



Learning Study Summary for Play and Care Together (PACT)

Programme Description

The Play and Care Together (PACT) pilot was designed to support increased psychosocial well-being and resilience for children in emergency contexts by helping them build stronger peer-to-peer relationships through play-based activities and sessions.

Implemented in 10 schools across the Karachi district of Pakistan, PACT worked with 1201 children between the ages of 10 and 14 who have been impacted by the negative effects of poverty, poor health, and conflict, including violence, child abuse, and substance abuse.

PACT trained 32 Peer Supporters and 15 Adult Facilitators in how to co-lead structured, supervised, play-based programme sessions designed to help children develop a strong sense of self, and sense of belonging, as well as other critical life skills, such as leadership, confidence, communication, decision-making, sense of belonging, and problem-solving.

The Building Back Better Project

PACT was developed as part of Building Back Better, an initiative that sought to pilot a series of new, play-based interventions in Ethiopia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Uganda from 2022-2023. It was made possible with the support of the LEGO Foundation.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 1 Children who participated in the pilot, as well as the Peer Supporters reported improvements in communication, empathy, sense of belonging, self-confidence, managing emotions, and knowing how to support each other.
- 2 Overall, 84% of children who participated in PACT reported enjoying the sessions. Adult Coaches also indicated that 100% of participants actively engaged in the activities.
- 3 The quantitative study found no significant improvement in measures of resilience, psychosocial skills, or life skills of Child Participants or Peer Supporters from baseline to endline. This finding could be in part due to the short duration of the PACT intervention cycle, implementation challenges related to the Peer Supporter component, and challenges in measurement.
- 4 Child Participants preferred PACT when delivered by Adult Facilitators only rather than when sessions were assisted by Peer Supporters. The study indicated that this may be due to the perceived ability of Peer Supporters to understand and deliver PACT.
- 5 The PACT training programme motivated peer supporters to become leaders, built their confidence, and provided them with a platform to showcase their skills.

Before PACT, we were always angry but... we learned about the brain zones... so whenever we are angry we perform breathing exercises and relax ourselves"

– Peer Supporter (FGD)



Reach

1201 children
32 Peer Supporters
15 Adult Facilitators

KEY LEARNINGS:

- 1 In the PACT pilot there was a lack of clarity on the role and responsibility of Peer Supporters and this may have contributed to some of the challenges experienced during the pilot. Future iterations of PACT should ensure that the role of the Peer Supporter is clear and that the project team and Adult Facilitators have a good understanding of the peer support component of the intervention.
- 2 Engaging school leadership and generating buy-in for Right To Play to implement a pilot intervention in an in-school environment is crucial. Right To Play should work with school leadership to determine the best time to schedule sessions. The pilot also indicated that 2 hours was too long for children to stay fully engaged in the PACT session and it was also a significant demand on children's time which resulted in them missing class time. A 1-hour session is therefore more appropriate and effective.
- 3 The PACT curriculum was found to be technical and initially difficult for Adult Facilitators and particularly Peer Supporters to understand. New interventions may require more intensive training and ongoing support, and when working with young people additional support may be required to support them to fulfil their role.
- 4 Respondents reported that the Wellbeing Journal was a useful resource for Child Participants and served as a tool to help them consolidate their learning, indicating that journaling can be a useful tool in PSS programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Review and adapt the PACT resource to simplify language and guidance to improve understanding of the activities and engagement with the Wellbeing Journal.
- 2 Develop guidance note to contextualize the PACT resource and activities.
- 3 Review the PACT intervention and develop a full theory of change and measurement framework that details causal pathways for how play and peer-based psychosocial support activities can be leveraged to contribute to the development of socio-emotional skills, psychosocial wellbeing, and resilience.
- 4 Manage another pilot of the revised PACT intervention in an in-school setting with a clearer Peer Supporter component, and invest in further research/evaluation to generate evidence on the effectiveness of the intervention.

“[Before,] Peer Supporters lacked self-esteem and were not confident enough that they can do it, but then they took the sessions and performed activities, and they realised that they can do it”

– Adult Facilitator (FGD)

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