

ET-PlayMatters Quarterly Newsletter 7th Edition

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PlayMatters

Sparking Lifelong Learning Through Play



ET-PM Hosts Project Steering Committee Meeting in Addis Ababa.

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ET-PM Hosts Project Steering Committee Meeting in Addis Ababa.

The PlayMatters Ethiopia consortium convened a strategic 3-day event in Addis Ababa from April 27th to 29th 2026, bringing together Senior Management members from the Regional Program Team, and technical experts across the program in Ethiopia. The event encompassed two focused activities: a workshop by RMEAL centered on reviewing PM 2.0 project progress, refining key performance indicators, and socializing senior regional program team members with the country team; and a Steering Committee meeting designed to support the upcoming PM 3.0 launch and provide a comprehensive briefing following the Regional Program Team (RPT) field visit.

Discussions opened with a comprehensive review of evidence and lessons from PM 2.0, implemented between 2020 and 2026 in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania. Findings presented by the PM-RMEAL team highlighted that the project not only exceeded its targets, reaching over 950 thousand children, but also demonstrated measurable improvements in holistic learning outcomes and psychosocial wellbeing. The integration of LtP within formal education systems further reinforced the model's effectiveness and sustainability potential. These results offered strong evidence

and generated momentum to expand LtP implementation at a broader scale through new and innovative approaches under PM 3.0.

Building on this foundation, participants explored the design and priorities of PM 3.0, with a clear emphasis on sustainability through localization and strengthened system ownership. Sessions focused on refining operational frameworks, including partner selection and onboarding, accountability mechanisms, and ensuring alignment across consortium members and regional teams. The importance of transparent partnerships and coordinated implementation emerged as central to achieving scale.

PM 3.0 is set to run from July 2026 to September 2030 across Ethiopia, Uganda, and South Sudan and implemented by a consortium of the International Rescue Committee, Plan International, and War Child Alliance. The program seeks to expand access to safe, inclusive, and quality education in crisis-affected settings, with strengthened focus on disability inclusion and Education in Emergencies to broaden reach and ensure learning continuity. The upcoming official launching of PM 3.0 marks a shared commitment to embedding LtP within national systems and delivering sustained, large-scale impact for children affected by crisis.



Presentation on major activities of PM 3.0, Addis Abab, 2026

Highlights of Quarter 4 and PM 2.0 Project Closing Phase Activities.

Strengthening the Integration of LtP in Colleges of Teachers Education.

Efforts to advance the integration of Learning through Play (LtP) within pre-primary teacher education centers are gaining momentum through coordinated capacity building initiatives across Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs). These initiatives are strengthening instructional capacity at college, district, and school levels, while reinforcing the integration of play-based pedagogy into pre-service teacher training systems.

Delivered jointly by the PlayMatters technical team and Kotebe University of Education, targeted LtP training programs for teacher education colleges were given in alignment with the national education standards. These training efforts are part of the project's broader policy engagement strategy, fostering government ownership and supporting the scaling of LtP integration. Such integrated approaches with higher educational institutions are essential for embedding LtP within formal teacher education frameworks, ensuring consistency as well as long-term sustainability in its implementation.

At the same time, Resource Centers within Colleges of Teacher Education are emerging as key drivers of sustainable LtP implementation. Through targeted technical support and the provision of teaching and learning materials, these centers have significantly improved in functionality and relevance. Their growing use by instructors and trainees reflects their expanding role as hubs for professional learning, pedagogical innovation, and practical skill development.

Complementing these efforts, teacher education institutions and partner schools are increasingly promoting the development and use of locally sourced TLMs, enhancing contextual relevance and cost effectiveness. Colleges engaged with the PlayMatters project over the past 3 years are now extending resource center services to surrounding schools, signaling an expanded role as both training institutions and practical platforms for advancing LtP beyond the college setting. Overall, such developments represent a significant step toward embedding LtP within the nation's teacher education system, ensuring that future educators are equipped to deliver engaging, inclusive, and effective learning experiences.



CTE Instructors on training, Jigjiga field office, 2026



Building School Leadership and Teacher Capacity to Embed LtP in Everyday Learning.

PlayMatters Ethiopia provided a comprehensive portfolio of capacity building initiatives targeting both the school leadership and teaching staff, with a strategic focus on institutionalizing Learning through Play (LtP) within everyday instructional practice.

By the end of the 4th quarter, approximately 800 teachers were trained and actively engaged in school leadership practices and implementation of the continuous professional development activities, strengthening the practical integration of LtP approaches which further enhances the competencies of both educators and school leaders.

The training sessions were strategically designed to promote participatory, learner centered pedagogical approaches....



LtP refresher training , 2026

Press to read more...

Experience Sharing Platforms Deepen Contextualized Learning and Strengthen School Leaders' Ownership of LtP Integration.

A landmark experience sharing forum convened over 170 school leaders, creating a dynamic platform not only for reflection on implementation progress and challenges, but also for grounding Learning through Play (LtP) approaches within the realities of diverse school contexts.

