 2000, and provides services at “NOAH’s Arks” – a network of community centers where children of all ages can take part in afterschool programs, receive nutritious meals, and obtain psychosocial support including bereavement counseling. NOAH operates Arks in 101 communities in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and North West provinces. NOAH also provides a number of other services specifically for OVC, including home visits from trained volunteers who assess children’s needs and provide further support to beneficiaries and their families. These services may include material and nutritional support, counseling, and other psychosocial care. NOAH also provides daycare for children under age six and nutritious meals for children of all ages who attend the Ark. In 2005, NOAH developed a full-time school readiness program based on the learning outcomes outlined in the national Grade R curriculum, focusing on literacy, numeracy and life skills. In addition to cognitive school readiness services, NOAH also implemented the “Clamber Club” for young children, a program that helps children develop strength and motor skills through organized physical activity. The school readiness and Clamber Club programs are now offered at 26 Arks in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

Save the Children has been working with vulnerable children in South Africa since 1989, providing nutritional support and helping to improve children’s access to health care and education. Save the Children’s volunteer childcare workers make

home visits to assess the needs of children and families, and connect beneficiaries with health, nutrition, and economic strengthening services. In 2009 Save the Children implemented a family-centered ECD model, operating support groups for parents and caregivers at 11 community resource and drop-in centers in Limpopo province. The groups provide a forum for training and discussion on issues related to parenting and children's development. Save the Children further offers ECD-specific training opportunities for childcare workers in Limpopo and Free State provinces, who in turn work with parents and caregivers during home visits to teach them these skills. The organization offers training in holistic childcare and facilitating developmental play, and recently initiated health-specific training as well. Moreover, Save the Children provides financial and training support to 12 ECD centers in Limpopo province offering daycare and supplemental food to preschool age children. These ECD centers are independent of the resource centers, and focus on providing general childcare rather than a specialized ECD program.

SACBC has been providing support to people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) and their families since 1999. Services include the delivery of food parcels, home-based care for PLWHA, and vocational training and income-generating activities (IGAs), such as home gardening, sewing, or beadwork. In addition, SACBC operates community clinics that offer vaccinations for children, antiretroviral medications for PLWHA, and other essential medical care. The organization supports ECD activities at 33 sites in all nine South African provinces, with the majority of sites running daycare centers and feeding programs for preschool age children. Sites are typically managed by a functionary from the Catholic Diocese, often a nun, priest or monk, who implements programming based on identified community needs. The date of initiation, size, scope and type of services offered varies by site, as programs are tailored to communities rather than following a prescribed model. However, at seven sites located in Gauteng and North West provinces, initial informal programs for young children have grown into more structured ECD programs offering formal full-time school readiness programs. Two of these sites have become accredited primary schools within the Department of Education's (DOE's) school system.

World Vision began working in South Africa in 1967, and currently provides community services through 18 Area Development Programs (ADPs) across Eastern Cape, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Limpopo, and Free State provinces. World Vision works with communities over the long term -15 years on average - in support of local economic and agricultural development and services for water and sanitation, health and nutrition, HIV and AIDS prevention and care, and OVC-directed programming. Enrolled families receive home visits from volunteers who assess the needs of the household and connect them to local support services, many of which are also run by World Vision. In an effort to address children's educational needs, World Vision established after-school drop-in centers where beneficiaries of all ages can receive a nutritious meal, homework help and take part in recreational activities. In 2009 World Vision piloted an ECD program at six ADPs in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Free State, training volunteers at 12 drop-in centers to implement educational activities for preschool age children. The training enabling volunteers to

prepare young children for school using a literacy, numeracy and life skills-based curriculum. In 2011 World Vision began to further expand its ECD activities in these three provinces with the development of an intensive school-based ECD model with a focus on school-readiness and increased teaching time. Training and implementation of this expanded program is expected to continue through 2012.

Woz'obona began in 1989 as a training program for preschool teachers, supporting the implementation of the Montessori educational philosophy adapted for low-resource settings. Since that time, Woz'obona has trained an estimated 1000 preschool teachers throughout South Africa, and currently offers Services Sector Educational Training Authority (SETA) accredited training equivalent to the DOE's Level Four and Five ECD training. Teachers who complete the Woz'obona training implement activities of the Montessori method at the preschools where they work, and receive ongoing support through mentoring and follow-up visits from Woz'obona trainers. In order to enable parents to be more active participants in their children's early development and education, Woz'obona developed the FMSLL program, which teaches parents how to educate their children through everyday activities and with items found in their homes. FMSLL workshops are easily adaptable to the local community context, and the methods taught are designed for use in low-income families where parents themselves have had little formal education. With increasing recognition in the 1990s of HIV and AIDS as major threats to the health and development of young children in South Africa, Woz'obona developed a program for OVC in Limpopo whereby volunteer care workers conduct home visits to provide nutritional, material, educational and psychosocial support.

METHODOLOGY

In April 2011 information gathering for this case study began with a preliminary review of program documentation from each partner organization. Annual reports, previous research and program reports were studied in order to gain a general understanding of the program model, key activities and services offered, and to inform the development of interview and focus group discussion guides. Site-based data collection took place in May and June 2011 through a series of 37 in-depth interviews with key informants, two focus group discussions with ECD volunteers and teachers, and observation of program activities. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at 18 program sites. Fieldwork included the program sites of four partner organizations: NOAH, SACBC, World Vision and Woz'obona; Save the Children staff members were contacted via telephone for interview. Site visits were conducted in Gauteng, Limpopo, and North West provinces, and included urban, semi-urban, and rural locations

ACTIVITIES

In-depth interviews were semi-structured, covering topics such as daily ECD activities at the site, major services offered for preschool age children and their families, staff/volunteer structure and training, identified program successes and challenges, and plans for program development. Interviewees were selected based on their direct involvement with the ECD activities of interest, either as a volunteer, teacher, or manager. In total, 11 interviews were conducted with management staff at the partner organization; 14 interviews were conducted with managers or principals at program sites, ECD centers or preschools; and 12 interviews were conducted with teachers, child activity coordinators, or ECD volunteers. Two focus group discussions were convened with a total of 11 participants in Limpopo. One group took place at the Woz'obona office in Jane Furse with six ECD teachers who had been trained in the Woz'obona ECD curriculum. The second focus group took place at the Moshate Drop-in Center in Maruleng with five volunteers working with the World Vision drop-in center ECD program. All focus group participants were women at least 18 years of age. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in English, audiotaped with permission from the interviewees, and transcribed for use in generating this case study report.

FOCAL SITES

In an effort to capture the spectrum of rural, semi-urban, and urban ECD programs, focal sites selected for this case study spanned five districts within Limpopo, Gauteng and North West provinces. Poverty and unemployment rates are high in these areas, while education rates remain low. The 2007 Community Survey

indicated that adults with no source of income represented one third to two thirds of the population in these districts, and despite attempts to increase enrollment in Grade R, at least one third of five year-olds were not enrolled (Statistics South Africa, 2007b).

Gauteng

Five site visits took place in Gauteng, the most densely populated province in South Africa with 11 million people, or 22% of the country's total (Statistics South Africa, 2010). Gauteng is primarily urban, and includes the political capital, Pretoria, the Johannesburg Metro District, and Ekurhuleni District (formerly known as East Rand). These three districts form a near-contiguous urban region sometimes referred to as the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Area, where an estimated 10 million people reside (Statistics South Africa, 2010). Johannesburg is a mixture of industrial and commercial areas, with residential sections representing all income brackets, from wealthy suburbs to low-income townships and informal settlements.

All five urban ECD sites that were visited are located in the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Area. Four sites were in Johannesburg Metro district, two of which were NOAH's Arks located in the township of Soweto; the remaining two were SACBC ECD centers in the informal settlement of Orange Farm. The fifth site visited was an SACBC ECD center in an informal settlement in Ekurhuleni district, located in the eastern part of the city. Despite infrastructure improvements and increased access to amenities in recent years, the proportion of substandard dwellings in these areas remains high, with 26% of Ekurhuleni residents and 19% of Johannesburg Metro residents living in informal shacks or dwellings made of corrugated iron or other readily available, low-cost materials. Moreover, 41% of residents in Ekurhuleni and 37% of residents in Johannesburg Metro in 2007 reported that they had no source of income (Statistics South Africa, 2007a).

Urbanization also has not guaranteed educational opportunities. In Ekurhuleni and Johannesburg Metro, 44% and 47% of adults age 20 or older respectively have not completed Grade 12 matriculation. In Ekurhuleni, only slightly more than half (58%) of five year-olds were enrolled in preschool or Grade R in 2007. Similarly, in Johannesburg Metro, just 60% of five year-olds were enrolled in preschool or Grade R (Statistics South Africa, 2007b).

Limpopo

Six ECD sites were visited in Limpopo, the northernmost province in South Africa. Limpopo is primarily rural and includes the northern portion of Kruger Park, South Africa's largest wildlife reserve. In addition to tourism in Kruger Park and the many surrounding private game reserves, mining and large-scale farming are the main industries in the province. Limpopo has a population of approximately five million people and its capital city, Polokwane, has 560,000 residents (Statistics South Africa, 2010). Three of the ECD sites visited for this case study were Woz'obona preschools in Sekhukune District; the three others were drop-in centers run by World Vision in

Mopani District. Mopani and Sekukhune have approximately one million residents each (Statistics South Africa, 2007a). Sekhukune's population is almost exclusively rural (Sekhukune government website), while similarly 81% of Mopani residents live in rural areas (Mopani District Municipality, 2009). According to the 2007 South African Community Survey, housing infrastructure in both Mopani and Sekhukune has improved steadily in recent years, and more than 85% of households reside in formal dwellings.

