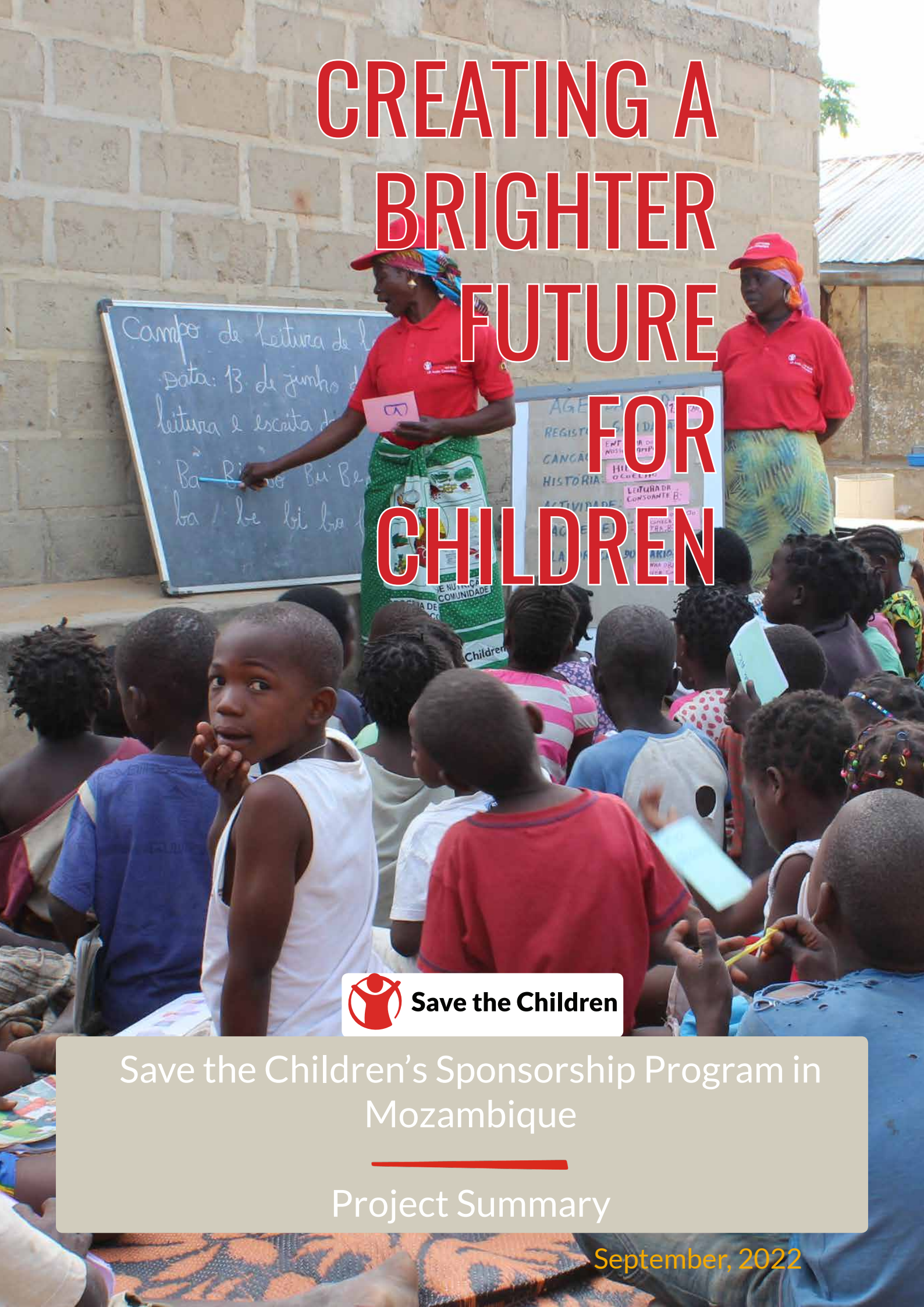


# CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR CHILDREN



**Save the Children**

Save the Children's Sponsorship Program in  
Mozambique

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Project Summary

September, 2022

*The following is a summary of the Sponsorship Program's primary goals, activities and achievements, implemented together with the government and local partners, and with the generous funding from our Sponsors.*

### **Save the Children and Sponsorship Programs in Mozambique**

**Save the Children** was established in the UK in 1919 and is the leading humanitarian organization for children in the world. We are currently composed of 30 national member organizations, operating in over 120 countries. We aim to improve the lives of children through better education, health care, protection services, and economic opportunities, as well as providing emergency aid and reconstruction during natural disasters and conflicts. We have reached over 157 million children to date, and strengthened the support systems around them for lasting change.

