The Promise of Play:
Supporting Young Children and Families Affected by Crises

play
to
learn

SESAME WORKSHOP. brac INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE NYU Global TIES for Children The LEGO Foundation

"I used to make miniature houses from clay when I was a child. Now, I do the same with the children at the Humanitarian Play Lab (HPL). It feels good to form a special bond with these children. Even when they become older and graduate from the HPL, they always come back to visit me."

- Shabikun Nahar, Rohingya Play Leader at a Humanitarian Play Lab

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Welcome!

In 2019, the Play to Learn consortium, supported by the LEGO Foundation, set out with a bold vision to establish play-based early childhood development (ECD) programming as an essential component of every humanitarian response, using a unique combination of media and direct programming.

The world has changed dramatically since we started this five-year program. The COVID-19 pandemic left families disconnected from schools, support services, and one another, with devastating effects on children's learning and well-being. In 2022, the year that this report covers, more than 100 million people around the world were living in forced displacement, an increase of at least 20 million since 2019 when the project began. 2022 also marks 11 years of conflict in Syria, and five years since more than 700,000 Rohingya people were forced across the border into Bangladesh. The countries where Play to Learn is operating have faced additional challenges such as natural disasters and economic instability.

The cycles of disruption and resiliency we see in the lives of children affected by crises have been an inspiration for our program approach: During the pandemic, Play to Learn partners pivoted to stay connected to families, including the use of phone calls and text-based support (and home visits when possible). These and other program innovations generated important learnings that are being mobilized, both within and outside the project, to support families whether they are on the move, unable to access services due to conflict, or living in hard-to-reach settings.

This report tells the story of Play to Learn's fourth year. It was a year of many firsts and milestone moments. We reached more than 120,000 children in Bangladesh, Jordan, and Lebanon with playful ECD programming. We also reached almost 100,000 caregivers and facilitators with resources, support, and training. Rigorous research confirmed that our Remote Early Learning program helped children in Lebanon to learn and grow. For the first time, Rohingya children saw characters in media who looked and sounded just like them. We finished creating a library of 140 playful animated educational videos. Humanitarian Play Labs reopened, reconnecting with thousands of children in Cox's Bazar after almost two years of pandemic closures. Our partnerships elevated the topic of ECD within national government infrastructure. And our advocacy activities brought increased visibility to ECD, including the first-ever spotlight on ECD in the United Nations' Global Humanitarian Overview.

In this report, you'll learn about these and other moments that made this a year of learning, impact, and growth. We invite you to join us in reflecting on what we learned and accomplished in 2022 so that we can build an even stronger foundation for the years to come.

Lesley Bourns, Sesame Workshop

Erum Mariam, BRAC

Marianne Stone, The International Rescue Commitee

Hirokazu Yoshikawa, NYU Global Ties for Children
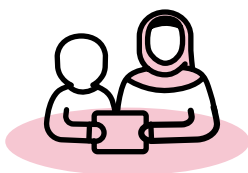
About Play to Learn:
Bringing playful learning to children affected by crisis

Play to Learn's bold vision is to establish play-based ECD programming as an essential component of every humanitarian response. To achieve this vision, the partner consortium brings together the unique expertise of the LEGO Foundation, Sesame Workshop, BRAC, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and independent evaluator New York University (NYU) Global TIES for Children in designing, implementing, and evaluating this project, which holds the potential to transform the humanitarian space.

Research shows that play is essential to healthy child development, helping young children overcome adversity and build a brighter future. Supporting caregivers is crucial—because we know that children thrive when the adults around them have support. And creating joyful, engaging video content allows us to tap into the power of media to reach children wherever they are—at home, at school, or on the move—on a global scale.

Play to Learn is engaging with refugee and host communities in Bangladesh, Jordan, and Lebanon to understand and meet their needs through educational media and playful ECD programs, while designing and testing program approaches and educational materials that can be adapted and scaled across multiple contexts.

A three-pillar approach to expanding opportunities for playful ECD

Direct services and educational media

In Bangladesh, Play to Learn is reaching children and families in the Rohingya refugee camps and in the host community in Cox's Bazar. Through direct services in homes, child-friendly spaces, and health centers, Play to Learn's in-person and remote ECD interventions provide playful learning and promote nurturing care, enhanced by videos, storybooks, posters, and more. In the Syrian response region, Sesame Workshop and the IRC are implementing Ahlan Simsim, a program funded by the MacArthur Foundation that delivers ECD opportunities through the *Ahlan Simsim* television show and direct services. With the LEGO Foundation's support, Play to Learn is deepening the play-based learning aspects of the program, promoting playful parenting and fostering joyful experiences that help children learn and grow**. Together, Ahlan Simsim and Play to Learn are the largest ECD interventions in the history of humanitarian response.**

Research and evidence

While the importance of play for ECD is well established, there is currently little research about how play-based early childhood interventions work best in crisis settings. The Play to Learn program sets out to fill these gaps by generating research—including a groundbreaking longitudinal study—and testing program models that demonstrate impact for children and caregivers. As Play to Learn develops and tests innovative program approaches in Bangladesh and the Middle East, **we are working with independent evaluators at NYU Global TIES for Children to generate evidence on what works—at least doubling the evidence base on ECD in crisis contexts.** In addition to rigorous impact evaluations, we are conducting process research to support improved program implementation.

Policy and advocacy

Despite clear evidence that ECD programming has both immediate and long-term benefits for children and their communities, these interventions remain dramatically underfunded around the world. **We are working to change this reality through strategic engagement with humanitarian actors, donors, and refugee-hosting governments.** We share what we learn about implementing high-quality ECD programs, empowering others to adapt, scale, and build upon these lessons. By bringing visibility to the needs of young children and their caregivers and demonstrating the value of meeting those needs, we aim to increase prioritization of and investment in ECD in crisis settings globally.
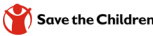
Direct Programming

Play to Learn reaches children, caregivers, and facilitators with playful ECD programming through a variety of remote, in-person, and hybrid program models. Here are the models implemented under Play to Learn in 2022:

Implementing Partner	Model	Description	Modality	Location	Sesame Content*
International Rescue Committee	**Integrated Play and Learning Spaces for Children**	Safe spaces are created in a variety of locations where children gather, such as community centers and health centers. Content supports cognitive and social-emotional development through play.	In-person	Jordan Lebanon	✓
International Rescue Committee	**Integrated Play and Learning Spaces for Caregivers**	Caregivers are provided with information related to child development, positive discipline, and learning through play. Sessions take place while children are engaged in the programming described above.	In-person	Jordan Lebanon	✓
International Rescue Committee	**Remote Caregiver Support**	Facilitators call caregivers in group sessions to provide support focused on early learning, responsive relationships, and positive parenting.	Remote	Lebanon	
International Rescue Committee	**Media-Integrated Remote Early Learning Program**	Teachers call caregivers to describe play-based activities for them to do with their children to encourage emergent literacy and numeracy, as well as social-emotional skills. The program also includes educational media, such as videos and storybooks.	Remote	Lebanon	✓
International Rescue Committee	**Preschool Healing Classrooms**	This model provides a safe environment and curriculum for children to learn pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, and social-emotional skills.	Remote In-person Hybrid	Lebanon	✓
International Rescue Committee	**Digital Programming for ECD**	More than 230 activities addressing COVID-19 prevention, caregiver and child well-being, and learning through play are available to caregivers via an automated messaging service and social media channels.	Remote	Middle East region	✓
International Rescue Committee	**Integrated Health, Nutrition, and ECD Messages**	Caregivers in Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar receive messages about health, nutrition, play, and ECD delivered through interactive voice response (IVR) calls, text messages, quiz questions, and home visits.	Hybrid	Bangladesh	
brac	**Center-Based Humanitarian Play Labs**	Centers in Rohingya camps promote social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and well-being through playful activities rooted in Rohingya culture.	In-person	Bangladesh	✓
brac	**Home-Based Humanitarian Play Labs focused on Father Engagement**	Home visits are conducted in Rohingya camps to promote fathers' well-being and encourage them to develop healthy relationships with their children through responsive and nurturing caregiving.	In-person	Bangladesh	✓

