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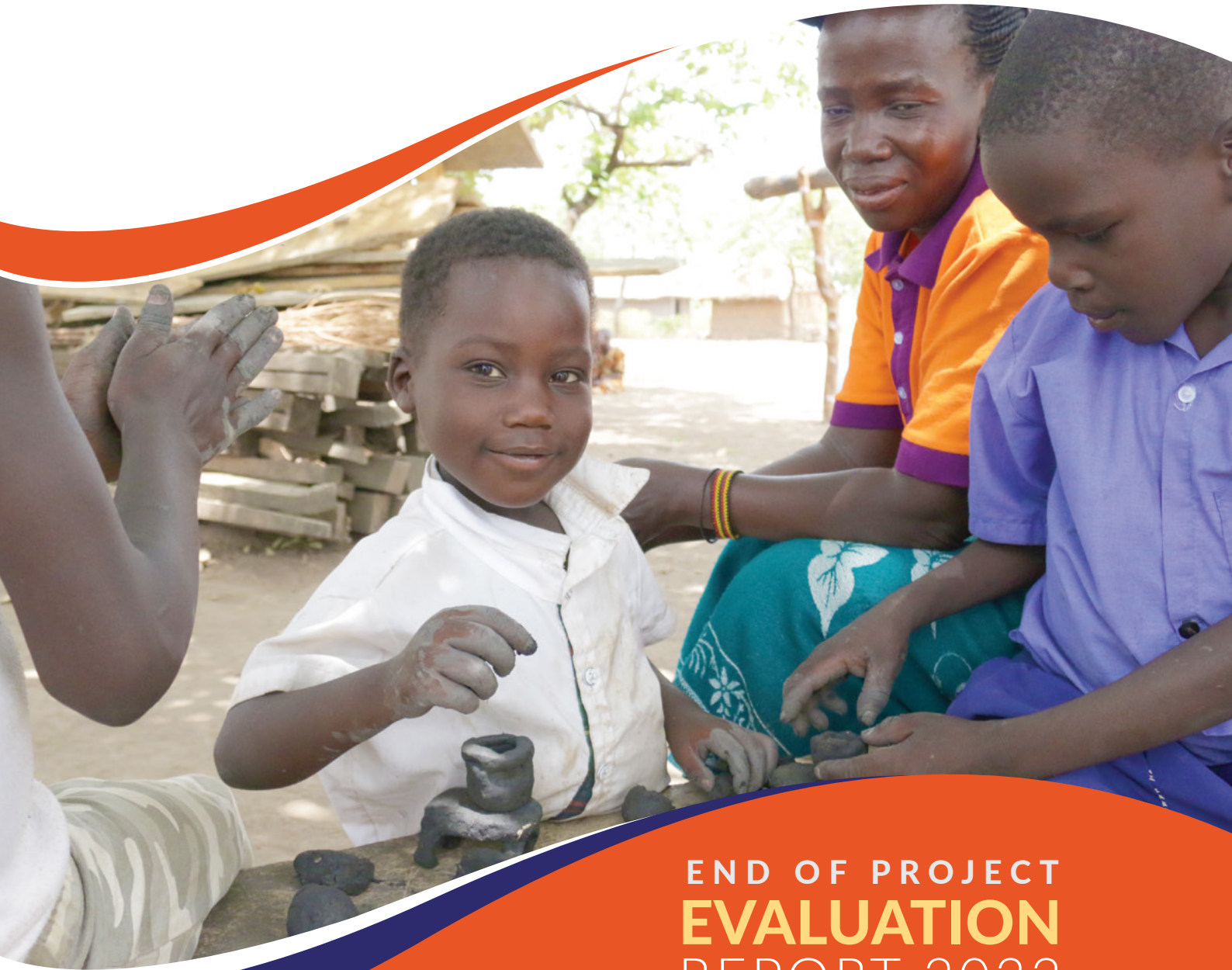
END OF PROJECT
EVALUATION
REPORT 2022

Building and Strengthening Integrated Community Support (BASICS) for SURE - (Phase 2 of 'Scaling Up Readiness and Retention – SURE – Impact) – Comic Relief Grant Code: 2828623

Author

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Acronyms

BASICS	Building and Strengthening Integrated Community Support
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CDO	Community Development Officer
DEO	District Education Officer
DIS	District Inspector of Schools
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FABE	Family and Basic Education
FGD's	Focus Group Discussions
HLCs	Home Learning Centers
HLCMC	Home Learning Centre Management Committee
HoP	Head of Programmes
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LABE	Literacy and Adult Basic Education
M &E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation & Learning
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PEs	Parent Educators
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VHT.	Village Health Team
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

Acknowledgement

This evaluation illustrates provocative insights that will prove to be critically important in the work with young children and their parents in UGANDA. The work that LABE has carried out offers a unique contribution that both challenges and extends knowledge of working with parents alongside community engagement. This evaluation would not have been possible without the support of the LABE team, the evaluation support team that include: Miria Nandera, Lubanga Elvis, Emiau Emmanuel, and Fatemeh Sadeghi. Importantly, we acknowledge the children, parents and supporting professionals of the HLCs. It is also worthy to note the particular influence of the policy makers, and of the Comic Relief team. With everyone's commitment and support a considerable, impressive programme has been created, improving the lives of children, their families, and communities

Executive Summary

Building and Strengthening Integrated Community Support (BASICS) is Phase 2 of the project 'Scaling Up Readiness and Retention (SURE) Impact' funded by Comic Relief and Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), formally Department for International Development (DFID). It is implemented in the Ugandan districts of Gulu, Nwoya, Koboko and Obongi and delivered by LABE. Phase 1 was funded from August 2017 to November 2020, and Phase 2 (Stream A) was funded from April 2020 to September 2021. LABE is an indigenous non-governmental organization established in 1989. The project aimed to provide holistic ECD for 2,750 learners, while building the capacity of parent educators and Home Learning Centre Management Committees (HLCMC), parents, and government officials at the local and national level to support inclusive access to quality ECD in Uganda. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which the delivery of Phase 2 of the SURE project has achieved its planned outcomes and to identify lessons for future projects. Throughout this evaluation report, this extension phase is referred to as the 'BASICS' project.

With the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the LABE project, qualitative research was conducted through online and face-to-face interviews. The interviews included participants from the LABE Board of Directors, LABE secretariat; a Comic Relief Focal Person; national level officials (MoES, NCDC), district - and sub - county officials and community leaders

– key informants; and participants from Home Learning Centres (HLCs) and adopters of LABE's community-based ECD methodology. Many of the interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. The participants all expressed a willingness to participate. Data collected from the participants are presented in the findings.

Objective 1:

To assess the relevance of the project outcomes
LABE's BASICS project included working with children, communities, sub-county- and district officials and national level policy makers. Thus, the programme promoted stakeholder engagement. The learning activities in the Home Learning Centres provided organized, structural experiences as part of the daily routine. Additionally, the experiences were delivered in homes to encourage children to participate alongside their parents. The class sessions were also multi-age which allowed children of different ages and abilities to learn from each other.

Objective 2:

To find out if the overall project represented good value for money
- a). The BASICS project focused on providing Early Childhood Care and Education services in marginalized communities. The intention was to support communities that may not have been able to benefit from other early years' education programmes. This has been identified as promoting equitable practices.

- b). HLCs used local materials to construct learning shelters; everyday resources were used to make play and learning materials for children; and some parents volunteered to work in

the HLCs. The local resources provided relevant learning experiences at a low cost, which are indicators of economy as defined by INTRAC (2020).In terms of efficiency, the inputs and outputs have been considered. The Parent Educators (PEs) and Programme Officers (POs) are the major inputs in this project. The PEs and POs have been locally recruited (economy) and are providing support using local resources.

- c).In terms of efficiency, the inputs and outputs have been considered. The Parent Educators (PEs) and Programme Officers (POs) were the major inputs in this project. The PEs and POs were locally recruited (economy) and provided support using local resources.

- d).In terms of effectiveness, it was considered how well the outputs from an intervention achieved their intended outcomes. The major output was the BASICs toolkit, which was used to deliver quality learning to 2,750 pre-school children. However, it was noted that the toolkit was yet to be adequately utilized by PEs. It is hoped that the full utilization of the toolkit will be implemented as the toolkit is developed further.

Objective 3:

To assess level of achievement of outcomes and the overall impact on the lives of beneficiaries

The project has a set of five intermediate outcomes. The level of achievement is explained based on our observations and perception in the field as follows:

Intermediate Outcome i): Improve learning outcomes for pre-school children at HLCs.

While parents reported positive examples of improved learning outcomes in children, elements of concern were also reported, especially by LABE officials. For example, at the time of the evaluation, the final parts of the toolkit were still being developed. With this in mind, more could have been offered to support the children. It is believed, the full toolkit will not only share the learning, but it will embed and enhance it. Additionally, it was noted that continuous assessment for learning of children who are still in the centres has yet to be initiated. Attempts have been made to conduct readiness assessment for children transiting to primary school. For effectiveness, the readiness assessment needs to be expanded to include those joining HLCs and those transitioning from HLC to primary school. Doing that will create baseline data that can be used to compare children's learning at the transition stage. As it stands, it was difficult to attribute readiness assessment data to the model. One other challenge that seemed to have contributed to both the delay in assessment and achievement of this learning outcome was the COVID-19 lockdowns. While children continued to attend classes in the HLCs during the lockdowns, other effects of COVID-19 like movement restrictions, health concerns of some learners, PEs and families greatly affected consistency. Our findings reveal that 60% of this outcome has been achieved.

Outcome 2: Enhance PEs capability and motivation to provide inclusive quality home-based ECD to children in marginalized areas.

The data revealed that all 82(100%) active PEs received training. Most of the training was conducted online, during the lockdown period. As the travel restrictions were eased, further support at cluster levels were conducted. However, 42 (50%) of the PEs reported not to be competent. This was

understood as most of the PEs trained virtually, and for the first time. Thus, although they participated in the training, some reported being overwhelmed by technology. Additionally, some of the PEs experienced health challenges related to COVID-19. Some of the PEs had been motivated by the hope that the course would be certificated; When this never happened, some felt discouraged.

When PEs went out to the communities during the COVID-19 period, many community members had learnt that relief items were being distributed to more marginalised groups. So, while the PEs encouraged self-help activities, some communities preferred donations. This attitude distorted the earlier efforts of PEs, with some becoming demotivated. Based on the findings, 50% of this outcome has been achieved.

Outcome 3: Support parental and community engagement in HLCMCs LABE implemented a variety of support services to improve the capacity of communities to manage HLCs.

Many of the activities revolved around training and supporting HLCMCs and VSLAs to implement their HLC action plans. It is worthwhile to note that 38 (90%) HLCs had established a VSLA group to fund HLC activities. Community mobilization had taken root as shown in the managing of HLCs, e.g., as aforementioned, construction and renovation of learning shelters, repairing outdoor- and indoor play materials, paying PEs and registration of HLCs at sub-county and district level. This resulted in 90% of this outcome being achieved.

Outcome 4: To work towards local government extension staff and ECD service providers to be more coordinated, inclusive, and responsive to the needs and demand of quality informal ECD.

The district officials interviewed confirmed that LABE has supported the communities. Special praise was given to the construction of learning shelters and community sensitization which influenced parents acceptance of the HLC concept. Through the support from LABE, the district officials for Koboko, Nwoya and Gulu have been able to monitor HLCs, participate in the PE trainings, support the process of registering 38 HLCs, and connect HLCs to government support services like livelihood trainings, seedlings and livestock distribution.

There was also acknowledgement by the districts of LABE's role in supporting and promoting continued learning during the COVID-19 period. To them, the HLC concept supported the government programme of home learning. The district leaders affirmed that the LABE model was an excellent example to use; and there was a desire to extend this model to other communities.

In some districts however, some officials were still slow to support the HLC concept. Even when supported, some officials did not find time to visit the centers as expected. Based on the findings, 70% of this outcome has been achieved.

Outcome 5: To achieve improved awareness and expansion of the home-based ECD model in marginalised areas of Uganda.

According to the findings, LABE has developed a number of promotional materials such as brochures, leaflets, t-shirts / caps etc. that can be used to popularize the model in HLCs and wider communities. Additionally, LABE conducted a 'Knowledge Attitude and Perception' (KAP) study

which explored how to promote the model within and outside LABE's areas of operation. At national level, LABE has presented the model at different forums including FENU, ELMA Community of Practice, UNICEF, MoES' Basic Education and ECD working groups etc. LABE also had radio and TV talk shows to popularize the model. The programme was particularly appreciated during the COVID-19 period. However, going forward, as said above, more work is needed, e.g., in terms of working with those adopting the HLC approach and PEs. Worthy of note, some adopters openly embraced all the components of the model, while others who said they had developed their own models adopted one or two components of LABE's Home Based ECD model. We were able to identify six adopters who meet the LABE definition of adoption. These include St Matia Mulumba in Kasese, USDC in the refugee settlements of Adjumani, Cheshire Services Uganda in Amolatar, Cotton On Foundation Uganda in Lwengo and Rakai, Rutooma Modern Primary School in Mbarara and Catholic Church in Gulu.

We were also able to identify two modified model adopters, where HLCs adopted LABE components into their models. These include Kyambogo University in Buikwe, Kalaki, Kalungu and Kaliro. LABE has also worked with Able Child Africa-UK to adapt the toolkit for children with special needs. Furthermore, they have also two other adopters who visited LABE's HLCs and have, autonomously started their own HLCs. These include: Rising Star in Pukong Sub County and Lukele HLC, Palaro sub-county both in Gulu district. The findings revealed this outcome achieved 80% of the intended outcome.

Objective 4:

To assess any unexpected or unintended project outcomes Unintended project outcome From design, the project planned to deliver ECD learning sessions at the project HLCs. However, due the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions, the project resorted to delivering sessions through clustered home visits to support continued learning amidst the prevailing restrictions. To implement this, the PE was trained and supported with materials to facilitate condensed sessions at clustered homes with 3-6 pre-school children in the different homes. The COVID-19 lockdown also presented far reaching opportunities i.e., increased recognition and appreciation of the Home Based ECD model at national, district and community level as a worthy model that can be used to support education and community development for hard-to-reach children and families especially during a global pandemic;

a). Much of the learning that was planned in the HLCs was physical (or face-to- face) in nature, however, -as a result of lessons learned during the lockdown restrictions, the project adopted online/virtual platforms to continue project implementation. The project also used recorded video sessions to support in-school learners at HLCs. With this blend of approaches, the project was able to continue implementation amidst the challenges.

b). Physical training and support supervision of the PEs and HLCMCs was planned. However, during the lockdown, the training changed from physical to a blended mode that included both virtual, recorded videos, and face-to-face trainings of PEs and HLCMCs;

c). Implementation of the project's COVID-19 interventions like community sensitizations of the pandemic, development of COVID-19 related home study materials, games, story books and supporting HLCs and communities to set up hand washing facilities like tippy taps and supporting them with soap, jerrycans and masks;

d). HLCs also became centres of excellence from which other government interventions can be accessed by the communities. More was done by government and other agencies to support continued learning for in-school children in the HLCs.

