



HIROSHIMA UNIVERSITY



JICA Grassroots Project

Improving the Access and Quality of Pre-primary Education in Rural

Malawi

Workshop Report

Conducted from 2nd to 4th September, 2024

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Supported by JICA

Summary

From September 2nd to 4th, 2024, we held a workshop to enhance the skills of caregivers from Community-Based Care Centres (CBCCs), Community Protection Workers (CPWs), and primary school teachers in Nkhata Bay District. Organized by the JICA Grassroots Project in collaboration with local district offices, the workshop had 57 participants, including caregivers, teachers, social welfare officers, education officers, Japanese experts, and JICA volunteers.

Knowledge improvement:

The improvement in participants' knowledge was statistically significant across all content areas before and after the workshop. However, 62.9% of participants still believed that children should repeat numbers up to ten every day to retain them.

Confidence in application:

Regarding participants' confidence in applying what they learned in their schools, the improvement was not statistically significant in all content areas. Given the short duration of the three-day workshop, it appears challenging to significantly boost confidence within this timeframe. More time and ongoing support may be needed to foster a more substantial improvement in confidence.

Key learnings:

Participants deepened their understanding of child development for ages three to five. They recognized the importance of free play in fostering learning and acquired valuable skills in meal planning, preparing balanced meals for children, and creating structured educational and caregiving plans.

Feedback and future recommendations:

The majority of participants gained new knowledge and skills through the workshop. Many suggested expanding the workshop to other CBCCs and districts. Considering their feedback, it is recommended that future workshops be scaled up to reach a broader audience.



I. Introduction

From September 2nd to 4th, 2024, we conducted a workshop aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of caregivers in Community-Based Care Centres (CBCCs), Community Protection Workers (CPWs), and primary school teachers at the Mkumbira Resource Centre in Nkhata Bay District. The workshop was organized by the JICA Grassroots Project, titled “Improving the Access and Quality of Pre-primary Education in Rural Malawi,” in collaboration with the Nkhata Bay District Social Office and the Nkhata Bay District Education Office. A total of 57 participants attended, including 15 caregivers from CBCCs, 3 CPWs, 14 primary school teachers, 4 social welfare officers, 2 education officers from Nkhata Bay District, 2 experts from Japan, and 17 JICA overseas volunteers.

Schedule

Date		Activity	Caregiver Support Book
2 nd Sep.	8:00-12:00 am	Opening remarks Introduction of participants Explain the purpose of the workshop Pre-test Knowledge Understand the global and Malawi concepts of early childhood development	
	1:00-4:00 pm	Knowledge Understand the development of children aged three, four, and five years old Activity Introduction of activities Conduct play-based activities Physical development, e.g. Chipako (tag), phada, drawing, etc. Cognitive development, e.g. ndido, ntchuwa, etc. Socioemotional development, e.g. playing house, dramatic play, etc.	pp. 6-19
3 rd Sep.	8:00-12:00 am	Knowledge Support the health and nutrition of children Check health record	pp. 28-37
	1:00-4:00 pm	Activity Make a dietary education board by participants	pp. 37
4 th Sep.	8:00-12:00 am	Knowledge Create a plan Manage facility Activity Develop plans by participants	pp. 20-27, pp. 38-42
	1:00-4:00 pm	Presentation Present created weekly and daily plans by participants Closing remarks Post-test	pp.25-26

We used the following materials: caregiver support books, toothbrushes, toothpaste, cups, hard rulers, soft rulers, nail cutters, MUAC tapes, height measurement tools, tape, markers, large sheets of white paper, a computer, and a projector. Notably, the caregiver support book was developed by members of the JICA Grassroots Project, drawing from the national curriculum, the caregiver training book, and the caregiver’s guidebook.