✓ * Indicates Sesame Workshop co-created materials integrated into the model

Implementing Partner	Model	Description	Modality	Location	Sesame Content*
brac	Home-Based Humanitarian Play Labs focused on Mother Engagement	Home visits are conducted in Rohingya camps to promote mothers' well-being and healthy child engagement through play.	In-person	Bangladesh	
brac	Home-Based Humanitarian Play Labs	Home visits are conducted in Rohingya camps to support play-based activities for social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.	In-person	Bangladesh	
brac	Host Community Play Labs	This model embeds play-based ECD into the pre-primary education system in government schools for the host community in Cox's Bazar.	In-person	Bangladesh	
Save the Children	*Watch, Play, Learn* Pilot: Integration into Pre-Primary School	Videos are integrated into the Alternative Basic Education curriculum at a school in the Dadaab refugee camps.	In-person	Kenya	
Universidad de los Andes Colombia	*Watch, Play, Learn* Pilot: Integration into Caregiver Mental Health Programming	In Colombia, videos are integrated into a group psychotherapy intervention in which caregivers view content with facilitators, then view the content at home with their children.	In-person	Colombia	
UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency	*Watch, Play, Learn* Pilot: Integration into Child Protection Programming	Videos, with facilitation, are added to programming at child-friendly spaces in the camps in Cox's Bazar.	In-person	Bangladesh	

"The children are delighted by these activities… because they are something they have never experienced before."

- Sara AlKhatib, IRC Smile Caravan facilitator in Jordan

PHOTO: Ahmad Zaki/IRC, Jordan

Direct Programming Model Highlights

Center-Based Humanitarian Play Labs in Bangladesh

In 2022, BRAC served nearly 20,000 Rohingya children ages 2-6 at Center-Based Humanitarian Play Labs. The model is based on four principles: heritage, safety, nurturing spontaneity, and integration of child protection and child development through play. In 2022, in-person centers reopened after the pandemic caused closures to in-person services, again offering children two-hour sessions, five days a week. Caregivers of children who attend the centers receive home visits to promote nurturing care, and children receive periodic health checkups. Media materials co-created by Sesame Workshop and BRAC—including storybooks, flashcards, and videos—have been integrated into the curriculum.

Watch, Play, Learn Pilot in Dadaab Refugee Camp, Kenya

In Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, Play to Learn is partnering with Save the Children to pilot use of the *Watch, Play, Learn* videos. The videos, dubbed into Somali, are shown to children in school on shared tablets to promote a playful, inclusive, and engaging learning environment. Children watch two videos a week—one math video and one focused on social-emotional learning—with related lessons before and after each video. Teachers have observed increased classroom engagement and curiosity among the children since the introduction of the videos.

Remote Early Learning Program with Educational Media in Lebanon

In Lebanon, Play to Learn reached Syrian refugee children with an 11-week remote preschool program. Teachers employed by the IRC called small groups of parents three times a week to deliver guidance on play-based activities to do with their children. The activities were co-developed by the IRC with integration of multimedia materials from Sesame Workshop to support children's emergent literacy and numeracy, as well as social-emotional and motor skills development. Children received packages of physical resources, such as worksheets, stationery, and art materials, and caregivers received internet bundles.

PHOTO: Fabeha Monir & Mohammad Rakibul Hasan/Sesame Workshop, Bangladesh

"[My IRC Learning Facilitator] is very cooperative and always provides detailed information that I need."

- Shofika, Rohingya mother of three

Scaling Pathways in the Middle East:
Integrating ECD into national government infrastructure

Play to Learn collaborates with national governments in the Middle East to encourage local ownership and integrate ECD into government infrastructure. These "scaling pathways" help to extend the reach of our programming and institutionalize ECD as a shared priority and commitment.

JORDAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MOE): Expansion of access to quality early childhood education (ECE)

Through this pathway, the IRC is working with the MoE to integrate social-emotional learning and learning through play into ECE. The MoE and the IRC are revising teachers' in-service training and teachers' guides, and the MoE implemented a school readiness program in partnership with community-based organizations that was co-designed by the IRC and the MoE. The MoE is also reviewing the *Watch, Play, Learn* videos to consider their use starting in 2023.

JORDAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH (MOH): ECD integration into health services

The MoH and the IRC co-developed ECD materials to integrate into primary health clinics. Nurses and midwives provide ECD information to caregivers during well-child visits for children 0-5 years old, and playful learning corners provide activities for children while they wait.

LEBANON MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MOPH) (with the Knowledge to Policy Center at the American University of Beirut): Country-wide standards for nurseries

The IRC and the MoPH finalized a set of quality standards for nurseries overseen by the MoPH, which were rolled out to all nurseries in the country in June 2022. These standards provide guidelines for healthy, child-friendly, inclusive, and safe services. Complementary programs will support nurseries in meeting the standards.

LEBANON MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS (MOSA): Country-wide standards for daycares

The IRC is working with MoSA to finalize standards for daycares run by MoSA. These standards are in progress and expected to launch in 2023.

LEBANON MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION (MEHE): ECD integration into pre-primary services

The IRC is working with MEHE's Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) to integrate social-emotional learning and learning through play into existing ECE services. Ahlan Simsim and Play to Learn materials are made available to teachers through CERD's online platform.

SESAME WORKSHOP. Watch PLAY Learn

***Watch, Play, Learn:* Early Learning Videos** is a set of 140 engaging, modular early learning videos, designed with particular attention to the needs of children affected by conflict and crisis. Designed for 3- to 8-year-olds, each five-minute video features Sesame Workshop's beloved Muppet characters and promotes specific ECD outcomes. The videos cover four curricular areas: math; science; social-emotional learning; and child protection, health, and safety. Sesame Workshop is developing an associated toolkit for implementers that will be ready in 2024.

Playtime with Noor and Aziz

With the debut of Noor and Aziz in 2022, Rohingya children living in Cox's Bazar saw characters who reflect their culture and language in media for the first time. Noor and Aziz are 6-year-old Rohingya twin Muppets who live in a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. They star in *Playtime with Noor and Aziz*, live-action Muppet segments designed to complement the *Watch, Play, Learn* animations. Rohingya children watch *Playtime with Noor and Aziz* in Humanitarian Play Labs in Cox's Bazar and on YouTube.

Meet Ameera!

Ameera, an 8-year-old with a passion for science and comedy, debuted in March 2022 as the lead character in the *Watch, Play, Learn* science videos (and also made her debut this year as a live-action Muppet on the *Ahlan Simsim* television show in the Middle East!). Ameera uses a purple wheelchair and forearm crutches due to a spinal cord injury, helping to represent the 240 million children worldwide with disabilities. Disability and inclusion advisors provided guidance on her movements and the adaptive equipment she uses. Ameera's brainy wit and sense of humor are inspired by her voice actor, comedian and fellow wheelchair user Ashley Glicken.

The Music of *Watch, Play, Learn*

To develop the music for *Watch, Play, Learn*, Sesame Workshop teamed up with composers, as well as Playing for Change, an organization that connects cultures through music. The collaborative process involved a composer providing a tune, which Playing for Change would then orchestrate and record in multiple regional styles with musicians from around the world (from regions of Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and South Asia). Dozens of instruments are featured, from the West African djembe drum to the Middle Eastern zurna woodwind to the Latin American guiro gourd. The resulting musical scores are culturally rich, yet globally relevant—children from around the world will recognize familiar elements and be exposed to new musical styles and sounds!

Piloting *Watch, Play, Learn*

We are piloting *Watch, Play, Learn* videos and facilitator resources to understand the experiences of using the videos from the perspective of teachers, facilitators, caregivers, and children. Three locations were chosen to provide a diversity of contexts from which to learn, including within formal refugee camps and in more integrated refugee and host community settings, with differing access to technology. Similarly, implementers were chosen who work across sectors related to early childhood, including child protection, education, and mental health.

KENYA

Where: Refugee camps in the town of Dadaab

Implementing partner: Save the Children

Program design: Social-emotional learning and math videos are integrated into the Alternative Basic Education curriculum to support teachers with classroom management, child engagement, and digital literacy. We are also learning how the intervention impacts inclusion.

