



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION

CHAPTER 9

Assessment in Emergent Literacy

NOT FOR SALE



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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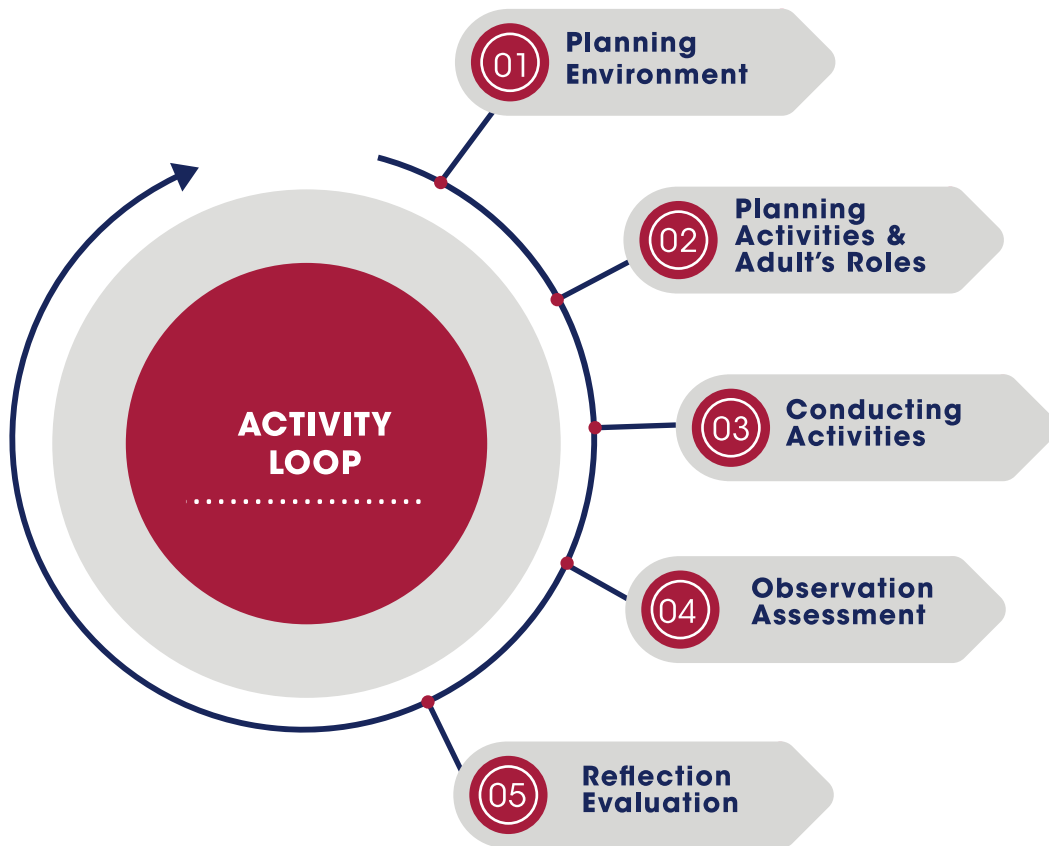
In Zambia, the ECE syllabus prescribes teachers to assess ECE learners through observation. In this ninth chapter of the ECE emergent literacy manual, we want to guide ECE teachers in how to observe and assess ECE learners, both in general (throughout ECE) as specific, within the USAID Let's Read project.

- *Content: assessment in general: observation and assessment; assessment with the I-CLAP*
- *Outcome: Insights in how to observe and assess ECE learners*
- *target group: ECE teachers, school leaders and MoGE officials concerned with ECE*

- *List of acronyms*
- *DRCC – District Resource Centre Coordinator ECAT – Early Childhood Assessment Tool*
- *ECE – Early Childhood Education*
- *ELDS – Early Learning Development Standards MoGE – Ministry of General Education*
- *SIC – School Insert Coordinator*
- *USAID – United States Agency for International Development ZIC – Zone Insert Coordinator*

