

Yizani Sifunde

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LEARNING
BRIEF

5



YIZANI SIFUNDE LEARNING BRIEF SERIES

Exploring the impact
of a collaborative,
multi-pronged early
literacy intervention
on 4- and 5-year-olds

Impact beyond the classroom: shifts in homes and communities



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Wordworks
Changing lives through literacy



WHAT IS YIZANI SIFUNDE?

Yizani Sifunde (isiXhosa for “come, let’s read”) aimed to boost early literacy outcomes at under-resourced early childhood development (ECD) centres in the Eastern Cape. It was implemented in three one-year cycles between 2021 and 2023.

The project was initiated and funded by the Liberty Community Trust, and jointly designed and delivered by three literacy nonprofits: Book Dash, Nal’ibali and Wordworks. Local Eastern Cape partners ITEC and Khululeka supported implementation.

This is the fifth in a series of learning briefs that explore the design, implementation and impact of Yizani Sifunde, a collaborative multi-pronged intervention designed to boost early literacy outcomes in 4- and 5-year-olds.

This brief focuses on:

- the elements of the project that targeted the homes of the children, as well as some community stakeholders;
- the shifts that resulted for these groups; and
- how these legs of the intervention consolidated or extended the project’s impact on young children.

This Learning Brief was written for the Yizani Sifunde project by Dr Magali von Blottnitz, with input from other project partners. It draws extensively on the external evaluation conducted by Social Impact Insights Africa. Liberty Community Trust holds the intellectual property rights to the evaluation results and gave permission for them to be shared subject to specific acknowledgements. The brief can be cited as follows:

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The Yizani Sifunde project partners gratefully acknowledge the **Liberty Community Trust**, without whose impetus, funding and constant support this collaborative project and the associated research would not have been possible.

How the Yizani Sifunde project touched homes

Main project inputs into homes: mediated distribution of books and caregiver workshops

The main way in which the project impacted homes is by donating **large quantities of books** to children to own. Most children attending the participating ECDs received 25 to 50 Book Dash books in the course of the year, mostly in their home language, which they took home to keep. Importantly, these books were **mediated**: Story Sparkers¹ introduced children to the stories in dedicated storytime sessions at the ECD centres, and encouraged them to ask their parents or caregivers to read the books again with them at home.

In addition to this main channel, ECD practitioners were encouraged to organise **up to six caregiver workshops**, following the Wordworks “Every Word Counts” programme.² By design, these workshops can only reach a portion of caregivers. In addition, this component of the project experienced various challenges, resulting in sub-optimal implementation (see box). Therefore, caregiver workshops reached only a portion of caregivers (estimated at approximately 500 caregivers over 3 years), but enabled deeper layers of impact for those who attended regularly.



Profile of caregivers and households touched by the project

Yizani Sifunde was implemented in two communities: a largely peri-urban community around East London, and a more rural community in the Chris Hani district, spreading from villages around Whittlesea to the outskirts of Queenstown.

While the profile of households in the two hubs was quite different, on the whole, of caregivers who made themselves available for an interview in 2023:

- 62% were the **mother** of their child and 22% were the **grandmother**. The remaining 16% were most likely to be an aunt, father or older sister.
- Most children live in households with one child (28%), two children (38%) or three children (19%), but a smaller number of households have between four and eight children.
- 87% of caregivers **received a grant** for their child(ren).
- 37% of caregivers had an education level lower than matric. 20% had matric only, and the remaining 43% had some level of post-matric education.
- Even though **isiXhosa** was the **dominant language in the majority** of homes (63%), a surprisingly high percentage of caregivers indicated that multiple languages are spoken in their homes. 43% of households in the East London hub were multilingual.

Left: The new Book Dash books that Lolwam keeps at his home in Airport Park outside East London.

1 Story Sparkers were young people from the targeted communities, employed by the project to support implementation in a particular geographic cluster. Their role included facilitating story sessions at ECD centres, managing book distribution, supporting practitioners, running reading club sessions and capturing project monitoring data.

2 See https://www.wordworks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Programme-information-sheets-2023_EWC.pdf

A note on methodology for home- and caregiver-related data

Collecting extensive data from caregivers about the changes taking place in homes requires a dedicated fieldwork methodology which would have exceeded the scope of the external evaluators' brief. Therefore, it was agreed that this leg of the project would be evaluated internally, and the external evaluators would do ad hoc interviews and high-level reviews of internal data analysis and results. This allowed some level of triangulation and mutual strengthening while staying within the evaluation's scope.

Over 2022 and 2023, Story Sparkers visited 352 homes to interview caregivers.³ In addition to an in-house data collection form and collecting photographic evidence, they administered DataDrive2030's Home Learning Environment (HLE) questionnaire. The HLE relies on self-reported findings, so there is a risk of inherent bias if survey respondents are influenced by social desirability when answering questions.

Below: Imbusise and her mother read one of her Book Dash books together at their home in Kwelerha.



³ Convenience sampling was used with an effort to represent all geographic areas / ECD centres equally. The aim was to interview caregivers twice, at baseline (March) and endline (October-November), but due to availability constraints, only 58% of the baseline homes could be reached at endline. Where they could not be reached, a new caregiver was interviewed instead.

The outcomes of the core project on caregivers

Most of this section builds on analysis of Home Learning Environment data. We report here on the three core categories of the HLE tool: early learning resources, caregiver time spent with the child, and the child's exposure to activities at home.

Additional qualitative data from caregiver interviews and ECD principal and practitioner interviews are also included in the final subsection to shed more light on shifts observed among caregivers.