JICA Grassroots Project
Improving the Access and Quality of Pre-primary Education in
Rural Malawi

Caregiver Support
Handbook
Plan for Children Aged 3, 4, and 5 Years
in Pre-primary Schools



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 Supported by JICA



JICA Grassroots Project
Kupititsa Patsogolo Kuthekera Kopita ndi Ubwino wa Maphunziro a
M'merampoyamba mu Madera a M'midzi mu Dziko la Malawi

Buku Lothandizira Alezi
Dongosolo la Ana a Zaka Zitatu, Zinayi
ndi Zisanu a M'sukulu za
M'merampoyamba



Kyoko Taniguchi
Yoko Yamamoto
Seiko Fukuda
Arthur E. N. Chiponde

Mothandizidwa ndi Bungwe la JICA
Zinamasullidwa ndi Matthews Kamzgezge Nyfrenda ndi Memory M'bwersachaje Chenjezi

Caregiver support handbook (left side for English and right side for Chichewa)



Workshop participants

II. Knowledge acquisition and activities by day

1st day: 2nd September

Topic: Child development

- Pre-test: Conducted to assess baseline knowledge
- Knowledge Objective: Understanding the developmental stages of children aged 3, 4, and 5
- Activity: Implementation of play-based activities



Learning numbers through the Malawian game, *Phada*



Introduction to the Japanese game, *Shiritori*

2nd day: 3rd September

Topic: Health and nutrition

- Knowledge Objective: Supporting children's health and nutrition, and reviewing health records
- Activity: Create a dietary education board



Handwashing demonstration



Height measurement



Learning about nutritional balance



Creating a food education board

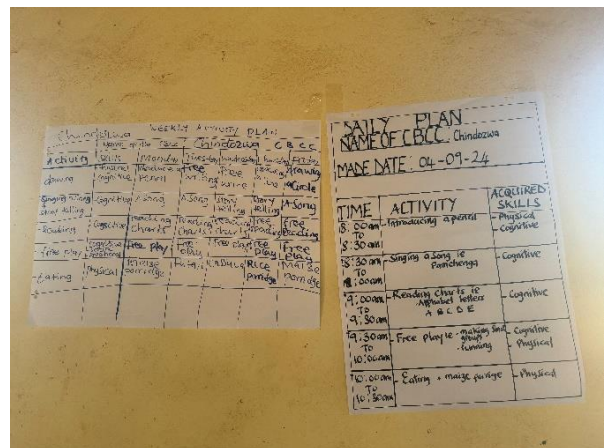
3rd day: 4th September

Topic: Planning

- Knowledge Objective: Creating plans and managing facilities
- Activity: Develop weekly and daily plans
- Post-test: Conducted to evaluate learning outcomes



Creating a weekly and daily activity plan



Presenting the created plans

III. Results of the pre- and post-tests

1. Percentage of correct answers before and after the workshop

Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of correct answers in understanding the content before and after the workshop. The blue bar represents the pre-test results, while the orange bar shows the post-test results. Before the workshop, the percentage of correct answers was notably low across all topics, except for the caregiver's role, ranging from 22.9% for creating a plan to 46.7% for health and nutrition. In contrast, post-test results improved significantly, with correct answers ranging from 57.1% in creating a plan to 85.7% for the caregiver's role. It was clear that the percentage of the correct answer in all contents was significantly improved before and after workshop. The data clearly show a substantial improvement in understanding across all topics after the workshop. The greatest improvement was in creating a plan, which increased by 34.3%, from 22.9% in the pre-test to 57.1% in the post-test. Health and nutrition improved by 26.4%, from 37.1% to 62.9%.

Similarly, understanding child development saw a 25.7% increase, from 37.1% to 62.9%. Lastly, the caregiver’s role improved by 17.1%, from 68.6% to 85.7%.

