

### PlayMatters Ethiopia has Celebrated the International Day of Play 2025 at National Level Featuring a Vibrant Exhibition, Engaging Conference and Insightful Panel Discussion.



Launching event of the International Play Day June 2025

PlayMatters Ethiopia marked the International Day of Play 2025 with a vibrant national celebration held from June 10th to 11th at Kotebe University of Education (KUE) in Addis Ababa. Themed “Choose Play – Every Day,” the event brought together more than 150 participants, including representatives from government institutions, academia, civil society organizations, development partners, pre-primary schoolteachers and children.

The conference officially opened with keynote speeches from higher government officials: Her Excellency Hikima Keyiredin, State Minister of the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA); His Excellency Dr. Tola Bariso, Head of the Oromia Education Bureau; Paolo Cernuschi, Country Director of the International Rescue Committee (IRC); Peter

Sweetnam, Country Director of Plan International Ethiopia; and Dr. Berhanemeskel Tena, President of Kotebe University of Education. In their addresses, the speakers underscored the transformative role of play in fostering creativity, enhancing psychosocial well-being, advancing inclusive education, and supporting equitable learning outcomes for all children.

The two-day celebration featured a national conference, interactive exhibitions, and live demonstrations of Six-bricks play, locally produced educational materials, and innovative child-centered literacy and numeracy games were showcased. PlayMatters Ethiopia, Save the Children, Right to Play, CDRT, Guwara No. 2 Primary School, and Biru Tesfa Pre-primary School exhibited their contributions, adding vibrant.....

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# Staff Meeting is Conducted Focusing on Impactful Y3 Project Implementation, Timely Procurements, Distribution of TLMs, and Smooth Project Transition Activities.

PlayMatters has conducted internal staff meeting with field office team and outcome leads focusing on year 3 implementation, timely procurements and distributions of TLMs from June 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>. The meeting marked a pivotal moment for the project as it enters its final year of implementation, with a strong focus on sustaining impact and ensuring a smooth transition and closeout of intervention schools to government and refugee systems.

The meeting was officially opened by Dr. Miressa Yadessa, PlayMatters Project Coordinator at IRC, who emphasized the strategic importance of the gathering. He underscored the need for strong field-level ownership and maximum effort to



Presentations by Field teams

challenges, prioritized upcoming deliverables based on their significance to project outcomes, and aligned planned activities with the academic calendar. A key area of focus was the practical planning for item forecasting, uploading, and procurement of Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs), as well as their timely distribution to field offices.

The event also featured strategic discussions on RMEL activities, project reporting and documentation, and updates on communication and visibility initiatives. The meeting concluded with shared commitments, clear action points, and a renewed sense of energy to drive quality implementation during this critical final year of the PlayMatters project.



Opening remarks by Dr. Miressa

ensure that Year 3 objectives, including transition and close-out activities are clearly understood and successfully executed to ensure the lasting integration of Learning through Play (LTP) in schools.

Over the course of the three days, outcome leads facilitated sessions that reviewed technical monitoring feedback from regional program teams and addressed challenges encountered during field implementations. Each field team then discussed strategies to overcome these



Field teams in group work



Conference Participants Visiting Children's Live Shows

elements to the event.

In the academic segment of the event, scholars, education experts, and partner organizations presented research papers and held reflective discussions on the implementation of play-based learning. They focused on key topics such as best practices, sustainability strategies, and challenges in mainstreaming Learning through Play across the Ethiopian education system.



Children's Demonstrating Live Shows and Various Games



Senior Government Officials and Invited Guests Exploring PlayMatters' Games and Activities Prepared by Various Partners

Looking ahead, Kotebe University of Education expressed a strong interest in partnering with PlayMatters Ethiopia to establish a model Learning through Play (LtP) school in Addis Ababa. This initiative aims to provide a practical foundation for scaling up play-based learning in early childhood and primary education across the country.



## “Meet our field staff”

**A**bdisalam Farah Aden, a 31-year-old education and humanitarian professional from Heragel town in Awbare Woreda, Somali Region, has built a career rooted in service, learning, and resilience. Growing up in a family that emphasized compassion and the value of education, Abdisalam took his first steps in schooling in Heragel before moving to Jigjiga—where he continues to live with his family—to pursue further education.

