The Power of Learning through Play

A learning review with the Partnership to Educate All Kids initiative

Final Report

April 5, 2024

Mariam and Phil Smith

Marianne Stattin Lundin

LEARNING LOOP

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Abbreviations

AYC	Amos Youth Centre
CdA	Cores do Amanhã
CFI	Community Focus International
CS	Changing Stories
DESH	Development of Educational Services for Human
FUNILUZ	Fundación Niñas de Luz
GFC	Global Fund for Children
GSK	Gramni Shiksha Kendra Samiti
LF	LEGO Foundation
LtP	Learning through Play
MM	Maji Mazuri
MT	Músicas de la Tierra
MtW	Move the World
NCL	Na Tubelenge Children's Library
OH	Outcome Harvesting
PEAK	Partnership to Educate All Kids (PEAK)
SS	Sabuj Sangha
ST	Starters Technology

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this Learning Review was to understand what happens when *Learning through Play* (LtP) is used in communities and how GFC partners in the Partnership to Educate All Kids (PEAK) initiative had contributed to the changes. 18 partner organisations from three regions (South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America) engaged in a Learning Review lead by consultants from Learning Loop.

The learning review employed Outcome Harvesting (OH) as the main methodological approach. In OH, outcome statements are gathered which form the basis of analysis; these comprise of three parts:

- The **outcome description**, which describes a change in behaviour of a social actor that the program - *through using LtP* - has contributed to.
- The **contribution** of the organisation/program to the change, with a specific focus on the role of LtP.
- A description of why this change is interesting (**Significance**) to the organisation in relation to the context of the change

Collectively, we gathered 123 outcome statements giving an overview of the types of changes that LtP is contributing to. Of these, 20 outcome statements were explored in further depth and developed into short case-studies. The learning review employed a framework of three broad

and youth, Education providers, and Others in the community:

Main findings about children and youth

More than half of the collected outcomes statements (64 out of 123 outcomes) described changes among children and youth. Through these outcomes, we see that LtP has helped children and youth connected to GFC partner programs to thrive and enjoy their learning experiences. The main changes observed are that **children have been empowered, improved their academic performance, and have strengthened relationships with others (especially teachers and parents).**

In school settings, LtP empowered children who had previously been excluded (due to personal, cultural or socioeconomic reasons) to excel academically and socially. In other supplementary/non-formal education/club settings, children gained confidence and a safe space to develop and explore. This helped them to overcome academic hurdles, learn life skills, positively connect with other children and their own families, and express their identities.

Active participation, educative games, sports and artistic expression (including local cultural/language elements) - *used alongside other non-play teaching methods* - contributed to these changes.

Word clouds showing the main changes observed in the data across the three actor

Children have started to raise their voice, helping to shape GFC partners 'own programs, raising concerns to the community through artistic performances. Two examples showed children speaking up in government school settings. Participatory play methods where children were accepted as they were (regardless of social markers), collaboration, and diverse art forms, games, and sports helped the children to grow in leadership.

Observing these changes in children and youth has convinced others in the community (and the GFC partners themselves!) of the value of LtP, and has positively influenced others to support LtP and engage in other community action.

Main findings about education providers

We learned of changes among education providers through 31 outcome statements. The majority of these outcomes relate to how they have **adopted an LtP approach**. Several factors have played a role in this, including observing and experiencing LtP themselves, training, resources, networking, and by witnessing the effects of other outcomes – especially the changes in children.

While there are instances of education providers providing resources or opportunities for LtP, there is not much evidence yet of a system-wide shift in LtP practices or provision of resources for LtP. The extent to which education providers have been influenced depends highly on the design of the program. GFC partners have some examples showing how play has disrupted the status quo in education ecosystems which can be an inspiration for other partners who intentionally want to influence the uptake of LtP by education providers.

Main findings about others in the community

35 outcomes about changes in the wider community, paint a picture of **community members, particularly parents and caregivers, becoming more open to play and more engaged and committed to supporting children in their activities**. Changes in relationships and attitudes in the community, allowed children who had previously been excluded to benefit from education and other program initiatives. Community members also engaged in action and advocacy for education and participated in improving the environment. One case described transformation in the life of a parent herself. Often the positive results in children along with strategic engagement by the GFC partner contributed to the changes in community.

Those partner organisations that focused on service provision typically had less awareness of the impact they were having on communities. The Learning Review surfaced outcomes that partners previously had not been aware of and some were especially inspired by the process of seeking community perspectives and following up on outcomes.

Relating back to partners 'LtP definition and the LEGO Foundation definition

The data gathered in the Learning Review resonates well with how partners define LtP. Sports and body movement as well as artistic expression came out clearly in the Learning Review data, but would not necessarily be forms of *play* without the child-friendly, fun, engaging and participatory characteristics that are highlighted in the GFC partners 'LtP definition. GFC's open approach, encouraging local expressions of LtP to emerge, contributed to the diversity and the effectiveness of play based approaches.

The partners 'LtP forms of play and outcomes also relate well to LEGO Foundation's (LF) five characteristics of LtP as well as the five skills identified as part of holistic development. This

Learning Review explored what happened when LtP took place beyond the formal classroom setting, describing children's skills and agency in a more integrated way, as well as the agency of the adults around them, which LF had identified as a research need.

Ideas to consider

Moving forward, here are some ideas for GFC and partners to consider, building on the experience and learning from this process.

- GFC and partners seek to address systemic inequality and exclusion; this will require further development of relationships across cultural/social divides. Partners should explore how LtP (and other factors) can further **build bridges and inspire relationships across divides** in the communities where they work.

- Partners should, in the **design** of their work, consider how they as civil society organisations **connect with and influence government education providers** in order to support a broader systems-level change towards LtP.

- Consider how more projects can play a role in **cultural transmission and intergenerational connections**.

- Now that partners already have experience of documenting outcomes as behavioural change in social actors, they can regularly monitor and communicate changes using **the simple balloons as a framework**. FUNILUZ showed how the use of puppets helped generate new conversations with children. GFC partners can **find creative ways of learning about change from children**; puppets could potentially support the harvesting of outcomes among children.

- Some GFC partners valued the opportunity to hear the perspectives of other actors. GFC can work with partners to **map out actors** who may be influenced through their work and explore simple ways to hear from them and engage them towards their vision.

- Given GFC's commitment to support sharing and learning among their partners, **use participatory processes to explore the strategies, experiences, challenges, and outcomes highlighted in the cases**.

Background and purpose

Context and project

Global Fund for Children (GFC) partners with community-based organisations around the world to help build a future where children and young people are safe and are provided with the space to reach their full potential and lead on activism to advance their rights. GFC's current vision promotes participatory, democratic approaches to grant-making whilst centering communities and those most impacted by the issues they fund as the key drivers of systemic change. Interwoven across their work are three Core Principles of shifting power, wellbeing, and interconnection.

The Partnership to Educate All Kids (PEAK) initiative was started in order to support community-based organisations around the world that are helping children who have experienced pandemic-related education disruptions access and thrive in learning environments. The initiative supports 66 community-based partners of varying size and experience, working in urban and rural settings, across 10 countries in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. All the partners put children ages 6-12 at the heart of their programming and activities and use play-based methods to advance children's holistic learning and education in their communities.[1]

Purpose and Focus of the Learning Review

The primary aim of the Learning Review was to capture and understand the diverse outcomes and changes that have emerged from GFC partners 'initiatives focused on Learning through play (LtP) and to explore the unique, powerful, and often unexpected outcomes that can emerge at the intersection of learning, healing, resistance, protest, liberatory exploration, cultural preservation, and play.[2]

PEAK partners volunteered to be part of the process and GFC then invited 18 of these partners, six from each of the three PEAK regions (see Annex 3), to be part of the process which lasted from October 2023 to February 2024.

We worked with two main questions to guide this Learning Review:

- **What happens when LtP (supported and fostered by GFC's partners) is used in communities?**
- **How have GFC partners been contributing to these changes?**

The broad scope of these questions was focused by the choice of the Outcome Harvesting (OH) methodology which focuses the learning on outcomes, defined as 'behavioural change in a social actor that the partners have contributed to'. This focused the initial phase of the learning review on concrete observations of change rather than on opinions, theories, or feelings about change, to allow us to identify specific cases which we could then explore further.

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[1] This section is informed by the PEAK learning review Terms of Reference and the Year 1 report.
[2] Ibid.

During the initial inception process, we read through background material about the partners and sought to further define the scope of the learning review. We decided to frame the collection of outcomes around:

1. Three domains of actors

The learning review intended to see how change has been supported in both children and youth, *and* other actors, to build an initial picture of broader systems-level changes. This structure created the balloon theme which has been used throughout the review (Figure 1). Often, actors who work at grassroots level with children and youth tend to share observations about this group (not surprisingly, since this is what motivates their work), so to encourage broader reflection, we have proactively sought to gather data about:

- **Children/Youth**, defined as under 18, but focusing on changes in the 6-12-year-olds reached by the programs.
- **Education Providers.** These include the teachers, volunteers, schools, organisations, and government ministries that provide formal or informal education services that the programs have interacted with.
- **Others in the community.** This group is primarily parents in the data, but can include local leaders, community organisations, religious groups, and other community members.

Figure 1: Balloon theme

2. Significance, as determined by partners

Typically, an OH evaluation at the local level would surface in the order of 50-100 outcomes that the project/local partner has contributed to. Given the time constraints for the learning review, and working with 18 partners, it was not feasible to collect this depth of data. We therefore focused the outcomes collection on 4-6 outcomes which partners felt were *significant*. Thus, the outcomes collected are intentionally shaped by the values and priorities of the partners and help to reveal what they consider are significant changes, and the important contributions that LtP makes. Through focusing on significance, we did not therefore gain a collection of every 'achieved' outcome, but rather a selection of outcomes which would best support collective learning.

It is also important to acknowledge that the focus of this learning review is not to explore the academic outcomes of children. Predictable academic outcomes (e.g. reading competency, maths) are not well measured through the OH approach and are better understood using other methods designed to look for these specific competencies. The learning review does not therefore focus on LtP's contribution to academic performance. While many of the outcomes do highlight change in this area, and here we can explore LtP's contribution to specific cases, we cannot make *generalisable* claims about the extent to which LtP contributes to improved academic performance.

What do we mean by Learning through Play?

Part of the purpose of this learning review was to explore further how GFC partners define LtP, by examining the changes and contributions which they associate with it from the contexts in which they work. A strict definition has therefore not been used from the outset, to encourage exploration of the term.

However, two main sources have served as a reference in this learning review, and have been informing (beyond the scope of this learning review) how partners are defining LtP in relation to the work with GFC:

1. LEGO Foundation's (LF) definition of LtP

LF lifts five skills for holistic child development: **creative, social, physical, emotional and cognitive**, and describe that "learning through play happens when the activity (1) is experienced as joyful, (2) helps children find meaning in what they are doing or learning, (3) involves active, engaged, minds-on thinking, (4) as well as iterative thinking (experimentation, hypothesis testing, etc.) and (5) social interaction."[3] Figure 2 shows these five characteristics of LtP.[4]

Figure 2: Five characteristics of Learning through Play

2. GFC's process of exploring LtP with partners.

The PEAK program, having been funded by LF, has referred to the definition above. GFC saw that many partners were already embracing LtP, though they didn't necessarily call it that. One of GFC's 'guiding stars' is 'Community-Driven Systems Change', which motivates GFC to explore what LtP means in the context of their partners. GFC therefore began a process of exploring partner definitions through a series of workshops, the results of which were being developed in parallel to this learning review. One of the outputs was a word cloud highlighting the main aspects which partners have described as being essential components of a play-based approach to children's education and development (see Figure 3[5]).

Figure 3: GFC partners' definition of LtP

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[3] LEGO Foundation. (2017) *What we mean by learning through play.* Retrieved from https://cms.learningthroughplay.com/media/vd5fiurk/what-we-mean-by-learning-through-play.pdf

[4] Zosh, J. M., Hassinger-Das, B., & Laurie, M. (2022). *Learning through play and the development of holistic skills across childhood.* Retrieved from learningthroughplay.com. Image credit: LEGO Foundation

[5] Image credit: GFC

LF's framework and the word cloud have been used to help inform the coding strategy used in the analysis of the data in this learning review.

Methodology and Process

In this section, we describe the main tools used in the learning review, the participatory process with partners, and the challenges and possible limitations of this learning review. OH, the main methodology used for the process, is briefly described in the following section. We have sought to engage in a participatory process with GFC partners through online workshops and interviews, exploring together what changes they have observed. From an initial brainstorm of outcomes, we identified case-studies to explore in greater depth. The process is described in

Session 1: Initial Brainstorming
Who is changing?
Connecting!
Children/ Youth (0-18)
"Education" Providers
Others in the community
...In what ways?
Further Brainstorming

Finding specific examples of change
Writing up outcomes

Session 2: Searching for Outcomes

One-on-one: Refining Outcomes
Refining and cleaning up outcomes.