Objective 5:

To assess the extent to which the project overall structure enabled LABE to meet its objectives

The PEs were project implementers recruited by HLCMCs; they were not LABE staff but oversaw learning activities in the HLCs e.g., facilitated children's learning, collected data, supported management committees and interfaced with district officials who came to visit the HLCs. The success or failure of learning in HLCs was largely dependent on these PEs. However, worthy of note, one issue emerged where, management committees, who recruited the PEs, delayed making payments to the PEs. LABE was not in a position to pay the PEs, as staff because this contradicts the community self-help approach that aims at building and promoting ownership and sustainability of project initiatives. This impacted on the morale of the PEs and it was an area of concern for the model.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions have been made:
First, we note that the Home Based ECD model developed by LABE in 2012 has gained recognition and respect as a low-cost and inclusive education intervention for marginalized communities. This has been possible due to the constant rebranding of the model through the different projects over the years.

It was noted that the strategies being used to engage the communities and bring on board the district leadership in supporting the HLCs had yielded more benefits than had been envisaged.

Considering how the project was operating, it was discovered there was significant improvements in project implementation in certain districts, with Nwoya doing better overall in terms of having average achievement of outcomes across the board. Next in line is Koboko with better performance in community mobilization and district leadership engagement. Obongi district comes third with better improvement in PE capacity development as an outstanding outcome.

Some points for further consideration: it would be a useful piece of work to explore the impact on the child of attending a HLC, and whether more time would be beneficial for children. An important LABE goal is to achieve equity; however, some participants did raise gender as an issue, however it was not identified as an obstacle to HLC practice.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings and conclusions, we propose the following recommendations:

a) It was widely acknowledged by all participants, in all roles, that LABE's work is having a significant impact across different regions. As such, it is hardly surprising that all the participants recommended that LABE distribute the programme more widely in Uganda.

b) A further recommendation was that LABE continue to build relationships with the government and take heed of changing policies and government initiatives.

c) We strongly recommend abandoning the districts that did not respond to the HLC programme.

d) It is recommended that comprehensive continuous assessment be initiated in all HLCs, and the PEs are supported to do authentic assessment of learning to support achievement.

REPORT

Background and Context

International attention to early childhood education has grown out of the recognition that intellectual, emotional, and physical development, socialization, and acquisition of culture all interact in shaping a young child's life (Evans, 2000). In order to support children to master the more complex levels of development, children need opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills and values through experimentation, observation, and reflection. The outcome of development is greatly impacted by the quality of experiences the child receives.

Young children need experiences that enable healthy, holistic development, this is a critical right for children. Investment in early childhood is known to positively influence economic, social, demographic, political and educational outcomes. All children, without distinction of their local culture, gender, race, language, religion, should have the experiences necessary in order to grow and develop (UNCRC, 1989). Young children are born with capacities (they are rich, resourceful, capable beings). These capacities enable them to communicate, learn and develop. This view of the child, as rich and able, needs to be supported in order for them to flourish. It is known that the first years of life is when most of the brain cell development occurs, along with the structuring of neural connections to the brain. For this reason, it is critical to invest in early childhood development.

Play-based learning can be used as a pedagogical basis for supporting children's learning in early childhood environmental education. Play enables children to use their creativity (e.g., playing with natural materials such as clay) while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Through play children develop early fine motor writing skills, which are often associated with school readiness and later academic success.

Early childhood is the most formative and essential stage of development that spans from birth to age eight of an individual's life. Evidence from neuroscience and psychology now show that this period in life has a profound and long-lasting impact on a person's future (Van Laere and Vandenbroeck, 2017). In order to nurture this period well, we need to provide Early Childhood Education to children. Early Childhood Education refers to provision for children from birth through to compulsory and primary education (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice and Eurostat, 2014). Additionally, it may also mean all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content (OECD, 2001). It should be noted that in order for children to benefit maximally from early childhood education programmes, such programmes must be of high quality (Education Scotland, 2020).

Research now shows that high-quality programs result in both short- and long-term benefits to young children (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000). Participation in high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) has been recognised as a fundamental step in children's development as it lays the foundation for future growth and learning (Vandenbroecka, Lenaerts, & Beblavý, 2018). Research has shown that children enrolled in high-quality programs tend to demonstrate better cognitive and social emotional outcomes in school than their peers who did not have the benefit of a high-quality ECE program (Mashburn et al. 2008).

Evidence from longitudinal studies of interventions like the Perry Preschool Project and the Abecedarian Project suggest that early childhood education has the potential to reduce these ability gaps by permanently bolstering social and emotional skills (Schweinhart et al. 2005) as well as IQ (Heckman, 2011).

The challenge however comes in identifying which ECE is of high quality since the word 'quality' is contested and subjective (McNair, 2022). To some people, quality ECE may depend on group size, adult-child ratios, and teacher qualifications (Vandell & Wolfe 2000). Others see ECE quality in terms of the amount of time spent in an ECE program, for example, programmes that keep children up to three years are considered of better quality than those who take on children for less than one year (Nores & Barnett 2010). In most poor communities, ECE programmes are considered to be of high quality if it offers protective measures for the vulnerable children (Center for the Study of Social Policy 2009) and do more to counteract those risks (Gomez, 2016). Others look for centres that have programmes that pay considerable attention to the role of early experiences on brain development and their impact on ameliorating risk factors and reducing achievement gaps in the early elementary grades (Gomez, 2016).

Challenges exist, as many interventions come and go without empowering communities to sustain them. To counter this, research has begun to look at ECE systems that create the infrastructure for an aligned, effective set of policies and programs to support young children's development and learning from birth through third grade (Gomez, 2016), with the aim of determining how the gains made can be best sustained. One critical area in providing sustainable programming is the use recognizable service provision points. In the literature, ECEC provision is typically categorised into unitary (integrated) or split systems, public or private settings, and centre-based or home-based provision, among others (Vandenbroecka, Lenaerts, & Beblavý, 2018). Centre-based ECEC provision that is provided outside the home, such as nurseries, day-care centres, kindergartens, or crèches are more pronounced in urban settings.

The Home-based ECEC provision that is delivered in a provider's home for younger children is recognized in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Finland and the UK (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice and Eurostat, 2014).

Home based ECE provisions are preferred in some communities due to the ability to utilize the child's environment for learning. Studies already show that the child's family and community environments are inextricably linked to their development, and stable attachment relationships can mitigate risk factors and promote positive social, emotional, and cognitive developmental outcomes (Ainsworth & Bowlby 1991). HLCs can only be sustained if the communities that initiated them are empowered to own them. Based on a wealth of global research, LABE designed the BASICs programme.

Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) is an indigenous organization established in 1989. It is a registered Non - Governmental Organisation (NGO) under the registration number MIA/NB/2004/10/1197. LABE exists to promote literacy practices and increase access to information particularly among children and women in local communities, in order to implement and protect their human rights. LABE are currently implementing educational projects focusing on children and parents in the districts of Gulu, Nwoya, Obongi and Koboko. LABE works with different partners including the government at district, local, and national levels to support the implementation of basic education policies including Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Early Childhood Development (ECD) contributing to Sustainable Development Goals 4 target 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6. LABE has developed a Family Basic Education (FABE) approach. The aims and objectives of LABE are to improve children and parents' literacy skills, through delivering home based ECD, in marginalized communities, where children in such communities cannot access ECD. LABE has been able to attract support to implement home based ECD in the said communities. Between August 2017 and November 20221, LABE implemented the 'Scaling Up Readiness and Retention (SURE) Impact project'. In May 2020, Comic Relief and FCDO supported the implementation of a second phase of the SURE project. It is this extension phase that is being evaluated and referred to as: 'Building and Strengthening Integrated Community Support (BASICS) for SURE'

Building and Strengthening Integrated Community Support (BASICS) was planned for two-years (1st April 2020 - 31st March 2022). It is implemented in the districts of Gulu, Nwoya, Koboko and Obongi. BASICS for Scaling Up Children's Readiness and Retention (SURE) sought to ease availability of home-based ECD countrywide. This was motivated by the government's approval of the informal ECD Complementary Learning Framework based on LABE's work in Northern Uganda and the West Nile regions of Uganda. This intervention simplified the use of the approved curriculum and illustrated how integrated community support can be delivered, inclusively, in marginalized communities.

The project aimed to provide holistic ECD for 2,750 learners, building the capacity of parent educators and Home Learning Centre Management Committees (HLCMC), parents, government officials at the local and national level to support inclusive access to quality ECD in Uganda.

The project objectives included:

1. To provide holistic ECD for 2,750 learners;

2. To build the skills of parent educators in home learning activities;

3. To increase awareness and capacity of HLCMCs, parents, government officials at the local and national level to support inclusive access to quality informal Early Childhood Education alongside the formal mostly privately funded ECD services in Uganda.

From the above objectives, the project delivered the following outcomes:

a). Improved learning outcomes for pre-school children attending HLCs.

b). Enhanced parent educators (PEs) capability and motivation to provide inclusive quality home-based ECD to children in marginalized areas.

c). Supported parental and community engagement in HLCMCs d). Supported ongoing holistic ECD provision in existing HLCs

d). Worked with local government extension staff and ECD service providers to be more coordinated, inclusive. and responsive to the needs and demand of quality informal ECD.

e). Achieve improved awareness and expansion of the home-based ECD model in marginalised areas of Uganda.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which the delivery of the BASICs project has achieved its planned outcomes and to identify lessons for future projects. The objectives of the evaluation were reviewed and revealed:

a). a need to assess the relevance of the project outcomes;

b). to explore whether the overall project represented good value for money;

c). assess the level of achievement of outcomes and the overall impact on the lives of beneficiaries;

d). assess any unexpected or unintended project outcomes;

e). assess the extent to which the project overall structure enabled labe to meet its objectives;

f). assess the project partnerships and consider how effective they have supported the delivery of project outcomes.

In addition, the evaluation will also answer the following:

a). what role has advocacy, networking and interagency coordination played in the project?

b). to what extent does the project address the SDG 4, targets 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6 as well Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) basic education policies?

Project learning questions:

a) How and why does the ECD teaching toolkit and parenting education improve learning outcomes for children?

b) How do HLCs best contribute to improved educational and livelihood outcomes?

c) What are the parents, teachers, VHTs (Village Health Team) and Community Development Officers (CDOs) views of their relationship with each other in implementing the 2016 National ECD Policy in an integrated approach at Community level? How has this changed through this project?

METHODOLOGY

With the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the LABE project, qualitative research was conducted through both face-to-face and online interviews. The interviews included participants from the LABE Board of Directors, LABE secretariat; a Comic Relief Focal Person; national level officials (MoES, NCDC), district- and sub-county officials and community leaders– key informants; and participants from Home Learning Centre (HLC) and adopters. Most of the interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. In order to receive both descriptive and illuminative data, the interview questions varied according to the role the participant played in the project. A series of open questions encouraged each participant to recount -the detail of their involvement of the LABE project, and to identify the effectiveness of the project and its challenges, from their perspective. The interviews were arranged at a time that was convenient for each participant. The participants all expressed a willingness to participate. Where respondents agreed, interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Additionally, notes were taken during the interviews and written up in detail shortly after.

Study Participants:

The evaluation targeted five categories of participants:

a). beneficiaries of the various interventions, 1) heads of HLCs, 2) PEs 3) HLCMCs,

    4) parents, and 5) children 0-8 years in selected HLCs.

b). project implementing staff/ coordinators in the beneficiary districts.

c). government officials (Inspectors of Schools, District Education Officers (DEOs), Community Development Officer, Ministry of Education Officials)

d). other key informants especially individuals/communities that have adopted LABE intervention approaches.

Sampling and sample size determination

The review covered participants from four districts and at least 10% of the project beneficiaries/participants. The evaluation focused on HLCs and government officials targeted by the project in the four districts. Sample size of 348 participants from the four districts participated. Approximately 132 participants from the four districts were involved in the study. Random selection was done for the parents, while for district officials, PEs, and Ministry officials, purposive sampling was done as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Numbers reached:

Project parameters	Project Target	Sample Reached
Districts	4	4
HLCs	40	16
Parent Educators	80	32
Parents	600	71
District officials	24	12
HLCMCs	40	16
VSLA groups	40	16
Model Adopters	3	2
Ministry of Education's officials ECD working group	20	8
LABE Board of Directors	6	6
Comic Relief Representative	01	01
Total	**854**	**132**

DATA COLLECTION

This comprised of desk review, and formative (face-to-face and online) interviews with implementing project officers and reconnaissance visits.

1. Desk Study:

The desk study included a review of project documentation, including the project proposal, project Start Up Form, SURE Endline Evaluation, Project Annual Report, outputs, and indicators. (It is also intended to complete a desk review of UPE guidelines, the ECD policy, and family involvement in basic education practices elsewhere).

2. Key informant interview:

Interviews were carried out with project implementing officers and beneficiaries including district LABE project officers, local government partners like District Education Officer (DEO) /District inspector of schools (DIS) / ECD focal point officer, and community development officers (sub-county officers) and beneficiary participants. The interviews focused on: the respective roles and level of participation of the various stakeholders in the implementation of the project; whether the project was implemented as planned (fidelity); effectiveness of strategies; what participants said had worked well / not well; and the level of government involvement and support for parental involvement in children's education. In-depth interviews with PEs were carried out to examine their level of participation in the project, roles, and perceived efficacy, how they have been supported, challenges or prospects for improvement and issues of sustainability.

3. Review of monitoring data

A review of the activities was conducted to assess the project reach i.e., number of participants in the different intervention components e.g., the number of children participating in HLCs and other project activities, number of supported households, number of parents and government officials involved in the project and number of new adopters. Additional monitoring was done to assess status of project implementation in the HLCs.

4. Focus group discussions:

Focus group discussions were conducted with parents (constituted in HLCMCs, VSLAs and also in parents' groups). The aim of the focus group method was to establish what parents perceived they learned from the project and in what ways they are using their newly gained knowledge. It was also of interest to discover the levels of support received.

Data management and analysis

Qualitative data: Following field data collection, hand written notes mainly from the FGDs and KIIs was assembled according to emerging themes. These themes formed the basis for discussion.
Quantitative data: Descriptive statistics was used to describe and analyze quantitative data. Results from the quantitative analysis were further strengthened using qualitative data.
Drawing on the approach set out by Silverman (2006) a content analysis was conducted which involved carefully reading through each transcript several times. A copy of the data, named raw data, was electronically stored, on a password-protected computer. The files were then re-read, and important aspects were highlighted. These temporary constructs enabled the coding process. The data was then read through again, a table was created with the temporary construct on the left, and transcript details on the right. This allowed for some temporary constructs to be eliminated. No data was deleted. A further reading reinforced important themes. A final reading allowed for a refining of the data which revealed the constructs that captured the essence of the data.

