



School Readiness Initiative Namibia

Status Report March 2024

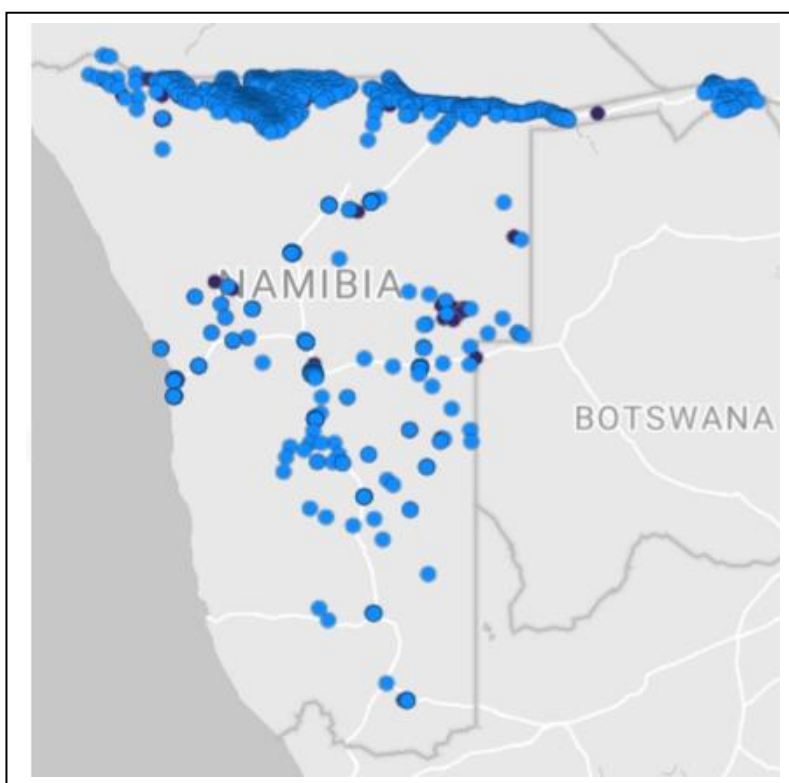


Figure 1: Map of all participating schools and centres in the School Readiness Initiative

Programme name	School Readiness Initiative Namibia
Donor organisation	Roger Federer Foundation
Implementing partners	LLCL, CAFO & WAD
Overall Programme start date and end date	July 2018 – December 2026
Planned total scale of institutions	2,500
Status of scale of institutions	2,032
Status of children reached	Cumulative 2020 – 2024 in 1,516 institutions: 145,000 pre-primary class children
Overall budget for the programme	N\$ 90 million
Total expenditure to date	N\$ 105 million

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary	p
1. Context analysis	
2. Overview of the School Readiness Initiative and the MOU	
3. Budget	
4. Scale and reach	
5. Monitoring and evaluation	
6. Key challenges and mitigation measures	
7. Opportunities	
8. Progress on impact indicators	
9. Progress on outcome indicators	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School Readiness Initiative is on track in delivering on the outcomes agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the Republic of Namibia, and towards reaching its impact targets. Through improved delivery of quality pre-primary education 92% of children assessed are developmentally on track and ready for Grade 1.

The SRI has reached 2,032 pre-primary facilities in 98 constituencies in 14 regions. 2,278 Pre-primary teachers and a total of 144,800 children have benefitted from increased capacity and quality in early education. This and other monitoring data are digitally collected and the Foundation is eager to find ways to increasingly share this data and integrate systems with the GRN.

The delivery of tablet devices for distribution to schools and centres with the Early Learning Kiosk pre-loaded onto them proved to be a significant challenge in the last round. NAMRA did not allow the usual tax exemption and held onto the tablets for six months until the matter was resolved by paying more than N\$ 300,000 in taxes, which could have been used to buy 100 more tablets. The SRI Consortium urgently need the practical assistance of the line Ministries to prevent this from happening again.

In the context of the transition of the responsibility for Early Childhood Education and Care from the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, the SRI Consortium is keen to contribute to the planning and costing of operationalising Section 14 of the Basic Education Act of 2020. The MOU should be amended to include a sustainability plan for the SRI and to detail further support for the GRN around Section 14 over the next two years. Possible opportunities include data integration, tracking children's developmental milestones and supporting workforce development in the ECD sector. The N\$ 90 million budget of the MOU has been exceeded by N\$ 15 million and the proposal to the Board of the Roger Federer Foundation for additional activities in the next two years should include a request for additional funding.

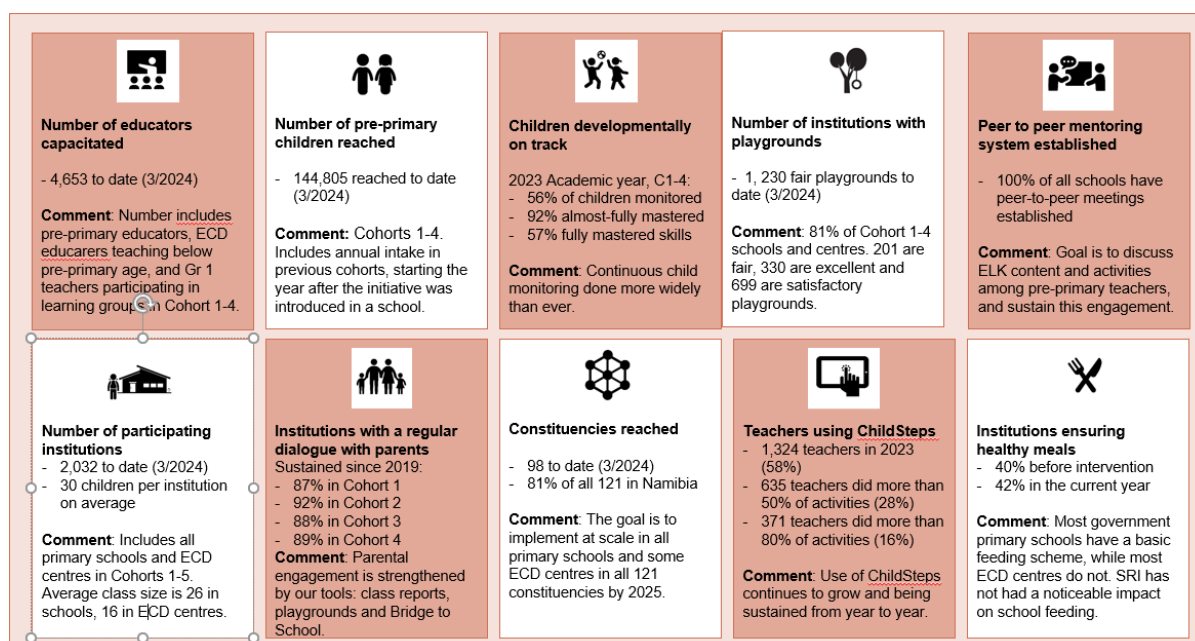


Figure 1: Key facts and figures on the outcomes of the School Readiness Initiative

1. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) spends 3% of its budget on pre-primary, with 54% of children in the age cohort attending pre-primary classes at primary schools. This was set out by the Deputy Executive Director of the MoEAC at the National Strategic Stock-taking and Planning Workshop on the Provision of ECD and Pre-Primary in Namibia held in February 2024. She further said that 10,000 Namibian children passed matric in 2022, and that 12 years earlier 10,000 children attended pre-primary. Based on international evidence about the longterm benefits of attending pre-primary class, there is a possibility that these successful matriculants could be the same children that were in the pre-primary class all those years before.