Participants who provided feedback to the PM project team highlighted that the exchange of practical, experience driven insights on lesson planning, classroom lessons delivery, including seating arrangements and overall classroom management, enabled them to effectively translate theoretical concepts into contextually relevant practices aligned with their school realities.



School Leaders training on LtP Melkadida, 2026

Press to read more...





...Building School Leadership and Teacher Capacity to Embed LtP in Everyday Learning.

with a strong emphasis on the active use of the 6-Bricks and other locally made teaching materials into the classroom lessons. These interventions have contributed to enhanced learner engagement, strengthened inclusive practices, and more dynamic learning environments, evidencing tangible improvements in both instructional quality and student participation.

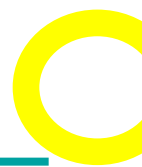
Moreover, trainings on school leadership and Teacher Continuous Professional Development (TCPD) were delivered to head teachers and lead teachers. These sessions deepened instructional leadership skills and were enriched by structured experience sharing sessions including peer learning practices, allowing school leaders to exchange insights, reflect on implementation challenges, and collectively strengthen their role in sustaining LtP within their schools.

Educators and school leaders are increasingly stepping beyond their roles as implementers, emerging as committed champions who carry the ownership and responsibility to sustain play-based learning in daily practice. Collectively, these capacity building initiatives are designed to drive long-term, lasting impact on the implementation of LtP.

...Experience-Sharing Platforms Deepen Contextualized Learning and Strengthen School Leaders' Ownership of LtP Integration.

Majority of the experience sharing participants indicated that this process deepened their understanding of LtP, strengthened their sense of collective ownership, and reinforced a shared commitment to sustained implementation of LtP, ultimately contributing to improved lesson delivery and overall education quality.

Building on this momentum, a 2-day Technical System Strengthening Workshop convened nearly 100 TCPD leads from graduate schools. The workshop enabled school leaders to revisit core LtP strategies and refine their implementation approaches, while reflecting on activities undertaken during the current academic year. Participants also identified key gaps and developed practical, time-bound action plans for the months ahead. It is expected that these efforts will strengthen school leaders' capacity to sustainably implement professional development activities and integrate LtP as a central element of everyday classroom practice.



Meet Our Staffs

Dejene Tirusew is a Project Manager with Plan International Ethiopia, a role shaped by eight years of steady growth and commitment across different capacities.

Since 2020, he has led the PlayMatters project with a clear sense of purpose, guiding teams and supporting implementation across diverse contexts. For Dejene, education is not only about access, but also it is about experience, and more importantly, about how children feel while learning.

His connection to Learning through Play deepened as he witnessed its effect firsthand. In classrooms where silence once dominated, he began to see energy, curiosity, and participation. For Dejene, play is not a break from learning, it is the method itself.

“It is not just about improving learning outcomes, it is about shaping the whole child.” he explains,

This belief has anchored his work, influencing how he plans, leads, and evaluates progress across the project.

One moment that stayed with him occurred during a routine school visit. A teacher, initially hesitant and agreed to try a simple play-based activity. After a week practice he meet with the teacher again and asked about the progress he observed while implementing LtP. The teacher replied that students who rarely engaged became active participants, solving problems together and laughing freely. The teacher paused, watching closely, then smiled and admitted, “They are learning faster this way.”

For Dejene, it was a quiet but powerful shift, proof that sometimes the most effective changes in classroom comes not from one way direct instruction, but from simple ways of lesson delivery which are engaging and participatory.

Yet his journey has also been marked by demanding challenges. There were times when multiple responsibilities collided, tight donor deadlines, coordination across teams, and the pressure to deliver quality results under constraints.

However, Dejene always prefer to stick to his carefully set planning and excute them in a timely fashion rather than being nervous with routine works. At the core of his work is a simple principle; - be committed, plan properly, and deliver on time. These are not just professional habits; they are the foundation of how he navigates complexity. He broke down complex demands into manageable actions, empowered his team, and ensured consistent follow-up. Through this, what could have been overwhelming became achievable.

At the same time, he recognizes that performance is sustained by balance. By prioritizing his wellbeing and making space for personal life, he maintains the clarity and energy his role demands. For him, balance is not a luxury; it is essential to staying effective and grounded.

When reflecting on his journey, Dejene often turns to the future rather than the past. He encourages colleagues to remain dedicated, even when challenges arise, because the impact of Learning through Play is long-term and deeply transformative.

“What we are building does not always show immediately, but it lasts.” he says,

At this point, he just keeps going, quietly doing the work, shaping systems, supporting those around him, and helping build spaces where children don't just learn, but feel involved and inspired.

Photo News



IDE celebration and Midyear-Back to school campaign, 2026



Photo News



LtP training for CTE instructors on pre-primary and primary education, 2026



Photo News



RMEAL workshop and Project steering committee meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 2026



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