Session 3: Initial Sense-making
What kinds of fruit are we seeing?

One-on-one: Digging Deeper
How did the most interesting changes happen?

Final Sense-making
What did we find out in this learning review?
What can we celebrate?!

Figure 4: Learning review roadmap

more detail later in this section, but our overall 'roadmap'[6] was as follows (Figure 4):

About Outcome Harvesting

OH is a well-established utilisation-focused evaluation methodology, meaning its purpose is to support learning and decision making among those involved in the program. Its strength is in deepening understanding about a program's contribution to complex social and systems change. Within OH, the definition of an outcome is:

> *A behavioural change in a social actor that we have contributed to.*

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[6] Learning through play illustrations adapted from GFC's five-year strategy artwork, created by Ramya Ramakrishnan

This definition is what is meant when we use the term *outcome* in this learning review, and when we refer the creation of concise *outcome statements*, which consist of three parts:

1. The **outcome description,** which includes details about who changed, what they are doing differently now, and when and where the change happened. These details help to ensure that the outcomes are about a specific event in history which can be verified, and not just a subjective opinion about change.

2. A description of the plausible **contribution** of the organisation/program to the change, which again can be verified by others or investigated further through other approaches like process tracing.

3. **Significance**: A description of why this change is interesting to the organisation in relation to the context of the change. This helps to highlight issues of local initiative, sustainability, local and strategic relevance, and cultural context.

OH does not start from the program/project plans, but first looks at the actual changes that have taken place through the implementation of a program. These point towards *what* the program contributed to and *how* they contributed to this change. These changes may be very different from what the program had expected, making OH a good tool for exploring both the intended and unexpected effects of a program (both positive and negative).

OH requires a participatory process from the design phase until interpretation of findings and support of its use. The process relies on the observations of people who are closest to the change process, normally program/project staff. They are most aware of the local situation and how to best analyse and interpret the observed changes. The role of the consultant is mainly facilitative, working with the staff and key actors to identify, agree on, and substantiate the outcome statements.

In this learning review, we have employed the ideas of OH to help capture a selection of concrete changes that GFC partners have observed, in order to create a rich picture of the kinds of change to which LtP play contributes.

Description of the evaluation process

Initial workshops with partners
In the first phase, we conducted a series of online workshop sessions and interviews with partners. Workshops were conducted separately for each of the three regions, to accommodate for time zones, group size, and interpretation needs. Some organisations used the online meeting tool Mural to post content, while others worked together, took photos of their group work, and sent them to us so we could interact with it online.

Session 1: Initial brainstorming
The first 90-minute workshop focused on introducing the purpose of the learning review, building connections in the group and with the facilitators, and introducing the main framework for the review. The session established initial discussions on change by asking participants to explore in groups:

- **Who is changing because of LtP?** The purpose of this step was to help partners think about who was a part of the LtP system, and where we might hope to find outcomes.

- **In what ways are people changing because of LtP?** This question helped partners to start thinking about what kinds of change they had observed, to start surfacing ideas which could be developed into outcome statements.

Responses were mapped out onto the framework "balloons" (Figure 5).

Session 2: Searching for outcomes: In this session we introduced partners to some of the basic ideas of OH and started to draft outcome statements together based on the initial brainstorm from session 1.

As homework, partners were asked to identify 4-6 significant outcomes about how play had contributed to change among children/youth, education providers, and others in the community.

One-on-one interviews with each of the partners were then conducted to help clarify and refine outcomes, ensuring that they were observed changes, and to make sure that all the parts of the outcome statements were present. Only complete outcome statements were used for analysis, which were entered into a spreadsheet containing columns for the outcome description, contribution, significance, and meta-data such as actor category and qualitative data coding. This gave us a complete set of outcome statements which we could then use for the next step in the process.

Session 3: Initial sense-making session

Using the completed set of outcomes, we were able to put together some initial synthesis of the data, to support further exploration by the partners. We presented the following:

- A mapping out of the outcomes onto the three actor domains, highlighting what kinds of change were happening in the different domains.

Figure 5: Participant insights upon reflection on initial synthesis of data

- Using an initial coding based on the LtP definition from partners, we displayed which concepts were most prevalent in the data.

The findings were discussed in smaller groups, looking at surprises, reactions and questions, which were shared back in plenary (see example from Sub-Saharan Africa in Figure 6).

Finally, we introduced the next phase of the learning review – looking more deeply into one or two outcomes to develop a case study – and asked participants to start making some initial
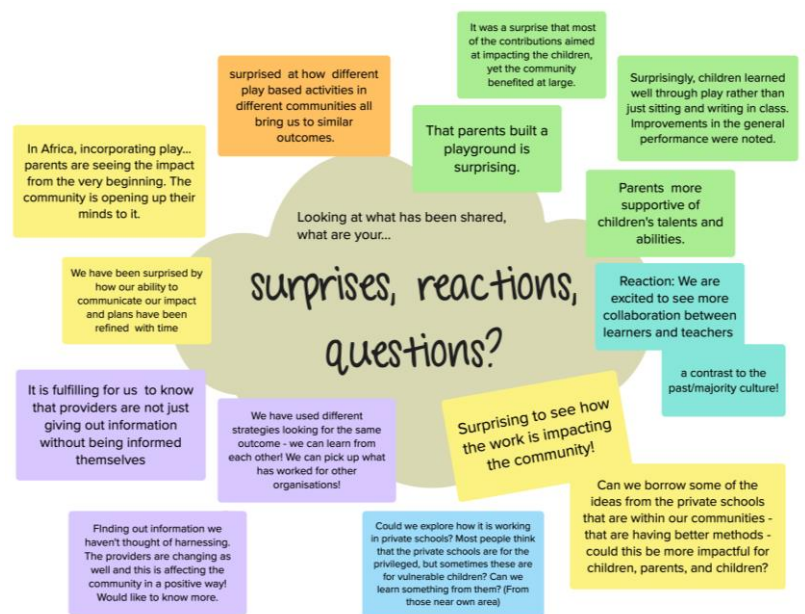
notes on which outcome they wanted to explore, why, and how we could go about it (e.g. who could we talk to).

Figure 6: Participant responses mapped out on framework

Substantiation/digging deeper

For their selected outcome, we encouraged each partner to talk with others knowledgable about the change to gain further knowledge of perspectives and confidence in the outcome story. We then conducted a 1-hour interview with each partner with two main purposes:

- to gain a more complete picture of how the organisation works with play; and
- to establish a more complete outcome story (case study) and explore how LtP was significant in supporting the described behavioural change.

20 outcomes from the partners were written up in depth, highlighting the approaches to play that the organisation has used. Of these 20 outcomes, partners were able to further substantiate 15 of these outcomes, gaining at least one new perspective. Some partners were, for different reasons, not able to follow up on the outcome within the timeframe, some partners met with one or more people, one partner met with groups of people ensuring that people living with disabilities were represented, and one partner organisation split up into teams and followed up on every single outcome, meeting 5 different people in each community! Most importantly, those who managed to follow up on the outcomes seemed to find it a meaningful process. Partners commented on the value of looking at just one outcome, following up on perspectives, and meeting people in this way.

The short case studies helped each outcome story to become more nuanced with background about the partner's history and approach to LtP and the details of how LtP and other factors contributed to the highlighted change. In the process, we also took note of additional outcomes and effects linked to the chosen outcome. As we discovered new occurrences of codes, we

added these to the outcomes database. If information was sufficiently complete for an outcome statement, additional outcomes were also added to the outcome database.

The short case studies are listed in annex 5, with links to the full writeup.

Coding and Analysis

The outcomes data was coded to help us identify patterns in actors, the type of change, the type of play mentioned in the outcome, and other contributing factors. This enabled us to do some basic quantitative analysis of the outcomes, and to filter data to review all outcomes related to specific themes (codes) in the data.

The coding strategy was developed from the data in combination with the outputs from the LtP definition process. This is available in annex 4.

Each outcome statement is given a unique code of format – e.g. AS506 – GSK. The first two letters indicate the region and the last letters the organisation. This is to enable easier referencing to the outcomes database.

Given the nature of the data, we have chosen not to present an analysis by region, and only comment on regional differences where this is very clear in the data.

Known Limitations

The online nature of the learning review and limited time to explore outcomes with partners is one of the main limits to this review. Not all partners were comfortable working online, and probably would have contributed more had we been working with them in person. Particularly in the sense-making session, feedback from partners was limited. However, the online approach has enabled us to conduct a review while minimising intrusion into the work of partners, and reducing overall budget and environmental impact.

One of the main limitations of the learning review is the nature of the data *sample.* With only 5-10 outcomes per partner, this is very much a limited sample of the changes that partners have contributed to. In keeping with the participatory process, the sample is based on what partners have decided to focus on and share through the process. In some cases, this has led to a wide range of changes, in other cases partners have shared multiple outcomes - linked together - about one family or case. Partners were asked to share what they thought were *significant* outcomes, and this inevitably shaped the data, which is primarily a reflection of the partners' subjective priorities rather than a comprehensive mapping of play-supported outcomes. This becomes an issue where there appears to be gaps in data, since it is difficult to verify whether these gaps indicate a type of change is not happening, or if partners have simply not raised these issues (having chosen to focus on something else instead). Of specific concern in the data, is that few outcomes give insight into linkages to ethnicity, religion and belief, and gender identity, making it difficult for us to draw conclusions about these issues.

Learning Review Findings

In total, **123 outcomes** were gathered with partners through this process, mostly about children and youth (as anticipated). Outcomes were categorised by the main actor domain, as shown in the balloons (Figure 7). Some outcomes were about multiple actors working together, and therefore are counted in multiple domains (and therefore the total numbers add up to more than 123).

This same structure is used to explore the findings from the outcomes and short case studies in the following sections. Each section starts with a "balloon diagram" showing the main types of change that are described in the outcomes (based on qualitative coding of the outcomes), with the size indicating their relative prevalence. Following this, we explore in more depth the changes that were described in the outcome descriptions and short case-studies.

When we refer to the changes/qualitative codes, we have bolded them in the text, and the number in

Figure 7: Outcomes categorised by main domain

parentheses is the number of times this code was used to describe an outcome in the data. When we refer to specific outcomes, we have given the outcome a code so that it can be easily found in the outcomes database. An example outcome statement, showing what the outcomes look like in the database, is included below:

Short Title	Outcome Description	Significance	Partner contribution
Community leaders provided a school building for play-based learning. (AS203 – DESH)	In May 2022, 12 community leaders of the Bihari colony in Mymensingh city (Bangladesh) sat in a discussion and grew a consensus that a play based learning environment would be created for their children. They provided a school building to be used.	The community leaders of this colony were very cautious about taking any decision with people from outside the colony. Because of the high communal sensitivity they were critical in trusting people from the outside. There is a new trust relationship between DESH and the Bihari colony. Leaders are actively welcoming DESH for the first time.	During March-May 2022, DESH worked to create an environment for the individual leaders through counselling and motivations, so that they could come together and take decisions for their children's learning. DESH told the leaders that the school would not be traditional, but be play-based and that attracted their attention (that it was joyful)! There were many questions and DESH had to create a mental picture to show what this would mean.

We then explore the contribution to these outcomes - both the characteristics of play that contributed to the change as well as any other contributing factors. We also draw a broad picture of the approaches that the GFC partners in this Learning Review have used in play,

based on the interviews with partners. Finally, we have some concluding statements for each of the actor categories.

