



Review of the Early Learning Partnership

Executive Summary for the Early Learning Partnership Advisory Group
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Executive Summary

Introduction and context

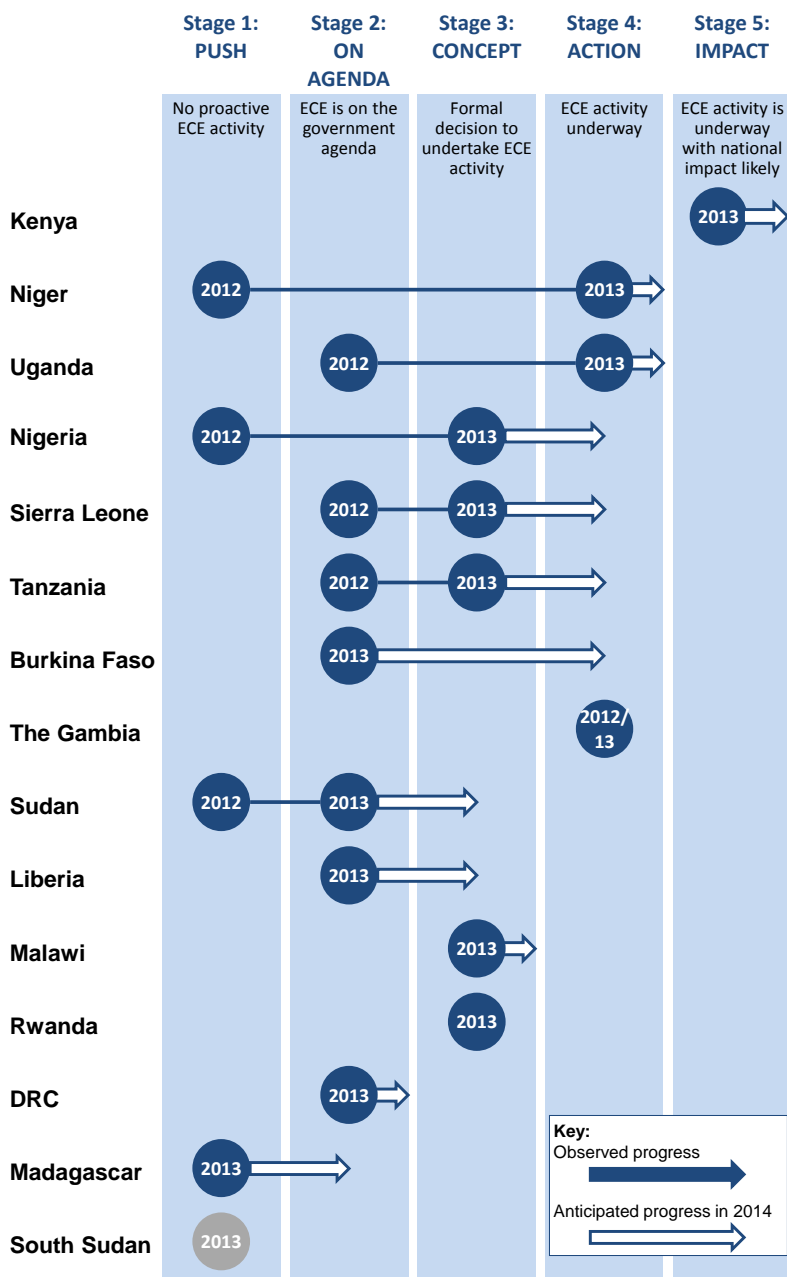
The Advisory Group for the Early Learning Partnership (ELP) has agreed to review the work program and experience of the ELP from 2012-2014. The Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) provided US\$ 2.05 million to ELP from October 2012 to October 2014, with US\$ 1.6 million allocated to the Africa region. This funding was intended to help raise the profile of ECD in the region and at the World Bank by leveraging larger amounts of finance and impact, and catalyzing change in countries to promote high-quality ECD and learning opportunities for young children. The remaining funds were allocated to the education anchor unit (HDNED) to fund global support for ECD¹. The ELP review, conducted by external consultants, focuses on the use of funds that were allocated to the Africa region, and presents findings on country-level impact, regional influence, leveraged funding, and collaboration with external partners. Main findings from the review show that ELP has successfully promoted ECD at the country level and at the World Bank through grants, workshops, and other support as needed (including additional funding from BMZ).