Dates of pilot: July 2022 to June 2023

Video subjects: Social-emotional learning; math

Target audience: Teachers and children from Somali refugee communities

Technology: Tablets, using a platform called Moodle to play content

COLOMBIA

Where: The cities of Tumaco and Jamundi

Implementing partner: Universidad de los Andes, Semillas de Apego program

Program design: Social-emotional learning videos are integrated into an ongoing caregiver group psychotherapy intervention. We are learning how our videos support caregiver efficacy and caregiver-child relationships.

Dates of pilot: March 2023 to December 2023 (pilot design occurred during 2022)

Video subjects: Social-emotional learning

Target audience: Primary caregivers of young children who live in communities affected by armed conflict or who have been forcibly displaced

Technology: Caregivers will use their personal smart devices to access videos that are available on a private Facebook group

BANGLADESH

Where: Refugee camps in Cox's Bazar

Implementing partner: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s child protection partners, including Community Development Center, Relief International, Save the Children, and Terre Des Hommes

Program design: Social-emotional learning videos are viewed in child friendly spaces and multi-purpose centers to promote child development and well-being.

Dates of pilot: October 2022 to February 2023

Video subjects: Social-emotional learning

Target audience: Facilitators and children from Rohingya refugee communities

Technology: Projectors and the *Watch, Play, Learn* offline application

"[The students] really feel happy and excited when they are watching the videos."

–Pre-primary teacher, Dadaab, Kenya

PHOTO: Sesame Workshop, Kenya

Research

Cultural adaptation of a measurement tool

NYU Global TIES for Children adapted an existing child assessment tool, Save the Children's International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA), to better fit the context of Rohingya children in Cox's Bazar. IDELA has been used in 76 countries, including many low- and middle-income countries, but it has never before been used in Rohingya communities.

Adapting an assessment tool requires more than just translation. The process entailed:

- Consulting with Rohingya community members and changing individual items to better fit the community's culture and language;
- Adding sections to measure new skills, such as executive function (how the brain manages tasks and meets goals);
- Making sure necessary materials could be easily found in or brought into Rohingya homes;
- Translating the tool into Bangla, the language of the enumerators, and adding child-friendly translations of certain words in Rohingya;
- Testing the tool with 282 Rohingya children;
- Conducting daily debriefing sessions during testing so language and cultural factors that required adjustments could be immediately changed for the next day's testing; and
- Analyzing the data to generate a final set of 30 assessment items.

Because of the many languages understood by Rohingya children, the assessment allows them to answer questions in any language they choose. For example, if a child is asked to name a body part, the child may answer with "theng" (Rohingya), "pa" (Bangla), "hkyayh"(Burmese), or "leg" (English), and any of these answers are correct.

Across the Play to Learn research portfolio, cultural and linguistic adaptations of each of the tools used by NYU Global TIES for Children are a key part of the process to ensure that research findings are accurate.

Update on Play to Learn's impact and longitudinal research

NYU Global TIES for Children

Research from NYU Global TIES for Children on Play to Learn programming

icddr,b

Additional research on Play to Learn programming by icddr,b

Study	Description	Status as of December 2022
Evaluation of remote early learning and caregiver support in Lebanon	This evaluation will help us understand how our Remote Early Learning program and additional remote caregiver support affect child development, which will help us adjust remote learning to make it as effective as possible in future crises.	Endline data collection completed; data analysis ongoing
Evaluation of *Watch, Play, Learn* videos in Colombia	This evaluation will help us understand the impacts of watching the *Watch, Play, Learn* videos on the math and social-emotional skills of 4-year-olds in Colombia who have been affected by displacement.	Baseline data collection completed; intervention ongoing
Evaluation of father engagement model in Bangladesh	This evaluation will help us understand the additional benefits of engaging Rohingya fathers in a home visiting parenting program.	Baseline data collection completed; intervention ongoing
Longitudinal study of Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar	This research will help us understand the potential lifespan developmental implications of being conceived, born, and raised in contexts of crisis and displacement.	Enumerator training completed; recruitment and data collection about to begin
Evaluation of integrated health, nutrition, and ECD programming in Bangladesh	This research will help us understand the impact of providing integrated messaging to Rohingya caregivers on multi-sectoral aspects of ECD.	Study design ongoing

In addition to the above list of impact and longitudinal research, many other studies are being conducted to produce learnings related to implementation and measurement.

Advocacy

The Play to Learn partners are working to influence the way that governments, donors, nonprofits, and multilateral institutions identify and respond to the needs of young children in crises. Our focus in 2022 was on deepening relationships and expanding the impact of our prior work with stakeholders including the U.S. government, UN agencies, refugee-hosting governments, and other strategic advocacy targets.

SESAME WORKSHOP

Sesame Workshop: The Journey Toward Embedding ECD into the Global Humanitarian Architecture and Agenda

STRATEGY SETTING	TARGETED ENGAGEMENTS	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	WIDENING OUR REACH	SUCCESS
Set priority targets of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNICEF as key actors for coordination within the humanitarian system	Created display highlighting Play to Learn and *Watch, Play, Learn* content	Director-level champions for ECDiE cultivated within OCHA and UNICEF	Held meetings with the Moving Minds Alliance (MMA), the Inter-Agency for Education in Emergencies (INEE), and UNICEF-led clusters and cross-sectoral specialists based on coordination work	**This work is encouraging better representation, coordination, and funding of ECD throughout the humanitarian architecture.**
Identified Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks (HNPW) as an important opportunity to engage with OCHA and UNICEF, and pursued three targeted workstreams at the event	Held side meetings with various stakeholders within the humanitarian community	Introduced *Watch, Play, Learn* to the humanitarian community and sparked conversations about potential distribution and research partnerships	Secured spotlight on ECD, mental health, and Play to Learn in the Global Humanitarian Overview—a key visibility point in a global agenda-setting document	
	Hosted panel highlighting the importance and feasibility of early childhood development in emergencies (ECDiE)	Advanced efforts for wider dissemination and relevance of Play to Learn's ECDiE coordination learnings	Continuing to discuss additional *Watch, Play, Learn* distribution opportunities to expand the reach of the Play to Learn investment	

Other advocacy highlights:

At the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Sesame Workshop and UNICEF co-hosted a panel about ECD in areas affected by crisis. Sesame Workshop also supported MMA in a call to action for leaders attending the Transforming Education Summit to increase investment in ECD, which was endorsed by six ECD networks and 25 organizations.

Sesame Workshop's President Sherrie Westin highlighted the needs of young children and caregivers during a UN Security Council hearing on Ukraine. She urged the Council to increase mental health support, invest in ECD in humanitarian and national response plans, and provide dedicated support for caregivers.

brac

BRAC: Bottom-Up Approaches to Encouraging Use of Low- and No-Cost Play Materials for ECD in Humanitarian Settings

STRATEGY SETTING

Identified Bangladesh's ECD Working Group as an important platform within the education sector to reach humanitarian actors working in Cox's Bazar

Planned event to highlight experiences related to designing sustainable play materials for ECD in different settings

TARGETED ENGAGEMENTS

Hosted an in-depth presentation to showcase the importance of play materials as stimuli, tailored to a child's age and developmental stage

Facilitated session focused on low- and no-cost play material development

Created installation, involving 14 organizations, to display ECD materials co-created with communities

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Changed perceptions of the viability of low- and no-cost play materials for a wide variety of stakeholders implementing different types of programming in Cox's Bazar

New cross-learning relationships formed among organizations working in Cox's Bazar, as actors worked closely together at the event

Event participants expressed interest in conducting community-level trainings to accelerate perception changes around endorsing the use of low- and no-cost play materials

WIDENING OUR REACH

Ongoing conversations about creating a module on low- and no-cost play material development with guidelines specifically for field-level facilitators

SUCCESS

This work demonstrated the importance of the role of low- and no-cost play materials and the feasibility of creating such materials by community members themselves, encouraging cultural ownership of the process of play-based learning and resulting in improved developmental outcomes for children.

Other advocacy highlights:

In partnership with the Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), BRAC organized a 12-day online certificate course on the foundations of ECD. Senior managers in national and international NGOs attended the course, during which they learned about developmental milestones, early learning domains, and the impact of culture on development.