Encouraging girls
Collaboration
Environmental stewardship
Requests for play-based methods
Cultural shift
Strengthened relationships
Employment and livelihoods
Adopting LtP
Choosing non-violence
Community development
Improved teacher-child relations
Providing LtP opportunities
Raising Awareness
Community engagement
Leadership
Supporting other children
Commitment
Material creation

Figure 8: Main changes among children and youth

Description of the main changes

In this section we describe in more depth the changes about children and youth and how they are linked to one another. The network analysis in Figure 9 shows the main codes (which occurred more than twice) and where they are linked together (i.e. co-occurrence of the same
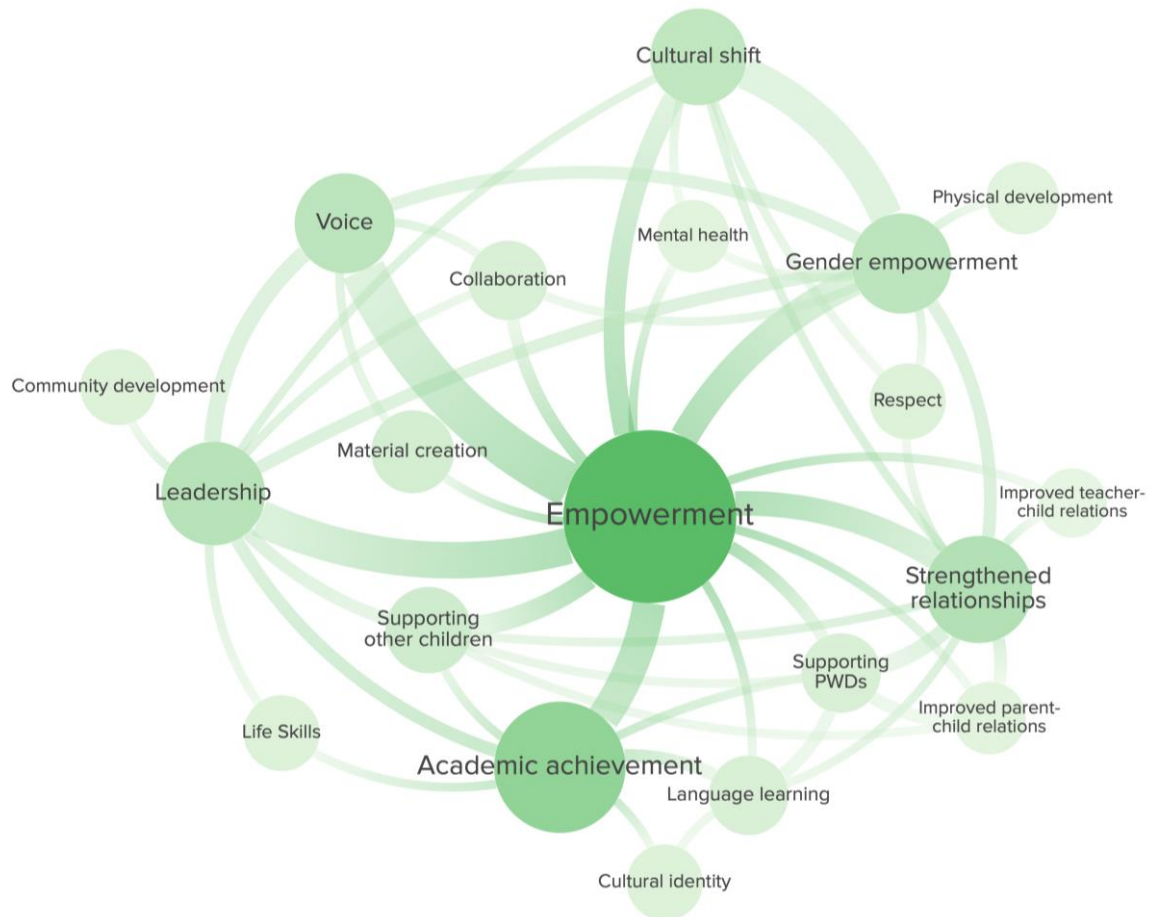
Figure 9: Network analysis showing linkages between main codes used to describe outcomes in children and youth

codes):

To understand this further, the changes are described in relation to overlapping *clusters*, where types of change are clearly related to each other in the data. The clusters are shown in the network analysis charts, focused on the code central to the cluster (note that these only display the main connections).

Cluster 1: Empowerment (32), Gender Empowerment (11), Voice (11), and Leadership (12)

The most frequent change described in this data relates to an increased willingness to participate in activities, communicate with others, and display overall confidence. In several cases this is leading to them voicing their ideas and concerns to project leaders, parents, teachers, and others in positions of power, and showing other signs of increased agency (e.g. taking on new roles and positions of leadership). Of the 64 outcomes about children and youth, 39 relate to changes in this cluster (Figure 10).

A sub-theme within empowerment is **gender empowerment**, especially regarding how girls have overcome cultural gender norms - **culture shift (10)**, and are now communicating more confidently, voicing their concerns, and engaging in mutually-respectful interactions with boys. This is even linked to several cases of improved **mental health (3)**, since the girls are now able to talk about their concerns.

Empowerment is also strongly linked to children taking **leadership (12)**, and **supporting other children (7)** (e.g. with school work), and to the other clusters of **strengthened relationships** and **academic achievement**.

Figure 10: Cluster 1 showing links between empowerment and other codes

Some examples of changes in this cluster:

- Children confidently presented their problems to parents and teachers, even addressing teaching practises, to address education issues in their school in rural India. (AS506 – GSK)

- Girls in the program looked people in the eyes and started to talk with community members and others. In the rural villages of southern Nepal, cultural and societal norms are such that girls have been trained to never raise their eyes/head towards anyone, especially not elders or new acquaintances. (AS001 – AT)

- Students in Zambia started to share about the social issues that were affecting them at home or in the community such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, and sexual abuse. (AF204 - AYC)

- A 15-year-old girl took leadership as a spokeswoman for the Board of Directors of FUNILUZ (Colombia) and advocates for gender equality. (AM005 - FUN)

- 20 girl guides representing girls in 10 communities in Guatemala formed a directorate spreading information, organising activities, and proposing ideas. (AM505 - SOL)
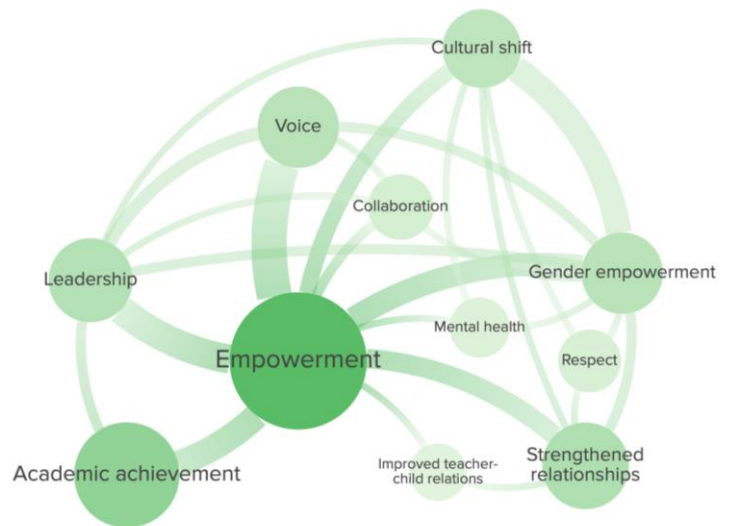
- 30 students in the teens program took on leadership roles in schools country-wide (Kenya), for example as leaders of a drama group, academic captain, and as founder of an anti-narcotics group. (AF403 - MM, see also case on Maji Mazuri)

Cluster 2: Academic achievement (20), language learning (5), life skills (4)

Unsurprisingly, given the education focus of the PEAK partners, a strong theme in the outcomes is improved school achievement among children (Figure 11). The outcomes highlight improvements in language learning, literacy, maths, arts, other **life skills**, and overall motivation to participate in educational activities. This has in some cases enabled students to pass on their academic skills to others (**supporting other children**).

Figure 11: Cluster 2 showing links between academic achievement, language learning and life skills

The outcomes also highlight changes among students who have struggled with the classroom environment, for example through being shy, or by being disruptive/highly active, but are now able to participate thanks to the integration of movement, other supports (e.g. a teddy bear helping a girl to communicate and learn literacy skills!), math manipulatives (physical objects, such as beads, that support children in manipulating and understanding math concepts), and other play-based approaches.

A small number of changes are also linked to **cultural identity** and learning other local languages, where cultural aspects have been integrated into activities. Amongst partners operating in Sub-Saharan Africa, outcomes also show **support to deaf and blind students** where sign language and braille have been integrated into activities.

Some examples of outcomes showing changes in this cluster:

- Bihari children in Bangladesh started attending and enjoying preschool (AS201 – DESH). The Bihari colony had no culture of school attendance among children or adults. Even the children were engaged with work. These children now enjoy a school environment (they come to school to play) and can prepare themselves for the next level of formal schooling. Without this arrangement, most of these children would not succeed to go to the next level.
- An 11-year-old girl with cognitive difficulties stopped forgetting names, numbers and the alphabet after playing instruments and singing at Músicas de la Tierra's activities in Colombia. (AM410 - See also case on Músicas de la Tierra)
- Children in Zambia learned each other's local languages and English through games (AF002 - NCL)
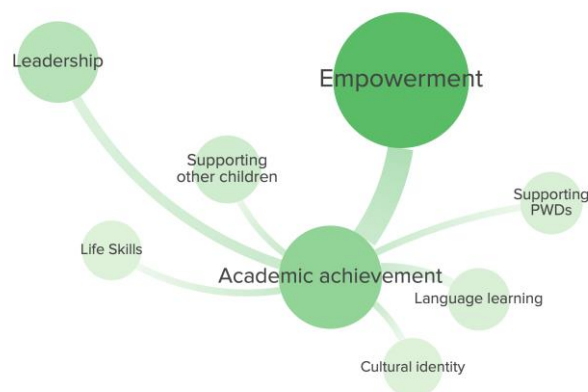
- An 8-year-old boy with autism, who had been expelled from other educational establishments in Brazil, focused on games which helped him identify the letters in his name. (AM204 - NED)

Cluster 3: Strengthened relationships (13)

The third significant cluster of changes is about new relationships, and improved relationships between children and their teachers and with their parents, with children communicating more freely and confidently (Figure 12). This has taken different forms in the different regions (characterised by the focus of the organisations).

In several cases in South Asia, this related to changed **gender empowerment, respect, and cultural shift**, where girls were now relating to boys more positively, and boys were starting to take on roles which had been previously left only to girls. For example:

- In 2023, all the boys in the Atoot (Nepal) programming started to help with house chores traditionally assigned to women in their own homes, becoming allies with girls in the program in shifting cultural norms. (AS010 - AT)

Figure 12: Cluster showing links between new/improved relationships and other codes

In several stories from Latin America, changes related to children who have come from difficult family contexts. Some who have even been traumatised by witnessing violence in the home, were able to start building healthy, non-violent, and respectful relationships with other children and program staff. For example:

- A 10-year-old girl who had suffered from witnessing violence in the home confidently interacted with people at Cores do Amanhã (Brazil), participating in different activities and performing in dance. Previously, she was very shy and didn't speak. (AM104 - CdA)

In Sub-Saharan Africa, several of the stories relate to improved relationships with **people with disabilities**. The integration of sign language and braille enabled new family interactions and relationships with other children in the program. This has especially helped to improve **parent-child relationships**, for example:

- 12 students started to communicate effectively using sign language with their parents and friends. The students can now interact with each other, and the family no longer relies on the partner organisation for communication. (AF202 - AYC)

While there was one case of new relationships with a discriminated Hare Krishna minority, and another observation of children learning other ethnic minority languages, there was otherwise little evidence in the data of new relationships across inter-religious or inter-ethnic divides.

Other outliers

In addition to the clusters described above, there were also a smaller number of significant changes which start to show what can happen when youth feel empowered and have new relationships and skills.
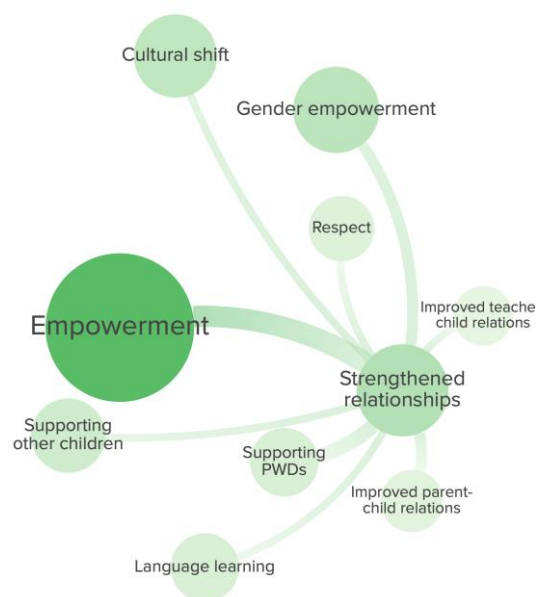
Four significant outcomes show how youth and children have contributed to **community development** demonstrating innovation, support to education, and environmental stewardship:

- In September 2023, girls in the Atoot (Nepal) program conceptualised, wrote and performed a drama to disseminate information about the hazards of poor sanitation, the benefits of healthy communal environmental sanitation, and how they can all do their part to better care for their personal and communal spaces.

- In 2023, high school students at Ekmattra Academy (Bangladesh) successfully developed a small hydro-electricity generation project, establishing a sustainable power source. Aware of the electricity-shortage problems in Mymensingh area, the students came up with the idea to address the issue.

- In April 2023, parents, youth, and project teachers in Lira, Uganda, created a play centre with learning materials made of local resources. Learning centres in five communities now have a play centre. (AF301 - CFI)

- In October 2023, 36 students and four teachers from Maji Mazuri (Kenya) put on a concert themed 'Nature's Music is Not Over 'held at Mathare Park. 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. They also presented poems and Shairi (poetry in Swahili) that educated on the importance of taking care of the world around us. (AF405 - MM)

Several smaller changes also show how students have begun to support the creation of **materials** such as posters, toys, videos, music, and drama performances, to support education in both their classroom context and more broadly in the community.

There are also some changes showing that youth were starting to find new **employment and livelihood** opportunities specifically linked to their involvement with play:

- A secondary school hired two Changing Stories alumni as teachers to use play-based learning, adopting the approach into their schools. (AS104 – CS)

- Two 22-year-old-girls started to play handball in an international team. They are paid to play in this team and also receive a scholarship to attend public school. (AS504 – GSK)

What is contributing to these changes?