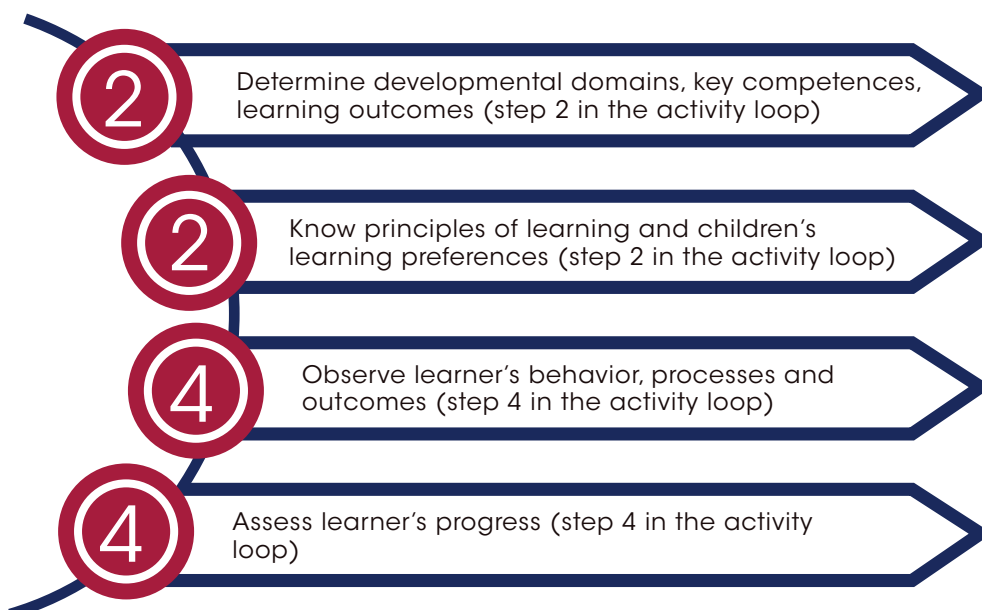
1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This chapter is focused on step 4 in the activity loop (see Chapter 3: Introduction in the package): Observation and assessment.



Although observation and assessment is step 4 in the activity loop, the teacher should already prepare this step during step 2: planning activities and adult's roles.

The graph below can serve as a short checklist for the teacher. When implementing the activity loop, these are the steps when observation and assessment come in:



Chapter 9 “Assessment in Emergent Literacy” contains two major sections:

SECTION 1: Assessment in ECE in general: How to observe and assess ECE learners throughout ECE, focused on their learning progress in a holistic way.

SECTION 2: Assessment with the Instrument for Children’s Literacy Attended Progress (I-CLAP): How to observe and assess progress in language and literacy of ECE learners in a holistic way, with a short and feasible instrument.

SECTION 1. ASSESSMENT IN ECE

1. WHY ASSESS ECE LEARNERS?

Young children develop knowledge, skills and competences in the different developmental domains at their own pace. It is very hard to compare one 4-year old with another, most likely they will have different pathways to grow towards school readiness. This is only one of the many reasons why observing and assessing young learners in ECE is key:

To understand children's characters, temperaments, identities, choices and motivations

- To know their interests
- To get insights into children's learning strengths, weaknesses, needs

To develop culturally situated knowledge about how children learn and develop

- To ascertain the relevance of the curriculum being offered to children in a given community, class, level
- To ensure holistic development of a child

To make informed interpretations and assessments about children's progress and achievements, reflecting dimensions on diversity

- To obtain information about learners' developmental needs
- To track their progress and acquisition of new skills and competences
- To place learners in appropriate learning levels
- To allow children to learn at their pace as individuals
- To make necessary adjustments in the teaching methodologies and changes in teaching and learning materials
- To identify early learning problems and institute early interventions

To inform curriculum planning in participatory and responsive ways

- To help MoGE plan and develop a developmentally / age appropriate curriculum
- To enhance implementation of educational policies

To reflect critically on the quality and effectiveness of provision

- To reflect how things can be done differently
- To define and plan appropriate interventions in planning, management, funding and to provide feedback on the expected goals and provision of required resources

To document information that can be discussed with families, teachers and other professionals, and make links with home and community cultures

- To provide information on the child which will be used to inform parents
- To plan for future activities together

2. WHAT TO OBSERVE AND TO ASSESS IN ECE

2.1. WHAT TO OBSERVE

Observation of ECE learners is focused on the process, on growth, on progress. Before observing, you can choose your focus:

1. Learning progress within the Key Competences (ECE syllabus)

- Identification
- disposition and attitudes
- naming
- making relationships
- problem solving
- designing
- creativity
- imagination/role play
- describing movement,
- self-confidence and self-esteem • exploration
- behavior and self-control • experimentation
- healthy and bodily awareness
- number and other mathematical activities • sense of time
- imitation culture and beliefs
- writing and reading
- sense of community

2. Learning progress within the Developmental Domains (Early Learning Development Standards ELDS)

- approaches to learning (inquiry and orientation, observation, exploration, numeracy)
- cognitive development (logic and analytical thinking, cognitive processes)
- language and literacy (receptive and expressive language, reading and writing)
- physical development and wellbeing (gross and fine motor development, eye-hand coordination, wellbeing)
- social and emotional development (interpersonal skills, self-awareness, social competence, self-expression, self-concept)
- spiritual and moral development (religious and moral values)

3. Learning processes within play

• **actions such as:** connecting, containing, filling, casting, shaking, strewing, restricting, constructing, creating, building, stacking, covering, focusing, organising, sorting, grouping, moving, falling, rolling, turning, pushing, carrying, throwing, fantasising, imitating, grabbing, tearing, kneading, stamping, painting, drawing, running, jumping, crawling, balancing, climbing, dressing up or undressing.

• **cognitive processes such as:** attending, perceiving, observing, recognising, discriminating, imitating, exploring, investigating, concentrating, memorising, retaining, retrieving and recalling information, scanning for information, integrating knowledge and experience, categorisation, classification, making connections and relationships.

4. Level of learning

• See the Taxonomy of Bloom (Chapter 3 – Introduction to the package and Chapter 10– Learning through Play).

2.2. Types of assessment: depending on focus, approach and objectives

Formative assessment

Focus on learning processes and progress

Holistic approach

Informs planning of the next learning activities including space, time and resources

Summative assessment

Focus on learning results or outcomes

With reference to curriculum goals or specific learning outcomes for individual children

Overview or snapshot of progress and achievements at a specific point of time

The I-CLAP (Instrument for Children’s Literacy Attended Progress) is an example of a formative assessment tool. The School Readiness Test is an example of a summative assessment tool.

3. HOW TO ASSESS LEARNERS IN ECE

3.1. Introduction

The ECE Language and Literacy Teacher's Guide stipulates that assessments should be done through observation. And according to the ECE syllabus (ECE syllabus, p. XIV),