If the Education Management Information System (EMIS) used unique identifiers for children, it would be clear if these were the same 10,000 children. Such local evidence would provide strong support for increasing the budget for pre-primary as an investment that will produce dividends throughout the education system for all Namibian children.

A function shift of the responsibility for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPSW) to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) was announced in 2008, targeting a 100% enrolment in ECEC schools and centres by 2015, which was not achieved. Since then the function shift has been Gazetted in Section 14 of the Basic Education Act 3 of 2020 but, while the rest of the Act was brought into force in October 2023, the implementation of Section 14 remained in a planning phase.

The School Readiness Initiative consortium of partners participated in the planning workshop hosted by the MoEAC and the MGEPSW in February 2024, to give shape to the

implementation of Section 14. There it was proposed that the National Integrated Early Childhood Development (NIECD) Committee should be revived and strengthened to coordinate the operationalisation of Section 14. The SRI consortium of partners is committed to contributing to this process, particularly in the workstreams on assessment, data management and workforce development, leveraging the existing tools of the School Readiness Initiative.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL READINESS INITIATIVE AND THE MOU

The School Readiness Initiative is a nationwide programme to ensure a good start in primary education for 70% of vulnerable children between the ages of 3-8 years. The approach towards this goal is to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as the learning environment in 2,500 institutions with pre-primary classes, both in primary schools and ECD centers, and to ensure a smooth transition from pre-school to primary school. This eight-year initiative is funded by the Roger Federer Foundation and is implemented by three local NGOs: LifeLine/ChildLine, Church Alliance for Orphans and Women's Action for Development.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the Roger Federer Foundation and the National Planning Commission for the implementation of the School Readiness Initiative in August 2018, to continue until 2025. The overall goal of the partnership is to increase the participation of children in pre-primary education, thereby increasing the school readiness of children by the time they start Grade 1.

The specific objectives, tools and methods of the MOU are as follows:

1. Establish processes of joint responsibility for early learners among all key stakeholders
 - a. including government officials, school principals and ECD centre owners, teachers, educarers, parents and communities (operationalised in the **national engagement of MoEAC and MGEPESW, regional steering committees, SEO and CLO training, principal orientation and community engagement**);
 - b. to improve the learning environment (**facility development plans**);
 - c. to ensure a smooth transition into formal education (**supportive transition routines**).
2. Scale access to age appropriate, stimulating and organised early learning facilities
 - a. in primary schools and temporarily in private ECD centres;
 - b. by motivating parents and communities to enroll their children in pre-primary classes (operationalised in **community engagement**);
 - c. by capacitating school and centre management and educators to offer the right facilities (**principal and school management team orientation, facility development plans, classrooms and indoor materials**);
 - d. by engaging parents and communities to enhance the early learning environment through building playgrounds, making and toys and playing

stimulating games at home (**natural playgrounds, toy-making, Bridge to School**);

3. Enhance the competency of teachers and educators in early learning

- a. to improve the quality of preschool teaching and learning;
- b. to increase school readiness of children as they enter formal schooling;
- c. by developing and implementing a self-guided course on early learning for under-qualified educators and lower primary teachers (operationalised in **KnowHow**);
- d. by developing and implementing a practical approach for teachers to develop professionally in peer-to-peer mentoring groups (**learning groups and peer-to-peer mentoring**);
- e. by developing and implementing a tool to continuously monitor the learning and development of pre-primary children (**ChildSteps**);
- f. by developing and implementing a practical guide for teachers and educators to engage parents in their children's early learning (**parent engagement**);
- g. by developing and implementing a practical guide to supporting transition of children from homes and ECD centres to primary school (**transition activities**);
- h. by combining all the digital tools on one platform called the **Early Learning Kiosk (ELK)** and providing tablets to schools and centres that are set up with this Kiosk and can be used offline.

This document reports on the status of the implementation of this MOU against these three objectives. Read more about the activities listed in bold in Section 9 "Progress on Outcome Indicators", below.

Implementation of the School Readiness Initiative happens in three phases, starting with an Establishment Phase of about 17 months, followed by a Sustainability Phase of 12 months, and then a Maintenance Phase that should increasingly be implemented by government officials and which continues until the end of the initiative and beyond.

Amendment of the MOU

After tabling the amendment of the MOU at the previous biannual SRI progress meeting in October 2023, the SRI Consortium have had discussions with the Programme Quality Assurance unit (PQA) in the MoEAC about the nature of the amendment. The proposal is to attach to the MOU an implementation plan for sustaining the positive changes effected in the ECD and primary education sectors, and the use of established SRI tools beyond the end-date of the SRI partnership. Other necessary changes to the MOU include the extension of the implementation dates and the budget. 2024 is a good moment to consider the plans of the MoEAC and MGEPSW for the implementation of Section 14 of the Basic Education Act in the development of this implementation plan. This status report is intended to form the basis from which this amendment can be drafted.

3. BUDGET

The Roger Federer Foundation committed to investing a minimum of N\$90 million across seven years in the School Readiness Initiative in Namibia. A no-cost extension was adopted after the COVID-pandemic to allow more time for implementing partners to reach their objectives and currently the N\$90 million is committed over eight years, ending in December 2026.

N\$ 105,252,747 have been spent up to the end of February 2024, which exceeds the N\$ 90,000,000 budget by more than N\$ 15 million. See the table below for a high-level breakdown of the expenditure.

	Expenditure NAD	Share of total expenditure
Implementation through NGO partners	71 193 801	68%
Evaluation, knowledge sharing, advocacy, government training	4 955 895	5%
Software development and data warehousing	7 324 065	7%
Hardware (tablets, covers, solar kits)	9 375 261	9%
RFF project management	12 402 978	12%
Total expenditure	105 252 000	
Remaining funds from NAD 90 mil budget	-15 252 000	

Table 1: High-level breakdown of expenditures for the School Readiness Initiative from 2018 to 2024 against the budget of N\$ 90 million

Most of the implementation costs of Cohort 5 (512 institutions) are not included in the expenses reported here. This is because the tablets were withheld by NAMRA and training of teachers were delayed as a result. Training, distribution of tablets and school-based support visits will start in all earnest in April 2024. The cost of Cohort 6 (the last 468 institutions) is also not yet included in the expenditure. It is therefore necessary to submit a new proposal to the Board of the Roger Federer Foundation for funding for another two years, and this is an opportunity to strategically review the components and implementation approach of the School Readiness Initiative.

