

Introduction

The following collection of 20 cases come from the 18 organisations involved in the Learning Review. Following a one hour interview with each partner about their collection of outcomes, we had a one hour “digging deeper/substantiation” interview with each partner to learn about their chosen outcome, exploring the specific case. Prior to the second interview, the partners were encouraged to contact those knowledgeable about the change to learn more about what happened and how learning through play had made a difference.

To understand the GFC partner’s contribution to the outcome, Learning Loop first tried to get some background about how the organisation worked with play and for what purposes. We then listened to what the organisation had found out about the chosen outcome. This came in the form of additional perspectives on outcomes, new outcomes, more detailed descriptions of how the organisation had contributed and how specifically learning through play had played a role. Finally, partners shared if other factors had been involved in influencing the change and if they had any concerns related to the outcome.

It should be noted that five of the cases were not substantiated by listening to external perspectives. We still chose to write these up using the details that the partner themselves knew about from their perspective. Each partner was given the opportunity to edit their cases.

Ekmattra

About Ekmattra

Working with children who have been living on the streets of Dhaka, Bangladesh, Ekmattra runs a school for these children in Mymensingh and facilitates the knowledge development of children and youth so that they can be an active force in social development.

A glimpse of how Ekmattra works with play

Ekmattra staff shared what play looks like in their context: “When we are working with the children, we always try to make it joyful and play-based. There is always a particular topic and lesson for the child and we do different activities to support them in learning - for example we make words and letters. We also engage children in play without having a specific academic purpose in mind. For example, when some children are not engaging with others, we engage them in play, mixing them with those who are doing very well. Through this mixed play, we create a comfortable space where the children can laugh at making errors, helping them to work together and to solve problems. Sometimes, if we notice that 5-6 students are not understanding or not engaging in a lesson, we use play to help children relax and then get back to the lesson and understand.”

10 students meaningfully connected with texts through theatre

Source: A team of Ekmattra staff leadership met with children and teachers in several separate conversations, learning about this outcome.

Outcome: In late 2023, through joining the Theater Club, 10 students in grades 2 to 6 who had found it challenging to connect with and pay attention to the stories in their textbooks became enthusiastic about learning, active, and eager to give their best. The students became interested also in other stories in the textbook.

Ekmattra staff described how they talked to a boy who had joined the Theatre Club who used to be very shy. When they asked him how he felt, the boy said that all he had to do while acting as the Golden Goose in the drama was to say ‘Paek Paek’. The boy said that when the other children watched the drama they were really happy and so he felt happy saying ‘Paek Paek’. The Ekmattra staff said that this was the start of witnessing many changes in his life.

Speaking to another boy, Abdul, about the experience, the boy said “I thought it was fun. After the drama, I started to read the stories in my textbook.” The boy explained that this was when he first had the thought of joining the English language club. Abdul’s teacher described him to be more attentive in the classroom now.

Ekmattra staff also talked with a very disciplined boy asking him about his experience with theatre. He said, "I tried to memorise the lines, but then, listening to the other boys, I realised that we can do this together!" The boy's eyes were shining. This child could connect with other children and felt that doing things together was key!

Related outcomes/effects

Ekmattra staff observed that their students were more interested in the library now. Since the drama was based on the stories from the textbook, theatre didn't just help the children who were acting to understand the texts; also the other students became curious asking "How can I know more about the story?" The teacher told the students, "You can know more from the library where there are books in both English and Bangla" and the children went to the library searching for books. First they picked up simple books, but later some said that they could read the sentences!

Some other children at the Academy also started to join another club - the English language club! Ekmattra staff asked a boy why he joined the English language club. The boy said that he, being inspired by the story of the Golden Goose, wanted to join, so that he could learn more stories. After this, the staff noticed that he had more focus and concentration.

Significance of the outcome according to Ekmattra

This is a shift in the way that these students engage with their academic content. Teachers and students brought learning to life. It's the first time Ekmattra has seen such a remarkable improvement in students' enthusiasm for learning and their connection to the stories they encounter in their textbooks. Ekmattra values students engaging physically and emotionally. Through the Theater Club, the curriculum with important lessons and messages, became accessible - helping students to develop a deeper understanding of conventions, rules, motivations, historical context, and the messages conveyed in the stories. Seeing this kind of change, the Ekmattra team expressed that it gives them as staff more energy to do more things!

Contribution of Ekmattra to the change in behaviour

When GFC started funding the project, Ekmattra started student-led clubs. In March 2023, Ekmattra started the Theater club, inviting 25 students who needed this type of support. Teachers inspired the students and provided costumes. Students recreated the Golden Goose story and the moral of the story that 'greed can lead to great loss' got embedded in their mind through an experience which appealed to the senses of seeing, hearing and feeling. The students played different roles, worked together, and made lots of mistakes, which made it really fun! The club helped students to think more deeply about the stories they encounter and the concepts they convey. The children in the Theatre Club created the stage and managed the whole theatre.

From the start, Ekmattra teachers asked who was interested in acting - allowing both attentive children and children who were not such attentive children to join. When a child, taking on a

role, would ask 'How can I act this or that?', the teachers helped them first to imagine, for example, 'What does a goose do?' The children joined in deciding how to act it out and the dialogue that they would have. It was a co-creation.

The significant role of play that supported this change

Ekmattrra staff expressed that while play-based educational learning is common in Bangladesh, Ekmattrra emphasises the element of joy in the activities at their sanctuary for children. They explained, "The most important thing to make the change in the lives of the child is joy! After doing fun things, they discover that they have learned things in the process! Making mistakes during the process of learning, in drama, makes the experience a lot of fun!"

The children at Ekmattrra come from a harsh reality and many of the children are over-aged in their grades. The structured life at the Academy, with times for going to school, having meals, going back to school, etc, can be a challenge and takes time to learn. "Including the aspect of joy, helps the children a lot", felt the staff. Play is used not just for the initial attraction, but also for comprehension throughout the learning process. The Ekmattrra team feels that "play helps to bring the child into the learning circle!"

Changing Stories

About Changing Stories

Changing Stories Nepal is based in the far western district of Dang where the organisation works through government schools to run play-based and experiential education programs in coordination with local youth leaders, so called 'fellows', who in turn receive training and a stipend to work with children and government school teachers as a way to build the talent and local employment along with quality education. Schools are chosen in collaboration with the local government considering academic achievement in those schools and what other support the schools are receiving. In the remedial education courses that Changing Stories provide, the basic criteria is to have 15 students in grades 3-5 that struggle with literacy.

A glimpse of how Changing Stories works with play

Changing Stories' goal is to support academic learning. Changing Stories have been using activity-based methods, bodily movement and fun as part of the child's experience in the classes, but in 2021, they started implementing play-based learning after some intense studies. The team has tried to figure out the role of the facilitator and is talking with other organisations about play, continually learning about this. They are trying to figure out what learning through play means in the context of having short term projects in school, needing to achieve the learning outcomes for reading and mathematics within 5 months of classes! Although Changing Stories feel that this is a constraint; they observed in 2023 that children now come to their classes to play. They don't feel that they are going to school. That has changed from 2022 and 2023!

The school principal of a Higher Secondary School adopted play-based learning methods

Source: Changing Stories staff member spoke with her team and had a conversation with the school principal.

Outcome: In July 2023, the principal in Guru Jajur Higher Secondary School invited Changing Stories to train their teachers in play-based learning methods so that they can implement this themselves. The principal used the school's own funding for this training. One round of training has already been held.

Changing Stories asked the principal how she felt about the training. The school principal mentioned that she had seen a positive impact on students' learning outcomes and their behaviour after Changing Stories' fellows led play-based classes. Initially, the teachers were hesitant to accept this new model of teaching; they were sceptical about activity-based

learning, but starting to see changes in the children. After 3 years of intervention, however, they could see the effectiveness of the method.

The principal said that the students who were a part of Changing Stories' classes were now more interactive, more confident and more "present" in their regular classrooms when the teachers implemented some elements of play-based learning. The school staff saw that children were opening up more and attendance rates were slightly higher because the children knew that they would be joining our classes if they went to the regular classes.

The teachers asked staff of Changing Stories if they could also receive training so that they could be equipped with the tools to make play-based learning a part of their pedagogy. Now that the principal has invested money, she mentioned that she wants to get her money's worth.

After the training, the regular school teachers are now trying to implement what they have learned. Some teachers have been using lecture based teaching for many years, using rote memorisation and they tend to revert back. The younger teachers, however, who know how to access the internet are putting in the effort. The principal said that if she can get the resources, she will invite Changing Stories back again next year. She is convinced, because she, as a public school principal, would not normally use the school's own funds for something like this training.

Significance of the outcome according to Changing Stories

This outcome of a school principal adopting play-based methods allows Changing Stories' to reach out to other schools. Building internal capacity and resources makes the intervention become low cost. This is the first school that has done that and as such becomes an example to other schools. If more schools adopt the methods, advocacy for the use of play-based learning has the potential to reach the school system at a higher policy level.

The outcome is also significant in that teachers serving 3000 students in this school can reach out long-term to the whole group of students that they meet in the classrooms and not just the students who need remedial support.

For Niharika, Executive Director of Changing Stories, she said "I am someone who didn't get to play other than during lunch time. I see children excited about going to school and happy. The little girl in me who had to carry lots of books is so jealous!"

Contribution of Changing Stories to the change in behaviour

Changing Stories, as part of their sustainability strategy, made it part of the MoU with the school that the principal and teachers would observe classes at least 3 times. This hardly happens due to the high workload of the teachers (and the fact that many teachers are women hurrying home to do housework), but this principal observed the play-based learning taking

place in Changing Stories' classes and participated in some games as well - in the types of games used with students.

Changing Stories showed the principal the end of project results - that the children who could not do basic additions now could do 3-digit carry over division. The principal could then see the change in the children who attended the classes.

All of these changes lead back to Changing Stories finding amazing youth, believing in them and in the ability of the students to excel.

The school has to take care of the infrastructure resources (classroom, lighting, etc), but Changing Stories provided the teaching and learning resources which the school receives at the end.

The significant role of play that supported this change

Changing Stories started to incorporate learning through play in 2021, but the school principal was already convinced about the effectiveness of the classes while doing activity-based learning. At the start of the classes at Guru Jajur Higher Secondary School this same school principal would complain about the methods saying things like, 'Why are you running around and playing?' Changing Stories was glad that she at least cared. The fellows (facilitators) tried to use a lot of local games such as a rubber band game and games using stones.