RESULTS

The findings will now be discussed in the context of the overarching aims of the project. While some findings accord with LABE's original objectives it is argued that more nuanced aims /objectives and understandings were expressed, which took more account of personal experience, and therefore offered a fuller explanation. Real names, and some incidental details have been changed to protect anonymity. Verbatim excepts from the transcripts are included so that representatives from the funder can make some assessments of the way data has been interpreted as well as gaining more immediate sense of participants' perspectives. The narratives that punctuate the quotations emerge from analysis of the wider data and research. From the document review, we were able to establish the following:

Table 2: Numbers reached:

Description	Overall project targets			People benefitting directly since the start of the project		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Pre-school children in project HLCs	3,000	1,650	1,350	3,233	1,711	1,522
Parent Learners	1,600	640	960	1,597	368	1,229
HLCMCs	480	274	206	371	210	161
Parent Educators (PE)	80	36	44	108	49	59
Total number of people benefitting from core target groups	**5,160**	**2,600**	**2,560**	**5,309**	**2,338**	**2,971**
Head teachers	20	13	7	23	20	3
P1-2 teachers	40	18	22	59	26	33
Centre Co-ordinating Tutors (CCTs)	8	6	2	7	6	1
Deputy Principal Outreach	2	2	-	3	3	-
District Education Officers (DEO)	4	4	-	5	5	-
District Inspector of Schools (DIS)	4	3	1	6	4	2
District Health Educators	4	3	1	5	5	-
District and Subcounty CDOS	12	8	4	13	11	2
National level officials (MoES, MoGLSD, NCDC)	20	13	7	23	15	8
Secretary for social services	4	1	3	4	1	3
Program Officers	8	7	1	8	8	-
Regional Managers	2	2	-	2	2	-
LABE Secretariat Staff	7	4	3	7	4	3
Total number of frontline workers	**135**	**84**	**51**	**165**	**110**	**55**
Other primary school children supported by target parents	2,750	1,395	1,355	3,855	1,886	1,969
Total number of people benefitting from other groups	**2,750**	**1,395**	**1,355**	**3,855**	**1,886**	**1,969**

The project aimed to provide holistic ECD for 2,750 learners. While it intended to build the capacity of parent educators and HLCMCs, parents, government officials at the local and national level to support inclusive access to quality ECD in Uganda, the numbers were not specified. Table shows different categories of beneficiaries. Note that while the project targeted 2,750 learners, 3,233 (1,711 males and 1,522 females) benefited, representing an increase of 117.5% of the project target.

Objectives

The evaluation included 132 participants. The data responds to the overall aims and objectives of the programme.

Objective 1: To assess the relevance of the project outcomes Programmes delivered in communities have to be relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries. Before we could delve into knowing whether HLC concept was relevant to the communities, we had to first explore what holistic ECD is. The Nurturing Care Framework (UNICEF, World Bank and World Health Organisation, 2018) shows a nuanced framework that includes aspects like nutrition, security and safety, and good health, responsive caregiving as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Holistic ECD adapted from UNICEF (2018).
Agencies that provide holistic ECD strive to create a context that is able to promote good health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, security and safety for children and above all a stimulating learning environment. The teachers who work with children should be supportive and model healthy, respectful, and compassionate ways of relating and problem solving; use daily routines to provide structure, engage different stakeholders in children's learning and carry out comprehensive assessment of learner progress (Ashokan, 2015).

Relevance of the Project Outcomes
In order for relevant Holistic ECD to be provided in a given community such a programme must promote working with stakeholders, use daily routine to implement learning, involve all children, and practice imitation (Ashokan, 2015).

In accordance with the aims and definition outlined by Ashokan (2015) the BASICS programme, worked with parents, district officials and national level policy makers, thus promoting stakeholder engagement. The learning activities in the HLCs were organized and provided experiences which formed daily routines and subsequently, structure for children. Additionally, the programmes were

delivered in homes which encouraged children to participate and supported parental engagement. The class sessions were also multi-age which allowed children of different ages and abilities to learn from each other, thus promoting holistic development.

Overall, the project was built around 5 key outcomes that include:

1. Improved learning outcomes for pre-school children at and from HLCs
2. PEs are capable and motivated to provide inclusive quality homebased ECD to children in marginalised areas
3. HLCMCs, parents and community members are increasingly engaged and supporting holistic ECD provision in existing HLCs
4. Local government extension staff and ECD service providers are more coordinated, inclusive, and responsive to the need and demand for quality informal ECD.
5. Improved awareness and expansion of the home-based ECD model into under- served areas of Uganda.

Based on our assessment of the project outcomes, we provide assessment as follows:

1. The first outcome that sought to improve learning outcomes of pre-school children was a complex outcome, and difficult to achieve, no matter the variables;
2. The second, third, and fourth outcomes represented the key pillars needed to promote quality early learning in the communities. The second outcome supported the quality of the workforce, the third outcome promoted parental and community involvement and engagement, while the fourth sought to harness government involvement for standardization and quality assurance.
3. The fifth outcome was about advocacy which depended on the success of the other outcomes. It was meant to promote the model as an alternative to the formal models of ECD service provision. Its success greatly depended on how efficient the other outcomes were achieved. In this case, it needed to follow the earlier outcomes.

Objective 2: To find out if the overall project represented good value for money

Value for money denotes general principles governing good planning, procurement and management. Ingredients of value for money are specified by INTRAC (2020):

- **Economy** – are inputs of the right quality being bought at the right price?
- **Efficiency** – how well are the inputs being converted into outputs?
- **Effectiveness** – how well are the outputs from an intervention achieving their intended effect?
- **Equity** –how fairly are benefits being distributed? To what extent is an intervention reaching marginalized groups?

Value for Money Issues

LABE's BASICs project was reviewed which revealed:

a). Some HLCs were using local materials for constructing the learning shelters, additionally they used local everyday materials for play and learning for and worked with local community members as PEs. All these local resources provided quality and relevant learning experiences

at a low cost - economy.

b). In terms of efficiency, the inputs and outputs were considered. The Parent Educators (PEs) and Programme Officers (POs) were the major inputs in this project. The PEs and POs were locally recruited (economy) and provided support using local resources.

c). In terms of effectiveness, it was considered how well the outputs from interventions achieved their intended outcomes. In BASICS, the major output was the toolkit which was intended to contribute to quality learning experiences for 2,750 pre-school children. However, it was noted that the toolkit was yet to be adequately utilized by PEs. This will be done when the complete roll out of the newly launched parts of the tool are implemented.

Objective 3: To assess level of achievement of outcomes and the overall impact on the lives of beneficiaries

This had a set of five outcomes. The level of achievements for each outcome is explained based on our observations:

Outcome 1: Improve learning outcomes for pre-school children at HLCs All the activities being implemented in the HLCs were expected to support children gain competences that helped make them ready for school. Such competencies include proficiency in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional skills, and physical skills. In implementing this outcome, the project designed a number of indicators for success to be observed as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Learner achievement through project intervention.

Improved learning outcomes for pre-school children							
Number-based (quantitative) indicators							
Indicator		Base-line	Overall project target	Numbers ben-efitting since the start of the project			Overall progress compared to project target
				Total	M	F	
4a	Percentage of early- numeracy proficient pre- school children assessed	87.50%	90.00%	90.9% (693)	361	332	102.5%
4b	Percentage of early- literacy proficient pre- school children assessed annually	60%	65%	80.2% (611)	335	276	115.2%
4c	Percentage of pre-school chil-dren with developed motor skills assessed annually	81.70%	85.00%	91.9% (700)	335	276	115.2%
4d	Percentage of the enrolled 5-6-year-old pre-school children graduating from HLCs annually	33.50%	45.00%	53.8% (762)	389	373	108.8%

Table 3 illustrates the progress towards achievement of children's learning outcomes as differentiated from baseline. The biggest progress of 15.2 percent above project target was realized in the proportion of children who were identified as literacy proficient after the intervention. The least progress was recorded as 2.5% above project target in the area of early numeracy proficiency. The quantitative data showed significant improvement at enrollment and literacy development.

Based on class observations, it was noted that the children attended the HLCs three days per week. The PEs were also trained and were using the toolkit to support learning, it was also noted that children were being provided with much needed sustenance to support their learning.

During the interaction with different stakeholders, it was stressed that the HLCs have contributed to the school readiness of children:

There is increased awareness among the communities on the importance of ECD. The communities have already learnt that if you allow a child to go through the ECD centres, that child is better prepared to take on the learning in the primary school compared to somebody who did not go through the ECD (Education Officer, Nwoya).

> *...right now all children are very much interested. Every morning they come to learn here (HLCMC member)*
>
> *...the children have now expanded their knowledge because before they started coming to school, the way they were living was different. But nowadays they have respect, they can also write on the ground whatever was taught to them from school and also speak words taught to them (HLCMC member)*
>
> *...as concerning bringing up these children, I have seen that when they are at home, they do not fear talking to me. They got all these encouragements from school here (Parent, Nwoya district).*

We also however, noted that while parents reported anecdotes of their perception of better learning outcomes, some concerns around the toolkit implementation were raised by LABE staff. For example, the toolkit covers one out of the three terms, the second term is in press and the third term has yet to be developed. In this regard, it cannot be said the children benefited from the complete package. Likewise, we note that continuous assessment for learning was yet to be initiated. Ordinarily, one cannot teach without assessing learner achievement.

The main limitation of this outcome was the inability of the PEs to conduct assessment for learning. The readiness assessment conducted were completed late, too late to benefit the children. Therefore, the PEs needed to be supported more to conduct continuous assessment that best supports learning.

For effectiveness, the readiness assessment needs to be expanded to include those joining HLCs and those transitioning into Primary school. In so doing, a baseline data can be created. At present, it is difficult to attribute readiness assessment data to the model. One other challenge that seemed to have contributed to both delay in assessment and achievement of this learning outcome was the COVID-19 lockdowns. While children continued to attend classes in the HLCs, even during the lockdowns, other effects of COVID-19 like movement restrictions, health concerns of some learners, PEs and families, greatly affected consistency. Our findings reveal that 60% of this outcome has been achieved.

Outcome 2: Enhance PEs capability and motivation to provide inclusive quality home-based ECD to children in marginalized areas.

This outcome was intended to support the capacity of PEs to provide quality ECD learning experiences to children in the HLCs. However, before that was done, LABE had to provide some input as shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: PE support provided by LABE

Parent Educators are capable and motivated to provide inclusive quality Home Based ECD to children in marginalised areas							
Number-based (quantitative) indicators							
Indicator		Base-line	Overall project target	Numbers ben-efitting since the start of the project			Overall progress compared to project target
				Total	M	F	
5a	Number of trained PEs regularly delivering	43	80	74	31	43	92.5%
5b	Number of trained PE demon-strating usage of the simplified ECD	0	64	78	34	44	121.8%
5c	Number of PEs assessed as com-petent to deliver	14	80	69	29	40	86.2%

Table 4 illustrates the progress of the PEs. The data revealed that training was delivered adequately for the PEs, however, the overall project target was missed by a 7.5%. Additionally, while more PEs (21.8%) demonstrated competence in using the simplified took kit, only 69 out of the target 80 were assessed as able to deliver quality home based ECD. This represents 13.8% that are either less competent or were not supported. LABE created extrinsic motivators for PEs in the form of t-shirts, caps, bags etc. However, many PEs wanted more in terms of certification, stipend, and physical training.

From the interviews conducted, various stakeholders acknowledged that the PEs received training to improve their capacity to implement learning in the HLCs as confirmed in the following excerpts:

> *…we had training on how to handle those children. We were provided with the toolkit and there are materials here which we were instructed to use (PE Koboko)*

> *…here, parent educators have also been trained. In fact here, LABE is our google because it gives us everything we need (HLCMC member).*

> *… the parent educators were mobilized, trained…these caregivers are now able to develop simplified learning materials. Secondly, they are able use the teaching*

> *learning materials that they developed (District Inspector of Schools, Gulu).*

> *…LABE has made simplified learning materials developed from the learning framework got form NCDC. We trained the PEs on how to use the materials at district and sub-county level. We worked in partnership with the district and sub-county level (PO, Obongi).*

While the training was conducted, most of it was done online during the time of COVID-19 lockdown. The participants at that time were not psychologically settled as many faced both health and financial challenges resulting from COVID-19 lockdown impacts that did not allow them to concentrate during the training for better conceptualization.

The PEs also informed us that that most of them were not motivated to work in the HLCs. They claimed that there were problems with payment, e.g., payment was not always received on time, or when the money was due. Additionally, some PEs complained that LABE had promised to send them to a college to get specific training in ECD but did not do it.

> *…what really pains is poor motivation, because somebody who is doing for you something and you are not appreciating that job, so that thing really pains (PE, Gulu).*

> *…we were deceived that we were going to be taken to the PTC to train in that place where they train for ECD. But that did not happen which really pains us (PE, Koboko).*

> *…in this project, they told us that we are volunteers, but sometimes they were to give us some motivation (PE, Koboko)*

The PEs, also claimed unmet promises, as a result, some were opting to leave for other positions. A number of them still reported that they were struggling to adapt to the toolkit; and/ or take on use of play-based learning in the HLCs despite training. The biggest challenge appeared to be the PEs stipend, which seem to have been misunderstood to be a responsibility of LABE, yet it is a management committee responsibility. The PEs voices from some of the mismanaged centres are as follows:

> *…to be frank, when we started with LABE, they were giving us UGX 7,500 (1.6GBP) per month, but now it is not there. We only get allowance from training which is also very small. Another thing, even when we go for training, they don't provide us with documents or certificates that show we have been trained.*

> *...the element of volunteers to teach because those caregivers are not trained. Some are just locally engaged....the biggest challenge to the HLC is the support to the PEs is very very inadequate. The support should have come from government, NGOs and even parents. If you look at government, government does not support ECD. ECD is a private enterprise (DEO, Koboko).*
>
> *...the attitude towards voluntarism is a challenge because our approach is self- help. People are asked to come and work. So, the attitude towards voluntarism is still low (PO, Nwoya).*

The above responses from a section of PEs show that they have some unmet expectations. It also suggests that LABE did not manage the expectations at the onset adequately. In this case, the centres were able to bring in a few PEs who looked at the centres as an income generating project for themselves. The lessons learnt from this is slow scaling is needed to develop better understanding of how the model works before handing over to the communities. Based on the responses from the participants, this outcome has achieved 50% of the intended outcome.

Outcome 3: Support parental and community engagement in HLCMCs

One of the outcomes of this project was to develop and harness the capacity of parents and the communities to support and manage HLCs sustainably. There were a number of support services that LABE was expected to give the communities in order to develop their capacity as shown in

Table 5: Support provided by LABE to communities

Community ownership of HLCs enhanced for growth and sustainability of the expanded scope of ECD support activities							
Number-based (quantitative) indicators							
	Indicator	Base-line	Overall project target	Numbers ben-efitting since the start of the project			Overall progress compared to project target
				Total	M	F	
6a	Number of HLCMCs implementing at 80% of their action plan activities	23	40	38	N/A	N/A	95%
6b	Number of trained parents attesting to improved nurturing practices	263	863	1,391	289	1,102	161%
6c	Number of VSLA recording consistent monthly contribution from at least 75% of members	28	40	31	N/A	N/A	87.5%

Table 5 shows that parents and communities have engaged in HLCMCs. The greatest progress was seen as 161% of targeted parents were trained and attested to improved nurturing practices. 5% of HLCs missed the target to implement their workplans while the greatest shortfall of 22.5% from the overall target was on number of VSLAs recording consistent monthly contributions of at least 75% of members. While these targets may have been missed progress has been made in mobilizing communities to continuously save through VSALs, especially during the COVID-19 lockdowns period. Some schools in the area were completely closed, but centres receiving LABE's support continued to operate even in difficult circumstances. The communities recognized LABE's support as shown in the following quotes:

The biggest support given to the HLCs by LABE is training:

> *...the management committees were trained and from the trainings they were able to develop action plans. Action plans are working documents which guide them to develop their HLCs. Then from the action plans, we are able to see new changes. We were able to see more standard home learning shelters, outdoor play stations which are cost effective, built from within the community using local resources. Other management committees went ahead to bring the aspect of feeding children (PO, Gulu)*

The programme received more appreciation from the community because of its flexibility during COVID-19:

> *...you cannot take away the fact that we have recorded the greatest progress unlike before in regard to community ownership, and thankfully for COVID-19, when the centres continued operating while the country was under lockdown, people realized that this model can be used to continue. There is increased acceptance in relation to use in regard to M&E and purpose (M&E, LABE).*

During the visits to the HLCs, it was noted that 38 out of the 40 HLCs had shelters that were constructed by the parents. It was also found that 37 out of the 40 HLCs provided snacks for children. All the HLCs had sanitation facilities, although a number of them were in need of repair.