Aspects of a play-based approach

Figure 13 gives a visual impression of how play contribution codes (left) are correlated to the outcome codes (right). Connections are only shown when they have occurred three or more times in the data. The number in the boxes shows the total number of times the codes were used in relation to changes for children and youth; the total number of linkages can be larger (e.g. with other teaching methods) since each instance of the code may be linked to multiple outcome codes. For reference, the strongest connection, participation to empowerment, occurred 15 times.

Reading the diagram from right to left, the play factor that led to the most *variety* of codes in outcomes was sports and body movement. **Sports and movements (23)** was a common

contributing play factor among participating partners in South Asia (19), which is partly attributed to one partner in South Asia using football as one of their main tools for supporting girls empowerment and most of their outcomes (10 in total) link in some way to football. Also another South Asian partner had sports as a main tool for empowerment. It should be noted that partnering organisations did not use sports and body movement as the only form of play; they combined it with artistic expression and other factors contributing to the outcomes.

Common in all regions and with diversity in outcomes were **participatory (24)** elements of play describing the children's active role in LtP and decisions made in play. Active participation in the activities organised by GFC partners were often described in stark contrast with the prevailing traditional methods used in school where the child is expected to be a passive learner. The organisations often mentioned how they challenged hierarchy, encouraged the child's active role and supported the child's sensory experiences and opportunities to manipulate objects and explore. Many organisations emphasised the child's opportunity to decide and form the play activities. Participation primarily links to empowerment, but also supported academic improvement, leadership, voice, cultural shifts and changes in gender norms. Giving the children, especially girls, opportunities to actively participate was ground-breaking in some contexts.
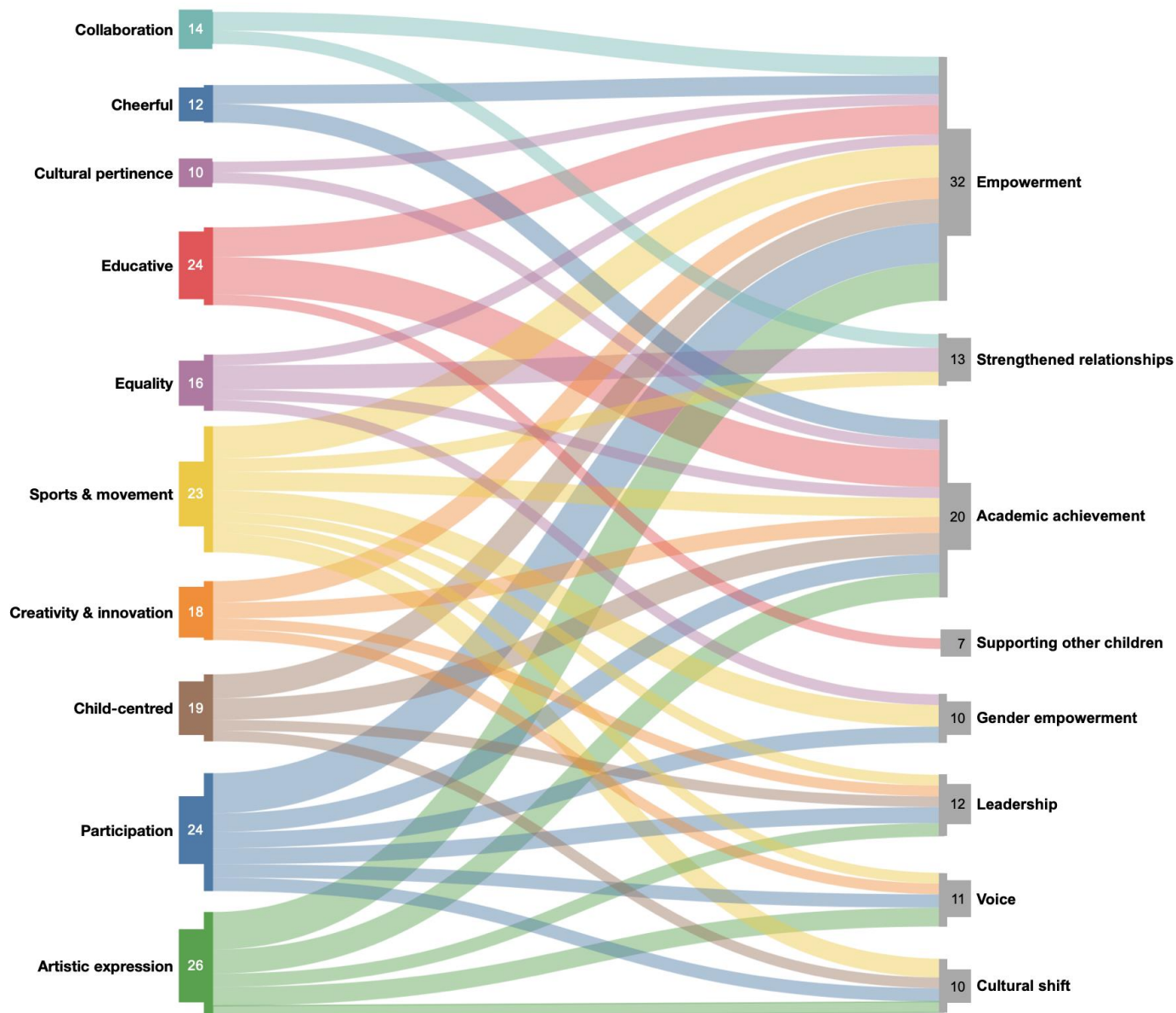
Figure 13: Diagram showing how various aspects of play contributed to the main outcomes.

Artistic expression (26) described children singing and expressing themselves using music, dance, theatre/drama, painting, poetry and other bodily or creative expression. A majority of the partners in all regions described how they work with drama, dance, or role play, giving opportunities for children to work through emotions and feelings using artistic expression. Partner organisations work with children who live in contexts where conflicts, inequalities, and other social issues deeply affect the lives of the children; in these circumstances, partners worked with children to motivate them to collectively and/or individually express themselves, supporting them to reduce fear of failure and encouraging them to create and try things. One partner mentioned that through drama, they could evaluate what the children were understanding or needed further support in. Artistic expression linked to results in empowerment, academic achievement, leadership, voice, and a cultural shift.

Common elements in all regions were play elements that were **educative (24),** where play was designed to strengthen academic skills, using songs, games, tools, toys, or other objects to teach academic subjects. In South Asia, several organisations that were part of the learning review worked directly with formal schooling of children and had this as their mandate. The

educative play efforts were as expected achieving academic results, but were also strongly linked to empowerment outcomes. Interestingly, there were also outcomes of children who went on to support other children of their own initiative.

Creative and innovative (18) elements of play – making things, initiating activities from own ideas, innovating and experimenting – were forms of play that contributed to changes in children in all regions. Creativity yielded results in empowerment, academic achievement, leadership, and voice.

All GFC partners said that they had designed their activities to be age-appropriate and child-centred. The outcomes data marked as having **child-centred (19)** aspects of play were explicitly mentioning how they engaged with children in ways that were inviting and inspiring for children in the way that the activities were carried out, supporting them at their level of capacity and interest. Child-centred play contributed to outcomes showing empowerment, academic achievement, leadership, and a cultural shift.

Equality (16) aspects in play connected to behavioural changes in the children's relationships, empowerment, academic achievement, and gender roles. Outcomes were coded by equality when the play aspect explicitly worked with inclusion and diversity in gender, social, economic and any other cultural label. In AYC's (Zambia) outcome AF205 about children (those with special needs and other children) exercising leadership together to address community issues, an important contribution to the change was games and team building where children of mixed abilities and needs were included. In Sololateca's (Guatemala) outcome AM506, a 13-year-old boy who previously avoided interaction with girls his age was able to change through the support of ancestral dance and gymnastics rehearsals where Sololateca expected participation with female companions.

Partners often described their approach as cheerful and fun, but outcomes were only tagged as **cheerful (12)** if the contribution explicitly named this. Cheerful play contributed to changes in empowerment and academic achievement.

Collaborative (14) aspects of play contributed to changes in empowerment and relationships. The small number of outcomes with this aspect was a surprise to partner organisations in initial sense-making sessions. Given the many partner activities using art forms such as dance and music and the sports and body movement games and activities, we presume that at least social interaction, negotiation and social learning may have been contributing to other outcomes as well. We can also presume that the positive environments described later in our text as a contributing factor is conducive to play and social forms of learning to be developed whether intentionally or unintentionally. Na Tubelenge Children's Library (Zambia) and Community Focus International (Uganda) described comments by parents on the social and communication skills improving in their children, which we can assume links to the social and collaborative aspects of LtP. Similarly, activities with theatre at Ekmattra (Bangladesh) contributed to both social changes as well as several language related outcomes.

Cultural pertinence (10) (i.e. linking to local culture) connected to outcomes showing empowerment and academic achievement. In play, children had opportunities to work with culture and language to make sense of the world. Although 10 outcomes describe how partners paid attention to culture and language issues (i.e. it was mentioned in contribution to outcomes),

only four outcomes show any clear change in relation to celebrating and transmitting local culture. We had expected stronger links between cultural pertinence in play and outcomes describing transmission of cultural identity.

In all the outcomes, *multiple* play factors have played a role, which highlights how different aspects of play typically work together. This is especially evident in the outcomes chosen for the cases, which were coded by at least four different contributing play factors. Three of the cases, one from each region (Ekmattra Bangladesh AS402, Maji Mazuri Kenya AF405, NEDUC Brazil AM204) demonstrate the partners' craft of incorporating important aspects of play and illustrates the multiple aspects that often are involved in LtP experiences.

These cases had in common a **child-centred approach** which was **participatory**, **educative**, involved **creativity and innovation** and involved **artistic expression**. Specific cases also integrated other aspects of play such as how the experience was **cheerful**, fostered **collaboration**, built **equality**, and engaged children in **nature and outdoors** and **sports and movement**.

GFC partners actively explored play

Some of the GFC partners chosen for the OH process have engaged in play-based approaches for a long time, while others have only recently changed the way that they work. The play opportunities nurtured or offered by GFC partners ranged from free play to more adult-led and structured play. This range provided opportunities to support development of "softer skills" such as social, emotional and intrapersonal skills, as well as "harder" skills, such as reading and mathematical skills. Free play, guided play, and games (Figure 14) all provide different opportunities for children and can support them in their agency[7]. Developed for each unique context and in connection with
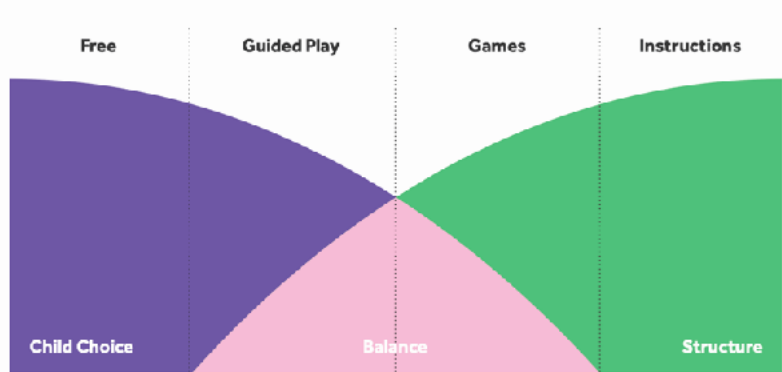
Figure 14: Play spectrum
Image credit: LEGO Foundation

instructions/teaching, the partners had goals or a set of boundaries to frame the play experience and cater for the variety among the children and their differing needs. One of the partners, Starters Technology, described how their different programs, all involving technology and play, were on different points on the scale depending on age level and purpose. The knowledgable educator taking an active role to guide discovery, through coaching, hints, scaffolding and in various ways making the experience meaningful for the child can boost the child's learning experience.[8] Among GFC partners, the extent to which children themselves led the activities depended on the organisation, opportunities and the activity. From the interviews, we sensed that partners were actively exploring and challenging themselves within their context how much

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[7] Zosh et al, 2022, Learning Through Play and the Development of Holistic Skills Across Childhood Available at: https://cms.learningthroughplay.com/media/kell5mft/hs_white_paper_008-digital-version.pdf
[8] Parker and Thomson, 2019, White paper on Learning through play at school, available at https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=learning_processes

they could move toward child-led play, where this was appropriate and in what ways they best could support the children by LtP. Many organisations expressed a sense of surprise seeing the results of the new opportunities for play that they had started to provide!

Relating to LEGO Foundation's definition

All of LEGO Foundation's (LF) five characteristics of play (Figure 15) have been described in outcomes, even though we have not probed partners to describe each of these aspect for each outcome. The changes that we see in the data relate to these characteristics:

Joyful - the partners all described their LtP activities as joyful experiences for the children. Play elements as well as outcomes of LtP were described as cheerful or fun. The additional perspectives gained from substantiating outcomes also confirmed the joyful nature.