Poverty and unemployment are high in both Mopani and Sekhukune, with 58% and 68% (respectively) of adults age 15 to 65 not economically active in 2007. Educational access is quite low. In Mopani only one in two adults has completed secondary school and 22% of people 20 years or older received no formal education. Education levels are similar in Sekhukune. Twenty seven percent of those 20 years or older received no formal schooling, and 47% attained less than Grade 12 completion. An estimated 61% of five years olds in Mopani and 66% in Sekhukune were enrolled in preschool or Grade R in 2007 (Statistics South Africa, 2007b).

North West

Six of the ECD sites visited as part of the case study were located in semi-urban areas of Bojanala Platinum District in North West province. North West is located to the west of the major urban areas of Gauteng, and south of rural Limpopo. The total provincial population was estimated at more than three million in 2010 (Statistics South Africa, 2010). North West is home to a number of large platinum and diamond mines, and agriculture and tourism also form major industries within the province. Bojanala District includes both rural and urban areas, and is the seat of Rustenburg, the largest city in North West with a population of more than 365,000 (Statistics South Africa, 2010). According to the 2007 Community Survey, 33% of Bojanala residents live in informal dwellings or shacks made of corrugated iron or other low-cost and readily available materials.

As in the above provinces, unemployment is pervasive and many residents lack access to education. In 2007 nearly half (48%) of adults age 15 to 65 reportedly had no source of income (Statistics South Africa, 2007b). Nine per cent of residents had completed no formal schooling, and 54% had not finished secondary school. Among five year-old children, only an estimated 54% were attending preschool or Grade R.

OVERVIEW OF ECD SERVICES

ECD programs are typically designed to benefit children of preschool age who have not yet started primary school, and may include services for both cognitive and physical development. These services may be delivered directly to children at a daycare, preschool, or drop-in center; or through special programming targeting their caregivers, such as parent workshops or teacher training sessions. The following sections of the report describe five organizations' efforts to address ECD through a combination of structured school readiness and physical development curricula for children, and family and community capacity building around ECD. Table 1 provides an overview of the range of specialized ECD services each organization offers that are subsequently detailed in this case study.

Table1: Specialized ECD Activities offered by each partner organization			
	Education for Children	Parent training	Community Capacity Building
NOAH	✓		✓
Save the Children		✓	✓
SACBC	✓		✓
World Vision	✓		✓
Woz'obona	✓	✓	✓

Four of the partner organizations, including NOAH, SACBC, World Vision and Woz'obona, have implemented structured school readiness programs for children. These programs aim to prepare children for primary school by ensuring that they have attained pre-requisite mathematics and language skills before entering Grade One at age six. Two programs, NOAH and Woz'obona, also include a motor skills development component, incorporating specially designed physical activities and movement approaches into the curricula. Save the Children and Woz'obona have implemented ECD programs that specifically target parents or other primary caregivers. These family-oriented programs aim to help parents become more active participants in their children's development. Each of the organizations also facilitates ECD-specific training for teachers and volunteers to promote the effective care of preschool age children in the community. The sections that follow provide an in-depth description of the target population as well as the ECD educational activities for children, parents and communities.

BENEFICIARIES

Children who participate in the structured ECD programs at NOAH, SACBC and Woz'obona are typically in the age range of two to six years; whereas World Vision's school readiness program targets those between three and seven. Save the Children and Woz'obona's parent-centered workshops and training activities were also conceived with the youngest children in mind, although they in effect continue to benefit children even after they have started primary school.



Each organization delivers services to children and families through local program sites, which generally consists of a "center" which serves as the hub of ECD activities. NOAH, SACBC, World Vision and Woz'obona all deliver their specialized ECD services directly to children at centers. NOAH and Woz'obona support more than 100 centers each, while World Vision and SACBC have fewer than 10 ECD centers with structured school readiness programs (although they offer daycare at a number of other centers). NOAH supports 26 centers (Arks) throughout Gauteng, North West and KwaZulu-Natal; SACBC has seven ECD centers offering a structured curriculum in Gauteng and North West; World Vision has implemented its pilot ECD program at 12 drop-in centers in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Free State; and Woz'obona has supported ECD service delivery at 625 preschools throughout Gauteng, North West and Limpopo. The number of children attending the centers varies. NOAH and Woz'obona's centers individually serve between 40 and 100 children under the age of six, while SACBC's centers tend to be larger, with 50 to 300 children attending at each on an average day. World Vision reports an average of 40 children enrolled in its ECD program at each drop-in center, with daily attendance ranging between 10 to 30 children.

Save the Children provides a parent training and support group program that takes place at 11 community resource and drop-in centers in Limpopo, and the organization also supports operations and teacher training at 12 daycare centers in the province. Unlike the other partners' sites, these resource centers do not provide childcare or ECD services directly, but rather are community centers where parents come to learn more about child health and development. Woz'obona also runs parent workshops and sessions through its preschools, teaching parents how to work with their children at home to support healthy cognitive development.

The children benefiting from NOAH, Save the Children and World Vision's programs are all OVC: they have lost one or both parents to AIDS, are living with a chronically ill caregiver or in a household that has recently experienced a death, or are severely impoverished. The proportion of children classified as OVC varies from center to center at the seven SACBC sites with specialized ECD programming. Two centers are registered primary schools open to any children in the community, and

the other five offer services specifically to OVC. Woz’obona serves very few OVC, which may be in part explained by their fee structure. These program fees, ranging from R50 to R150 per month, are likely prohibitive for many households with OVC. Woz’obona sites offer fee exemptions under some circumstances, as do SACBC sites whose monthly charges range from R30 to R70. The other three programs provide their child-focused services free of charge, and Woz’obona and Save the Children also have no cost for their parent-centered programs. Woz’obona’s family program concentrates on serving the parents of children attending the centers, which means that only a few OVC caregivers participate. Save the Children’s parent program, by contrast, specifically targets primary caregivers of OVC. Table 2 summarizes beneficiary information for each partner organization.

Table 2. Summary of Beneficiaries Receiving Specialized ECD Services

	Target group for specialized ECD activities	Sites offering specialized ECD services	Proportion of beneficiaries who are OVC	Cost of Services
NOAH	Children age 2 to 6 years	26 “Arks” across Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal offer structured child-focused programs	100% of children	No fees charged
Save the Children*	Parents or primary caregivers of children infant to 9 years	11 community resource centers in Limpopo offer parent/caregiver training	100% of parents/caregivers	No fees charged
SACBC*	Children age 2 to 6 years	7 sites in Gauteng and North West offer structured child focused programs	20 to 100% of children, depending on the center	Monthly fees range from R30 to R70, with some fee exemptions for OVC
World Vision	Children age 3 to 5 years	12 drop-in centers in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Free State offer structured child-focused programs	100% of children	No fees charged
Woz’obona	Children age 2 to 6 years and parents of all children age 9 and younger	625 sites across South Africa have implemented the Woz’obona curriculum with children, 25 centers are currently undergoing training; 30 preschools trained in FMSLL in 2009-2010.	An estimated 10% of children and parents, but records are not kept on OVC status	Monthly fees range from R50 to R150, with some fee exemptions for OVC
*These organizations also train staff and/or provide resources at additional centers offering general daycare and nutrition services for young children, including 12 centers supported by Save the Children in Limpopo and 25 sites supported by SACBC dispersed across all nine provinces. These centers also at times provide daycare for children younger than two years old.				

EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

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Four of the five partner organizations have developed a formal school readiness program focusing on cognitive development. Three of these programs are full-time and offer Grade R education based on the national curriculum, a prerequisite for children entering primary school. Two of the programs also incorporate activities for developing motor skills and coordination. Some organizations have developed ways to engage parents in monitoring children's performance and in center activities. Specifically, the three programs with full-time school readiness programs track each child's progress on a daily or weekly basis, and share this information with parents through quarterly reports and/or meetings. These centers further engage parents in school decision-making and governance through the school governing body (SGB), made of up parents who meet on a monthly basis with the site manager or principal of the center. The sections below detail these components of organizations' intensive educational efforts for young children.

School Readiness Curriculum

NOAH, SACBC and Woz'obona offer robust school readiness programs based on DOE requirements, wherein children receive seven or more hours of contact time with an ECD teacher five days a week for a minimum of one year before enrolling in primary school. NOAH and SACBC's school readiness

"When children come into the centers, they're not talking, they're not doing anything, and a year later they're talking, drawing, playing and they have the confidence to greet you. You can see that excitement about going to school, and being a big kid, and learning. It's a beautiful thing to see."

Project Manager, SACBC

activities closely follow the national Grade R curriculum, while Woz'obona works towards the same learning outcomes through an alternative (Montessori) approach. The curriculum used in World Vision's pilot program is based on the literacy, numeracy and life skills curriculum developed by the Education and Small Enterprise Development Association (EASEDA), an NPO working to improve literacy rates in South Africa. This school-readiness program aligns with the national curriculum learning outcomes, but uses a more informal structure, with children receiving school readiness services at the centers on a drop-in basis for two to three hours a day, up to five days per week.



**Children using equipment at
Woz'obona's Itireleng Daycare Center**

Many primary schools now require evidence that a child has completed preschool or Grade R before enrollment, and some schools have begun conducting formal assessments as a further condition of enrollment. According to South Africa's national curriculum guidelines, by the time a child finishes Grade R s/he should be familiar with the alphabet and numbers up to 100, and able to write simple things including his/her name. In addition, a child should be

familiar with basic concepts related to the natural environment, history, geography, art and culture, and life skills. Life skills at the Grade R level include basic health and hygiene knowledge, the ability to recite practical information such as the child's home address and whom to call in an emergency, and knowing how to recognize abuse and inappropriate touch. Natural and social sciences include identification of things in the natural environment, community and family structures and roles, and an understanding of the child's role in these various environments. The national Grade R curriculum learning outcomes are outlined in greater detail for each subject in Table 3 on the subsequent page.

