Evaluation of the Roving Caregivers Program in St Lucia

IMPACT RESULTS
2008 and 2009

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Outline

1. Evaluation questions- what is the study trying to find out?

2. Methodology- mixed approach

3. Focus on quantitative approach

4. Findings

5. Conclusions
Evaluation questions

Does the Roving Caregivers Programme (RCP):

1. Affect the development of young children and help them realise their potential?

2. Influence and change the thinking, behavior and practices of parents?
Research methodology (qualitative and quantitative)

• Longitudinal: follow 450 children and their caregivers over time
• Indepth analysis of 44 families
• Quasi-experimental: intervention group and matched control group
• Differences-in-differences methodology: compare changes over time between RCP and non-RCP children and parents
Research methodology (quantitative)

• Starting point: the planned expansion of RCP to 2 districts in the West and the South of St Lucia in 2006

• Selection of 15 communities based on RCP selection criteria:
  – Above-average poor
  – Many children from birth to three years old
  – Little access to ECD facilities

• In each district: assign 4 communities to RCP and 4 to non RCP group such that the two groups are comparable
## Income & poverty study group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average per capita consumption per month</td>
<td>EC$ 219</td>
<td>EC$ 232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% below 1995 poverty line (EC$ 156.37 inflation correction)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% below indigence line (EC$ 113 infl. correction)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households with insufficient cash to pay for expenses</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% unemployment (persons aged 17-64)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
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</table>
Evaluation tools

• Child assessments
  – Cognitive assessment (Mullen Scales)
  – Socio-emotional assessment (Vineland)
  – Nutrition (WHO indicators)

• Structured caregiver interviews
Differences-in-differences analysis

→ Look at changes over time

Child’s developmental status

Year 0

Year 1
Main findings- 2008

• Positive impact of RCP on cognitive development of especially the younger children in the study
  (6-18 months old at start RCP)
  – Visual reception
  – Fine motor skills

• Risk factors: poverty, low maternal education, malnutrition
Differences among RCP participants: Age-at-enrollment

- Gross Motor Skills increased more for children who enroll at a younger age
- Receptive Language has increased more for children who enroll at a younger age
- Expressive Language (speech) has increased more for children who enroll at a later age

NB: Age-at-enrollment may be related to physical and language development in the first place
Other findings

• Impact of RCP *largest* for *first-time* mothers

• Children with *low birth weight / stunting* score significantly *lower* on cognitive development

• Children enrolled in *day/care* preschool score significantly *higher* on cognitive development compared to children not in *day/care preschool*
Child-related conclusions

- Poverty and low maternal education are substantial **risk factors for child** development
- Urgent need for **accessible ECD services** for children at risk
- RCP has proven to yield significant benefits for child development
- Benefits largest for **youngest children**
Medium term impact - 2009

• Has the 1-year impact been sustained into 2009 when all children have graduated from RCP?

→ focus on cognitive development
Findings 2009

2.5 years after program start (end 2009):

- The impact on Visual Reception has strengthened:
  large effect on the **average** child, the **youngest**, and the **poorest** children in better-educated families
- The impact on Fine Motor skills has faded (levelled out with NRCP children

- Socio-emotional development needs further research (challenges with Vineland)
  - Teacher assessments will be available at a later date (2012-2013).
Graphically:

Child’s developmental status

Year 0

Year 1

Year 2

Visual reception

Fine motor skills
Summary

- RCP program very popular among caregivers

- Two years after program start, the one year impact of RCP has:
  - been reinforced (Visual Reception)
  - faded out (Fine Motor skills) → pre-school enrolment?

- Impact strongest for:
  - the 50% poorest children (target group)
  - children with better educated caregivers

- Socio-emotional development: next year → teacher reports
Positives of Programme

1. A home-based intervention that is directed primarily at the child and is showing us changes in caregivers’ parenting practices

2. Rovers, the home visitors, have grown in self esteem and community status / respected by community

3. Both families in the program and other communities are asking that the program be expanded into additional communities

4. It is a programme designed for those living in poverty
Conclusion (1)

• The importance of Early Childhood Development also in the context of economic growth and poverty reduction

• The evidence-based approach shows clear positive impact on the children through the home based RCP

• Poverty and low maternal education are substantial risk factors for child development
Conclusion (2)

• Urgent need for deliberate targeting and accessible ECD services for children “at risk” (poorest of poor)
• RCP has proven to yield significant benefits for child development
• Benefits largest for youngest children
• Family counseling services/active referrals need to be an integral part of any early learning home-based strategy
Planning: way forward

• 2010 (all children preschool age, 4 or 5):
  – Assessment of children’s vocabulary
  – Assessment of children’s behavior → parent report
  – Parental empowerment

• 2012 (all children primary school age, 6 or 7):
  – Assessment of children’s numeracy & literacy skills and socio-emotional development → teacher reports
  – Child well-being → child interviews
THANK YOU