

Country-Level Sector Work

CAPE VERDE AND GUINEA

“Early Childhood Development in Africa: Can We Do More and Better for Less? A Look at the Impact and Implications of Preschools in Cape Verde and Guinea”

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It is now widely recognized that early intervention programs are one of the most effective ways to build human capital and break the cycle of poverty. Yet the amount spent on early childhood care and education (ECCE) varies considerably, and no single approach has been identified as a universal model to suit every cultural context. If poor countries are to initiate and maintain effective ECCE programs, it is necessary to identify interventions that are both cost effective and adaptable to meet different communities' and countries' needs.

As part of the World Bank's effort to amass the “building blocks” needed to determine both the feasibility of and best practices for investing in early childhood care and development, the sector study examines early childhood programs in a relatively wealthy African country—Cape Verde—in comparison with a relatively poor country—Guinea. Based on the understanding that there is no blueprint for the implementation and support of early childhood activities, particularly in low-income African countries, it emphasizes that the feasibility of different approaches may be to a large extent country specific. In Cape Verde, the sector work is being conducted under the Education and Training Consolidation and Modernization Project. In Guinea, this sector work will support the government's Education for All plan to improve learning quality, eradicate child illiteracy, and reduce adult illiteracy.

Indicator	Guinea	Cape Verde
Per capita GNP (US\$)	550	960
Under age 5 mortality (per 1,000)	207	64
Malnutrition	29%	19%
Immunized for measles	56%	82%
Pre-primary school enrollment	9%	30%
Grade 1 enrollment	54%	100%

Source: World Bank 1999.

The study attempts to extract general guidelines on implications for adaptation and implementation of different program options to inform educational planning efforts. Reviewing the country context, it describes the range of early childhood programs in operation and explores the impact of these programs on children's cognitive and physical development, identifying for both countries the characteristics of the most effective interventions.

The study addresses five main research questions:

1. What is the overall status and profile of preschool or ECD programs in the targeted countries?
2. What factors determine child enrollment in preschool or ECCD programs?
3. To what extent does preschool attendance influence child development?
4. What programs or program characteristics appear to be most effective in terms of child development? (What types or characteristics of the surveyed preschool programs are most associated with or explain child development gains?)
5. What are the policy implications of these programs in terms of beneficiaries, costs, financing, and implementation?

Section II of the study summarizes the concept of ECCD and its relevance for poverty alleviation in the African context. Section III describes the methodology used for the study. Sections IV, V, VI, and VII examine the findings and policy implications from the Cape Verde and Guinea surveys, including a description of the ECCD sector and an analysis of the determinants of preschool attendance and impact on child development. Section VIII concludes with a summary of findings and principal policy implications of the research, identifies additional issues, and makes recommendations for future action.

The study applies a survey methodology defining cognitive and physical development as dependent variables, and individual characteristics of the children (such as age, gender, health status, socioeconomic status, and family characteristics) and variables related to the preschool/ECCD programs (such as student/teacher ratio, qualification of teachers, type of program, urban or rural settings, private or public program, overall cost structure) as the two groups of independent variables. A sample of preschool centers was designed in each of the countries, taking into account variability of socioeconomic levels, geographic distribution, and types of programs. In both Guinea and Cape Verde, for each of the centers surveyed, a random sample of 15 five-year-old children and their families were surveyed, and for each center, 10 five-year-old children from the same location and with similar socioeconomic characteristics who did not attend preschool formed the control group. Cross-tabs and multivariate analysis were used to compare the two groups and the incidence of variables for the cognitive and physical development of children. These analyses were done separately for each country. Two types of instruments were applied: questionnaires addressed to the teachers and personnel in the centers and to families, and cognitive development tests to assess the children and the program's impact.

In Guinea, the sample was designed in a two-phase approach: a sample of 36 preschool centers and 900 children from Conakry and four additional geographic regions (Moyenne Guinée, Haute Guinée, Basse Guinée, Guinée Forestière). The samples were derived from a first-stage sample of 460 centers and 1,089 teachers. Of the 36 preschool centers, 64 percent were *écoles maternelles*, 22 percent were Community Education Centers (CECs), and 14 percent were *jardins d'enfants*. In Cape Verde, the sample consisted of 34 centers and 850 children and their families with a geographic distribution covering five islands (Santiago, 60 percent; Maio, Fogo, Sal, and São Nicolau). Sixty percent of the centers were located in either

urban or semi-urban areas, and 40 percent were in rural areas. The distribution according to the type of centers was the following: public, 50 percent; private, 18 percent; NGO, 11 percent; community, 12 percent; religious, 9 percent.