The children have been using their bodies, making human clocks, and playing shopkeeper with fake money. When shopkeeping, the facilitators have given students a budget and asked them to roam around a couple of shops to negotiate and bargain. The children have also played a lot with cards (for example, letter and word cards) made by the Changing Stories teams. In this area, the children have seen their parents gamble with cards all day. In the classes, the children use cards to mix and match and associate words with letters. They have dice games using wooden dice and letter bingo. As children learn to read sentences, Changing Stories engages students in other activities such as drawing characters matching a story and writing stories, passing a paper around each writing a sentence of a story, or doing a book launch.

The child's physical, emotional and social well-being and safety comes first to Changing Stories. They explained, "When play is involved, students are being instructed that the team has to win. Just because you know the answer doesn't mean anything without collaboration. As an organisation, I think we need more play based communication and leadership."

Further concerns

Teachers in this context have focused on the curriculum and have not realised that some children had grade 1 level maths when they were starting grade 5. The teachers are meant to have individual plans, but teachers in Southern parts of Nepal deal with 300-400 students per day, so this is impossible. This is one reason why students are not at their grade levels. Teaching 60-65 students in the class is not as easy as in Changing Stories' classes with a cap

at 15 students. Changing stories is concerned that the principal has unrealistic expectations now of her teachers, expecting similar results from her teachers who are teaching 5-6 classes, working 6 days a week. Changing Stories suspects this might create some problems if teachers see these expectations as a threat.

It is very different for a new teacher to learn about play-based learning compared to a teacher who is experienced and set on their methodology. Changing Stories is concerned that principals will expect changes by just adding more resources or giving training is going to make a difference. Changing Stories believes that they have to be patient with teachers as well!

Amos Youth Centre (AYC)

About AYC

Amos Youth Centre in Zambia empowers the youth in peri urban communities through education and leadership development to break the cycle of poverty in their communities.

A glimpse of how AYC works with play

In 2022 Global Fund for Children informed AYC about another organisation that was using *Learning through Play*. This organisation inspired AYC to learn more. They were using traditional games as well as “modern” games, but it was specifically the traditional games known to all and in the local language that gave AYC a new way of looking at *Learning through Play*. AYC employed a trained teacher and is now using games at the start of each session. The children can choose any game as long as it fits into the topic of the session. Sometimes the whole session gives time for playing games. Small children stimulate their imagination, drawing in the soil, using stones, running to find things in the environment, or sitting in a circle listening to stories and solving problems through drama. These stories often tackle heavy topics such as *bad touch and good touch*, helping the children to process trauma. Through play, AYC can easily observe and evaluate the children’s understanding and their needs and provide further support. Play helps to break barriers to academic learning, but it also helps AYC to build relationships with children and to support them through social issues that they are facing.

Diverse learners at the Youth Centre excelling

Source: AYC staff who also had group discussions in three separate groups: Learners, Parents and Teachers. Parents were selected from different categories including parents of those visually impaired, hearing impaired, and physically impaired. Many parents came and appreciated having the opportunity to ask their own questions. Amos found out that this was a good way to meet the parents and to learn about the impact of their work. They said, “although it was a lot of work for us and tiring to have all these meetings, it was absolutely worth it!”

Outcome: In May 2023, the majority of the learners coming for free lessons at the Youth Center in Shikoswe, Kafue, could read a short story, spell their name in English and also teach fellow students.

A parent said that her deaf child, who came to the centre with very little communication skills at the age of three, learned how to read and write her own name and the names of her friends through playing at the centre, even though her older siblings had not been able to read and write! After three years on the program she was able to read, write and communicate in sign

language and she finally got to learn her mother's name. One AYC staff member expressed, "It made my heart burst when the child for the first time knew that her mother also had a name!"

Teachers said that a blind girl, who came to the centre when she was in 5th grade and now is in her 9th grade, learnt how to use braille and can read and write through playing games. The mother said that the child is now having friends and playing with others, which did not happen before! The blind student is also able to participate in the paralympics games at national level. At home, she teaches her father and brother, who are both blind, to read and write braille and at the Centre, she teaches braille to her peers living with visual impairments.

Parents reported that one child, who used to have poor grades, has greatly improved academically after joining activities at the Centre for three months - from position 45 in term one to position 15 in term two.

AYC staff were surprised, "We did not expect that children that were not interested in school would become more interested as a result of learning through play!"

Related outcomes/effects

The supervisor at Amos has noted that the teachers became more relaxed and creative when they were using play. During monthly meetings/check ins, teachers confirmed that they were enjoying work more.

Significance of the outcome according to AYC

At the onset of the program it was observed that most of the learners (80-90%) who were in 4th grade were unable to read or spell their names in English and didn't understand the English phonetics; they were only proficient in Chinyanja, the language taught at their schools. Having only Chinyanja at the schools until 5th grade, many children fail the exams in 7th grade. Although Chinyanja is the local language of the central part of the country, children may have other languages as their mother tongue, such as Chitonga.

Contribution of AYC to the change in behaviour

In 2022, AYC formalised the young learners' program using play-based teaching. This gave an opportunity for learners in first grade to sixth grade to attend free lessons at the Youth Center in Shikoswe, Kafue. Children, interacting with each other and with their teachers in small groups helped the children to feel confident that they could "do things right".

The significant role of play that supported this change

The teachers at the centre introduced a local spelling game at the beginning of each session. Additionally, they scheduled a story time reading session every morning where the teachers read the stories in English and then read the same book in Chinyanja. The same book was used until the children understood the meaning. Teachers used physical objects and activities to support the learners to understand the meaning of the words. AYC also asked the children to share folk tales and helped the students to write them in English.

For the inclusion of those with visual impairments, AYC had “playing cards” for sighted children and children using braille so that they could play together.

Further concerns

While AYC wants children to be open and interacting freely, there was a case where one child did not know acceptable boundaries, touching a teacher in an inappropriate way in play. This situation helped AYC to prioritise safeguarding further, teaching children about '*good and bad touch*'.

DESH - Development of Educational Service For Human

About DESH

DESH works in Bangladesh to ensure education for disadvantaged children using joyful learning methods to promote equal education rights in the society. In Mymensingh, DESH supports children living in a Bihari “colony”, an isolated group of approximately 3000 people living in a very small area. These children will not be able to go to school without support.

A glimpse of how DESH works with play

DESH uses play to make academic learning joyful, playful, and not boring. DESH trains facilitators to use play materials, games, puppets, and drama. Some forms of play need no instructions, but for other forms of play teachers are helping to give instructions. Through play the children learn about health and hygiene, life skills, and cognitive development.

Children living in Bihari colony started to go to preschool

Source: DESH staff shared the outcome story, but they also visited 25 parents and talked with them. This was a group of mostly mothers and some of the children in the family.

Outcome: In June 2022, 50 preschool aged children (30 girls and 20 boys) who come from poor stranded Pakistani Families and live in a demarcated dilapidated area commonly known as ‘the Bihari colony’ in Mymensingh city, started attending a joyful and play-based learning school in their own arena (a process that took approximately 3 months). The children have learned the alphabet, love doing drama, and happily keep the place clean.

With the preschool centre located in the centre of the colony, the mothers confirmed that they had observed their children’s active participation in the programme. (The fathers are generally not in the community during the day.) Some children had shared their dreams with their parents sharing what they wanted to become as adults, for example teachers and religious teachers. Some mothers said that the games that the children are playing are appropriate but that some activities are new to them, such as drama and puppet shows. Both mothers and children are excited and mothers are coming to the centre to watch the puppet shows.

Related outcomes/effects

Through participating in making the preschool happen and seeing the changes in the children, the community leaders and parents are getting more engaged in the children’s education and are building relationships with DESH, coming from outside the ‘colony’.

Significance of the outcome according to DESH

The Bihari 'colony' had no culture of going to school. They are an isolated group of people that are not part of the mainstream culture. The children were engaged at work and without support they would not have had any drive or interest in education. The children now enjoy a school environment (they come to school to play) and can prepare themselves for the next level of formal schooling. Almost all of the 50 preschool children continued to the next grade. Asked about the value of the outcome, one of the DESH staff, expressed, "It means everything to me, it's the climax of my work, giving me happiness!"

Contribution of DESH to the change in behaviour

In June 2022, DESH provided a beautifully decorated school house with different play materials including indoor and outdoor sports items, lesson books, school bags, and snacks. DESH trained two women from the same community (one of the few literate Bihari) to teach the children. The women knew each of the children by name.

The significant role of play that supported this change

The environment and costumes available inspired the children to play and do drama. The teachers gave some training on how to do drama, but mainly they encouraged the children, introducing only a few play items at a time! DESH started only with play and gradually play was used only 50% of the time. DESH gradually introduced the letters of the alphabet. One game is that the children have a board with letters and the child chooses a letter finding other play materials to illustrate that letter.

Further concerns

Living under hard situations, these children struggle to have enough food/nutrition. Therefore the programme is also providing some snacks/food, for example an egg or a banana.

Maji Mazuri

About Maji Mazuri

Maji Mazuri, working in Nairobi, Kenya, helps people escape poverty and become thriving individuals by providing the foundation through education and support needed for children, youth and families. They have a programme in Mathare, the largest slum area in Nairobi, Kenya.

A glimpse of how Maji Mazuri works with play

Maji Mazuri staff summarised how they work with play to help children with full performances, work with poetry, shairi (a local form of poetry), dance, and to achieve academically in school, “We play first and then we learn. Play enhances the learning process. Before we begin a lesson, we first have physical activities or mind games. Sometimes we even play scrabble.” Further, they described how group performances support the children’s interaction. The children work together to do charades and plays, using their critical thinking skills. Play gives the children living in the slum area emotional relief. Play relates to all the subjects they are learning in school as well - maths, reading, science, and social studies. Through the children’s active participation, Maji Mazuri encourages teens to take a leadership role. The staff reflected on their experience with play, “We often notice that artistic expression develops both emotional and cognitive skills.”

Students and teachers transformed a dump site into a playground

Source: Maji Mazuri staff

Outcome: In October 2023, 36 students and four teachers from Maji Mazuri wholeheartedly put on a concert themed ‘Nature’s Music is Not Over’ held at Mathare Park. In Eco therapy, they made beautiful vases out of recycled plastic that the children later used to plant flowers and young trees around the park transforming the place into a playground. The 36 children were involved in writing poems and *shairi* (poetry in Swahili) and presented these at the event, educating on the importance of taking care of the world around us.