All the HLCs visited had outdoor learning materials created by parents; all the users of the service had access to a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) opportunity. This VSLA group met regularly and contributed money that was used to maintain the HLCs and also pay the PEs.

> *... the issue of parenting, what LABE has done is to change the parents mindset to support the centres and make it their own. We even see that the children love the centres so much that when they are taken to primary, they always come back because of the facilities in the centres made by parents (District Education Officer, Nwoya).*

It should however be noted that all groups were able to pay the PEs, although not in time. Some HLCs also had ineffective committees, for example, they found it difficult to mobilize parents to support the HLCs and repair the learning structures. The findings reveal that 90% of this outcome has been achieved.

Other findings from the HLC adopters indicate that, due to a myriad of reasons, parents had varying levels of engagement in their children's education. This was an area that some HLC adopters would like to develop further:

> *'The part we feel needs to be built on is mainly parents' engagement, because this was a new concept in the area where we are working...I believe other areas will react differently...their levels of income are low. So, we had to concentrate on the HLC...parents really faced with so many challenges when it comes to income generation. So that's the area where we feel we can help (HLC adopter).*

However, notably, there was also evidence, that in some districts there was excellent engagement from parents.

HLC Concept
HLC concept has the following components:

Table 6: Home Learning Centre components

Title	Number	Comment
Project HLCs	40	10 per district
Project Parent Educators	82	2 HLCs in Koboko have hired an extra PE
HLCs with VLSA	36	10 in two districts and 8 in the other 2 districts
HLCs with micro-enterprises	26	3 districts had 8 each and the other one had 2.
Model adopters	7	2 in Gulu and 5 in non project districts
HLCs with learning shelters	38	On one district had 8, the rest had 10.

Table 6 shows the status of HLC support and beneficiaries by components. The table shows that all the districts opened their HLCs as expected, with only two HLCs without shelters.

Observations revealed that 38 HLCs were operational, while two HLCs were still resolving management disputes in order to allow smooth operation of the centres. Some HLCs were additionally implementing multi-grade classes to accommodate learners of different abilities and ages. It was also observed that the PEs in the centres were largely using an academic approach with the children as opposed to the home-based play approach that the HLC model advocated for.

Of fundamental note, some HLCs used differentiated activities to support children with special needs. However, in some cases, the PEs preferred to use teacher centred approaches when working with children. Overall, most of the learning activities revolved around literacy and numeracy, leaving out socio-emotional activities that are needed for strong communal relationships in the 21st century.

Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) Groups

VSLA groups is an innovation that was initiated in the HLCs to raise funds to sustain HLC activities. It is an association of parents of the HLC, however, other parents in the community (who do not have children in the same HLC) can also join. Parents in this savings associations meet weekly to make three forms of savings i.e., individual savings, social funds savings and the mandatory education funds saving. The education fund is used to finance the day-to-day operations of the HLCs including paying of PEs, renovating outdoor play materials, feeding children etc. For the education fund, each VSLA member contributes between UGX 500 -1000 (11 -12 GB pence) to the HLC. This money is recorded and later used to pay the PEs stipend and also funds other HLC activities.

Notably, all the 38 HLCs have established a VSLA group. However, the level of savings varies between HLCs. In some HLCs parents save for one year, at the end of the year, they share the dividends. When the New Year begins, they start a fresh. Some Community Development Officers (CDOs) have been keen to support the groups with further training; linking them to government projects for support; and organize local change experts in the community for mentorship and training to further strengthen their capacity.

Outcome 4: To work towards local government extension staff and ECD service providers to be more coordinated, inclusive, and responsive to the needs and demand of quality informal ECD.
The findings illustrated that LABE worked more with CDOs to support the HLCs as shown in Table

Table 7: Support provided by Local Government officials to communities

Local government extension staff and ECD service providers are more coordinated, inclusive and responsive to the need and demand for quality informal ECD							
Number-based (quantitative) indicators							
	Indicator	Base-line	Overall project target	Numbers ben-efitting since the start of the project			Overall progress compared to project target
				Total	M	F	
7a	Number of HLCs registering quarterly technical/monitoring visits from government officials	12	32	37	N/A	N/A	115.6
7b	Number of HLCs receiving ECD supportive materials from government and local authorities	8	32	28	N/A	N/A	87.5

Table 7 illustrates that local government have been supported to monitor and supervise HLCs. Up to 115.6% of the centres above the overall project target of HLCs reported to have been visited by the local government officials was noted. The visits were however, spot visits as no supportive materials were provided to the centres as expected. The table also shows that out of 32 HLCs, 28 received supportive materials from government and local authorities (87.5%), missing the target by 12.5%,

The findings revealed that the district officials were keen to praise LABE for supporting them:

> *...government has not supported us to visit those centres, but LABE has supported us to go to the field. Also in circumstances when we are in the field, we pass by (District Inspector of Schools, Nwoya District).*

... we have been engaging the CDOs and other stakeholders to come and give technical support. We have also been doing a lot with them, sharing reports, registration of VSLA groups etc. (Team leader, Northern region).

Through this support, the district officials have been able to: monitor HLCs, participate in PE trainings, support the process of registering 38 HLCs, and connect HLCs to government support services. In some districts however, some officials were not as supportive of the HLC concept. For example, some officials found it difficult to find the time to visit the HLCs. Additionally, some district officials who visited thought their role was to 'inspect' and not 'offer support'. It was noted that some of the officials were not yet experienced in working with community groups. Our findings indicate that advocacy and collaboration appeared to be a complex process, that require more skills, as the success of the programme depended on the competency, initiation, and mediation consultation modes:

> *'We realise that the children have achieved a lot in academics, and they are now even graduating to universities, but they started in those HLC's...so it's an all- round approach...We have so many partners in Uganda, but when you compare them with the LABE programme, it's cheap, (i.e. doesn't cost much), yet it's producing a lot of (good) results compared to others; others have come and gone...we are also advocating that they still up the programme in other areas, but they [suffer] financial [difficulties] (Minister of Education, Principal Education Officer).*

The above participant illustrated how individuals were influenced by the LABE approach, and how they intervened in the advocacy process, advocating for the LABE programme. Additionally, the above quotation also indicates that the M of ES assumed the role of an ally – alongside LABE, because of the belief the Ministry, had in the programme.

> *'...even politicians, local government leaders use HLC's for their meetings, even when it comes to health provision of health facilities. We see health workers using those home learning centres to immunize their children to heave them even carry out messages to pregnant mother (Minister of Education and Sports, Principal Education Officer).*
>
> *'...when we interviewed the parents', they were pushing us to take HLCs and make them primary schools...and their comments were: "let's build on this and government constructs additional classrooms", meaning that LABE has empowered communities and has made them pick an interest in education' (Minister of Education and Sports, Principal Education Officer).*

The MoES discovered that the parents were also demonstrating advocacy competencies, identifying environmental /physical factors that were restricting children's development; alerting officials to the common concerns; and identifying strengths of LABE and resources.

> *'One of the biggest collaborations I know about with LABE is with the Ministry of Education Working Group on Early Childhood Development...LABE is involved in the meetings with the M of ES, and therefore, they share a lot of good practices... so the M of ES knows they have a partner in the HLCs promoting Early Childhood Development (LABE Executive Directorship).*

While LABE did a tremendous job to involve the local government officials in the project implementation, its efforts were greatly hampered by the COVID-19 restrictions. In cases where one would want to see more government involvement, the same officials were either involved in emergency activities, restrained by health and safety concerns, or simply lacked the logistical capacity to do so. Overall, from the activities conducted, we see this outcome to have been met at a level of 70%.

Outcome 5: To achieve improved awareness and expansion of the home-based ECD model in marginalised areas of Uganda.

LABE has developed materials that can be used to expand the HLC model outside the evaluated districts. As such, LABE carried out a 'Knowledge Attitude and Perception' (KAP) study to learn how to promote the model to other areas. LABE has also made presentations on the model in national forums. The model is accessible to children in marginalised communities and is the best alternative to expensive private ECD models. Through this experience, LABE was able to collaborate with other partners to provide HLC services in their own communities. Other communities made learning visits to LABE HLCs and then went ahead and started their own HLCs as explained in the following quote:

> *...Some communities visited us, they saw the materials made in the centres and when they went back, they also started their own centre, e.g. in Pukong sub-county (PO Gulu).*

Most of the adopters who have taken up the model gained the necessary information from either the national forums or local communities close to the HLCs. There was little involvement of communities in other districts. This may mean that the model is yet to be popularized outside implementing districts or outside the ECD sector like in the business community or political spaces.

Model Adopters

Model adopters are people who are interested in and implementing the HLC concept. After training, the HLC adopter is given access to the necessary support materials. The findings revealed nine HLC adopters, although LABE reported six as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Level of adoption of HLC model in other areas

Improved awareness and expansion of the Home Based ECD model into under-served areas of Uganda							
Number-based (quantitative) indicators							
	Indicator	Base-line	Overall project target	Numbers ben-efitting since the start of the project			Overall progress compared to project target
				Total	M	F	
5a	Number of new Home Based ECD model adopters operating in underserved areas	2	8	7	N/A	N/A	87.5%
5b	Number of pre-school children enrolled in informal-based centres in new under-served areas	740	1,280	1,952	1,011	941	152.5%
5c	Number of new Home Based ECD adopters seeking technical guidance from LABE	3	9	9	N/A	N/A	100%

Table 8 shows that there are seven HLC adopters out of the expected 8, representing 87.5%, given the LABE definition of adopters. From the adopters, we also note there was a great increase (152.5%) in the number of children benefiting from expanded ECD services if you add numbers of children benefiting from the adopters

During our interaction with different adopters, it was found that they were at different stages of adoption. Additionally, and of interest, there were some adopters who are overt in their adoption (e.g., more confident), while others are covert (less confident). LABE identified five HLC adopters who had met the requirements.

These include three from SURE which include: St Matia Mulumba in Kasese district; Baylor Uganda in Kyenjojo district; United Network for ECD (UNECD) in Kayunga. The others that joined recently included Cotton On Foundation in Lwengo and Rakai districts; Cheshire Services Uganda in Amolatar district; Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC) in Adjumani; and Rutooma Modern Primary School in Mbarara.

It is interesting to say that these two organisations are also funded by Comic Relief under the **All In, All Learning!** Programme co-funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office. The collaboration between LABE and these two organisations demonstrates sharing of lessons and cross-fertilization of ideas between these **All In, All Learning!** funded partners: LABE has shared its HLC ECD model with **Cheshire Services Uganda** and **Uganda Society for Disabled Children.** In return, LABE has learned from these two disability organisations, how to integrate support for children with disabilities in its ECD work. – an example of a highly successful mutually benefiting partnership.The findings also identified two covert adopters who were starting to work with LABE. These include Kyambogo University in Buikwe, Kalaki, Kalungu and Kaliro. LABE also collaborated with the organisation 'Able Child Africa UK' who was working with LABE to adapt the toolkit to the needs of children with special needs.

Two other adopters who visited LABE's HLCs have begun their own HLCs. These include: Rising star, Pukong – Gulu and Lukele HLC, Palaro, Gulu district.

The training input of LABE impacted positively on the personal confidence of HLC adopters and provided conceptual security. LABE has provided parents, NGOs and other professionals with tutorials and simulations, given them access to new resources, provided the HLC with management and productivity tools. These resources represent significant investments, particularly in light of limited resources and competing needs. LABE, too, notably, receives guidance from the National Curriculum Development Centre, this guidance has impacted on LABE's conceptual framework – a created toolkit to support the framing, knowledge and interpretation of the knowledge required to enable early childhood development. The professional training was notably valued by all participants, all commented on its usefulness in helping them make sense of what was expected of them:

> ❝ *'We got training from the LABE team, different aspects, especially when it came to handling -HLCs and how the community gets involved into the learning of their children and what the community contributes to...So LABE really supported us a lot in understanding Home Based Learning Centres and we see that it's really working' (HLC adopter).*
>
> *'Oh yes, they have packs...it's a well- developed pack. It's easy to understand' (HLC adopter).*
>
> *'We have a national teacher policy, which was approved in 2019. And it advocates for all primary teachers to be graduates...So we have to move fast to ensure we support the efforts so that we can produce even more qualified teachers...the parents that have been chosen could go through their teacher training, Since we now have the National Teaching Policy, which advocates for all pre-primary teachers to be graduates...' (Ministry of Education and Sports, Principal Education Officer).*

Some participants raised the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a lack of resources in the community, specifically, a community which takes little or no account of children who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream education.

> 'Specifically, that children with disabilities, definitely there is a challenge, you would find that some of them are not able to walk, some of them are coming from very distant places. So, it becomes a challenge if they do not have the required assistive devices...if the child is in a wheelchair...the roads are really impossible...so that makes it a little hard. Really, so the distance definitely becomes a challenge, especially if the HLC is very far from the home' (HLC adopter).

The HLC adopter (above) envisioned a life where all children participated fully and enjoyed the same rights whether disabled or not. . There was a keenness to be pro-active, calling for reasonable adjustments to be made to take account of the nature of disability at individual level.

> '...the numbers are really overwhelming, and you have to create more learning centres...that would also require training. ' (HLC adopter).
>
> '. they [LABE] are trying because parental involvement has been a big challenge
>
> with government, much as we advocate for the parents to be part of all school related activities, it has remained a challenge' (Minister of Education, Principal Education Officer).

Based on the above information, it was noted that the model was yet to be popularized outside ECD circles, especially among business communities with the aim of developing Private Public Partnerships. It was hoped that this could be done when LABE begins to use short contextualized HLC documentaries that focus on specific adoptable components of the model. The findings suggest that 60% of the outcome was achieved.

