

ARE PARENTING INTERVENTIONS TRANSFERABLE ACROSS SETTINGS? ASSESSING KEY CONSTRAINTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



Summary of preliminary results

We tested the effects of sending 2 messages/week to caregivers and teachers of Ivorian public schools, over the course of the school year. The messages were meant to engage them in children's education, bringing parents closer to their children's school life, motivating teachers to do more to improve children's literacy and numeracy skills, and warning both to the harms of using physical punishment to discipline children.

We randomize the schools where parents and teachers receive the messages, and compare children across those schools and those not targeted by communication. We find huge effects of messages to parents on learning in CP2 (the first primary cycle): messages decrease dropout rates by 50%, and improve learning by about 1 quarter ahead in school for both literacy and numeracy. This reflects the fact that parents become more engaged in children's school life, and decrease the use of physical punishment.

Interestingly, there are also some puzzling findings. Child labor in cocoa fields increases massively within children that improve in school, suggesting parents actually do not enlist children who are struggling in school – at least at that young age – and that child labor does not really rival with learning for younger kids. Moreover, effects are lower to non-existent among CE2 (the second primary cycle) students, even though their parents also become more engaged, suggesting teacher quality is the binding constraint at that stage.

Last, improving teacher's work is hard: when they are targeted by messages, learning does not improve, and even reverses the positive effects of targeting parents. Further research is under way to understand the reasons for those effects, and to try new approaches that could improve learning beyond CP2 by providing teachers with better tools through smartphone-based educational technologies.

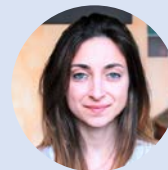
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