This story is about the transformation of a dumpsite into a playground. The youth reclaimed the place earlier this year and have been setting it up as a playground. It was at this concert that it all escalated.

Related outcomes/effects

Since then, influential people in the community are getting others to come and see what is happening, contributing to a lot of positive outcomes!

Significance of the outcome according to Maji Mazuri

The children planted trees where there had been no trees in the area! Environmental pollution is one of the challenges they face as a community. People used to litter and even throw "flying toilet bags" haphazardly anywhere in the area. The outcome cuts across – impacting the children, the education providers and the whole community. Incorporating learning through play has led to increased participation and interest in education and development. The community at large has benefited from improved social cohesion through collaboration and communication. Lots of children came to the event and people just passing by joined the activity. The children could express their love for nature and the whole experience touched on all five skills of the children's holistic development (creative, emotional, physical, social, and cognitive).

Contribution of Maji Mazuri to the change in behaviour

At Maji Mazuri, the Teens Club organised a theme called 'Art in Relation To The Environment' to educate children in Mathare slums about the importance of such issues, equipping them with ideas and techniques on how to create awareness. In 2022, over the course of 3 months, the club discussed climate change. In October 2023, an event called 'Nature's Music is Not Over', was organised by Hewa Safi initiative, a grassroots organisation championing climate change and clean air, with members who themselves have been through Maji Mazuri programmes. They invited Maji Mazuri to the event. At the event, Music was being played while eco therapy was going on. This was a playful experience where the children chose to do different things - some chose to make vases, some planted trees, etc. They were divided into groups and chose their activities. The activity was happening outdoors - creating a nice environment for change. In between the activities, Maji Mazuri partnered with other organisations doing things.

The significant role of play that supported this change

The children at Maji Mazuri stay near the park and always play around there and they did that even when it was still a dumpsite! At this event, there was music and dancing. The children performed poetry, *shairi* and dance at the concert as well as playing games around in the park. During ecotherapy, the children recycled plastic, collecting and sorting it, then painted it, and hung it up around the area around Mathare camp. The children took part in different things - some sorted plastics, some hung up the vases.

Students from the teens programme became leaders in their schools

Source: Maji Mazuri staff and Mariam (Learning Loop) interviewed two former teen programme participants directly.

Outcome: Since January 2023, more than 30 students in the teens program in Mathare took leadership of other students in various school activities in schools country wide, such as in dance classes and sports activities. During school holidays, they helped both their peers and alumni to organise and mobilise other teens and encouraged them to volunteer during their free time. Some even started initiatives starting poetry clubs and dancing in the schools.

Samuel, an alumni of the teen's programme is now in his third year at Maranda high school. He is a leader in both education and in chess. He has friends and loves to play football, do art, and read. He is thinking about studying software engineering at university.

Wholfen, also an alumni of Maji Mazuri's teen programme, is now in his third year at Upperhill School. Currently he is

- academic captain,
- one of the officials in the drama group
- acting chair of the equity foundation club
- founder of the anti-narcotics group, campaigning against narcotics in school
- peer teacher in charge of English and Swahili

Today, Wholfen is performing at assemblies in school where all students are gathered. He has brought both drama and poetry to the high school. Poetry was not popular at school, but now it is being used! He has also been using the skills in competitions. Wholfen said, "Maji Mazuri is a hope in the community! I only had my mother tongue. I failed first grade and had to repeat that year. I still remember the first word that I read in English; it was the word 'doll'. It was at Maji Mazuri I learned and gained my confidence!"

Significance of the outcome according to Maji Mazuri

The students in the Teens program from the slum areas stand out in schools and can take leadership in schools and in society, even during school holidays!

Due to the reintroduction of art, music, and life skills subjects into the syllabus, there has been a need for extra hands to assist other students. The competency curriculum meant that the pupils after grade 6 went to other schools and all of them were chosen as prefects, taking high levels of responsibility and leadership of various groups. They have taken leadership in the national theatre, at supermarkets, and at the Nairobi National Museum library.

Contribution of Maji Mazuri to the change in behaviour

The Maji Mazuri program created a sense of community, fostering leadership skills and a sense of passion for giving back to the community. Maji Mazuri would ask, for example, "Can you

come up with a group song?" People were given opportunities to do things (play), before they were asked to lead. Samuel explained that he learned social skills at Maji Mazuri "through leadership training, by expressing myself and through football. I was very good at football!"

When Wholfen came to Maji Mazuri in 2013 from the countryside, he used to stammer, but now he speaks fluently! It was at Maji Mazuri he learned how to speak both English and Swahili and he means that it was poetry that helped him to learn the languages. It was in Maji Mazuri's poetry club that he began writing own poems and became creative!

The significant role of play that supported this change

Samuel explained how he thought that play had helped him develop leadership skills at Maji Mazuri, "It helped me to learn cognitive skills - I learned different perspectives and about culture. Through football I got to play with people from different parts of the country and learned how to get along with them. Also poetry - different ideas and different issues in the world were discussed and raised through poetry. Poetry gave me a broader perspective on the world. In poetry you have to think out of the box!"

Wholfen explained that play helped him to work with his emotions. He could also do that through writing his own scripts for drama. Being part of the drama club is something that he took with him to high school.

GSK- Gramni Shiksha Kendra Samiti

About GSK

GSK works in India to enhance access to quality child-centric education in villages across rural Ranthambore with children of nomadic, denotified tribes and forest dwelling communities through child-centred, participatory and play based methods, in an attempt to reform the education ecosystem and make it more qualitative.

A glimpse of how GSK works with play

GSK explained how they work with play both as a means and an end, “We look at play as a subject in our schools and in our programmes that are out of school, we use play as a medium”.

In GSK’s out of school programme, sports helps the children to develop interest, connect with each other, and participate in an energetic environment so that the children can excel in all aspects - science, maths, etc. GSK explained the effect, “We don’t have to put in additional efforts to convince parents”.

In formal schools and affiliated schools (state government recognised schools) GSK provides sports as a subject, giving it equal weight to other subjects. Through this, GSK sees that children gain communication skills and opportunities to participate in other levels, even at regional level. Both the school and out-of-school children join the sports, where sports effectively attract the children.

Community members demanded learning by doing and experimental work in government schools

Source: GSK staff who work in the school and in the communities.

Outcome: In 2021, the community members, including parents and children, in Jaganpura, and later in Bodal and Fariya, started to put pressure on the nearby government school to include learning by doing and experimental work.

While in other places, children struggle to go to school, parents and other community members observed that children at GSK programme schools were excited to go to school, confident and self-motivated. Children and parents would stay after school and discuss education, creating a very different kind of feeling. Parents observed schooling at school events and during Parent-Teacher meetings, they would collectively think about the schools. When one of GSK’s schools was shut down in 2018/2019, this is when the parents and children took the experience at GSK with them and started to put pressure on the government.

The children (who had once been in our schools before they closed) could confidently present their own problems to both parents and their teachers in the government schools, even problems related to teaching practices. Sometimes the teachers would react to the children, “Are you suggesting how I should teach?” Teachers became aggressive and the children wondered what to do. Some children would come to the staff at GSK, but GSK couldn’t directly influence the teachers so much. GSK did talk to the teachers that the children were not used to the traditional methods and explained that relationships were important to them. Sometimes the teachers did not accept GSK’s comments.

In order to put pressure on the teachers, children then talked with parents who put pressure on teachers. When the parents talked with the teachers, the teachers had to listen and stay accountable to what they were doing in school. Parents asked, “Where is the law that teachers can beat the children?” and there were debates on how teaching should take place.

Some of these changes had already taken place before 2018. In one place where parents had spoken with teachers who had not changed after complaints, parents locked down a school, putting pressure on the government system to investigate and talk with parents! When the government came to find out, the parents complained about teacher practices and demanded new teachers. Government then changed half the staff!

Related outcomes/effects

Also in sports, the children demanded that there should be a sports class as part of schooling. They made it known to schools that if they did not have a teacher, the students needed equipment and would self-practice. Sometimes, the children asked for time and opportunities to travel to sports tournaments. They reacted to teachers’ excuses about risks and told teachers that it’s not fair to blame their own inaction on risks.

One example of putting pressure after 2021 took place when one school was shut down due to the COVID lockdown. The parents wanted proper support for the children and when they did not see teachers intending to take responsibility to address the situation, parents and students approached teachers.

Significance of the outcome according to GSK

In the past, the parents were never active during the year; they only came for enrolment and when grades came. GSK knows that for lasting changes in the education/learning for children this work needs to be included into the government schools. This was one more example of parents taking responsibility to influence the government.

Contribution of GSK to the change in behaviour

Since 2018, GSK teachers have included experience-based learning. At first, parents complained that GSK spoiled the children. Sometimes the parents were insulted when children would question them or not touch the feet of parents or stand up if adults came into a room as a sign of respect. The parents had to understand how children too needed respect and that

they have the right to feel hurt or feel bad and question. GSK helped them to understand that they could use the respectful form of “you” and that the child would then also use this respectful form back, rather than using the disrespectful form. GSK explained, “We deliberately developed this kind of relationship with the children which was not hierarchical”. When GSK had a logical debate with parents, the parents had to accept and the questions from parents shifted. New concerns from parents were about the world that the child would meet in other future schools or places in society to which GSK responded, “Don’t be afraid - the children will be changing the world and you need to help!”

GSK also involved parents and community members in their different meetings/groups where parents were informed about the importance of play. Parents were invited to observe school and mutually decide what education should be. At first parents would say, “You are not teaching - you are using songs”, but with time, the parents saw that the children were getting good results and trust increased in the relationships.

The significant role of play that supported this change

In traditional school settings, there are a lot of abstract concepts that have to be memorised or learned by heart. GSK instead tried experiential-based learning – connecting learning to the children’s context and their learning environment. In 2018, GSK started experiential learning practices also outside of the school environment. Parents observed that children were getting better results through learning by doing and sports activities which have been provided by GSK programming through the years. Seeing the great difference, they felt that this should be available to all children - even in the government school.

Move the World

About Move the World

Move the World utilises the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a tool to promote a love for learning within schools in Ghana.