Objective 4: To assess any unexpected or unintended project outcomes
There was the expectation by the LABE team that the evaluation would identify any unexpected or unintended project outcomes. The two separate areas are explained below:

Unintended project outcome

a). While the project aimed at support learning in specific home learning centres, from design, the project planned to deliver ECD learning sessions at the project HLCs. However, due the pandemic and related restrictions, the project resorted to delivering sessions through clustered home visits to support continued learning amidst the prevailing restrictions. To implement this, the PE was trained and supported with materials to facilitate condensed sessions at clustered homes with 3-6 pre-school children in the different homes. The COVID-19 lockdown also presented far reaching opportunities i.e., increased recognition and appreciation of the Home Based ECD model at national, district and community level as a worthy model that can be used to support education and community development for hard-to-reach children and families especially during a global pandemic;

b). Much of the learning at HLCs was planned to be physical (or face-to-face) in nature, however, with experience and learning from the lockdown restrictions, the project adopted online/virtual platforms to support and also continue project implementation. The project also used recorded video sessions to support continued learning for in-school learners at HLCs. With this blend of approaches, the project was able to continue implementation amidst the challenges.

c). Physical training and support supervision of the PEs and HLCMCs was planned at project design. However, during the lockdown, the training changed from physical to a blended model that included both virtual, recorded videos and face- to-face trainings of PEs and HLCMCs

d). The project also integrated COVID-19 interventions like community sensitizations about the pandemic, development of COVID-19 related home study materials, games, story books and supporting HLCs and communities to set up hand washing facilities like tippy taps and supporting them with soap, jerrycans and masks.

e). HLCs also became centres of excellence from which other government interventions could be accessed by the communities. More was done by government and other agencies to support continued learning for in-school children in the HLCs.

Unexpected project outcome

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, it became difficult for government officials to access communities. However, since the HLCs were operating remotely, government and health officials could visit such HLCs and access the people. HLCs became access points for the distribution of government produced learning materials during the lockdown periods, and were used to provide psychosocial support to parents, and support youth livelihood programmes and agricultural inputs for communities. The HLCs also became COVID-19 vaccination points. They were also used for other purposes as explained in the following quote:

> *...so, these centres have been taking on community initiatives where government services like vaccination, and deworming etc. are held. On health and nutrition, and gender, those things have been done. But from the education department, not yet this year (PO, Gulu).*

District leaders began using lessons learnt from the LABE strategies to use in primary schools:

> *...there is no school feeding in the primary schools, so we started copying from LABE to apply it in the primary school. So, there is the element of bandwagon from LABE going to the primary school; so, we have now promoted the issue of school feeding with the initial lessons from LABE (District Education Officer, Koboko).*
>
> *...the element of parenting in these centres. What LABE has done has changed the mindset of the parents. When these parents now reach the primary school, they are positive about supporting their children in the primary school (District Education Officer, Koboko).*

Some parents become members of the school management committees in the primary schools. The parents began influencing the committees to support school meals; to enable their children to remain in school instead of

> *...one thing I want to tell you is that we started school feeding in the primary schools in 2015 and we failed. We tried again in 2016 ND failed. But with what they are doing from the home learning centres, from the ECD, they go to primary school and when the children reach there, they feel like coming back to the centres, so we started the issue of parenting. With that, we have now seen a change in the parents (District Education Officer, Koboko).*

Other agencies have used the HLCs as contact points to support communities in various activities. It is usually difficult to organize communities in one place to support them, for example, NGOs and other government agencies have begun to use the HLCs as a base for other services:

> *...we have come to work with the centres as ICOLEW. We are a government programme that supports communities in 10 gender related areas (Gender Officer, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development).*

> " *...LABE has shortened the distance by bringing services nearer to the communities. The centres are helping the families to get their basic needs because they have introduced the self-help project through VSLA. And also our extension workers like the CDO are supporting to see that they provide agricultural inputs to parents (Secretary for Education, Nwoya district).*

Some communities, especially in areas where there have been no primary schools have positively embraced the ideology behind the HLCs and further developed the HLC concept by introducing a community led primary school. Such communities now have both the HLC and a primary school that help the children transition from pre-primary to primary in the same community as explained in the following excerpt:

> " *... in some places like in Lukele centre, they started with a home learning centre, then the home learning centre gave birth to a primary school. Then the home learning centre remained operating and the children from the centre joined the new primary school directly (PO Gulu).*

Objective 5: To assess the extent to which the project overall structure enabled LABE to meet its objectives:

This objective was meant to establish the robustness of LABE structure to meet its project objectives. We note that LABE has a three-tier administration level.

First Tier

The first level is the management level based at the head office led by the Executive Director. This level does largely policy related work, programme development and general guidance of the organisation based on targets set by the Board of Directors. The management team comprises of the Executive Director, the Head of Programmes, the Head of Communications, the Head of M&E and Head of Finance. Some of the issues arising from the overall project structure are explained below:

Head of Programmes

The Head of Programmes is charged with the responsibility of providing strategic direction for programmes, direct operational management in the field, mentor programme officers and guide team members on how to respond to programme challenges. The same officers also advises senior management members on projects, develops training materials and responds to issues raised in the M&E reports. In our conversation with the HOP, it was stated that the workload was heavy; additionally, section three of the toolkit has yet to be completed. The findings also revealed that field officers requested a need to see more of the HOP on ground. This however, was exacerbated by COVID-19 lockdowns which interrupted the flow of activities.

Communications Manager

The Communications manager is responsible for creating awareness and reaching out to communities for the benefits of the HLC concept. So far, the officer has been able to implement the KAP study, develop brochures and programme briefs to promote HLC awareness, develop a strategy for marketing HLC concept, and made HLC presentations at national and local levels. The officer also has responsibility for online training for the HLC adopters. However, the HLC concept was not known in many areas. LABE has not yet put in place a strong mechanism to market the HLC concept beyond ECD circles.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) Officers

The MEL department has two officers i.e., at LABE's head office and in the field. The MEL at the head office supervises the field-based MEL officer. The main MEL roles include routine monitoring of programme activities, ensuring fidelity of implementation of activities and making follow up on general work plans. They, additionally, somewhat surprisingly, do the work of the Head of Programmes by trying to supervise the POs and PEs. Unfortunately, they also use a remotely controlled database that can be prone to hacking.

Second Tier

The second tier is made up of the two regional team leaders, the Programme Officers, and the field-based MEL officer. This level is in charge of day-to-day implementation of programmes as guided by management based in the head office. The Head of Programmes directly relates with the team leaders who supervise the Programme officers, the Head of MEL directly relates with the field-based MEL, while the head of finance relates with team leaders. The ED cuts across all the offices.

Team Leaders

Team leaders are directly supervised by the Head of Programmes. The team leaders are charged with the responsibility of empowering team members, monitoring HLCs, conducting parenting sessions, coordinating programme activities, making follow-up on activity implementation, and office work. From the interaction with team leaders, they complain of a heavy workload, i.e., covering all outcomes across different projects. They also complained of slow response by communities, and inadequate training from the Head of Programmes.

Programme Officers

The programme officers played critical roles in terms of community mobilization, supporting two HLCs per day; provide PE and management committee capacity development; engage local government officials in HLCs activities; conduct parenting sessions; train VSLA members and collect M&E data. The PEs were overstretched by their role. Some of the POs expressed as being 'not confident' enough to present the toolkit and believed they lacked adequate knowledge to provide support supervision to the PEs. The POs also believed the NGOs in the area provided better incentives to the PEs. Additionally, many of the POs were male, which may add concerns about diversity.

The third tier

The third tier revolves around the HLC officers called PEs. The PEs are officers who are not directly referred to as LABE staff, but are in charge of daily programme, e.g., teaching children, collecting MEL data, supporting management committees and interfacing with district officials who come to visit the HLCs. The success or failure of the HLCs lies squarely on the role of the PE. Despite carrying out a significant role there is misunderstandings about the specifics of that role, e.g., the management committee believes PEs should be the responsibility of LABE, whereas LABE argues that this is not sustainable

Study Learning Questions

1.   How and why does the simplified ECD teaching toolkit and parenting education improve learning outcomes at the end of the ECD learning cycle?

The simplified ECD teaching toolkit and parenting education materials are resources that if used well can help to improve children's learning outcomes at the end of the ECD learning cycle as explained below:

a) **The ECD teaching toolkit**

i). The toolkit provides simplified content outline for PEs to use to support learning of children in ECD

ii). It provides guidance on materials to be used to support learning

The weakness of the toolkit is that:

i). It focuses more on literacy and numeracy areas of learning and leaves out the socio-emotional learning aspects that children need to thrive in the 21st century.

ii). It does not provide guidance on continuous assessment that is key for learning. iii). Most activities still focus on academic content that cannot be implemented by non-educated parents.

iv). It has not yet been contextualised to fit into the unique cultural communities of the beneficiaries. One standard toolkit assumes that all learners are at the same level and come from the same cultural context - that is not true.

v). Only term one is available, term two is in the press, while term three is to be developed. This makes it incomplete to provide adequate guidance to improve learning outcomes up to the end of ECD learning cycle.

b) **Parenting Education**

This component involves knowledge sharing sessions with parents on how to support their children while at school or home. It also includes literacy lessons for parents who need it. This component has helped in the following ways:

i). Improved parent involvement in the HLCs.

ii). Made it possible for some parents to acquire literacy skills that they are using to manage their day-to-day life.

iii). Raised the profile on the importance of ECD in the life of children among parents who did not see it as useful.

iv). Improved the relationship between parents and their children that was not so close previously

v). Reduced instances of both child abuse and domestic violence in the families as parents started to understand why some materials were being demanded for at school.

vi). Increased parents' awareness about savings through savings groups and the need to start income generating projects to improve family incomes.

The weakness of the parenting sessions include:

i). It still draws more female parents than male parents. More effort is needed to interest men who are key decision makers in the families.

ii). The content of parenting education needs to be widened to include family planning issues and health education. At present it largely focuses on parenting and livelihoods.

2. How do HLCs best contribute to improved educational and livelihood outcomes?
HLCs can best contribute to improve educational and livelihood outcomes if the following is done:

i). HLCs are initiated in stable communities who are receptive to self-development initiatives. Such communities will be willing to receive training and implement. This is not the case in Obongi and Gulu.

ii). Parents are engaged as support teachers in the HLCs to allow them put into practice the parenting lesson activities acquired.

3. What are the parents', teachers', VHTs (Village Health Team) and Community Development Officers (CDOs)' views of their relationship with each other in implementing the 2016 National ECD Policy in an integrated approach at community level? How has this changed through this project?
To the evaluators, this question was out of context as it does not relate to the evaluation Terms of Reference and no data was collected in response to it. For this reason, it was not possible to address it in this evaluation report, particularly as it does not address any specific evaluation objective.

Emerging Areas

Emerging patterns and divergent data were identified, and the findings collated. The themes emerged from the interview questions, through the transcript of those themes credible evidence and impact has been uncovered (see table 9 below).

Table 9: The focus of the interview questions translate into number of themes (see below):

Project Impact	Continual engagement (esp. during pandemic); community investment; entrepreneurship; taking services to local people; higher numbers of children attending school; the significance of an inclusive education /ethos; rural areas without nursery /schools are developing a HLC; parents participating in the learning of their children; HLCs critical in determining academic attainment; LABE supported parents about how they can best help their children to learn at home.
Challenges	Parental engagement, in low resourced environments; disabled children's attendance; numbers of children needing a space; location of the HLC centre
Professional Training	LABE toolkit; LABE team; LABE training valued greatly; highlighting examples of good practice which might be emulated elsewhere. Based on demand of HLC, more created, more needed; HLCs may transform into school-based learning; creative approaches (with / without parents paying – different models).
Advocacy / Collaboration	Sharing practice; visiting other HLCs; peer support groups.
Future Developments	Based on demand of HLC, more created, more needed; HLCs may transform into school-based learning; creative approaches (with / without parents paying – different models).
Recommendations	More HLCs in other districts; digital learning; monitoring and supervision; consistent teaching training, expanding the project.

The themes were then considered, e.g., how did they connect together; unanimous areas of agreement; and contradictions and paradoxes.

Project Impact:

In a world of constrained resources, it is no surprise that impact should be near the top of the development agenda, and as a result, a fundamental theme of the interviews. Without demonstrated impact, why would anyone invest in development work? The following quotations reveal the project impact from the perspectives of the participants:

> *'...one of the achievements yes, by the time they [LABE] introduced the project, when I reached the field, so many parents, especially the ladies could not even write their names...but currently they can even write stories for the children, they can read, they can process their stories, because they have learned through the LABE project, in addition to that parents' have learned to take care of their own children, which wasn't previously the case' (Minister of Education and Sports, Principal Education Officer).*

The first message is that the learning experiences from the HLCs are valuable educational learning experiences. The LABE programme taught and encouraged parents to learn to read and write; to read to their children and to be involved in their children's learning. The parents, who learned alongside the children, as partners in reading, were in a strong position to support their children,

because of their shared lives, and building on and extending their knowledge base. The participant above outlined that, as a result, the parents have an increased knowledge, improved attitudes about learning and the acquisition of new skills needed for furthering children's academic skills. The quotation also indicates the increased innovativeness and increased knowledge in adult education and literacy and, consequently, children's intellectual progress.

When young children leave the protective circle of the HLC to start school they start a new life. For the first time they are evaluated comparatively, relative to other children, by non-familial authorities. For the first time they are also evaluated in terms of proficiency at abstract tasks like reckoning and reading. One of the discoveries, reported by several participants, was that the children of the HLCs did better, in terms of cognitive competencies and motivation, when they began school life, i.e., the children from the HLCs had higher attainments and made more progress than others. This would suggest the children were 'school – ready' when they left the HLCs. 'School- readiness' is one of the objectives of LABE. The following quotation elaborates on LABE's aim and helps outline what LABE do in terms of making children 'school ready'

> *'...they [LABE] prepare them to transition into schools, to primary school, and then support them in that first year of that primary school to make sure that they are retained, you know, because it's one thing, a child going into primary school, but you know ensuring retention...So in that sense [LABE] plays a very important role (Comic Relief Focal Person).*

The term 'school readiness' is often used ambiguously with many implications. Whilst none of the participants defined the term, they discussed, in order to do well at school, children needed a culmination of all the essential social, emotional, cognitive and autonomy building competencies that have been taught during the child's time at the

HLC. LABE confess to being focused on children (and adults) acquiring skills in particular literacy / math, that are required for formal schooling. The participant above, suggests that the children from the HLCs had the necessary skills to enable them to adapt to the requirements of school, such as concentration, an attitude to work as well as memory and social contact, e.g., complex skills such as encoding and decoding. With many differing views of school readiness presenting themselves through a variety of viewpoints, it is helpful to consider, in more simpler terms, that the children from the HLCs reportedly do better than their counterparts.

The HLCs appeared to not only have positive impacts on educational attainment, but also contributed to positive social and community outcomes for children.

> *'[w]e are finding out that those areas, which do not have schools are starting to take on HLCs... they are buying in, they are supporting the idea...And it's really great work, especially in rural areas where there are no nursery school's (HLC adopter).*

Whilst training is mentioned below it is worthy to note here. It was agreed by many of the participants that LABE have enabled a culture of acceptance through training, education and awareness raising. The ethos that has emerged has resulted in the values of the Home Learning Centres being aligned with the morality of inclusion. Several participants informed us that one of the greatest benefits of the HLC is the way in which they support inclusive education:

> *'...you can work with children with disabilities...With children with disabilities you will find that most students with disabilities have not been schooled. So, this was one way [attending the HLC] of having them bridge that gap' (HLC adopter).*

> *'...so inclusive disability inclusive HLCs is what we wanted. And we didn't have the expertise in it. So, we partnered with them [LABE]' (HLC adopter).*

Education is important for all children, but even more so for children with disabilities, whose social opportunities may be limited. As the participants explained, in their view, the HLCs have given children with disabilities much greater access to education, promoting greater inclusion of these children alongside their non-disabled peers. Despite these advances, and the willingness to find solutions, many problems remain, including financial barriers, alongside accessibility.