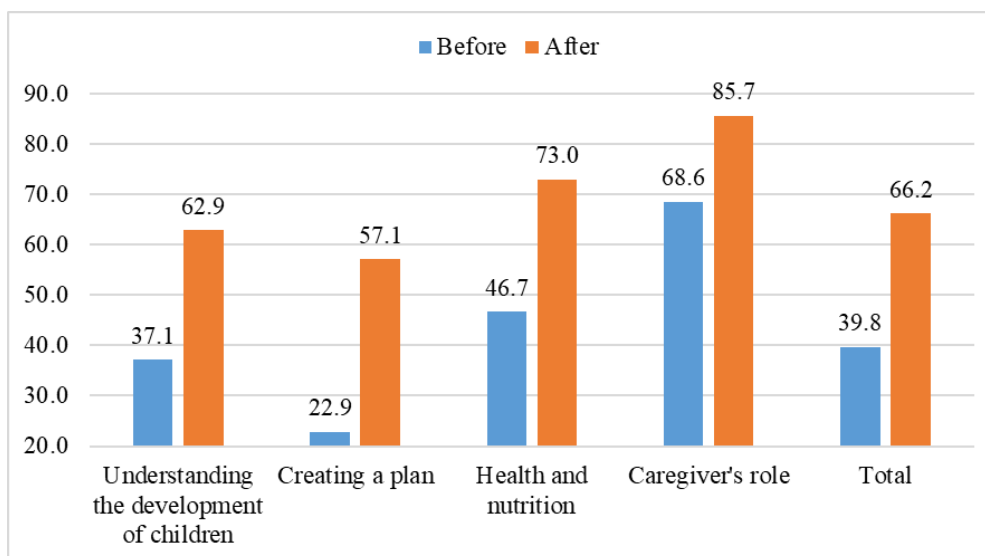


Figure 1. Percentage of correct answer in understanding content before and after the workshop

Note. The improvement was statistically significant in all contents.

Tables 1–4 show the frequency of correct answers for each question categorized by topic. Before the workshop, participants demonstrated a lack of knowledge regarding child development. For instance, they believed that children aged three to five could perform the same activities, such as running at full speed, counting ten or more items, and beginning to understand and follow rules. Additionally, they thought that when children first hold a pencil, their grip is strong. In practice, 57.1% of participants believed that children should remember numbers by repeating them every day. They also thought it was important to teach children to memorize their self-introduction. Furthermore, they believed that children develop social skills by imitating their teachers. Regarding planning, participants were unaware of the planning process. In terms of health, they lacked knowledge about proper handwashing techniques and the timing for brushing teeth; approximately 31.4% indicated that children should brush their teeth only after waking up. Finally, in nutrition, they were uncertain about the components of a well-balanced meal.

However, after the workshop, participants demonstrated a significant improvement in their knowledge. They now understand the developmental differences among children aged three to five years. For instance, they recognize that three-year-old cannot always run at full speed, count to ten or more, or consistently understand and follow rules. Participants learned that when children first hold a pencil, their grip is weak and that children engage in play with friends by participating in rule-based group games. Despite this progress, 62.9% of participants still believed that children should repeat numbers up to ten every day to remember them. In terms of planning, more than half of the participants grasped the planning process. In health, the majority understood the appropriate handwashing techniques and the correct times for brushing teeth. Approximately 91.4% reported that children should brush their teeth after breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Additionally, over 60% demonstrated an understanding of well-balanced food choices.

Table 1. The frequency of the correct answer in the development of children

Q1	Children at ___ years old can run at full speed.	Before	After
1	3	17.1	0.0
2	4	2.9	5.7
3	5	40.0	71.4
4	4 and 5	17.1	17.1
5	3, 4, and 5	22.9	5.7

Q2	Children at ___ years old can count 10 or more things.	Before	After
1	3	17.1	0.0
2	4	34.3	5.7
3	5	17.1	68.6
4	4 and 5	31.4	22.9
5	3, 4, and 5	0.0	2.9

Q3	Children at ___ years old begin to understand and follow the rules.	Before	After
1	3	17.1	0.0
2	4	11.4	25.7
3	5	31.4	42.9
4	4 and 5	25.7	11.4
5	3, 4, and 5	14.3	20.0

Q4	Children first learn to hold a pencil, _____.	Before	After
1	their grip is strong.	22.9	2.9
2	they can write letters.	5.7	2.9
3	they can write simple letters.	5.7	5.7
4	their grip is weak.	57.1	82.9
5	they cannot write anything.	8.6	5.7

