



Executive summary

Final evaluation of the Education component: *Save the children* project, Uganda

DIRECCT programme

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1 Presentation of the evaluation

The final evaluation concerns Save the Children's "Ask a teacher" project. This project offers face-to-face training for teachers, supplemented by telephone training via an interactive voice server (IVR). IVR training comprises seven pre-recorded teaching modules. Each module is delivered over a one-week period, with pre- and post-training assessments. This distance learning course also includes an SMS service to support teachers' commitment to their learning process.

To carry out this evaluation, various categories of stakeholders were contacted via WhatsApp and the interviews were conducted remotely via WhatsApp, Zoom and Teams. 9 interviews were conducted, as well as an in-depth study of the project documentation. The consultant was supported by a Cota employee, Alexandra Cogels, bilingual FR-EN, who conducted the interviews online, in the presence of the consultant and using the interview guide prepared by the latter. This pairing worked very well and made it possible to obtain the desired information.

2 Results and conclusions

2.1 Performance criteria

Relevance

Good alignment of the project with the MoES strategic plan

The Ministry of Education and Sport's (MoES) sector analysis highlighted a lack of skills in teaching methods. In response to this assessment, the government drew up a national policy in 2020 highlighting the need to strengthen teachers' skills. Save the Children's "Ask a teacher" project is in line with this ministerial strategy because it aims to strengthen teachers' pedagogical skills.

Good match between the project and teachers' needs

The "Ask a teacher" project aims to strengthen the teaching skills of primary school teachers (P1 to P7). The project is organised into three phases: 1) eighteen face-to-face training modules for teachers; 2) a discussion period with tutors following each module; 3) a reminder of key concepts via telephone calls at fixed times (IVR training). The design of the eighteen face-to-face training modules is based on an in-depth analysis of teachers' needs (baseline). This pedagogical reinforcement meets a real need. In-service training for teachers in low-income areas is often inadequate and of poor quality.

Good involvement of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the Project

The project has encouraged the active participation of key stakeholders throughout its implementation, namely the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES), District Education Officers (DEOs), inspectors, tutors, head teachers, teachers, School Management Committees (SMCs), Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and parents.

Intervention logic: general objective not achieved

The general objective of the project is as follows: "To ensure the continuity of educational services in order to mitigate the impact of the covid crisis in Uganda". The question is more about a future containment: if there were to be a future containment, would the project be able to ensure the continuity of education services? The answer is no. The teachers have not been trained in distance learning, nor have the pupils been introduced to digital technology. We are aware of the realities on the ground, and we are talking here about digital distance learning because it is part of the MoES's strategic plan. Distance learning can take other forms, such as the involvement of the community (parents as 'relay teachers') or audio or paper-based courses. As currently implemented, the project's activities and products will lead to the following objectives:

- general objective: to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Uganda;
- specific objective: to strengthen teachers' pedagogical skills.

Project relevant over time, with the exception of IVR training

If we look at the Project as a whole, i.e. in-service teacher training, the Project is relevant over time, whatever the contextual changes. Teachers will always need to improve their teaching practices. However, when we look specifically at IVR training (we are talking here about the technology used), doubts emerge as to its relevance over time. This method, based on telephone training, seems somewhat out of step with the digital advances observed in other African countries in terms of hybrid or distance teaching/learning. Firstly, training teachers in ICTs fosters their professional development, offering opportunities for continuous learning, collaboration and pedagogical innovation. Secondly, given that students will be required to work with digital tools in their future professional lives, it is essential that teachers integrate the teaching of ICT into their pedagogical approach, and therefore that they are trained in its use.

Coherence

Good complementarity between partners, but no formal coordination

Other technical and financial partners are involved in teacher training, but their work is very complementary. However, there does not seem to be any formal coordination between these partners, although synergies and pooling could be envisaged.

Efficiency

Efficiency of cascade training

As regards face-to-face training, 8 CCTs and six inspectors were trained in pedagogy by MoES representatives. They then trained 500 teachers in the three target districts in pedagogy. This cascade of training makes it possible to optimise resources by training a small number of trainers (CCTs and inspectors), who in turn train a larger number of teachers.

Time-saving equipment for CCTs

The project provided motorbikes and tablets to the CCTs. According to the interviews, this equipment saved them time and made their inspection work easier.