> " *'For years, we implemented projects for inclusive education...we were not able to find a way of them starting school a little bit early...so a HLC would be ideal for the children, especially to start learning' (HLC adopter).*
>
> *'We have a problem in this country, we really don't support special needs properly as we should be supporting...And when it goes to the extent that the child is a little more disabled, like in movement, they don't come to school... they're being held at home' (HLC adopter).*

The participants shared deep-rooted feelings and raised the significance of educational inequities; and shared the conceptual and philosophical problems of equity and inclusion, as well as the social and educational issues. All the participants stated that, due to the desire to live in an egalitarian society, combined with the culturally responsive pedagogy of the HLCs, they are ideal environments for working with diverse populations.

Research has shown conclusively that parental involvement does make a difference to children's engagements and their achievements, and the evidence indicates that parental involvement greatly benefits the children. Parental involvement in their children's education may be one of the greatest successes of this project, as parents expressed a determination to have greater involvement in their children's education. The participants strongly claimed that the parents' engagement significantly impacted on the children's cognitive development, literacy and numeracy skills, so much so, as said above, that the children from the HLCs transition much more easily to school and do better than expected when they arrived there.

'The parents' attitude towards children's learning is now very good. They [parents] are seeing the importance of learning' (National Curriculum Developer
– Key Informant).

> " *'Regardless of the status of that child, the parents are participating in the learning of their children, which is really key' (HLC adopter).*
>
> *'...they [parents] are fully engaged and involved and they are the educators, they are they people that are trained, even when it comes to the centre management committee? They are elected from the parents within the community. Then we empower them, we train them... even the male parents are very interested... so I feel that it is a good model' (Minister of Education, Principal Education Officer).*

Some of the HLCs fit into the context of entrepreneurship development. It would seem that the HLCs provide a natural habitat for entrepreneurs. Through this platform, the latent /raw talent available locally supports and innovates their goods and services sought by the local community; providing opportunities for employment generation, and as a seedbed for regional dispersal. The concept supports the sustainability of the HLCs and provides innovation. The HLC supports the parents (and other users of the service) facilitate, promotes, develops, and enhances this entrepreneurship. The

selling of goods / crops etc., has been accepted as an engine of economic growth for promoting equitable development and enables sustainability of the HLC.

> *'what LABE has done is mobilised, families and communities around the centres and supported them to develop village 'Savings and Loan' schemes around those HLCs. So actually, some of those HLCs are now being supported by money saved through the community, village, what they call village Savings and Loan schemes' (Comic Relief Focal Person).*

However, other HLCs chose not to venture down this route and instead turned to the local community to support the resourcing of the HLC:

> *'...it is possible to actually run those centres because the community are engaged.. they know and appreciate what their children are learning...So, we could have somebody offer us a large compound...and provide us with the basics...So, from that experience we saw that we do not really need to be able to run a home learning centre with the finance we can actually do it with the support of the community...' (HLC adopter).*

Over the course of any programme, often thorny decisions need to be made, conditions change, objectives are altered. The above participant acknowledged the initial tensions in trying to balance LABE's model, with their own, complex, and controversial, values. They contended with a more nuanced approach, where resources were invested by members of the community. This approach, the participant believed, had greater usefulness – LABE did not dismiss this different approach, but sought to strengthen and refine the HLC approach, by exploring new ways of working. The positive response from LABE, regarding more creative ways of running a HLC, was very much appreciated by the HLC adopter.

As with the differences above, in terms of financing / resourcing the HLC, other differences also existed, e.g., it did appear that HLCs were not a specific model / approach, but that each HLC responded to the community it served, for example, the times of attendance and the ages of attending children varied:

> *'We accept children of all ages, because we have up to senior secondary. So, we have from kinder – primary...yes, we do it all' (HLC adopter).*
>
> *'Usually they[children] come just for one hour in the day. And it is usually at nine in the morning. So that for the rest of the day they can go back home because they have to go and do chores. So, we couldn't keep them any longer' (HLC adopter).*
>
> *'...the children at the HLCs report at eight, they start their lessons they get a break within the lessons, then they join back and continue to lunchtime and thereafter they are free to go back...it's not a full day because of their age' (HLC adopter).*

In a literal sense, the HLCs vary, according to the community they serve. Some children attend for one hour, whereas, stayed for 4 to 5 hours. To a large extent the organisation of the HLC is being responsive to the children and families in the district. It may suit some children to attend one hour, and others more.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are made:

First, we note that the concept of HLCs (developed by LABE over 10 years ago) is gathering respect as it constantly rebrands itself through subsequent projects. A number of changes and adjustments have been made from the nature of structures, e.g., how PEs are motivated, introduction of daily routines, modification of VSLA to include enterprises and use of COVID-19 adaptive strategies. Moving forward, those are improving the overall HLC concept.

Through BASICS (All In, All Learning! Phase 2 Extension Project), it was noted that the community outreach has outperformed the rest of the outcomes.

The findings reveal that there has been significant improvement in project implementation in the districts, with Nwoya doing better overall in terms of having average achievement of outcomes across the board. Koboko follows next with better performance in community mobilisation, and district leadership engagement. Obongi district comes third with better improvement in PE capacity development as an outstanding outcome.

The evaluators also note that while it was easy for Nwoya and Koboko to do slightly better than the other districts in most of the outcomes, the context in Gulu and Obongi need to be put into context to explain their performance. Obongi has refugee population as the bulk of parents for the HLCs. Such parents are always on the move for better areas for settlement. They may move back to their countries of origin and they may view education in their refugee home as not as a big issue they have to deal with in their temporal situation. For the case of Gulu, the parents are still emerging from the war conflict that they were in for over 20 years. Such parents feel they are in great need, and they tend to become dependent. In both cases, it is not easy to mobilize parents to contribute to the HLC or to support the education of their children. In many instances, they depend on relief from different agencies and are not motivated to contribute towards the HLCs.

The findings also reveal that the LABE programme has progressed beyond the set objectives, which is a remarkable accomplishment. We know what happens in the early years lays the foundation for the rest of life. Early preventative intervention can be exceptionally valuable. The most profound finding was a need for more HLC in a wide range of districts. Digging more deeply into the findings revealed a desire from participants for LABE to continue to share their knowledge and expertise in other districts, i.e., the training, by LABE, should be continued and delivered to parents and other early childhood development professionals. Different approaches to HLCs have been identified in the findings, and LABE should continue to respond to individual requests, with the hope that HLCs become autonomous and no longer require in-depth daily / monthly support; however, all HLCs would benefit from regular professional training. The sharing of good practice is to be commended, as individuals have learned from HLCs in other districts. Government policymakers have an important role to play in resourcing and supporting LABE in the critical work they do in supporting young children's education, and subsequently their lives.

Some points for further consideration are: currently some HLCs operate for one hour per day, others for longer. It would be a useful piece of work to explore the impact of children's attendance at the HLC, and whether more time would be beneficial for children. An important LABE goal is to achieve equity; however, this report fails to take into account the influence of gender; whilst some participants did raise gender as an issue, it was not identified as an obstacle to HLC practice.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings and conclusions, we propose the following recommendations: It was widely acknowledged by all participants, in all roles, that LABE's work is having a significant impact across different regions. As such, it is hardly surprising that all the participants recommended that LABE distribute the programme wider in Uganda:

> '...we wish to have it [LABE] in other regions...this programme can work well in those regions; then I would recommend ongoing orientation training. Right from the start for master trainers...I would recommend constant monitoring. I would recommend support supervision for the mentoring and coaching for those teachers... I don't want to say LABE is a project, but I want to say that LABE is a programme that came to stay not to go' (National Curriculum Developer – Key Informant).

> '...they still need to come up with...digital, e-learning. I want to suggest it would be good to enrich that [e-learning] in the teaching...I feel that ICT should be started at the foundation...I'm saying ICT is one of the good things...' (National Curriculum Developer – Key Informant).

The NCDC key informant, acknowledged that ICT can positively impact children's knowledge and that it can contribute to changes in teaching practices, the innovation of HLCs and community services. Coordinating the introduction of computers with national policies and programs would enhance the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and would be likely to result in widespread use and learning.

> 'The first recommendation I can give is adhering to government policies and guidelines. Then the second one is to strengthen their coordination and collaboration with government officials...I would recommend that they continuously call-in government officials to orient and share the new interventions...to strengthen collaborations' (Minister of Education and Sports, Principal Education Officer).

A further recommendation was that LABE continue to build relationships with the government and take heed of changing policies and government initiatives. It was not suggested that LABE did not do this, but the recommendation was that LABE continue to build critical relationships.

More recommendations are specified as follows:

Home Learning Centre Conceptualization and Revitalization

1. The nature of HLC requires marginalized communities to be empowered to independently manage the affairs of the HLC. This concept cannot easily be entrenched in some communities who view themselves not as marginalized, but as city residents entitled to donor support because of the war situation they have experienced. Sadly, in this district, many NGOs who provide 'handouts' to communities kill the self-sustainability concept LABE is trying to build. . **We strongly recommend abandoning these two districts in favor of more stable communities which can adopt the model if we are to realise the objective 'value for money' in these districts.**

2. If one has to support learning in any institution, data about learning must be collected on a regular basis. This data is to assess learning, assessment for learning and for learner placement. At present, this is a weak component in the HLCs. **It is recommended that comprehensive continuous assessment be initiated in all HLCs immediately and PEs are supported to do authentic assessment of learning to support achievement.**

3. In most HLCs, it was noted that play based learning, one of the strong components of home based ECD was not given adequate time by the PEs. **It is recommended that as the toolkit is operationalized, the play component be demonstrated to PEs further.** The play approach will help more learners' play materials to be in the hands of children and not PE. The approach will also make lessons more practical as opposed to the academic approach we seem to be seeing now.

4. LABE aims to popularize home based ECD model for adoption. However, challenges exist; for example, two issues arise: the first one is that LABE's definition of HLC adopters leaves out those adopters that are doing it on a small scale. The second is that LABE does not have tracking systems to track and engage with adopters who are at different stages of implementation before full adoption. **We recommend that LABE redefines 'adopter' or develops an accreditation programme that can be used by any organisation or group that is using any component of the home based ECD model and recognizes having been inspired by LABE's model.** It is also recommended that LABE put in place an adopters tracking system to cater for this move.

5. The home based ECD HLCs are over spaced, with some spaced as widely as 35kms. A PO is expected to work in two HLCs each day. The distance between the two HLCs makes it challenging to do the work efficiently. **We recommend that LABE negotiates to implement HLCs in one sub-county of a district to reduce over movement by PO, M&E, HoP.**

6. Having good structures in a HLC does not mean good learning. The curriculum (toolkit) is the driver for learning in the HLCs. At present, the toolkit is available for the first term only and that is what is being used; the section of the toolkit that deals with the second term s at the press, while the section on the third term has still to be developed. This means there is an incomplete toolkit. **It is recommended that more investment be made to complete the third term section of the toolkit and to adapt it to the benefiting district's unique needs to complete the curriculum cycle if children are to benefit from it. It is recommended that the toolkit include socio-emotional learning activities that are currently missing -from it.**

7. Currently, LABE is using the concept of multi-age teaching strategy to promote learning in the HLCs. It was noted that this may be problematic in providing inclusive learner-centred learning. This is based on the fact that there are older children with low ability and vice versa. **We recommend that LABE adopts a multi-grade approach -instead of multi-age groupings to consider abilities in inclusive settings.**

8. We note that more children are enrolling into the HLCs who come along with siblings. In many cases, the same children are left in the same class groups, thus inhibiting learning. **We recommend that these children be put in separate groups and a child to child approach to teaching be adopted to promote child-centred learning.**

9. Training has been conducted for PE to help them work with children in the HLCs. On close examination of their approach, it was noted that the PEs are replicating the lower primary school approach to handling children in the ECD in the HLCs. **We recommend that more PE training be conducted with an emphasis on nurturing, multi-sensory nature based learning, child-centred pedagogical approach.**

Value for Money

10. The PEs and POs are the main drivers in the efficiency of the HLC model. However, it was noted that they confessed to having knowledge gaps in what they were expected to do. **We recommend that more capacity building training and support supervision be given to PE and PO to improve their efficiency in delivering the intended outputs (Efficiency).**

11. More resources were being spent on the engagement of district officials to promote HLC model. However, their engagement is still limited to monitoring that does not give value for money. **We recommend that Education officers to be facilitated with fuel regularly to allow them go to the centres to provide support supervision to PE if we are to see better value for money.**

12. Many HLCs were struggling to raise funds to ensure sustainability. However, others have thriving VSLA groups with increased savings. In was noted that the savings groups that were not well regulated were starting to outgrow the HLC as more non HLC parents join the groups. **We recommend that in order to increase savings of education fund to cater for HLC costs, each HLC consider levying interest on the savings collected by the VSLA to increase funds for PE.**

13. LABE is currently using a remotely controlled database for MGiven the era of hackings and sabotage that is on the increase, **we recommend that LABE invest more resources to develop a local database which they have control over for data safety.**

14. Considering that most parents working with HLCs are female, there may be need for LABE to consider recruiting female POs. Doing that will respond well with gender responsiveness on the side of LABE. **We recommend that effort be made to recruit female PO to cater for gender equity in staffing at district level.**

15. At present LABE has two strong ECD trained POs in Obongi and two well trained community development officers in Koboko. This partly explains why Obongi is strong in ECD and weak in community mobilization. Likewise, Koboko is strong in community mobilization, but weak in ECD. **We recommend that one ECD trained PO from Obongi be relocated to Koboko in exchange for Community worker PO from Koboko to move to Obongi.**

16. The POs at present feel overburdened by responsibilities that span through different outcomes. These roles include some data collection on behalf of the M&E officers. **We recommend that M&E data collection role to be removed from POs to allow them concentrate on PE support supervision.**

17. The team leaders in the two regions are resident in one district. We note that the team leaders put more effort in their resident districts, leaving the other district less attended to. **We recommend that the regional team leaders should reside in each of the programme districts**

from time to time to allow intensity of support to PO instead of short visits.

18. At present, there are two M&E officers at LABE. One stays at the head office in Kampala, while the other is a field-based officer who resides in Gulu. The field officer gets overwhelmed visiting all the four districts, probably that is why they give the POs to collect M&E data for them. **We recommend that one extra field based M&E officer be recruited so that each region has its own officer for efficiency.**

19. Meetings alone may not be effective in popularizing the HLC model. **We recommend that LABE develops targeted video programmes to promote specific components of HLC concept to be used in target communities as a marketing tool. This can be aired in local TV and** radio stations.