To meet its goals, ELP has carried out the following key activities:

- To promote ECD at the country level in Africa, ELP awarded 14 grants to World Bank Task Teams through a competitive process. The 14 grants provided funds for Technical Assistance (TA) to support project preparation, outreach, capacity building, and upstream TA. Task Team Leaders (TTLs) reported that progress on the ECD agenda was unlikely to have occurred without the ELP grant.
- To promote ECD more broadly in the Africa region and within the World Bank, ELP has developed a regional Community of Practice (CoP) for ECD stakeholders, co-hosted two regional workshops with 21 country delegations, contributed to analytical work, and engaged with World Bank staff on ECD.
- ELP has leveraged resources from the World Bank, governments, and other donors to promote high-quality ECD in three ways: generating new funding for ECD through promotion of ECD within GPE and IDA projects, improving the efficacy or quality of ECD activities within existing projects, and catalyzing technical resources of World Bank staff and consultants.
- In addition, ELP has made significant efforts to align strategies and improve donor coordination with its key partners, especially UNICEF, UNESCO, and GPE.

¹ Funding received by HDNED produced an ECD glossy, review of ECD in the World Bank portfolio, World Bank training on ECD, and SABER-ECD policy research in India.

Figure 1. Countries' progress along the critical path



Impact

ELP has had a significant impact on moving the ECD agenda forward at the country level and within the World Bank's Africa region, as well as leveraging funding for ECD.

Country-level impact

- Most countries (nine out of 14) that received ELP grants have progressed along the critical path² - as outlined in Figure 1.
- Collaboration between the ELP team as well as TTLs have been instrumental in supporting progress by target countries, especially at the more advance stages where understanding of the delivery systems and nuances within country is vital.
- ELP grants, especially when an ELP team member was embedded with the Task Team, have contributed to inclusion of ECD activities in nine GPE/IDA projects.
- ELP grants and team support improved the quality of ECD interventions, provided feasible options to implement governments' ECD strategies and commitments, encouraged new ways to think about ECD and provided partial funding to four impact evaluations.

Regional level impact

- Senior leadership at the World Bank engages with ECD and believes that ELP has contributed to an increase in momentum for ECD.
- The ECD portfolio in the Africa region at the World Bank increased during the tenure of ELP in FY14, including steady increases in the number of projects with ECD components or subcomponents and ECD analytical work.
- ELP has successfully collaborated with external organizations to co-host regional workshops and stay informed of ECD plans at the country level, which resulted in positive feedback from partners on collaboration.

Leverage impact

- In total new project funds, ongoing project funds, and technical resources, ELP has leveraged over US\$ 43 million to promote ECD in 14 ELP grant countries.
 - 60 percent comes from generating 10 new projects, which will test several feasible models for ECD provision, including flexible training for instructors and caregivers, community-based ECD centers, development of teaching and learning materials, parenting education, and childcare for women at work/training.
 - 40 percent comes from complementing 4 existing projects.
 - The small remainder comes from over a year's worth of World Bank staff and consultant human resources.
- This funding represents a return of 21 times over the initial investment of US\$ 2.05 million.

² The critical path was initially developed by CIFF and subsequently adopted by the ELP Advisory Group.

Recommendations

ELP has successfully promoted ECD at the country and regional levels. The following lessons learned and recommendations may be useful to consider for a potential second round of ELP funding, and include: deployment of resources, expanding grant funding, measuring and reporting results, and working with partners (see Table 1).