4. SCALE AND REACH

Regions, constituencies and pre-primary institutions

The School Readiness Initiative aims to reach 2,500 institutions by 2026. So far 2,032 institutions participate in the programme across all 14 regions of Namibia, covering 98 of 121 constituencies, with the final cohort scheduled to come on board in August 2024. The goal is to implement the programme in all public primary schools with pre-primary classes and to allocate the remaining resources to ECD centres with pre-primary classes. Currently the balance is 50/50 with a trend in favour of primary schools in the last two cohorts. It is worth noting that the number of institutions in the SRI is not stable, because during the sustainability and maintenance phases it is found that more and more ECD centres no longer

have pre-primary children due to the directive of the MoEAC that these classes should move to primary schools.

With Cohort 5, the SRI extended into the last of the fourteen regions of Namibia, Kunene. This region is unique because of the nomadic lifestyle of the people who live there and the desert landscape which makes access to remote communities very difficult. The SRI implementing partners, WAD and CAFO, joined 62 people from 17 different offices in an intersectoral visit to the region in September 2024, initiated by the Namibian Police Force. The purpose of the visit was to conduct regional development assessment and planning for infrastructure of roads and water, schools, clinics and telecommunication, and to build cooperation and partnerships between key stakeholders and line ministries.



Picture 1: Children at Otjavaja village, Cera Cafema queueing to receive their snack packs from the SRI partners

The table below shows a breakdown of the reach of the School Readiness Initiative in schools and centres, per region. The data for the total number of primary and combined schools was taken from the 2022 EMIS report. The report does not clearly state whether all these state schools do have pre-primary classes. The report indicates the total number of state and private schools with pre-primary classes as 1,505 but the SRI is not implemented in private schools. Nevertheless, it is clear that most or all institutions in the final cohort will have to be primary schools in order to achieve full scale in this sector.

Region	SRI ECD Centres	Total ECDs	Coverage	SRI Prim & Comb State Schools	Total Prim & Comb State Schools	Coverage	Total SRI sites
Erongo	101			29	37	78%	130
Hardap	12			42	45	93%	54
//Karas	4			25	31	81%	29
Kavango East	174			97	152	64%	271
Kavango West	42			95	172	55%	137
Khomas	133			45	48	94%	178
Kunene	9			35	65	54%	44
Ohangwena	227			141	235	60%	368
Omaheke	35			35	30	117%	70
Omusati	111			111	244	45%	222
Oshana	79			107	104	103%	186
Oshikoto	12			134	185	72%	146
Otjozondjupa	86			55	51	108%	141
Zambezi	4			52	98	53%	56
Total	1029			1003	1497	67%	2032

Table 2: Scale of institutions where the SRI is implemented, per region and nationally

Teachers, educarers and children

The School Readiness Initiative focuses on building the capacity of pre-primary teachers and educarers in both formal school and ECD centre settings. Their knowledge and skills in early learning through play across all developmental domains are strengthened and they are supported to also engage Grade 1 teachers and educarers working with younger children on these topics in order to support children's transition into school. So far, the SRI has worked with 2,278 pre-primary teachers and educarers and through them have reached another 1,302 Grade 1 teachers and 1,073 educarers working with younger children.

The EMIS Fifteenth School Day Report of 2023 indicates that there were 53,357 children enrolled in pre-primary classes in public primary schools. This is about half of the number enrolled in Grade 1, which is 98,199 children. The conclusion can be made that half of the Grade 1's of 2023 came from ECD centres or straight from home. This year SRI will reach 25,400 pre-primary children in primary schools and another 20,500 pre-primary children in ECD centres. That is a total of nearly 46,000 children representing roughly 47% of all Namibian children in this age cohort. Note that we only count children in the second year of implementation, when they truly start benefitting from their teacher's increased knowledge and skills.

Thanks to the sustainability and maintenance phases of the SRI, most teachers continue to implement the good practices they had learned. Therefore, we can confidently calculate the cumulative number of pre-primary children benefitting from improved quality pre-primary education with each new cohort of children in these teachers' classes. For cohort 5, mapping and advocacy have been completed, but training has not yet started. Therefore, the institutions are counted but not yet the teachers and the children in Cohort 5. In total, the SRI has improved the quality of pre-primary education for 144,800 children

Participants in the School Readiness Initiative	
Number of institutions with pre-primary classes	2 033
Of these: Primary schools	1 004
Of these: ECD centres	1 029
Number of pre-primary teachers & educarers	2 278
Of these: In primary schools	965
Of these: In ECD centres	1 313
Number of Grade 1 teachers in Learning Groups	1 302
Number of ECD Educarers below pre-primary in Learning Groups	1 073
Total number of educarers and teachers, from below pre-primary to Grade 1	4 653
Number of pre-primary children (enrolment)	45 889
Of these: In primary schools	25 403
Of these: In ECD centres	20 486

Table: Summary of schools, centres, teachers, educarers and children participating in the SRI

Tablets

About 2,870 tablets have been delivered and distributed to partners, teachers, SEOs and CLOs, other government officials and stakeholders. We follow a policy of one tablet shared between two teachers wherever possible, because it is more cost effective and sustainable than providing schools and centres with a tablet for each teacher or educarer. Sharing tablets further requires teachers and educarers to come together to study the KnowHow course in their learning groups, which builds professional networks between peers.

In the early years of implementation, serial numbers of tablets were captured manually as the tablets were registered to a specific teacher. Unfortunately, this system was not reliable and in 2023 we implemented a new version of the Early Learning Kiosk (ELK) that captures the serial number of a tablet and links it to the school or centre it was given to, as soon as the teacher or educarer registers on the apps. This new version has its own launcher, which is called DataGuard. Apart from capturing serial numbers, it also prevents teachers from using their tablets for anything other than the apps and materials on the ELK. This was necessary because some teachers deleted the educational content on the tablet and used the device for their own purposes. Note that additional apps and materials can still be added to the Kiosk on request of the Government.

The implementing partners started systematically updating the tablets to the new version of the ELK in August 2023 and they continue to work hard to make sure all institutions are active on this new platform.

In the figure below the dark and light green sections indicate tablets that have been updated to DataGuard. Of the 2,080 unregistered tablets the serial numbers are known at purchase for 1,482. 770 of these tablets have just been released by NAMRA after it was delivered in August 2023. Partners are now getting these tablets ready for distribution. For 598 older

tablets the serial numbers are not known yet but will become known as soon as these tablets are updated to DataGuard.