Early learning resources in the homes

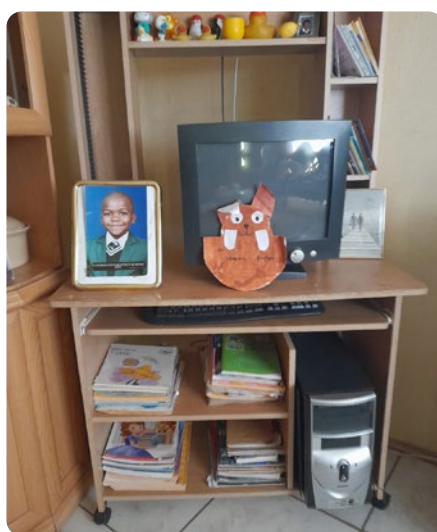
The HLE questionnaire asks caregivers questions about two main types of early learning resources in the home: children's books, and three types of toys (homemade, shop-bought, or household objects that can be used as toys such as sticks and pans).

With regards to books, the project achieved its aim of **radically increasing the amount of children's books** available in children's homes:

- At baseline, two-thirds of homes had no children's books. At endline, almost all (94.4%) families had more than 5 children's books.
- The average number of children's books in the sample increased from **1.3** per household at baseline to **26.4** at endline.⁴

The pictures below show how these books have become an object of pride and delight for all in the family.

Below: examples of how books are kept in the homes of children who benefited from the Yizani Sifunde project. Some made a handmade library box, others found space for the books on existing shelves or furniture, and others set up a small table in the lounge dedicated to children's books.



⁴ Endline interviews took place between 16 October and 5 November, while book distribution continued until the end of November, so the endline value for books is not an accurate endline.

More unexpected was the finding of a **significant increase in the children’s use of homemade toys**. At baseline, 43% of caregivers reported that their children played with such toys; this increased to 63% at endline. This was not influenced by parent workshops, so it may be a consequence of observing practitioners or Story Sparkers create their own toys.

Importantly, 78% of children share the books they received with other children, such as siblings, cousins or children from the neighbourhood (7% “sometimes” and 71% “often or always”). Some comments by caregivers illustrate the spirit in which this sharing happens:

“When she is playing outside with friends she takes her other books with.”

“When they read she gives her cousins to choose books they want to read.”

“She shares books everyday with her friends in the neighbourhood.”

“He shares his books with his friends everyday.”

Below: ECD children from the 2022 and 2023 cohorts posing in their homes with their family members, and the Book Dash books they received throughout the year. The books have become a resource for the whole family to enjoy.



Caregiver time spent with their children

At baseline and endline, caregivers were asked to estimate the amount of time that they have to spend with their children during the week (across all days) and the weekend (across both days): very little time (less than an hour), some time (about 2 hours), and lots of time (more than 2 hours). The data collected revealed that:

- Compared with similar studies,⁵ Yizani Sifunde caregivers had **high levels of time available** to spend with their children. 55% of caregivers said they had “lots of time” for their children, both during the week and weekends. Only one in five caregivers said that they had “very little time” for their children (21% on weekdays and 22% on weekends). This was by far the highest amount of time availability of all the studies known to us. This may have been influenced by the methodology: collecting data through home visits, rather than telephonic interviews, is likely to have resulted in a higher representation of stay-at-home caregivers and a lower representation of caregivers working full-time.
- Due to this high starting point, there has not been much change between baseline and endline, although there has been a decrease in the likelihood of mothers spending “very little time” with their children, especially on weekdays.

Caregivers’ reading behaviour

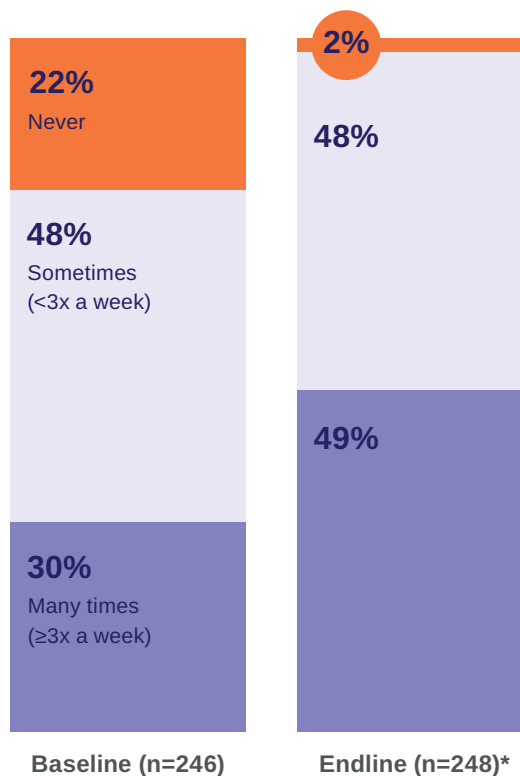
The HLE questionnaire asks caregivers to indicate, for a range of activities, how often they have engaged in this activity with the child in the past week: never, some times (less than three) or many times (at least three).

At baseline, reading books was one of the activities caregivers were least likely to engage in (22% reported never doing it) – which is understandable since many did not have any books.

By endline, the proportion of caregivers who reported “never” reading had decreased markedly and the likelihood of caregivers reading “many times” increased very starkly.

This finding indicates that the abundant books that reached the homes were fairly **effective in shifting caregivers’ behaviour**. This shift seems to have had a limited contagion effect to other beneficial behaviours such as storytelling and singing, although with a smaller effect size; it is not possible to be conclusive about the causal mechanisms of these shifts.

DIAGRAMME 1: Caregivers’ engagement in reading with the child, baseline vs. endline



* 1% of the endline responses were invalid or “don’t know” answers.