Training and Capacity Building

20. POs are doing their best to support capacity development of PEs at the HLCs. However, the time they take at the HLC is very short to allow adequate dosage of support. This is because the POs have to support two HLCs that are up to 25 miles apart along a less accessible road, in a day. **We recommend that, POs focus on only one HLC per day for intensive support and visit the second one on a courtesy call only in order to provide adequate support for each HLC.**

21. The toolkit is a new innovation that is yet to be well understood by both POs and PEs. The virtual trainings conducted did not help some POs master it. The findings revealed that face to face training may be more beneficial. **We recommend that physical ECD and toolkit retraining be done for POs only, supported by team leaders. This can then be cascaded by POs to PEs supported by team leaders for better mastery.**

22. One of the project outcomes was to promote the adoption of HLC model. At LABE, there is one officer assigned to promote adoption. If the model has to be adopted, one needs a more elaborate marketing strategy with adequate work force to support it. **We recommend that more workforce be allocated to support new districts that have shown interest in adopting the model. The POs can also be supported to take on marketing role of the model in their districts to promote HLC concept at different levels and support adopters.**

Lessons Learnt

In conducting this evaluation, the following was revealed:

1. Each district brings unique challenges, which range from socio-economic, security, refugee status and level of literacy. Use of one standard procedure for all districts may not be effective. The toolkit implementation, HLC model adoption and parent engagement strategies may need to be district specific.

2. Districts of Obongi and Gulu have unique community contexts that make HLC model implementation challenging. Gulu has a peri-urban population that is used to handouts, while Obongi has a refugee community which is also used to handouts. Interventions that require communities to give their contributions becomes a challenge when the same parents can access other NGOs that give handouts.

3. The COVID-19 lockdown provided opportunity for the LABE model to shine as an alternative model for children to learn while at home. It is at that point that many people got more interested in it. LABE's definition of an 'adopter' may leave out some adopters who have modified the model to suit their context. This calls for a review of LABE's definition of HLC adopters and the training provided.

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APPENDICES
Appendix A: List of Documents Reviewed

In evaluating this project, we were able to review the following documents:

1.   The ECCE policy
2.   The NIECD policy
3.   SURE final evaluation report
4.   BASICS project documents
5.   The Uganda Education Act 2008
6.   Guidelines for establishment of community based ECD in Uganda
7.   BASICS project Start up form (M&E plan)
8.   Year 1,2 Annual reports (Narrative and finance)
9.   Comic Relief feedback to annual reports
10.   KAP study report

Appendix B:

SN	Category	Participant Name	Role	Gender	District	Contact
1	Parent Educators	Oola Richard	Agweng HLC	M	Nwoya	
2		Auma Teddy	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
3		Apiyo Rita	Baraminy HLC	F	Nwoya	
4		Acan Catherine	Baraminy HLC	F	Nwoya	
5		Antowa Concy	Amatura HLC	F	Obongi	
6		Amuru Arias	Amatura HLC	M	Obongi	
7		Anena Janet	Otege HLC	F	Gulu	
8		Anena Joyce	Otege HLC	F	Gulu	
9		Ogenrwot Denis	Goka HLC	M	Gulu	
10		Denaya R. M	Ayilenga HLC	F	Koboko	
11		Lemuga Jackson	Nyeite HLC	M	Koboko	
12		Bayiga Philip	Nyeite HLC	M	Koboko	
13		Tiperu Asina	Nyeite HLC	F	Koboko	
14	District Official	Ayiba George Butele	DEO	M	Nwoya	0772862009
15		Achola Harriet	DIS	F	Nwoya	0782053992
16		Atim Betty	Sec. Ed	F	Nwoya	0779749320
17		Obol David	DIS	M	Gulu	0785403348
18			DEO	M	Koboko	
19		Paul	DIS	M	Koboko	
20	Parents	Akumu Concy	Lagot Libi HLC	F	Gulu	
21		Anek Jenifer	Lagot Libi HLC	F	Gulu	
22		Lameno Scovia	Lagot Libi HLC	F	Gulu	
23		Acan Agnes	Lagot Libi HLC	F	Gulu	
24		Okello Alfred	Lagot Libi HLC	M	Gulu	
25		Adele Margaret	Lagot Libi HLC	F	Gulu	
26		Apili Nancy	Lagot Libi HLC	F	Gulu	
27		Ayenyo Grace	Lagot Libi HLC	F	Gulu	
28		Ayebare Rehema	Lagot Libi HLC	F	Gulu	
29		Asiki Musa	Tanyaji HLC	M	Koboko	
30		Moro Nassur	Tanyaji HLC	M	Koboko	
31		Sabuwa Rebecca	Tanyaji HLC	F	Koboko	
32		Safina Dharun	Tanyaji HLC	F	Koboko	
33		Safina Ayike	Tanyaji HLC	F	Koboko	
34		Nora Kakune	Tanyaji HLC	F	Koboko	
35		Kana Peterson	Arabule HLC	M	Koboko	
36		Ati Ayine	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	
37		Wasa Godwill	Arabule HLC	M	Koboko	
38		Saburu Joice	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	
39		Akandra Jamila	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	
40		Akandru Muna	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	
41		Witro Jamu	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	
42		Swimu Knight	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	
43		Yaka Kemisa	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	

44		Atuma Fatuma	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	
45		Akulia Ayisa	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	
46		Itutu Ayisa	Arabule HLC	F	Koboko	
47		Semenika James	Arabule HLC	M	Koboko	
48		Data Isaac	Arabule HLC	M	Koboko	
49		Kilama John	Agweng HLC	M	Nwoya	
50		Amony Margaret	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
51		Akello Aisha	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
52		Ojara Patrick	Agweng HLC	M	Nwoya	
53		Okot Patrick	Agweng HLC	M	Nwoya	
54		Ayugi Jeska	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
55		Piloya Agnes	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
56		Anyeko Margaret	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
57		Alinga Everline	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
58		Adong Everline	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
59		Ajok Dorina	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
60		Akwongo Mary	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
61		Angee Albina	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
62		Arach Betty	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
63		Auma Mary	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
64		Oola Joyce	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
65		Aryemo Joyce	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
66		Acaa Fiona	Agweng HLC	F	Nwoya	
67	Management Committee	Anywar Nelson	Baraminy HLC	M	Nwoya	
68		Achari Morino	Baraminy HLC	M	Nwoya	
69		Ongupa Justin	Baraminy HLC	M	Nwoya	
70		Alanye Julia	Baraminy HLC	F	Nwoya	
71		Acan Betty	Baraminy HLC	F	Nwoya	
72		Ajok Jane	Baraminy HLC	F	Nwoya	
73		Acero Jackline	Baraminy HLC	F	Nwoya	
74		Acan Regina	Bobayo HLC	F	Gulu	
75		Atal Pasika	Bobayo HLC	F	Gulu	
76		Lamono Dina	Bobayo HLC	F	Gulu	
77		Ocen Denis	Bobayo HLC	M	Gulu	
78		Ojok David	Bobayo HLC	M	Gulu	
79		Oyella Brenda	Bobayo HLC	F	Gulu	
80		Olungi Mike	Bobayo HLC	M	Gulu	
81		Salama Innocent	Awara HLC	F	Obongi	
82		Munduru Amina	Awara HLC	F	Obongi	
83		Atimaku Zulufa	Awara HLC	F	Obongi	
84		Onzia Fatuma	Awara HLC	F	Obongi	
85		Aisha Rasulu	Awara HLC	F	Obongi	
86		Dawa Joyce	Awara HLC	F	Obongi	
87		Candiga Yusuf	Asamvu HLC	M	Obongi	
88		Likicho Safina	Asamvu HLC	F	Obongi	

89		Zena Maimuna	Asamvu HLC	F	Obongi	
90		Masudiyo Beatrice	Asamvu HLC	F	Obongi	
91		Enzama Moris	Asamvu HLC	M	Obongi	
92		Hadige Tom	Asamvu HLC	M	Obongi	
93		Osman Miraj	Asamvu HLC	M	Obongi	
94		Guri Khassim	Asamvu HLC	M	Obongi	
95		Mjiga James	Jiro HLC	M	Koboko	
96		Tera Servant	Jiro HLC	M	Koboko	
97		Muro John	Jiro HLC	M	Koboko	
98		Safi Rajab	Jiro HLC	F	Koboko	
99		Fatuma Agoro	Jiro HLC	F	Koboko	
100		Nema Gueri	Jiro HLC	F	Koboko	
101		Margaret Messiya	Jiro HLC	F	Koboko	
102		Wayi Oliver	Jiro HLC	F	Koboko	
103		Pontius	Yambura HLC	M	Koboko	
104		Sanyaresu Robert	Yambura HLC	M	Koboko	
105		Aloro Joseph	Yambura HLC	M	Koboko	
106		Buga David	Yambura HLC	M	Koboko	
107		Gogo Francis	Yambura HLC	M	Koboko	
108		Toko Moro	Yambura HLC	M	Koboko	
109		Yangara James	Yambura HLC	M	Koboko	
110		Ezati Margaret	Yambura HLC	F	Koboko	
111		Kenyi Swali	Yambura HLC	M	Koboko	
112		Mary Night	Yambura HLC	F	Koboko	
113		Aate Fatuma	Yambura HLC	F	Koboko	
114		Sanya Robert	Yambura HLC	M	Koboko	
115		Okuti Geoffrey	Amatua HLC	M	Obongi	
116		Ujeyo Sabina	Amatua HLC	F	Obongi	
117		Lekuni Margaret	Amatua HLC	F	Obongi	
118		Anderu Dusuman	Amatua HLC	M	Obongi	
119		Yikia Kemisa	Amatua HLC	F	Obongi	
120		Rashid Juma	Amatua HLC	M	Obongi	
121	LABE Field Staff	Opio Richard	Team Leader	M	Gulu	
122		Aluma James Ambaku	Program Officer	M	Obongi	
123		Nyakuni Robert	Program Officer	M	Obongi	
124		Okello Heron	M& E	M	Koboko	
125		Andama David	Program Officer	M	Koboko	
126		Drani Vick	Team Leader	M	Koboko	
127	LABE Head Office	Stella	ED	F	Kampala	
128		Kamya Edmond	M&E	M	Kampala	
129		Godfrey	HoP	M	Kampala	
130		Joyce Nairuba	Communications	F	Kampala	
131			Finance	M	Kampala	
132	Comic Relief			F	UK	
133	Comic Relief			F	UK	

Appendix C: Final ToR

LITERACY AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (LABE)TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR A CONSULTANCY TO CARRY OUT END OF PROJECT EVALUATION

Project Title: Building and Strengthening Integrated Community Support (BASICS) for SURE
Project Ref: 2828579

Back ground:

Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) is an indigenous organization established in 1989. It's a registered NGO under registration number MIA/NB/2004/10/1197. LABE exists to promote literacy practices and increase access to information particularly among women and children in local communities in order to actively demand and protect their rights. We are currently implementing educational projects focusing on children and parents in districts of; Gulu, Nwoya, Obongi and Koboko. LABE works with different partners including government at local, district, national levelsto support the implementation of basic education policies including UPE and ECD contributing to SDG 4 target 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6. Through our Family Basic Education approach, we are enhancing parental involvement to deliver home based ECD to marginalised communities that cannot access existing forms of ECD delivered by the private sector. The approach improves parental involvement in children's education and parents' literacy skills.

About the project: basics

Building and Strengthening Integrated Community Support (BASICS) for SURE projectis a 2-year project (1st April 2020-31st March 2022), funded by Comic Relief and implemented by LABE in the districts of ; Gulu, Nwoya, Koboko and Obongi. The projectis part of Comic Relief 's All In All Learning programme whose overall budget is 349,432£. The project overall aim is to provide holistic ECD for 2,750 learners, building thecapacity of parent educators and sensitizing HLCMCs, parents, government officials at local and national level to support inclusive access to quality informal ECD in Uganda.

It also seeks to ease transfer of home-based ECD countrywide following government approval of the informal ECD Complementary Learning Framework based on LABE's work in Northern Uganda. To do this, it will simplify the approved curriculum and show adopters how integrated community support delivers inclusive ECD in marginalized communities. It is envisaged that home-based learning experiences linked to school activities will: support children learning wherever they are, greatly ease home-primary school transition and ensure children stay and succeed in school. Project outcomes and key activities are;

Outcome i: Improved learning outcomes for pre-school children at and from HLCs
Conducting periodic pre-school children's readiness assessments

Outcome ii: PEs are capable and motivated to provide inclusive quality home- based ECD to children in marginalised areas. Developing 200 simplified ECD teaching toolkits: In Q1 and Q2 of Yr1, LABE will build on existing NCDC-developed Caregiver's Companion to the Complementary Learning Framework and Guidelines on conducting continuous assessment to produce a PE ECD teaching toolkit. Toolkit will have sample daily routine/lesson plans and teaching materials, ECD material-making activity sheets and sample ECD continuous assessment tools. It will be complemented

with a 'view and teach' video showing how some ECD sessions are taught. Conducting 1-day PEs training per month for 6 months beginning from Q3 of Yr1in using the toolkit. PEs from nearby HLCs will cluster at a HLC to receive monthly trainings followed by ECD teaching and reflection sessions.

From Yr1, mobilise home-based PEs meeting requirements to enroll for the 9- month apprenticeship community child care programme course proposed in thenew ECCE Qualifications Framework.

Outcome iii. HLCMCs, parents and community members are increasingly engaged and supporting holistic ECD provision in existing HLCs. Orient 40 VSLA groups to the integrated literacy, parenting and microenterprise curriculum: beginning Q1 of Yr1, LABE will sensitize HLC-VSLAs to engage simultaneously in literacy, parenting and microenterprise training using saved funds to cover facilitators' costs. Resourcing and training VSLA-group facilitators to deliver literacy, parenting andmicroenterprise development sessions after each weekly VSLA meeting. Supporting 40 HLCMCs to hold quarterly progress reviews of proposed activitiesin their HLC development plans: activities implementation like HLC gardens ion,shelter maintenance for child safety and hygiene rely on community self-help.

Outcome iv. Local government extension staff and ECD service providers are more coordinated, inclusive and responsive to the need and demand for quality informal ECD. Facilitating sub-county level extension staff e.g., community development officer to deliver technical information to parents in HLCs during weekly literacy/parenting sessions. Providing guidance to HLCMCs beginning Yr1 to register HLCs with sub-county authorities. This is a key requirement to enable HLCs access ECD-supportive services e.g., agricultural inputs from government. Sharing progress reports on home-based ECD activities with district education inspectors for ECD. LABE will specifically target district education sector reviewmeetings to share reports.

Outcome v. Improved awareness and expansion of the home-based ECDmodel into under-served areas of Uganda. Carrying out a rapid cross-sectional survey in Q1 of Yr1: to examine public awareness, knowledge, perceptions and attitudes about home-based ECD toinform the public campaign design. Developing home-based ECD awareness raising strategy in Q2 and Q3 of Yr1. Strategy will have illustrative activities and tools examining key community stakeholders to reach and changes in their knowledge and behaviors related tohome-based ECD. Public campaign and events from Q4 of Yr1 and throughout Yr2: will include distribution of information packs containing dual-sided bilingual leaflets with messages about benefits of home-based ECD and calendar-charts with steps of managing a HLC. Other campaign components will include free radio show discussions featuring local politicians, government authorities and community leaders, and video films

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the final evaluation is to assess the extent to which the delivery of the BASICs project has achieved its planned outcomes and to identify lessons for future projects.

Scope of work

At the project level

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

1. Assess the relevance of the outcomes in terms of whether they were achievable andwhether they met the needs and priorities of the target group.

