



**RIGHT TO PLAY**  
PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

**PLAY TO GROW *FLEX***

**RESEARCH STUDY**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**January 2024**

# 1. Right To Play International

Right To Play is a global organization committed to improving the lives of children and youth affected by conflict, disease, and poverty. Established in 2000, Right To Play has pioneered a unique play-based approach to learning and development which focuses on quality education, life skills, health, gender equality, child protection and building peaceful communities. With programming in 16 countries, Right To Play transforms the lives of more than 2.3 million children each year, both inside and outside of the classroom. In addition to our work with children, Right To Play advocates with parents, local communities, and governments to advance the fundamental rights of all children.

Right To Play is headquartered in Toronto, Canada and in London, UK and has operations in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Our programs are facilitated by more than 500 international staff and 31,900 local teachers and coaches. For more information, follow @RightToPlayIntl and visit [www.righttoplay.com](http://www.righttoplay.com).

## 2. Research Overview

### Background on Play To Grow

Play To Grow is a Right To Play early years education intervention designed to support parents of children ages 3-6 in developing social emotional skills and foundational learning through responsive parenting and play.

Play To Grow is designed to be delivered either as a standalone intervention or as a component in a broader pre-primary program and brings together the science of early childhood brain development, play therapy, child-parent relationships, and early literacy and numeracy into a time-bound intervention. Play To Grow draws heavily from the strong evidence base of Child Parent Relationship Therapy, an intervention developed by the Center for Play Therapy at the University of North Texas, that is grounded in child-centred play therapy, attachment principles and interpersonal neurobiology.

The primary component of Play To Grow is a 24-week parent education program designed to support the development of nine key parenting skills. Each one hour session is delivered by trained Parent Educators from the same community as participating parents/caregivers, and provides parents with information on child development, play, and self-care as well as actionable parenting methods to try at home.

The 24 sessions are supplemented by six monthly home visits from the Parent Educator designed to build trusting relationships with participating parents/caregivers and give an opportunity to discuss their experience of the program, what they are learning, and how they are applying new knowledge and skills. The monthly visits also provide an opportunity for Parent Educators to observe participating parent/caregivers' progress in applying the parenting skills developed

through the weekly sessions. The final component of the intervention model is a series of radio messages designed and contextualised to reinforce the key themes and skills focused on in the regular parent education sessions.

The current Impact Statement of Play To Grow is *Children have improved social emotional learning and early literacy/numeracy skills through responsive parenting and play.*

### **Research & Development on Play To Grow**

Right To Play is in the early stages of designing a research and development strategy that will establish a structured process through which Right To Play will develop new interventions which will then be iteratively piloted, evaluated, and adapted through sequential phases. This reflects a strategic commitment to generating evidence on play-based interventions designed to contribute to improving children's learning and wellbeing.

In 2022-23 Right To Play piloted a series of new play-based interventions with a focus on early years education and psychosocial support. Play To Grow was initially developed in partnership between Right To Play and Unbounded Associates in 2022 and was first piloted in Tanzania and Uganda in 2023. An accompanying learning study commissioned to evaluate the initial pilot found indicative evidence of improvements in children's social emotional skills, the parent-child relationship, and responsive parenting and it was also found to be relevant and appropriate.

Play To Grow is now considered a *promising practice* intervention and Right To Play has secured additional funding to implement a further pilot and research study. As part of the next phase of development of Play To Grow, Right To Play has continued the collaboration with Unbounded Associates to develop Play To Grow *Flex*, an adapted version of the original intervention designed to be relevant, appropriate, and effective in contexts of protracted crises and with communities with specific additional needs such as internally displaced persons and refugees.

The Play To Grow *Flex* intervention is designed to deliver 26 sessions, incorporating two additional sessions focused on the impacts of adversity on children and their caregivers. The *Flex* package is designed to respond to the needs of children and families affected by conflict and crisis, particularly those that have been displaced, experienced war or community violence, or have experienced the loss or separation from loved ones. The revised intervention therefore has an increased focus on psychosocial wellbeing and introduces additional trauma-focused components in appropriate sessions.

## **3. Purpose of Consultancy**

Right To Play is seeking to procure the services of an independent learning partner to design and manage a research study on the further pilot of Play To Grow and the initial pilot of Play To Grow *Flex* in Isingiro and Adjumani, Uganda. The primary purpose of the research is to explore the feasibility, relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness of Play To Grow and Play To Grow *Flex* in this second-stage pilot.

The research study should be co-designed in partnership with Right To Play to respond to the following potential research questions:

- 1) To what extent is Play To Grow Flex **feasible, relevant, and appropriate** in the communities and contexts for which they are intended? This could include a qualitative component that explores the following sub-questions:
  - a. What beliefs do parents have about play and learning?
  - b. What child outcomes matter to parents?
  
