



A young girl in Yemen does an illustration as part of a child-to-child activity aimed at getting her ready for school.

- There is evidence that Young Facilitators benefited from their participation and reported gains in their self-confidence and enthusiasm for school.

Specific findings of the **Year One, Grade One Outcomes** (follow-up) evaluation include:

- There was significant programme impact in **Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo** and **Yemen**, but not in **Tajikistan**.
- The programme continued to have a high level of impact in **Yemen**, substantially improving on-time enrolment, children's academic progress and adjustment to the classroom, and family involvement in primary school.
- There were substantial programme impacts in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** in the areas of on-time enrolment, children's adjustment to the classroom and families' engagement in preparing children for the school day, as well as in some academic skills. The very high rate of attrition among the sample in the country, however, means that the results cannot be generalized with certainty.
- In **Bangladesh**, the programme had a positive impact on on-time enrolment and caregivers' engagement with the school.

Key recommendations from the evaluations

- As the programme was most successful in countries where young learners had repeated and ongoing experiences and support to acquire school readiness skills (for example, more frequent programme sessions and take-home activities), every effort should be made to ensure that the programme is provided to children as often as possible – preferably twice a week or more – and supplemented with extra practice at home or in the community.
- As the programme was only successful in countries where family and community were involved from the beginning, such early involvement should be included in all future Getting Ready for School programming.
- Further expansion of Getting Ready for School into new regions should, wherever possible, include early advocacy with government educational officials to situate the programme within the country's early childhood education goals and/or country goals to increase on-time enrolment in primary school. Such up-front action will increase the chances of long-term programme sustainability and may increase more immediate practical support for the programme.
- Countries should follow through on plans to make programme materials more child-friendly and more culturally relevant.
- Selection of Young Facilitators should be done in a more inclusive manner so that students who are not selected do not feel rejected by school staff. Future development of training and support for Young Facilitators should include building their skills in the use of more child-centred pedagogy and positive methods to manage young children's behaviour.
- Programme staff should explore creative ways to increase the availability of suitable places and times for children to participate in the programme where classroom space and teacher time are limited.

For more information, please contact:

UNICEF
Abhiyan Rana, Education Specialist
Education Section, Programme Division
 3 United Nations Plaza
 New York, NY 10017, USA
 E-mail: ajrana@unicef.org
 Website: www.unicef.org/education



Evaluations of Getting Ready for School: A Child-to-Child Approach

A unique approach to school readiness

The purpose of UNICEF's innovative programme, Getting Ready for School: A Child-to-Child Approach, is to facilitate the successful transition of young children into primary school. The programme provides them with school readiness skills (cognitive, social, emotional and physical), involves families and others in the community as capable partners in children's development, and improves the ability of schools to successfully engage their youngest learners. Rather than replace comprehensive early childhood development programmes, such as kindergartens or preschools, the programme supplements those with a low-cost alternative in communities largely in developing countries, where formal early childhood development programmes are unavailable to most families.

Based on a successful child-to-child model originally developed for health, Getting Ready for School consists of an older child (a 'Young Facilitator') being provided with guidance and information that he or she then ►

shares with peers or younger children in the community through formal and informal means. Through such interactions, the younger child develops early learning competencies and is better prepared to start school at the right age, while the older child gains confidence and self-esteem.

Getting Ready for School programme

The Getting Ready for School pilot programme was first implemented in **Bangladesh, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Tajikistan and Yemen** during the 2008/09 school year. The initial programme involved training teachers to provide guidance and supervision to the Young Facilitators (students, typically in Grades 4–8) and training Young Facilitators themselves to interact with young children who were one year away from expected on-time school entry at the start of the programme. The programme consisted of 35 sessions which would take place in school or in the community as frequently as possible. The Young Facilitators worked with the young children through a series of planned activities designed to support child development through play.