SOURCE: Analysis of internal baseline and endline HLE data collected in 2022 and 2023

5 See Dawes et al. 2020; Cain et al. 2023

Qualitative evidence: the mechanisms enabling adoption of a reading routine

Qualitative evidence helps identify elements which, alongside the provision of books, catalysed the shift in caregivers' behaviour. Importantly, children appear to have acted as change agents at home. These mechanisms include:

1. A "nudge effect" by children:

Motivated by reminders from ECD practitioners and Story Sparkers, children have insistently asked their caregivers to read books to them. As caregivers commented:

"She always wants us to read in the house and now I am used to it and it makes me happy."

"He gets happy and always wants me to read and not stop."

2. A "joy and pride effect"

The vast majority of caregivers mentioned the feeling of excitement and happiness shared by child and caregiver as a result of the experience of reading together. They also mentioned their pride in seeing their child's literacy skills developing. This bodes well for the chances of sustaining the new routine even after the end of the project's lifetime.

"He becomes very happy when we read together."

"I feel happy about the fact that he trusts me and pays attention."

"I enjoy reading with my child because I love seeing that she can actually read pictures and interpret what is going on in the story without struggling."

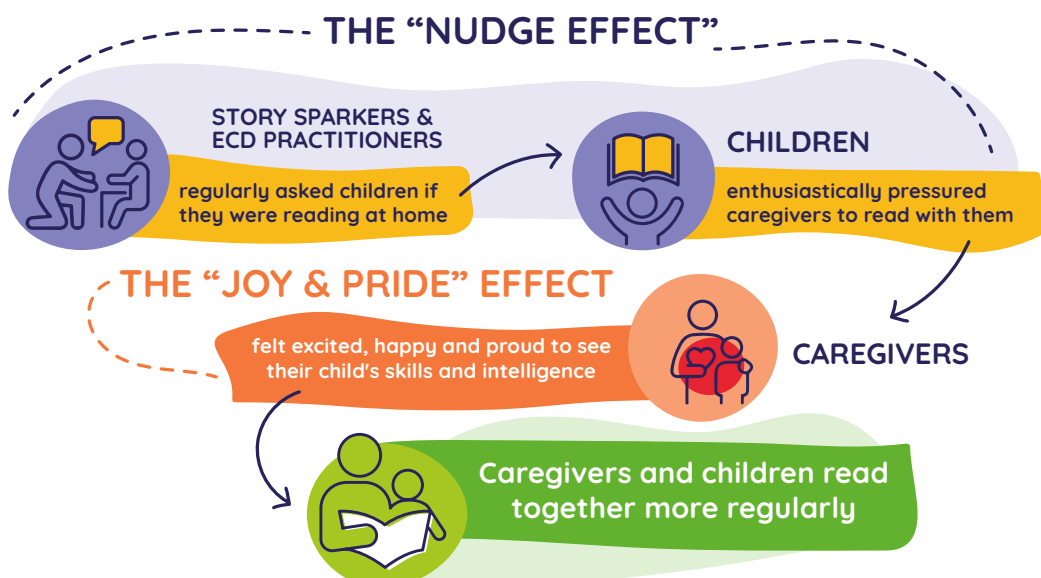
3. A caregiver "skill and confidence effect"

We know from the sustained work in the ECD centres (see Learning Brief 4) that reading a book in a way that will keep children engaged and excited is a skill that should not be taken for granted, but can be acquired through training and/or seeing it modelled. We have some anecdotal indication that a similar skills transfer took place at least in some cases between ECD practitioners and caregivers. This helped some of the caregivers to build their confidence levels and turn reading into a more enjoyable activity for them and the child at home.

As one of the alumni practitioners put it in her post-project reflection:

"At home, children were complaining about their parents that they are not reading well like the teachers at school. So it made parents come to us and ask us to help them so they can read like us. The relationship we had with parents really improved because of the project."

DIAGRAMME 2: How owning books led to more reading: mechanisms identified via qualitative evidence



Shifts in caregiver involvement and the ECD-home relationship

It is commonly accepted that in South Africa’s low-income communities the levels of caregiver involvement in their children’s education in general, and engagement with the child’s teachers or institution of learning in particular, are low. This is often regarded as one of the reasons for the children’s low achievement.

In the ECD centres participating in the project, the external evaluation found very high levels of dissatisfaction with parental engagement among ECD principals and practitioners at baseline.

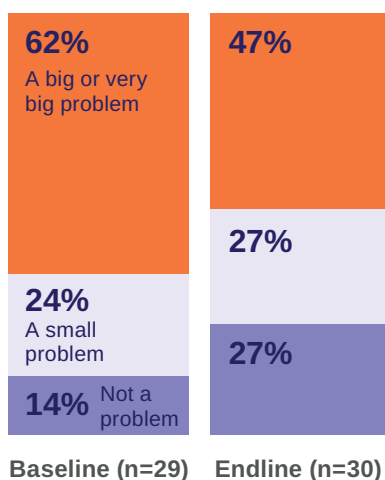
At endline, however, the proportion of respondents who viewed parental engagement as a big or very big problem fell to below 50%. Practitioners also indicated that their interactions were more about helping children learn and less about complaints (see Diagrammes 3A and 3B).

Although the data on this theme is not as extensive as the structured HLE interviews across several hundreds of caregivers, this finding appears to be meaningful nonetheless. Indeed, when the internal team carried out close-out interviews in 2024 with principals and practitioners who had participated in the Yizani Sifunde project in the previous three years, and asked them in an open-ended question to describe the greatest change that the project had caused for their centre, the theme of parental involvement and caregiver-ECD-relationships surfaced spontaneously in a surprisingly high number of responses.