With a BA and a master’s degree in Educational Planning and Management from Jigjiga University, Abdisalam has translated academic excellence into practical impact. His journey in the humanitarian and development sectors spans over 13 years, including seven years with the International Rescue Committee (IRC). From serving as an Education Assistant in Awbare Refugee Camp to taking on leadership roles such as Acting Camp Manager in Sheder and Emergency Education Officer, each step has deepened his commitment to education in crisis contexts.

Since joining the PlayMatters project in Jigjiga, Abdisalam describes his experience as both professionally enriching and personally transformative. Learning through play (LtP), especially in displacement-affected communities, has reinforced his belief in child-centered, inclusive education.

“ Promoting play-based learning in these settings has not just supported children—it has reshaped how I view education altogether, ”

Abdiselam reflects.

Before IRC, Abdisalam spent six years at the Jigjiga Woreda Education Office, serving in supervisory and leadership positions. Across every role, his work has been guided by principles of compassion, accountability, and neutrality. Challenges have been part of the journey—particularly supporting children affected by trauma—but community engagement and a strong value system have helped him turn these difficulties into learning opportunities.

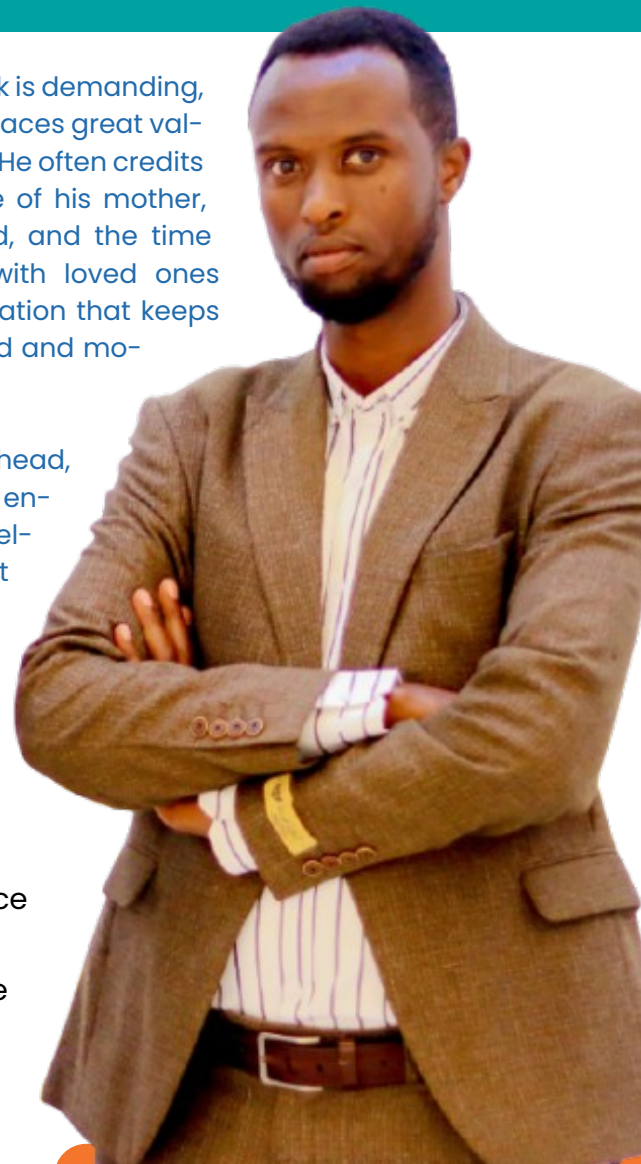
While his work is demanding, Abdisalam places great value on family. He often credits the presence of his mother, Aisha Ahmed, and the time he spends with loved ones as the foundation that keeps him balanced and motivated.

Looking ahead, Abdisalam encourages fellow project workers and humanitarians to

“ Remain passionate, embrace learning, support one another, and always stay focused on the impact

of your work. With patience and teamwork, we can overcome challenges and create lasting change.

For Abdisalam, true change doesn’t come from grand gestures, but from consistent actions guided by strong values.



**Abdiselam Farah Aden**



# IDOP celebrations at Field level with students and the various community members



Gambella field Office versus Shire Field Office





# IDOP celebrations at Field level ...



Melkadida Field Office

versus

Benishangul Field Office





# IDOP celebrations at Field level ...



Afar Field Office