Q5	To remember numbers up to 10, _____.	Before	After
1	children repeat every day.	57.1	62.9
2	children write every day.	8.6	2.9
3	children can learn through their experience.	17.1	25.7
4	children can learn through their parents.	8.6	0.0
5	children can count numbers up to 10.	8.6	8.6

Q6	To develop social skills, _____.	Before	After
1	children imitate what teachers do.	54.3	14.3
2	children play with friends by incorporating rule-based group games.	42.9	85.7
3	children should learn numbers.	0.0	0.0
4	children should eat breakfast every day.	2.9	0.0
5	children should understand the alphabet.	0.0	0.0

Table 2. The frequency of the correct answer in planning

Q7	About creating a plan for CBCC, _____.	Before	After
1	it is important to develop only a daily plan.	11.4	0.0
2	it is important to develop a weekly and daily plan.	14.3	60.0
3	it is important to develop a monthly plan first and then a daily plan later.	28.6	22.9
4	it is important to develop a daily plan first and then a monthly plan later.	20.0	0.0
5	it is important to develop a monthly and daily plan.	25.7	17.1

Q8	To improve the quality of activities, _____.	Before	After
1	do, check, plan, and adjust cycle is important.	2.9	5.7
2	do, plan, check, and adjust cycle is important.	0.0	2.9
3	plan, check, do, and adjust cycle is important.	51.4	25.7
4	plan, adjust, check, and do cycle is important.	14.3	11.4
5	plan, do, check, and adjust cycle is important.	31.4	54.3

Table 3. The frequency of the correct answer in health and nutrition

Q9	In hand washing, it is important to _____.	Before	After
1	wash quickly.	2.9	0.0
2	wash until arm.	22.9	25.7
3	wash several times.	28.6	14.3
4	wash between nails.	45.7	60.0
5	wash without soap.	0.0	0.0

Q10	It is important to brush tooth _____.	Before	After
1	after eating breakfast.	0.0	0.0
2	after waking up.	31.4	8.6
3	after eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner.	62.9	91.4
4	after eating breakfast and dinner.	0.0	0.0
5	before sleeping.	5.7	0.0

Q11	Combination of _____ is well-balanced.	Before	After
1	sima, beans, fish, and salt	37.1	14.7
2	sima, beans, and salt	0.0	0.0
3	porridge, soya, and grand nuts	31.4	11.8
4	porridge, milk, and sugar	0.0	5.9
5	porridge, soya, milk, and mango	31.4	67.7

Table 4. The frequency of the correct answer in caregiver's role

Q12	As role of the caregiver, it is important _____.	Before	After
1	to teach children not to play in school.	0.0	5.7
2	to prepare an environment where children can play by themselves.	68.6	85.7
3	to teach children to memorize self-introduction.	20.0	2.9
4	to prepare a place where children cannot go outside.	2.9	0.0
5	to teach children to follow teachers.	8.6	5.7

2. Confidence in implementation

Figure 2 illustrates the participants' confidence in applying what they learned in their schools. The blue bar represents the confidence level at the pre-test, while the orange bar indicates the post-test confidence level. The mean scores for managing facilities, conducting play-based activities, creating dietary education boards, and developing plans increased after the workshop compared to their pre-workshop scores. For managing facilities, the mean score rose from 3.17 before the workshop to 3.37 afterward. In conducting play-based activities, the mean score increased slightly from 3.23 to 3.26. For creating dietary education boards, the mean score improved from 2.94 to 3.26. Lastly, in planning, the mean score went up from 2.83 to 3.29. However, the understanding of child development did not show an increase after the workshop compared to before. Given the short duration of the three-day workshop, it seems challenging to significantly boost confidence in this area. More time and continued support may be necessary for a more substantial improvement.