**Save the Children Mozambique** began operations in 1986, reuniting families who were separated during the civil war. Since that time, we have been working with schools, health and social services, communities, and families around the country to help the poorest children gain access to quality education, health care, protection services, and psychosocial support. Our emergency response team has provided lifesaving support during major natural disasters, including Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in 2019; provided critical health information and educational support during COVID-19, and presently providing a package of support to internally displaced people (IDPs) fleeing the conflict in Cabo Delgado Province. We work in eight of Mozambique's eleven provinces implementing humanitarian and development programs.

Save the Children's Sponsorship Program is unique as it connects a child in need with a sponsor, who then maintains communications over the years as the child grows into a young adult. Globally, Save the Children has reached over 2.4 million children in over 22 countries. In Mozambique, sponsor donations were combined to support the child's community, creating a ripple effect for lasting impact.



With these donations, we were able to rehabilitate early learning centers and playgrounds; establish community libraries; construct handwashing stations and latrines; train early learning facilitators and community educators; train parents how to teach their young children at home and engage them in their children's learning; and offer a full set of innovative, educational and fun activities for children of all ages. We ensured that children were healthy, protected from all forms of violence, and had the skills to thrive in school and enjoy lifelong learning. Additionally, we capacitated parents, communities, local partners and the government to continue the work after we depart. In Nacala, Mozambique, the Sponsorship Program reached 104,000 children ages 3 to 18 years, and over 33,000 parents and caregivers.



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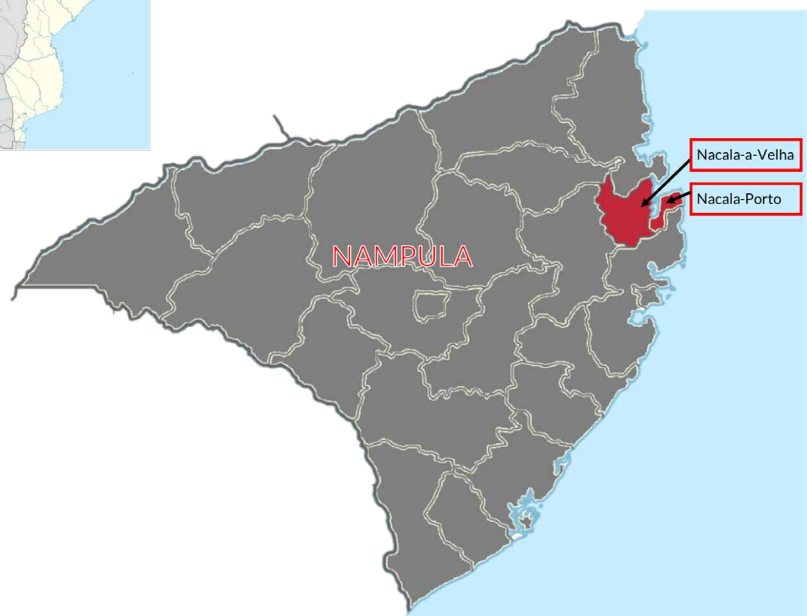
## Who are the children in Nacala?

Save the Children chose to initiate Sponsorship Programs in Nacala because the area had some of the poorest education and health indicators in the country. In 2014, Save the Children conducted a situational analysis of the region which indicated that on average, 89% of school-aged children were not attending school. Parents and caregivers, being predominantly illiterate themselves, held little value for formal education and were not engaged in their children's learning, resulting in children not being motivated to attend school and learn. It was common for girls to drop out of school; an estimated 48% of girls were married or pregnant while still children themselves, the highest rate in the country, with many girls having their first child between the ages of 13 and 15 years old. As having an education was not considered to be useful for girls in their roles as wives and mothers, most families did not invest in their daughter's education.

Health and nutrition was also a concern: an estimated 51% of children under the age of five suffered from chronic malnutrition, which can have a life-long impact on children's cognitive and physical development. Illnesses such as malaria and diarrheal diseases are endemic in the Nacala region and spread easily through poor sanitation, contaminated drinking water and poor hygiene, leaving children chronically unwell. Adolescent girls who are malnourished and give birth not only put their own health at risk, they also have a higher risk of having unhealthy babies, perpetuating the cycle.