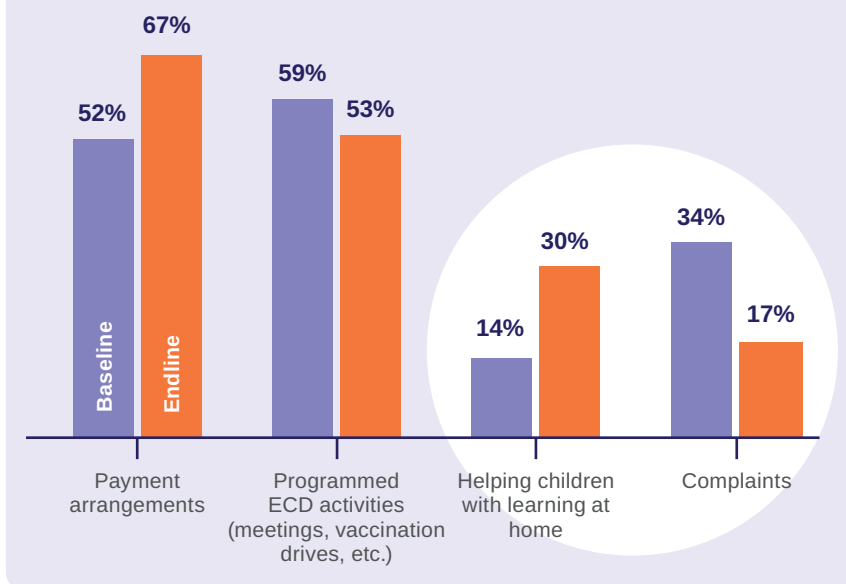
The quotes by ECD principals displayed in Diagramme 4 help illustrate some of the mechanisms through which these shifts took place.

DIAGRAMMES 3A AND 3B: Shifts in ECD practitioners’ experience of caregiver engagement

Is parental engagement in ECD and learner activities a problem for your ECD centre?

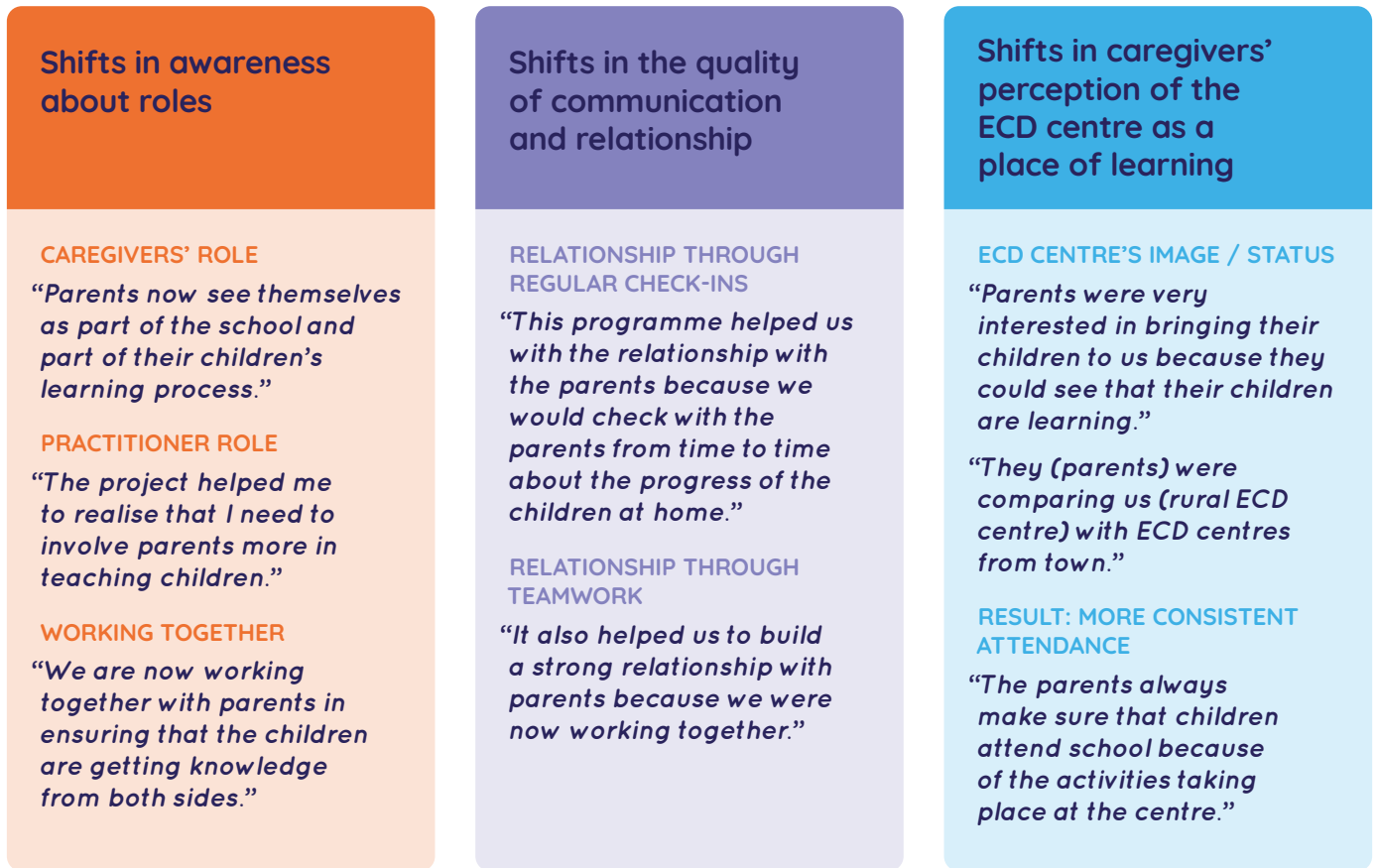


Common topics for engagement with caregivers reported by ECD staff



SOURCE: Polzer Ngwato (2024), pp. 39-41

DIAGRAMME 4: Qualitative shifts in ECD practitioners' experience of caregiver engagement



SOURCE: close-out interviews with alumni ECD practitioners and principals, Jan-March 2024

Below: Children and caregivers at home showing the Story Sparker their favourite books.



