

# Evaluating an early childhood care and education program brought to scale in Ghana

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<b>Registration date</b> 17/12/2021	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 14/10/2022	<b>Condition category</b> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Millions of children in the developing world will not reach their full potential due poor sanitation, nutrition and living in unstimulating environments. Many early childhood care and education programs have been shown to be effective in improving pre-school children's school readiness and health, but few of those which have been adopted by national governments have either (i) been re-evaluated once they're delivered at a national level or (ii) been shown to be effective once they have been.

This study team previously evaluated the International NGO Lively Minds ECCE program in a small efficacy trial in northern Ghana, showing it to be effective in boosting cognition and child health. This program has now been adopted by the government of Ghana, and is being rolled out to 61 districts across the north of the country. In partnership with the government and Lively Minds, we have agreed to evaluate the roll of the program using a randomized control trial framework, randomizing the order in which different districts start to receive the program across a 3 year period.

### Who can participate?

Study participants are children aged between 3-5 and either enrolled or due to enrol in pre-school in the coming school term.

### What does the study involve?

This study involves taking part in two surveys, one immediately prior to the ECCE program being rolled out to participants district and one two to three terms later, where one term is about three months. As the program is now run by the government of Ghana and part of the government policy, researchers have little to no input in its delivery other than randomizing the order in which it gets rolled out to each district.

### What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Other than gifts given to survey participants as compensation for their time, there are no benefits for taking part in this study. Taking part in the study entails interacting with interviewers, covering topics such as health and maternal empowerment, which some participants may find uncomfortable.

Where is the study run from?

The study is run from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (UK), in partnership with Yale University (USA), the University of Ghana, and International Poverty Action, Ghana.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

June 2021 to September 2024

Who is funding the study?

The study is funded by United States Agency for International Development

Who is the main contact?

Dr Sonya Krutikova, [sonya\\_k@ifs.org.uk](mailto:sonya_k@ifs.org.uk)

## Contact information

### Type(s)

Scientific

### Contact name

Dr Sonya Krutikova

### ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2488-7489>

### Contact details

The Institute for Fiscal Studies

7 Ridgmount Street

London

United Kingdom

WC1E 7AE

020 7291 4800

[sonya\\_k@ifs.org.uk](mailto:sonya_k@ifs.org.uk)

### Type(s)

Public

### Contact name

Dr Sonya Krutikova

### Contact details

Institute for Fiscal Studies

7 Ridgemont Street

London

United Kingdom

WC1E 7AE

020 7291 4800

[sonya\\_k@ifs.org.uk](mailto:sonya_k@ifs.org.uk)

## Additional identifiers

**Protocol serial number**

AEARCTR-0008500

## Study information

**Scientific Title**

Evaluation of a pre-school program implemented at scale in Ghana

**Study objectives**

1. The early child care and education program improves child development when implemented at scale.
2. The early child care and education programme increases child height-for-age Z scores (and reduces rates of stunting) when implemented at scale.

**Ethics approval required**

Old ethics approval format

**Ethics approval(s)**

1. Approved 23/10/2021, UCL Ethics Board (University College London, 2 Taviton Street, London, WC1H 0BT, UK; no telephone number provided; ethics@ucl.ac.uk), ref: 21361/001
2. Approved 22/11/2021, Ghana Health Service Ethics Review Board (Research and Development Division, Ghana Health Service, P.O. box MB 190, Accra, Ghana; no telephone number provided; ethics.research@ghsmai.org), ref: 028/09/21
3. Approval pending, Yale Ethics Review board

**Study design**

Unblind multi-centre cluster randomized control trial with 1:1 allocation

**Primary study design**

Interventional

**Study type(s)**

Quality of life

**Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Child health and cognitive and socio-emotional development.

**Interventions**

The intervention in this trial is the government implementation of the International NGO's Lively Minds Early Child Care and Education program, with the sequence in which different districts start receiving the program randomly allocated by the research team. The program involves child playgroups for pre-school-aged children, the installation of "Tippy Tap" water sources for hand-washing, pre-school teacher training, and a parenting program, and was previously evaluated by the PI in an earlier study (see <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/14922> for details).

While the program is scaled to all districts in Northern Ghana, this study focuses on 54 districts (grouped into 9 district groups (DG)) and two cohorts of children, combined into 60 district-cohort pairs. District groups will be enrolled in the study from January 2021 to September 2024 in 5 tranches. In each tranche, one DG is allocated at random into the treatment group and one allocated to the control. District group six is used with different cohorts of children as both a

control and treatment district group - control with the first cohort of children, treatment with the second. The control DG in each tranche will begin to receive the program 2 to 3 terms after being enrolled into the study after all data collection has been completed.

## **Intervention Type**

Behavioural

## **Primary outcome(s)**

Measured 2 to 3 academic terms (6 - 9 months approximately) after treatment commences:

1. Child cognition as measured using the emergent numeracy, emergent literacy and executive functioning tasks in the IDELA as well as items relating to the same domains from the Harvard Laboratory for Development Studies
2. Child health, as measured using height/weight for age and height for weight Z score
3. Child socio-emotional development, as measured by the externalizing, internalizing and pro-social domains of the Strengths and Difficulty questionnaire and the the socio-emotional items in the IDELA

## **Key secondary outcome(s)**

Measured 2 to 3 academic terms (6 - 9 months approximately) after treatment commences:

1. Maternal mental health (Kessler-10 and WEMWBS) and knowledge of ECCE
2. Teacher knowledge, motivation and teaching quality (measured through classroom observations)
3. Parent-child investment, as measured by quality of the home environment (FCI and HOME) and the parent-child relationship (CPRS)
4. WASH practices in the home
5. Acute Malnutrition measured by MUAC

## **Completion date**

01/09/2024

## **Eligibility**

### **Key inclusion criteria**

1. Aged between 3 and 5 years
2. Enrolled in the 1st year of preschool or planning to enrol in a sample preschool in the coming term (i.e. they must be in the preschool for the whole duration of the treatment).

### **Participant type(s)**

Healthy volunteer

### **Healthy volunteers allowed**

No

### **Age group**

Child

### **Lower age limit**

3 years

### **Upper age limit**

5 years

**Sex**

All

**Key exclusion criteria**

Does not meet inclusion criteria

**Date of first enrolment**

17/01/2022

**Date of final enrolment**

01/02/2023

**Locations**

**Countries of recruitment**

Ghana

**Study participating centre**

**Ghanaian Education Service**

M45 Ministries Accra

Accra

Ghana

M45

**Sponsor information**

**Organisation**

United States Agency for International Development

**ROR**

<https://ror.org/01n6e6j62>

**Funder(s)**

**Funder type**

Government

**Funder Name**

United States Agency for International Development

**Alternative Name(s)**

U.S. Agency for International Development, Agency for International Development, USAID

**Funding Body Type**

Government organisation

**Funding Body Subtype**

National government

**Location**

United States of America

## Results and Publications

**Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan**

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the study will be stored in a publicly available repository, either the UK Data Service or the World Bank Microdata archive (conditional on funder requirements). Archived data will be fully anonymous, and consent for the archiving process is sought as part of the participant consent process. The data will be available for research purposes only.

**IPD sharing plan summary**

Stored in publicly available repository

**Study outputs**

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Protocol article</a>		13/10/2022	14/10/2022	Yes	No