

PlayMatters

Policy Impact Story

Uganda | 2024



The Story

How PlayMatters Uganda influenced the Second Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Community in Uganda (ERPii) to prioritize the application of Learning Through Play as an Education Innovative.

In partnership with



The LEGO Foundation

The Change

The ERPII is a comprehensive plan by Government of Uganda to mobilize resources and coordinate efforts that cater for the provision of education services for refugees and their host communities. The plan costed at USD 450, aims at enabling over 674,895 refugee children ever year access quality education services over the period FY22/23 to FY24/25. The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports in her acknowledgment appreciated the technical and financial support by UN agencies, PlayMatters and IRC as “instrumental in the development of the plan”.

The ERPII, addresses the underlying challenges of an inadequate system readiness to host and full accommodate the ever-increasing numbers of refugees that has attributed to crowded classes, increasing attrition of teachers, increased school dropouts, and violence against children in school among others.

A critical learning by the Humanitarian Education Accelerator programme by UNHCR funded by Education Can't Wait (ECW) observes that the lack of “longer term funding for the development of components that ensure sustainable and efficient scaling of an intervention, innovations are often incentivized to move into new contexts”. In addition to providing a framework and scope of work, the plan is a resource mobilization tool. The plan identified PlayMatters and ECW as critical long-term funding opportunities. As an extract (of priorities) of the ERPII, the Ministry designed a second Multi-year Resilience Plan (MyRPii). Through the MyRP funding window, the ECW invests in countries affected by conflict and protracted crisis. Uganda successfully secured the second ECW seed fund as a critical long term funding opportunity.

As part of the plan implementation, the most recent financial tracking (draft report before Steering committee for approval) observes the significant increase in funding particularly by government through programmes such UGIFT, UTSEP etc. It is critical to observe this in the context of the ever-increasing influx of refugee. Uganda is home to more than 1.5M refugees and asylum seekers from the countries within the region particularly DRC, South Sudan, Sudan and Ethiopia. A total of USD 107M in only 1 and half years of the ERPII compared to USD 123M for the entire 3 and half years of ERPI. Additionally, a key change is the prioritization of ECCE by the plan. The report records an increased funding for early childhood education of refugees by partners.

The plan is cognizant of the high reliance on partners to deliver EiE, however government engagement and partnerships are critical for scaling the different education innovations such LTP being promoted by PlayMatters Consortium. The ERPII provided improved structural arrangements and mechanisms of governance and coordination at all levels through the district ERP steering committee and partnership forum (such as EiE working group).

What did PlayMatters do to make this change happen?

At the core of PlayMatters strategy is engagement with Government and partnerships. From the inception/ launch of PlayMatters by the Minister, the project has nurtured cordial working relationship with the MoES particularly the Basic Education Department that oversees ERP Secretariat. A critical learning on managing engagements is the challenge associated with navigating influence versus interests of government entities exasperated by the inadequate funding, challenges of coordination and collaborations for the integrated delivery of services and the associated big problems facing education (see World Bank Blog).

At the start of project, PlayMatters supported government of Uganda respond to EiE challenges associated with the Covid19 pandemic and lockdown. The home learning packets for continued learning, school readiness after uplifting of the lockdowns, and refresher training of teachers. This all took place during the bridging period between ERPi and EPRII. The consortium was part and parcel of the development of the ERPII (the Plan). This included the provision of technical consultant that drafted the plan. Which recognizes the tool as not only a framework for services delivery but also as a resource mobilizing tool.

Regarding fund raising for EiE, PlayMatters has supported the implementation of the secretariat's fund-raising initiatives including institutionalization of a resource mobilization task team, finance tracking, and campaigns to expand funding commitments. Finance tracking is one key activity by the secretariat, deliberately conducted to assess financing status of EiE. The Consortium has ensured full support and cooperation to the exercise. Early Childhood Care and Education in Emergency (ECCEiE) received greater prioritization in ERPII, this is a critical learning that has been observed globally and locally. In addition to being part of the team that informed the prioritization of ECCEiE in the plan, the project has provided technical support in the form of Policy and Advisor to the ERP secretariat, with great emphasis on ECCE. The project is part of the core task team that support the newly created ECCEiE task team.

