

Midline findings:

Classroom and teacher observations

The importance of pre-primary education in Tanzania

Policymakers and implementers have increasingly focused on early childhood education (ECE) given the growing global awareness of the critical role that quality pre-primary education plays in laying the foundation for improved school readiness and learning outcomes. In Tanzania, despite the potential of pre-primary education, major challenges impede quality implementation of ECE. Two key challenges include (1) a teaching shortage that has resulted in an unfavourable teacher-to-pupil ratio and (2) the fact that much of the teaching force is untrained or underqualified in ECE. Further, the curriculum and instructional practices have long been developmentally inappropriate for young learners, lacking active and experiential learning activities and foundational content.

Assessing instructional practices and learning environments

Observing classrooms provides insights into changes in teachers' instructional practices and classroom learning environments over time. We are observing classrooms to assess whether teachers who participated in the FkW intervention and ongoing coaching improved practices compared to teachers who have not participated in FkW and whether they sustain those practices over time despite contextual challenges and post project implementation. This study helps assess project impacts as well as provides continuous learning for quality improvement in Tanzania's pre-primary classrooms.

The classroom observation tool

We assessed instructional practices using an observation tool that was developed collaboratively by FkW partner organizations. The tool assesses the quality of the learning environment and teacher performance in key areas, including lesson planning, instructional skills, learning materials, student participation, and classroom management. It also captures aspects of the school environment, including water and sanitation facilities and school feeding.

Data collection

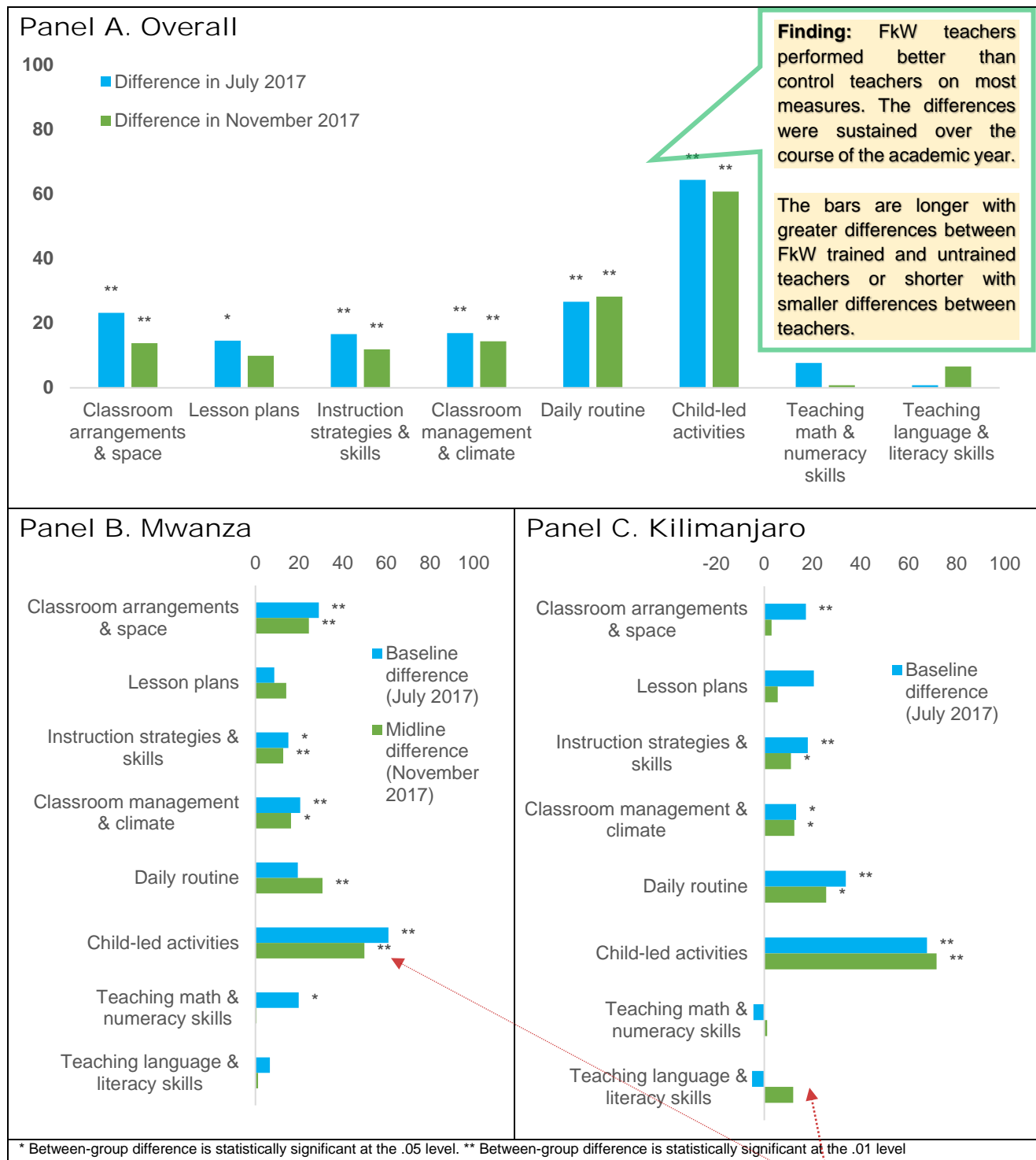
We conducted repeated classroom observations, following the same schools, in May and November 2017. Our sample included 81 randomly selected schools in Kilimanjaro and Mwanza regions. Schools were randomly assigned to the FkW intervention or the control group so that the study groups were similar on school-level characteristics before the intervention was implemented. We assessed 81 schools across Kilimanjaro and Mwanza. Of the 40 schools in Kilimanjaro, 20 schools were intervention and 20 control, while in Mwanza, of the 41 schools, 20 were intervention and 21 were control. We conducted extensive training to ensure that classroom observers completed the tool in a systematic manner and reached an interrater reliability score of 96 percent. We plan to observe these teachers two additional times in 2018 to understand how instructional practices change one year after FkW activities have wrapped up.