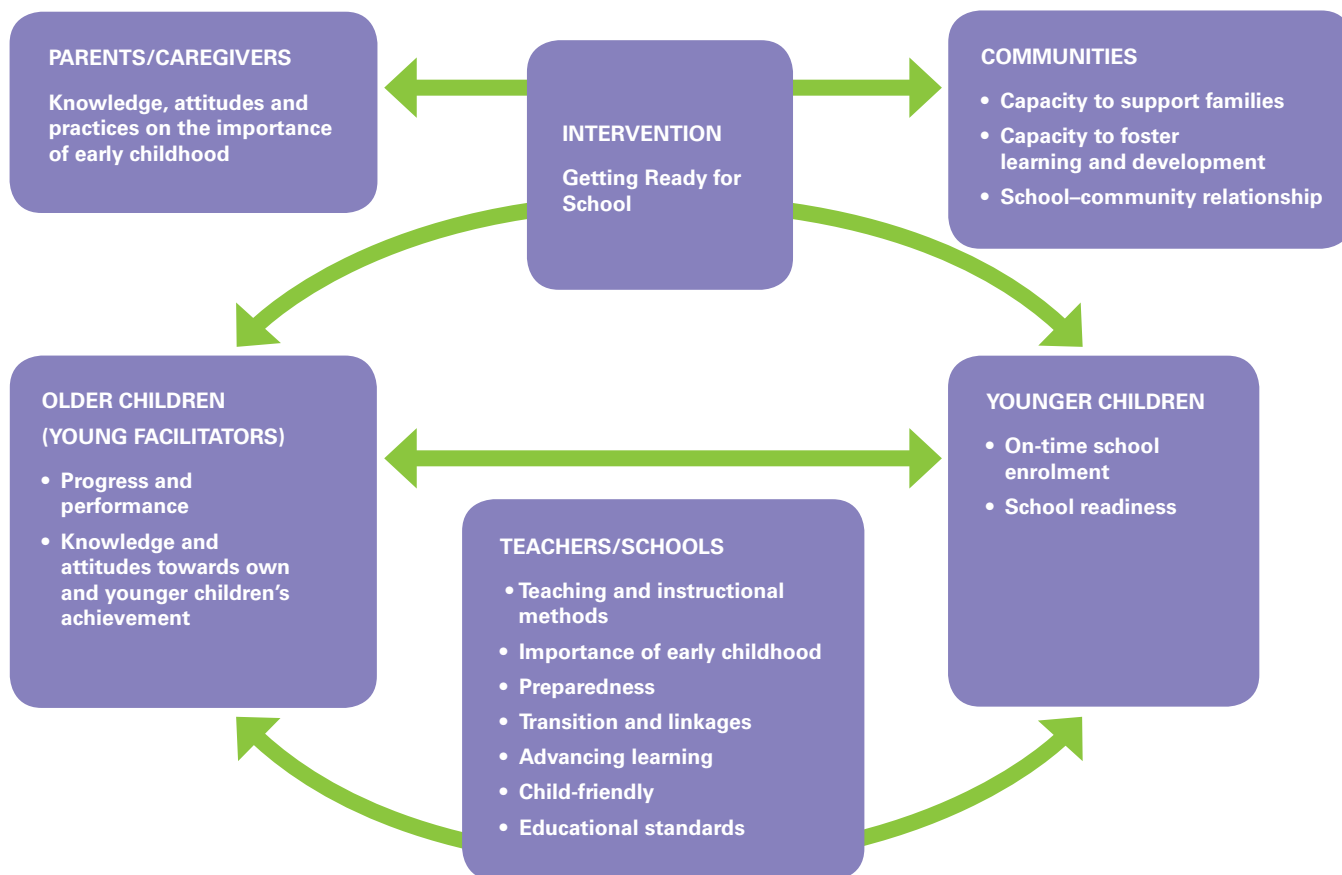
After the first cohort of young children joined school, two evaluations were conducted. The first evaluation measured the school readiness of the

younger children who had been working with Young Facilitators for about one year. This evaluation took place a few weeks after expected on-time school entry. The second evaluation focused on measuring the school performance of the same group of children after completing Grade 1. The evaluations also tested secondary goals such as increased family support for children's education.

Main programme goals

- **For young children:** to increase their school readiness and on-time enrolment in primary school.
- **For families whose children participate:** to improve their understanding of the importance of school readiness and increase their active support for their young children's learning.
- **For Young Facilitators:** to improve their educational engagement and performance; build their self-esteem; increase their positive attitudes towards learning; and increase their belief in the importance of supporting young children's learning.
- **For teachers:** to increase their belief in the use of child-centred pedagogy; improve their understanding of the importance of school readiness; and raise expectations regarding the level of school readiness of their incoming students.

Model of change





A Young Facilitator in Grade 5 helps two preschool-age learners participate in child-to-child activities at Haribhanga Dargarpar Government Primary School, on the northern border of Bangladesh.

© UNICEF/2009/Amin Drik

Programme evaluations

UNICEF first commissioned the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct an independent assessment of whether and to what extent the Getting Ready for School programme achieved its desired results during its pilot year. This evaluation, titled, Programme Evaluation for Year One, took place in the 2009/2010 school year, following the first year of implementation. It focused on the six participating countries: **Bangladesh, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Tajikistan and Yemen.**

AIR then conducted a follow-up impact evaluation based on a study of children through their transition into Grade 1. The Programme Evaluation for Year One, Grade One Outcomes study included four of the six participating countries: **Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tajikistan and Yemen.**

The findings of both evaluations identified programme strengths, weaknesses, challenges and best practices to guide future implementation and expansion of the programme.

Structure of the evaluations

Both evaluations were structured in the form of country-level randomized controlled trials – the most rigorous type of evaluation design. A mixed-methods approach was used whereby a combination of quantitative and qualitative data provided measures of programme impacts, as well as essential information regarding conditions that seemed to have contributed to or detracted from the programme's success. The use of a common evaluation framework and common tools across countries enabled the drawing of conclusions about the success of the

pilot programme overall and allowed for the formulation of general recommendations to guide future programme implementation and expansion within and across countries.

Major findings of the evaluations

The Getting Ready for School programme enjoyed a highly successful pilot implementation in several countries. The programme was extremely well received by stakeholders and achieved key goals. Continued development and expansion of the programme, combined with efforts at securing sustainability, could make Getting Ready for School a valuable resource for countries and communities that seek to increase better educational opportunities for their young children.

Specific findings of the **Year One** evaluation include:

- Overall, the programme resulted in a higher number of on-time primary school enrolment for both girls and boys.
- Across all six countries, there was a high degree of interest and enthusiasm in the programme, and programme attendance was very high.
- There were at least some significant programme impacts on children's school readiness in all six countries.
- There were significant programme impacts on children's beginning literacy and beginning mathematics in four countries.
- Impacts on non-academic skills, such as the ability to follow directions, were less consistent across countries.
- Programme impacts were most apparent in countries where children had a higher programme dosage, such as extra sessions at home or in the community.