Socially interactive - Play was described as socially interactive and could take the form of games, sports, theatre, dance, and much more. Outcomes were also social, describing changes in relationships.

Actively engaging - Partners described children immersed in learning and discovery, actively participating, deciding and shaping their play.

Figure 15: Five characteristics of learning through play
Image credit: LEGO Foundation

Meaningful - Children made their own decisions, worked through their own problems, wrote their own messages connected to their own contexts and realities and communicated linking to their own language, culture and identity.

Iterative - Children worked with problems which they practically solved whether to individually master digital technology or to collectively solve community problems by making a hydro-electric generator. They made suggestions, shaped games and included matters that they felt were important.

LF's five skills for holistic child development – creative, social, physical, emotional and cognitive – are also clear in the outcomes. Opportunities for play offered by the GFC partners aimed to address these development needs and in some cases focused on some skills more than others, given the partner organisations capacities, goals, and contexts. Multiple examples of each skill among children have been seen among the outcomes.

Other Contributing Factors

In addition to the play aspects contributing to the outcomes, this section explores other factors that were part of the contribution story of the outcomes. Figure 16 provides an overview of the main non-play related factors that contributed to the outcomes among children. As with Figure 13, the diagram shows the number of times contribution codes (left) were used in conjunction with outcome codes (right). The number in the boxes shows the total number of times the codes were used in relation to changes for children and youth; the total number of linkages can be

larger (e.g. with other teaching methods) since each instance of the code may be linked to

Figure 16: Diagram showing how various non-play factors contributed to the outcomes

multiple outcome codes.

Unsurprisingly, **other teaching methods(25)** was the most common factor influencing a variety of changes in children and youth in all regions. *Teaching* refers to 'non-play' activities where partners provided information, education, workshops, awareness raising on topics, training or giving advice. The children were taught about leadership, academic topics (including practical and technical tasks such as audiovisuals and engineering), on life skill topics (including topics like menstruation), about the indigenous community and the environment. They were taught skills for drama, music, poetry and other arts. There were also examples of teaching the children how to make learning and play materials. Teaching influenced outcomes describing empowerment, academic skills, leadership, voice, gender equality, and cultural shifts. The descriptions of 'non-play' teaching methods contributing to the outcomes supports the legitimacy of keeping or combining 'non-play' teaching methods with LtP opportunities.

The staff's **relational (19)** approaches of choosing to care, building mutual respect and trusting the children was described as a contributing factor in all the three regions. The relational aspect

included stories of partners challenging traditional hierarchy in the context and culture; for example, giving opportunities to youth or girls who the majority culture would normally not listen to. The relational approaches influenced children's empowerment, academic achievements as well as changes in relationships.

Encouragement (14) clearly contributed to outcomes describing empowerment, leadership, voice, and academic achievement. Partners described how they encouraged children to participate in dance, to play, to do drama, to play sports according to their own wishes, and to study. They told them not to be afraid of making mistakes, encouraging children to express themselves freely. They encouraged children to explore books, innovate, develop critical thinking and to think out of the box. They supported personal projects, listening actively and giving space to use the skills that they were developing. They mentored and coached children in developing skills and leadership.

Physical resources (teaching aids, tools, materials, and finances) and other practical **help (23),** such as organising events, were influences on academic achievement, empowerment and leadership outcomes.

The softer skills of the partner organisation's staff creating safe and positive **environments (19)** for their children and youth involved in their programs, clearly contributed to empowerment and academic achievement. Partners described that the children in their programs lived with specific needs, stigmas or in challenging contexts and needed these safe and positive spaces to develop and reached their potential.

There were other less commons factors not common across all regions. Someone being an **inspiration (9)** from the outside or a role model were mainly mentioned in outcomes collected from the partners in South Asia (7). Atoot (Nepal) used the concept of role modelling while mentoring girls on the football pitch (and beyond). Changing Stories (Nepal) used the concept of "fellows" who were mentored and in turn, an inspiration to others.

Some outcomes in children's empowerment, academic achievement and language use were directly influenced by the start of new program **initiatives (11)** enabled through funding by GFC, marking a significant change to how the partner organisation worked. These outcomes were mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa where several partners who were part of the learning review explicitly expressed a shift in practices and how they had embraced play, inclusive efforts, environmental discussions and created learning spaces and clubs in new programming initiatives.

Community engagement (8) only linked to outcomes in children's empowerment and was a contributing factor found mostly in Latin America (5). FUNILUZ (Colombia) shared how families gave input on sessions and helped to prepare snacks. NEDUC (Brazil) conversed with grandparents who served as caregivers, giving them emotional support. Ruleli (Colombia) invited parents and siblings to experience children's activities at Ruleli and shared about the benefits of the program. Músicas de la Tierra involved fathers, mothers and other family members in music and in construction of percussion instruments.

Conclusions about Children and Youth

More than half of the collected outcomes statements (64 out of 123 outcomes) described changes among children and youth. Through these outcomes, we see that LtP has helped children and youth connected to GFC partner programs to thrive and enjoy their learning experiences. The main changes observed are that children have been empowered, improved their academic performance, and have strengthened relationships with others (especially teachers and parents).

In school settings, LtP empowered children who had previously been excluded (due to personal, cultural or socioeconomic reasons) to excel academically and socially. In other supplementary/non-formal education/club settings, children gained confidence and a safe space to develop and explore. This helped them to overcome academic hurdles, learn life skills, positively connect with other children and their own families, and express their identities.

Active participation, educative games, sports and artistic expression (including local cultural/language elements) influenced these changes. Other non-LtP factors such as teaching, relational approaches, encouragement, resource provision, and creating a positive and safe environment also contributed to these changes.

Children have started to raise their voice, helping to shape GFC partners 'own programs, raising concerns to the community through artistic performances, and two examples spoke of children speaking up in government school settings. Participatory play methods where children were accepted as they were (regardless of social markers), collaboration, and diverse art forms, games, and sports helped the children to grow in leadership.

Observing these changes in children and youth has convinced others in the community (and the GFC partners themselves!) of the value of LtP, and has positively influenced others to support LtP and engage in other community action.

Possible gaps and weaknesses in the data

As mentioned in the methodology section, highlighting gaps in the data is problematic, given that the outcomes do not represent a comprehensive picture of any individual program, nor are they a random sample, since comprehensively evaluating the program was not the intention of the Learning Review. However, some gaps in the data – where we expected to find changes – are worth flagging, since they are inconsistent with the espoused values of GFC and/or LtP.

Although there were outcomes describing changes in relationships, and changes with respect to gender, very few described the development of relationships across ethnic or religious boundaries, and therefore there is little evidence in this data to support the idea of play, in mixed groups, building respect and building bridges across ethnic/religious divides. Similarly, there were no changes which *explicitly* mentioned minority gender perspectives (LGBTQ+).

The integration of cultural identity, and how play can support cultural transmission, recovery and celebration only came out as part of the outcomes in a few places. Again, given the intention of GFC and partners to develop contextually relevant LtP, and inter-generational connection (beyond child-parent/care-giver relationships), we had expected to see more of this kind of change. One possible explanation for these gaps may be that partners only have taken note of

outcomes that fit into the way that they have framed their work as 'academic achievement' for example, not counting social cohesion or intergenerational connections as outcomes.

Key points organisations can learn from each other

The following outcome examples, some of which have been written up as cases, exemplify some highlights that can be a support to other organisations in the GFC network:

GSK (India) has some exciting examples of **advocacy for education rights** - how children and communities took action to gain sports opportunities in government school, influenced teaching methods to become more participatory, and ensured that they received the educational services that they needed in their communities (AS506, AS507, AS508).

Maji Mazuri (Kenya) and Ekmattra (Bangladesh) have great examples of how they **engaged children in community projects**. Using playful activities, the arts combined with education on the environment, Maji Mazuri (AF405) transformed a garbage dump into a playground and helped their community to change their waste management habits. In Bangladesh, high school students at Ekmattra Academy (AS401) who were aware of the electricity-shortage problems in Mymensingh area, came up with the idea of doing something about the situation and successfully developed a water flow electricity generation project, establishing a sustainable power source.

Creating safe spaces for youth and intergenerational connection was especially strong in Latin America and several organisations can share examples of this. FUNILUZ (Colombia) involved both children and family members in meaningful activities (AM001, AM005). Cores do Amanhã (Brazil) opened safe spaces for children while mothers were receiving help. They used games, dances and chess to capture the interest among both children and parents (AM101, AM102, AM103, AM104, AM105). Ruleli (Colombia) helped children to relate to people in their environment (AM301) and gave parents the opportunity to experience what the children were doing (AM303). At Músicas de la Tierra (Colombia) boys and girls, as well as their parents, practised chirimía music together (AM401, AM404, AM407). Músicas de la Tierra created spaces where children could perform without fear of making mistakes (AM408).

Changing Stories (Nepal) and Músicas de la Tierra (Colombia) can share stories about how they **collaborated and supported other educational actors** so that the approach gains wider and sustainable use. Both organisations worked deliberately with school teachers and school leaderships, building trust and relationships, and were able to influence their decisions and practices (AS101, AS104, AS105, AM405, AM406).

Sololatecas (Guatemala), FUNILUZ (Colombia), Atoot (Nepal) can share powerful ways that children got involved in **making decisions** and grew in **leadership**. Outcomes describe girls teaching and directing their peers in different ways (AM004, AM502, AS005) and children representing other children in the community in decision making (AM005, AM502).

Encouraging girls
Collaboration
Environmental stewardship
Requests for play-based methods
Cultural shift
Strengthened relationships
Employment and livelihoods
Adopting LtP
Choosing non-violence
Community development
Improved teacher-child relations
Providing LtP opportunities
Raising Awareness
Community engagement
Leadership
Supporting other children
Commitment
Material creation

Changes in Education Providers

Figure 17: Main changes among education providers

28

Description of the main changes

As to be expected, there are far fewer changes captured about education providers: 31 compared to 64 about children and youth. In this section we describe these changes, visualised in Figure 17, in more detail, again looking at the main clusters of change.

Adopting LtP approaches

By far the main area of change – covering over half of the outcomes about education providers – is about the progression of education providers **requesting LtP (2), adopting LtP (15),** and **raising awareness (2)** about LtP. These changes are happening in all regions, across 12 of the partners, suggesting this commonly occurs wherever LtP is introduced to teachers and other education providers.

Around a third of these changes are about program facilitators/volunteers/teachers adopting the methods within the partners' own programs and education institutions. This is where change should start, but it falls into a 'grey area' of whether this is strictly an outcome (a change in someone *outside* of the program), but it does give an indication that play-based approaches are deemed relevant and are gaining traction with program volunteers. (E.g. AF005, AF102, AF203, AF206, AM206). In two cases, the changes were due to former program staff who are now working in other places, which demonstrates that former staff believe in the methods and made choices to continue using the approaches in new environments.

However, many of the partners are actively engaging with other education institutions and are seeing a positive uptake of the approach and willingness to collaborate. Where partners have connected with teachers, they appear to be positive to the approach, are shifting their own teaching practices, and are sharing the ideas with others. For example:

- Since 2021, Move the World's partner schools in the Accra area (Ghana), started to engage students in interactive and engaging learning activities on a day-to-day basis. (AF504 - MTW)

- In March 2023, 30 teachers from 5 government schools in Uganda, supported by Community Focus International, adopted the use of play in the mainstream classroom. (AF304 - CFI)

- In 2023, In India, Sabuj Sangha's teachers at Kishalaya Sishu Siksha Niketan school, started to share their new teaching practices and ideas with other teachers. (AS308 - SS)

Some of the most exciting changes are where other education providers have requested help and collaborated with GFC partners to implement LtP approaches:

- In July 2023, the principal in Guru Jajur Higher Secondary School invited Changing Stories (Nepal) 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. (AS 104/105 - CS, see case study).

- In September, 2023, in India, teachers and student teachers at the government teacher training program asked during the Teacher's Celebration Day that Sabuj Sangha teachers provide training on the new teaching and learning methods. (AS309 - SS)

- Pedagogical teams with different educational backgrounds worked in alliance with Ruleli (Colombia) to support 150 children needing healing and developmental support. (AM302 - RUL)

Providing LtP opportunities

A further progression of engagement is found in the examples where education providers have begun to collaborate with others to **provide LtP opportunities (4)** and create **materials (2)** to support LtP. The outcomes show some initial signs of this kind of change, for example the following outcome from Community Focus International (Uganda):

- Parents, youth, and project teachers created a play centre with learning materials made of local material. (AF301 - CFI)

The strongest example of an education provider ensuring the provision of LtP is the change described by GSK (India) in response to one of their model schools, which is described further with similar examples in the case study:

- In 2018, the government changed half of the staff in one school in response to parents taking action for their children's educational rights when teachers were not providing proper education for their children. 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 and took action to put pressure on the government. (AS508 - See the GSK case)

While this is an isolated case, it shows what can happen when partners, communities and governments collaborate to ensure that children's rights in education are met.