The PlayMatters project' implementation address the core priorities of the ERP which is a significant contribution to the achievements of the ERPII Objectives. The project is implemented in 9 of the 12 Refugee Hosting Districts of Uganda. As of July 2024 UNHCR Dashbaord, PlayMatters' reach of learners represents over 67% of the total refugee learners in preprimary and primary.

How Long did this Take?

The development of ERPII (FY22/23–24/25), which is a succession of ERPi (FY18/19 –20/21) was severely interrupted by the two country-wide Covid19 pandemic Lockdown, particularly in 2020 and 2021. However, the process was completed and launched in retrospect by the Minister of Education in May 2023.

Other Partners and Institutions Engaged

PlayMatters has nurtured a cordial working relationship with MoES as a key ally and partner to integrate LtP in key policies and systems, and champion partnerships for LtP. Particularly, the Department of Basic Education including the ERP Secretariat, and Teacher Education Training and Development. Besides, PlayMatters has worked closely with Directorate of Education Standards, and National Curriculum Development Center especially content co-creation.

PlayMatters has cooperated closely with UNHCR, Office of Prime Minister and Settlement command in coordinating implementation and compliance with the ERPii document and refugee response coordination mechanisms.

Rate the Contribution to this Change

High – It is hard to talk of ERP in Uganda and not mention PlayMatters achievements in the discussion.

What is the Potential Impact of this Change?

Documented learnings by UNHCR on scaling and sustainability of education innovations such as Learning through Play, observe the need for government engagement, partnership, longer-term funding, programme contextual adaptation, evidence expansion, and appropriate scaling strategy. PlayMatters is proud to recognize that all the above learnings are part of the project implementation and that the ERPii has provided the necessary enabling environment of partners to thrive.

Over 67% of the refugee children in preprimary and primary schools are benefiting from the PlayMatters Project. Evidence shows that the kind of interventions by PlayMatters is addressing key learning outcomes issues associated with issues challenging teachers, schooling and learning environments, functionality of School Management Committee (SMC), Continuous Professional Development Committee (CPD), and Community and parent engagement.

The changes made in ERPii are of high impact and responding to challenges & learnings made in ERPi.



What is the Evidence of this Contribution?

The ERPII has an observed increase in financing of EiE particularly government commitment, and a greater prioritization of ECCE. Despite the fact that the ERPII falls short by USD 72M of the costing model for the first one and half years, the financing tracking observed a significant financial contribution by Government to EiE i.e. \$54M compared to the \$52M by partners. Additionally, the report observes a significant government expenditure on recurrent wage i.e. \$22.3M in Jan-Jun 22, to \$33.6M in FY22/23.

Regarding ECCE, government expenditure is limited by Educ Act. The report further observed that despite the fact partner expenditure by level of education is below the costing model projects, it was notable that partner prioritization and therefore expenditure on ECCE is much appreciated i.e. a notable \$4.36M was invested in ECCE in FY22/23.

There is not better acknowledgment of PlayMatters contribution towards the development of ERPII than that by Permanent Secretary of MoES. PlayMatters footprint is all over the ERPII document and its implementation. In addition to the several mentions of PlayMatters and IRC in the ERP document, the provision of P&A Advisor to the secretariat is continuous presence of PlayMatters in ERPII and in MoES but also an in-house lobby for PlayMatters' awareness and participation in key processes and opportunities to flag LTP.

The EiE Working Group is key partner engagement platform for coordinating EiE in Uganda. PlayMatters is a member to the Working Group (EiEWG) as a consortium and individually all partners are members/ participate in the monthly meeting. However, regarding the mission to influence the integration of LTP in key policies and system, PlayMatters is strategically member to several task team such as the Information Management Task Team etc. Regarding the championing of LTP integration, the project has been key in the proposals and setting up of following task teams such as 1. Teacher Management Task Team, 2. ECCEiE Task Team, 3. and Innovative Pedagogies Task Team.

Last but most importantly is that ERP Secretariat has been part of the content co-creation of Learning through Play.

Who Benefits?

The actors within the social-ecological environment of the child especially the learner will stand to benefit the most from this change.

Learner: experiences a better schooling and learning environment, with learner-centered responses.