A glimpse of how Move the World works with play

Move the World has intentionally included play in every activity, because of all the rote learning in the school system. They explain what this can look like: “Our biggest goal is to have kids play and learn by doing. It is more important that they play than that they know all of the SDGs. The children learn SDGs because they have fun. To understand Zero Hunger, we let the children bring plastics, coconut shells, taking them through play and growing crops to understand Zero Hunger. We use SDG cards, hands, food squash, and ask children to bring something from where they come. We get all children involved across different backgrounds and languages, helping them to learn how to work together as a team and build trust and belonging irrespective of differences. They see themselves as one, because we make it so fun and let cultural expression come out in play.”

A Get Global Graduate plans to further her education in fashion design

Source: Move the World staff

Outcome: A 16 year old girl, a Get Global Graduate from 2020, showed interest in furthering her education in fashion designing as a result of engaging with our No Poverty bead making activity in a private school near Accra.

The 16 year old has graduated to secondary school and has chosen fashion and design in high school.

Significance of the outcome according to Move the World

Move the World values students taking their learning out of the classroom into real life situations. The graduate can continue with school and start using her skills to make money without waiting for employment. Most significantly, the student can choose for herself rather than her future being chosen for her. It links to SDG 1!

Contribution of Move the World to the change in behaviour

In 2020, Move the World held a Get Global 7 month programme and the facilitator developed relationships with the students, supporting students' personal growth. In the Get Global Session focused on No Poverty, students created bracelets and necklaces with beads and were

encouraged to create businesses with their own tools when they are older. Each one of Move the World's programmes has an activity passport where they get a stamp when they have done the activities connected with each SDG. To make it more fun and playful - the person with the most stamps, gets a badge. During the sessions, the children discuss questions such as, "Can you have a mobile phone and still be in poverty?"

Move the World has engaged the girl in their programme since she was 11 years old.

The significant role of play that supported this change

Facilitators are trained at how to make the bracelets, and were given beads and threads, for the session. During the session, the children were put into groups and were taken through how it is done. Before they went home, they were given beads to take home. The idea was that they could give the bracelet away to somebody else and they also discussed how they could sell it.

Atoot

About Atoot

Atoot Nepal works in Kapilvastu district and Lumbini in Nepal to empower girls through sports and education. By using football as a tool for development, and in partnership with schools, Atoot creates opportunities to build confidence, leadership, teamwork and social skills for girls while working with families and community members on raising awareness on the importance of girls' education. While providing sports is a major goal, Atoot tries to achieve gender equity and to reduce violence, child marriage, early school dropouts and gender discrimination.

Atoot wants to give a voice to the girls who are not sure that they can use it, in a patriarchal society where girls don't have decision making power. Atoot believes that when girls have the power to make their own decisions, there is no stopping them. The word Atoot means "unbreakable" - like the girls!

A glimpse of how Atoot works with play

In Atoot, play is an important aspect of their programming and the girls themselves are the ones making decisions. Atoot designed work in classrooms and in workshops to be child-centred and age-appropriate and use play-based games. They expressed, "Working with children, it has to be participatory, engaging and fun." The children are given tasks as a team, building things and solving things.

In football, the girls develop their skills beyond football. They learn how to handle emotions, and how to get on with each other even when they come from different backgrounds. They strategise, develop leadership and learn to lose gracefully!

Girls started to ask men for things

Source: Atoot staff who also talked with a few of the girls' fathers directly

Outcome: Since 2021 Atoot girls in Dohani village of south Nepal started to become more vocal, demanding things for themselves and they no longer hesitate to ask men for things. They have even asked for sanitary napkins from Atoot's only male staff member, their fathers and brothers.

Related outcomes/effects

The girls are sharing things that have happened in Atoot which was not common before. Talking with parents and being at home has become a safe space. That was not common

before. One of the fathers is a teacher, and he also shared about menstruation with the girls in his class.

When the girls see injustice - they are vocal and say things like “Don’t do that”. The girls from our program ask questions and some teachers in schools have complained that the girls are asking too many questions, but the teachers do like that the girls are active in the sports. There are teachers that are happy as well about all the changes in the lives of the girls.

The girls are so strong about wanting to come to the programme, that people don’t bother trying to stop them. Earlier the community members and parents used to stop them.

Significance of the outcome according to Atoot

In this community there has not been any trust among the community members, not even among the girls. In a patriarchal society like Nepal girls have no voice. These norms are worsened within rural villages. Girls rarely speak, much less to boys and men about their wants and needs. Furthermore, girls never discuss menstruation with males, as that is thought to be taboo within their societies/cultures. There used to be many taboos around what girls could do and not when they had menstruation. They were, for example, not allowed to enter the kitchen. The girls were isolated for at least 3-4 days with a separate toilet and given food in a room by themselves. In this context, asking for sanitary napkins takes a lot of courage.

One of the Atoot staff said “Before, girls - not even mothers or sisters - would ask men for anything, which means that the men don’t know what the girls want. Since boys and fathers are away from home, they don’t know what is going on. I myself used to see how my father would listen to negative things in society rather than to me and that was difficult for me.”

Contribution of Atoot to the change in behaviour

Atoot’s programming gives girls access to undiscovered knowledge, which ultimately challenges societal/cultural myths, norms and practices. In the programming, they learned of harmful practices that hold girls back. Play opened up their minds to a different type of being. The workshops have helped the children not to be shy.

Atoot also met with the girls’ mothers directly together with the girls to learn about menstruation and practices around these. The fathers didn’t join these. The mothers didn’t know, for example, how many hours to use sanitary pads, etc.

Also having a male ally who is a positive role model has been important when the fathers are not. The girls needed a male ally that could be trusted and could help them to feel valued.

The significant role of play that supported this change

Through play, the girls spoke about what they wanted to do, how they felt and what they wanted to achieve. They became comfortable with their bodies and felt safe to share things. In

workshops, they did mini dramas and became leaders as they are creative. They have also performed drama in front of community people sharing their own messages!

On the football field, girls and boys played on the same team. The girls felt comfortable around boys and with their bodies, shaking hands with the boys without blushing and talking eye to eye. This behaviour did not stay on the football field- it then spread into their own lives. Football helped the girls to show parents how disciplined they were and how they respected their own parents.

Further concerns

Some of the teachers have asked “What have you achieved? What have you done? What is the impact?” Teachers associated football with trophies and unrealistically thought that academic achievement would shoot up even when Atoot classes are only for 1 hour.

Starters Technology

About Starters Technology

Starters Technology in Ghana leverages technology to help children explore their potential in STEM, including storybooks for children, bootcamps and school or home mentoring sessions.

A glimpse of how Starters Technology works with play

Each part of the Starters Technology works differently with play. In Bambini, a full time school for ages 1-6, there is a lot of space for play. In XP, a programme on Saturdays, play can take the form of hoverboarding or as a means of mastering an application. Also in Starters Technology's vacation school children identify what they would like to do, through play. One important principle in Starters Technology's way of working is giving everyone equal opportunity no matter gender, age, or other social status.

The management of Starters Technology created a recurrent activity focused on play

Source: Starters Technology staff and their conversations with some parents.

Outcome: On September 16, 2023, the management of Starters Technology created a recurrent activity for every Saturday, called XP, where children could play at a high level and learn without forcing any particular knowledge.

In XP, the staff stopped being critical of themselves as they implemented play or afraid of parent's perception. Instead, they allowed the students to discover themselves using play - for some it meant developing social skills, for another to improve cognitive skills. In the Ghana education system, there is a specific goal for everything, but Starters Technology decided to listen to the children's desire - not the parents' expectation or desires.

Related outcomes/effects:

So far, those who came for XP are still coming and if they don't come, parents explain why. Children are joyfully showing a readiness to try new things.

Mrs Ayorka brought two boys to the programme. One of the boys is a special needs child. Through text messages, the mother said that Skyler (brother of the special needs) really liked the XP programme and he wants to come back all the time. Unfortunately they live very far away. Another child with a speech impediment joined the Bambini programme because of Mrs Ayorka sharing how her children had liked the XP programme.

Direct feedback from parents:

Jayden and Kayden came for the vacation camp and wanted to keep on coming. When Starters Technology introduced XP, they bought credits for every month. They don't come to waste their time, they come knowing what they want to achieve by the end of the day - they ask for game controllers and play on the hoverboard. Now, Ayden, the younger brother, comes and enjoys it even more.

The parents themselves have developed an own openness to play. It started from the vacation camp where they understood that play led to learning. Most parents were at the camp for the first day when they were introduced to all of the activities that the children would be exposed to. One mother tried virtual reality headsets for the first time and some parents tried the hoverboard. The parents would also come to pick up the child every day.

Some of the parents that came for the vacation camp from far away asked Starters Technology to organise an opportunity for parents to meet each other again. This was organised together in December 2023, with parents helping out. A friendly community is being built around the feeling that was created through play.

Significance of the outcome according to Starters Technology

Management now puts learning through play in the forefront of our brand and services. "For a long time we masked our learning through play agenda because of how parents sometimes see it as not being serious enough for a learning approach." The children are excited and Starters Technology staff themselves get to try out more experiments with play and innovate more!

Contribution of Starters Technology to the change in behaviour

Starters Technology introduced their first vacation camp in July- August 2023 which leveraged more on play technology based activities to enforce learning. Starters Technology decided to take away the feeling of school, which was risky because of parents' expectation of wanting the children to learn. Starters Technology made sure that each activity was firstly fun.

The significant role of play that supported this change

Play at the vacation camp inspired the change, but the experience of implementing XP continued to inspire the staff. Starters Technology changed how they engaged in play. "Play" can still feel like school, but in XP freedom with certain rules showed the children that it was not about doing it right, but enjoying the process. The freedom to do something without having a critical eye opened the door to the children trying things out and experimenting, and in turn inspired the staff.

Further concerns

As Starters Technology maximises the play component of their programmes, things get broken and it gets a bit expensive although they try to fix things!

CFI - Community Focus International

About CFI

CFI, in Uganda, empowers vulnerable communities, persons with disabilities and their caretakers through assistive mobility devices and alternative basic education.

A glimpse of how CFI works with play

CFI uses the Teaching at the Right Level approach as a means to teach numeracy and literacy skills in remedial classes for children after school. CFI often meets learners in small groups in the open space outside school, playing games and using a lot of body movement. For example, to help the children learn letters, the children pretend sitting in a taxi, chiming “The taxi is moving, is moving in a town...” and other children join if they are able to say the sound of the letter. The ‘clap and snap’ game is a game used to teach maths, where a clap has the value of 10 and a snap has the value of 1. The staff try to support the children back to the level where they didn’t understand well, mixing grade levels depending on abilities. Sometimes the children have ideas for how to do the play activities differently. The teachers themselves understand that the methods help them to control the class and use playful techniques to get everyone’s attention, such as “Let me hear somebody clap/sing”. CFI uses what the children are familiar with, helping the children to learn new content integrated into what they already know.