Cost/benefit ratio: no added value for IVR training

The IVR training is a reminder of the key concepts covered during the face-to-face training. Setting up the IVR training cost 117,159 euros, which represents 37.6% of the project's overall budget.

The quantitative added value of IVR training is questionable. Of the 202,540 teachers who started the training, only 0.11% went on to module 7. This loss is thought to be multi-factorial: IVR calls at times when they are not available, poor network quality, insufficient data, difficulty in changing "paper" habits, lack of motivation, human IVR voice difficult to understand, financial incentive too low (2000UGX/module completed), loss of telephone.

The added value in terms of quality was also questioned. The paper version offers additional flexibility compared with audio courses: a) you can read at your own pace, revisiting certain concepts if necessary; b) you can read when you want, depending on your availability; c) you can continue your training beyond the project.

Efficiency

Effectiveness of face-to-face training/Good synergy between training, peer exchanges, training materials and supervision by CCTs

The training modules are of high quality. The effectiveness of face-to-face training can be attributed to an effective combination of: a) face-to-face training; b) post-training peer exchanges; c) training materials summarising the key concepts covered in training; d) and teacher supervision by the CCTs.

IVR training/Quality content but some revisions needed

IVR training consists of reiterating the key concepts covered during face-to-face training. The content of the training organised by IVR is of a high standard. A few revisions are nevertheless necessary. For example, there is no section on writing teaching objectives, and several of the training's teaching objectives are missing, poorly formulated or inadequate.

IVR training/Poor post-test results

Few teachers score well on the post-tests, i.e. the quizzes given at the end of the modules taken by telephone. For M1 and M7, the average post-test score was only 44% correct. For 5 of the 7 modules, the teachers obtained post-test scores lower than the pre-test scores: M1: -2%; M2: -1.6%; M3: -11.9%; M4: -2.1%; M6: -8.7%. The poor post-test results for the IVR training course highlight the need to revise the quizzes.

Lack of links between the Project and teacher training

The various players spontaneously associate the training they have taken with Enabel. The training is not perceived as ongoing training that is an integral part of their teaching job, but rather as one-off training linked to a project. As a result, the motivation of some actors to take this training is reduced because they perceive it as a task added to their job. It is essential that the modules are consistent with the training programme given at the teachers' institute, and that communication about these modules comes mainly from these institutes.

Impact

Individual level/Building teachers' teaching skills

Teaching practices have been improved thanks to face-to-face training. For example, teachers are putting more positive teaching into practice: they appreciate each pupil's progress, encourage them and give them positive feedback on their work. These findings are in line with the results of a study presented in Save the Children's final evaluation report (March 2023) and also corroborate the performance obtained during the post-tests of the face-to-face training.

Individual level/Student learning reinforcement

Literacy and numeracy scores have been improved. For literacy, there has been an increase of 5 percentage points from 2022 to 2023, from 40% to 45%. For numeracy, there has been an increase from 34% to 56% from 2022 to 2023.

Individual level/Very limited impact on improving teachers' digital skills

The impact in terms of strengthening digital skills remains very limited. In face-to-face training, no module deals specifically with digital technology. Furthermore, there is no mention of digital technology in the content of the modules. The same applies to IVR training by telephone. Using the telephone to follow courses does not allow users to develop their digital skills either.

Organisational level/Strengthening key players in education

The project has brought about significant changes within educational structures. Tutors and inspectors have expanded their role by becoming trainers, thereby enhancing their own skills. In addition, the training of headteachers in pedagogy has encouraged the emergence of a pedagogical dialogue within the school, between teachers and between teachers and headteachers.

Systemic level/Positive impact on school attendance

The project has had a positive impact on increasing school attendance. This increase is linked in particular to the improvement in the quality of teaching. Teaching would be more structured, more positive, more active and interactive, and more in touch with the realities of everyday life. These changes in teaching practices are said to have had a positive effect on pupils' motivation to come to school.

Durability

Extend the development of headteachers' skills in education and school management

Headteachers benefited from face-to-face pedagogical training in the same way as teachers. This pedagogical reinforcement is positive insofar as headteachers now have better pedagogical knowledge and skills, enabling them to discuss their practices with teachers. Nevertheless, in order to further strengthen the sustainability of the project, it would be beneficial to strengthen the skills of headteachers in two areas: a) pedagogy and b) classroom management. By filling these gaps, headteachers could play an essential role in the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching.

