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STRONG BEGINNINGS: LEVERAGING THE HOME, SCHOOL, AND CHURCH TO DEVELOP THE WHOLE CHILD IN HAITI

JULY 2023

OVERVIEW

Strong Beginnings is a four-year program led by the University of Notre Dame and partners using the L3 (lakay, lekòl, legliz / home, school, church) model for learning and emotional support for vulnerable children, aged 3-8, and their families. Increased investments in social and emotional learning (SEL) and scaled-up innovative, early childhood development (ECD) approaches are needed to prepare Haitian children for early grade, mother tongue literacy (Haitian Creole and French). The ultimate goal is to equip students with strong academic and SEL skills to become lifelong readers, learners, and citizens by the end of 2nd grade.

QUICK FACTS

PARTNERS

- University of Notre Dame (UND)
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
- The Episcopal Commission for Catholic Education (CEEC)
- Summits Education
- Schools for Basic Teacher Training and Centers for Pedagogical Support Network (EFACAP)

LOCATION

- Sud, Grand'Anse, Centre, Nord & Artibonite departments (270 schools)

BENEFICIARIES

- 164,000 pre-primary, 1st and 2nd grade students by 2023-2024
- 907 pre-primary, 1st and 2nd grade teachers by 2023-2024
- 270 school directors

GOALS

GOAL ONE	Strengthen the Creole and French reading and writing skills as well as the social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies of 1st and 2nd grade students through the provision of scripted literacy and SEL curriculum, robust teacher training and coaching, curated classroom libraries, and community-delivered summer reading camps.
GOAL TWO	Ensure that children between 3-6 years have a nurturing, developmental environment and are ready for school (measured by pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, motor functioning, and SEL skills), accomplishing this through the creation of SEL and pre-literacy materials for early childhood development (ECD) facilitators and parents, facilitator training, education for parents, and training for local community leaders on ECD.
GOAL THREE	Inclusion of an innovative learning lab that seeks to work with community partners to identify intractable issues that affect child development and learning, develop community-driven solutions to these issues, and iteratively test these solutions before scaling them up in other areas.

KEY RESULTS

- A randomized control trial found that the pre-K SEL program had a statistically significant positive impact on level 3 students’ SEL skills, such as managing stress or expressing empathy. A more comprehensive curriculum will be evaluated in School Year 2023-24.
- Through the L3 learning lab, 516 caregivers learned childhood development, positive parenting, and nutrition skills using local products. A “caregiver/parent ambassador” group and 91 parish and community leaders learned ECD to deliver pre-birth child development and SEL sessions to their communities.
- Four Community Resource Centers serve 438 children to develop their competencies in literacy, numeracy, and SEL outside of school.
- Data from a holistic L3 systems evaluation with in-depth open interviews identified L3 activities as the cause of meaningful change to support whole child development for the children in the program. Two thirds of parents taking the L3 training began using non-violent approaches to manage their children’s behavior at home. These changes in child rearing have positive impacts on student learning outcomes.
- Learnings from the evaluation exercise led to expanding the ECD program to more communities with a multi-year, pre-service training program for parish and community leaders in northern Haiti.

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