The three full-time programs offered by NOAH, SACBC, and Woz'obona aim to provide the equivalent of Grade R, whereas World Vision's program focuses more generally on the provision of related basic skills. Each school readiness program concentrates primarily on literacy, numeracy, and life skills, while also introducing natural and social sciences, and art and culture. Children are taught in the local language, with a basic introduction to English. At all four of these organizations, the ratio of children per teacher/volunteer is typically 1:20, though at a few of SACBC's sites the ratio of children to teachers is closer to 1:50. Each organization's curriculum and teaching approach is described in greater detail below.

NOAH's ECD program is closely based on the DOE curricula for preschool and Grade R, and aims to prepare children for Grade One applying the nationally recognized learning outcomes and themes. NOAH's Child Activity Coordinators (CACs) teach the ECD classes, spending two or more hours each day with children on literacy, numeracy and life skills. This includes formal instructional time as well as time dedicated to practice for mastering key concepts, with one-on-one help from the CACs. Each month a different theme is introduced, and learning activities align structurally with these themes, which are summarized in the box on page 17.

Table 3: Summary of Learning Outcomes of the National Grade R Curriculum (2005)

Language and Literacy (for first and second language)	
Listening	The learner listens for information and enjoyment, and responds appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.
Speaking	The learner is able to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide range of situations.
Reading and Viewing	The learner understands the alphabet, correctly identifying letters and their sounds.
Writing	The learner can write the alphabet, and simple words, including their name.
Thinking and Reasoning	The learner uses language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning.
Language Structure and Use	The learner uses the sounds, words, and grammar of the language to develop and interpret thoughts.
Numeracy	
Numbers	The learner recognizes, describes and represents numbers and their relationships.
Patterns and Functions	The learner recognizes, describes and represents patterns and relationships.
Space and Shape	The learner describes and represents characteristics and relationships between two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects in a variety of orientations and positions.
Measurement	The learner begins to recognize and use appropriate measuring units and instruments in a variety of contexts.
Natural and Social Sciences	
Scientific Investigations	The learner plans and conducts investigations and collects information; the learner evaluates information and communicates the findings.
History	The learner can tell the story of their own life, that of their family and others around them; can tell stories about people of interest and social experiences over time; the learner can explain the use of objects and personal belongings that they value, and why they are valued.
Geography	The learner demonstrates an understanding of the difference between needs and wants; can tell stories about familiar places in the area where the learner lives or has visited; demonstrates an understanding of direction.
Arts and Culture	The learner can create, interpret and present artwork; can reflect on cultural practices and artistic activities; and can express and communicate their ideas through art.
Life Orientation	
Health Promotion	The learner makes informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health.
Social Development	The learner demonstrates an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities, and to show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions.
Personal Development	The learner uses acquired life skills to achieve and extend personal potential to respond effectively to challenges in his or her world.
Orientation to the World of Work	The learner will be able to make informed decisions about further study and career choices.
Economic Management	The learner demonstrates an understanding of their economic contribution and personal role in the household; a commitment to completing tasks; simple leadership and management experiences, and basic consumer and financial skills; awareness of different goods and services, and the influence of advertisements; and entrepreneurial thinking.

SACBC's seven sites with formal preschools and ECD programs similarly base their school readiness program on the national curriculum for Grade R including the 12 themes listed in the adjacent box. All seven sites offer both Grade R classes for children preparing to enter primary school and preschool programs for younger children preparing to enter Grade R. SACBC's curriculum revolves around literacy, numeracy and life skills. On a typical eight-hour day, children learning at Grade R level spend an average of 105 minutes on numeracy, 75 minutes on life skills, 45 minutes on English literacy, and 120

Monthly Themes applied in the Curriculum of NOAH and SACBC

- All About Me
- Five Senses
- Clothing
- My Family
- My Home
- Community Helpers
- Seasons
- Food
- Transport
- Farm Animals
- Tiny Creatures
- Christmas (December)

minutes on literacy in their local language. Additional time is allocated for outdoor play, creative arts and free play. Three and four year-olds receive structured school readiness services before entering Grade R, through its preschool education program. The program offers approximately 120 minutes of literacy and numeracy instruction each day, and participants additionally spend 90 minutes on life skills and motor skills, which includes outdoor play and lessons about health and hygiene. Each day involves learning in the various subject areas, with time for children to put concepts such as counting and reading into practice. As children practice reading, writing and counting, teachers offer individualized attention for skills development, and to ensure that every participant is demonstrating sufficient mastery of key concepts.

"We give them free choice but with limitations. We present an activity to them first, and then they can use the activities themselves. You give them time to explore, then you see what they are doing, and then you ask them about what they're doing."

ECD Teacher, Wozobona

concepts and skills to the children each day, they spend less time teaching at the front of the class than teachers using more traditional approaches. Following these demonstrations or presentations children may choose to spend time at "Learning Areas" set-up around the classroom, with teachers present to guide them as necessary.

The **Woz'obona** educational approach is rooted in the Montessori educational philosophy, but adapted for South Africa's rural and low-income communities. A central component to the approach is that children should set their own pace for learning. The role of the teacher in Montessori education is to demonstrate, guide and facilitate the learning process, rather than direct it unilaterally. While teachers present

The first thematic area introduced is “Practical Life,” which helps the children develop their small muscles with activities such as pouring water, tying ribbons and string, folding clothing, and manipulating other items commonly found in the home environment. Life skills are also included in this theme, as it focuses on the practical uses of common items and introduces basic health and hygiene practices. Tin can telephones used during this theme introduce concepts of communication, social skills, and sharing, which often segues to teaching about healthy relationships and recognizing abuse. Other topical areas include language and reading, numbers, culture and history, senses, science and nature, art, and music. To ensure that children are prepared for Grade One, activities in each of these areas are designed to help children achieve the specific learning outcomes set out by the DOE. Examples of activities and learning outcomes in each area are provided in Table 4 below.

In the Woz’obona Montessori approach, classroom items are labeled to introduce and reinforce concepts about written language. Labels primarily use the local language, which is also used for teaching. Children spend between seven and nine hours at the center each day. Approximately 2.5 hours each day are devoted to the teacher’s presentations, and children’s free use of educational activities in each content area. A typical day for program participants also includes time for story reading, writing practice, outdoor play, art making, and music and movement activities.

Table 4: Woz’obona’s Learning Areas and Examples of Activities	
Learning Area	Examples of Activities
Practical Life	Pouring water; tying ribbons; tin can telephone; folding clothes; dolls.
Language/Reading	Story books; paper/workbooks and crayons for writing and drawing; wall charts with birthdays, days of the week and seasons; alphabet chart.
Numbers	Sticks, stones, bottle caps and other small items to count; flash cards with dots and numbers; wall charts with numbers.
Culture/History	South African flag; maps; traditional drums and other cultural items.
Sensorial	Items with different scents; wall charts with different shapes.
Art	Paper and art supplies for drawing, painting, and doing cut-and-paste.
Music	Traditional instruments such as drums and shakers.
Science/Nature	Flash cards with names and pictures of animals, items from the natural environment, such as shells, pine cones, leaves, and bird’s nests.

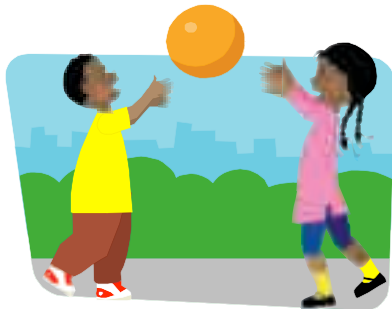
The curriculum used in **World Vision’s** pilot program is based on the literacy, numeracy and life skills curriculum developed by EASEDA, a non-profit organization that works to improve literacy rates in South Africa. EASEDA has created a DVD for use in teaching children about phonetics. As part of the

program, the DVD is played for the children to demonstrate the sounds associated with letters and the construction of words using letters. The volunteer teachers are also provided with guides for teaching lessons on literacy, numeracy and life skills. The life skills component of the curriculum focuses on teaching children about health and safety, and understanding the environment around them. This school-readiness program is in alignment with the national curriculum learning outcomes, but applies a more informal and less intensive structure than the other three school readiness programs. School readiness is provided to preschool age children through the drop-in centers for two to three hours per day, five days a week. Within this short daily timeframe, the volunteers who teach the children are encouraged to be flexible in allocating time for lessons and in tailoring lessons to the areas where children need to spend more time and attention. The curriculum consists of four levels, with children starting in level one, and as they progress with reading, writing and counting they pass onto the next level. Children are not required to pass a level within a certain timeframe, and are encouraged to learn at their own pace, rather than keeping up with the other children their age. ☐

“When we started out we concentrated on the unemployment issue, because of the background research we did, but as we went on we realized that we need to teach the children and prepare them for a better future, otherwise they’ll still be unemployed.”

ADP Manager, World Vision

Activities for Sensory-motor Skills Development



Each of the programs includes opportunities for outdoor play intended to stimulate gross motor skills development and activities such as cut-and-paste and art making to help children develop the fine motor skills needed for handwriting. NOAH and Woz’obona however include a more formal method for promoting muscular and motor skills development through inclusion of structured physical activity techniques as part of their school readiness programs. NOAH’s Clamber Club program was specifically designed by an occupational therapist in South Africa to help children develop balance, perception and motor skills through games, activities and dances that target these functional areas. As part of Woz’obona’s Montessori curriculum, ECD teachers construct their own equipment – small objects that children can manipulate, improving fine muscle development and hand-eye coordination in the process.

