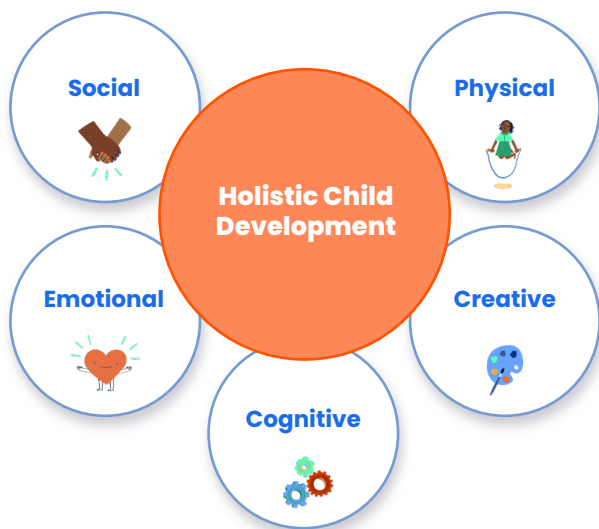


About PlayMatters

The PlayMatters initiative reimagines childhood for 800,000+ refugee and host community children across Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania whose education and social development have been affected by displacement and trauma. Building on the amazing resilience of children, PlayMatters is helping to cultivate holistic learning through play experiences for children aged 3-12+ for them to bounce back, recover, learn, and thrive.

This project will build children’s social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative skills, contributing to their long-term well-being, through play in their homes, schools, and communities.



PlayMatters is seeking to improve holistic learning outcomes by supporting learning through play pedagogies in educational settings, by supporting families to engage in playful interactions with children in the home, by advocating for policy change to integrate and strengthen learning through play into curriculum and training, and by working to bring refugee education and national education policy into alignment.

PlayMatters is being implemented by a consortium led by the International Rescue Committee, and includes Plan International, War Child Holland, Innovations for Poverty Action, and the Behavioural Insights Team in partnership with the LEGO Foundation.

The power of learning through play

Play is a natural state for children, who are curious to engage with and learn from the world around them, exploring and trying new things. Therefore, playful activities are a powerful vehicle through which children can develop a wide range of skills – cognitive, physical, creative, social, and emotional.

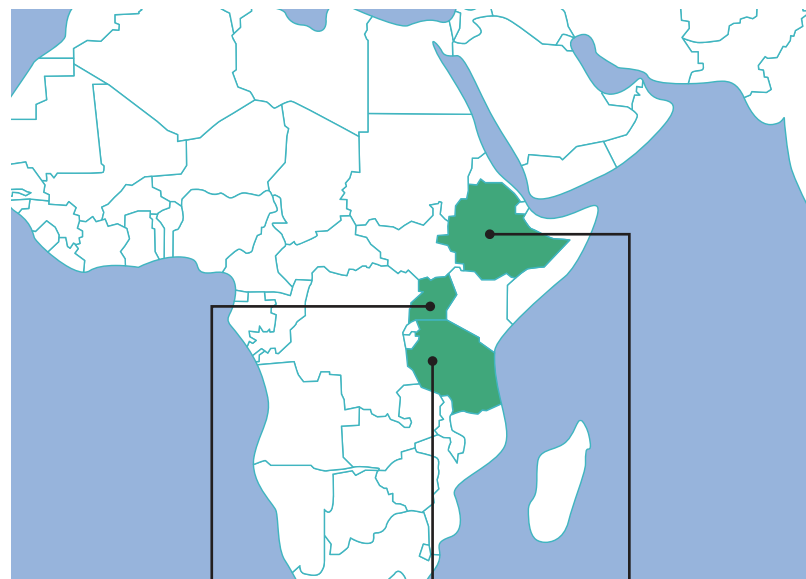
Although the term “learning through play” is open to a wide interpretation, the LEGO Foundation cites five characteristics of a playful activity: joyful, meaningful, iterative, social, and actively engaging.