Table 1. Lessons learned and recommendations

	Lessons learned	Recommendations for next phase
Deployment of resources	Progress along the critical path depended on both ELP effort and TTL effort in countries such as Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Making significant progress on the critical path was also possible with less effort (minimal or moderate) from the ELP team and extensive TTL effort (e.g. in Niger).	Consider ways to better identify and support existing TTLs who are champions for ECD and to cultivate new champions.
	ELP was able to finance significant impact by providing grants that complemented ongoing projects in countries like Niger and the Gambia.	ELP could continue to finance activities where TTLs have a clear plan in place, with a pathway to scale, but lack funds
	As part of ELP grant activities, costed implementation plans proved difficult to develop in some countries, though recent progress in Tanzania and Kenya suggest that once Government is interested, the process can move forward more quickly and meet a compelling need.	ELP could keep the challenge of developing costed implementation plans in mind when setting targets for any second round of funding and supporting more targeted activities to help address known barriers with costing.
	Countries that demonstrated strong ownership of ECD activities, such as Sierra Leone, made significant progress along the critical path.	ELP could prioritize grants where there is demonstrable country ownership of ECD activities, and also encourage this as part of grant objectives.
	ELP support was a critical factor in rapid progress along the critical path, especially when an ELP team member was embedded with the World Bank Task Team (e.g. Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Uganda).	ELP could consider expanding the model of ELP members or other core consultants embedded in Task Teams.
Expanding grant funding	Other trust funds at the World Bank, including JSDF, provide differentiated tiers of funding to facilitate the application and review processes for different types of applicants.	For future rounds of funding, ELP could offer two tiers of funding: larger amounts for countries that are ready to implement ECD activities and continuation of smaller amounts for countries that are beginning the policy dialogue.

	Lessons learned	Recommendations for next phase
Expanding grant funding (cont.)	TTLs mentioned that capacity in terms of ECD providers and ECD policymakers can present a constraint to sustainability of ELP grant activities.	ELP could consider targeting capacity building activities, both at the policy, managerial and caregiver/teacher level for the next potential round of funding to increase sustainability.
	World Bank staff reported that they committed on average 23 days that were not financed by ELP to implement ELP grants.	ELP could encourage staff to request funding for their time dedicated to ELP grants, by making this more explicit in the application and grant monitoring process.
Measuring and reporting results	Countries chose to engage and advance ECD in varied ways, and their journey within the critical path is not as uniform and linear as the current Theory of Change seems to suggest. For example, many countries made significant progress on early learning but less emphasis was placed on health impact. Also, similar activities (e.g. impact evaluations) in different countries resulted in dissimilar outcomes.	The Theory of Change could be revisited to ensure it is consistent with experiences thus far, reflecting the varied and non-linear paths that countries could take. In particular, there could be more specific criteria for each stage of engagement and a more explicit focus on early learning.
	While no standard set of grant activities is guaranteed to produce results, countries at earlier stages along the critical path encounter different bottlenecks requiring different activities (for example, securing resources to implement the ECD policy in Sierra Leone) than do countries at later stages of the critical path (such as scaling up national interventions in the Gambia).	ELP could create a “menu of options” as suggested by senior World Bank management and TTLs to identify the most effective models for ECD provision in the region and suggest criteria for where each model may be most effective.
	Although feedback from regional workshop participants was positive, it was difficult to link workshops with changes in ECD engagement at the country level. The team did not have adequate staffing capacity to ensure follow-up in some instances.	ELP could plan a small number of post-workshop follow-ups to assess the extent to which participants have helped promote/influence ECD in their country, and which aspects of the workshop have been most instrumental for change. Expanded resources should allow for better follow-up.
	A review of the ECD portfolio through the World Bank’s database did not capture the full picture of analytical work funded by ELP.	ELP could consider providing each country grant a specific project code to allow for easier tracking and perhaps higher profile.
Working with partners	UNICEF mentioned that the positive working relationship with ELP has led to better outcomes and increased coordination on ECD (for example, co-hosting regional workshops and staying informed of ECD plans at the country level in Sierra Leone).	ELP could continue to strengthen its relationship with UNICEF and identify complementary areas of expertise and work, as UNICEF is a key partner for ECD in several grant countries.