NOAH's Clamber Club uses group exercises, songs, games and dances to stimulate children's perceptive and motor skills development. The Clamber Club has been specifically tailored to fit the monthly themes used in the school readiness program (see themes in box on page 17. For example, as part of the transportation theme, Clamber Club activities include songs and games relating to vehicles and other forms of transportation; and for the animal theme, songs and games relate to the noises and movements that animals make. Clamber Club makes use of hula hoops, bean bags, balance beams and other equipment to teach children skills and coordination beyond that acquired through regular outdoor activities and games. The Clamber Club program includes DVDs that additionally demonstrate songs and games for children and provide accompanying music.



Children participating in NOAH's Clamber Club

NOAH has provided each Ark with all of the necessary equipment for implementing Clamber Club activities, including a TV and DVD player. One or two CACs and the Ark Manager from each Ark have taken part in a five-day Clamber Club training implemented by NOAH, and these participants disseminate skills and knowledge acquired from the training to the other CACs. Children ages three to six years can participate in Clamber Club activities once or twice per week on an ongoing basis, for 30 to 60 minutes per session, as part of the daily ECD program at the Arks. At some Arks the Clamber Club has also been implemented for older children as part of afterschool programming.

"The Clamber Club fits in with the other themes and really integrates well with the lesson plans. I find it's a good way of teaching the children because often they don't like to sit still for too long. It's for children two to six, but the kids in aftercare love it so much that we do it for all the children who come to the center, even the older ones."

Woz'obona teachers are trained to make educational equipment out of commonly found objects, which is then used in a systematic manner to help children develop motor skills and coordination. These activities go beyond typical classroom activities such as cut-and-paste and coloring. Instead, they promote fine motor skills development through opportunities to manipulate nuts and bolts, pour water from containers of different sizes, tie string and ribbon, and practice picking up small objects with tongs. These activities form a large part of the two and half hours program participants spend each day using educational equipment in the classroom.

Parental Involvement

The three organizations with formal full-day school readiness programs—NOAH, SACBC, and Woz’obona—all have mechanisms for ensuring ongoing and constructive communication with parents. The organizations also have SGBs that help to engage parents in center governance and decision making.

The organizations offering full-time school readiness programs have developed formal procedures for assessing children’s progress, and for reporting to parents on a quarterly basis. A grading system is used for progress assessment, with a score of one on a particular task or concept indicating low performance and a score of four indicating high performance. Frequently, commentary or a narrative report from the teacher accompanies this numerical assessment. In addition to the reports that are sent home to parents, some centers conduct in-person meetings with parents each term, or more often if there are challenges with a particular child.

SGBs have also been established at the centers and preschools run by NOAH, SACBC, and Woz’obona as a mechanism for the formal involvement of parents in institutional decision-making processes. These sites have all established SGBs in accordance with national guidelines, which recommend that the governing body be made up of a minimum of eight individuals, including an elected Chairperson, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and several members at large. The SGB members include parents that are interested in getting involved in center governance, or who play important roles within the community and therefore have strategic connections that are valuable for center development and expansion. SGB meetings are generally held once or twice each month. The SGB’s responsibilities revolve around governance, financial management, and fundraising. The SGB oversees school finances, ensuring budget adherence and appropriate management of resources. This includes approving center-related expenses, such as purchasing new supplies or hiring new teachers. Fundraising is an important part of the SGB’s role, with networking activities conducted within the community to obtain donations from local businesses and organize fundraising events. A number of SGBs have been successful at procuring donations of food for center-based feeding programs. At one Woz’obona preschool, the SGB took on a project to build an additional classroom at the school, securing donated building supplies from a local wholesaler and implementing a program wherein parents and caregivers were called upon to donate a certain number of bricks toward the project.

PARENT & PRIMARY CAREGIVER TRAINING



Save the Children and Woz'obona have both developed family-based approaches to ECD programming. These organizations offer workshops or training opportunities for parents or primary caregivers designed to empower them to support the optimal development of the children under their care.

"We have a triangle: I'm with the children during the day, but the parents are with them in the afternoons and evenings, and we need to work together to teach the child. You need to teach the parents to help the child at home - then they'll know how they can help the child and also how they can help me; and me, I need to respect their input."

ECD Teacher, Woz'obona

Save the Children offers training sessions and information for parents on topics related to early childhood care and development through community resource centers. In 2009, 11 resource centers began offering parent support groups for up to 20 members. The groups meet once a week on an ongoing basis. A manual developed

"We started our ECD program with the child care workers, who are from the community, and who the parents know and trust. But we found that wasn't enough because these are volunteers and we need to work with the parents themselves."

Program Manager, Save the Children

for resource center staff offers discussion suggestions, but support groups generally operate without a set schedule of topics. Instead, members agree on a weekly topic. Some sessions are led formally by a trainer or staff member from Save the Children, while other sessions utilize a peer-to-peer style, with someone from the community or a group member facilitating group discussion around a particular topic. Staff members at the resource centers also encourage groups to bring in expertise and information from elsewhere in the community, so as not to be completely dependent on Save the Children for information, and to promote ownership and community engagement within the group. Both cases offer participants the opportunity to share experiences and lessons learned in a semi-structured, supportive setting. Common topics for training include nutrition, communicating with young children, and facilitating play to stimulate development. At the time this case study was developed, 200 parents had participated in one or more training sessions at Save the Children's resource centers.

Woz'obona developed the FMSLL program in 2002 to demonstrate to parents how they can effectively teach their children using items found around the home. To ensure its quality and acceptability, the program was initially piloted in collaboration with 27 local CBOs to train 60 facilitators, who in turn conducted workshops with more than 1600 parents in 2002-2004. When the pilot program came to an end in 2004, Woz'obona formally introduced FMSLL as part of the curriculum for teachers, practitioners and volunteers. Woz'obona currently offers FMSLL training after completion of ECD Level Four training, and those who have been trained in turn provide training for parents. As with Level Four training, trainees receive mentoring visits from Woz'obona staff at the ECD centers or schools where they work; during these visits mentors offer assistance with implementation and address any issues that have arisen. On occasion Woz'obona also offers FMSLL training to parents directly, or trains other community members interested in leading local family-based educational initiatives. In 2009-2010, 47 teachers and SGB members were trained as FMSLL facilitators at 30 preschools, and 447 parents participated in FMSLL workshops throughout South Africa.

FMSLL workshops focus on teaching early math, science and literacy in a fun and active way and at a relatively low cost to caregivers. For example, FMSLL approaches encourage parents to help their children learn to count by demonstrating how to measure quantities of water and maize while preparing food for dinner; or by showing children how many reeds are needed to weave a sleeping mat. Parents do not need to be literate or numerate themselves to apply the FMSLL teaching principles – FMSLL shows them how to use the skills and knowledge they already have to teach their children, and makes use of familiar and traditional songs, games and stories. FMSLL workshops take place at schools or other community centers, and vary in length from two hours to full-day sessions. Workshops can be once-off sessions, or they may be offered in a series. The topics may cover literacy, numeracy, and science, or be focused on just one topic, depending on the education levels of the participants and the time available. Additional topics such as how to care for children, health, nutrition, and child protection are sometimes included in the workshops as well. An FMSLL manual has been developed with guidelines for workshop facilitators, but the sessions can easily be adapted to suit local needs and circumstances.

“There are parents who are just interested in learning as their young ones are, and because of the equipment we're using, the parents can come right down to the level of the child. They want to know how the equipment is used, and they want to use it too, and this helps them teach their children at home.”

ECD Teacher, Woz'obona

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

2



Each of the partner organizations offers free ECD-specific training for teachers, practitioners and volunteers although the level of training and the topics covered varies by organization and in some cases from site to site. Only Woz'obona's training is accredited by SETA, although some programs facilitate access to accredited training for their ECD personnel or other community members. NOAH, Save the Children and SACBC have helped volunteers or teachers access Level One ECD training from the Department of Social Development (DSD) at one or more of their ECD sites, either by directly sponsoring such training opportunities, or by making linkages to local government training. The Level One ECD training involves five days of classroom work on topics including young child health and development. Trainees must complete a portfolio of written work and demonstrate the ability to apply what they have learned. A moderator from SETA evaluates the portfolio and observes the trainee working with children to ensure that all the Level One requirements have been met. This process of accreditation, from the five-day training through portfolio review and classroom observation, typically takes one year. Woz'obona's training incorporates a similar assessment procedure, whereby a representative from SETA evaluates trainees before issuing their certifications.

Of the five partner organizations, Woz'obona offers the most intensive training, with an accredited Level Four ECD certificate that involves up to three years of part-time classroom work and mentoring visits from Woz'obona's trainers. Staff and volunteers working on ECD activities at NOAH, Save the Children and World Vision have received ECD-specific training from their respective organizations, typically lasting one or two weeks in length. While this training is not accredited by SETA, it covers the basics of ECD education and is loosely based on the national ECD and/or Grade R curriculum, focusing on literacy, numeracy and life skills for preschool children. Many of these staff and volunteers have also received training on topics such as nutrition and counseling, to further help them in their work with children. In addition, NOAH's CACs have been trained on Clamber Club implementation. SACBC does not offer a standardized ECD-focused training, but instead provides site-specific training and support in response to identified goals; for instance, helping sites to become registered ECD centers and primary schools. Woz'obona trainers conduct follow-up visits with trainees, and the other four organizations provide ongoing support with implementation of ECD programs through monitoring and evaluation (M&E) visits from project managers and other headquarters staff.

