

Regional NEWSLETTER



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schools in Uganda**

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Message from the Project Director

Reflecting on our progress and looking ahead to new opportunities



Martin Omukuba

Project Director

In this quarter, I want us to celebrate the amazing progress we have made together so far. I am incredibly proud of each one of you for the remarkable contribution you are making towards PlayMatters achievements.

At our recently concluded Regional Technical and Evidence Learning workshop in June, we reflected on our milestone achievements, a testimony of what a united team can achieve. The workshop was convened to understand how to apply research and MEAL findings. And to enhance collaboration across workstreams to continuously build and use evidence to tell the story of PlayMatters. The workshop was an inspiring showcase of the collective talent and dedication of our teams across the board. From the four-day discussions, PlayMatters continues to enhance quality education in refugee and emergency settings by supporting teachers, improving school leadership to scale and sustain Learning through Play, teacher and children well-being. I am hopeful that the discussions yielded great results as we continue to share more evidence and impact of PlayMatters work.

In April, we had the honour of hosting the LEGO Foundation at our project sites in Lamwo District, Uganda where they visited two schools; Bright Future Primary School and Beyogoya Primary School. This was the first time LEGO was visiting a PlayMatters project site to see firsthand Learning through Play in practice within the school environment. Their visit was significant as their feedback was both encouraging and insightful. They particularly noted the challenges faced by teachers managing large classrooms, yet at the same time showing resilience on how to creatively manage children. We should particularly be proud of the efforts invested in training these teachers to be able to handle these large classes.

Annually, PlayMatters collaborates with Ministries of Education in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania to host the System Actors conference. Ethiopia Ministry of Education in collaboration with the project will host this year's conference with the theme, ***Achieving Quality Education by Teaching & Learning through Play*** that draws from the Africa Union's 2024 theme to ***Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa***. The two-day conference will reflect on the different policy engagements that PlayMatters has collaborated with these Ministries and other humanitarian actors to create an enabling environment that links policy to practice. This is ultimately geared towards improving the quality of teaching and learning for ECD and primary Education, in host and refugee settings and, for the integration and adaptation of learning through play methodology within national and humanitarian systems.

Let's keep the momentum and continue to drive our mission with passion and purpose.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication.

Highlights from Quarter 1



Technical and Evidence Learning Workshop paves way for communicating Project impact and evidence

The PlayMatters Regional technical and evidence learning workshop, that took place in June in Entebbe, Uganda, brought together 60 project staff to discuss evidence, impact and ways of working together.

Spearheaded by the regional evidence and research team, the workshop brought together workstreams including all three PlayMatters project outcomes, MEAL, Research, Communications/Multimedia, and Program leadership/management to build capacity, develop tools/plans, and discuss technical issues and progress in-depth, with a focus

on improving quality implementation and opportunities for scale and sustainability. In addition, workstreams came together to share learnings and progress.

True to the workshop objectives, teams, convened in Admas Hotel, and for four days worked and learnt from one another and agreed on plans for the year ahead.

“When we have these workshops, it is more of a reconciliation on the expectations. And secondly, it also gives an opportunity to learn and collaborate; what is working in TZ not working in TZ, what is working well in Uganda and what is working well in Ethiopia. There is that cross learning within a short period of time,” Paul Timothy Mwebe, the Deputy Project Director, said.

On his part, Martin Omukuba, the project director, said, **“This workshop is important because we reflect and review what we have done from the past year key performance indicators. We look at our budgets, our activity workplan and review. Did we achieve what we set out to set to do last year or not and what is ahead of next year as the project comes to an end. Is the team structure still viable to deliver what we want? The second thing that is very important for the teams to come together is to learn from each other as different departments and to be able to meet and socialise as well.”**

By Douglas Asimwe



Highlights from Quarter 1



National Play Day in Uganda shows country's commitment to play-based learning

PlayMatters Uganda participated in the inaugural National Play Day celebrations in Kampala in June. The day that brought together organisations that recognise the value of play in children, including Save the Children, UNICEF, among others, was presided over by Minister of Education and Sports, Janet Museveni, as the chief guest. She echoed government's recognition of play in fostering holistic learning and called upon all stakeholders to join hands and ensure every child is given the right to play. PlayMatters was represented by teams from the regional PlayMatters office and the Uganda PMC.

Also participating was the team from the LEGO Foundation who were represented at the celebrations by Jan Christensen and Casper Jensen. The day was also marked by several exhibitions from organisations demonstrating the power of play in shaping children's learning abilities. With this day, Uganda became the first country to dedicate a day to play in the world.



Strengthening partnerships with System Actors: Workshops in Uganda and Ethiopia

Uganda: In June, PlayMatters Uganda hosted a System Actors workshop in the central Uganda district of Mukono to establish and strengthen partnerships for scale and sustainability – a key focus for policy and advocacy in 2024. Among the participants were officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the UNHRC – which is a key implementing partner within the refugee setting as well as staff from PlayMatters project implementing partners. At the end of the workshop, participants had worked together to develop a roadmap for policy and advocacy priorities and an activity calendar for 2024.