The additional effect of caregiver workshops

In addition to receiving books to own, and the indirect effect of seeing their child receiving a higher-quality learning programme at the ECD centre, a subgroup of caregivers (estimated at approximately 500 over three years) received more comprehensive input through parent workshops.

These caregivers attended between one and six sessions, co-delivered by the Story Sparker and the ECD practitioner. Workshops were designed to equip caregivers with some knowledge about early learning, and suggest practical ways to support early language and literacy development through daily interactions with their children.

We present below the evidence we have about the effect that these workshops have had, over and above the other inputs of the project.



Top: An ECD practitioner welcoming parents for their first workshop at Newvale Day Care Centre.

Bottom: Caregivers from Luthando ECD Centre attending a hands-on parent workshop.



More quality time spent with the child

Changes in the amount of caregiver time spent with the child are difficult to establish statistically with HLE data, for three reasons: the high amount of time available at baseline, the limited sample size, and the fact that the HLE tool does not capture increases beyond “more than two hours per week.” Nevertheless, the data suggests that caregivers who attended parent workshops have increased the time they spend with their children more than other caregivers.⁶

Qualitative interviews provided possible explanations for this, including the parents’ greater awareness of their role as primary teachers, and their realisation that doing house chores can be an opportunity to engage the child and even to practise language or mathematics.

In addition to the amount of time, there is ample interview evidence pointing to more intentional use of time spent together, more child-friendly activities, and healthier parent-child interactions.

Diagramme 5 shares some quotes from caregivers illustrating the value they derived from these workshops.

DIAGRAMME 5: Key themes from caregivers’ feedback on parent workshops



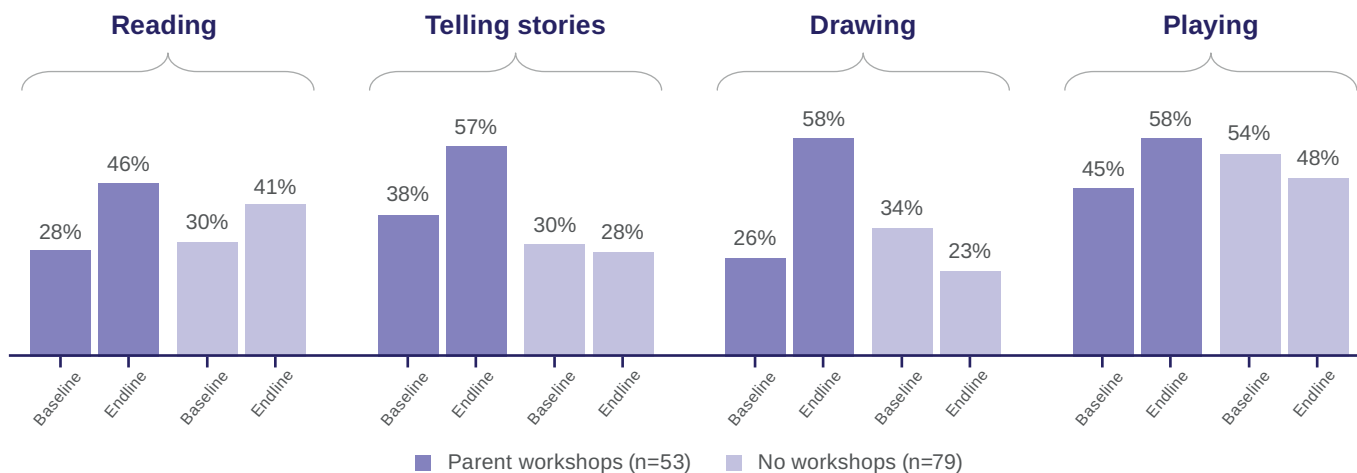
SOURCE: caregiver interviews, 2023

⁶ Using the Caregiver Time for Activities with Child Scale, as proposed by Dawes et al (2023), p. 10, caregivers who have attended parent workshops moved from a score of 6.5 at baseline to 7.1 at endline (Cohen’s $d=0.12$), while the full sample progressed only from 6.1 to 6.3 (Cohen’s $d=0.07$).

More engagement in storytelling, playing and drawing

The HLE data also shows that between baseline and endline, parents who attended workshops reported increased engagement with storytelling, playing and drawing far more than caregivers who did not participate in workshops.⁷

DIAGRAMME 6A: % of parents who do home learning activities at least 3x per week: workshop participants vs. non-participants, at baseline and endline

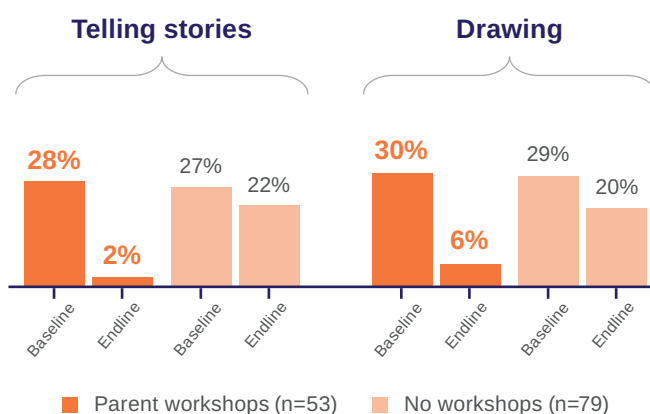


SOURCE: analysis of subsample of the HLE dataset, 2022-23 (matched caregivers where information was available about their attendance at caregiver workshops)

Despite the risk of spurious effects due to the smaller subsample size, the data suggests that:

- The **presence of books** and the **role played by practitioners and Story Sparkers** were apparently **sufficient to initiate the changes with regard to the caregivers' reading behaviour**; parent workshops did not lead to significant additional shifts.
- However, **parent workshops** seem to have played an important role as motivators for **more frequent engagement in storytelling, drawing** and, to a lesser extent, playing.
- The percentage of parents who **never tell stories or draw also decreased to near zero for workshop attendees**, while it remained similar at baseline and endline for parents who did not attend.