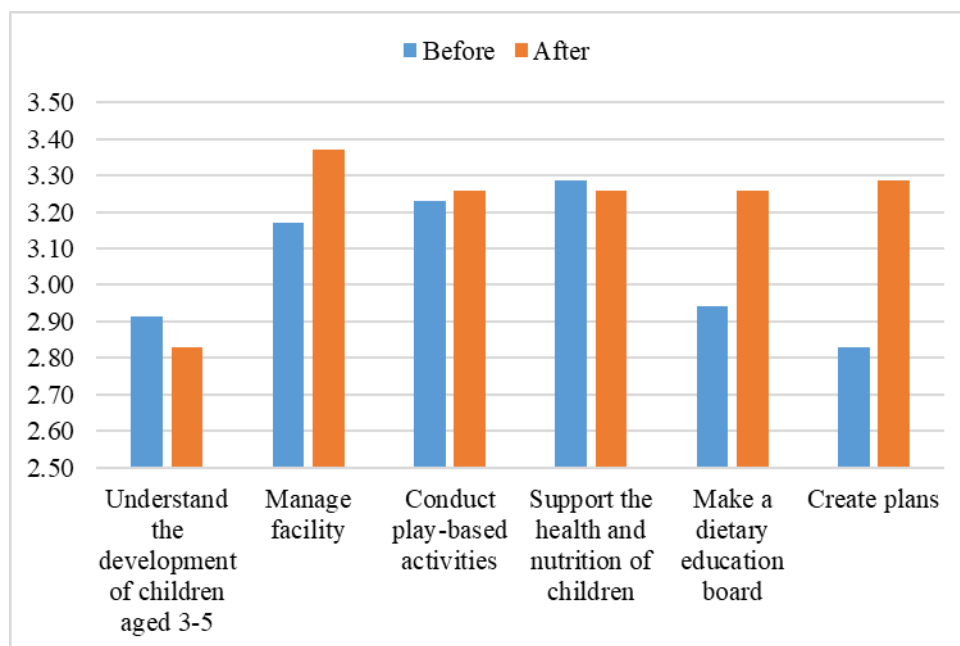


Figure 2. Confidence of implementation

Note. Likert scale: 1 = None, 2 = Slightly, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Very, and 5 = Extremely.

The improvement was not statistically significant in all contents.

3. Workshop content applicable to participants' schools

Participants shared the following insights regarding the applicability of the workshop content to their schools:

- Child development: Gained an understanding of various stages of child development.
- Skills development: Learned about cognitive, social-emotional, and physical skills, along with relevant examples.
- Physical activity: Recognized the importance of exercise for children's physical development.
- Learning through play: Understood that children learn significantly through self-directed play.
- Balanced nutrition: Now able to prepare well-balanced meals for children.
- Food groups: Learned how to prepare meals that include all six essential food groups.

- Program and lesson planning: Gained skills in creating programs and plans to support children's development.
- Planning for teachers and caregivers: Developed the ability to create monthly, weekly, and daily plans.
- Support for educators: Learned methods to support both primary teachers and caregivers.

In summary, participants deepened their understanding of child development for ages three to five. They recognized the importance of free play in fostering learning and gained valuable skills in planning and preparing balanced meals for children, as well as creating structured plans for educational and caregiving purposes.

4. Participants' comments and suggestions for the workshop

Participants shared the following comments and suggestions regarding the workshop:

- Childcare for ages 3-5: We learned how to effectively care for children aged 3 to 5.
- Understanding child development: The workshop has deepened our understanding of child development for ages 3 to 5.
- Training duration: The training days were insufficient, and it would be beneficial to hold this training more frequently.
- Importance of the training: This training is crucial and will significantly benefit my community.
- Increased knowledge: We gained valuable knowledge about child development for ages 3 to 5.
- New knowledge: You have taught us many things we were previously unaware of.
- Community impact: This training has been very helpful, and we plan to teach our community what we've learned.
- Connection between primary and early childhood development (ECD): This training helped us understand the link between primary education and ECD.
- Training fellow caregivers: As a result of this workshop, I will be able to train fellow caregivers and members of the community.
- Request for expansion: My request is to extend this training across the entire country, not just here.

In summary, the majority of participants acquired new knowledge and skills through the workshop. Most of them suggested expanding the workshop to other CBCCs and districts. Considering their feedback, future workshops should be scaled to reach a wider audience.