

Stories from the field: Tips for conducting ELOM fieldwork

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Our ELOM study

ELOM 4&5 and Learning Programme Quality Assessments

- Singita Lowveld Trust (SLT) embarked on this ELOM journey after spending over a decade supporting early childhood development (ECD) centres in the Greater Kruger region to answer two questions:
 - 1. Are the children developing?**
 - 2. Is the ECD programme being offered of good quality?**
- In 2025 SLT did the LPQA and dip stick assessments across 17 ECD centres to get an overview of the programme and its impact on the ground - this led to the realisation that there is a need to do both Baseline and Endline assessments to get a fuller picture of the programme.
- In 2026 SLT did the ELOM 4&5 baseline assessment and will be doing the endline assessment in October.

Fieldwork: What We Learnt

What worked well?

- Having Tsonga/Shangaan speaking assessors who are also ECD practitioners.
- Constant communication & feedback with the 27 ECDs before, during and after the ELOM 4&5 assessments and giving one to one feedback to each centre upon receiving the ELOM results.
- In 2025 when doing the dipstick, there were enough eligible children to be assessed.
- Most children were interested in the assessments and were happy playing with the assessors
- The process also provided the team with practical experience in administering ELOM and strengthened their understanding of the assessment procedures, including the importance of following the tool and instructions consistently.

Challenges faced: Where we could improve

- Centre staff walking in and out during the assessment, to check how things are going and to call the child being assessed for breakfast.
- Practitioners concerned about the children's performance and therefore wanting to choose children that they thought were "fit or will do well" during the assessment.
- There were language errors in the assessment test and read slightly different to the one used during the training. Maybe get someone to look at both tests.
- Sudden age change of eligible children in the middle of assessment where only children born between 2021 – 31st January 2022 were suitable and not beyond.
- Requests for explanations on low scores received from DataDrive2030 despite detailed comments already provided in the assessment forms.

What We Learnt: Language of Assessment

- Familiar language supports understanding – children are more likely to understand and respond confidently when the assessment language is familiar to them.
- SLT trained 11 Xitsonga speaking assessors consisting of 7 SLT staff classroom facilitators and trainers, and 4 practitioners from the 27 ECD Centres that SLT supports.
- Practitioners learnt that reading the assessment activities instructions in Xitsonga command children's attention.



Key recommendations

01

- Building skills and capacity in the ECD sector by training ECD practitioners as ELOM assessors.

02

- Communicate eligibility of children with the Centres beforehand
- Organisations are to give ELOM assessment report feedback to the ECD Centres that they have assessed.

03

- Action and implement the learning outcomes and recommendations received from the ELOM reports.