DIAGRAMME 6B: % of parents who never do home learning activities: workshop participants vs. non-participants, at baseline and endline



⁷ It was not possible to verify the relationship between parent workshop attendance and children's learning gains. Initially the project sought to prioritise home visits for children who were part of the external evaluation so that this could be assessed, but this was not possible due to practical challenges in scheduling home visits. Parent workshop records were also of variable quality and it was not possible to link workshop attendance to children.



Implementation lessons learned from the caregiver workshop component

Internal monitoring data shows that:

- 28 of the 43 centres in the 2023 cohort (65%) held at least one parent workshop.
- 15 of these (35%) held between 4 and 6 sessions.
- The other 13 (30%) held only 1 to 3 sessions.

Caregiver attendance at the sessions was often irregular. While this may seem disappointing, in resource-constrained environments where practitioners already work long hours for low remuneration, any extra effort to engage parents through workshops is to be commended.

Interview evidence revealed the following reasons for sub-optimal implementation:

1. Widespread scepticism among practitioners about their chances of success with parents;
2. The lack of budget for catering at the workshops;
3. Transport challenges for parents who live far from the centre;
4. The small size of some ECDs, which made it difficult for practitioners to keep a critical mass of caregivers engaged over multiple sessions;
5. A possible overload, as this component was introduced alongside a comprehensive classroom programme. This created a risk that both trainers and practitioners would give more attention to the classroom implementation than to the caregiver workshop component.

In the future, we would like to:

- Introduce the parent workshops as a follow-on in the second year, rather than in the same year as the classroom programme;
- Encourage small ECD centres to cluster together to offer these workshops jointly; and
- Provide a budget for transport subsidies and catering to encourage sustained attendance.



Left: During a parent workshop at Precious Jewels (Fort Grey, East London), caregivers page through the Every Word Counts resources provided.

The effectiveness of reading clubs and other community activities as extensions of the core project

The design of the reading club intervention

While the core of the Yizani Sifunde project took place in ECD centres and homes, reading clubs were intended to extend the reach of the project and to embed literacy development practices among a wide array of community players.

Given their informal nature, reading clubs have proven to be one of the most difficult project elements to monitor. Nevertheless, a number of key insights and lessons can be drawn from monitoring data and the external evaluation that can strengthen the design and implementation of the reading club model.

The project design included three types of reading clubs, all of which were supported with Book Dash Books and Nal'ibali resources (training, reading club starter packs, Nal'ibali reading supplements⁸ and ongoing mentoring). They included:

1 STORY SPARKER-LED READING CLUBS

Each Story Sparker was required to set up one reading club for children in their community and run regular sessions. These reading clubs were intended as “model clubs” for other volunteers to observe and learn from. All participating children would receive Book Dash books to take home after the sessions.

Since they were run by project staff, Story Sparker-led reading clubs were easiest to monitor. After each session, Story Sparkers had to mark child attendance on a digital tool, capture a summary of activities and record books distributed. An external perspective on the quality of activities was provided by the independent evaluator, who observed several sessions held by different Story Sparkers.

2 VOLUNTEER-LED READING CLUBS

Every year, towards the middle of the year, the ground team organised training in the various communities where the project was implemented, with the intention of mobilising volunteers and equipping them with skills to run their own reading clubs. The hope was that in each community, a few volunteers would start reading clubs (using their home, a community structure or any other venue). Story Sparkers would provide support and resources, along with Book Dash books to take home after the sessions.

Outside of registration data provided by reading club leaders, little other data on these clubs exists. It is therefore difficult to establish what proportion of those trained actually started and maintained active clubs, how many children they reached, and how often they met.

3 READING CLUBS OR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES⁹ IN PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Story Sparkers encouraged organisations with a mandate related to education or literacy (such as schools, libraries, and ECD centres that were not able to participate fully in the project) to register reading clubs or conduct reading-related activities. Partner organisations would register in the same way as community-based reading clubs and would receive support visits.

While monitoring data on their activities was not collected, the independent evaluation was able to observe two reading clubs at ECD centres that were not participating in the project, and gave positive feedback about those visits.¹⁰ Due to the lack of data on this type of reading club, the rest of this section focuses on Story Sparker- and volunteer-led reading clubs.

⁸ Nal'ibali reading supplements are 16-page, bilingual, newspaper-format resources with cut-out books, read-aloud stories and activities that come out approximately monthly.

⁹ There was an agreement that a 'Reading Club' referred to a setting where children *choose to join a group that meets regularly* to run activities related to reading and stories. Therefore, if a teacher or ECD practitioner proposes literacy activities as part of the normal classroom routine, or if a librarian offers once-off activities without constituting a group that will reconvene regularly, they would be supported as partner organisations but it would not be regarded as a reading club strictly speaking.

¹⁰ See Zhou and Shilakoe 2024, p. 47.

The success of Story Sparker-led reading clubs

In 2023, there were 289 children registered in 11 reading clubs run by Story Sparkers. Two clubs had more than 40 children registered (41 and 57, respectively), but it appears that most of these children did not attend regularly: the average attendance of these clubs was approximately eleven children per session in both cases, a more appropriate number considering that there was only one adult facilitating.