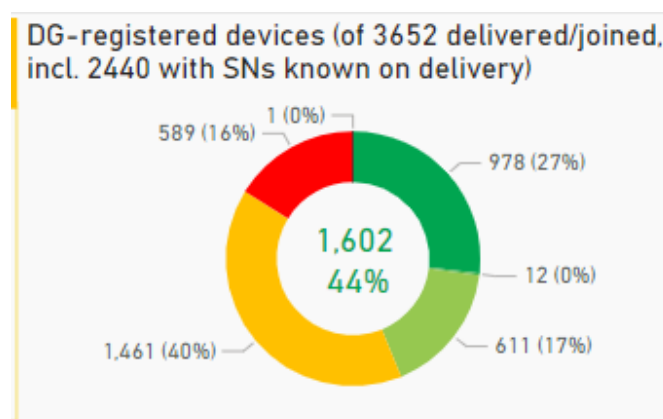


Figure: Number of tablets distributed and registered to specific schools and centres

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The implementation and outcomes of the School Readiness Initiative are rigorously monitored through digital data collection tools. The data is digitally analysed and interpreted and easily viewed through the PowerBI interface. All the implementing partners have access to this data interface, which enables them to do data-driven management of their teams. The screenshot below gives an overview of the number of institutions in the SRI in Namibia and how many times they have been visited by the implementing partners.

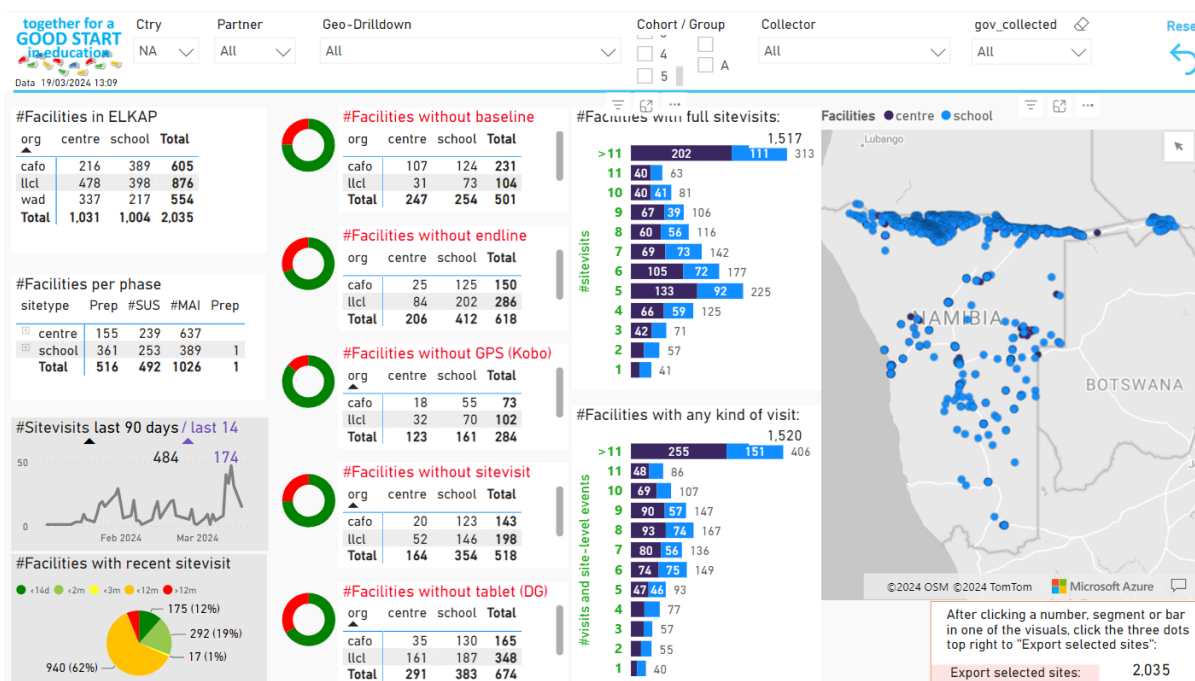


Figure: The PowerBI landing page for SRI Namibia

A large amount of data has been collected through the School Readiness Initiative over the years and the Roger Federer Foundation is keen to hand over this data to the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN). It would not be user-friendly to hand over spreadsheets of data without properly integrating it into existing government systems, for example data systems for teacher quality assessment, enrolment and attendance. Discussions have started with PQA and EMIS on how this can be done. Read more about these developments below in Section 7: “Opportunities”.

6. KEY CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Tax exemption on programme resources

After successfully utilizing the tax exemption status of our implementing partner Lifeline/Childline for the importing of tablets, covers and Bridge to School books for many years, NAMRA rejected this exemption in August 2023. The tablets and covers for Cohort 5 were held by NAMRA for 6 months while the Consortium partners and government partners tried to resolve the issue. In the end it could only be resolved by the Roger Federer Foundation paying the import taxes and duties on these goods, exceeding an amount of N\$ 300,000. With this money, another 100 tablets and covers could have been purchased and distributed to schools and ECD centres.

NAMRA has not provided clear guidance yet on how to approach the next delivery, but they have indicated that it would be best if the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture received the goods and utilised their tax exemption. Proactive collaboration between the Foundation and the MoEAC on this matter is essential to avoid such an unnecessary expense in the next round, which will be in May 2024.

Network coverage and connectivity at schools and ECD centres

While the SRI tools function perfectly offline, updating the apps and syncing user data is only possible when the tablet is connected to the internet. Poor connectivity in several regions affect the efficiency of data collection and increase the cost of implementation. This is because project staff have to visit schools and centres with hotspots to enable updates and syncing of data, or even take the tablets to the regional offices for syncing, which leaves the teachers unable to use ChildSteps for a week or more.

A strong lobby from key stakeholders in Government is necessary to increase network coverage in these areas, so that all teachers and children can benefit from the advantages of the internet. Further, it is in the interest of cost-efficiency that the line Ministries have access to real time data through online data systems, to inform their own planning and implementation.

Kunene

The Kunene region presents a unique context which requires the typical implementation model of the School Readiness Initiative to be adapted. For example, most teachers and

educarers in the rest of Namibia are able to access the English language tools with the help of the glossary and audio translations on the apps, but among some communities in Kunene English is not widely understood. Furthermore, most communities are nomadic which makes the establishment of playgrounds impractical. The lack of proper road infrastructure will increase the cost of training and visiting teachers and educarers dramatically and the lack of network coverage will make it difficult to support them remotely.

As discussed in Section 4: “Scale and reach”, the SRI Consortium partners are working on coming to grips with the context and adapting implementation plans and expectations accordingly.