Schools (preprimary and primary): functional school management and administration equipped to apply education innovations such as the application of LTP in teaching and learning processes.

Community and Parents: strengthened relationships between schools

and out-of-school community engagement, better learning outcomes for children. Local Governments: increased access/enrolment, retention and completion, and better achievement/performance of learners.

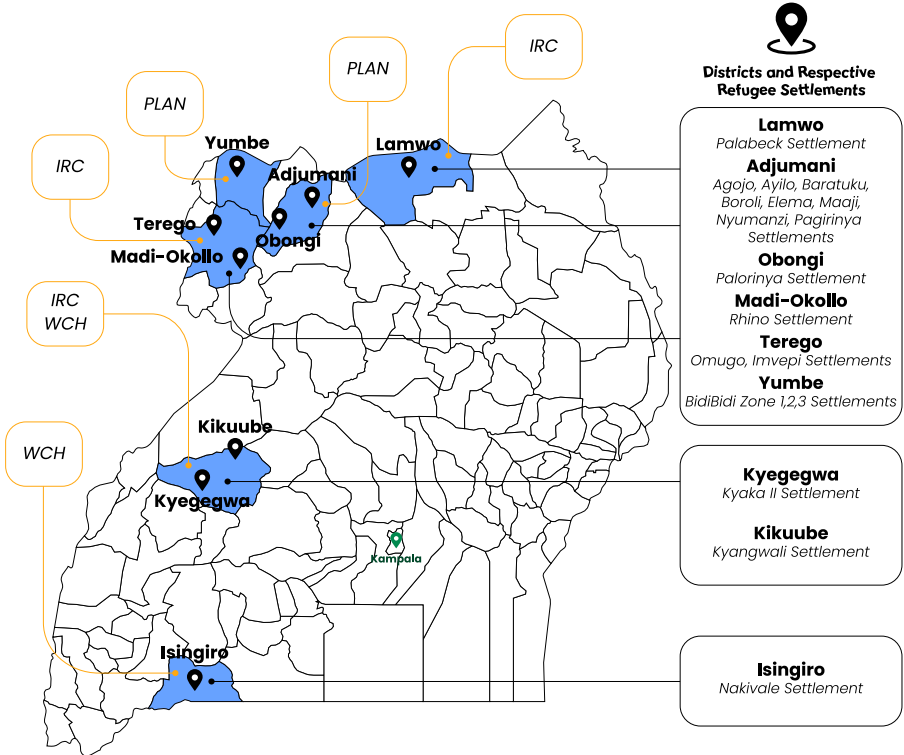
Ministry of Education and Sports: strengthened system for the coordination and delivery of education for refugees.

What's Next:

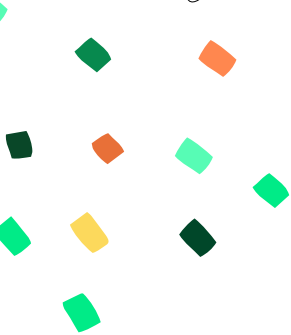
The ERPII is particular for the period of FY2022/23 to FY2024/25, however it's a reflection of government's commitment to expand access to education by refugees with support from UNHCR and education partners. The ERP is implemented in accordance with the government cycles and National Development Plan. It is therefore PlayMatters' Uganda policy priority that Learning through Play is integrated in key education policies and adapted by EiE Partners' programming. Therefore, PlayMatters' intends to:

- ✓ Participate in all EiE coordination and partnership fora, but more particular promote LtP through key task teams, EiE working group and settlement education cluster.
- ✓ Support the functionality of targeted/mapped coordination and partner engagement platforms and strengthen linkages with systems and coordination of EiE in Uganda.
- ✓ Establish Partnerships with EiE Partners especially coordination, collaboration and integrated services delivery at school level.
- ✓ Flag EiE issues in mainstream sectoral policies and program such as teacher attrition, equating of teacher qualification to secure licensing to teacher in Uganda etc.

Uganda



International Rescue Committee (IRC)
Plan International (PLAN)
War Child Holland (WCH)





For more information, please contact:

PlayMatters Regional Office,
Plot 8, Lower Naguru East Road, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256 (0) 394 822 224, +256 (0) 200 900 697
www.playmatters.org