BRAC offered short courses on the fundamentals of ECD to 16 members of the ECD Working Group in Cox's Bazar throughout 2022. Participants learned how to implement learning through play, foster creativity in young children, and support the mental health of children and caregivers.

The IRC: Igniting Excitement for Nurturing Care: Convening, Coalescing, and Commitment

STRATEGY SETTING

Set goal of bringing together stakeholders to create momentum in the Middle East around the importance of ECDiE, including improved coordination, strengthened leadership, and reflection in humanitarian planning processes

Specifically, identified opportunity to operationalize nurturing care in the region by generating political will and aligning it with national priorities

TARGETED ENGAGEMENTS

Formed a working group spanning global-, regional-, and national-level staff within the IRC, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), Save the Children, and the Arab Network for Early Childhood Development (ANECD)

Formed national task teams to craft and convene national ECD strategy workshops

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Co-designed and implemented five workshops in Damascus, Iraq, Jordan, Northwest Syria, and Palestine

Robust commitment secured and ongoing plans formed regarding the inclusion of ECDiE in national plans

WIDENING OUR REACH

Iraq: Finalization and publication of the ECD Strategy by the Government of Iraq, in partnership with UNICEF

Palestine: Expanded the existing ECD Strategy in Palestine to include a strengthened ECD Governance Committee

Northwest Syria: Addition of ECD programming to the Education Cluster's Education Strategy—the first time ECD was indicated as an Education Cluster priority in the country— and new funding secured from the Protection Cluster

SUCCESS

As a result of this work, there is strengthened leadership and coordination in the region to embed the priorities of nurturing care, in alignment with local political priorities. We will now work to build on the foundation of progress achieved so far to deepen these commitments.

Other advocacy highlights:

The IRC and the Moving Minds Alliance (MMA) have made strides in working with the French Government to highlight the importance of ECDiE. Through disseminating briefs and developing contacts, this work is positioning ECD as a key driver for France's development priorities.

The IRC supported the World Food Programme (WFP)'s Regional Bureau in Cairo to develop an internal discussion paper on ECD. The paper highlights opportunities for the Bureau to advance ECD and nurturing care through strategic partnerships and by incorporating technical expertise into school health and nutrition programming.

"Our children didn't get to live like other children because of the war. But now, I see my children getting an education and growing up in good mental health. My children's mindset has changed, and their lives have, too."

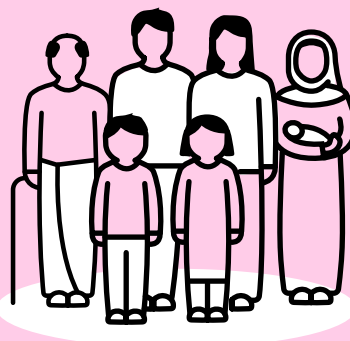– Mahmoud, Syrian father of 4, living in Lebanon

Our Reach

868,674
children, caregivers, and facilitators have been reached through Play to Learn programming from 2019 to 2022

216,961
were reached in 2022

WHO WE REACH

Across all models, through 2022, Play to Learn programming has reached:
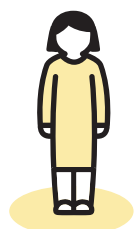
569,019 children
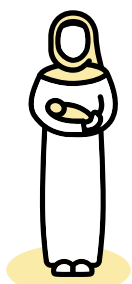
283,366 caregivers
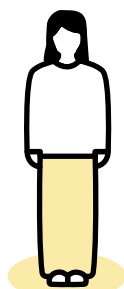
16,289 facilitators

HOW WE REACH FAMILIES

Play to Learn serves families directly and in partnership with governments and community organizations. Throughout the lifetime of the project, we have reached:

58% — Direct Services

42% — Scaling Pathways
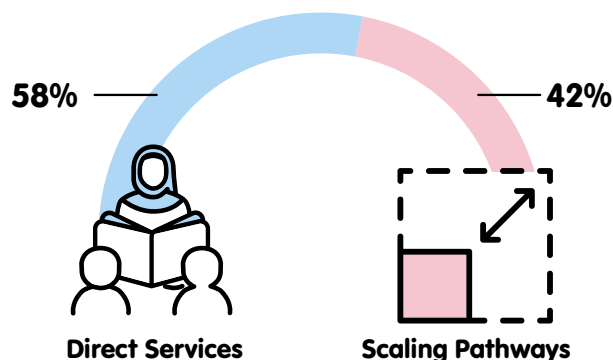
WHERE WE WORK

Programs delivered by Play to Learn partners operate across three countries. Our geographical reach to date has been:

48% Jordan

3% Lebanon

48% Bangladesh
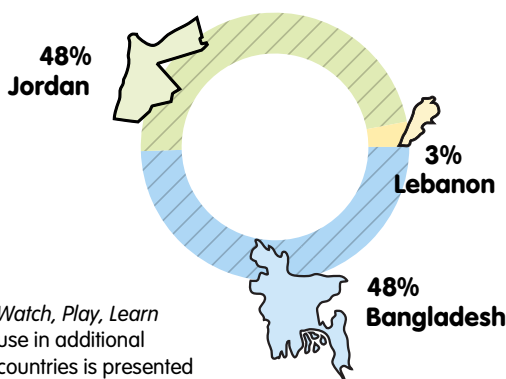
Watch, Play, Learn use in additional countries is presented on page 19.

WHAT APPROACHES WE USE

Play to Learn meets children and their caregivers where they are—using remote, in-person, and hybrid services to optimize programming for accessibility, safety, and scale.

Project Lifetime
In-person 72%
Remote 25%
Hybrid 3%
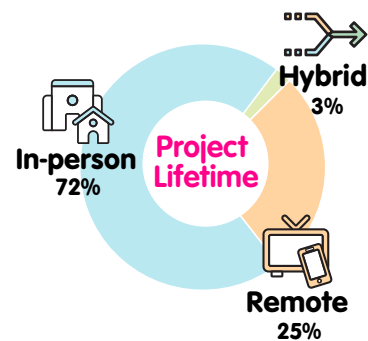
In 2022, our proportion of in-person and hybrid services increased relative to our remote services as COVID-19 restrictions lifted and it was safe to deliver in-person services again.

2022
In-person 85%
Remote 5%
Hybrid 10%
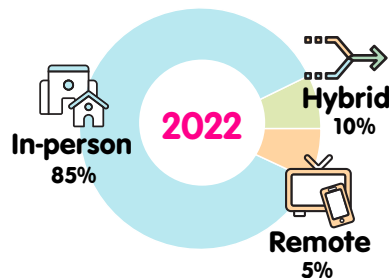
30 MILLION+

BROADCAST REACH

The *Watch, Play, Learn* videos have reached more than 30 million viewers across all broadcast audiences (see page 19 for a list of countries reached).

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

The Reach and Visibility of Play to Learn's Key Messages

Play to Learn focuses on reaching a diverse set of audiences with key messages. Here we highlight the breadth of audiences we reach with our learnings and include some examples of how we reach them.

ADVOCACY MESSAGES

DONORS:
From Congressional events (with Cookie Monster!) to briefings on mental health and meetings with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Play to Learn partners have engaged U.S. government leaders to deliver the message that ECD is one of the most valuable uses of U.S. foreign assistance dollars.

REGIONAL AUDIENCES:
The IRC's @FamilyCornerIRC accounts on Instagram and Facebook deliver Arabic-language content to caregivers to empower them to support their children's development. The accounts have reached more than 62,000 unique users.

GENERAL INTEREST

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS & IMPLEMENTERS:
BRAC hosted a seminar to share technical learnings with a community of practice on education in the camps in Cox's Bazar in collaboration with UNHCR. At the seminar, practitioners discussed solutions for improving education in the camps.

GLOBAL GENERAL PUBLIC:
Sesame Workshop President Sherrie Westin and UNICEF USA President and CEO Michael J. Nyenhuis wrote a CNN op-ed about Sesame Workshop Muppet Ameera's wheelchair, exploring why both aspirational and accurate representation matter.

play to learn

REFUGEE-HOSTING GOVERNMENTS:
Integrating play-based learning and psychosocial well-being into the Bangladeshi national pre-primary curriculum relied on BRAC building strong relationships with the government across many interactions and touchpoints.