7. OPPORTUNITIES

Data integration

The School Readiness Initiative collects monitoring data on various outcomes of the programme, including the quality of learning facilities and teaching practices and the engagement of parents. Crucially, the initiative also collects learner outcome data through ChildSteps, which is currently the only digital source of learner outcome data at any level in Namibia, except for the matric results. The SRI Consortium has started working with PQA and EMIS on ways to regularly share programme M&E data and on long term plans to integrate our data with the existing government systems.

As a start, PQA will receive monthly statistics on the national utilisation of ChildSteps and on the learning outcomes of children in pre-primary classes. PQA will also be given access to and training on the SRI’s real time data dashboard by the end of March 2024. At the school level, the ChildSteps individual report card can be officially used to strengthen transition and learner support into Grade 1 by sharing it with the receiving teacher.

Through close collaboration with EMIS, the SRI Consortium will work towards using the same unique identifiers for schools and teachers in our data collection as is used in the EMIS system. EMIS has long had plans to use the birth registration certificate number as unique identifier for children, and SRI could take the lead in collecting child-level data in this way. In the meantime, EMIS has requested that we share all the indicators for which we collect data so that they can map the scope and depth of the data we have and compare it to the data in EMIS. This will enable the EMIS team to identify which data they want from the SRI. Two such data points that immediately stand out are enrolment or attendance data for ECD centres, which is currently not collected by MoEAC. Finally, the SRI Consortium will take guidance from the MoEAC on working with the School Link system and EMIS, as appropriate.

Curriculum and assessment

Another proposal from the February 2024 workshop was for NIED to work to align the curricula for 1-3 years, 3-5 years and 5-6 years. ChildSteps was discussed as the only digital assessment tool of its kind, that could potentially be expanded to accommodate 4-5 year olds and 3-4 year olds. The SRI Consortium is interested in supporting this work and looks forward to further engagement from NIED.

Inclusive education

The SRI Consortium is exploring a partnership with the Namibian NGO Side-by-Side, which specialises in inclusive education, to write a module for KnowHow that covers the key concepts and aspects of teaching children with disabilities and how to accommodate and support them in the classroom.

We are further working with DATS in PQA to include their screening tool for children with special needs as part of ChildSteps, for teachers to evaluate and refer children who present with learning barriers. The idea is that when a child repeatedly and continually scores red in a certain domain on ChildSteps, the system will refer the teacher to the related area of the screening tool.

Other NGOs using ChildSteps

Development Workshop Namibia (DWN) is an NGO that works in ECD centres, some of which have pre-primary classes. They are currently working in 600 centres, about 20% of the centres in Namibia, compared to SRI's 900 centres so far (about 25%). DWN is interested in using ChildSteps in their centres with pre-primary children or classes, which would contribute to standardised assessment practices in the pre-primary sector and to the availability of child outcome data from ECD centres. This reach can be expanded if more NGOs are encouraged to implement ChildSteps, which is free to use and which the Roger Federer Foundation will happily support in terms of data collection and warehousing.

Workforce development

While the Government of Namibia is working on formalising pathways and qualifications for ECEC professionals, there is recognition of the fact that many educarers are currently unqualified or under-trained and that interim professional development measures will need to be adopted urgently. The SRI Consortium is committed to explore ways in which KnowHow can support this gap in teacher capacity in the interim as well as longer terms.

One possibility is to partner with tertiary institutions to offer KnowHow as part of their ECD training options, including an accredited assessment for the KnowHow content. This would mean that SRI could make the training available to teachers/ Educarers free of charge, as we are doing currently, and that interested teachers can complete the assessment at a tertiary

institution by accessing a government subsidy. This approach allows all teachers to access the training, even if they are not interested in the formal assessment and accreditation.

Two other options include for the SRI implementing partners to register as training organisations with accreditation to offer and assess KnowHow, should the government take the route of service level agreements for ECEC workforce development in the next few years. Another option would be for the Roger Federer Foundation to contract a Namibian ECD consultant to compare KnowHow to the government's revised 12-weeks course for Educators offered by MGEPSW and to the School Readiness Training for Grade 1 teachers offered by MoEAC. The report can be submitted to NIED for sign off, depending on what the findings are, so that KnowHow becomes an approved government training. PQA indicated that there are many qualified Junior Primary teachers (Gr 1-3) who are unemployed, who could be deployed to newly built pre-primary classes, and for whom KnowHow could be a good refresher training.

COI (Classroom observation instrument)

The Classroom Observation Instrument, to be used by supervisory teachers, has to be adapted for pre-primary and then it can be digitalised and included on the Early Learning Kiosk. This way the data can be captured in real time and the MoEAC in the regional and national offices can monitor teaching quality across the country. There is also a companion piece to the COI, which is a self-evaluation tool for teachers that helps to build their knowledge on the right learning environment and teaching approaches. Including this tool on the Kiosk can enable self-reflection and self-improvement practices for teachers in between visits from supervisors. The SRI Consortium welcomes further guidance from PQA on how and when this can be operationalised.

Expanding playgrounds through MGEPSW

MGEPSW indicated that they have funds available for installing playgrounds at centres, but found that the cost of setting up playgrounds through a tender process is exorbitant and will only allow for providing a very small number of playgrounds. There is interest in funding the SRI Consortium partners to establish natural playgrounds through community participation. The partners are eager for further engagement from the MGEPSW on this matter.

8. PROGRESS ON IMPACT INDICATORS

The impact of the School Readiness Initiative is measured by four indicators:

1. Children participating in organized learning one year before starting Grade 1

This year 25,400 pre-primary children in primary schools and another 20,500 pre-primary children in ECD centres will participate in organised learning in SRI schools. That is a total of nearly 46,000 children representing roughly 47% of all Namibian children in this age cohort.

2. Attendance rate of children in pre-primary classes against enrolment

Year 1 (2019)	Year 2 (2020)	Year 3 (2021)	Year 4 (2022)	Year 5 (2023)
Cohort 1: 83%	Cohort 2: March 97% July 65% December 54%	Cohort 3: January 31% December 41%	Cohort 3: First semester: 83% Second semester: 70%	Cohort 4: First semester: 84%

Figure : Attendance rates across cohorts in SRI schools

3. Children developmentally on track when starting Grade 1

In academic year 2023 ChildSteps data have been captured for 56% of children in all SRI schools and centres. Of these children 92% have almost mastered or fully mastered the skills required to be ready for school.

4. Repetition rate in early grades

Year 1 (2019)	Year 2 (2020)	Year 3 (2021)	Year 4 (2022)	Year 5 (2023)
7%	Automatic promotion	Automatic promotion	Automatic promotion	Grade 1: 9.5% Grade 2: 7.4%

Figure : Repetition rates in early grades in Namibia (not necessarily in SRI schools)

9. PROGRESS ON OUTCOME INDICATORS

Note: All SRI Outcome Indicators are rated using a scale of 0 to 4, as below

0 = none	1 = poor	2 = fair
3 = satisfactory	4 = excellent	

PowerBi visuals follow the same rating scale. We consider an outcome indicator to be met if it falls within a scale of fair (2) to excellent (4) ratings and therefore the reported progress rate is a total of fair, satisfactory and excellent percentages.

