

PlayMatters

Policy Impact Story

Uganda | 2024



The Story

How PlayMatters Consortium collaborated with the Ministry of Education and Sports to establish and coordinate the Learning through Play Community of Practice in Uganda as a platform to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices.

In partnership with



The LEGO Foundation

The Change

A formative study by PlayMatters shows that “parents and children did not view play as a learning approach but as activities for relaxation and enjoyment. However, most of the educators and school leaders perceived play as relaxing the minds and for explaining difficult concepts. In essence, this understanding shows that play is viewed as a learning approach”.

In 2022, it was observed that, over 17 organizations were implementing play-based projects funded by LEGO Foundation in Uganda. As a result, PlayMatters Consortium (PC) and Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) observed the need to harmonize the implementation of Learning through Play (LtP) in Uganda. The PlayMatters Consortium in collaboration with the MoES facilitated the establishment of a Uganda Learning through Play Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP is chaired by the MoES with PM Uganda as the Secretariat. The LtP CoP is guided by 3 overarching objectives:

- ✓ Sharing knowledge, experiences, and best practices;
- ✓ Leverage resources for effective and efficient implementation of LtP interventions; and
- ✓ Influence policy makers to integrate LtP in key education policies and systems such as the ECCE Policy of 2024.

The CoP adopted the definition of Learning through Play as designed by the LtP content co-creation team comprising of PC and MoES technical experts. Learning through Play (LtP) is an active teaching and learning method that capitalizes on a child’s natural desire to engage in play.

The CoP has four functional task teams, based on core thematic areas necessary for the integration and application of LtP: Teacher Professional Development; Community and Parenting engagement; Quality and Standards; Research and Innovation; and Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning. The CoP has over 28 members, organized into four task teams with terms of reference. The task teams are chaired by MoES departments with statutory mandate to provide overall leadership and technical guidance in the thematic areas. The task teams are co-chaired by an implementing partner and each task team has a learning agenda.

What is the Potential Impact of this Change?

The CoP has been able to create greater cohesion among LtP partners, and harmonization in delivery strategy in Uganda. The community was instrumental, in mobilizing partners to joint activities such as the National Play Day and International Day of Play. This resulted in greater visibility (which brings actors together to share experiences, learnings and knowledge) and commitment from the government.

What did PlayMatters do to make this change happen?

The MoES in partnership with PC engaged MoES Departments and Agencies to orient them on their leadership role of task teams. The CoP working with the departments and agencies coordinates the mobilization of partners to attend task team meetings, annex 1.

The project also held engagements with key strategic partners i.e. World Vision, Save the Children International, BRAC, UNICEF, VVOB. Besides engaging strategic partners, the secretariat mobilized and profiled partner members. The community was central in mobilizing partners to the national play day (30th May 2024) and all preceding regional activations. The community has built a culture of learning through sharing of resources/materials, learnings and experiences during task team meetings. The sharing of learning and knowledge and experiences is based on the learning agenda of each task team.

Other Partners and Institutions Engaged

The Community is a collaboration between MoES and implementing partners. In consideration of the four task teams, the key Ministry departments PlayMatters engaged were Basic Education, Teacher Education, Directorate of Education Standards, Education Policy Research and Innovations. However, PlayMatters engaged other departments in participating in the task teams. Alongside the departments, are the 28 member partners of the community. Most notable, PlayMatters has held deliberate engagements with UNICEF, BRAC, World Vision, LABE, Save the Children, Child Fund, Right to Play among others.

What is the Evidence of this Contribution?

The Community of Practice has adapted the PlayMatters Learning through Play definition which did not exist. The Community has an adopted terms of reference and learning agenda for each task team. Increased membership from an initial about 10 mins to over 28 members of the community is a testament to the increased visibility. PlayMatters has profiled members of the community, and these enabled the mobilization of partners at National Play Day.

How Long did this Take?

The community of practice was established in 2022 and has been ongoing since then.

Rate the Contribution to this Change

PlayMatters collaborated with Basic Education Department to set up the Community. Through the different task teams chaired by ministry departments, the community is provided a sustained opportunity to integrate LtP in key education policies keeping with their responsibility to coordinate the policy implementation. The community also brings together all partners implementing inclusive LtP methods, thus creating scaling pathway for LtP.

Partners have an opportunity to choose their preferred task teams under the different themes and in line with their programs/projects. Due to this coordination partners have a platform to discuss various topical issues such as the different policy priority areas: These discussions 1) Open up a platform for NGOs to contribute to policy reforms 2) influence the changes that are made in the different policies in a harmonized manner, 3) discuss challenges in implementation and come up with resolutions to address them. PlayMatters' contribution to this change is assessed as 'high'.

Who Benefits?

Ministry of Education and Sports now has a platform to consult on issues related to LtP. Now an LtP standard document is being developed because of the collaboration and wealth of knowledge and experiences from **different partners**. This is expected to facilitate scaling of Learning through Play for sustainability.

What's Next:

- ✓ Support MOES to establish a rotating secretariate to enable full participation of other partners especially as PlayMatters project comes to an end.
- ✓ Expansion of membership.
- ✓ Develop and share policy products by task teams.

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