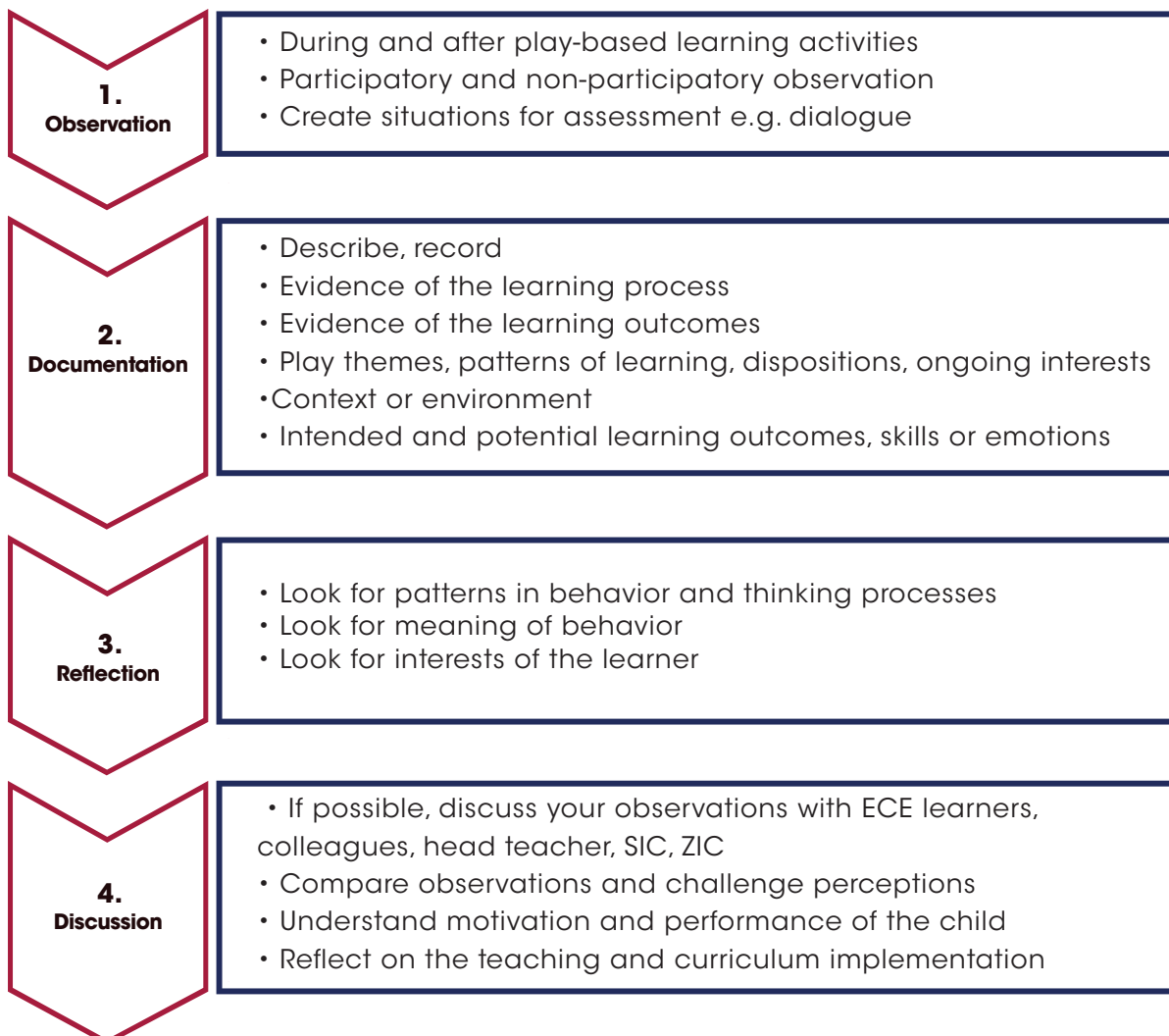
"(...) children are at different levels of development, therefore there will be no formal written examinations set after finishing the work for each age group. Assessment through observation should be an integral part of the programme. Therefore, assessment at this level is to identify as early as possible areas of a child's development that need extra or specific attention. Assessment tools may be used not as diagnostic tools but rather to guide in the establishment of the developmental pattern in children."

As such, assessment in Early Childhood Education is mainly formative: focused on the learning and development progress of learners, non-standardized, based on qualitative information, contextualized and conducted in the normal classroom environment.

3.2. Process of assessment

3.2.1. Introduction

Assessment of ECE learners is a continuous process, with different steps which are shortly introduced in the graph below and are explained further in this chapter.



5. Decision

- What are the learner's capabilities?
- What are the next possible steps?
- Plan for challenge, extension, consolidation, change of pedagogy, intervention, referral and parent consultation

6. Follow up

- What are the results of the decisions made and the actions implemented?
- Start the process of assessment anew: observe, describe, document, discuss and decide.

3.2.2. Observation

7 Observation

- During and after play-based learning activities
- Participatory and non-participatory observation
- Create situations for assessment e.g. dialogue

Observation is the main stage in the process of assessment at Early Childhood Education. Thus, more attention will be given to this first step.

3.2.2.1. When to observe

Learning in ECE takes place through play activities. These are the best moments to observe learners and their learning processes. Observation of learners happens on a daily basis, during the whole school year.

- Observation can focus on learners when they are:
 - Playing individually
 - Playing together in small or bigger groups
 - Playing and interacting with an adult