Study Findings and Recommendations

Preschool education can be a double-edged sword that can both alleviate and exacerbate disparities. Preschool services can have an equalizing effect on the cognitive development of poor children, compensating for disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Even if preschools cannot entirely close the cognitive development gap between rich and poor children, a lack of early stimulation programs can widen the gap in a relatively well-off country. Public policy should emphasize the support of ECCD programs for poor and disadvantaged children. The provision of subsidized programs for lower-income families could, in addition to reducing disparities in school readiness among children from different socioeconomic status (SES) levels, also free mothers to find employment, thus improving household income levels.

More and better can be done with less. High-cost programs may not necessarily produce the best results. Low-cost preschools need not sacrifice quality. Many such preschools are effective, producing high cognitive development scores at low unit costs. Traditional, government-supported approaches with highly paid teachers and formal training do not automatically guarantee high cognitive development scores. Short, focused, reliable, and contextualized training can be more efficient and less costly than most available formal training programs. Community-based programs, such as the CECs in Guinea, appear promising, in part because of parental involvement and financing and the proximity of the locally resident teacher, who is able to spend more time at the school. The wide variation in effectiveness of preschools, at many different price points, indicates that there are many factors that influence a preschool's success. Closer examination of what makes indigenous models of ECCD successful is warranted, particularly in the case of the CEC programs in Guinea but also in other francophone African countries that have similar types of initiatives.

Government plays a critical role in supporting ECCD programs. The services the government provides and the policies it promulgates should work within a realistic investment framework. In Guinea, where preschool enrollment is low and public resources for providing ECCD programs are scant, the government can establish a supportive policy framework that creates an environment in which private-sector and community ECCD initiatives can flourish. This could take many different forms, such as (a) supporting IEC and parental education campaigns about the importance of early childhood education and care; (b) piloting low-cost, community-supported ECCD models based on promising indigenous programs; (c) creating ECCD start-up credit funds; or (d) developing nonburdensome guidelines and guidance for community programs.

Government can improve efficiency and equity. In Cape Verde, where the public sector is already providing a significant proportion of the population with preschool

services, the government role should focus on the more efficient use and distribution of public-sector resources. The preschools that have enjoyed the greatest success at the least cost should be studied further and replicated. Focused ECCD-related training should be provided to public-sector teachers. Resources to benefit the poor could be redistributed by levying user charges on wealthier households, limiting public preschool access to poor families, or providing poor families with subsidies (scholarships, uniforms, nutrition, or health services) to encourage enrollment.

Government can improve quality. Government can act to improve the quality of ECCD services available through public- or private-sector providers. Government can help equip local organizations and parents with the knowledge of what to expect from ECCD providers in order to select or monitor their children's preschool program. Government and donors should think "outside the box" of formal, traditional preschool programs. They should encourage and support communities in the creation of ECCD services and target whatever assistance is feasible to those communities that have acted to provide preschool or ECCD services.

What are the next steps in supporting ECCD in Africa? This study highlights several issues that require further investigation, ranging from the longer-term impact of preschool on the performance of primary school students and the elusive factors that make a preschool effective to how best to expand access to preschool programs without raising public expenditure burdens or pricing poor parents out of the preschool market. The government of Guinea—with World Bank assistance—will initiate ECCD pilot programs in the country's two poorest regions to provide a more in-depth and qualitative look at the features of successful programs, as well as their costs, and to replicate them within the framework suggested by this study (community-based and parent-supported centers). In Cape Verde, several of the research findings—in particular, the equitable allocation of preschool resources and the effectiveness of government preschools—are subjects of the policy dialogue taking place between the government and the World Bank.

Policy Implications: What Can Government and Donors Do?

- Create a supportive policy framework
- Encourage community and private-sector ECCD initiatives
- Develop low-cost, effective, and realistic models of ECCD
- Launch IEC and parental education campaigns
- Work within a realistic investment framework.

Source: Jaramillo, A., and K. Tietjen. 2001. *Early Childhood Development in Africa: Can We Do More and Better for Less? A Look at the Impact and Implications of Preschools in Cape Verde and Guinea*. The World Bank Africa Region Human Development Series. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

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