We are primarily working with teachers, facilitators, and other educators in promoting the integration of learning through play in early childhood development centers as well as primary schools. This is following a technical assistance approach designed to integrate learning through play within the existing curriculum and education systems.

We are also working with caregivers, community leaders and system actors in children’s lives to transform everyday interactions into learning opportunities and for the integration of learning through play teaching methodologies in the ecosystem surrounding children.

Where we are implementing



- 
Uganda
 Kyegegwa, Isingiro, Kikuube, Lamwo, Arua, Madi Okollo, Terego, Obongi, Yumbe, & Adjumani Districts.
- 
Tanzania
 Kasulu, Kibondo & Kakonko Districts.
- 
Ethiopia
 Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella, Afar, Tigray & Somali Regional States.

50% of the refugees in PlayMatters countries of implementation are **children below 18**. Many of them spend their entire childhood living as refugees.

Our content development process

The PlayMatters consortium is following a built-test-learn approach to content development, to create user-generated and centered content to foster learning through play. Our process is guided by the stages outlined below:

Behavioural mapping

We spoke to educators, parents, caregivers, and community leaders in the three countries to better understand their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs towards learning through play.

Content, prototyping and piloting

Using the insights from the behavioural mapping process, we formed content development committees. These committees are drafting content ideas on incorporating learning through play and took them back to educators, caregivers, and the community to find out if they are feasible, and desirable.

This content will continuously be refined following a build-test-learn approach throughout our second year of implementation.

The final product will be the PlayMatters core package, which will include teacher professional development materials, teaching and learning resources, toy making guides, audio programs, and more. This will be scaled up to reach many more learners over the life of the project and beyond.

The PlayLibrary

This content will be housed in our PlayLibrary, an organized collection of online and open sourced content to foster learning through play activities.

Fun facts about the PlayLibrary

It will guide and support children, teachers, and caregivers on their play-based learning adventure.

Content in the PlayLibrary will be designed to be accessed and used in early childhood development centers, primary schools, alternative learning centers, in the community, and at home.

It will facilitate play-based learning for children and support the emotional wellbeing of the educators, caregivers and others delivering it.

Monitoring, evaluation & research

The PlayMatters consortium has set in place a robust mechanism to monitor the impact of the initiative on children's holistic development and wellbeing following our theory of change assumptions. These assumptions track the outputs of our learning through play activities, their early and intermediate outcomes, and our overall outcome of improved holistic learning of children while improving educator, child, and caregiver wellbeing.

A central feature of our theory of change is our belief that strengthening the skills, resources, and motivation of the adults who interact with children will lead to behavior change in the use of learning through play practices in their interactions. This will then result in improved holistic learning outcomes and wellbeing.

We are also conducting research to contribute to the growing knowledge base on the impact on learning through play approaches with educators, caregivers, and system actors on children's holistic learning outcomes and wellbeing. This research covers cross cutting themes like gender, inclusion, and protection.

PlayMatters COVID-19 response

Soon after the consortium started laying the foundation of the project in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. Learners in Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania were affected by school closures and educational calendars were disrupted.

In order to support national efforts in providing alternative learning at home, we developed and launched a family-friendly home learning program to engage children in educational play which mitigates stress and learning loss.

- This was through interactive learning packets in 18 languages which are making reading, math and socio-emotional learning activities fun for the whole family.

- The learning program also included airing radio shows in 8 languages to complement the packets. Both the packets and radio shows promoted COVID-19 safety, health and hygiene messages.

Over 100,000 children in Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania benefitted from this response.



For more information, please contact:

PlayMatters Regional Office

Plot 8, Lower Naguru East Road, Kampala, Uganda
+256 (0) 394 822 224, +256 (0) 200 900 697

Mike Mina (Communications Focal Person)

Email: Mike.Mina@rescue.org
www.rescue.org/playmatters

In partnership with



The LEGO Foundation