Outcome 1: Establish processes of joint responsibility for early learners

The School Readiness Initiative aims to raise the profile of the needs of pre-school children among leaders and administrators in government at the national and regional levels, as well as at the school, community and household levels. The SRI Consortium of partners further works towards systemic integration of the SRI tools, data and approaches by participating in national coordinating structures and events for ECEC, and by sharing data and actively

seeking to integrate SRI data and reporting systems with those of the government in Namibia.

National level engagement for coordination, resources and quality education

Since 2018, the Roger Federer Foundation and the SRI implementing partners have regularly engaged with the National Planning Commission (NPC), the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPEWSW) through the biannual MOU progress report meetings and through participating in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development (NIECD) Committee.

The last biannual reporting meeting was held on 31 October 2023. At that meeting sustainability plans were discussed, as well as data integration, the national use of ChildSteps and the accreditation of KnowHow.

Several side meetings were held on 1 October 2024 with different units and departments within the MoEAC towards the goals of integration, systemic leverage and sustainability, including with PQA, DATS and EMIS. At the time the addendum to the MOU was envisaged as a roadmap to sustainability, but this has since evolved due to the costed extension plans for the SRI for the following two years. PQA explained the utility of the Classroom Observation Instrument (COI) and DATS shared a draft screening tool for children with barriers to learning with the aim of including digital versions of these tools on the Early Learning Kiosk. Data integration options and processes were discussed with EMIS.

In February 2024 the Foundation and its partners participated in the national strategic stock-taking and planning workshop on the provision of ECD and pre-primary in Namibia. At this broader stakeholder meeting strategic areas of engagement for the SRI were affirmed as data integration and management, monitoring children developmentally on track and teacher development and professionalisation.

Beyond government partnerships, the SRI Consortium has engaged with tertiary institutions responsible for teacher training in Namibia, specifically Namcol and the International University of Management (IUM), around the inclusion of the KnowHow course in the range of qualification options and modalities for teachers. The Consortium also met with Development Workshop Namibia (DWN) to discuss the leveraging of tools and resources for ECD and pre-primary between them and the SRI.

Progress made in these areas is presented above in Section 7: “Opportunities”.

Regional and constituency level engagement for coordination, resources and quality education

The School Readiness brings together the Ministries of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC), Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPEWSW) and Health and Social Services (MoHSS) in regional and constituency-based steering committees. Here the

implementing partners provide feedback on the progress of the programme, challenges and opportunities, and discussions foster greater integration of early childhood and educational services at the local level.

Below are some examples of the impact of these steering committees at a local level:

Otjozondjupa Region

The MGEPEWS offered to help identify community champions that can design and construct playgrounds at ECD centres as part of the SRI.

//Karas Region

The Steering Committee meeting was held to resolve the challenges of two ECD centers that had problems with their premises that were rented and with educators that were absent from work. The meeting was attended by five members of the MoEAC and the MGEPEWS.

Zambezi Region

The Senior Education Officer, Ms. Georgina Sibalatani, demonstrated the region's commitment to the SRI by allowing the Teacher Resource Centre in Katima Mulilo to be used as a venue for Pre-Primary teachers to meet monthly in order to share experiences and best practices in the implementation of the SRI. This platform also enabled teachers to update their tablets using free government provided Wi-Fi and to solve all technical problems at a central location with assistance from SRI staff.

Engagement on community level for better learning environments

Community engagement is critical in the ECD sector where centres are privately or community owned and only partly supported by government, or not at all. Nevertheless, in some areas community ownership of primary schools is also high and in 2023 more than 6,800 people attended community meetings convened through SRI. It is typically easier to engage communities in rural areas than in urban or peri-urban areas, a trend that is visible in the data. In urban areas the focus is on engaging parents directly because wider community structures are not strong. Read more about parent engagement under Outcome 3.

In some regions, community meetings are organised jointly by the SRI, the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Community Affairs Unit of the Namibian Police. At these meetings programme staff encourage community members to actively support the development of young children by being engaged at ECD centres and primary schools, especially in improving learning environments. It is important that community leaders are

motivated to continue this work in partnership with schools, centres and government departments when programme staff no longer visit them.

In Ohangwena 94% of schools and centres are rated fair to excellent on community engagement, as shown by the chart below:

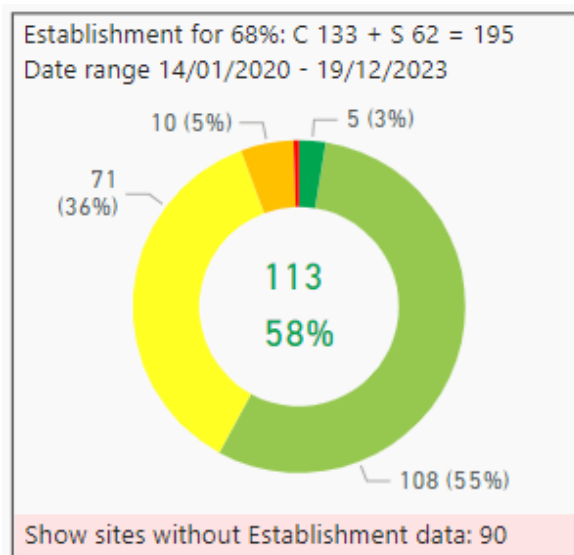


Figure: Community engagement in support of pre-primary facilities in Ohangwena Region.

4.2 Outcome 2: Scaling access to age-appropriate early learning facilities

This objective of the School Readiness Initiative is focused on the environment of the school, enrolment and attendance. The aim is to transform early childhood development centres and primary schools that accommodate pre-primary aged children to offer age-appropriate environments in its facilities and in its culture, so that schools, teachers and principals will be ready for children. Ideally an improved environment and culture should have a positive impact on enrolment and attendance.

This objective is approached through comprehensive facility development plans that address not only the physical environment of buildings, school grounds and classrooms, but also teaching and learning and the teaching and learning culture into which the pre-primary class is received. School and centre leadership are engaged in the review and implementation of the facility development plans and outputs are monitored by field officers on their monthly visits.

Facility management team commitment and infrastructure improvement

Principals and their school management teams, as well as ECD centre owners and management are trained on the SRI and ELK to equip them to integrate SRI into the facilities' culture and curriculum and to foster an integrated approach towards sustaining the SRI at the school level. Principals particularly appreciate the digital class registers that are

completed on ChildSteps. These registers provide detailed information on absenteeism so that children at risk can be more easily identified.