Programs also aim to establish an ECD-competent workforce in their communities. At Save the Children, a number of volunteers from resource and drop-in centers have been sponsored for accredited Level One ECD certification. Through partnerships with local government, NOAH also helped personnel from five Arks obtain accredited Level One ECD training from DSD, and SACBC has similarly enabled staff members from ECD centers access such training. World Vision aims to build capacity beyond their project personnel and recently began to provide training for qualified primary school teachers on the Grade R curriculum and other ECD capacities.

Finally, while not ECD-specific and hence not described in detail here, it is notable that each of the five partner organizations has developed and made available training sessions and workshops for site-based personnel on governance, financial management and fundraising. These trainings are important to improving centers' financial viability and sustainability, and often critical to a successful bid for registering with DSD. Registered ECD centers are, in turn, eligible for sources of government funding.

NOAH has trained approximately 200 CACs and Ark Managers on ECD education and Clamber Club curriculum implementation since 2003 throughout Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and North West provinces. The ECD training takes five full days to complete and covers

“NOAH has provided us with training so that we can correspond with the school, and when the children leave here and go to the primary school the teachers come to us and say that our children are the smartest and are ahead of the others.”

Child Activity Coordinator, NOAH

numeracy, literacy and life skills for young children. The training includes many practical exercises, so that trainees have a chance to put what they are learning into action and get immediate feedback from the facilitator. Following the training sessions, NOAH's trainers visit the Arks and address any challenges that the CACs or Ark Manager are experiencing in implementation. Periodic refresher training sessions are offered by training staff from NOAH's head office, typically once per year, to address any issues that have come up and to provide CACs and Ark Managers with an opportunity to share their implementation experiences and best practices. Training is generally conducted by geographical area, with the Ark Manager and one CAC attending from up to 30 different Arks in the area. Successful completion of the training does not depend on written coursework or examination. NOAH's trainers facilitate many of the training sessions themselves, and occasionally outsource training to other organizations that have expertise in a particular area. Clamber Club training, for example, was facilitated by the occupational therapist that developed the curriculum. Additionally, Ark managers and one or more CACs at each Ark have received supplemental training from NOAH on topics such as counseling, addressing bereavement and grief with children, and/or play therapy.

In 2010 **Save the Children** funded SETA-accredited ECD Level One training for 30 volunteer care workers who work at the 11 resource centers and make home visits in Limpopo. Save the Children is also working towards expanding care workers' skill sets by providing them with supplemental training on physical and emotional health and holistic care for young children, with the expectation that they will transfer such knowledge to parents and primary caregivers during home visits. In July 2011, Save the Children initiated a five-day training that was developed and sponsored by DSD and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), covering safety and nutrition for young children, how to help children through bereavement, facilitating play, and communicating with children. The organization expects to train 30 care workers in these ECD capacities by the end of 2011. In addition, as part of a larger plan to improve physical health for children under five, Save the Children will conduct a one-day workshop for staff and care workers on identifying malnutrition and referring children for appropriate care. The workshop will focus on early identification of under-nutrition using the mid-upper arm circumference test for children, and will educate participants on the government recommendations for immunization.

While **SACBC** does not offer a standardized ECD training program, capacity building is an important part of the support the organization offers to sites. Seven sites in Gauteng and North West have made ECD a priority through the provision of formal school readiness programs. At these sites, SACBC has worked with staff and volunteers to develop the ECD programs, providing financial and technical support, and has helped facilitate access to Level One ECD training for one or more teachers at each site. With technical and financial support from SACBC, two sites have become registered primary schools, offering formal classes for Grade R through Grade Three. The other five sites provide preschool classes for three and four year-olds and Grade R classes for five year olds, but unlike the registered schools do not offer primary school classes. SACBC also offers additional training in response to needs identified by site staff members and volunteers. The topics of the training vary, and may relate directly to working with children, or have more of a management focus. In addition, informal capacity building in areas such as identifying and assisting children with special needs, or helping children deal with grief, is provided by Project Managers during site visits or upon request.

World Vision's ECD program is still in the early phases of development. For the implementation of the pilot project providing basic literacy and numeracy education for children age three to five, 12 volunteer childcare workers in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Free State working at the drop-in centers

We would have been able to accomplish more if we had the children for longer hours, so that's why we want to take the program to schools. With a structured school setting, where you can consistently give them input, there is longer exposure and they will learn more.

Grant Manger, World Vision

received two weeks of training on ECD education and school readiness from EASEDA. The training included topics such as helping children learn to read, write and count, and communicating effectively with young children. World Vision began scaling up its ECD program in 2011 by partnering with schools and the DOE in an effort to expand the availability of Grade R in rural and low-income communities. The organization provided training for 48 qualified teachers across 24 schools in Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Free State provinces on Grade R and ECD specialized skills, such as how to implement the national Grade R curriculum, and how to effectively educate and communicate with young children. This two-week, accredited program was developed by specialists from Witwatersrand University, who also implement the training. It covers content included in the national Grade R curriculum, and aims to help participants develop their capacity to implement curriculum in schools. This initiative is designed to enhance ECD educational opportunities in the community; World Vision will also continue its numeracy and literacy program providing supplementary educational support for OVC at drop-in centers.

Woz'obona offers training in a modified Montessori approach with SETA-accredited training equivalent to a Level Four ECD qualification. In addition to one year of part time classes (typically on weekends or evenings so as not to conflict with teaching time), trainees must also successfully complete a portfolio of written assignments, and be observed by a moderator from SETA

“We don't have money to buy ready-made things, but we don't say, 'I don't have anything to teach the children with', we rather go out and make equipment ourselves. Woz'obona has provided us with skills on how to make these things. We use sticks and bottle caps for counting, for example.”

ECD Teacher, Woz'obona

in order to receive certification. Training topics include facilitating active learning; managing an ECD program; making equipment and activities from readily available materials; facilitating creative art; and teaching with stories, songs and rhymes. Equipment-making is a large and significant part of the teacher training, and teachers not only learn how to make the equipment, but also develop an understanding of why they are making the equipment, and how it can be used to teach preschool concepts. Educational equipment is found or constructed by the teachers themselves, with recycled materials that are readily available and inexpensive. Between training sessions, the Woz'obona trainers visit the trainees in their classroom to offer general mentorship and troubleshooting. The mentor observes the trainee and asks him/her about the choice to do things in a particular way, in order to assess whether or not the trainee understands what s/he has learned. Mentoring visits take place approximately two weeks after a training session to allow time for implementation. The mentoring visits are ongoing throughout the duration of the training. The training schedule can be adapted to suit the trainees' schedules and to minimize time away from the classroom, and typically intensive training sessions take place one weekend per month, with mentoring visits in between. It can take up to three years for a trainee to

complete all the training sessions, required mentoring visits, the portfolio of written assignments, and final assessment from a SETA moderator. Woz'obona trains an average of 25 teachers per year, and estimates that they have trained more than 1000 teachers since 1989 that are placed throughout Gauteng, North West and Limpopo. Training is provided to teachers free of charge, as it is funded through Woz'obona's sponsors and donors. When a new funding opportunity becomes available, Woz'obona identifies low-income communities where there is a need for improved ECD services and where there is also an interest in the Montessori curriculum.

RESOURCES

The funding structure for project sites varies among the five partner organizations, and in some cases, from site to site within an organization. Program activities and other related infrastructural and personnel are often realized through a combination of funding from international donors, local government and community initiatives, as described below.



NOAH's Matibestad Ark

International Donors

All five programs receive funding from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which is used to support ECD activities in a number of ways, including personnel stipends and training and/or books and other supplies for the centers. Some of the programs receive support through the fundraising efforts of their organization's international branches. Save the Children receives funding from Save the Children UK; SACBC receives financial support through the international and local funding channels related to the Catholic Church; and World Vision receives funding from World Vision offices in the UK, Canada and Malaysia. In addition, a significant portion of the funding for World Vision's services for children comes from individual donors to the program's child sponsorship program in South Africa.

Government Funding

Eligible NOAH, SACBC, Woz'obona, and World Vision sites have all received funding from DSD and/or DOE. Sites registered as NPOs or ECD centers can apply for a number of government grants and subsidies towards feeding programs, infrastructure improvements, and/or teacher salaries.

ECD teachers with a recognized university-level teaching degree can receive salary subsidies from the DOE, and those with Level Four ECD certification are eligible for a subsidy of approximately R1000 per month from the DSD. A number of registered ECD centers have successfully applied for DOE funding for teacher salaries for personnel with Level Five ECD training or higher. These subsidies range from R2000 to R3000 per month, depending on the individual's level of education and experience. Teachers at registered ECD centers are also eligible to participate in supplemental ECD training opportunities sponsored and facilitated by DSD. DSD further offers a subsidy of R12 per child per day in support of ECD center feeding programs. Two of

SACBC's sites are registered primary schools with DOE, and therefore also receive the DOE's National School Nutrition Program annual subsidy, ranging from R700 and R900 per student. Registration as an ECD center additionally brings opportunities for staff members to participate in DSD ECD training, which in turn can increase the level of subsidies the center may be eligible for.