Improved Relationships

There are several outcomes about **strengthened relationships (7),** which mostly show how teachers are relating better to other teachers and working with students. Two examples from Atoot (Nepal) and Move the World (Ghana) highlight a shift in gender empowerment and non-violent approaches to discipline:

- Local government school teachers asked for help from young female Atoot staff, which is not the cultural norm in the area. (AS005 – AT)
- Since 2021, in several communities that have had Move the World programming, parents and teachers expressed that they have changed their discipline methods from using the cane to other non-violent forms modelled by Move the World facilitators. (AF506 - MTW)

What is contributing to these changes?

Outcomes describing education providers **adopting LtP** is supported by partners **teaching**/training **(10), helping** with practical resources **(4), networking (3)** or because of **other outcomes (3).**

When education providers adopted LtP within the partners' own programs and spaces, a common contributing factor was that the organisation was inspired by GFC and the training that had been provided. In the case of Sabuj Sangha's outcome (AS306) in India, they described

how, after training from GFC in 2023, they brainstormed with teachers about reasons for drop-out/lack of academic performance and started to create teaching aids. As they moved from lecture-based teaching and put their ideas to practice, they saw the positive effects of children playing outdoors - learning with songs, games and even having a school garden. Similar stories of GFC inspiring partners' own staff/volunteers were found in Sub-Saharan Africa (AF005, AF101, AF103, AF206). Through the substantiation process, teachers at Amos Youth Centre (Zambia) expressed that they became relaxed and creative when they used play. An interesting comment by FUNILUZ (Colombia) was a reflection on the exciting use of a teddy bear in supporting a girl's academic skills and confidence. When FUNILUZ learnt that the girl was not allowed to take the teddy bear to school when it created a bit of a chaos among other students, FUNILUZ has been grappling with questions of how it is possible to establish enough order in the play opportunities for the more traditional educational spaces to be able to adopt these more play-based methods.

While digging deeper into Músicas de la Tierra's (Colombia) outcome about an 11-year-old girl helped by music (AM410), the staff learned of the teacher's desire to change her own practices, upon seeing the effect that LtP had on the children at her school. She was inspired about the children's growing interest in school at a crucial time of life when other children were dropping out. Músicas de la Tierra described the way that they had actively engaged and collaborated with school teachers and that this may have contributed to the change. Músicas de la Tierra respected the work of the school teachers while trying to provide advice on how to create more playful environments. Músicas de la Tierra also organised workshops and pedagogical training in incorporating music as an educational tool.

Changing Stories' (Nepal) contribution to outcomes AS104 and AS105 (see case study summary in Annex 5) where the Guru Jajur Higher Secondary School hired two Changing Stories alumni as primary level teachers and invited and paid for a training on play-based methods by Changing Stories shows how a series of activities and efforts influenced the change in school leadership to adopt LtP:

- In 2021, Changing Stories trained and mentored 2 local youths (fellows) who were able to bring a significant impact in children's learning levels. Changing Stories, as part of their sustainability strategy, made it part of the Memorandum of Understanding with the school that the principal and teachers would observe classes at least 3 times. This principal observed Changing Stories' play-based learning and even participated in some games. Changing Stories deliberately showed the principal that the children who could not do basic additions, could do 3-digit carry over division at the end of project. Although the school has to take care of the infrastructure resources (classroom, lighting, etc.) Changing Stories provided the teaching and learning resources which the school receives at the end. As well as word cards and other materials made by the Changing Stories teams, the fellows (facilitators) tried to use a lot of local games such as a rubber band game and games using stones, and emphasised team efforts in those games.

Sabuj Sangha (India) described how **networking** in the form of getting involved in an education laboratory and doing advocacy work contributed to their outcome (AS309) on government teachers asking for training **(requesting LtP)**.

Education providers themselves taking responsibility for **provision** of resources or spaces was supported by partners' **networking (3)** and **community engagement (2)** activities.

Ruleli's (Colombia) outcome (AM302) describes how providing a space and collaborating with other professionals influenced the outcome of pedagogical teams with different educational backgrounds working in alliance with them to support 150 children in need of healing and development.

The spaces and types of programs that each partner organisation operated in contributed to how much the partners could have an influence on education providers. From our limited understanding of the partners, based on the parts of the programs they have described to us, we have mapped out types of spaces in the table below.

Focus of project	Partners	Number of external education provider changes*	average per partner
Youth group/club (non-formal education)	GSK, Atoot, AYC, Maji Mazuri, Starters Technology, NCL, FUNILUZ, Músicas de la Tierra, Sololatecas, Ruleli, Cores do Amanhã, NEDUC	5	0.4
Service provision (partner's own schools)	Ekmattra DESH Maji Mazuri Starters Technology	0	0
Service provision with modelling approach	GSK Sabuj Sangha	3	1.5
School support (partners operate in collaboration with schools)	Changing Stories Move the World CFI	9	3

* Excluding own project staff/teachers/volunteers

Those partners that focus on modelling and school support (inevitably) tend to show more impact on education providers. Músicas de la Tierra is the exception, which may be attributed to their close collaboration with the schools in their program.

Overall Findings

Personal experiences of engaging in LtP affected education providers enough to change their practices; play did not just affect the children or youth. In these contexts, modelling and engaging in play opposed the traditional practices and parents' and teachers' expectations, so there was an element of risk that was mentioned by several partners. While some partners have used play based methods or experience based learning methods for a long time, the data shows changes in how staff and volunteers of GFC partners themselves have confidently engaged in play and provided opportunities for LtP. Several organisations expressed their commitment to play-based methods from the effects that they are seeing and expressed a desire to take further steps.

Although not stated as outcomes, we heard how GFC partners' own staff serving as education providers have reached out and connected to the community through LtP-related activities. In all three regions, these education providers have invited parents to activities, festivals, and

productions - often involving the arts and LtP experiences. In addition, many of the partners' education actors, especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa had some engagement with community members in collaboration and discussion.

Where local teachers and school leadership have shown interest in or adopted LtP methodology, several factors have played a role; observing or experiencing LtP along with training, providing resources, networking, and seeing the effects of other outcomes support (for example changes in children). In one case of school leadership changing, setting the expectation of leaders and teachers to come and observe played a role.

There are instances of education providers providing resources or opportunities for LtP and building or changing relationships, but there is not much evidence yet of a system-wide shift in LtP practices or provision of resources for LtP. The extent to which education providers have been influenced depends highly on the design of the program - some partners focus on service provision, while others have more of a rights-based approach and desire to influence other education providers and systems. Two partners have model schools where they have intentionally linked to other education providers. Those who have designed their programs to influence system change actors are likely to also have built the relationships with them to know of changes in education providers. Given the positive impacts play is having, more partners should explore looking into how - even in small ways - they can influence the education system more broadly, learning from what other partners have been able to achieve.

At the level of the education ecosystem, the outcomes and cases shared by GSK (India) and Changing Stories (Nepal) showed how play could disrupt the status quo; in the GSK case this was done in collaboration with community members and in Changing Stories it was done mainly within the school system. Broader influence in the education ecosystems that partners operate can hopefully continue and expand, for example, with Músicas de la Tierra where in collaboration with other community actors, they are advocating for change which may potentially reach national level actors affecting education. Other partners have a foundation of experience with LtP which could serve as a basis for more intentional influence with other education providers to expand the uptake of LtP in their respective education ecosystems.

Changes in the wider Community

Figure 18: Main changes among other in the wider community

Description of the main changes

There were 35 outcomes about wider changes in the community; however, unlike education providers, these cover a broader range of changes. A simple network analysis was made of the main codes (mentioned three or more times) to help show the linkages between them (Figure 19). In this section we describe in more depth the main themes in the data.

Approval (10)

A frequent change described was that parents and other community members were now encouraging their children to join LtP activities/programs. This is often a contrast to previously expressed scepticism about play, but having seen the benefits they are now supportive, expressing appreciation, and recommending that others involve their children in LtP programs.

Figure 19: Cluster showing links between community engagement and other codes

Engagement (15) and Commitment (4) of parents and community members

Closely connected to approval is community engagement and commitment, where parents and community members are now getting involved in partner programs and their children's education. Several of these changes are significant since they have occurred in contexts where education is not prioritised or where children have not received their educational rights due to stigmatisation (e.g. a child with Down's syndrome). While many of these changes are small, they indicate that parents are showing an increased interest in their children's education by:

- helping their children come to school/extra-curricular activities,
- attending and participating in school/program activities,
- participating in parent-teacher meetings,
- helping out in events (e.g. sports events and performances)
- making small material contributions to their children's education (e.g. sportswear)
- using methods they've learned in the program at home.

Wider Community Action

11 outcomes related to the community **providing opportunities for education**. In five of the outcomes, community actors **provided spaces** for play by creating playgrounds, preschool facilities, and practice spaces (AS203 - DESH, AF305 - CFI, AF301- CFI, AF408 - MM, AM401-MT). The remaining six outcomes show how community actors were engaged in different ways in **mobilising and advocating** for play and resources to support play:

- Community members in three communities in India put pressure on the government to integrate learning by doing and experimental work into school classes. (AS506 – GSK)

- In May 2023, partners and well-wishers supported Maji Mazuri's (Kenya) school feeding program at the Kenya National Theatre through buying tickets and donating. (AF 401 - MM)

- In April 2022 mothers and teachers in KSS school in Nandakumarpur village in India started to work together to find solutions to make the school a safe place for children. (AS311 - SS)

- A local community leader mobilised communities and teachers to engage in the Músicas de la Tierra (Colombia) program, influencing community attitudes and coordinating events. (AM403 - MT)

- A family organised a parents' association to organise school music and gain resources for this in relation to Músicas de la Tierra (Colombia) program. (AM402 - MT)

- A local government took initiative and collaborated with Músicas de la Tierra (Colombia) to advocate for a music school building. (AM411 -MT)

Environmental issues

Other aspects of community development in the outcomes touched on **environmental issues,** which programs had integrated into their play approach. Four outcomes describe how:

- community members in the FUNILUZ (Colombia) context participated in a second-hand store, which was run by youth, supporting a "circular economy" to help families struggling financially. (AM003 - FUN)

- community members in the Atoot (Nepal) context were affected by youth messaging about the local environment/sanitation. (AS006 - AT)

- community members living in Mathare slums in the Maji Mazuri (Kenya) context started to separate and dispose of litter properly (AF406 - MM)

- a project facilitator related to Move the World (Ghana) began her own sustainable home garden. (AF501 - MtW)

Cultural and relational changes

12 of the outcomes suggested some kind of cultural and relational change, many of which are the reciprocal of changes already described among children and youth, for example community members are now:

- encouraging and supporting girls, specifically 3 outcomes from Atoot (Nepal)

- participating in education, especially in ethnic groups where schooling has not been deemed relevant in their culture in the past, e.g. DESH (Bangladesh) and Sabuj Sangha (India)

- able to communicate with their deaf and blind children, specifically Amos Youth Centre (Zambia)

Two outcomes claimed changes in violent forms of discipline. In one, police reduced/stopped beating children in the slums even during a period of riots and other violence in the community (AF407 - MM). However, this change is framed in terms of improved youth behaviour, and not explicitly linked to a change in police attitudes. In the second, parents and teachers *expressed*

that they had changed discipline methods (AF506 - MtW), but no concrete behavioural change had been observed to verify their opinion.

One transformational outlier

One transformational story from Cores do Amanhã (Brazil) highlighted how a mother who had suffered from domestic violence and depression was able to turn her life around and find hope (AM102 - CdA). Her children began to participate in the recreational space created by the organisation, allowing the mother to focus on her own participation and restoration. Today she is teaching other groups of women using her own story and experiences and is generating income by braiding hair. This story is explored further in the case study.

What has contributed to these changes?

Among all the 123 outcomes, the following LtP codes were the most commonly used to describe the partners' contribution to change in community actors: artistic expression (9), educative play (8), participation (8), cheerful (7), creative (7), and sports and body movement (7).

Factors other than play that contributed to the changes in community actors were: teaching/training/awareness raising (15), community engagement (15), help with resources (11), other outcomes (7), environment (7), and inspiration (6).

Each outcome seems to have its own story and often a combination of several factors. In our outcomes data, we saw no clear pattern of certain types of play or certain other factors contributing to certain types of outcomes in community actors, except for outcomes marked as cultural shift (10), all found in South Asia. For these outcomes describing a cultural shift in the community, community engagement (7) was the clearest contributing factor although LtP elements varied. Atoot (Nepal), DESH (Bangladesh), Sabuj Sangha (India), and GSK (India) all employed various strategies for community engagement which clearly contributed to cultural shifts. These strategies included performances, sports and playful methods in combination with meetings and other forms of interactions with parents and community members. Also, communities recognising positive outcomes in the children contributed to the cultural shift.