2. Assess whether the project activities generated the planned outputs and if they weret delivered on time. How were work plans adapted during the life of the project? Did the project activities represent good value for money?

3. Assess the achievement of outcomes and the overall impact on the lives of beneficiaries and on local communities.

4. Review significant achievements the project has brought about; which approaches worked particularly well and why and which worked less well and why. Any unexpected or unintended outcomes- both positive and negative.

5. Gather feedback about the project from people affected by the activities and provide an opportunity for them to participate in analyzing project achievements.

6. Assess the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, Parent Educators, district education officials and Ministry of Education and Sports officials) about the home based ECD model as alternative in delivering early learning to children in marginalized areas.

7. To what extent has the project contributed to the achievements of broader national and international policies, conventions, good practices or targets in the country

8. Assess the extent to which the benefits received by the target groups are having a wider overall effect on larger numbers of people in the sector, region or country as a whole.

9. Whether the positive outcomes of the project are likely to continue after the end of the project

10. Make recommendations for future intervention and projects

11. Document any unexpected outcomes, both positive and negative.

At LABE level

1. Assess the extent to which the project's structure has enabled it to meet its objectives and the needs of the target groups

2. Assess the effectiveness of the monitoring, evaluation and learning system of theproject

3. Review actual expenditure against planned expenditure and assess whether spending reflects project priorities.

On Partnerships.

1. Assess the project partnerships and how effective they have supported the delivery of project outcomes.

2. In addition, the evaluation should consider to what extent (if any): Advocacy, networking, and inter-agency coordination has been going on. What has this achieved so far?

3. Alignment with international and national instruments/policies.

4. Assess the extent to which the project addresses the SDG 4, targets 4.2, 4.5, and 4.6 as well MoES basic education policies.

Evaluation process:

The final Evaluation will be led by international consultant, working with a co-evaluator based in Uganda and in conjunction with LABE staff. The evaluation team will conduct fieldwork in 4 districts to explore the evaluation objectives. The inception report is expected to spell out the key tasks of each consultant involved.

The following documents should be examined as part of the final evaluation (these will be availed to the selected consultants)

1. The approved project proposal document
2. The project Start up form (M&E plan)
3. Year 1,2 Annual reports (Narrative and finance)
4. Comic Relief feedback to annual reports
5. KAP study report
6. Any other relevant documentation as requested by the consultant

The following stakeholders and beneficiaries shall be consulted;

1. Comic Relief focal person
2. LABE staff
3. Ministry of Education and Sports
4. National Curriculum Development Centre
5. New model adopters
6. Village Savings and Loan Association committee members
7. Home learning Centre Management committee members
8. Parent participating in the project
9. ECD Learners
10. Teachers and head teachers in the HLC satellite schools
11. District Education Officers

The scope:

The evaluation is expected to cover a sample of the project beneficiaries and stakeholders involved in the project as per table 1 below;

Table 1: Numbers to be reached:

Project parameters	Project Target	Sample
Districts	4	4
HLCs	40	16
Parent Educators	80	32
Parents	600	240
Ministry of Educations officials (NCDC, BEWG, PS, Policy, ECD working group	20	8
LABE Board of Directors	6	6
District officials	24	10
HLCMCs	40	16
VSLA groups	40	16

Outputs of the Final Evaluation

1. Main report of not more than 35 pages as per Comic Relief guidelines, but some of the information can go into annexes.
2. A policy brief of not more than 5 pages for use at national level to increase awareness and publicity of the model.

The two reports above will be consumed by; LABE staff and management, Donors, Line Ministries, district education officials and network partners. MEL and Communications Manager will further simplify the content of these reports for sharing with project beneficiaries such as parents, HLC management committees and VSLA members among others.

Next: LABE is seeking for the letter of interest, technical and budget proposals & CV from 2 qualified consultants; the lead and co- evaluator.

The technical and budget proposals & CVs should be addressed to LABE Executive Director, email: stellah@labeuganda.org, not later than 15th February 2022. The proposal should show the interpretation of ToRs.

Once the 2 have been selected, they will be expected to work together and harmonize their proposals.
Please note that this is a short-term *contract of not more than 25 days and a final report is expected to be submitted not later than 31st March 2022.*
Profile

Our ideal candidates should have:

1. Sound understanding of Early Childhood Education as addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Knowledge of ECD provided from a family learning perspective.
3. Familiar with ECD policy and frameworks in Uganda
4. Proven Experience in conducting end-of-project evaluations. Must sharelinks to the reports done previously.
5. Good command / Proficient in written and spoken English)

List of acronyms

NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
PS	Permanent Secretary
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SURE	Scale up Readiness and Retention
TORS	Terms of Reference
VHT	Village Health Teams
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

Appendix D: Tools Used

Instrument 1: National LABE Board of Directors Key informant interviews

Date: _____

Name of Interviewee: _____

Organization: LABE_____

Position of Responsibility: _____

Location Kampala:_____

Interviewer (initials):_____

A. General
1.   What is your overview of the BASICS project?
2.   What do you think have been the main achievements and impact of the BASICS project so far?
3.   Has there been any unintended or unexpected impact?
4.   What do you think have been the main challenges (if any), in terms of implementing BASICS?
5.   Which collaborations or partnerships have you formed to help promote HLC concept?
6.   What advocacy campaigns have you done that has helped promote HLCs concept?
7.   How is the HLC concept addressing the SDG 4 goal?

LABE Executive Director and Financial Manager
1.   Have there been any particular challenges regarding the financial management of the BASICS project? If yes, how can these be remedied?
2.   How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the project delivery?
3.   How were the work plans adapted during the project period?
4.   Has there been a problem with the disbursement of funds from the donor?

M&E Manager
1.   What do you see as the main outputs of this project?
2.   What unintended outcomes did you see as M&E officer in the life of this project?
3.   How successful has utilization of the project M&E framework been? What challenges?
4.   What processes are undertaken at the district and head office level to maintain and update the project database?
5.   How have you been tracking data from the field in terms of:
     a). Activities conducted
     b). Outputs from beneficiaries
     c). Outcomes from non-direct beneficiaries?

Output Table for level of Achievement

SN	Indicators	Midline	Endline
1	Conducting periodic pre-school children's readiness assessments		
2	#of PEs assessed as competent to deliver quality home-based ECD		
3	# of trained PEs regularly delivering weekly home-based ECD sessions		
4	# of trained PEs demonstrating usage of the simplified ECD teaching toolkit		
5	# materials created by PEs for use with pre-school children at HLCs		
6	# of pre-school children proficient in early literacy, numeracy and motor skills annually		
7	# of HLCs with operating HLCMCs		
8	# of trained parents attesting to improved nurturing practices		
9	# of HLCs with operational VSLAs		
10	# of community-developed initiatives (e.g. VSLAs, HLC gardens, parent education) happening in HLCs		
11	# of available improved learning shelters, latrines and hand-washing facilities at HLCs		
12	# of informational sessions delivered to parents in HLCs by district and sub-county technical staff per quarter		
13	# of ECD-supportive inputs and resources from government provided to registered HLCs		
14	# of home-based ECD data available in national EMIS database		
15	# of new home-based ECD model adopters operating in new under-served areas		
16	# of pre-school children enrolled in informal home-based centres in new under-served areas		
17	# of new home-based ECD adopters seeking technical guidance from LABE		

COMIC RELIEF FOCAL PERSON

1. What goal were you trying to achieve in awarding this funding for BASICS?
2. So far, what do you see as the greatest achievement for this project?
3. Where do you see that this project still needs more support?
4. What other development aspect should LABE add into their intervention so as to address CR wider education strategy?

Instrument 2:

MOES National /District / National working groups Key Informant interview

Position of interviewee: ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Date: ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Organisation:⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Location (district): ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

Interviewer (initials):⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

1. Describe your roles/responsibilities (if any) in relation to the LABE'S Home based ECD project

2. What were the key objectives of the project?

3. What activities have you been engaged in to implement the project?

4. What do you see as the key achievements of the LABE'S Home based ECD project?

5. What impact do you see in the community that you can attribute to the project?

6. What do you think have been your main challenges of the LABE'S Home based ECD project?

7. In what way do you think your roles in the LABE'S Home based ECD project could be improved?

8. What recommendations, if any, would you make regarding any partners/projects working with pre-school children and parents on preparing children for school and helping them stay in school?

9. How else have you worked with LABE to promote HLC

Instrument 4: Parents Focus Group Discussion
**To be conducted with a selected group of parents, including at least 1 SMC member, who are)
(involved in home learning centres**

Number of Parents:_____ Male:_____ Female:_____ Date: _____

HLC:_____ Location (district):_____

Interviewer (initials): _____

1. How have you been involved in the Home Learning Centres?

2. What is the project provided by LABE doing in your school/community?

3. How well do you think the parent educators are working with children and adults?

4. How are you using the knowledge learnt from LABE in your home?

5. What do you think has been the best thing LABE has brought to your community?

6. What change do you see in the children that you believe is because of being in the HLCs?

7. If you think the project is a good thing, how do you think it should be continued?

8. How could home learning centres be improved for yourselves, your children and your community?

9. If there are any problems with the project, what would you recommend to make it work more effectively?

10. In what ways have the knowledge you have got from LABE helped you to benefit from other places?

HLCMC Focus Group Discussion

Number of HLCMC Members: _____ Male:_____ Female:_____ Date:_____

HLC:_____ Location(district):_____

Interviewer (initials):_____

1. How have you been involved in the Home Learning Centres?

2. What training have you got from LABE that is helping you do your work?

3. How well do you think the parent educators are working with children and adults

4. How are you using the knowledge learnt from LABE in your home?

5. What do you see as your main achievement as HLCMC?

6. What change do you see in the children that you believe is because of being in the HLCs?

7. What plans do you have to help the centre grow even when LABE is not around?

8. What do you think LABE should change to make the centres work better?

9. If there are problems with the project, what would you recommend to make it work more effectively?

10. In what ways have the knowledge you have got from LABE helped you to benefit from other places?

PARENT EDUCATORS KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW
(To be conducted with selected PEs in 4 HLCs per district)

Gender of Parent Educators: _____ Date: _____

HLC Name: _____ Location (district) _____

Interviewer (initials): _____

1. What have been your responsibilities as a PE?

2. What training have you got from LABE that has made you a better PE?

3. What materials have you been able to produce for the centre?

4. What are the challenges involved in being a PE?

5. How do you think these challenges could be overcome?

6. What is the best way for the adopted communities to be supported to sustain their HLCs?

7. Have there been any children with special needs coming to your home learning centre?

8. How do you cater for children with special needs who register in the centre?

9. How do you work with the parents to ensure learning takes place in the centre?

10. How have you been able to encourage women and girls in their learning?

11. What would you recommend to make HLCs work more effectively?

12. How can HLCs be continued after LABE's role is over?

Instrument 6: LABE Project Officers

Date:_____

Name of Interviewee:_____

Organization: LABE_____

Position of Responsibility:_____

Location (District)_____

Interviewer (initials):_____

1. What is BASICS project all about?

2. Describe your roles/responsibilities in relation to BASICS.

3. What objectives is BASICS expected to achieve?

4. What do you think have been the main achievements of the BASICS project so far?

5. What has been the unintended or unexpected impact?

6. What do you think have been the main challenges in implementing BASICS project:

7. How is the project addressing the needs of children and in particular
   (a) Children with special needs,

   (b) Women and girls?

8. What do you see as things introduced under BASICS that may continue even after the project is phased out?

9. Which of the following activities have you done under BASICS?

Output Table for level of Achievement

SN	Activities	Whendone
1	Conducting periodic pre-school children's readiness assessments	
2	Mobilize home-based PEs meeting requirements to enroll for the 9-month apprentice- ship community child care programme course	
3	Conducting 1-day PEs training per month for 6 months beginning from Q3 of Yr1 in using the toolkit	
4	Developing 200 simplified ECD teaching toolkits: Produce a PE ECD teaching toolkit.	
5	ECD material-making activity sheets and sample ECD continuous assessment tools	
6	Supporting 40 HLCMCs to hold quarterly progress reviews of proposed activities in their HLC development plans	
7	Orient 40 VSLA groups to the integrated literacy, parenting and microenterprise curriculum	
8	Orient 40 VSLA groups to the integrated literacy, parenting and microenterprise curriculum	
9	Facilitating sub-county level extension staff e.g. community development officer to deliver technical information to parents in HLCs	
10	Sharing progress reports on home-based ECD activities with district education inspectors for ECD	
11	Providing guidance to HLCMCs to register HLCs with sub-county authorities	
12	Public campaign that includes distribution of information packs containing dual-sided bilingual leaflets with messages about benefits of home-based ECD and calendar-charts with steps of managing a HLC	

HLC ADOPTERS

Date:_____

Name of Interviewee:_____

Organization: LABE_____

Position of Responsibility:_____

Location (District)_____

Interviewer (initials):_____

1. Where did you get the idea of starting a Home Learning Centre?

2. How were you helped to start the HLC?

3. What things did you see from others who are implementing HLC that you have not adopted?

4. How do you manage the centre sustainably?

5. What things did you receive from LABE that is helping you to implement the HLC?

6. What do you think have been the main challenges you got while implementing HLC project?

7. How is the project addressing the needs of children and in particular
   (a) Children with special needs,

   (b) Women and girls?

8. What advise do you give to LABE to make their HLC more efficient?

9. What is the future of Home based ECD after re-opening of school? What do you intend to continue with?

BASICS ENDLINE EVALUATION

March – April 2022 Proposed Itinerary

Date	Activity	Location
Wednesday 23rd to 25th February 2022	Submit Inception report	Consultant
Thursday 10th March 2022	Entry Meeting at Head	
office	LABE-Head office	
Sunday 13th March 2022	Travel to Koboko	Koboko
Monday 14th February 2022	Work in Koboko	Koboko
Tuesday 15th March 2022	Travel to Obongi Work in Obongi	Obongi
Wednesday 16th March 2022 (Morning)	Orient 40 VSLA groups to the integrated literacy, parenting and microenterprise curriculum	
(Afternoon)	Work in Obongi Travel to Gulu (evening)	Obongi Obongi-Gulu
Thursday 17th March 2022	Work in Gulu	Gulu
Friday 18th March 2022	Work in Nwoya	Gulu
Saturday 19th March 2022	Work in Nwoya	Kampala
Monday 20th March 2022	Travel back to Kampala	
Thursday 24th – Tuesday 29th March 2022	Interviews with LABE head office staff, Ministry officials, Model Adopters	Kampala + Online with Dr McNair
Wednesday 30th March – Monday 4th		
April 2022	Data Analysis	Kampala
Thursday 7th April 2022	Meeting to receive preliminary findings	LABE Head office
Wednesday 13th April 2022	Sharing the first Draft of Report and video for LABE's comments	LABE Head office
Thursday 21st April 2022	Submission of final report and video	LABE Head office

While in each district:

- Day 1: Interview DEO, DIS, ECD focal point person, HLCMC
- Day 2: Interview parents, PEs, HLCMC

Note: *To save on time, virtual meetings with CR, model adopters can be done concurrently as Prof collects data from the field. However, this will depend on how the 2 consultants intend to share the roles.*

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