From the middle of March until the end of November, these eleven reading clubs held **a total of 225 sessions** (a bit less than one session per reading club per week), though one reading club held as many as 49 sessions.

Every week, Story Sparkers were able to donate a new Book Dash book title to their reading club participant to take home, which acted as an incentive to keep attending. A total of 2343 Book Dash books were distributed to those 289 children in 2023.

As the pictures below illustrate, some of the reading clubs attracted mostly children of school-going age, thereby **extending the project's reach to older cohorts** of children. Other reading clubs focused more on other children from the same age group as children attending the ECD centres (below right). Those cases may have enabled a **broader socio-economic reach**, insofar as they likely touched children whose household income did not allow them to pay ECD centre fees.



Above: Members of Young Stars Reading Club from Machibini Village (Queenstown), with the Nal'ibali cut-out books and Book Dash books they took home after the session.

The success of Story Sparker-led reading clubs can probably be attributed to the quality of their offering and their facilitation. Nal'ibali's careful recruitment of Story Sparkers as **enthusiastic young people with a deep knowledge of their community**, and the level of care that the project team has put into designing and delivering the training for these Story Sparkers, bear testimony to these high quality standards.

When independent evaluators observed several sessions by Story Sparker-led as well as partner-led (ECD-based) reading clubs, and interviewed caregivers of participating children, they concluded that:

- Reading clubs were a fun, enriching space.
- Reading club leaders were enthusiastic and highly prepared.
- In addition to core literacy practices like reading and writing, which were strongly interlinked, activities included singing, drawing and dancing – ensuring a holistic approach to learning and an enjoyable experience for children.
- The opportunity for children to take books home helped extend the impact of the club activities beyond the immediate session.
- Parents and caregivers trusted the facilitators and appreciated the safe and beneficial environments that reading clubs provided for their children.¹¹



Above: Children in the Future is Bright Reading Club in Ncera (East London), enjoying their Book Dash books that they received through the Yizani Sifunde project.

¹¹ See Zhou and Shilakoe 2024, pp. 45-46

The challenge of incubating and sustaining reading club activity in the community

Despite the project's success in recruiting and training community volunteers to run reading clubs (892 people trained and 271 clubs registered), motivating and supporting community members to start and sustain reading clubs on a voluntary basis proved challenging. Available evidence suggests that a substantial proportion of registered clubs did not actually get off the ground. Despite the intention to arrange regular Story Sparkers support visits to the active clubs, frequent rescheduling made this difficult. External evaluators' attempts to arrange a visit to a community-based reading club were also unsuccessful.

Although not reported on in the evaluation, barriers to running reading clubs typically include capacity to organise appropriate venues, recruit children and secure parental consent, and other commitments on the part of both volunteers and children. Mentoring and practical support from Story Sparkers can help overcome these hurdles, but proved more complicated to organise than expected; Story Sparkers reported few mentoring visits over the duration of the project.

Nevertheless, some community-based reading clubs were active, run by passionate individuals, although their sessions appear to have been less regular than the reading clubs that were "institutionalised" (i.e. facilitated by paid staff, whether Story Sparkers or staff or partner organisations). Training and providing more structured support to a smaller cohort of highly-motivated volunteers may be more effective in ensuring the sustainability of volunteer-based clubs.

Other avenues through which the project affected communities

In addition to reading clubs, the project was designed to reach communities by promoting a culture of reading for enjoyment via:

- **media campaigns**, especially community radio stations, which aired isiXhosa stories on a weekly basis;
- **events and activations** in specific public spaces and community places, for example at libraries and clinics; and
- **partnerships** with various local stakeholders.

Due to the broad scope of community stakeholders, and the diverse and informal nature of activities involved, the internal monitoring of this has been mostly input- and output-based. The independent evaluation did not collect evidence on these aspects of the project.

Bellow: Children attending a Mandela Day Community Activation at Ncera Village, West of East London, July 2023.



Concluding thoughts

To summarise this learning brief, the rich evidence gathered shows that the shifts that took place in homes and in communities have both **consolidated and extended the project's impact** in the ECD classrooms.

Yizani Sifunde activities in homes and communities **consolidated the project's impact** for various beneficiary groups:

- For **children attending project classrooms** (core beneficiaries), strengthening the home environment helped consolidate the benefits derived from the improved classroom learning environment and strong language and literacy curriculum. Access to books at home, and opportunities to read them on their own, with caregivers and with friends and siblings, reinforced the effectiveness of the practitioner's teaching in class, and vice versa.
- For **children of caregivers exposed to parent workshops**, the impact has been even greater, with strong increases in the frequency of storytelling and drawing activities, which stimulate other skills essential for the development of language and emergent writing.
- It is unlikely that the same learning gains would have been possible (see Learning Brief 3) without the improvements in the **home learning environment**. In fact, the high correlation between the number of books received and ELOM learning gains confirms the key contribution of the home to the improvement in the children's achievement.