Parents, youth and project teachers created play centres

Source: CFI staff

Outcome: In April 2023, parents, youth, and the project teachers of the five primary schools in Lira district engaged in creating a play centre with learning materials. Also, they strengthened the recreational play centres using locally available materials, for example banana fibres for making balls and dolls, tree branches for building play slides. They made goal posts and used old tires for play equipment.

The parents have become much more involved in the children being able to learn through play, seeing play as part of the children’s advancement. The feedback is coming the whole time - that the parents are getting involved and asking questions.

Related outcomes/effects:

CFI staff said, “When you move around in villages on the outskirts, you will find play materials made by parents- parents trying to duplicate what they see is made at play centres. Children

from the other families also come. This is creating unity - when children and families are visiting each other.

Significance of the outcome according to CFI

The parents' contributions beyond what they had done before shows the SMC's and PTA's commitment! Most of these playgrounds are still in perfect shape - because they were made by the communities themselves.

The play centre brings children out of the classroom and provides children opportunities for social and relational skills. The space can also be used for classes and extracurricular purposes. This made learners' social skills improve at the play centre for example helping them to collaborate with each other and making the learning process more enjoyable and effective.

Contribution of CFI to the change in behaviour

In February 2023, Community Focus International trained parents, youths, and project teachers on how to develop appropriate learning and play materials in the five learning centres of Abunga primary school and Orem primary school in Lira district; and Angolo primary school, Anyomolyec primary school, and Otwal primary school in Oyam district. Each of these communities now have a play centre. In Anyomolyec (the name of the village meaning I've married an elephant!), they expanded and improved a play centre that they already had.

CFI also held meetings with stakeholders, including the School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations. CFI visits parents quarterly, encouraging them to contribute to their children.

The significant role of play that supported this change

The parents and youth were very excited about making the play centre and picked up local materials for this themselves. When CFI monitored work in the communities, communities asked to do this again!

Also, during visits to parents in communities, CFI could hear that the children continued with songs and games outside of school, teaching their friends. Parents observed what the children had learned and the children taught their friends. The parents also observed and commented on their children's social skills. CFI believes that this has influenced the parents to help to contribute to their children.

Further concerns

When CFI has used wood instead of metal in making the play equipment, some parents have been afraid of the risks.

Sabuj Sangha

About Sabuj Sangha

Sabuj Sangha runs a play based model school and nurtures the idea of joyful learning in an area of India which is a human trafficking hub. Their residential school for rescued child labourers provides age-appropriate education and helps mainstream the children into the formal system. Their motto is providing holistic education to the children in a way so that it can reach their potential and sustain them throughout their whole life.

A glimpse of how Sabuj Sangha works with play

Sabuj Sangha believes that only play based methods can make learning joyful. They try to use different activities to support the child's learning and help them to mix with each other, irrespective of gender. Using materials such as a ball, flash cards, smart boards, clay models, and puppets in the classroom, they support children in making words and sentences. Sometimes they take the help of songs, rhymes, and role play to keep the learners active and learning joyful. Using the whole campus as a classroom, children have lessons in the school garden on a regular basis, helping them to learn values from their parents' profession, be in touch with nature and to take responsibility for nature. Outdoors, they also clean the campus and learn proper hygiene and health practices.

Along with games, Sabuj Sangha have also introduced Child Parliament so that the children learn democracy and support development of leadership qualities.

Teachers motivated children through attractive play-based teaching methods

Source: Sabuj Sangha interacted with the community, including the parents of their enrolled children.

Outcome: Since 2022, teachers at Kishalaya Sishu Siksha Niketan school started to become innovative, preparing lesson plans, using relevant teaching and learning materials for the topics and intentionally linking with physical activities inside or outside the classroom. Almost every subject is now taught using play based activities and teachers are actively taking part in the Playful Classes under the trees

Related outcomes/effects:

It was noted in the interview that whereas children in the past were not sharing their ideas, they now came forward to talk with the teachers. Children enjoy coming to school without any fear or inhibitions. They share their views, enjoyments and matters that they want to know

about. While talking to the children, Shrabani Giri shared her experiences, “Whenever our teachers start their class with playthings like ball, we think that it will be just a game. But after going back home, when we open our books, we see that the same things are there. As a result, learning never becomes a burden to me.”

It also came out from the discussions that upon seeing their children’s growing interest now the parents, irrespective of their education background, are getting involved more in their children’s studies and interacting with teachers on the development of their children.

Significance of the outcome according to Sabuj Sangha

In the past, teachers only used traditional methods, such as giving lectures. Teachers never saw their active role in being able to influence student's interest, school drop outs, or children’s academic performance. This motivated the teachers as well as the students which decreased school dropouts. Students are much more active now.

Contribution of Sabuj Sangha to the change in behaviour

After training from GFC, in 2023, Sabuj Sangha brainstormed with teachers about reasons for drop-out/lack of academic performance and started to create teaching aids.

The significant role of play that supported this change

In the school garden, the students learn playfully and directly from nature. Souvik Mondal, one of the students of 4th standard, expressed: “When I go to the school garden, I find an extra spirit within me. It gives me the chance to come in undeviating contact with nature.”

Also at the playground, Sabuj Sangha wants to support smooth learning. The teacher may stand in the middle, dancing with a multiplication table song and the students follow. As a result they are learning joyfully while their body movement helps them to stay fit physically. Sabuj Sangha noticed a remarkable positive impact on the children when the children spent their time playing, singing and dancing.

The children have enjoyed being part of the lessons held under the shadow of the trees: Snigdha Paik explained, “When we perform role play under the trees, it gives us much pleasure and we can take our lesson into account for a longer time.”

Na Tubelenge Children's Library

About Na Tubelenge Children's Library

Na Tubelenge Children's Library offers library services and measurable learning solutions (supplementary reading classes and games) to children in underserved communities in Zambia.

A glimpse of how Na Tubelenge Children's Library works with play

The staff explained, "At Na Tubelenge Children's Library we use play to attract children to the library and to help them to gain interest in reading. Play brings the children together in a safe space and enables them to socialise. The children look forward to coming to the library - not just to read, but to play! We have so many activities that involve play and over time we have observed that children learn better when play is involved. Some parents who would normally not let their children play, now accept that our library is beneficial to their children, giving the children the opportunity to learn, read and play."

Through different weekly activities that involve play, dance and songs such as native and board games, spelling bees, and arts & craft, children are able to learn a variety of skills. Facilitators, teachers, and children all take part in suggesting ideas for games and activities; the children even suggest the books they would like to be added to the library or read for storytime. Activities include spelling bees held on Mondays that mix games like charades and spellings, allowing children to describe, guess and learn new words. The library has arts and crafts on Tuesdays where the children use local recyclable material and mostly papers to create things. The native games on Thursdays encourage children to use local languages; this is done in the effort to preserve local languages.

Children learned each others' local languages or English at the library

Source: Na Tubelenge Children's Library staff

Outcome: Since the introduction of native games in September, 2022, children coming to Na Tubelenge Children's Library in Chilenje, Lusaka, started to learn each others' local languages or English through the games.

Zambia has 72 languages and Natubelenge Children's Library brings together children of different language backgrounds. Playing together at the children's library means communicating with each other, which leaves children no choice but to learn each others' languages, be it English or a local language, whether the children are playing a board game or physical native games. The staff shared a couple examples of what this looked like:

One little boy who is a regular participant in our activities didn't understand English at all, but is now able to understand English even when he hasn't yet joined our literacy classes or enrolled into formal education. Everything he has learned can only be attributed to learning through play. Language abilities developed naturally, even when games did not intend to teach different languages. Another child who has been raised to use English as the child's first language, started learning local languages after becoming a member of the library.

Significance of the outcome according to Na Tubelenge Children's Library

Na Tubelenge Children's Library staff are excited to be part of the effort to preserve local languages which may be on the verge of extinction. Na Tubelenge Children's Library staff explained the concerns around language issues, "We don't have enough content in local languages and culture, so children are exposed to cartoons and other media in English and even learn English before socialisation! Some parents also think that English is the measure of intelligence. This comes down from colonisation and still needs a transformation of minds. We need to be happy to be who we are - and if the children don't learn this - then we are heading in the wrong direction. English helps us to communicate widely, but the children should embrace their local languages!"

Another reason why the staff of Na Tubelenge Children's Library value this outcome is because of prevalent tribalism. They want all the children to know their equal value and feel free to use their own language. They are hoping to see greater respect between children.

Contribution of Na Tubelenge Children's Library to the change in behaviour

The library intentionally includes and encourages children of every background to come to the library. We do not care about their tribe, race, gender, religion or physical abilities etc. Since September 2022 the library has, as stated above, held a *native day* one day a week where children are encouraged to use local languages and play native games. Every Thursday announcements are made to remind the children to use their local languages.

The significant role of play that supported this change

On *native day* children play native games and sing songs in local languages. Na Tubelenge Children's Library provided board games. Some games require the use of local materials such as small stones, while others use dance, and physical activity. Through all these games children are learning languages.

FUNDACIÓN NIÑAS DE LUZ (FUNILUZ)

About FUNILUZ

Funiluz creates opportunities and mentors girls in Colombia to become leaders of their own lives by developing their talents, critical thinking, and personal social projects so that, in the future, they will be women who contribute positively to new generations from their own conditions and life examples.

A glimpse of how FUNILUZ works with play

FUNILUZ wants girls to be able to play in an environment that they can trust and where they are not restricted by lots of guidelines. FUNILUZ wants to be a place where girls can think out of the box and use their imagination. FUNILUZ's goal is education and they provide a variety of activities, all which have structure but aim to be fun, whether it is sports, a reading club, English classes or a politics school.

Play helps FUNILUZ to bring up topics that are difficult to cover. Using methodologies inspired by the theatre of the oppressed and Paulo Freire, girls create experiences and learn skills that they can apply in their daily lives. FUNILUZ can bring up topics such as bullying using puppets. When something sad happens, girls can create a resolution and a happy ending. They then use the same skills to solve conflict in everyday life. Playing at FUNILUZ is done in groups, where children learn how to take leadership, learn rules, make decisions, and learn about rights while respecting authority.