Summary of Findings

The harvested outcomes paint a picture of community members, particularly parents and caregivers, becoming more open to play and more engaged and committed to supporting children in their activities. Negative attitudes about play have shifted and now communities are starting to show enthusiasm, building a local movement for LtP. Changes in relationships and culture in the community, allowed children who had previously been excluded to benefit from education and other program initiatives. Community members also engaged in action and advocacy for education and participated in improving the environment. One case described transformation in the life of a parent herself.

Parents, other family members, a local community leader, a local government, and community members in general (for example in a "slum" area and in a conflict-affected area) changed because of a variety of LtP methods and other ways that the partners provided resources and engaged with them, informed them, built relations with them and provided a positive

environment. Often outcomes in community members related directly to the positive results in children.

Partners in South Asia intentionally sought to impact communities more broadly and their engagement mostly related to children's education. In Sub-Saharan Africa, outcomes in the community describe changes mostly in parents except for Maji Mazuri (Kenya) having broader community outcomes beyond education. In Latin America, there were program activities designed to involve parents; the outcomes among them were mainly about individual parents who were changing.

Those partner organisations that mainly focused on service provision often had little awareness of the impact they were having on communities. The Learning Review surfaced outcomes that partners previously had not been aware of and some were especially inspired by the process of seeking community perspectives and following up on outcomes. In Latin America, Músicas de la Tierra explained how they too, as a GFC partner, had changed and discovered their wider influence, "Initially, we didn't have an idea of the impact in the community! To us it was just a project, but reaching these results in an accidental way, we want to use this for advocacy." The results they saw in children through the music and their approach to working with the children inspired teachers, community members and the partner organisation themselves. Besides meeting the ministries, they plan to meet some senators to explain about the transformation that can take place through LtP.

Conclusions and Ideas to Consider

An overall picture

The main outcome chain (or sequence of events) that we see in the data is about how integrating play in educational spaces has empowered and transformed children (and sometimes others at the same time) who have gone on to affect other children, parents, families, and teachers. Observing this change has inspired local actors and GFC partners themselves, who have become convinced of the value of LtP. In a few instances, children and youth took action to influence the wider community through performances, advocacy and innovation.

In this sequence of events, the Learning Review data builds a strong case of children's empowerment, academic achievements, and new relationships. There are some outcome stories describing wider effects in families, in school settings, and in the community.

While partners had used play to some extent, partners often mentioned GFC's partner convening as an inspiration, where partners personally experienced play and were connected to the network. Partners integrated LtP into their own programs and emphasised specific elements for their contexts. GFC's open approach of encouraging local expressions of LtP to emerge, contributed to the diversity and the effectiveness of play based approaches.

Relating back to partners' LtP definition

The data gathered in the Learning Review resonates well with how partners define LtP. Sports and body movement as well as artistic expression came out clearly in the Learning Review data, but would not necessarily be forms of *play* without the child-friendly, fun, engaging and participatory characteristics that are highlighted in the GFC partners' LtP definition and which we also saw in the Learning Review data. The partners communicated these experiences as play and these should at least be noted as an avenue for change taking place through LtP. All of the words in the word cloud can be found in the OH data.

The partner LtP definition contains words describing the actual experience of play while also using words that we expect link to the future - impactful, hope, empowerment, and transformative. Since OH focuses on the concrete visible behaviour, these words were not used for coding of LtP contribution, but they resonate well with the enthusiasm and conclusions brought out by partners when describing the qualitative data gathered in the Learning Review.

Figure 20: GFC partners' definition of LtP

Based on the changes that have been highlighted in the data, we suggest the following edits to the partner's definition of LtP:

- Make **empowerment** bigger. Empowerment was a major theme among the outcomes affected by LtP.

- Add **relationships** since relationships developed and were strengthened through LtP experiences.

- Add **challenging norms.** While this might not be true to all LtP experiences, it is good to think about how play creates a safe environment to challenge restrictive cultural norms.

- Add **inspiring.** LtP inspired children to help other children, and the changes in children further inspired changes in their teachers, and other community members.

Relating back to the LF's LtP definition and links to theory

We have already pointed out that the partners' LtP forms of play and outcomes relate well to LF's five characteristics of LtP as well as the five skills identified as part of holistic development outlined in LF's white paper, *Learning through play: a review of the evidence* (Zosh, et al, 2017)[9]. In the later paper on *Learning through play and the development of holistic skills across childhood* (Zosh, et al, 2022)[10], the authors emphasise the need to learn more about "holistic skills and sub-skills in a more integrated way", "the role of adults in children's learning through play", "the impact on children in primary school age and older" and "across different cultural and social contexts". Although not a longitudinal study nor an extensive research project, the Learning Review has provided an opportunity to grapple with the topics that the authors claim needed to be explored, going beyond the formal classroom setting and describing children's skills and agency in a more integrated way, as well as the agency of the adults around them.

Later theories emphasise the interconnectedness of skills in a child's holistic development and how these skills need to cut across various domains (Zosh, et al, 2017). The cases in this Learning Review showed that partners offered forms of play in safe and supportive environments that boosted a variety of skills fitting their world and cut across various spaces in their lives.

Ideas to consider

Moving forward, here are some ideas for GFC and partners to consider, building on the experience and learning from this process.

Learning from the findings:

- GFC and partners seek to address systemic inequality and exclusion; this will require further development of relationships across cultural/social divides. Partners should explore how LtP (and other factors) can further **build bridges and inspire relationships across divides** in the communities where they work.

- Partners should, in the **design** of their work, consider how they as civil society organisations **connect with and influence government** education providers in order to support a broader systems-level change towards LtP.

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[9] Zosh, et al. (2017). Learning through Play: A review of the Evidence. Retrieved from Learning-through-play_web.pdf
[10] Zosh, et al. (2022). Learning through Play and the Development of Holistic Skills Across Childhood. Retrieved from https://cms.learningthroughplay.com/media/kell5mft/hs_white_paper_008-digital-version.pdf

- Consider how more projects can play a role in **cultural transmission and intergenerational connections**.

Learning from the process:

- Now that partners already have experience of documenting outcomes as behavioural change in social actors, they can **keep the simple balloons as a framework** and communication tool to regularly monitor change in these areas. FUNILUZ showed how the use of puppets helped generate new conversations with children. GFC partners can **find creative ways of learning about change from children,** puppets could potentially support the harvesting of outcomes among children.

- Some GFC partners deeply valued the opportunity to reach out to other actors to hear their perspectives. GFC can work with partners to **map out actors** who may be influenced through their work and explore simple ways to hear from them and engage them towards their vision.

- Given GFC's commitment to support sharing and learning among their partners, **use participatory processes to explore the strategies, experiences, challenges, and outcomes highlighted in the cases**.

Appendices

Annex 1: Learning Review Questions

Setting the scope and focus of the Learning Review

The Learning Review intends to understand:

- What happens when 'learning through play' (supported and fostered by GFC's partners) is used in communities?
- How have GFC partners been contributing to these changes?

'Learning through play 'is being left open to definition, and is being explored by GFC and partners (with reference to LEGO Foundation's definition) who are working towards a definition which can be used in analysis.

Framing the Outcome Harvest

By using an Outcome Harvesting process with GFC's partners, learning will focus on:

- **GFC partners 'contribution**. We are only looking at outcomes related to the influence of GFC's partner organisations.
- **The outcomes *definition*** - behavioural change in a social actor that we have contributed to - will help us to focus on outcomes rather than opinions, theories, or feelings during the collection of the initial set of outcomes.

In addition, the OH process will focus on:

- **Three domains of actors.** Sessions will encourage partners to scan what happens among children/youth, education providers, and others in the community. Partners may not work directly with all of the three domains but will be asked to think of any concrete changes they are aware of. Most change can be expected among 6-12-year-olds (PEAK's emphasis), but the Learning Review will look at changes among children/youth of all ages.
- **Significance:** Given the constraints of time, we will encourage partners to focus on writing 4-6 outcomes which they feel are significant. Through focusing on significance, we are not gaining every possible 'achieved' outcome, but rather on those outcomes which will best support collective learning. Only complete outcome statements will be used for analysis.

Questions for Diving Deeper…

- Prior to diving deeper, explore with partners and GFC: Which outcomes are worth writing up/exploring further for digging deeper?
- What was the story/journey/processes and multiple causes which led to the outcome? (include positive and negative factors and conditions, actors involved)
- What can be learned from this?
- Plus any other specific questions identified by partner organisations and GFC related to specific outcomes or to a set of outcomes

Questions for meaning-making

Two summary questions for meaning-making and sense-making are: 1) What can we learn from the Learning Review? and 2) What do we want to act on moving forward? (GFC and partner perspectives)

In own contexts/roles as GFC, as partner organisations, or as community of practice within the GFC network, discuss what is significant from own perspectives:

- Affirmations, ideas, inspiration to expand or try out in own contexts/roles moving forward
- Factors/challenges to avoid or to address

Questions for analysis

The following set of questions are a support to analysis after the two cycles of exploring outcomes - harvesting outcomes and the "diving/digging deeper" interviews focused on the 15-25 selected outcomes. We expect to find patterns of outcomes (e.g. who is changing, types of change, locations of change), patterns of contributions (e.g. approaches, methods, innovations) and highlights worth exploring and understanding. Some of the analysis will be done with the partners and some analysis will be presented to them for further comments and meaning-making due to time constraints.

The following is a draft set of questions to be finalised with GFC after we have the set of outcomes to put the emphasis on the analysis that is most useful. These questions are derived from what we personally find are useful lenses in an Outcome Harvesting process combined with specific questions from the ToR. We believe that the OH framing and process questions above will give data that can help us explore analysis questions below. With the broad framing and participatory process described above we cannot guarantee the amount of data on any one analysis question.

Children/youth

From analysis of outcomes:
- In what ways do we see that children/youth are thriving because of learning through play inside educational settings? How are they able to speak up, speak out, question, or advocate?
- In what ways are children/youth thriving because of learning through play outside educational settings (for example, healing trauma, addressing the climate crisis, inspiring protest, promoting equity)? How are they able to speak up, speak out, question, or advocate?
- How do the outcomes link to the partners 'co-created learning through play definition?
- How do the outcomes link to LEGO Foundation's definition of learning through play?

From analysis of partner contribution:
- What forms of play do we see help children to thrive - inside and outside educational settings?
- What approaches, spaces, and methodologies supported these outcomes?
- What methods are linked to outcomes about empowerment of young people? Do methods focusing on art, memory, non-dominant history, and culture play a significant role?

Education setting actors

From analysis of outcomes:
- Who in the education settings (influenced by the partner organisations) are changing because of learning through play?
- What types of outcomes within education is learning through play contributing to? (Identify outcome chains when these exist)
- How are education setting actors reaching out towards/connecting to the community through learning through play?

From analysis of partner contribution:
- What seemed to influence change in education actors?

Others in the community

From analysis of outcomes:
- Who else in the community is changing because of learning through play?
- In what geographical locations/types of projects do community level change seem to occur?
- What types of outcomes beyond education is learning through play contributing to? (Who else other than children have changed? Identify outcome chains when these exist)

From analysis of partners contribution:
- How can/does integrating play into education disrupt the status quo, within the education ecosystem and outwards into community and society?

Reviewing the whole system of actors

- What can we learn from interactions/relationships between individuals, organisations, and communities and possibly between locations?
- How can/does integrating play into education disrupt the status quo, within the education ecosystem and outwards into community and society?

Annex 2: Rough schedule of Learning Review activities

Dates are 2023 - 24

Date	Activity
18 Sep - 8th Oct	Background reading, planning, and preparation
9 Oct - 20 Oct	Online sessions with partners
7-17 Nov	Interviews with partners to refine outcome statements.
17 - 29 Nov	Cleaning up outcomes, initial coding and preparation for sense-making
30 Nov - 12 Dec	Initial sense making sessions with partners.

Date	Activity
5 Dec - 26 Jan	Interviews with partners, writing up and checking cases.
29 Jan - 10 Feb	cleaning up coding and substantiation data, analysis and writing report

Date	Activity
5 Dec - 26 Jan	Interviews with partners, writing up and checking cases.