Many of the partners profiled here have helped their sites obtain NPO status, and a few are registered ECD centers. By July 2011, 15 of NOAH's 26 Arks offering ECD services were registered NPOs and eight were also registered ECD centers, making them eligible for the DSD subsidies towards their feeding program and/or salaries. An additional four Arks had submitted applications for one or both of these registrations. Those that are not yet registered have begun the application process with assistance from NOAH. None of Save the Children's ECD sites and resource centers had yet received government funding when this case study was conducted, but Save the Children was working to help sites obtain the NPO registration needed to apply for DSD funding. All of SACBC's 33 sites are registered as NPOs, and two of the sites are registered as ECD centers and consequently receive government funding towards teacher salaries. More than 90% of World Vision's drop-in centers are registered as NPOs, and receive a subsidy from DSD towards their feeding programs; the three drop-in centers that are not yet registered are working on attaining NPO registration; none of their sites are registered as ECD centers. The majority of Woz'obona sites receive some form of government funding from DSD, for school feeding programs and/or teacher salaries, and preschools where teachers have Level Five ECD certificates or higher also receive funding for salaries from DOE.

Local Resource Mobilization

All of the organizations have successfully sought other funding opportunities by partnering with local or national businesses. NOAH receives financial support from a number of donors in South Africa, including the My School Program at Woolworths South Africa, MAC AIDS Fund, ABB, Vodacom, Barloworld, JSE, Arcelor, Mittlal, Anglo American Chairmans Fund Momentum, Finlay and Associates, and First Rand Empowerment. NOAH has also partnered with the Bright Kid Foundation, which donates and renovates shipping containers to be used as classrooms and facilities at the Arks. Three ECD centers operated by Save the Children are funded by large-scale commercial farms, which have provided infrastructure and stipends for the teachers who provide daily daycare services. World Vision has received funding from ABSA Bank and Kentucky Fried Chicken towards building and furnishing drop-in centers. Woz'obona

"The services at the Ark are free for the community. Unemployment is high and there is a lot of poverty. We're working with other organizations and the community so that we can become an income generating community."

Ark Manager, NOAH

receives funding to cover the cost of training from a number of local businesses and organizations, including Jim Joel Foundation, ABSA Foundation, the National Development Agency, Benoni, and Libra. Several of Woz'obona's sites have received large donations from ABSA Bank to renovate and expand center facilities.

Many other programs help sites to source funding locally through fundraising, school fees and income-generating activities. Local fundraising initiatives undertaken by the SGBs at NOAH, SACBC and Woz'obona's centers provide donations of food for feeding programs, and donations towards infrastructure such as classrooms and outdoor play equipment, and teacher's salaries. The monthly school fees charged by SACBC and Woz'obona sites contribute to teacher's salaries and the general administration and upkeep of the centers. IGAs implemented by NOAH, SACBC, and World Vision sites support teachers' salaries and center infrastructure. These IGAs include activities such as selling baked goods, craft-work, sewing, tailoring, and poultry projects. Some sites of NOAH, SACBC, World Vision and Woz'obona also run a community garden that helps to supplement feeding programs, and excess produce is sometimes sold for profit and used to support other center activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

Each of the five partner organizations profiled here has developed an ECD service set reaching low-income children and families who may not otherwise have access to preschool or other early child services. These organizations' programs directly address a number of financial and logistical barriers to ECD service provision for children in communities with few resources. Three of the partners have implemented ECD programs that expose children to school readiness and/or physical development formal curriculums five days a week for at least a year prior to starting primary school – a level of preschool program intensity that supports academic and social success in the early grades. Further innovations were seen in efforts to make the centers economically self-sufficient. Close working relationships with schools have also increased teachers' ability to monitor children's ongoing educational progress as well as respond more effectively to their nutritional, health and psychosocial needs.

Alongside these successes, challenges remain, including inconsistent program attendance among children already enrolled in ECD programs. In other cases, children are enrolled only a few months before starting primary school, and consequently are less prepared to start school than children who have received a year or more of structured ECD services. Recruiting teachers and volunteers with ECD qualifications is another challenge for programs working in areas where income and education levels are generally low. The pool of trained professionals is small and organizations often do not have the resources to pay salaries for qualified ECD teachers and practitioners nor finance such opportunities for their project personnel. In addition, many sites do not have the resources for infrastructure improvements necessary to attain registered status with DSD. Unregistered sites are not eligible for government subsidies towards feeding programs and teacher salaries. Most centers also function without dedicated administrative staff, leaving teachers and volunteers to take on the responsibility of managing center finances and logistics. There is also a need to increase access to ECD services among OVC and their caregivers, including addressing financial barriers such as limited transportation and inability to pay enrollment fees as well as remain widespread. Lastly, in many places there is insufficient capacity for identifying and providing services to children with cognitive and physical challenges.

SUCCESSES AND INNOVATIONS

Facilitating Access to Center-based Services



Children at NOAH's Kliptown Ark

Between 1999 and 2007 enrollment in Grade R increased from 15% to 49%, and while this is indicative of significant improvement, tremendous need persists among the large proportion of children in the country who are not receiving any form of ECD education (Department of Education, 2008). Children from low-income and HIV-affected families in particular face many barriers to obtaining Grade R or equivalent services, and their parents and caregivers may be

especially hard to reach with information and services. Lack of transport and money for program fees not only keeps children from attending centers on a regular basis, but causes some families not to enroll their children at all. Indeed, the two programs with a fee structure reported serving few OVC relative to those with free services. However, several organizations have enacted measures to promote access to quality educational services among the most vulnerable children.

NOAH in particular has a wide-scale reach, providing a free full-time structured school-readiness and physical development program to OVC in more than 100 communities. On a somewhat more limited scale, World Vision and Save the Children also provide ECD related services for OVC free of charge. SACBC and Woz'obona sites have at times negotiated fee exemptions for OVC. SACBC and Woz'obona's preschools have employed other creative approaches for reaching children from families with few resources, such as establishing arrangements where parents or caregivers spend time volunteering at the center as an alternative to paying program fees. Volunteer activities have included cleaning centers, gardening or maintaining the grounds, and assisting with childcare for babies and toddlers at the center. NOAH and SACBC sites provide transport for children from low-income neighborhoods to centers, ensuring that children arrive safely and at no cost to their families. Achieving universal access to preschool and Grade R will depend on these and other efforts to reach the country's most vulnerable children.

Intensity of Exposure

Partners have found that a program consisting of seven or more hours of daily contact time between the teacher and children can have a greater impact on children's preparedness for school, versus less time intensive models. NOAH, SACBC, and Woz'obona offer children seven to nine hours of structured ECD programming per day, five days a week, with at least one third of that time dedicated to school readiness lessons and

We learned a few things from the pilot program, and now we're going to take ECD into the local schools so that children get a better grip on early education. The program would have been a greater success if we had children for more hours per day. Two to three hours aren't enough, and that is why we are scaling up the ECD program.

Grant Manager, World Vision

activities, and the remaining time used for creative or outdoor play and meals. ECD practitioners and teachers at NOAH, SACBC and Woz'obona indicated receiving positive feedback from teachers at local primary schools about the preparedness of the children who had attended their programs. Correspondingly, the fact that each of these programs closely follows and is equivalent to the Grade R curriculum helps ensure that children qualify for entry into primary school. Following a one-year pilot ECD program at drop-in centers, with children receiving two to three hours of contact time with ECD volunteers, World Vision recognized the need to increase the level of program exposure in order to better prepare children for primary school, and has begun to partner with local schools to offer the more time-intensive model.

Establishing Relationships with Local Schools

Establishing relationships with local schools has helped partner organizations achieve several of their long-term goals. These aims included ensuring quality ECD education with a lasting impact, and monitoring children's needs to ensure they receive necessary services and support even after they complete ECD programs.

Linkages with local schools provided opportunities for ECD centers to receive meaningful feedback on children's readiness once they entered primary grades. This helped identify aspects of the ECD curriculum that worked well, and areas that needed to be strengthened. While not every ECD site had established a relationship with local primary schools, among those that had, the ECD practitioners indicated that their teaching practices benefitted greatly from the teachers' feedback.

Furthermore, relationships between organizations and schools allowed for increased service integration, particularly for OVC. Feedback from teachers over the long-term better enabled the organizations to follow-up on children's progress and address material, nutritional, health, and psychosocial needs. This was primarily achieved through improved ability to track children who,

upon graduation from an ECD program, no longer attended the sites' centers on a regular basis. At some sites the ECD teachers have formal partnerships with primary and secondary teachers, but more commonly, childcare workers or home visitors follow-up with the schools once a child has left the ECD center. Establishing relationships with local schools also enabled staff and volunteers to successfully negotiate school-fee exemptions, increasing the likelihood that OVC would enter and remain in primary school.

Site Sustainability

“We have relationships established with the schools. When the child is not going to school, we do follow-ups with the parents or guardians to find out why. And if the child has a problem, the teachers will sit down with us and tell us, and then we can sit with the child and the guardians and sort the problem out, and it helps us with our own teaching because then we know what problems to look for in our own class.”

Child Activity Coordinator, NOAH

Many of the sites visited for this case study were able to provide consistent and sustainable ECD programming, despite working in communities where resources for ECD are scarce and families are largely unable to pay for services. To support organizational financial sustainability, partner agencies have tailored their training efforts to include topics such as governance, fundraising, and financial management. Woz'obona introduces these topics during their Level Four ECD training, and also offers a more extensive Site Sustainability training as part of the upgrading option for ECD teachers who have completed Level Four. NOAH, SACBC, and World Vision all provide training on site management and financial sustainability as part of the long-term relationship established with partner sites, and the topics covered vary from year to year, and from site to site. These training sessions, which cover a wide variety of topics related to effective program management, aim to help sites improve the effectiveness and operating efficiency of the programs they implement. Assessments of site's training needs are done on an ongoing basis, typically during monthly or quarterly monitoring visits.

“We don't expect them to be perfect when we get there, that's why there is constant support from us. We are pushing now that sites that are very dependent [on SACBC] start to look for other sources of funding, and to become more sustainable, to start looking for other grants and to start doing income generating activities. We want to see our sites grow and mature.”