RESEARCHERS & ACADEMICS:
NYU Global TIES for Children regularly presents Play to Learn findings at academic conferences. Examples from 2022 include the Society for Research in Child Development Conference and the International Society of Political Psychology Virtual Seminar Series for the Asia-Pacific Region.

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS & IMPLEMENTERS:
Play to Learn partners presented to the UNICEF-led clusters and inter-cluster coordinators and discussed opportunities to strengthen the inclusion of ECD within and across clusters.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

TECHNICAL RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

In addition to targeted engagements, Play to Learn partners regularly share content with networks and coalitions who have a significant collective reach. In 2022, these included the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, MMA, The Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN), Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the Early Childhood Peace Consortium, UNESCO's Global Education Coalition, the World Economic Forum Education 4.0 Alliance, and the Thrive Coalition, among others.

Play to Learn Around the World
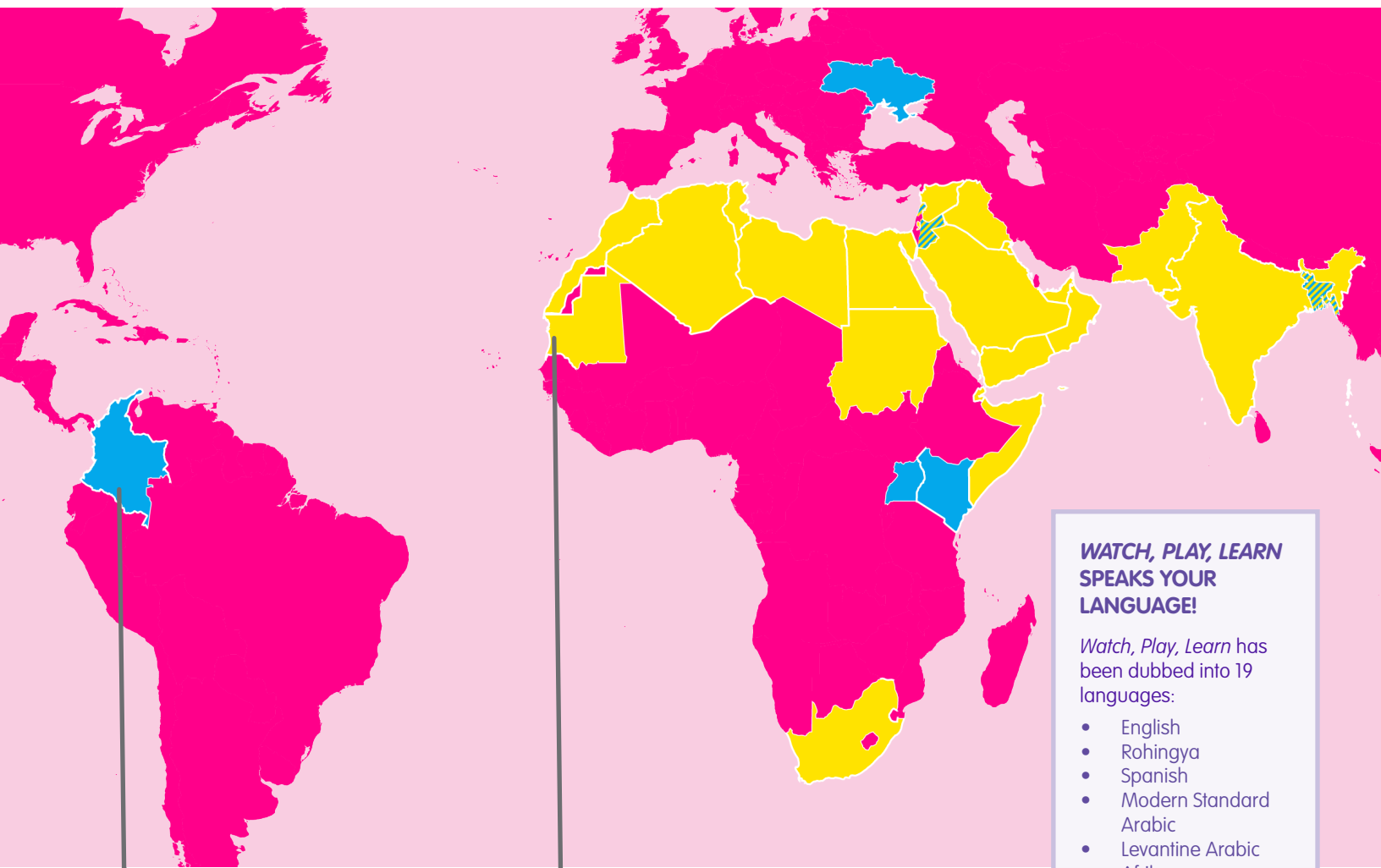
DIRECT SERVICES
The majority of our direct services operate through Play to Learn partners in Bangladesh, Jordan, and Lebanon. Play to Learn content is additionally used in direct services with other partners in Colombia, Kenya, Uganda, and Ukraine.

BROADCAST
Watch, Play, Learn is broadcast in 24 countries

WATCH, PLAY, LEARN SPEAKS YOUR LANGUAGE!

Watch, Play, Learn has been dubbed into 19 languages:

- English
- Rohingya
- Spanish
- Modern Standard Arabic
- Levantine Arabic
- Afrikaans
- Ndebele
- Zulu
- Sesotho
- South African English
- Somali
- Swahili
- Urdu
- Ukranian
- Russian
- Bangla
- Hausa
- Hindi
- Telugu

The Benefits of Play to Learn Programming for Children and Families

Evidence from a rigorous impact evaluation of our remote preschool programming in Lebanon showed significant positive impacts on learning outcomes for young children.

An impact evaluation conducted by NYU Global TIES for Children found that our Remote Early Learning program in Lebanon had statistically significant impacts on children's language, numeracy, and social-emotional development. The 11-week program, reaching mostly Syrian refugee children, engaged caregivers remotely via WhatsApp group sessions to provide them with guidance on activities to do with their children at home, along with physical ECD learning kits. The program's curriculum featured the integration of educational media, including videos and storybooks. Research from NYU Global TIES for Children found effects on emergent literacy and numeracy skills comparable to those of many in-person preschool programs studied globally. We also found effects on children's social-emotional and motor skills, as well as an increase in caregiver-child learning interactions. This suggests that remote programming can be an effective tool to improve learning outcomes for young children—an important finding for populations affected by humanitarian crises, during health emergencies, for families on the move, or in other contexts where in-person preschool is not feasible in the short- or long-term.

In addition to impact evaluations, Play to Learn partners monitor program delivery. Below are several of the many benefits that children and their caregivers experienced in 2022 based on that data:

89%

In 2022, 89% of surveyed caregivers reported that they had supportive, nurturing interactions with their children after participating in a caregiver-facing Play to Learn program.
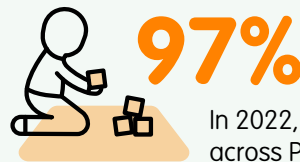
97%

In 2022, 97% of surveyed caregivers across Play to Learn models demonstrated an understanding of the importance of ECD and how to encourage learning through play in their children after participating in a Play to Learn program.

88%

In 2022, 88% of surveyed caregivers across Play to Learn models had attitudes that promote gender equity after participating in a Play to Learn program. Gender attitudes can be entrenched and difficult to change—highlighting the important role of continued work on this topic. Sample questions to measure this might include:

- Are boys naturally better at math than girls?
- Should men and women share household chores?
- Is it okay for a woman to work outside the home?
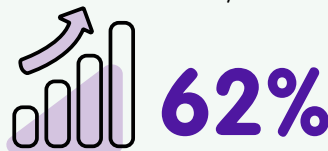
62%

In 2022, 62% of observed children who participated in a Center-Based Humanitarian Play Lab (HPL) demonstrated age-appropriate physical, cognitive, creative, social, or emotional skills after attending an HPL. Sample questions used to measure this might include:

- Does the child participate in cooperative work with peers?
- Does the child persist in difficulties with patience?
- Can the child name and identify at least five colors?
- Can the child count five objects?