Results

We found that, although classrooms are severely overcrowded (especially in Mwanza), that teachers in FkW classrooms demonstrate stronger instructional practices than their counterparts in control schools. These differences have largely persisted over time, although with some small declines as control teachers improved their teaching practices and intervention teachers' held steady or dropped slightly. The following tables and figures include classroom observation results, overall and broken down by treatment status and region.

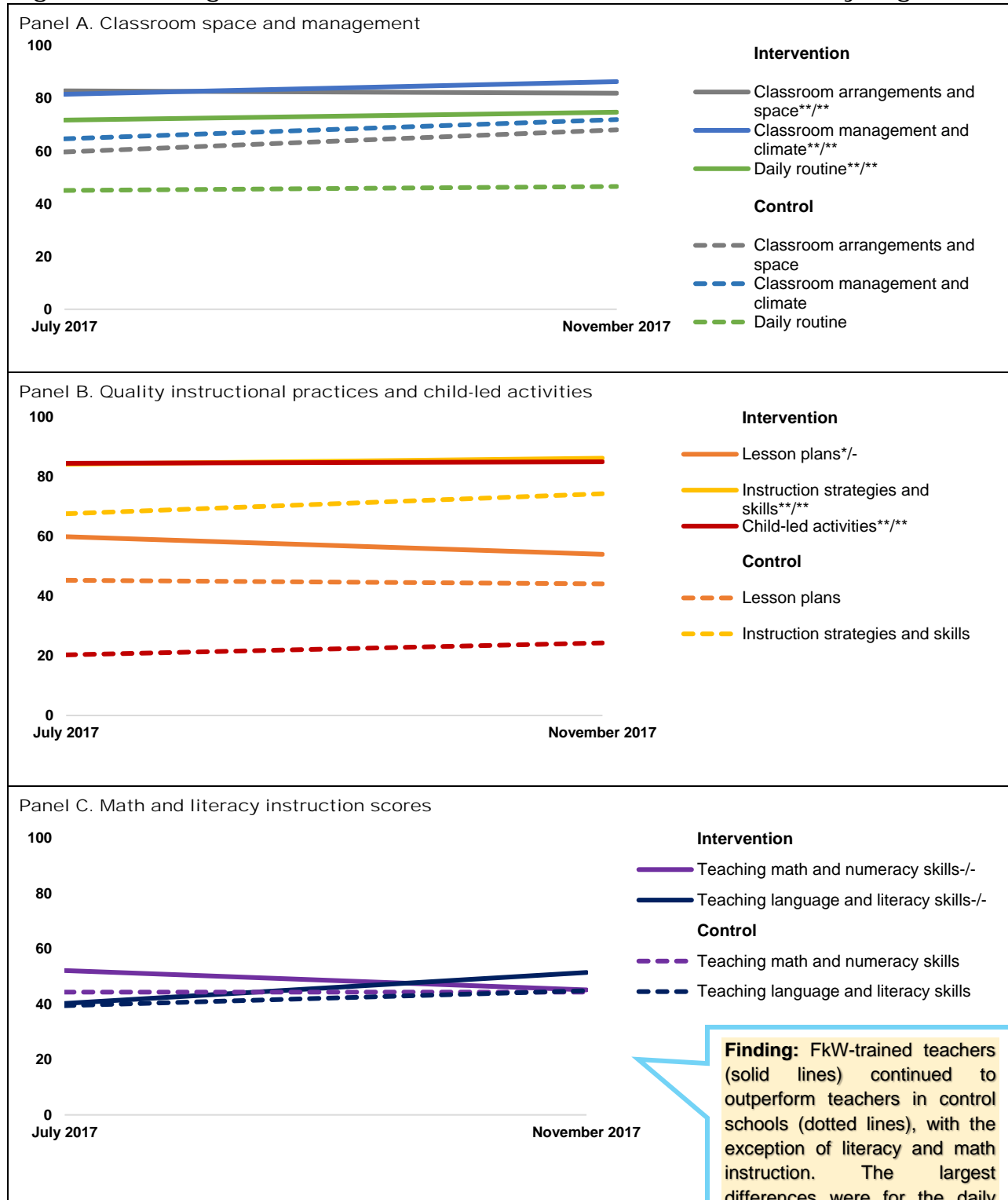
Figure 1. Sustainability of instructional practices

Figure 1. Sustainability of instructional practices over time



These bars show the *differences* between the intervention and comparison groups in the middle, and at the end of the academic year. Differences are statistically significant, if starred *.

Figure 2. Changes in teacher observation scores over time, by region



Source: Fursa kwa Watoto - Baseline and midline, July and November 2017

Figure 3. Changes in teacher observation scores over time, by region