Ethiopia: The System Actors workshop in Ethiopia early this year brought together participants from various sectors including Ministry of Education (MOE), Addis Ababa University, Kotebe University of Education, Addis Ababa Education Bureau, humanitarian organisations – UNICEF, Plan International, AU Liaison Office, Right to

Highlights from Quarter 1

Play, and World Vision, among others. While delivering his speech on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Dr Theodoros Shewarget, the CEO Curriculum Development, FDRE Ministry of Education, revealed that a review of the previous policy and curriculum framework indicated that Ethiopia's national education system was heavily focused on theory, neglecting practical and hands-on approaches such as PlayMatters initiatives which prompted the revision of the policy and curriculum framework. The participants were able to learn about the achievements of PlayMatters through a gallery walk, take part in Learning through Play activities, games demonstrations, and reflections in addition to being part of a panel discussion.



LEGO Foundation visits PlayMatters in Uganda, describes the experience as absolutely amazing!

PlayMatters was privileged to host representatives from the LEGO Foundation in the project locations in Uganda. Jan Christensen, a Facilitation Specialist and Casper Jensen, Senior Facilitation Specialist visited Palabek Refugee Settlement in Lamwo district and interacted with learners and teachers at Beyogoya Primary School and Bright Future Primary School. One of the classes they observed was Teacher Ketty Atimango's at Beyogoya Primary School. She was happy to teach her lesson while Jan and Casper watched from

the back of the class. Her Primary Two class has **180 learners** that she attends to every day out of the total school enrolment of **4,840 learners** (2,556 boys and 2,284 girls) at the school. Beyond the classes, the team interacted with school management and community members and gave encouraging feedback about the visit.

"Visiting the schools has been an absolutely amazing experience. I was impressed with what the teachers have been doing. The conditions in the classrooms are not easy, but the energy level and spirits of the children are remarkable. I now have a much better understanding of camps, settlements, and refugees in Uganda. PlayMatters' integration and inclusion efforts stand out," said Jan.

Highlights from Quarter 1



14 primary schools in Tanzania receive multimedia equipment

In a milestone move by Plan International, a PlayMatters implementing partner in Tanzania, multimedia equipment was distributed to 14 primary schools. The occasion held at Nyavyumbu Primary School in Kibondo District, was attended by government dignitaries including officials from Kibondo District and Kigoma Region highlighting the significance of this initiative. The equipment,

including 14 laptops, 14 rechargeable PICO projectors, 14 rechargeable speakers, 1 photocopy machine, 14 external drivers, 14 HDMI cable and 14 extension cables, are to enhance Teachers' Continuous Professional Development (TCPD) activities.

The guest of honour, Col. Aggrey Magwaza, said, **"I thank Plan International- Tanzania through the PlayMatters project for organizing this important event for handing over the multimedia devices to primary schools in Kibondo district. These devices will motivate teachers to prepare lessons and build their own capacity."**

Nassir Yahya, a Pre-primary teacher and Librarian at Rugage, Nyarubogo Primary School, said, **"These devices will benefit me as a librarian to register schoolbooks, students book checkout and downloading books from online platforms such as LMS and Tanzania Institute of Education, (TIE). The projector will help teachers watch demonstration videos."** The impact of this initiative extended beyond equipment provision. PlayMatters also renovated classrooms, improved facilities, and distributed desks, amounting to substantial support to provide a conducive learning environment.



TeamUp activities enhancing PlayMatters' goal of children's holistic development



Through play-based activities, TeamUp equips learners with skills such as communication, confidence, critical thinking and creates emotional and mindful awareness. In January 2023, Angela, a 14-year-old pupil, embarked on a transformative journey by joining TeamUp activities at St. Joseph's Kyabirikwa Primary School in Isingiro District, western, Uganda. Despite the school being closed for holidays at the time, [Read More...](#)

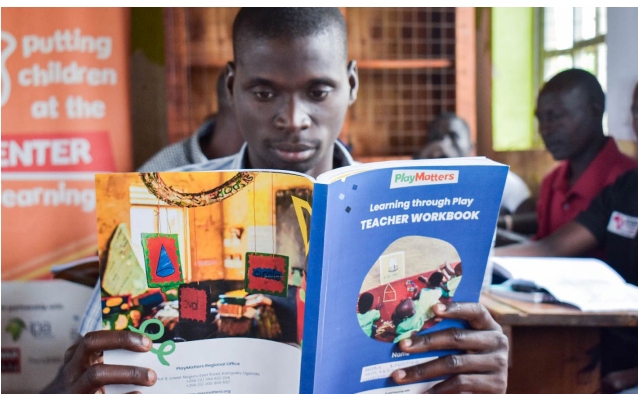


Before TeamUp, pupils would laugh at those who scored 50 marks in an exam saying how can they score such marks, yet they study every day. But now when you score a low mark, fellow pupils encourage you to revise hard and get better marks.