Our Advocacy Impact

Advocacy progress can be difficult to measure on traditional project timelines or with common reporting metrics—changes in systems-level policies and practice often happen over years. Here are several moments from Play to Learn advocacy work over the past year where we have seen direct results of our work.

U.S. Government budget advocacy wins

The Play to Learn investment in U.S. Government advocacy has begun to show clear results. In the newest U.S. Government Budget, Play to Learn's collective advocacy won an additional $5 million—a 20% increase—for the office that oversees programming for vulnerable children and caregivers. We also secured new budget language emphasizing that the Global Child Thrive Act should be a priority across both humanitarian and development programming and calling on the Biden Administration to report on the amount of funding provided in the budget under development and humanitarian assistance for mental health and psychosocial support. These changes are critical to ensuring accountability for results, as well as ensuring the policy will be applied to crisis-affected regions. Play to Learn partners also secured language that requires more data collection on basic education spending for children in crisis contexts. This will ultimately allow us to make a more compelling case for increased investment for young children affected by crisis.

Standards esablished for nurseries in Lebanon

The IRC partnered with the Lebanon MoPH and the Knowledge to Policy Center at the American University of Beirut to create the first-ever standards for private nurseries in Lebanon. The new standards apply to all nurseries run by the MoPH and promote consistency in the quality of ECD programming for children nationwide, including guidelines for curriculum; physical infrastructure and play areas; health and safety (including sanitization procedures); and how to be inclusive of children with diverse backgrounds. In response to the country's financial crisis and resulting limited resources, the standards describe quality at three levels: a minimum standard of service, plus two higher tiers of quality that programs may aspire to as resources allow.

Advising national pre-primary curriculum in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh National Curriculum and Textbook Board invited BRAC to provide technical expertise on a new national pre-primary curriculum. Through this engagement, BRAC successfully advocated for playful pedagogy and psychosocial well-being to be incorporated into the national pre-primary curriculum. To bring the curriculum to life, BRAC contributed to the development of a corresponding teachers' guide. The curriculum was approved for a pilot in 3,214 government schools beginning in January 2023.
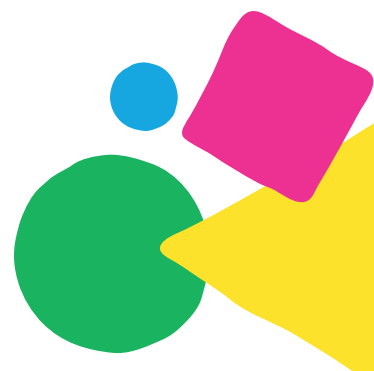
Participant Voices

Read stories of adaptability, growth, and joy from participants in Play to Learn programming.

Many Rohingya children learn to express themselves through art when processing difficult emotions. When Omor Faruk first arrived at a BRAC Humanitarian Play Lab (HPL), his artwork reflected the violence he had witnessed before fleeing home. Playful learning activities, including drawing and painting, helped him heal. Now a graduate of the HPL program, Omor Faruk hopes to be a teacher one day.

Nur Hossain has lived in the camps in Cox's Bazar since 2017. He grows plants next to the shelter where he lives with his family and loves teaching his grandchildren about how to nurture the vegetables they grow. During the COVID-19 pandemic, his grandchildren's education was temporarily disrupted. Although he appreciated the remote programming that was provided, Nur was relieved when ECD facilitators began making home visits that felt more personalized to the children's specific needs. When the Center-Based HPLs reopened, he was thrilled that his grandchildren could return to the program: "When the children enter the HPL, they are transported to a more colorful and vibrant world. Whenever they come home and tell me about something new they learned, it makes me happy knowing that they are receiving this opportunity."

Nuria Sultana joined the BRAC team during the pandemic, first connecting with pregnant women and mothers through remote programming and then through home visits. "Over time, I was able to transform from a stranger into someone who they could rely on," she reflected. When she feels overwhelmed, she practices the same breathing exercises she teaches mothers. "When someone cries, we are used to telling them to stop crying," she said, "but now I know that when people cry, they should be allowed to cry." Helping people process complex emotions has now become a central component of her career and life.
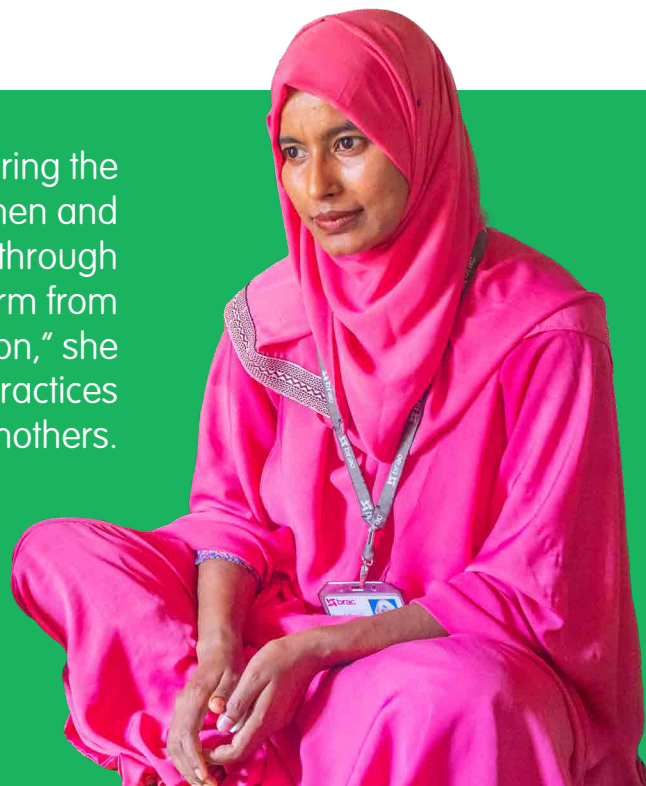
When Tasnim, a 5-year-old Syrian girl, first started attending a Preschool Healing Classroom in Lebanon, she did not speak, even to say her name. But the playful environment of the classroom encouraged her to begin participating in activities and to speak more and more. Tasnim now uses phrases in English, French, and Arabic and has learned to express her emotions through words. Tasnim's parents say she is excited when she wakes up every morning to go into school.
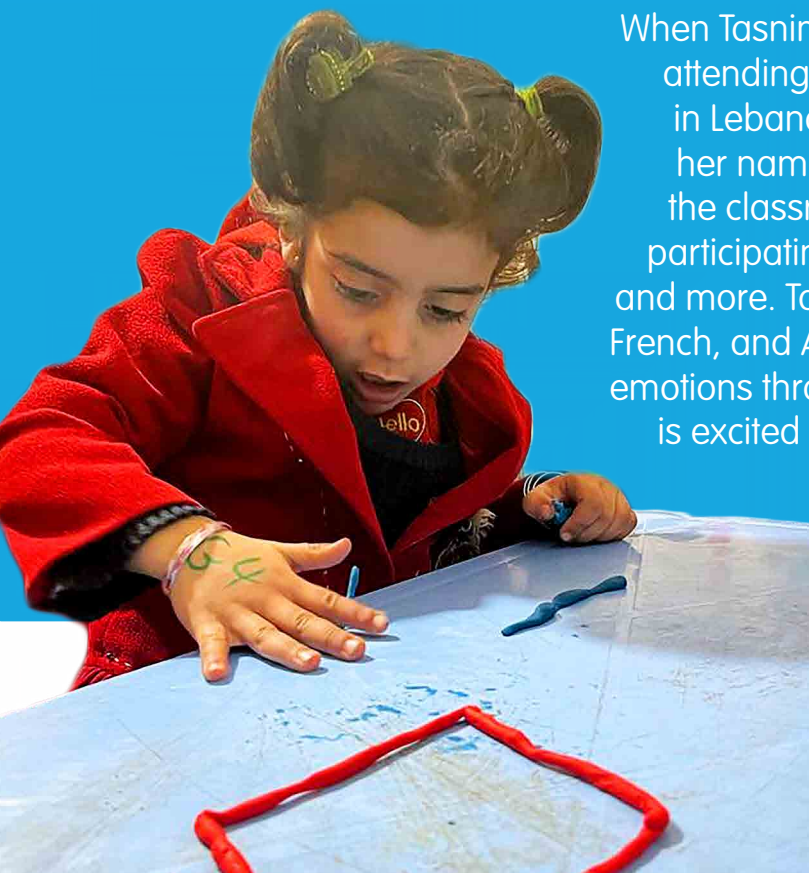
Our Learning Agenda: Research

Rigorous, responsible research in humanitarian settings requires adaptability and proactive community engagement. Below are lessons generated from Play to Learn's research activities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh about how to implement research studies effectively and ethically in these contexts.