A girl from an illiterate family worked with her lion to learn and teach literacy skills

Source: FUNILUZ met with Maria as well as with Maria's aunt and teacher.

Outcome: In June, 2023, Maria, an 8-year-old girl from an illiterate family in the San Joaquin community (located in one of the most vulnerable areas of the Ciudad Bolívar locality in Bogotá, Colombia) started to participate with other girls in group activities by starting to teach her own stuffed animal (a lion). She learned how to read and write, has a passion for reading, and is even using the lion to teach her own mother!

Related outcomes/effects:

Maria's mother can now read and write some words and phrases and her aunt has made a commitment to help Maria - she herself started to study and began her own learning process.

The achievements of Maria and her mother seem to have an impact on the aunt as well - today three people are taking on learning!

Significance of the outcome according to FUNILUZ

Maria was really shy, she didn't know how to read and write, and she didn't smile or express emotions. By the third month of using the lion as a tool, the girl's grades went up. Now she has more confidence and is happy - even laughing! She is also able to use the technique in using her English language as well.

Contribution of FUNILUZ to the change in behaviour

Maria came to FUNILUZ in January 2023. In June, FUNILUZ asked Maria to bring a favourite toy - a stuffed lion - so she could teach the lion. It was after she brought the lion that she started to achieve academic results and play with the other girls. FUNILUZ used a vowel game and the interaction with the lion to teach the vowels. The flexible methods were very different from the rote and repetition commonly used in the schools.

At one point, FUNILUZ asked the mother to help Maria with her reading activities. This is when the mother cried and told them that she didn't know how to read. FUNILUZ staff comforted the mother and offered to help her to learn how to read and write. This is when Maria said that the lion could teach her mother how to read and the child's process of teaching the mother started!

FUNILUZ added that they believe that GFC helped them as an organisation to apply the concept of learning through play as described by LEGO, grow through a learning experience and pay attention to the results of play!

The significant role of play that supported this change

Using the lion for the interaction with Maria, it was, from Maria's perspective, the lion who was learning the vowels. A phrase that inspired FUNILUZ a lot is, "When someone teaches, two people learn." Play also helped Maria to be herself. Another small influence that play had on Maria was that FUNILUZ learned that Maria associated the word "yellow" with joy. FUNILUZ could then use the word to help trigger joy!

Seeing daughters improving, mothers (who are mostly single mothers) coming to classes and participating in play and dancing, hugging and interacting, has generated connections and effective communication between mothers and children!

Further concerns

FUNILUZ wanted to see if Maria would be able to take the lion to school, but the teachers thought that it would be a distraction for other children. The creative activities at FUNILUZ also create distractions and FUNILUZ is grappling with the question, "When chaos is created through play, how do we restore order and stay organised?" The FUNILUZ team believes that if they can overcome this, then play can also be used more in school!

Músicas de la Tierra

About Músicas de la Tierra

Músicas de la Tierra is a not-for-profit, itinerant music school in Colombia that uses Caucan music as a formative and educational tool to teach traditional instruments and styles in rural and indigenous communities. Músicas de la Tierra inspires children through playful music education that broadens their horizons and empowers them to face life's challenges with creativity and strong cultural roots.

A glimpse of how Músicas de la Tierra works with play

Músicas de la Tierra believes that all of their activities relate well to each child's context and needs. While doing activities with the children, using music, rhythm, or theatre, Músicas de la Tierra staff ask children for suggestions and ideas and together they create something. Playing the game, *Tingo, tingo, tango*, for example, using a bottle of water, the teacher begins singing 'tingo, tingo, tingo' and with the 'tango' the bottle lands on a child who is chosen to answer a question or perform a musical excerpt. The staff explained how they teach the children: "If they make mistakes, like missing a note or playing off-key, it is valid and not censored, as we are learning while having fun." Games like these give the organisation a space where they can measure how the children are learning different concepts and musical scores.

As soon as the children arrive, Músicas de la Tierra helps the children to get prepared in a playful and fun way- stretching necks and shoulders and expressing themselves using their bodies, jumping and incorporating movements of dance. Without knowing it, the children are incorporating elements of music and handling space, pace, and rhythms. There are also the emotional benefits: We realise that children have gained self-confidence, leadership, social skills, and expressiveness; children who at the beginning of the project arrived shy or sad, are now seen as happy."

Músicas de la Tierra has also developed board games and chess, using recycled materials such as plastic bottle caps. Children take these board games home, thus raising awareness about environmental protection at school, at home, and in the community and encouraging recycling. Environmental protection has been an important theme in the musical repertoire.

Communities and educational entities have observed the children having fun and the methodologies that have been based on play. By participating in the activities, the community

has positively valued them. Músicas de la Tierra explained its vision of success: “If the methodology had not been based on play, we would not have achieved the results we have!”

An 11-year old girl improved her cognitive abilities by playing instruments and singing

Source: Músicas de la Tierra first learned about the change in Bresly when her mother approached them to share about the improvements she had seen. Músicas de la Tierra also contacted Bresly’s teacher, the mother once again, as well as Bresly herself to learn more.

Outcome:

Bresly is an 11-year-old girl (in 6th grade) who lives in La Rejoja, but her family was displaced by violence from another municipality in the department of Cauca. When Bresly began to participate in Músicas de la Tierra activities in February 2023, she was presented as a girl with cognitive difficulties - she had difficulty with brain oxygenation, which affected her memory and ability to relate concepts, understand, and retain information. In November 2023, after participating in Músicas de la Tierra’s Paths, Flutes, and Games program, and especially after learning to play the flute, Bresly greatly improved her memory and learning processes. Today she is always willing to do things and is able to lead other girls in performances.

Related outcomes/effects:

Bresly’s school teacher added that Bresly had become a leader in school- using body expression, music and dance activities. She also mentioned Músicas de la Tierra’s impact on her own teaching practices. Faced with the challenge of 45 students dropping out of school, she commented, “We demand academic results, but we lack empathy and don’t teach resilience. We have noticed that all children want to go and be with you. We saw that all the children are playing instruments and doing highly complex things using flutes and still they come back to you! Why can’t we change the way we work at school, and help them fall in love with maths and other subjects so that they want to come back to school?” The teacher expressed the importance of helping to improve the self-esteem of children Bresly’s age to reduce drop-out rates.

The families of each of the children now recognize “the artists in the family.” The community has also begun taking responsibility for what is happening with the children participating in the Paths, Flutes, and Games project led by Músicas de la Tierra- For example, the Community Action Board (local government), is now strongly interested in building a music school, and is working closely with Músicas de la Tierra to present a proposal to relevant government ministries in Bogota to access resources.

Músicas de la Tierra explained how they too have changed: “Initially, we didn’t have an idea of the impact in the community! For us it was just a project, but reaching these results in an

accidental way, we want to use this for advocacy.” Besides meeting the ministries, they plan to meet lawmakers to explain about the transformation.

Also, seeing how Bresley and other children wanted to come to classes and trusted them, inspired Músicas de la Tierra to clarify that if disciplining a participant is required, the behaviour should be corrected and not the person, as “traditional” methods usually do by reprimanding using hurtful words.

Significance of the outcome according to Músicas de la Tierra

When Bresley was born, she had hypoxia (lack of oxygen in the brain) and the paediatrician said she would have learning difficulties. There were days when Bresley knew her ABCs, and days when she didn't. Her mother felt sorry because Bresley even forgot her own name. When Bresley would be asked to go to the neighbour's house to fetch a hammer, for example, she would forget why she had gone there. When Bresley joined the project in 2022, Músicas de la Tierra saw her as excessively shy and insecure with a sad and fearful look in her eyes. Seeing the change in Bresley is an example of how music helped a girl to improve her cognitive problems, improve her learning processes, and take leadership. Similarly, other children with various language difficulties, self-esteem, and social relationships have found in the project dynamics a scenario to develop self-confidence.

Músicas de la Tierra's contribution to the change

In February 2023, Bresley began participating in Músicas de la Tierra's Paths, Flutes and Games program. She enjoyed the musical activities a lot and showed that she was very rhythmic, moving her body to the beat of the music. She also liked to sing and play the flute, and became a competent solo player! Breathing exercises also helped her.

Músicas de la Tierra also works differently with discipline. They show that they are not against a child; instead they call attention to a specific behaviour at a specific moment using a calm tone saying something like, “Please stay until we have given you instructions”. They tell the children in a loving way, rather than judging and punishing the child.

Given the large number of children in their workshops (58 children), Músicas de la Tierra created a clear set of rules: no physical aggression, no verbal aggression, no bullying, we take care of each other and we are all friends. The older kids, 11 or 12 year olds, took care of the 6-7 year olds, creating a trust environment. Bresley felt she had a safe space to express herself and have fun, despite her own challenges.

The significant role of play that supported this change

The flute is a simple object - but a way for Bresley to express herself, using a whole mental and complex process. For example, Bresley led the whole group in a performance, and she did it successfully while the other children also had fun!

Músicas de la Tierra sees children as extremely intelligent and, while they are careful with the lyrics of the musical themes to be composed, they work with what the children want to sing and play. The families of the children with whom Músicas de la Tierra works consume popular music whose texts contain anti-values, while the organisation emphasises ecological, children's, or folklore themes. Participating children propose or suggest elements to organise a song's beat, so they can assemble any musical genre - whether it's chirimía or reggaeton - and at the same time preserve their integrity. Every time children perform in front of many people, they gain self-esteem and become leaders of transformation in their community.

Other factors that influenced change

The support of teachers and mothers and fathers contributed to achieving the changes seen in Bresly..

Org. Sololateca

About Org. Sololateca

Org. Sololateca designs and facilitates workshops with children, adolescents, and youth in Guatemala on issues of self-esteem, gender equity, indigenous women's rights, and preventing early and forced marriage and violence against women.

A glimpse of how Org. Sololateca works with play

From the moment that Org. Sololateca began working with play, the children became confident, seeing the organisation's staff as friends instead of teachers. Org. Sololateca had previously focused on theory, but through play, the children came up with ideas and developed skills to another level! For example, children started designing and creating toys - something that the staff had not noticed before! While in most communities in the area, children don't have opinions to offer, the games from Org. Sololateca motivate them to get involved and develop their leadership.

For each of the nine workshops they facilitated, Org. Sololateca tried to identify games to be used. For example, in the workshop called "Learning to rescue my own culture," they used Indigenous games, and in the self-care sessions, the children shared hygiene tips through play! Org. Sololateca created reading spaces and times for story telling where the children embraced a character in the story using play. Also, during recess, children had an activity in which they were motivated to dream of what they wanted to be when they grew up, choosing objects and gestures to represent this.