The SRI aims to build a relationship between the pre-primary teachers and school management that will allow for a free and confident expression of the specific infrastructure and learning environment needs of young children. It is the Principal's responsibility to include the needs of the pre-primary class in the **facility development plan**.

Of the facilities that are already in the Maintenance Phase data is available for 924 of the 1,026 facilities. Of these, 860 facilities (93%) continue to include pre-primary in their plans and they are doing fairly well to excellent in implementing these plans. As shown in the graph below, Cohort 4 completed the Establishment phase in December 2023 and 92% of these 493 facilities are working well towards improving the learning environment for the pre-primary classes.

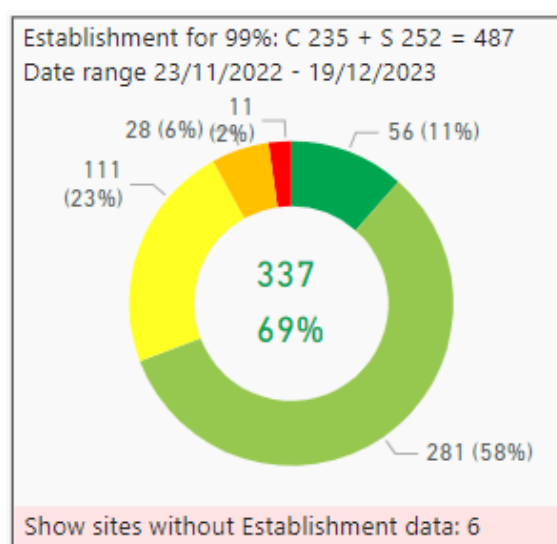


Figure: In Cohort 4, 92% of schools and centres are doing fairly well to excellent in formally improving the pre-primary learning environment

Part of an age-appropriate learning environment for pre-primary is an outdoor play area. The objective of the **natural playground** is to create a unique outdoor space that fosters children's physical and cognitive development while promoting a deeper connection with nature. The concept promotes the utilization of sustainable materials and innovative design, which aims to provide a safe, engaging, and ecologically responsible playground environment for learners.

Playgrounds are established through a collaborative effort between the implementing partners and the community, parents, educarers and teachers. So far 1,230 playgrounds have been set up and maintained in a fair to excellent condition.

Communities love the playgrounds, as can be seen in the reports from some regions below:

- A total of 192 parents (73 men and 119 women) participated in the construction of playgrounds in the Oshana region.

- The MGEPSW members of the steering committee, the Headman of Oikango in the Oshana region and members of the community participated in setting up the playgrounds at Mandume Kindergarten and Glory Kindergarten.
- The center owner of Oiva Tonateni in the Oshana Region was overjoyed to have a playground built at her center because before they did not have any playground equipment, but now their children are playing with enthusiasm.

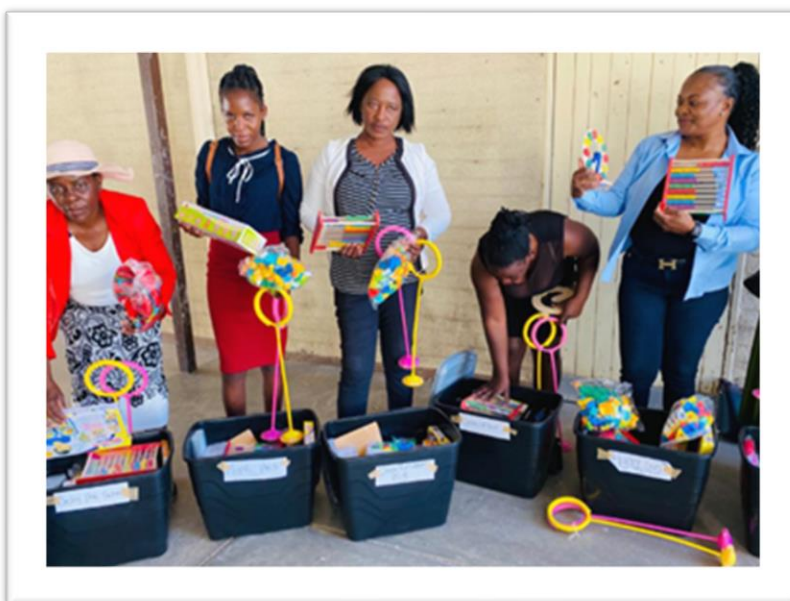
The pictures below show the start and progress of a playground in the //Karas Region:



Pictures * & * : Before and after: the establishment of a playground in the //Karas Region

Through the SRI pre-primary classrooms are set up to be stimulating, age-appropriate environments. An average of 81% of Cohort 1-3 classrooms in the Maintenance Phase continue to be satisfactory to excellent, while 75% of classrooms in the recently completed establishment phase for Cohort 4 are satisfactory to excellent.

The School Readiness Initiative generally does not provide infrastructure or give handouts, but a basic box of resources is provided to meet the desperate need for educational materials. Below is a group of teachers in Cohort 4 receiving their resources.



Picture: Teachers in Cohort 4 receive their educational resource boxes

Outcome 3: Enhance competency of pre-primary teachers and educarers on early learning

This outcome objective is based on the perspective that the knowledge and skills of the teacher is a key driver of education quality and school readiness. Through the School Readiness Initiative teacher capacity is developed in pedagogy, child monitoring and parent engagement, using the suite of tools in the Early Learning Kiosk. While most teachers working in the Basic Education sector are qualified, many educarers in the informal ECD sector are un- or under-qualified, making the School Readiness Initiative even more valuable for their professional development.

KnowHow participation, peer-to-peer mentoring and learning groups

A revised version of the early learning course KnowHow became available in the middle of 2023 and some teachers from previous cohorts who did not complete the old version of the course were enrolled again. Altogether 918 teachers did the course in 2023 and close to 90% of them completed more than 8 out of 10 modules.

The KnowHow course is intended for self-guided study and mediated in peer-to-peer mentoring groups and larger learning groups.

Teachers and educarers are paired or put in groups of three with colleagues from their own or neighbouring school or centre. The SRI staff provide a recommended schedule of meetings, but meeting frequency varies based on individual needs. Through the peer-to-

peer mentoring relationship teachers and educarers record videos of their classroom activities and later share these in their Learning Groups for discussion and learning.

More than 60% of teachers and educarers from previous cohorts continue to meet in their peer groups. 80% of Cohort 4 teachers and educarers have established fair to excellent peer-to-peer mentoring groups, as shown in the graph below.