Based on these and other findings, Save the Children developed a program to tackle the many challenging issues that children faced in their communities in Nacala. Because of the generosity of our sponsors, the Sponsorship Program was able to provide a comprehensive package of support for children from ages 0 to 18, as well as strengthen the communities, families, and the education and health systems around them so that they could continue to grow and develop and have a better chance at reaching their dreams.

### SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTPRINT



# Program Overview

Sponsorship Programs implemented activities in 4 main pillars tailored for the ages and stages of children aged 0 to 18 years



Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)  
Children ages 3-5



Basic Education (BE)  
grades 1-7



Adolescent Development (AD)  
Children ages 10-18



School Health & Nutrition (SHN) ages 3-18



## The Impact of COVID-19

The Mozambican President declared a national COVID-19 lockdown in mid-March, 2020, and all educational institutions were closed for the 2020 academic year. In order to ensure children and their families could stay safe, the Sponsorship Program initiated widespread radio and community-based COVID-19 education campaigns. The Program engaged local tailors and adolescents to produce masks, which were distributed to health professionals, volunteers, SCI staff and children. Health volunteers visited families door-to-door to raise awareness about COVID-19 prevention and symptoms, and information about seeking help if they suspected infection.

While primary schools and above reopened for the 2021 academic year, classroom sizes and time in the classroom were substantially reduced. Additionally, in an effort to make up for lost time, the curriculum covered two years of learning material, putting additional stress on students and teachers. Preschools were only permitted to reopen in early 2022. During the two years impacted hardest by COVID-19, the Sponsorship Program worked diligently to ensure that children received the support they needed so that they could continue to learn through creative ways in their own homes. Some of these adaptations are captured, ahead.



## What is ECCD?

Save the Children's ECCD activities are based on our global best practices and aimed to improved child development outcomes. They include primary health care and good nutrition, as well as engaging parents and their community in a child's learning. In Nacala, the preschool was the heart of young child development in the community, where young children learned through play, and where their parents met twice per month to learn about how to support their children's development at home using the **Emergent Literacy and Math (ELM) toolkit**. Emergent literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes a child develops in relation to reading and writing during the early childhood years, including oral language and understanding that print has meaning. Emergent math focused on the development of mathematical and spatial concepts, including understanding that each number represents a specific quantity. Evidence shows that even children as young as 1 or 2 years old can start understanding basic literacy and numeracy foundations. To make sure children were well nourished and healthy and physically ready to learn, the Program held community Nutrition Fairs at the preschools and financed monthly mobile health services, who provided vaccines and primary care, focused on children. The Sponsorship Program trained 323 community members as Preschool Facilitators and rehabilitated 33 preschools and playgrounds, while ensuring all had handwashing and latrines facilities to promote good hygiene.

## ECCD in preschools

Before young children can start learning reading and math, they need to develop the physical, cognitive, language and social skills to, for example, use a pencil, and follow a story. From the ages of 3 to 6 years, we invited children to Early Learning Centers - or preschools - where specially-trained facilitators helped children learn critical foundational skills through play, songs, dance, and art, aiding in their transition into primary school and provided them with the foundations for lifelong learning. We established and supported 51 early learning centers in the Sponsorship Communities in Nacala.

*"I'm very happy because now my daughter can play, sing and likes to count" - a mother of a preschool student"*

*"I like to study, to solve mathematical exercises. When I grow up, I want to be a mathematics teacher" - preschool graduate."*



- Over 15,678 parents and caregivers were trained in positive parenting and early child stimulation exercises, resulting in 92% of caregivers reported regularly engaging in care-giving practices with their children.
- 87% of parents stated that they were engaged in their children's education, including speaking with their children's teachers about their progress at school
- Over 5,700 children ages 3 to 5 attended 51 early learning centers, including 22 children with disabilities.
- 323 community members were trained as ECCD facilitators, who used songs, games, art, dance and storytelling to foster vital learning skills and created educational resources and toys using locally-available materials. They also conducted home visits to support parents to use ELM methods with their children at home.
- Monthly mobile health services, financed by the program, provided health care to an estimated 26,750 adults and over 66,000 children in 82 communities. Children from preschools and primary schools were prioritized during the visits, and included vital preventative care such as vaccinations and deworming and iron folate supplementation for adolescent girls.
- 15 latrines and handwashing stations were constructed in early learning centers
- 33 early learning centers and their playgrounds were rehabilitated
- During COVID-19, the Sponsorship Program trained 51 Parent Educators who provided door-to-door support to nearly 3,000 parents and their children. The Program also recorded and broadcast sessions on local stations about Parental Education, reinforcing positive parenting skills, child protection, and ELM methods so that parents could help their children learn at home.