Home- and community-based activities also **extended the project's impact to new groups**:

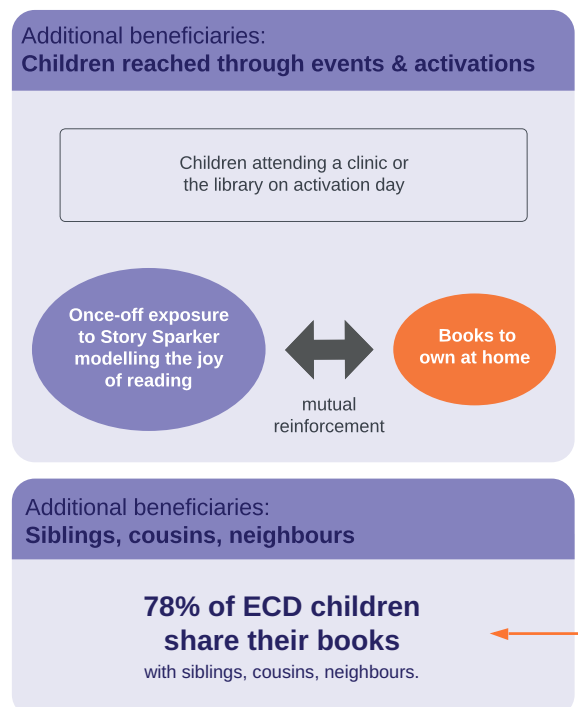
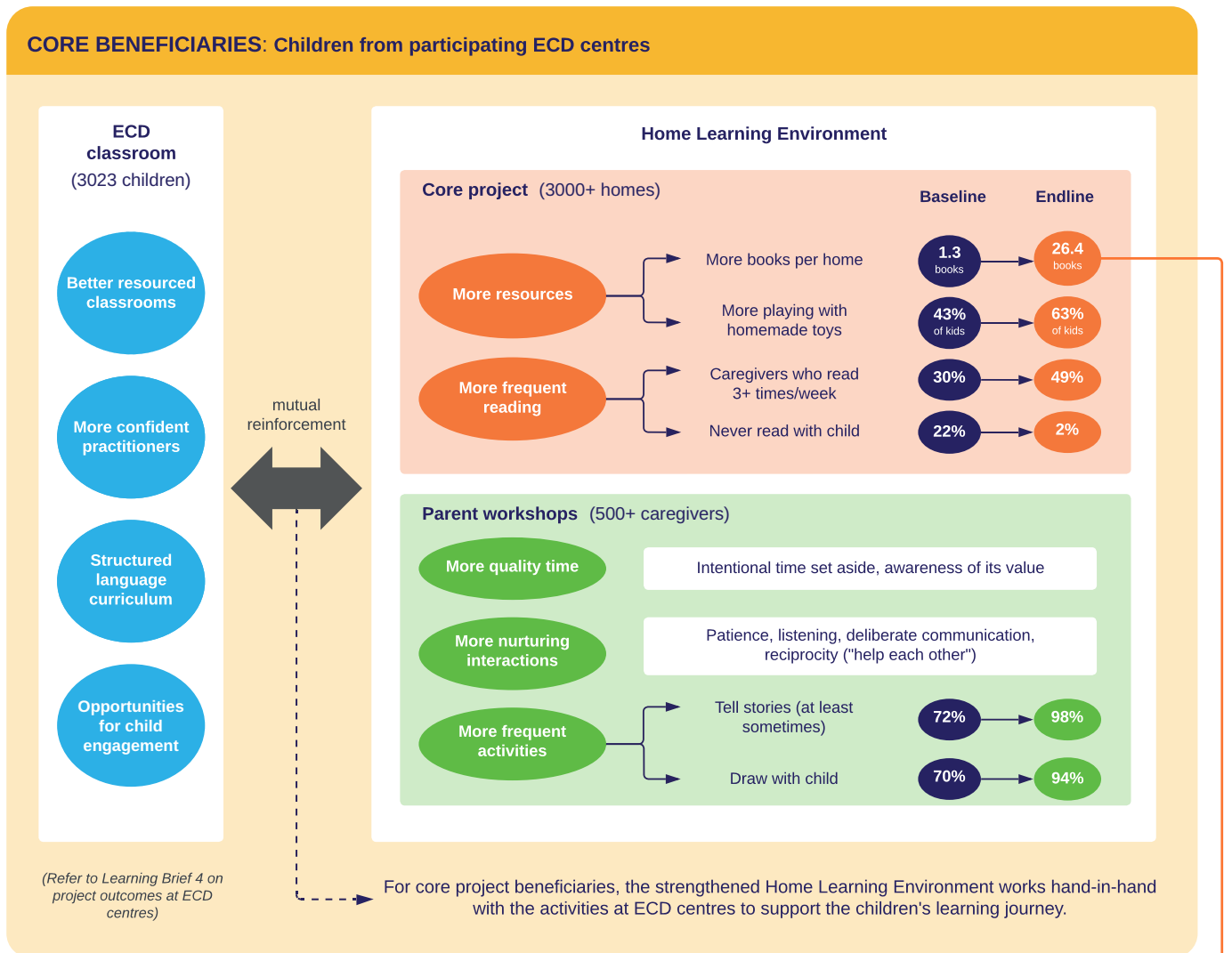
- **Reading club activities** helped extend the reach to more children, including children attending other ECD centres,¹² young children not attending an ECD, and slightly older children attending primary schools. Here again, the combination of in-situ activities and take-home books created a reinforcement effect where the impact of the primary activities could be extended and prolonged in the community and home.
- Many more children were reached through **once-off events or activations** and the effects of **book sharing**.

Diagramme 6 on the following page represents how these two effects have materialised.

This project confirms that, with intentionality and strong project management in place, it is possible for projects to harness the complementarity of classroom, home and community spaces to support early language and literacy development.

¹² These may be centres which did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the project for various reasons, e.g. because the practitioner was already signed up for some other training and therefore could not commit to the Little Stars training.

DIAGRAMME 7: How work in homes and communities helped consolidate and extend impact



ABBREVIATIONS

ECD	Early Childhood Development - by extension, an ECD Centre
HLE	Home Learning Environment
LB	Learning Brief
LCT	Liberty Community Trust
SIIA	Social Impact Insights Africa
YS	Yizani Sifunde

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The evaluation reports, a summary infographic and the full Learning Brief series can be accessed in [this folder](#) or by scanning the QR code.



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