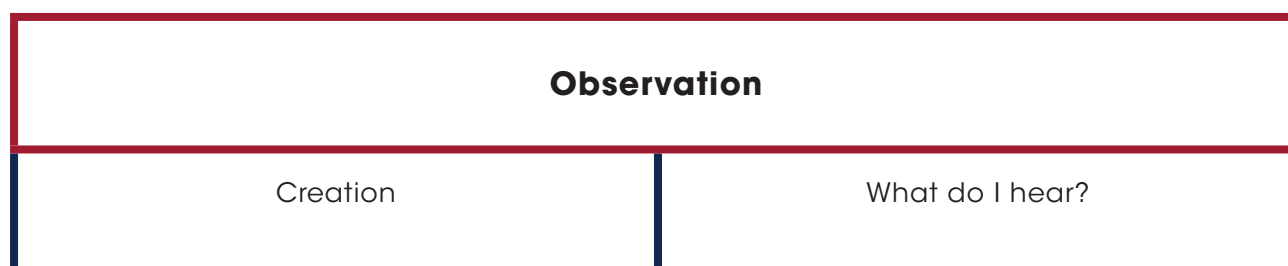
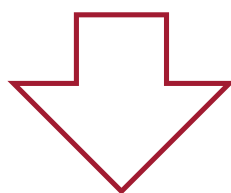
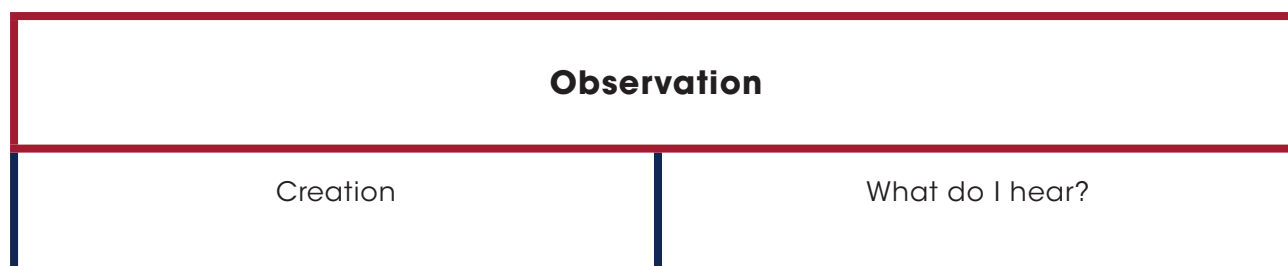
3.2.2.2. *Participatory or non-participatory observation*

- Observation can be done in two complementary ways, depending on the outcomes and the situation:
 - Non-participatory observation:
 - the teacher sits aside during an activity to observe one or more learners
 - during a specific time period
 - the teacher takes notes
 - the teacher is not involved in the activity
 - the only focus of the teacher, is the observation
 - Participatory observation:
 - the teacher is conducting lessons
 - in the meantime, he or she observes the signals, learning processes and behavior of the learners
 - the teacher maintains an active role with the children
 - the teacher takes notes and tracks the effects of the interaction or activity

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Non- participatory observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prejudices and biases (preconceived opinions or affective feelings towards a person, that are not based on reason or actual experience) can be encountered • You can easily focus on one or two children • You can immediately record observations • You can see the behavior or process as a whole, from beginning to end. • Interpretations of behavior will be more correct; you can more easily link new observations with previously collected information • You can observe starting from a question, a problem posing or the intended learning outcomes of the activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children might act differently when they are aware that they are being observed. • You can miss information while making notes • Sometimes you can hear learners but you cannot see them from your observation post • Sometimes you miss the depth of the learning process because of the distance between you and the learners
Participatory observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners are not aware that they are being observed • You can see many things at once • Because of your proximity, all information is clear: the language used, the activity process... • You can let the activity flow more easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You lose a lot of information when you do not record it immediately; after the observation, you may have lost the essence • Children may act differently in proximity of a teacher: they are more actively involved when they are aware the teacher is near them (=Hawthorne effect)

3.2.2.3. Observation and interpretation

During the observation, it is important to focus only on what you see and hear. Do not proceed to interpretation until you have gathered objective information from the observation.



As children play, they derive different meanings which teachers cannot always see. Therefore as a teacher they should pay attention and listen carefully to learners. It requires teachers to:

- Engage emotionally
- Be truly interested

Teachers should be alert to learner's diverse methods of communication and representation. Think about language, gesture, posture and other non-verbal modes of communication, and e.g. verbal, musical and written messages or art as modes of representation.

Teachers should "listen to thoughts", this means they try to get into the minds of the learners: Teachers should listen to the meanings and intentions. Children use a lot of meta-communication in play: they talk about what they think, they talk about symbolization and actions. A teacher who "listens to thought" is actually observing how thought is expressed in multi-modal ways.

It is very important that teachers understand learners learning process. (S)he should observe gestures, body language and facial expressions. A teacher can check whether the observations are correct, by: commenting on action, using out-loud thinking, posing open-ended questions and reasoning, pretending not to know, conveying emotions...