## Sustainability of the Early Learning Centers

Save the Children had planned sustainability of the Early Learning Centers and ECCD activities from the start, building capacity in communities and with government partners so that they had the skills and tools for providing quality education for young children over the long term including:

- Involvement of counterparts from the Education, and Women, Children and Social Welfare district services from the start to the point they have been organizing and facilitating all trainings and supervision visits for the last several years. They are committed to continue to technically support the ECCD centers, and ECCD and parent education facilitators.
- Capacitation of the community preschool management committees on how to manage the centers, including raising funds to ensure maintenance, and organizing community members to help the ECCD facilitators with their a Over 15,678 parents and caregivers were trained in positive parenting and early child stimulation exercises, resulting in 92% of caregivers reported regularly engaging in care-giving practices with their children.



## What are Save the Children's Approaches to Learning?

Save the Children is a global leader in improving learning outcomes in the early primary grades. We have been developing and refining child-centered educational tools for decades so that they are suitable for all cultural contexts, and responsive to the children's own cognitive and physical capacities and learning styles. In the Sponsorship Program, we capacitated schools to use key components of the Quality Learning Environment (QLE) toolkit, which are practices that encourage children's participation and promote their physical and social-emotional well-being in the classroom. We capacitated teachers on how to use our signatory educational packages for grades 1 to 3, which include the interactive Literacy and Numeracy Boost toolkits, where children learn through a mix of different engaging activities. We trained teachers how to assess children and identify learning gaps so tools and activities can be adapted accordingly.

We fostered a learning environment in homes through our continuous engagement with parents and caregivers, and involved the community as a whole through the establishment of community libraries and reading clubs.

## Why Children need an Early Educational Boost?

When children in rural Mozambique start primary school at the age of 6 years old, most have never had any exposure to toys or books or even Portuguese language, as most only speak their local languages at home. It can be a scary time for young children, and a very steep learning curve as they try to learn reading and math skills and a new language at the same time. Save the Children introduced its Literacy and Numeracy Boost toolkits into the Sponsorship Program primary schools, which is innovative and evidence-based approaches to improve literacy outcomes in young learners. The Program also fostered the love of reading through the establishment of community reading clubs and encouraged parent engagement in their child's learning so that children felt supported and motivated to learn.



"I want to be a teacher to help other children in the community." - Grade 2 student"

- The Program's community mobilization activities encouraged parents to invest in their children's education, resulting in substantial increases annually in primary school enrolment.
- Working in collaboration with government District education partners 506 teachers were trained in literacy and numeracy boost tools, our signature approach to reading and math.
- These tools were used to teach nearly 48,000 children in the Program's 82 schools.
- 16,500 children attended over 200 community Reading Camps. The girls and boys in the reading camps produced 14 books which were published by the Ministry of Education!
- Children's rights topics were integrated into Early Literacy and Maths at-home sessions and Reading Camps so that children and their families were aware of child rights.
- Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) scores noted that Grade 3 children had substantially better reading abilities than prior to the Program's start.
- The program rehabilitated 124 classrooms and 34 administration areas in 39 schools.
- During COVID-19, the Program provided books and teaching materials to 336 teachers of grades 1 to 3, and broadcast over 100 training sessions on local radio stations to help them support remote learning with children.

## Community Libraries and Reading Camps: Innovation with Impact

Children need frequent opportunities to practice their literacy skills and to see reading as an enjoyable activity so that they are motivated to keep learning. Experience has consistently shown that creating an environment where learning continues outside of the classroom benefits students, especially children growing up in communities without a strong reading culture. In Nacala, the Sponsorship Program provided books and protective containers for mobile community libraries, and established reading camps for children to reinforce school-based learning, both of which were managed and operated by enthusiastic community members who were trained as reading promoters. The libraries and reading clubs sparked the children's creativity to the point that the children themselves started writing their own books! The Ministry of Education published 14 of the books written by the Sponsorship children for national circulation. Over its time in Nacala communities, the Sponsorship Program established over 200 reading clubs. Moreover, the Program created an interest in books and a love of reading within the community for the first time in its recent history.