Project Manager, SACBC



The Garden at NOAH's Freedom Park Ark

Fundraising activities and IGAs have been undertaken by a number of sites as a means of sustaining ECD service delivery and other activities. All of NOAH, SACBC, and World Vision's sites, and the majority of Woz'obona's sites, include gardens whose yields reduce food costs for feeding programs, and at some sites excess produce is sold for profit. Many of the SACBC and World Vision ECD sites are linked to larger community centers offering services to families

affected by HIV and AIDS and poverty, where IGAs have been established, and several of NOAH's Arks have undertaken independent IGAs to sustain ECD and OVC programming. These IGAs included selling baked goods, craftwork, tailoring and sewing projects, and poultry projects to sell eggs and chickens. Fundraising efforts undertaken by the SGBs at NOAH, SACBC, and Woz'obona's sites have been effective at garnering financial and in-kind community donations. Examples of such support include food donated by local grocery stores, and bricks, sand and concrete donated for the construction of additional project space at schools or centers.

Mentoring Visits and Practice-based Training

Both teachers and management staff felt that mentoring and follow-up visits from headquarters staff or trainers helped keep teachers' skills current and better enabled them to address problems with implementation. Woz'obona trainers follow-up with trainee teachers for up to three years after training starts, ensuring that they are prepared to implement the Montessori curriculum and providing specific guidance for challenges that may arise. NOAH, Save the Children, SACBC and World Vision sites all receive regular visits from M&E staff and/or project managers to help identify areas where further assistance or additional training is needed. This ongoing support not only helps maintain the quality of service delivery, but also contributes to ongoing professional development for staff and volunteers at the site.

ECD practitioners interviewed for this case study also emphasized the value of training focused on practical application of the material, rather than theory. They discussed the significance of training that incorporated classroom situations and other real-life program scenarios as part of ongoing instruction and assessment. For example, they highly regarded training that addressed management and implementation of day-to-day activities such as devising an activity schedule, keeping progress records, and handling child behavioral problems, as well as when trainers integrated observations from past and

ongoing mentoring visits as examples. They appreciated it when trainers engaged the entire class in problem solving and discussions on how to address challenges. Further, while practitioners of all educational levels saw value in these practice-based and practical training components, trainers and project management staff from NOAH, SACBC, World Vision and Woz'obona all emphasized the importance of developing practical skills among participants with poor literacy skills. While practitioners with low literacy levels may not be able to obtain higher level ECD qualifications, they can nonetheless apply practical skills for working effectively with young children. Practitioners interviewed for this report emphasized their appreciation for opportunities to learn their jobs through such hands-on approaches.

Collaborative Capacity Building and Advocacy

"We want to share good and bad practices, and work with the government to invest more in this sector. There should be a joint partnership with civil society organizations and the government...We are also working with some other partners in terms of developing and recommending policy."

Program Director, Save the Children

Partner organizations have also established relationships with one another, collaborating on capacity building initiatives for staff and volunteers working on ECD and/or OVC activities. Each organization has cultivated particular programmatic strengths within the child development sector, and is thus able to share niche expertise through joint training and other collaborative

ventures. For example, Woz'obona has conducted training sessions with CACs at NOAH's Arks on facilitating active learning through play, and has also provided training for NOAH's home visitors on the "writing to read" approach to literacy, in which children are introduced to literacy during home visits and learn to read and write by creating picture books about their lives. Save the Children in 2009 provided training to SACBC on establishing community childcare forums (CCFs). NOAH and Woz'obona have also collaborated on a research initiative examining how participatory ECD services could be carried out in Limpopo province. These relationships, in addition to contributing to capacity building through training initiatives, prevent duplication of efforts or overlap of activities in areas where several organizations are working. Furthermore, groups of organizations with similar goals may constitute a more effective voice than any single organization for

"We've been very lucky because we've been able to take our approach to sister organizations without having to ask for money from the recipient organizations, because it has all been paid for by our donors. This has given us access to other organizations. NOAH is a good example of this, because we've worked with them in a number of different ways."

Director, Woz'obona

resource advocacy purposes. Each of the organizations included in this report has worked hard to establish relationships with local government, at the district or even provincial levels. These collective efforts have brought increased government attention to the need for ECD programs, the positive impact of existing programs, and the need for policy change and development. By capitalizing on the strength of their shared vision and establishing a unified voice in advocating for ECD investments, these organizations have laid the groundwork for continual program growth and improvements.

CHALLENGES

Inconsistent and Late Attendance

Teachers reported that children with sporadic or inconsistent attendance at the ECD centers were less prepared for school upon completion of preschool or Grade R. Instructors struggled to help children with high absenteeism catch-up to the rest of their class, and found that they often did not have sufficient time to provide the

“There are some children as young as three or four taking care of sick parents and caregivers and they can’t really enjoy or thrive in their ECD environments. These children need care themselves. This affects enrollment [in ECD] and transition to school, particularly in rural areas and townships.”

Program Director, Save the Children

necessary one-on-one support. The primary reasons for absenteeism included economic difficulties that prevented parents from paying program fees on time or at all. Often chronic illness within the household exacerbated these barriers to access, and even apart from serious economic hardship children may be kept at home if there is no one available to take them to preschool on a daily basis. In other cases, organizations report that young children are responsible for providing physical care for ill parents, or for taking on other household tasks when a parent is ill. In areas where education levels are low, and parents themselves have received little education, partners also indicate that preschool may not be seen as a priority, and the benefits of preschool education may not be fully understood.

“The difficulty is that the children don’t come every day. Some only come when they need food, and then they are behind the other children and we struggle to teach them. We try to build on what the children learned before, so if a child misses a day or a week, they miss out on all those lessons.”

ECD Volunteer, World Vision

The DOE has recently implemented a policy requiring children to have successfully completed Grade R before entering Grade One. This policy is designed to ensure that all children entering Grade One have been exposed to the same educational concepts, reducing variation in knowledge and skill levels within the classroom. However, in response to this policy many parents bring their children to ECD centers for Grade R just a month or two before they are supposed to start Grade One, rather than enrolling children in preschool at the age of three or four and enabling them to receive a year of school preparation. This late enrollment results in reduced contact time with teachers, who struggle to impart the entire Grade R curriculum in just a few months. Teachers reported that it is difficult to provide teaching services effectively to children who lag far behind alongside their better prepared peers. Moreover, many primary schools in South Africa have begun formally assessing children's readiness for school before admitting them, and late enrollees are often unable to acquire skills sufficient to pass such assessments. Organizations reported that in these cases parents sometimes blame the teachers for not sufficiently preparing their children. Interventions aimed at improving attendance should identify and address the root causes of delayed initiation of Grade R, such as lack of transportation and inability to pay fees, and may also consider including an outreach component for families, promoting the value of ECD programs and the importance of early enrollment and regular attendance.

Parental Training

Engaging parents in formal ECD programs can be challenging, particularly in areas where educational attainment among adults is low. Even parents whose resources are less limited may be unaware of the benefits of ECD education. While Woz'obona and Save the Children have developed programs that successfully engage parents in ECD, their reach remains small relative to the need.

"We've found that it's easier to reach the more vocal parents in the community, so now we're focusing on reaching those who are less vocal, and explaining what we're doing and how their participation will give them decision making power. People have been very receptive, because they feel they have a voice."

Program Manager, Save the Children

Woz'obona's program targets parents whose children are already enrolled in its fee-based preschool, so exposure to outreach is minimal among those who may need it the most. Save the Children's ECD support group sessions for parents and training for home visitors concentrate on OVC guardians; however, the scale of the program is limited. Similarly, staff at NOAH, SACBC and World Vision expressed the need for more parental engagement, recognizing its potential to support child enrollment and attendance at centers as well as to empower caregivers to develop in their critical role as the child's first teacher.

While funding is a necessary prerequisite for scale-up of parental training opportunities, doing so could be a natural extension of existing services. Each program offers home visiting to OVC and such activities could be expanded to include an ECD focused home-based approach, with care workers receiving training and transferring such skills during home visits. Centers currently serving children could also conduct workshops and training for parents, either implementing such activities themselves or empowering SGBs to do so.

The parent-focused models undertaken by Woz’obona and Save the Children are scalable approaches that could serve as a useful starting point for other organization with similar aims. Woz’obona’s FMSLL program teaches parents how to use readily available items for teaching basic developmental skills and school readiness concepts at home, incorporating education into daily routines. The FMSLL curriculum is designed for implementation among parents in low-income settings where education levels are low, and could be easily applied at existing centers. Woz’obona has further expressed interest in adapting it for a home visiting format where one household or several households are brought together for a workshop series. Training home visitors in FMSLL may help programs expand their work with parents in rural and low-income areas where access to ECD centers is limited by financial constraints and distance to ECD centers. Save the Children’s training provides other core competencies for promoting child development, such as nutrition and health service information, and the organization has significant experience with incorporating such skills transfer into both a center and home-based format. These parent-focused models, alone and in combination, present opportunities for addressing young children’s cognitive and physical development needs in a variety of forums. As all partners expressed interest in expanding outreach for parents, leveraging each organization’s particular strengths (developing curricula or modules, implementing training, etc.) in a partnership model for outreach service delivery may also prove useful.

Limited Pool of Trained Professionals and Volunteers

In low-income communities where education levels are low, it is challenging for centers to find trained ECD teachers or practitioners locally. All of the programs prefer to have staff and volunteers with a minimum of Grade 12 education, or ECD

“It was difficult to find people to come and teach at our drop-in centers, because most people in area have not received a decent education, and you find they are not able to give what they don’t have.”