Org. Sololateca is committed to continue teaching through play: "We learn by doing things and we are completely satisfied - learning and unlearning!"

Parents showed support to children by taking part in a festival

Source: Org. Sololateca talked with the children about the chosen outcome, but they didn't stop there! They looked at all of their outcomes. As a team, they divided up the work, researching and interviewing the participants to learn more about them. They then held a meeting amongst themselves and shared the results with one another. Org. Sololateca reflected on the experience: "This was significant for us. They told us things that we didn't imagine or consider initially. We interviewed 5 people in each of the communities - there were girls, mothers, and fathers. We gained a whole new understanding of what had happened".

Outcome: At the year-end festival that Org. Sololateca held November 4th, 2023, parents took part in the year-end festival, showing support to the children in their activities at Org. Sololateca. At the time of receiving the diplomas, the parents were very proud and took photos with the children and the children felt supported.

While parents of younger participants came, parents of only one out of 32 adolescents came to the festival. These adolescents explained that they didn't bring their parents, because they thought that the others would not have their parents with them. The teacher and the school director felt, however, that it was important that the adolescents were participating in the large event, showing their talents. The adolescent group participated with different communities for the first time and were very grateful to share their talents, having an impact on participants, teachers and parents.

Significance of the outcome according to Org. Sololateca

Parents generally did not want their children to participate in Org. Sololateca's extracurricular activities. This was the first time that the children were accompanied to an event by their parents, siblings, cousins and friends. Even in school activities the parents do not attend, because they live day to day and attending an event means losing the wages of that day.

In this case, when the parents saw that the children had support with food and materials, the parents and the authorities recognized the organisation's work as legitimate. The communities felt that they were not alone.

The beneficiaries live in the red zone of a conflict due to a territorial dispute between the municipality of Nahuala and Santa Catarina Ixtahuacan. This restricts freedom of movement, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, with children living in uncertainty and danger - sometimes needing to flee.

Contribution of Org. Sololateca to the change in behaviour

Org. Sololatecas organised the year-end festival to be held on November 4th for the children, but prior to the festival, the children asked the teachers to have their parents accompany them in receiving the diplomas at the festival (in 5 of the 6 communities where Org. Sololateca works).

Org. Sololateca provided tutoring and support, and this is seen as favourable by parents, who have seen improved academic results in children and felt comfortable leaving their children at the activities provided by Org. Solocateca. Some children reminded their parents about their own achievements when trying to convince their parents to accompany them to the festival.

Knowing that the activity would be broadcasted on a local TV channel (showing recognition in society) and through the Facebook platform was a strong incentive. Org. Sololateca had also told the children that a person from GFC would be present to give the diplomas! According to

the children, the special guest from outside was a convincing and exciting factor that made the parents come.

The significant role of play that supported this change

Org. Sololateca believes that games made the difference in the children's strengthened confidence, relationships and leadership - they had lost the fear of being told if they were wrong. One child explained the connection between play and her parents' support: "My mother accompanied me to the Festival because she wants to participate in the training; she says that she was never able to play in her childhood. I have told her that we played a lot in the workshops and she always asks me about what I learn in the workshops."

The children's confidence could be seen in their relationships with their parents: In one of the communities, Pasaquin, three little girls explained that, since the moment that they started to take part in activities at Org. Sololateca, they talked with their parents who wanted to know the value of the activities. The teacher then helped to explain to the parents that after the workshop, they would be giving each child a diploma of recognition for completing the whole programme and if she would stop attending, that she would not get a diploma.

Another girl managed to convince her parents, having first said to them, "You think that I'm not a useful girl and that I don't know anything. My friend is very intelligent and you want me to be like my intelligent friend." When it was time for the festival, the same child then managed to convince her father to come by saying, "You need to come because I am smart and I'm going to get a diploma and it will be broadcasted on TV". Another girl described her commitment, "I made a deal with my father and promised to earn my diplomas if he would come."

All of the beneficiaries from all of the groups at Org. Sololateca created a presentation and participated in the event - in modern and ancestral dances and games. Although the children live in these circumstances and with limited economic resources, the boys and girls came up with costumes (using recycled clothing) for their presentations!

Further concerns

One of the mothers would say, "We learn, the girls are learning, but when we get home, it is not the same - we can't do what we can do in the workshop. It is easy to forget what we are learning in our own contexts. Unfortunately we have another reality and a different type of learning."

Ruleli Corporación Social y Cultural (Ruleli)

About Ruleli

Ruleli is working in underprivileged areas of Colombia with theatre, dance, and creative arts programs, as well as helping with homework and skills-building for children of all abilities.

A glimpse of how Ruleli works with play

Ruleli uses learning through play as a strategy to improve education, to make education relevant, and to overcome barriers in vulnerable situations. The children bring their difficulties with them and Ruleli supports their specific needs. Through play, Ruleli strengthens maths skills in children and teaches reading. In music, they use traditional instruments like maracas and drums; in dancing, they use different movements and rhythms. Ruleli uses puppets which the children themselves have made using material from home. Through puppets, they can work with stories and various topics together with the children. Ruleli also uses hula hoops, ropes, and traditional games. Traditional games are passed on by family members and help the teachers to teach teamwork. Ruleli discovered how play is fundamental and goes along with art as a tool to support physical and cognitive development in children, for every aspect of life.

A 17-year old boy resolved conflicts using skills learned at Ruleli, helping to improve family relationships.

Source: Ruleli worked as a team to learn more about this outcome. They met with Camilo, Camilo's parents, and his teachers.

Outcome:

Camilo, a 17-year-old boy from Barrio Olaya, began participating with Ruleli in 2019. However, he had many conflicts with his family because they did not see the benefits of his participation in Ruleli's program. In late 2021, disapproving of his engagement at Ruleli, removed him from the program. Camilo then spoke with his parents, using playful dynamics and putting into practice non-violent conflict resolution skills that he had learned from Ruleli. Camilo spoke to his parents about what he had learned at Ruleli and how important it was to follow these teachings within the family. Camilo returned to Ruleli in 2022. Now, when his parents face a problem, they go to Ruleli. They have announced that the teachings that Ruleli taught Camilo, the importance of speaking, dialoguing, not prohibiting, have helped them improve their family relationships.

From listening to the family and the teacher, they affirmed that Camilo indeed has become a responsible person and they recognised Ruleli's efforts. Camilo put to practise what he learnt at Ruleli in his own family and even made his parents aware that he learned the strategies at

Ruleli. Camilo's parents now expressed an absolute trust in contrast to the hesitation they showed before, when they were not convinced about Ruleli's support for Camilo.

Related outcomes/effects:

Camilo himself discovered that the same strategies that he used for conflict resolution also worked in his academic life and in his relationship with his girlfriend! One of his teachers confirmed that Camilo used many of the games that he learned in drama classes in school and with his friends. Ruleli further described his transformation, "He was a child who didn't know how to act and show emotions, but now he has the best personality! He can live through theatre!"

Teachers highlighted Camilo's commitment to whatever he proposes to do. He confidently holds presentations, organises logistics and meetings and will complete tasks with no effort. In Camilo's graduation ceremony, he was awarded best student, making the parents really proud.

At first, Camilo told Ruleli that he wanted to become a teacher, but as an underprivileged child, he thought he couldn't aspire to that much. Later he told the staff that he wanted to study business administration, believing that he could be good at maths. He had found creative ways to solve things in academics.

At Ruleli, Camilo has become special for the children with disabilities. He helps the children home or helps with transport.

Significance of the outcome according to Ruleli

The playful dynamics taught by Ruleli to Camilo gave him the ability to apply them in practice within a totally different situation and in all relationships.

In the Colombian Caribbean, machismo generates violence, divisions, and even suicides amongst boys, girls, adolescents, and diverse young people, since non-acceptance and bullying lead them to make wrong decisions. The other children participating at Ruleli, including the children with disabilities, now have an older role model they can look up to.

Contribution of Ruleli to the change in behaviour

Since 2019, Ruleli has taught Camilo skills to resolve conflicts through playful dynamics of theatre and music. Ruleli also took the time to talk and share with his family about the benefits for Camilo of participating in the program.

Camilo himself attributed the change to the family environment he experienced at Ruleli - a place that he could trust and where friendship was valued.

Ruleli has been talking with Camilo since the beginning of 2023, encouraging him to continue to further his studies.

The significant role of play that supported this change

Playing through music and theatre gave Camilo tools to express himself freely to his parents and other people around him. One game that Ruleli used to teach children how to solve conflicts is called “the corner of emotions” (sadness, joy, love, excitement). Ruleli proposed this game in every class. Knowing that Camilo did not have space for expressing emotions at home and that it was hard for him, the staff sat down with him and adapted the game slightly for him.

According to Ruleli, another game, “Change of characters,” helped him to improve his mood. The staff expressed, “Today, he greets us with a hug or a kiss. This wasn’t easy for him!”

Music also played a role in influencing Camilo, because he loves music. Through music, he could connect and express emotion very well.

Cores do Amanhã

About Cores do Amanhã

Cores do Amanhã works in Recife, Brasil, with afterschool and weekend activities for children and young people focused on sports, arts, dance, crafts, and much more.

A glimpse of how Cores do Amanhã works with play

Cores do Amanhã started their operations working with graffiti artists. Given their location near a prison complex, graffiti gave Cores do Amanhã opportunities to talk with young people about complex topics - for example on the use of drugs. Cores do Amanhã explained, "We didn't at first have a pedagogical plan, but we knew that what we did with them was more than just art." Cores do Amanhã then connected with other artists, teachers of physical education and today has many different kinds of workshops and activities using play, games and art as educational tools to support and to have dialogue with children and young people. Children, as well as adults, have fun interacting, getting engaged and letting their emotions flow as they socialise and let go of things. Play helps them to communicate their emotions - personally and professionally. With play, the children can talk about words like "prison". At Cores do Amanhã, "it's not dancing for the sake of dancing or singing for the sake of singing. We always want to achieve something more."

A 10 year old girl positively connected to her culture and identity through dance

Source: Cores do Amanhã talked with Cecília's mother, father, sister, and brother-in-law. Cores do Amanhã wanted to add that they have appreciated the opportunity of just looking at one student. Talking with the family gave them a good opportunity to connect with them, even though there had been a history of violence in the family.