## Keeping Children Healthy for Improved Learning Outcomes

Children cannot concentrate and learn unless they are healthy and well-nourished. Based on Save the Children's global best practices, the Program engaged children, parents, families, communities, schools and health services in activities to promote healthy behaviors. This included ensuring that children were vaccinated and received routine health checkups, and that they consumed healthy meals and practiced good hygiene at home. Children from preschool onwards learned about a range of hygiene and health topics in the classroom, which were tailored for their ages. Adolescent girls and boys learned about puberty and sexual and reproductive health, including menstrual hygiene management, and protecting themselves against unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV. The adolescents also learned about malaria prevention and took an active role in teaching their families and communities about malaria and the importance of prevention efforts.

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## Key Results

- 20 new male and female latrines and handwashing stations were constructed in five primary schools reinforcing good hygiene behaviors.
- The Program implemented 287 food fairs and trained 645 community health promoters and 78 teachers on preparing nutritious meals using local produce.
- Mobile health brigades vaccinated over 1,600 children from common childhood diseases.
- 10,780 adolescent girls received regular iron-folate supplementation to reduce the incidence of anemia.
- About 1,000 adolescent girls received packages of menstrual pads and soap so they didn't have to miss school due to their periods.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Program trained nearly 1,000 community members, ECCD facilitators, reading promoters and nutrition volunteers to provide house-to-house COVID-19 education and support; distributed hundreds of masks to adults, children and health workers; mass produced and distributed information brochures; and provided PPE to health care providers.



### Helping Adolescents Become Adults

The goal of the Adolescent Development component was to ensure that adolescents were equipped to make healthy and successful transitions through puberty and into young adulthood. Using our global best practices, we designed activities and clubs for in and out-of-school adolescents to ensure they had supportive peer groups and safe spaces to discuss sensitive topics and to start planning for the future. For those adolescents who left primary school, we encouraged their return. As there are no secondary schools in the communities, we supported adolescents who graduated primary school to earn an income and generate savings with the aim of investing in their secondary school education.

Keeping adolescents fully engaged in healthy activities, such as theatre and football, also motivated them to stay away from alcohol and drugs. We assisted adolescents to form associations and provided them with start-up funding and technical support for initiating income generating activities, which included activities such as agricultural production, small animal production, selling baked goods, dressmaking, and the production of other artisanal products. These initiatives provided a critical boost to adolescents on their journey into adulthood.

### Key Results

- Over 15,000 adolescents participated in 76 clubs lead by trained peers.
- Over 150 adolescents received training and financial support for starting small businesses, including soap making, hairdressing, selling baked goods, small animal and agricultural production and sewing.
- Over 1.320 adolescent girls were taught to make homemade reusable menstrual pads to better manage their menstrual hygiene and ensure they could remain in school during their periods.
- During COVID-19, local tailors trained 36 adolescent girls on how to produce face masks and set up large-scale production centers in the communities to meet the demand.





Save the Children conducted learning exercises to analyse which interventions had the biggest impact on the children and the overall sustainability of the program. These included:

### **ECCD:**

- The introduction of classroom aids – called Teacher’s Friends - contributed to better learning outcomes and smoother transitions of the children into primary school.
- Parent Education sessions strengthened the skills and confidence of parents / caregivers and improved their learning interactions with their children at home, as well as increased parental engagement their children’s learning.
- The implementation of ‘Talking Walls’ – the use of classroom walls as learning spaces – increased the engagement of children in the classroom and contributed to improved reading, writing and math skills.

### **Basic Education:**

- The production of bilingual booklets (Portuguese and Emakua) based on local stories in the reading camps helped to better engage the children and improved literacy outcomes.
- The involvement of parents and caregivers in storytelling in the reading camps increased children’s enthusiasm and participation, and resulted in the production of local storybooks.
- The program’s efforts to continuously raise awareness about the importance of education in communities and capacitation of the school councils contributed to the annual increases in student enrolment in primary schools, and contributed to the increase in the number of girls who graduated primary school and continued into secondary school.

### **School Health and Nutrition:**

- Teaching girls to make their own reusable menstrual pads contributed to the reduction of girls’ absenteeism and school dropout.

### **Adolescent Development:**

- Counselling with adolescents helped to reduce early marriages and increased the number of girls using family planning methods.
- The establishment of group meetings in safe spaces, including at the community libraries, helped adolescents to share and discuss sensitive issues, including sexual and reproductive health.



*Save the Children and the children and families of Nacala would like to extend a warm THANK YOU to our sponsors and all others who contributed to the success of the Sponsorship Program.*

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