A teacher can only be a good listener, when (s)he has connected well with the learners.

3.2.3 Documentation



- Describe, record
- Evidence of the learning process
- Evidence of the learning outcomes
- Play themes, patterns of learning, dispositions, ongoing interests
- Context or environment
- Intended and potential learning outcomes, skills or emotions

Collect data over a long period of time, this is evidence for reflection and evaluation. Description and recordings are needed both on the “making”, the learning processes, as on the “outcomes”, the results, in order to make learning visible.

Recording observations is very difficult where there is over enrolment of learners. A teacher can employ the following mechanism to easy recording of the observations:

Use a diary and make regular notes of significant observations

Collect or describe well selected examples of the outcomes of learners’ play (drawings, sculptures, emergent writing, constructions, ...).

Use checklists or observation tools every now and then, to assess where the learners are in their development

Observe children’s notebooks

Write down your observations and descriptions, e.g. in a separate notebook per learner. If you have a smartphone, you take photos of play and learning outcomes and reflect on those photos afterwards.

3.2.4 Reflection



- Look for patterns in behavior and thinking processes
- Look for meaning of behavior
- Look for interests of the learner

Look for patterns, meanings and interests. E.g. can you see whether the learner prefers to learn by listening, by touching, by moving or by looking? E.g. is the learner more of a philosophical, visual or analytical thinker? Do they prefer problem solving, introspection or creativity?

Use the ‘reflection and observation tool - annex 3’



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3.2.5. Discussion

4. Discussion

- If possible, discuss your observations with ECE learners, colleagues, head teacher, SIC, ZIC
- Compare observations and challenge perceptions
- Understand motivation and performance of the child
- Reflect on the teaching and curriculum implementation

Share insights with teachers, parents, caregivers and other professionals involved with a child. The chapters on Parent, Family and Community Involvement can support the teacher in how to involve those partners in the child's learning process.

As a teacher, probe further. Look for causes and explanations of the observed behaviour and learning processes.



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3.2.6. Decision



4. Discussion

- If possible, discuss your observations with ECE learners, colleagues, head teacher, SIC, ZIC
- Compare observations and challenge perceptions
- Understand motivation and performance of the child
- Reflect on the teaching and curriculum implementation

Decide how learning can be extended through activities that challenge children's thinking.

3.2.7. Follow up



6. Follow up

- What are the results of the decisions made and the actions implemented?
- Start the process of assessment anew: observe, describe, document, discuss and decide.

Section 2: I-CLAP: Instrument for Children's Literacy Attended Performance

1. ASSESSING WITH THE I-CLAP

1.1. WHAT?

- The I-CLAP is an instrument to assess emergent literacy progress of ECE learners. The instrument is added as a separate annex (Annex 5 – I-CLAP) to the ECE Emergent Literacy Manual.
- The acronym I-CLAP stands for:
 - I: It is an instrument for easy use, with only 6 indicators.
 - C: It is focused on children in pre-primary education, aged 3 to 6 years.
 - L: The 6 indicators are related to language and literacy mainly, although linked to the 6 developmental domains of the ELDS and thus holistic.
 - A: The assessment is done based on attended performance. Therefore, it is observation-based assessment.
 - P: The assessment is done based on the performance of learners throughout the activities in the classroom, on their behavior and creations.
- It is formative assessment. The assessment is based on observation. It tracks the individual development and learning progress of a learner throughout ECE. It can be used to compare the acquisition of emergent literacy skills of every individual learner at different moments and to develop actions to stimulate learning of that learner.
- It is not a standardized, normative assessment. It cannot be used to compare learners from the same age amongst each other.

1.2. WHO?

The I-CLAP is used by ECE teachers and caregivers, to assess the emergent literacy acquisition of learners, aged 3 to 6 years, in Early Childhood Education centers in Zambia.

1.3. INDICATORS AND THEIR LINKS TO DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS AND EMERGENT LITERACY SKILLS

Teachers are stimulated to take the perspective of the ECE learner when they score the indicators. In the theory of “listening to thoughts” (see 4.2.2.3. pg. 15), teachers get into the heads and bodies of the learners, to fully understand what they do and why they do it. To enhance teachers to take up the perspective of the learner, all indicators are written from the “I”-perspective: the “I” stands for the child.

