



RIGHT TO PLAY
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Learning Study Summary for Play to Grow (PTG)

Programme Description

The Play To Grow parenting pilot brought together principles of play therapy and child-parent relationship therapy in a parent education resource facilitated by community members over a 6-month period in Tanzania and Uganda. The approach uses playful group sessions to help parents hone skills to improve their own wellbeing, their relationship with their children, and their children's pre-academic and social-emotional development.

Play To Grow implemented the following activities:

Training of parent educators; 12 parent education sessions; 12 parent support group sessions; monthly home visits; radio broadcasts.

The pilot was implemented in four districts in Tanzania (Dar Es Salaam, Serengeti, Kibondo and Kasulu) and Uganda (Adjumani, Isingiro and Kampala). In Uganda, the project targeted both refugee and host communities.

The Building Back Better Project

Play To Grow 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.

"Children's learning is not only at school. Even at home we can teach our children numeracy, reading and other skills. Those who do not perform well at school can be taught without even knowing that they are being taught. For example, asking a child to bring two or three tomatoes"

– Female Caregiver

KEY RESULTS

Right To Play supported 232 parent educators in Tanzania and Uganda on the Play To Grow approach. Following training from RTP, parent educators reported that they had the necessary skills and resources to support caregivers on how to apply responsive parenting. By the end of the project, caregivers improved their knowledge of responsive parenting and play and this had a reported positive effect on parent-child interactions and children's SEL skills.

Social & Emotional Learning

Caregivers reported an improvement in children's positive social and emotional skills and behaviour. This improved from 39% to 64% in Tanzania, and 21% to 46% in Uganda. Findings also showed that children were better able to identify and name their emotions as a result of improved communication with their parents.

Improved Parent-Child Relationship

Play to Grow led to an increase in the proportion of respondents reporting positive parent-child relationships. This increased from 42% to 69% in Tanzania and from 70% to 84% in Uganda. This improvement was observed across all demographic factors, including gender, district, education level and employment status.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that caregivers are more aware of spending time with their children and are interested and want to understand their children's emotions.

Changes in Responsive Parenting

Caregivers spent more time engaging in playful learning with their children and created positive home environments that support learning. The endline indicated that parents were more likely to use 6 playful and stimulating activities each week.

Caregivers reduced the use of punitive discipline. The Play to Grow methodology focused on supporting parents to embody an attitude of non-judgemental acceptance towards their children and suggested alternative non-punitive strategies. The percentage of parents who reported using punitive discipline fell from 80% to 21% in Tanzania, and from 51% to 12% in Uganda.

The project had a positive effect on parents with lower levels of education and served as an important equalizer for less educated parents.



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Reach: 232 Parent Educators trained, 3112 caregivers, 12532 children (est.)

KEY LEARNINGS

- 1 Caregivers spending **increased time playing with their children was at the core of reported improved SEL.**
- 2 **Contextualising parenting resources was crucial for the success of Play To Grow.** The parenting resource was adapted from the Child Parent Relationship Therapy model with the support of local play therapists who also worked closely with Right To Play to train parent educators.
- 3 **Parent educators appreciated the simple layout and user-friendly structure of the Play to Grow manual.** The resource focused on 9 core parenting skills and each session included a 1-page plan translated into over 7 languages.
- 4 The **combination of parenting sessions and home visits was essential to fostering responsive parenting,** leading to increased proportion of parents initiating regular playful learning activities with children.
- 5 Overall, the endline found that **male parent educators may be more resistant to changing their attitudes towards responsive parenting.** Some evidence indicates that this is linked to perceptions of gender roles and hesitation from male figures to engage in parenting activities.

NEXT STEPS

These early findings indicate the potential of Play To Grow's approach to support children's SEL skills and improve parent-child relationships. The following next-steps will be implemented based on learnings from the project:

- 1 Boost guidance on psychosocial support of children for an emergency-ready package
- 2 Integrate user feedback via in-country learning workshops to finalize the existing package
- 3 Develop a teacher version of the training to support continuity across home and school settings
- 4 Develop a series of video training sessions to support uptake of the 9 core parenting skills identified in Play To Grow

"The project has worked to bridge the social distance between parents and children. Children are no longer afraid of their parents and they can share their emotions and the challenges they face"

– Community Development Officer

The **LEGO** Foundation