

Hilin Mu Program Evaluation Results – 2019-2021

Context: Niger has one of the world’s highest rates of early marriage, maternal mortality and lowest rates of female literacy. To address these challenges, the Hilin Mu program provides safe space clubs to girls enrolled in their last year of primary and first year of secondary school. The program helps to keep girls in school while building their literacy, numeracy and critical life skills, simultaneously helping to delay marriage.

Key Findings:

The following results were calculated using multilinear regression to analyze pre/post test data in literacy (referred to here as “French”) and math as well as school exam scores. Scores from Hilin Mu participants were compared with girls from control schools in Grades 5 and 6 (called CM2 and 6ieme in Niger)¹.

Literacy and math competency among participants was 23% and 27% higher than the comparison group after one year, respectively. This rose to 46% and 29% higher than the comparison group after two years.

Literacy and math skills are critical for both progressing in school, as well as for increasing girls’ ability to take advantage of economic opportunities after they leave school. Figure 1 shows the test scores for the intervention and comparison group after one year (including data for girls who started grade 5 (CM2), in 2019 and in 2020), with the first two bars depicting literacy (in French) and math. Figure 2 shows these same scores after two years (for girls who started grade 6, or 6ieme, in 2020). By the end of the first year, Hilin Mu participants saw an increase in literacy scores by 23% (2.4 points*) compared to the control group, and by 27% (2.7 points*) in math. By the end of the second year, Hilin Mu participants' scores increased 46% (3.3 points*) relative to the control group in French, and 29% (2.3 points*) in math (Figure 2). All results are statistically significant, as shown by the

Figure 1: Midline results – French & Math scores and school exam results in last year of primary school (Grade 5, or “CM2”)

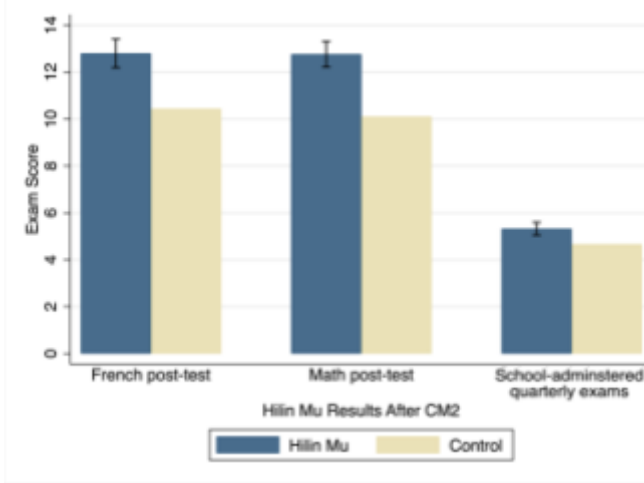
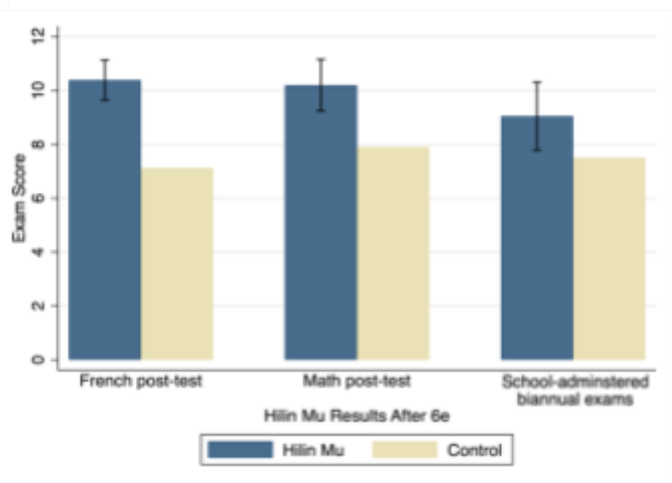


Figure 2: Endline results - French & Math scores and school exam results in first year of secondary school (Grade 6, or “6ieme”)



confidence interval at the top of the treatment bar of the graphs.

¹ In the Nigerien school system, CM2 is the final grade in primary school and is equivalent to the U.S.’ 5th grade. 6eme is the first grade in secondary school and is equivalent to the U.S.’s 6th grade.