Navigating changing realities around access to a population requires a nimble research design.

Due to a variety of complex factors, it can be difficult for outside visitors to access refugee camps. For example, Play to Learn's evaluation of a parenting program for fathers in Cox's Bazar required surveying 4,000 parents to best estimate the program's impact. Researchers calculated they would need 100 enumerators collecting data over 30 days, but due to changing factors affecting access, only 25 enumerators could collect data over 15 days. The research team had to rapidly shorten surveys, reduce the sample size by half in the camps, and work with the implementation team to also offer the intervention in the host community to augment the sample there. Ultimately, this created an opportunity for an entirely new set of learnings, now drawing from both refugee and host communities.

Working in remote refugee camps requires creative logistical problem solving.

Distance from towns, limited infrastructure, difficult weather conditions, and challenging terrain all lead to logistical challenges in planning and implementing research activities. Most travel to reach research participants is on foot, over hilly terrain, and often in inclement weather. Research using heavy equipment, bulky materials, electricity, or internet requires additional resources. These factors were especially important as the research team identified devices to collect biomarker data (for example, heart rate). Various devices can collect this data, but they often require internet or electricity or do not produce sufficient quality data. After testing four devices, the team discovered Bodyguard, a portable device that captures the quality of data needed, has internal storage capacity, uses a long-lasting battery, and is small, portable, and affordable.

Cultural practices and routines change, requiring adaptations in research design.

Cultural practices and routines change rapidly. When the intervention and research design for the evaluation of BRAC's caregiver program for fathers was developed, fathers spent most of their time at or near home. But by the time baseline data collection began, a lifting of COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions and an increase in the availability of income-generating activities meant fathers were no longer reliably in their homes or reachable on cell phones. Following intensive consultations, the research team changed protocols so enumerators could quickly canvass nearby areas for fathers who were included in the original database and immediately available. Ultimately, this strategy helped the team meet daily data collection targets with little to no impact on the study's overall rigor.

Conducting research in the Rohingya language requires sensitivity and community-based expertise.

Most commonly used research methods were generated through work with Western, English-speaking populations— but these do not necessarily apply when working with other cultures. Direct translations of concepts from one language into another often don't convey the right meaning. This necessitated partnerships with local NGOs who have Rohingya linguistic and cultural expertise. The research team has an ongoing partnership with the Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP), a community-based social enterprise working in the camps. They conducted interviews with more than 100 Rohingya community members to better understand caregiving practices and common mental health challenges people encounter—including the specific words and phrases used when describing these topics. Next, they interviewed 22 community-identified cultural experts in caregiving and mental health. This informed two new measures used in Play to Learn research in the camps, which will be publicly available after the completion of the project to inform future research.

Ethical research requires participatory and community engagement strategies.

Research must neither harm participants nor put them at undue risk. This is particularly important when research involves vulnerable populations, such as pregnant women, babies, and refugees. Play to Learn works closely with local Rohingya enumerators to reduce the chances of harm to participants. One component of the research involves collecting physical measurements of newborns within 72 hours of birth. In consulting with communities, researchers learned most women give birth at home, and the period immediately after birth is considered a very sensitive time, during which only a few people are allowed to visit. In consultations with communities to ask how this data could be collected respectfully and without violating cultural norms, it was agreed that female Rohingya enumerators from the community could collect the data if their visits were kept short.

"It's not easy being a single mother of two sons, but the help and support I receive from the BRAC team made life much simpler."

- Zubeda, Rohingya mother of 7-year-old twin sons

Our Learning Agenda:
Design and Implementation

Below, we share some of the many examples of how we applied learnings across Play to Learn's design and implementation over the past year.

Learnings that affirm good practice

Digital tools must be tailored to the needs and capabilities of the end user.

- Across the IRC's digital tools, caregivers value convenient access to content and, therefore, prefer media optimized for use on mobile devices. In contrast, facilitators require additional resources and guidance built into the way they access digital resources in order to best integrate technology into their programming.

Local involvement at all stages is essential to ensure program quality and relevance.

- The Rohingya community was involved throughout the process of developing video content for use in their community, including providing input into character design and content. Although Rohingya leaders were initially concerned about video use in schools, after meetings to showcase the content, leaders expressed enthusiasm and agreed the videos were educational.

- BRAC prioritizes capacity building of the local Rohingya workforce to ensure a legacy of strong ECD facilitation skills.

When designed for minimal burden, caregiver mental health and well-being is an enabling factor for children's learning and play.

- Children thrive when parents thrive. Many Play to Learn models include elements of caregiver support.

- Programming to support caregivers may still cause a strain on their time. Play to Learn programming in Lebanon found that when two caregiver-facing programs were combined, the time caregivers spent on one program took away from time they were able to spend on the other.

New insights

Flexibility in program delivery can help a model overcome unexpected obstacles and meet different users' needs.

- In humanitarian contexts, models may need to shift from in-person to hybrid or remote delivery due to changes in access, safety concerns, or population movement.

- A mix of modalities can optimize attendance. Play to Learn has found that while most caregivers prefer in-person modalities when possible, some face barriers to in-person attendance and appreciate remote options.

The use of low- and no-cost materials for both play and space construction are enabling factors for scale.

- BRAC's Center-Based Humanitarian Play Labs use locally available materials, such as bamboo, in construction. Home-Based Humanitarian Play Labs offer an even lower-cost model without the need for any new construction.

Our Learning Agenda:
Advocacy

Taking stock of our strategies so far

In 2022, Play to Learn commissioned the first of four reports outlining advocacy progress driven by the Play to Learn consortium and summarizing lessons learned. The report, "The Path to Progress," highlights four case studies that provide a representative illustration of different goals, strategies, and tactics and synthesizes key themes and lessons learned.

The report found that strategies driving Play to Learn's advocacy success include:

- **Cultivating strong relationships with decision-makers**, including multi-year campaigns that required relationship building across changes in governments and other institutions

- **Building ECD champions in decision-making positions,** including elected officials, heads of departments, and government staff

- **Conducting and deploying research,** communicating high-quality research in timely and targeted ways

- **Working in partnership and coalition,** bringing together likeminded individuals and organizations, and leveraging their combined voices and capacities for greater effect

The ECDiE Coordinator Learning Cohort

Sesame Workshop and the University of Virginia's Humanitarian Collaborative are partnering to better understand success factors and challenges in the formal coordination mechanisms of ECD in crisis contexts through the development of an ECDiE coordinator learning cohort. The cohort launched in October 2021 and includes coordinators working in Bangladesh, Colombia, Jordan, Syria, Uganda, and Ukraine. Cohort members exchange learnings in a community of practice, helping Play to Learn better understand the different roles that ECDiE coordinators play at the country or crisis level; gather lessons learned from their work to inform work in other contexts; and generate learnings on why and how humanitarian actors, donors, and host governments should invest in deploying ECDiE coordinators. Key learnings from the cohort so far include recommendations on strengthening inclusion of ECD in mainstream humanitarian needs assessments and response plans at the country or crisis level, as well as a summary brief on contextual factors that support or impede ECDiE coordination, who "leads" on ECD in-country and how that impacts coordination, and how to advocate for increased prioritization of ECDiE.

> "Advocacy is rarely a linear process—there are frequent obstacles on the road to progress, requiring rerouting, extra stops along the way, and sometimes even retracing our steps. The winding path of advocacy may also offer opportunity, opening new and unexpected paths toward progress."
>
> –The Path to Progress, Play to Learn Advocacy Report #1

Resources to Share

Stories from the Middle East: This article on the IRC's website illustrates the IRC and Sesame Workshop's work together in the Middle East.