Grant Manager, World Vision

Level One, which is equivalent to secondary school matriculation with a focus on ECD, but this is often not possible. Many areas have no colleges or vocational schools, and those individuals who can afford to go away for school or training rarely find employment opportunities back home where

compensation matches their skill and educational level. Qualified teachers and other ECD practitioners tend to look for salaried opportunities, and may be unwilling to work for the small stipends community-based organizations can offer.

These barriers ultimately leave most programs to rely on compassionate but frequently underprepared community members, rather than qualified ECD teachers, for service delivery. Many programs reported being unable to interest and retain volunteers or practitioners who had completed secondary school, much less teachers with ECD qualifications. Organizations often try to address this skill gap through the provision of unaccredited two-week ECD training. Moreover, World Vision and Save the Children rely entirely on volunteers to carry out ECD-related activities in non-salaried positions, although some receive a small stipend. At SACBC sites ECD staff qualifications vary, with some centers having the resources to recruit teachers with university degrees who receive a DOE salary, and other sites relying on volunteers, some of whom are working on Level One or Four qualifications part time. As in the case of SACBC, Woz’obona teachers with a Level Four ECD certificate or equivalent receive a salary, while those with lower qualifications, such as Level One, are eligible for a smaller stipend. However, obtaining such qualifications is beyond the reach of many other program support staff. Woz’obona trainers reported that aspiring ECD teachers who have not completed secondary school can achieve an ECD Level One certificate, but they often struggle with the written work necessary to attain a SETA-certified Level Four ECD qualification.

“The ladies who receive training through the ECD centers here are not employable in the working world outside of this community, as they are perceived as not qualified. Yet if a lady goes off to university and studies for three years and gets a teaching qualification the poorer communities cannot afford to pay her because she is too qualified. We feel that there should be more training for the poorer communities.”

ECD Teacher, SACBC

Many of the staff at NOAH’s Arks and SACBC’s sites began as volunteers and are now earning a salary. Volunteering at centers is often an entry point for a career in ECD for young women in rural and/or low-income communities. In areas where options for training and employment are few, this opportunity is a significant one. Some organizations have provided financial support for volunteers and staff to obtain accredited ECD Level One training, and there is value in expanding such efforts. Facilitating increased access to even introductory accredited ECD training may help build a qualified workforce locally, and professionalize ECD services at the centers.

Low Levels of Administrative Support at Centers

Most ECD centers do not have staff dedicated specifically to basic management and administration. Designated managers and administrators at various sites discussed the difficulties associated with teaching full-time while also handling the operational aspects of the programs. Teachers at NOAH, SACBC and Woz'obona are required to compile monthly reports for the organization's headquarters and for the SGB, as well as tracking each child's progress for quarterly reports and/or meetings for parents. The centers which are registered as NPOs or as ECD centers have additional monthly reporting requirements to maintain their registered status. Project and financial management training from the organizations helps build staff capacity to implement required reporting systems, but the process can be

"The workload is too much, and we can't get everything done. There are many disturbances from the Department [of Social Development], always asking us for reports, and it keeps us from teaching the children. We need someone to do this admin work for us, but we have to do everything ourselves, and still take care of the children."

ECD Center Manager, SACBC

quite time consuming at centers with a limited number staff and volunteers. With dedicated administrative support, teachers would be able to devote more time to teaching, provide one-on-one attention to children who need extra support, follow-up with parents more regularly, and implement extracurricular activities at the centers such as choirs or sports teams.

Inability to Obtain DSD Registration as an ECD Center

Each of the ECD sites identified essential program areas for which resources were insufficient to deliver the full range of services they wanted to provide to children and their families. Obtaining DSD registration as an ECD center was a particularly fraught issue for many sites. Government subsidies have been made available to preschools and ECD centers to help them address the nutritional needs of children enrolled in the programs by

"At present we are not registered with the DSD, because of the requirements. They needed more documents, and now we are in the process of registering. We would like to be registered with the DOE, and that will help us align with the national curriculum. Maybe then we could get a better salary for the teachers, and maybe even better training and more funding."

ECD Center Manager, SACBC

providing nutritious meals on-site as well as to pay for teacher salaries. While in some cases sites that are registered as NPOs are able to get government funding towards feeding programs for OVC, registering as an ECD center makes a site eligible for an additional feeding subsidy that covers all children under five, and is not OVC specific. In order to register, a center must meet a number of infrastructure and staffing standards. Specifically, registration requires centers to have a minimum square-footage for each student, and

contains additional specifications for the kitchen, toilets and yard. It further requires that organizations have a sound governance protocol, including a manager/director and an SGB, and a constitution or set of guiding principles; and the site must also have one or more staff with a recognized ECD qualification, such as the Level Four ECD certificate.

NOAH, SACBC and World Vision have helped many of their sites attain NPO registration, but registering as an ECD center has been more challenging, particularly at the most remote sites, where ECD services are so desperately needed. Many center managers said they were unable to register the center with the DSD because they did not have the capital resources necessary to improve the building's infrastructure in keeping with government minimum standards. It is challenging to find qualified staff and volunteers, particularly in rural or low-income areas, as many of the volunteers begin working at ECD sites because they have a passion for working with young children, rather than because they have been formally trained in ECD. Teachers expressed frustration that without this registration they were not eligible for funding from the government, and yet without funding they were not able to meet the requirements for registered status. Staff at SACBC and Woz'obona sites that had received ECD registration indicated that maintaining registered status was challenging due to the level of mandated reporting and the growing list of infrastructure requirements. Centers struggling to manage competing priority needs reported exhausting their available funds on food for children enrolled in the program and on salaries/stipends for teachers, and thus being unable to renovate or expand ECD buildings as required.

Grants to help programs obtain the required teacher qualifications and infrastructure improvements could increase registration rates among centers and result in greater access to significant sources of financial support. In addition, registration with DSD can also yield a variety of training opportunities, contributing to the long-term sustainability of centers.

Inadequate Services for Children with Cognitive and Physical Challenges

ECD teachers indicated that they find it difficult to properly assist children with cognitive and physical disabilities or delays. Those participating in SETA-accredited ECD training indicated that assessing and identifying children with special needs is not part of the standard curriculum. Other ECD practitioners reported even less exposure to capacity building opportunities related to children with special needs. Support for identifying special needs children and providing them with appropriate supplemental services is available in some of the urban areas of the country through the DOE's District Assessment Teams, and specialized remedial schools that cater to a variety of cognitive and physical challenges. However, these services are not readily available in the more remote locations. Even in cities, teachers reported experiencing wait times as long as six months or more before the District

Assessment Team was able to visit the school and assess the child. The teachers believed that this delay is primarily caused by under-resourcing in terms of people trained to conduct the specialized assessments, and that there is a need to recruit and train more assessors to reduce wait times. Once assessments are complete, additional challenges often become apparent, including the need for children to travel far from home to take part in special needs classes or receive additional services. Fees charged for special education services represent yet another barrier to access among children from resource-poor families. Without access to extra attention and/or specially tailored learning programs, these children tend to fall behind their classmates at an early age, and their chances of finishing school are further diminished.

In the future, programs may consider addressing the dearth of specialized disability services by establishing formal linkages with the District Assessment Teams who work for the DOE providing individual cognitive and physical disability assessments. These

“If a child is slow and we see that they can’t keep up with the other children we try to work with them to help them. We don’t have special programs for these children, but we do what we can.”

Child Activity Coordinator, NOAH

relationships could be initiated through the SGB or the CCFs, to avoid adding to the workload of teachers and ECD volunteers. In areas where District Assessment Teams and specialized services may be limited, selected ECD teachers and volunteers would benefit from related training. They could be instructed on how to identify children with special needs, making appropriate referrals, and ideally ways to use readily available resources for special education to ultimately help children facing these challenges to succeed in the ECD center environment. For example, trained volunteers or staff could spend additional time with special needs children one-on-one, and there may be ways to adapt the standard curriculum to better suit children with special needs, depending on the nature and severity of the disability. While providing staff and/or volunteers universally with specialized training may not be feasible, each site could select one to two practitioners for training and to implement the newly acquired skills and approaches in their home communities.

THE WAY FORWARD



Children lining up at NOAH's Reamogetswe Ark

Much has been accomplished by the five partner organizations profiled in this case study. Their ongoing efforts to bring high quality ECD programs to rural and low-income communities in South Africa are reaching vulnerable children in the critical early stages of physical and cognitive growth. Moving forward, each of the programs indicated a desire to reach those children who are not enrolled in ECD centers, and intervene with those whose attendance is infrequent. Facilitating increased access to accredited

ECD training for volunteers and practitioners is also a priority, as is expansion of parent-centered and home-based models among those organizations who have implemented such programs. Obtaining ECD center registration through DSD is a pressing need common across partners. Approaches to addressing this may include recruiting additional administrative support or seeking funding from alternative sources.

These programs are at the helm of a movement to ensure that *all* children in South Africa are given a solid foundation for early learning and later success, in school and beyond. The importance of early childhood development services is only magnified for children whose progress may already be imperiled by illness, poverty, and lack of household and community resources for education and wellness. In South Africa, high rates of HIV transmission and low levels of access to testing and treatment services have had particularly damaging effects on children, many of whom are growing up without one or both parents or with someone who is chronically ill. Program approaches to support young children's healthy physical and mental development, such as structured school readiness programs, parental engagement and training, and effective partnerships between preschools and primary schools, must be scaled up to reach more children in more places. NOAH, Save the Children, SACBC, World Vision and Woz'obona's ECD programs represent an array of promising responses to this critical need. Ongoing efforts to identify and support strategies that are working best are our best collective hope for enabling the healthy early development of each successive generation, in South Africa and around the world.

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