*French and math scores are the averages of the post-tests administered by the program team; each subject is out of 20 points.

** Primary school exam scores reported by school districts (“Inspections”). This is the average of three exams taken over the course of the year; each exam is out of 10 points.

□ Improved test scores meant Hilin Mu participants were 13% more likely to pass their final year of primary and continue to secondary school.

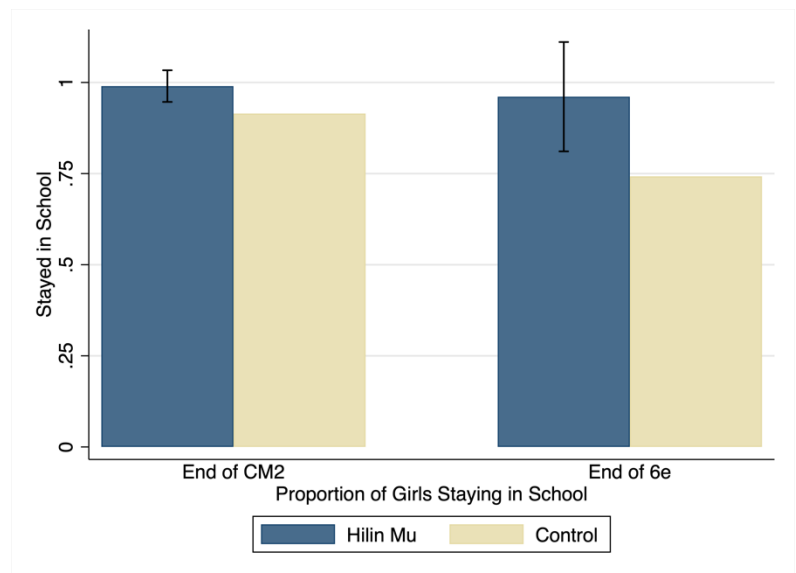
In Niger, students must achieve a minimum average exam score at the end of their final year in primary school in order to qualify to advance to secondary school. If they don’t, they have one chance to repeat the school year, or else they must drop out or enroll in private school (which is unaffordable for most). The third bar in figures 1 and 2 shows that exam scores – which were administered by the schools, not the program team – were 16% (0.75 points**) higher among participants than girls from the comparison group. This means that Hilin Mu participants were 13% more likely to pass grade 5 (CM2) and continue on to secondary school.

Hilin Mu increases girls’ likelihood of staying in school by close to 30% after two years.

Figure 3 shows that Hilin Mu participants were 7.5 percentage points more likely to still be in school at the end of grade 5 (CM2); 99% of participants had not dropped out compared to 91% of control girls. 40% of girls who completed one year of Hilin Mu programming did not score high enough on their exams to advance to secondary school and had to repeat their last year of primary, relative to 53% of comparison girls. Of these girls who had to repeat, the Hilin Mu participants were 20 percentage points more likely to still be in school at the end of the repeated year relative to comparison girls.

Figure 3: Proportion of girls staying in school

By the end of grade 6 (6ieme), for the girls who had progressed, the percent increase of staying in school rises to 22 percentage points. This is an increase of 30% relative to the control group girls still enrolled, or an increase from 74% to 96% of girls not marked as having dropped out. By looking at repeaters and those who progressed to 6th grade, we can estimate that there are roughly 128 girls (114 who progressed, and 14 repeaters) who would have dropped out between the beginning of 2019 and the end of 2021, but remained in school due to the Hilin Mu program, relative to the 594 total girls tracked over two years.



Challenges & Limitations:

Challenges faced during the evaluation included difficulty in reaching girls who had dropped out of school in order to test them, as well as the unreliability of certain data obtained from schools and school districts that we would have liked to have used in our matching process and analysis. The literacy and math pre/post tests were administered in schools to girls who were present. This means that girls who dropped out either by the end of grade 5 or the beginning or end of grade 6 were not captured. Because this was more common in control

schools, the sample size of girls for whom data was available was smaller, which may have led to underestimating the impact of the Hilin Mu program on participants because girls who dropped out may have been more likely to test poorly.

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