Exit strategy for IVR training not fully developed

At present, the continuity of IVR training remains uncertain, as the departure of the Project Director has not enabled liaison to be established between the new team and the Ministry to discuss the resumption of the Project. No agreement has yet been reached with the Ministry to obtain a free telephone line, and no formal arrangements have been made for the continued funding of IVR training.

Lack of incentive to invest in training

Official recognition (attestation, certification) of teachers' efforts could strengthen their intrinsic motivation to invest more in the lifelong learning process. With regard to IVR training, until December 2023, teachers received a reward of 2000UGX for each module completed. Since 2024, teachers are no longer paid for each module completed, but instead have to pay 300UGX. Although this is a modest sum, the interviews show that this amount seems to be an additional obstacle to completing IVR training.

2.2 Specific questions: gender criteria

Taking gender into account in training modules. The face-to-face and IVR training modules include lessons on gender, from combating stereotypes to promoting girls' participation in the classroom.

Equal access to training. Access to both training courses was equitable between the sexes, with similar rates of engagement and progression throughout the different training modules.

Reinforcing girls' learning and the persistence of gender stereotypes. Girls' results in literacy and numeracy improved between 2022 and 2023. Compared to boys' results, girls are better in literacy and boys are better in numeracy. These very positive results for girls could nevertheless reflect the persistence of gender stereotypes associated with girls' skills in literary fields and boys' skills in mathematical fields.

3 Recommendations

1. Replace the IVR training course with a summary paper and/or digital document (on a USB key) that teachers can consult at any time. One or two documents per school can be provided. Add a module relating to the formulation of an educational objective, review the formulation of the objectives, as well as the pre-test and post-test.
2. For face-to-face training, integrate a module on hybrid or distance teaching into face-to-face teacher training. Familiarise students with the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). In the event of a pandemic, one possibility would be to provide teachers and students with computers/tablets/smartphones. Other possibilities include involving the community ("relay teacher" parents), and audio or paper lessons. It will be important to add an accompanying document for parents, so that they can support their children in their learning.
(NB. We are aware of the realities on the ground. The recommendations relating to digital technology are addressed to the Ministry. The integration of digital technology into teaching and learning is part of the MoES's strategic plan).
3. Include specific training on school management so that headteachers play an essential role in the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching.
4. Provide for a diploma or official certificate to recognise the efforts of teachers who have undergone training and encourage their commitment.
5. Establish closer links between the project and teacher training institutes. Ensure that the modules are consistent with the training programme given at these institutes. Communicate mainly from these institutes to reinforce the perception of continuing education as an integral part of the teaching profession.
6. Re-establish formal coordination between technical and financial partners to ensure better complementarity and continuity between the different school levels. Regular meetings could be organised between the partners to discuss progress, challenges and lessons learned from the various projects. These meetings could be organised remotely if the partners are far apart. Several projects are currently working on teacher training and are producing their own training with their own materials. In order to ensure overall coherence, it would be interesting to pool certain activities.
7. Re-establish formal communication between the new project team and the Ministry to discuss the continuity of IVR training: free telephone line, funding for IVR training. This recommendation only applies if IVR training is maintained.

4 Lessons learned

1. Ensure the presence of at least one person who supervised the project through to its evaluation, in order to guarantee the availability of the information and documentation required for this evaluation stage. Otherwise, it is essential to keep a complete record of the project. In the case of this project, some documents were lost or were only stored on the project manager's computer. Another possibility is to include in the contracts an obligation to take part in an interview with the project evaluators.
2. The importance of post-training follow-up. The project has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning because it offers post-training follow-up. The teachers took part in face-to-face training, then exchanged views with their peers, they were supervised by the CCTs and a reminder of the training was offered to them via the IVR system.
3. Enhancing the skills of tutors, inspectors and headteachers has a significant impact on the quality of teaching.

4. In the context of the move towards digital education, it is crucial to integrate digital skills into teacher training so that they can continuously self-train and prepare their students for today's realities.
5. The effectiveness of cascade training has been demonstrated, highlighting the importance of training a small number of trainers who can then share their knowledge with a larger number of teachers.
6. Financial incentives and formal recognition play a crucial role in teacher engagement in training, highlighting the need to adjust these incentives to maximise participation.