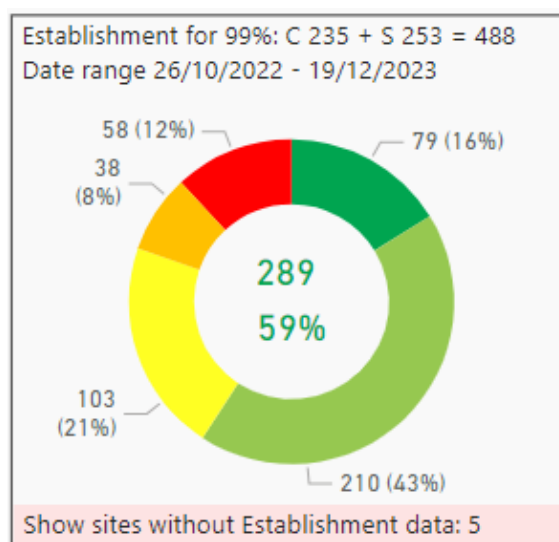


Figure: 80% of Cohort 4 teachers participate in peer-to-peer mentoring groups at a fair to excellent level

The purpose of establishing learning groups for teachers and educarers is to provide a supportive and collaborative environment for educators to engage in continuous learning, share experiences, and acquire new knowledge and skills. The learning groups bring together Grade 1 and pre-primary teachers at primary schools and pre-primary and younger age group educarers from feeder ECD centres, thereby promoting age-appropriate learning environments across the early years of education and strengthening the transition of children from ECD to primary school.

Further benefits of the Learning Groups:

- Generating new ideas and methods that enhance teaching skills
- Exchange of ideas for classroom management and layout
- Primary schools set up open days for children from their linked ECD's
- Primary schools share registration dates and documents with ECD educarers, to share with parents



Picture Teachers from Hardap Region after receiving their KnowHow completion certificates in Mariental

Child development monitoring

The ChildSteps app has digitalised the Namibia curriculum for pre-primary and enables teachers and educarers to consistently track the development of all children across domains, and to identify and support children who fall behind. The alignment of the ChildSteps report card with the official paper-based report card was embraced by many pre-primary teachers and educarers who printed the reports directly from the tablet.

In the 2023 academic year 1,324 teachers and educarers out of 2,278 across all cohorts used the ChildSteps app. In Term 1, 574 teachers and educarers completed more than 75% of the required activities. 697 Teachers and educarers completed more than 50% of activities. 170 Teachers and educarers likely used the app only for the attendance register and did not complete any activity scores. In Term 2, 443 teachers and educarers completed more than 75% of the required activities. 556 Teachers and educarers completed more than 50% of

activities and 389 teachers and educators only used the app for the attendance register. These statistics are illustrated in the graph below.

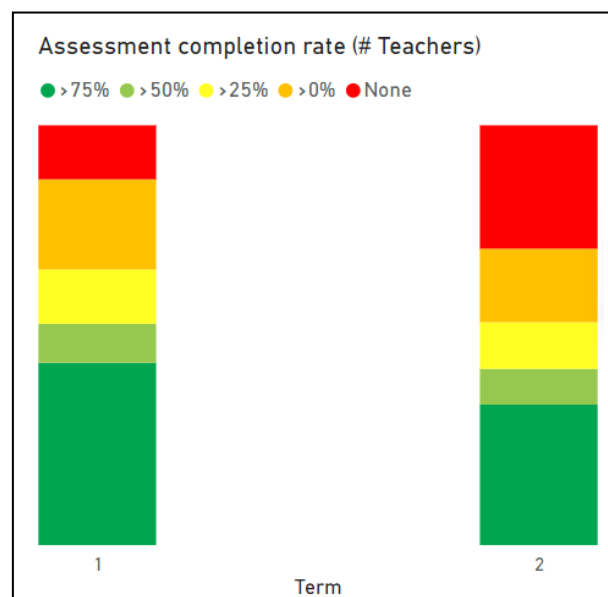


Figure: The completion rate of curriculum required assessment activities by all SRI teachers in 2023

Of the 56% of children in SRI schools whose teachers tracked their development on ChildSteps, 92% have almost mastered or fully mastered the required skills for school readiness across domains and are developmentally on track. 57% of children have fully mastered the skills for school readiness. See the graph below for a full breakdown.

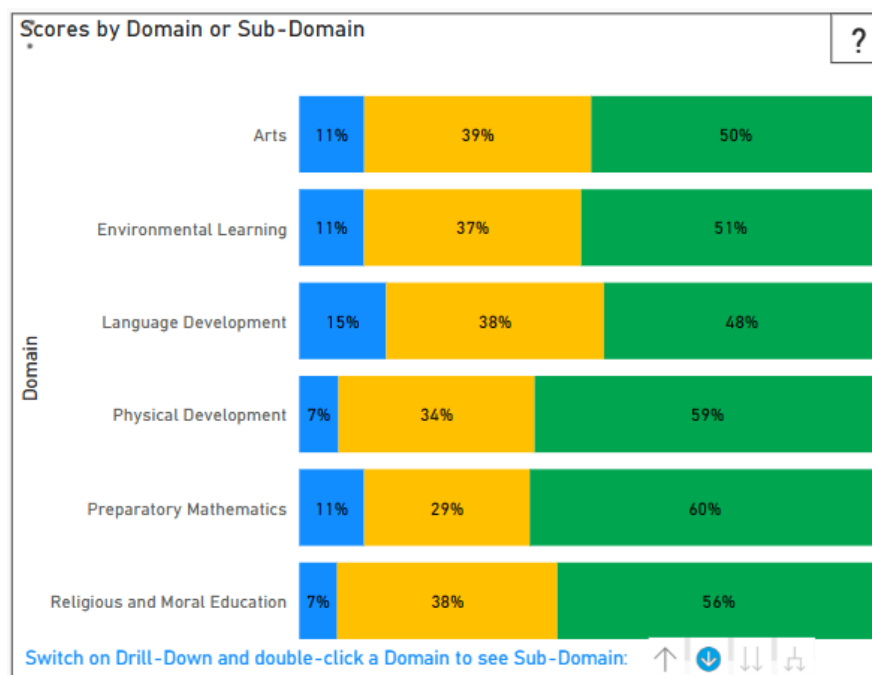


Figure: Monitoring results of child development and school readiness in 2023

Teacher-Parent engagement on children's development

Pre-primary teachers and educarers are supported to engage parents on three aspects of early learning: the individual child's development progress and readiness for school, transition from home to ECD centre to school, and learning through play. The transition of children into Grade 1 is supported by the individual child reports produced by ChildSteps and discussed with parents. This report accompanies the child to Grade 1 and is share with his or her new teacher there.

Engagements around learning through play are practical in nature: parents make educational toys from materials around the house, they use the Bridge to School books to play educational games at home with their children, and they establish a playground at the school or centre, as described under Outcome 2. In certain regions implementing partners convene fathers separately, sometimes together with MGEPSW or NAMPOL, and address gender stereotypes around the parenting of young children. 90% of all SRI schools have an excellent engagement with parents.



Picture: Parents learning to make toys in Erongo region



Picture : Male engage meeting in Oshikoto Region

END.