Nurturing care workshops report: This report describes five workshops convened by ANECD, the IRC, Save the Children, UNICEF, WHO, and local partners in Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, and Northwest Syria. It outlines recommendations for advancing nurturing care in the region.

Scaling and partnerships: This resource describes the IRC's many scaling pathways in collaboration with national governments.

Rohingya stories: This resource shares the experiences of participants in BRAC's Humanitarian Play Labs and Pashe Achhi programs through stories, artwork, and photos.

Cultural connections: BRAC produced a video featuring Shabikun Nahar, a Rohingya Humanitarian Play Lab worker, recalling the stories she tells children at the play lab to help them stay connected with their culture.

Research brief series: NYU Global TIES for Children developed six research briefs, covering issues such as the adaptation and testing of assessment tools, issues around delivering quality research in conflict-affected contexts, and Rohingya fathers' perceptions of play. These briefs are featured on a dedicated Play to Learn webpage.

Global learnings about play: This resource contains a snapshot of Sesame Workshop's learnings on global play, including guidelines for adults facilitating play, commonly available objects used for play, and ideas for games that have been vetted for relevance around the world.

Storytelling with communities: This video describes Sesame Workshop's process of using formative research and gathering input from communities to develop new characters—and gives a behind-the-scenes look at how this process was used to create Noor and Aziz!
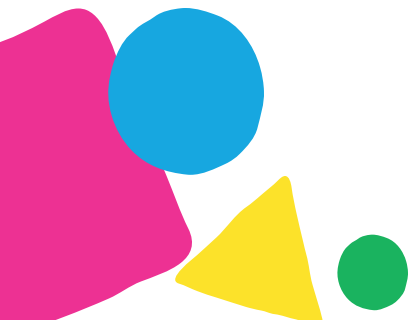
Online hub featuring Play to Learn resources: Sesame Workshop created a public-facing home for the resources produced across its humanitarian portfolio—including many assets created under Play to Learn.

Technology Spotlights

The *Watch, Play, Learn* app

In order to show video content in low-technology settings, Sesame Workshop partnered with Working Man, an app developer, to develop the *Watch, Play, Learn* mobile application. The app was designed with an easy-to-use interface that supports users with limited literacy or familiarity with technology and runs on Android devices, including newer and older phones, tablets, and projectors. To design the app, a variety of low-connectivity scenarios were considered. A content management system allows users to create playlists relevant to daily lessons and videos are downloadable for offline play—teachers can simply press play without relying on internet connectivity or toggling between screens. The app is currently in use in Cox's Bazar.
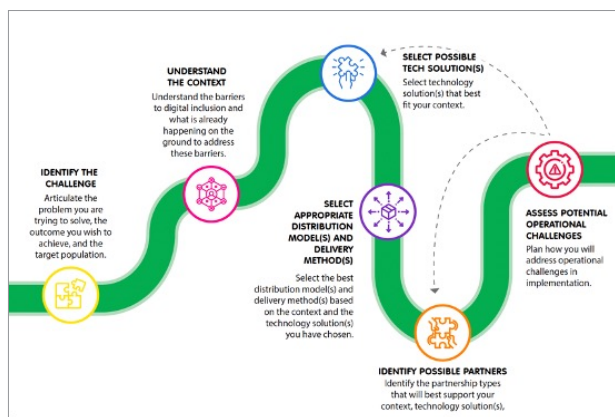
Technology Decision Roadmap

Sesame Workshop partnered with global development organization DAI to create the Decision Roadmap, a step-by-step process to help programs determine how to distribute video content in low-connectivity and crisis-affected communities. Meant to be used collaboratively across stakeholders, the roadmap helps users determine which technology solutions and partnership models are best suited for their context.

Interactive voice response

To support pregnant and lactating women in the Cox's Bazar camps and surrounding host communities, the IRC worked with international health research institute icddr,b to develop messages about healthy child development and created a plan for disseminating them through a variety of digital modalities. The resulting program, Gindegi Goron (a Rohingya phrase for "developing future"), uses a mix of technologies to deliver messages. The program uses IVR calls, two-way phone calls, and text messages—and tailors which messages are sent based on the specific needs of the recipient, including the age of their child and if the recipient is a pregnant woman, a lactating mother, or another family member, such as a father or a mother-in-law. The IVR system also conducts biweekly quizzes to reinforce the messaging for program participants and provides the IRC with information on uptake to enable iterative improvements over time.

Looking to the Future

At the heart of Play to Learn is our desire to keep learning—about the communities we work with, how to best reach families despite new challenges, and how to connect with other organizations and networks who have the same goals. We are always incorporating what we learn into our plans for the future.

Pillar of work	What have we learned?	How are we applying these lessons in our future plans?
Direct Services	The COVID-19 pandemic forced partners to pivot programming and utilize remote modalities, illustrating that remote ECD services can be viable. This was confirmed through an evaluation of our WhatsApp-based program in Lebanon, which improved child development across all domains.	We continue to use remote and hybrid modalities for delivery when appropriate, including the use of phone calls, IVR, WhatsApp, and more. Across these models, we are continually applying lessons learned about effectiveness. Our *Watch, Play, Learn* pilots in Bangladesh, Colombia, and Kenya are also providing operational lessons on appropriate technology.
Global Content	The "ready to use" content that Play to Learn created requires a broader toolkit for integration into programs. Partners who piloted the content requested guidance in areas such as facilitator training, integrating videos into ongoing programs, and activities to complement the videos.	Play to Learn is creating a toolkit to support integration of *Watch, Play, Learn* content into direct services. This toolkit will focus on educational guidance, facilitator training, tools for monitoring and evaluation, and support for technology and operations.
Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning	Successful scale requires models to adapt to changing contexts. Intervention design should therefore rely on both existing research and continuous engagement with participant communities to create responsive programming.	In 2023, the Play to Learn consortium is consolidating evidence-based delivery approaches into a technical package to outline for practitioners, based on Play to Learn project learnings, how elements of interventions can be replicated and scaled in a given context.
Advocacy	Evidence is helpful but not sufficient or always necessary to drive change. In some cases, it is not necessary because decisions on resource allocation are made at such a high level (such as national budgets) that evidence is not yet part of the process. In others, technical implementers may find the research useful, but without higher-level political will, it is difficult for them to drive change.	Our advocacy approach for 2023 incorporates upcoming evidence from across our research portfolio. Our overall strategy, however, allows us to make progress that incorporates, but does not rely on, ongoing research. For some decision-makers, we instead focus on linking ECD to existing priorities. In other cases, we tailor which evidence we bring to technical vs. political decision-makers by identifying the level of detail appropriate to their interests and the type of decision they are making.

"Yara gained self-confidence and learned how to socialize. She knows what she wants and expresses her emotions and needs clearly. Yara transformed into a social butterfly!"
—Dima, displaced mother of 3-year-old daughter Yara in Lebanon

PHOTO: Sheikh Shananuzzaman Angkan/BRAC IED, Bangladesh

SESAME WORKSHOP

Sesame Workshop is the non-profit organization committed to helping kids grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. Sesame Workshop delivers high quality early childhood programming in more than 150 countries.

The International Rescue Committee helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover, and regain control of their future.

brac

BRAC works to empower people and communities in situations of poverty, illiteracy, disease, and social injustice, seeking positive changes that enable individuals to meet their full potential.

NYU | Global TIES for Children

New York University Global TIES for Children is an international research center that works toward a world where all children have equitable access to opportunities that allow them to thrive in an ecosystem where caregivers and teachers have the resources needed to support them.

The LEGO Foundation

The LEGO Foundation aims to inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow; a mission that it shares with the LEGO Group. The LEGO Foundation is dedicated to building a future where learning through play empowers children to become creative, engaged, lifelong learners. Its work is about re-defining play and re-imagining learning. In collaboration with thought leaders, influencers, educators, and parents, the LEGO Foundation aims to equip, inspire, and activate champions for play.

To learn more about Play to Learn, contact:

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