Angella



Learning through Play teacher training, Teacher Jeska shares her perspective



The training, according to teacher Jeska, has made her gain knowledge that will ease her work especially in managing some of her classes that composed of **300 pupils**. Thirty-six kilometres southwest of Imvepi Refugee Settlement in Terego district, is Alengu Early Childhood Development Centre (ECD). Like other ECDs within refugee settlements in Uganda, Alengu faces numerous challenges, some related to the large [Read More...](#)



I really love the training because it talks about a lot of play and indeed in the ECDs, we introduce our lessons and our activities using play. I am sure children will learn.

Teacher Jeska



Staff receive First Aid training

A team of **31 staff** received training in First Aid skills at the PlayMatters Regional Office in Kampala last month. The two-day training was led by First Aid experts from The Red Cross Peninah Namubiru and Uthuman Nayenga. The training equipped staff with skills to respond to casualties in case of emergencies such as collapsed buildings, accidents, electric shock, choking, fainting, burns, cuts and wounds, fractures, bleeding, among others. Staff credited the training for its practicability. **“I have benefited from the training. It has been practical. Now I know I can do something because we have tried these things. Another important thing is that we are looking at real life situations. It can happen to me, my child and my colleague at work, so what we are learning is not farfetched,”** said Britah Atusimiire, Human Resources and Administration Assistant.

In his concluding remarks, the PlayMatters Project Director, Martin Omukuba, encouraged staff to practice what they have learned. **“This is a lifetime skill for you, and I think it is very important that you know it and practice it because you don’t know when you will use it. Who knows when an accident is going to happen?”**

By Douglas Asimwe



PlayMatters Wall of Fame

In every newsletter, we shall be highlighting members from the PlayMatters field teams on our **“Wall of Fame”**.

We are drawing inspiration from what motivates them to do their work and hope they can inspire all of us.

Monica Tugume Ndyabahika

Project Officer, Isingiro, Uganda



Reaching out to children is my passion; their smiles give me hope to be better hence my desire to build their teachers' capacity by mentoring and coaching them with the aim of ensuring a child-centered approach in the teaching and learning process.

Bahiru Hailu Degu

Project Manager, Benishangul-Gumuz, Ethiopia



I'm passionate about how Learning through Play contributes to the overall wellbeing of vulnerable children and its pivotal role in promoting critical skills to develop hope and resilience. I take pride being part of this project.

Upcoming Events

Regional System Actors conference in Ethiopia this August

The PlayMatters Regional System Actors conference will happen this **August in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia** under the theme, **Achieving Quality Education by Teaching & Learning through Play.**

The two-day conference will reflect on the different policy engagements that PlayMatters has collaborated with these Ministries and other humanitarian actors to create an enabling environment that links policy to practice. This is ultimately geared towards improving the quality of teaching and learning for ECD and primary Education, in host and refugee settings and, for the integration and adaptation of learning through play methodology within national and humanitarian systems.

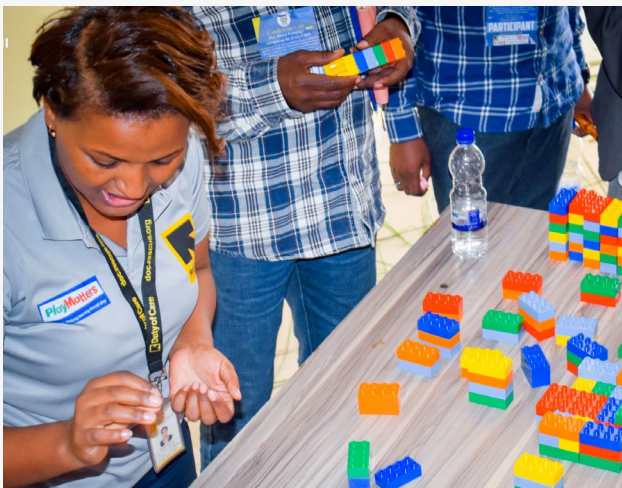


*A photo from last year's system actors workshop.
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 2023*

Photo Gallery



In May, PlayMatters Tanzania participated in the Global Action Week for Education. The team used the event as a platform to showcase Learning through Play methodologies.



PlayMatters Ethiopia celebrated Day of the African Child while conducting a national research conference in collaboration with Jigjiga University in May. The theme of the day was, Play-Based Learning: Advocating for Every Child.



Following a school quality assessors supportive visit in May, PlayMatters Tanzania has conducted a teacher refresher training to fill the gaps identified to ensure teachers improve their Learning through Play practice in class.



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In partnership with



The LEGO Foundation