All indicators can be linked to one or more developmental domains from the ELDS and different emergent literacy skills. All domains and all skills are captured in those 6 indicators. The I-CLAP does not pretend to be complete, but representative.

INDICATOR	DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN ELDS	EMERGENT LITERACY SKILLS
1. I explore things in and around me. I try out new ways of doing something.	Approaches to learning Cognitive development Social-emotional development	Orientation in space Environmental, instrumental, body and voice sounds
2. I interact with others in play and in work.	Approaches to learning Social-Emotional development Spiritual and moral development	Speaking and Listening Fluency and comprehension
3. I compare objects. I see similarities and differences.	Approaches to learning Cognitive development	Visual perception and discrimination
4. I read pictures. I tell a story based on pictures.	Language development Cognitive development	Print concept and meaningfulness Fluency and comprehension Vocabulary, words and sentences
5. I play with sounds and syllables.	Language development	Speaking and listening Oral blending and segmenting Alliteration, rhyme and syllables
6. I manipulate objects. I make drawings. I copy shapes and letters.	Physical development Language development	Fine motor skills Eye hand coordination Writing letters

2. SCORING AND REPORTING WITH THE I-CLAP

2.1. SCORING: THE SCORES TABLE

	Indicator	0 Not established	1 Emerging	2 Limited	3 Established
1	I explore things in and around me. I try out new ways of doing something.	I do not explore what is around me. I like to stick with the known and usual.	I explore what is nearby and not very strange. I initiate activities that I am used to.	When I am stimulated and encouraged, I explore things around me and I try out new methods.	I explore spontaneously and initiate new ways of doing something without doubt. I express own ideas and opinions.
2	I interact with others in play and in work.	I do not interact with others. I like to play by myself. I do not greet or thank appropriately.	I play nearby others. I might share toys and tools, with some stimulation. I sometimes greet and thank others, in my own language.	I play and work next to others, in co-existence but not real cooperation. I greet and thank others, in my own language. I sometimes build friendships in the classroom.	I play and work with others. We share ideas and divide roles. I greet and thank others appropriately. I am able to build friendships in the classroom.
3	I compare objects. I see similarities and differences.	I do not compare and do not look for similarities or differences.	I analyze objects with help: when given concrete guidelines, I name some characteristics.	I compare with help; when given guidelines, I can name some similarities and differences.	I compare easily. I see similarities and differences of all kinds of objects.
4	I read pictures. I tell a story based on pictures.	I am unable to read pictures.	I can identify and name certain objects, persons, places or animals in a picture.	I can describe what is happening on the different pictures.	I can relate the pictures and tell a comprehensive story.
5	I play with sounds and syllables.	I make oral sounds without consciousness.	I am conscious of the sounds I produce and the sounds around me.	I can identify sounds I hear. I can copy sounds as well.	I can clap syllables. I can puzzle syllables orally into a new (non-existent) word.
6	I manipulate objects. I make drawings. I copy shapes and letters.	I do not manipulate objects with my hands and fingers. I do not scribble or draw.	I manipulate objects, I scribble or draw, using my hands, fingers or big tools.	I manipulate objects, I draw and make copies of shapes, using my fingers or smaller tools.	I copy letters with my fingers or smaller tools.

**Week 9-10:
Prepare**

- Take your class register, the I-CLAP and observation notes or documentations of the past term (week 9-10)
- Reflect on your observations and documentations of learning through play activities of the past term, for every child in your class.
- Plan when to score the indicators. If additional observations are needed, then you can plan for additional observations in week 9 and 10 (min. 30min/learner).

**Week 11-12:
Score**

- Take the indicator list and the scoring list.
- Score the indicators for each learner: based on observations and documentations of learning through play activities throughout the term; focused on the evolution and progress during the past term.

**Week 13: Report
to parents**

- Interact with parents about the evolution of their child.
- Tips on how to engage parents in ECE, can be found in ECE emergent literacy manual:
- Chapter 8: PCI approach in ECE and Chapter 12: Parental involvement in the ECE classroom



**Week 13: Report
to officials**

- Report the progress of all learners to the school head, school administrators and DRCC.