Outcome: In 2022, 10 year old Cecília from Sancho community, who had experienced violence in the home, started to participate in the children's Popular Dance Workshop. She also started to take better care of herself, braid her hair, say hello to people and occupy various spaces at Cores do Amanhã. She now wants to do everything in the best way possible, and is performing in other spaces with the Popular Dance Group. Today she arrives at Cores and says good morning to everyone, giving people hugs.

The family members all confirmed that Cecília found herself with culture. She started appreciating her culture, ancestry, and her black colour and started to take care of herself, embracing her afro hair and having colourful braids. The family also confirmed that her empowerment came through the arts and play.

Related outcomes/effects:

Cecília won't let other people bully her, hurt her or humiliate her even when this has been part of her childhood. Now, other girls look up to her and she helps them to feel the way that she does. Other girls say, "I want to be just like Cecília!"

Significance of the outcome according to Cores do Amanhã

Cecília didn't speak due to the violence she had witnessed in her home. She would be very shy and very afraid of everything. Now she is a positive influence on other girls.

Contribution of Cores do Amanhã to the change in behaviour

Cecília started to come with her mother in 2021, but her transformation began with the invitation to the Popular Dance workshop organised by Cores do Amanhã. Cecília could trust the Cores do Amanhã team by sharing her difficulties through dance without having to put it into words. Along with the help of a psychologist, the dance helped her to open up. When the mother changed after receiving support at Cores do Amanhã, the child, too, felt that she could talk.

In the Popular Dance workshop, the children learned about the Brazilian traditional dances and dances from Recife region - about the differences and special characteristics of each dance, including Frevo, Coco de Roda, Dança do Caboclinho, and two types of Maracatu traditional dance. Cores do Amanhã explains why the dance was created (its purpose and religious roots), from where the dance originated, the movements, the instruments involved, the special attires and props, who dances the dance and who takes different roles. The dance teacher, Vanessa, is herself confidently playing key roles in the dances and also helps the children to make their own clothes. Cores do Amanhã uses the dances to discuss with the children about culture and ancestry, and what they see in their own families and how it is part of who they are. They believe that learning the dances and understanding their meaning and history helps the children to feel like they belong somewhere and can value their own culture.

Cores do Amanhã also uses the dances and other artistic elements to discuss gender roles, identity, violence, self-care and sexuality. For example, one of the main elements of the Maracatu is the *Caboclo de Lança*, which is a male role, but today there are several organisations, including Cores do Amanhã, that are questioning that tradition and are bringing women to perform as the *Caboclo de Lança*. This is one more way that Cores do Amanhã address the issue of gender to children.

Another influence on Cecília's transformation is that she started playing chess at Cores do Amanhã.

The significant role of play that supported this change

It was dancing in the workshop on Popular Dance that made everything change in Cecília's life. Cores do Amanhã teaches dance by first showing a video, but the different elements and characteristics of dance are taught through play, for example, using memory cards - matching

traditional dances with their instruments. They also use drawings, songs, and bodily movements.

Playing games and having fun with the children helped Cores do Amanhã to know about the specific needs of the children, giving them ideas for future activities.

NEDUC

About NEDUC

Located in northern Brazil, NEDUC tutors children in afterschool programs, focusing on the use of games and arts.

A glimpse of how NEDUC works with play

In the beginning, play was not an important part of NEDUC's work. Their focus was on academic learning, helping the children with their homework and using written activities. Only at the end, would they incorporate a couple games. Along with GFC's proposal, NEDUC began to consider including something more fun, colourful and dynamic. NEDUC expressed, "That actually made sense to us because we were lacking those moments of better connection with the children. Through a more playful approach, we could address classroom hierarchy in classroom interaction." Although the teachers knew before that the new activities were good, they could see that they were stuck and that the children, including those with autism, needed more support.

Incorporating play made the NEDUC team stronger, more creative, more confident and a bit messier! The staff could remember fun games that they used to play as children and researched together. NEDUC started to make games with recycled materials and included storytelling and role play. After academic activities, they engaged children in role play, dancing, jumping, and games that the children themselves proposed and created rules for. Incorporating play, made the teachers proactive and creative. It made NEDUC's work and spaces more open to those who wouldn't come before, helping parents and other children to come!

A 6-year old boy, who used to be hyperactive, listened to his classmates and could be involved in activities.

Source: NEDUC was able to connect with a nanny (a woman who takes care of the child).

Outcome: Luís Felipe, 6 years old, living in the Coroadinho community, couldn't focus on any activities proposed by NEDUC. In September 2023 Luis started to concentrate more in the activities and respect his friends, letting them speak without interrupting them. Now he is involved in many activities, listening to his classmates and can concentrate, in order to be part of the games.

Luís Felipe does not live with his mother or father. He lives with his sister and a 21-year old “aunt”/nanny who is not related to them by blood. The nanny pays most attention to the younger sister and cannot help the children in their school activities. Luís Felipe is an active, expressive child that likes to talk, sharing his stories. Not getting the attention he wanted at home, the cell phone became his support 18 out of 24 hours a day! The boy only had opportunities to play at school and at NEDUC. The nanny has tried to limit Luís Felipe’s use of the cell phone, but has not managed and argues that without it, the boy would be on the streets. The nanny confirmed a change in Luís Felipe - that he was more outgoing and engaged. She felt that he had become more communicative - responding in long phrases and sharing own experiences in ways that he had not done before. Luís Felipe now comes home more tired, thinking twice before getting the cellphone.

Related outcomes/effects:

Luís Felipe loves reading and earned a reading award at school.

Significance of the outcome according to NEDUC

Luís Felipe used to come to NEDUC with dark circles under his eyes, since he had been on his cell phone until late at night. The cell phone was his mother's gift, as a way to stay in touch after she moved away. Luís was a hyperactive child who couldn't make connections with people because of his use of screens. He struggled to finish any task and jumped from one subject to another, struggling to keep focus. He mixed cursive and block letters and wrote incomplete words.

By giving an opportunity to the boy, NEDUC could as a team learn a whole new reality of how change can happen!

Contribution of NEDUC to the change in behaviour

NEDUC started working with Luís Felipe in August 2023. By using psychopedagogy and concentration techniques, NEDUC helped Luís Felipe and other children to strengthen their focus through storytelling circles. This helped Luís Felipe to listen and respect his mates’ speaking time, and to listen carefully to instructions. Another activity involved him taking photographs. NEDUC explained, “Play in his case had to be more appealing than a device and that was not easy, because a device has music and colours. We had to open our doors to get more connected.” NEDUC had an itinerary of play with Luís Felipe. “There was a way to deal with him and work through play.” They communicated through a hug. If the child went under

the table NEDUC staff would go under the table with him, doing activities with him and responding to him in play.

The significant role of play that supported this change

The storytelling made Luís Felipe excited and engaged in various characters that the children had created! Storytelling circles also gave him an opportunity to be heard! “When we play this game”, NEDUC staff explained, “one person tells part of the story and the next person continues.” Luís Felipe was one of the children who was most involved in the activity. NEDUC staff also incorporated other knowledge into these activities - about indigenous communities and about their city which suited Luís Felipe well who was interested in learning more about the context. NEDUC also made a puppet of a snake, based on the boy’s interest in the myth of a snake! NEDUC staff felt that the stories’ structure of having a beginning, middle, and an end helped him to have great results.

An 8-year old boy with autism who had been expelled from other places, focused on games which helped him identify the letters in his name.

Source: NEDUC was able to connect with the child’s grandmother to follow up on the outcome and to give the grandmother some further tips and strategies for dealing with Miguel.

Outcome: In October 2023, Miguel, an 8-year old child with autism who studied at Instituto Rei Davi in Coroadinho community, started to be able to name all the letters of the alphabet and identify the letters in his name after playing games in a way that helped him to stay focused. Miguel plays and moves a lot, always throwing himself on the floor and jumping and running. He doesn't sit down or sit still. He liked the game the teacher introduced to him so much that he took the game home.

Miguel is a result of a teenage pregnancy where the grandmother became the mother figure. The grandmother is very loving but permissive, so Miguel rules the house. Miguel had struggled in school and had been expelled from several schools due to his behaviour. He would spit and kick. After the diagnosis of Miguel as autistic, the family felt relief.

The teacher at NEDUC said that Miguel completely and radically changed. He used to repeat the same words, but now he can communicate so that people can understand him. Through painting, writing on the floor, and drawing on the blackboard, he has developed fine motor skills, and in maths, he has developed beyond merely counting objects. In the past, the child was like a storm that passed through a room, but now, the child can organise his own play area and toys at school. At home, however, this still seems to be difficult for him.

Miguel is now willing to go to school and he gets really stressed or annoyed if he comes in late and apologises.

Significance of the outcome according to NEDUC

NEDUC felt that it was very difficult to work with this child since he couldn't sit still. When he started to come to NEDUC he had already been stigmatised due to his behaviour. He had been expelled from other places, had bitten a teacher and was seen as impolite. Given that he would have preconceived ideas about teachers and caregivers, it is significant that he was able to trust NEDUC. After seeing the progress, the teachers expressed "It was nice to get a hug from a child who would bite and be aggressive".

Contribution of NEDUC to the change in behaviour

When Miguel came to NEDUC, the staff consciously decided to let go of comments they had heard about the children and to give children like Miguel a proper chance to improve. They noticed how good this was for Miguel and for the team.

At NEDUC, the staff did not ask Miguel to sit down or stay quiet at any point. In a circle, without making him do it, they provided instructions and calmly explained to Miguel the importance of an activity and that he would benefit from joining it. NEDUC explained their approach with the child, "It's as if there is a red sign that pops up in Miguel's mind when he is told what to do, so instead, we give him suggestions. One day he came without trousers because he didn't want to wear them. I told Miguel - which pair of shorts would make you look very well dressed or elegant? Then he could get dressed."

NEDUC paid attention to what the children were good at and used this information in their educational processes. Knowing that Miguel liked to be the centre of attention, NEDUC worked with him as Super Miguel - integrating a playful approach with Miguel.

The significant role of play that supported this change

NEDUC invented a circuit game with several physical tasks to be completed, letting the child do what he was able to do and release his energy. The teacher gave meaning to the play that he himself invented, as if he were a superhero who had a mission to accomplish. He would, for example, start under a table and had a challenge to reach at the end - needing to identify the letters of his name.

NEDUC staff created monsters/characters to help children express their feelings and engage the children, respecting each others' 'monsters' and paying attention to the activity they were doing together.