- 2) To what extent does Play To Grow **contribute** to its intended outcomes of:
  - a. Improvements in social emotional learning skills
  - b. Improvements in school readiness
  - c. Improvements in pre-primary, foundational literacy and numeracy
  - d. Improvements in wellbeing of children and parents/caregivers

*(This should include data collection at the child-level)*
  
- 3) How does play-based, responsive parenting **contribute to the intended outcomes** and what are the **core components** of the intervention design?
  
- 4) How should Right To Play **adapt** Play To Grow to **improve effectiveness** of the intervention design and implementation?
  
- 5) Should Play To Grow **advance** to the next phase of the Right To Play R&D process including a rigorous evaluation of effectiveness and impact?

The **primary objectives** of the consultancy are as follows:

- Design and manage a research study in collaboration with Right To Play to respond to the key research questions on Play To Grow and Play To Grow Flex

- Collaborate with Right To Play to finalise the intervention measurement framework and develop, adapt, and finalise intervention-specific measurement tools
- Design a research framework and further research instruments to collect necessary data, adopting a mixed methods approach that includes child-focused and participatory methods
- Develop a comprehensive and actionable research report that responds to the key research questions and identifies key practical recommendations for Right To Play to further adapt and improve the Play To Grow intervention (including theoretical, operational, and strategic recommendations).

## 4. Key Deliverables & Timeline

The following table provides an indicative overview of the research timeframe and key deliverables. An indicative workplan should be included in submitted proposals and will be further revised during the inception phase.

Deliverable	Deadline
Terms of Reference Published	24 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
Submission of proposals	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2024
Award of Contract	4 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
Design & Inception Phase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RTP consultations and document review</li> <li>- Rapid literature review</li> <li>- Workplan</li> <li>- Methodology &amp; tools finalised</li> </ul>	March 2024
Baseline Data Collection	April 2024
Endline Data Collection	September/October 2024
Draft Report	October 2024
Final Deliverables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Final Report</li> </ul>	October 2024

b. Learning Workshop c. Tools & Data	
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## 5. Experience

The consultant/firm should have:

- Experience of designing and managing research, including feasibility and pilot studies
- Experience in designing research appropriate for pilot projects, including approaches such as implementation science and realist evaluation
- Technical expertise and/or experience in early childhood development, early childhood education, social-emotional learning, parenting support, and play-based approaches to learning and wellbeing.
- Experience of managing research in Uganda, including with refugee, IDP, and host communities
- A collaborative approach to co-designing high-quality, utilisation focused research
- Commitment to critically analyse data and translate findings, learning, and recommendations to generate evidence on and improve the Play To Grow intervention
- Ability to deliver in tight timeframes and meet deadlines in dynamic circumstances, working flexibly around the implementation of the pilot project
- A commitment to child-focused, child-friendly, and participatory research methods where appropriate
- Ability to travel to and within Uganda in support of the study, as required
- Commitment to adhere to the Right To Play Child Safeguarding Policy
- Proficiency in English (essential)

## 5. Proposed Budget and Payment Schedule

Consultants are asked to provide a financial proposal for offers under **CAD 80 000**.

The payment schedules will be as follows:

- First payment: After signing of contract agreement with Right To Play (20%)
- Second payment: Submission of final inception report, including revised tools and approach following piloting of instruments (20%)
- Third Payment: Submission of the baseline report approved by Right To Play (30%)
- Final payment: Submission of final endline report and other final deliverables approved by Right To Play (30%)

## 8. Application Submission

We invite interested candidates to submit the following application documents:

- Expression of interest including relevant expertise and previous experience
- Technical Proposal including response to Terms of Reference, outlining approach to the research objectives, and specifying days per activity (maximum 4 pages)
- Financial Proposal (budget/day rates)
- CV/s of each team member.
- Two relevant references

All questions or clarifications regarding these Terms of Reference must be in writing and submitted to [hgathercole@righttoplay.com](mailto:hgathercole@righttoplay.com) no later than **6<sup>th</sup> February 2024**. Questions and requests for clarification, and responses thereto, will be circulated to parties who have indicated interest in the opportunity.

Proposals must be submitted no later than **22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024** to **Henry Gathercole, Global Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Manager** ([hgathercole@righttoplay.com](mailto:hgathercole@righttoplay.com)).

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis and may be reviewed as soon as they are received. Early submissions are therefore encouraged and Right To Play reserves the right to select a consultancy before the proposal submission date noted above.

Right To Play is a child-focused organization. Our recruitment and selection procedures reflect our commitment to the safety and protection of children in our programs. To learn more about who we are and what we do, please visit our website at: <https://righttoplay.com/en/>