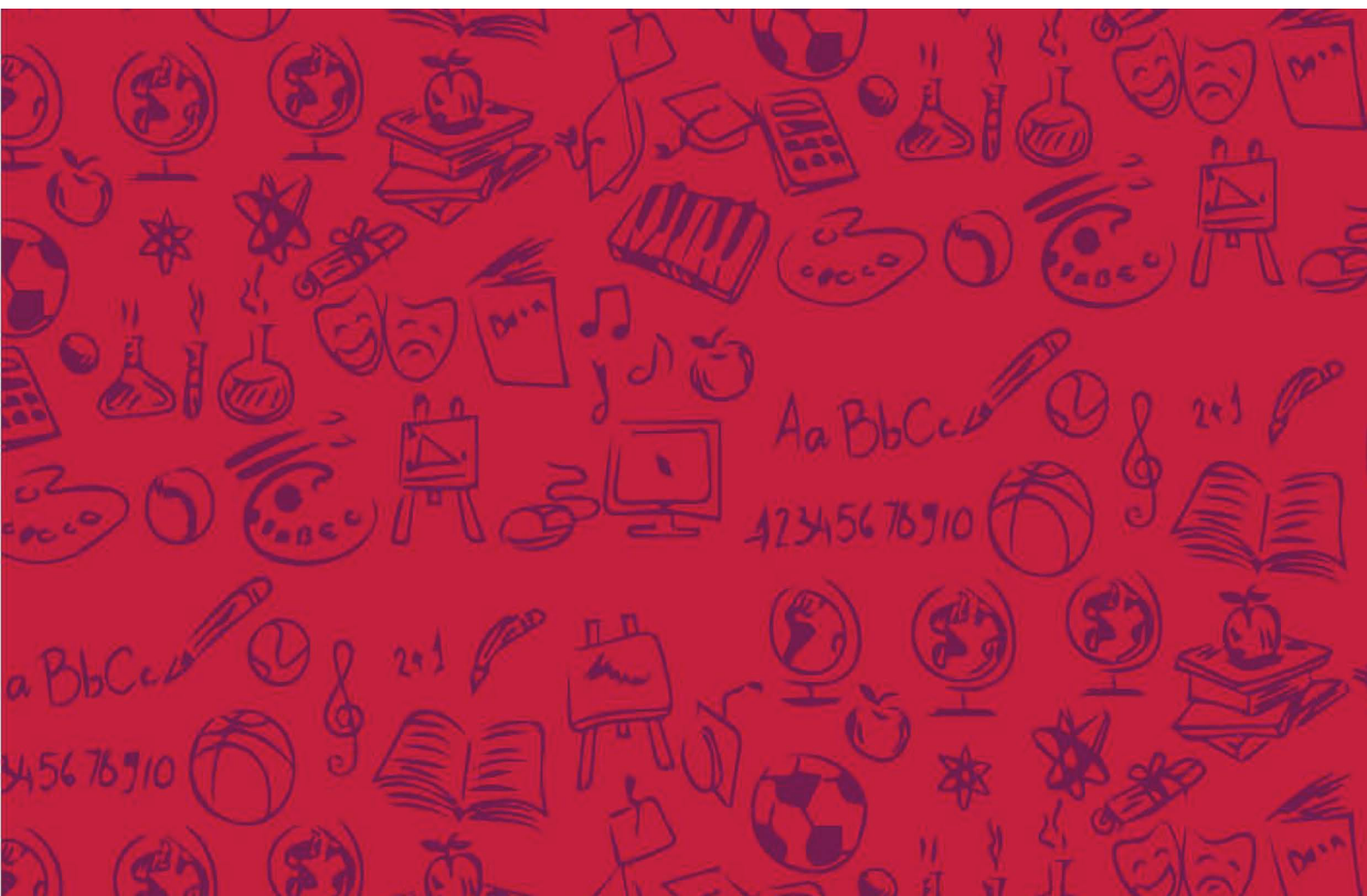
Week 13: Input

- Input the scores in USAID Let's Read Dashboard.
- Work with your Head Teacher to input the scores of the learners in the USAID Let's Read Dashboard, using the project's tablet.



**Before the next
term: Plan**

- Reflect and plan activities to stimulate growth, development and learning of learners in the next term.
- Tips on how to plan activities: ECE emergent literacy manual, Chapter 3 - Introduction to the package and Chapter 10 - Learning through play



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