Annex 3: Participating Partner Organisations

Name of partner	Data code	Country	Region	Key words	One-sentence description
Maji Mazuri	MM	Kenya	Sub-Saharan Africa	education through sports, and expressive / creative arts	Maji Mazuri helps people escape poverty and become thriving individuals by providing the foundation through education and support needed for children, youth and families.
Na Tubelenge Children's Library	NCL	Zambia	Sub-Saharan Africa	literacy through community library	Na Tubelenge Children's Library offers mobile library services, supplementary reading and games to students from high density but poorly resourced schools.
Amos Youth Project	AYC	Zambia	Sub-Saharan Africa	LTP-based literacy, math, science, art	AYP empowers the youth in peri urban communities through education and leadership development to break the cycle of poverty in their communities
Community Focus International	CFI	Uganda	Sub-Saharan Africa	literacy / children with special needs	CFI empowers vulnerable communities, persons with disabilities and their care takers through assistive mobility devices and alternative basic education
Move the World	MTW	Ghana	Sub-Saharan Africa	music / experiential learning	MTW utilises the SDGs as a tool to promote a love for learning within schools
Starters Technology	ST	Ghana	Sub-Saharan Africa	STEM	Starters Tech leverages technology to help children explore their potential in STEM, including storybooks for children, bootcamps and school or home mentoring sessions
Ruleli	RUL	Colombia	Latin America	arts and culture, anti-racist education, music, youth empowerment, children with disabilities	Theatre, dance, and creative arts programs, plus homework help/skills-building, for children of all abilities
FUNILUZ	FUN	Colombia	Latin America	girls empowerment, menstrual education, political education	Funiluz creates opportunities and mentors girls 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 condition and example of life.
Músicas de la Tierra	MT	Colombia	Latin America	music / experiential learning	Itinerant music school teaching traditional instruments and styles in rural and indigenous communities. Músicas de la Tierra inspires young people through playful music education that broadens their horizons and empowers them to face life's challenges with creativity and strong cultural roots.
Cores do Amanhã	CdA	Brasil	Latin America	child development / youth empowerment through sports, arts, dance, music, and culture	Afterschool and weekend activities for children focused on sports, arts, dance, crafts, and many others.
NEDUC	NED	Brasil	Latin America	literacy, youth empowerment, anti-racist education	Tutoring afterschool program for children focused in games and arts

Sololatecas	SOL	Guatemala	Latin America	play-based learning	Designs and facilitates workshops with children, adolescents, and youth on issues of self-esteem, gender equity, indigenous women's rights, and preventing early and forced marriage and violence against women.
Atoot	AT	Nepal	South Asia	Sports (football), socio-emotional learning, and education	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.
Changing Stories	CS	Nepal	South Asia	Youth development and empowerment, ECD through literacy and play	Changing Stories Nepal is based in the far western district of Dang where it works through government schools to run play-based and experiential education programs in coordination with local youth leaders, 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.
Gramni Shiksha Kendra Samiti	GSK	India	South Asia	Working with nomadic tribes on play-based learning (STEM, forum theatre, indigenous resources)	GSK works to enhance access to quality child-centric education in villages across rural Ranthambore with children of nomadic, de-notified tribe and forest dwelling communities through child-centred, participatory and play based methods to reform the education ecosystem and make it more qualitative.
Sabuj Sangha	SS	India	South Asia	Model school connected to government curriculum in remote trafficking-prone area	Sabuj Sangha runs a play-based model school and nurtures the idea of joyful learning in an area 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
Development of Educational Service for Human (DESH)	DESH	Bangladesh	South Asia	Education, youth empowerment, underprivileged community, children with special needs, preschool program	DESH works to ensure education for disadvantaged children using joyful learning methods to promote equal education rights in the society.
Ekmattra	EK	Bangladesh	South Asia	Residential facility focusing on holistic education for underprivileged children	Ekmattra facilitates the knowledge development of children and youth so that they can be an active force in social development.

Annex 4: Qualitative Codes

This annex describes the codes used to analyse the outcome statement data and the frequency these codes were used to describe the outcomes. A more complete presentation of frequency distribution is available in the outcomes database.

The full database is available as an excel sheet from GFC.

Outcome Codes

Code	Simplified code	Definition	Frequency			
(used in visuals)	(used in database)		Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Latin America	Total
Empowerment	Empowerment	Play is empowering children/youth to engage with others in new ways, emphasising personal agency and the development of a belief in their own ability to succeed and influence their world.	15	9	12	36
Strengthened relationships	Relationships	Captures broader social interactions and relationships fostered through LtP, including empathy, understanding, inclusion, and support.	9	10	5	24
Academic achievement	Academic	Emphasising the educational outcomes of LtP in terms of academic success and learning milestones.	8	6	7	21
Community engagement	engagement	parents/community members getting involved in addressing issues of education/LtP in their community	8	3	9	20
Cultural shift	Cultureshift	changes which imply a significant shift from cultural norms	20	0	0	20
Leadership	Leadership	Play has helped youth/children to take leadership.	8	4	5	17
Encouraging girls	Gender	Specific instances where LtP provides support and opportunities for girls, promoting gender equality.	13	0	3	16
Educators adopting play-based methods	adoptedLtP	Cases where educational institutions or educators adopt LtP or play-based methods.	4	7	5	16
Providing opportunities for LtP	Provision	parents, teachers or other community members creating new opportunities for children, potentially in education, recreation, or social settings.	4	3	6	13
Voice	voice	children/youth voicing their concerns and interests (sub-set of empowerment)	5	3	5	13
Gatekeeping	Gatekeeping	parents or others encouraging children to participate in LtP programs	4	2	4	10
Supporting other children	supportingchildren	examples of where youth/children are taking steps to support others, e.g. academically to socially	4	3	2	9
Community development	Community	Play is helping to create a sense of community beyond the classroom leading to community action	3	1	2	6
Raising awareness about play	Awareness	Creating awareness about the value of play in the community.	3	2	1	6
Employment and livelihoods	Livelihood	Youth have developed new livelihoods or employment	3	2	1	6

Code	Simplified code	Definition	Frequency			
(used in visuals)	(used in database)	49	Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Latin America	Total
Requests for play-based methods	requestedLtP	Instances where there is a demand or request for training in or provision of LtP methods.	4	2	0	6
Material creation	Material	Creating materials to support LtP	2	2	2	6
Language learning	Language	Where LtP facilitates the learning of new languages, whether local or international.	1	5	0	6
Supporting PWDs	disability	Changes that support people with disabilities	0	5	1	6
Environmental stewardship	Environment	Instances where play leads to an appreciation and care for the environment.	1	3	1	5
Improved parent-child relations	PCrelationships	signs of improved relationships between parents and children	1	3	1	5
Physical development	Physical	physical play and sports and physical health.	5	0	0	5
Life skills	Skills	youth/children building practical life skills (e.g. time management, using tools)	2	0	3	5
Cultural identity	Identity	Play is helping to generate appreciation for one's own culture and traditions, serving as a medium for passing down and reinforcing traditional knowledge and heritage.	1	2	2	5
Collaboration	Collaboration	Highlights instances where children engage in group efforts to solve problems and overcome challenges together	1	3	1	5
Commitment	Commitment	Others in the community expressing commitment to the concept of play.	0	2	2	4
Mental health	Mentalhealth	improvements in mental health	2	0	2	4
Respect	Respect	Play is helping youth/children to have respect for one another.	2	2	0	4
Choosing non-violence	Non-violence	Choosing non-violent methods over physical discipline, reflecting a change in behaviour or disciplinary approaches.	0	2	1	3
Improved teacher-child relations	TCrelationships	signs of improved relationships between teachers and children	1	2	0	3
Personal transformation	Transformation	Play is supporting deeper individual-level changes, such as overcoming a negative self-image, healing from trauma	0	0	2	2
Hope	Hope	Play is creating hope.	0	0	1	1
Innovation	Innovation	Play fostering innovative thinking, creativity, and the generation of new ideas or methods.	1	0	0	1
Storytelling	Storytelling	Play is encouraging community members to engage in storytelling.	0	0	0	0

Learning through play codes:

Code	Description	South Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Latin America	Total
Cheerful	cheerful / joyful / happy / fun /motivating	8	4	10	22
Educative	games for educational purpose, activities and material for academic learning	17	10	11	**38**
Equality	(gender, social, economic, etc.) Inclusion and diversity	8	8	5	21
Child-centred	child and youth-centred / age appropriate	9	5	11	25
Nature & outdoors	being outdoors/in nature	4	4	1	9
Artistic expression	singing, music, dance, theatre/drama, painting, bodily expression, diverse expression, creative expression	6	11	17	**34**
Sports & movement	sports and body movement, physical games	19	5	11	**35**
Participation	active participation, active, activity-based, experience-based, learning by doing	16	12	9	**37**
Cultural Pertinence	cultural pertinence / valuing culture/ language	2	3	8	13
Collaboration	collaboration in the play, team building, working together in playful activity, team work	7	6	7	20
Creative	making things/activities from own ideas, innovating, experimenting	6	10	11	27
Community Engagement in Play	the community participating in play	1	1	5	7
Board games	chess and other board games	0	0	2	2
Not Specific	nothing specific mentioned about the play aspect	5	10	5	20

Other contribution codes:

Code	Description	South Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Latin America	Total
Teaching	information, education, workshops, awareness raising on topics, training, giving advice	17	19	17	53
Inspiration	role modelling adults/peers, visitors, people from outside influencing	12	2	3	17
Environment	providing a safe/healthy/positive environment/allowed to make mistakes	10	8	11	29
Engagement	community engagement/provision	13	2	9	24
Relational	building trust, less hierarchy, care, building trust, believed in youth	8	7	12	27
Encouragement	encouraging	10	4	6	20
Other Outcomes	other outcomes such as academic results, better behaviour in others have convinced them	7	5	2	14
Standards	policy, rules, frameworks, boundaries, guidelines	5	2	2	9
Help	practical help/organising, provision of resources (money, tools, teaching aids)	17	9	14	40
Performances	performances, exhibitions, festivals	2	1	5	8
Reflection	reflection, analysis	4	3	1	8
Networking	networking, peer learning, being connected, advocating	2	7	8	17
Research	researching, exploring what worked	1	1	0	2
Initiative	providing new initiatives/programs/activities	3	13	1	17
Incentive	incentives such as prizes, stamps	0	1	2	3

Annex 5: Case Study Summary

The case studies are listed below. The full versions of the cases are available at the link below and are recommended reading in connection to this Learning Review as they provide concrete examples of some of the key changes and in some of the more detailed causes, some insight into the causal interactions within the case. Note that Maji Mazuri (Kenya) and NEDUC (Brazil) chose to explore two of their outcomes; hence there are 20 cases.

The case-study document is available from GFC.

	Partner	Case	Outcome codes	LtP codes	Other factors
1	Ekmattra	Students and teachers transformed a dump site into a playground (AS402)	academic	child-centred, artistic expression, participation, collaboration, educative, creative, cheerful	encouragement, environment, help, relational, standards, initiative
2	Changing Stories	The school principal of a Higher Secondary School adopted play-based learning methods (AS105)	requested LtP, adopted LtP	educative, collaboration, sports&movement, participation	inspiration, relational, standards, other outcomes, help
3	Amos Youth Centre	Diverse learners at the Youth Centre excelling (AF201)	academic, identity, language, disability	educative, sports & movement, participation, cultural pertinence	relational, environment, teaching, help, initiative
4	DESH	Children living in Bihari colony started to go to preschool (AS201)	academic, culture shift	artistic expression, educative, child-centred, cheerful	help, teaching, community engagement, relational, encouragement
5	Maji Mazuri	Students and teachers transformed a dump site into a playground (AF405)	environment, collaboration, voice, empowerment	educative, artistic expression, nature & outdoors, participation, creative, collaboration, child-centred	initiative, teaching, networking
6	Maji Mazuri	Students from the teens program became leaders in their schools (AF403)	supporting children, leadership, empowerment	artistic expression, participation	relational, networking
7	GSK	Community members demanded learning by doing and experimental work in government schools (AS506)	engagement, requested LtP, voice, empowerment	participation, equality, sports & movement	teaching, relational, community engagement, other outcomes
8	Move the World	A Get Global Graduate plans to further her education in fashion design (AF502)	academic, livelihood, empowerment	creative, cheerful	relational, reflection, help, teaching, incentive
9	Atoot	Girls started to ask men for things (AS003)	empowerment, culture shift, mental health, gender, voice	artistic expression, creative, sports & movement, collaboration	inspiration, teaching
10	Starters Technology	The management of Starters Technology created a recurrent activity focused on play (AF102)	adopted LtP (internal)	cheerful, child-centred, participatory, creative	reflection, other outcomes, initiative
11	Community Focus International	Parents, youth and project teachers created play centres (AF301)	materials, provision, commitment, engagement, community	not specific	teaching, community engagement

	Partner	Case	Outcome codes	LtP codes	Other factors
12	Sabuj Sangha	Teachers motivated children through attractive play-based teaching methods (AS306)	adopted LtP (internal)	educative, nature & outdoors, cheerful, sports & movement	teaching, reflection, help
13	Na Tubelenge Children's Library	Children learned each other's local languages or English at the library (AF002)	language, identity, academic	cultural pertinence, equality, sports & movement	standards, help, initiative,
14	FUNILUZ	A girl from an illiterate family worked with her lion to learn and teach literacy skills (AM001)	empowerment, academic	child-centred, educative, participatory, cheerful, artistic expression, community engagement in play	engagement, relational, other outcomes
15	Músicas de la Tierra	An 11-year-old girl overcame cognitive difficulties by playing instruments and singing (AM410)	academic, mentalhealth	artistic expression, sports & movement, participatory, child-centred, cheerful, collaboration	relational, standards, environment, encouraging, performances
16	Sololatecas	Parents showed support to children by taking part in a festival (AM503)	engagement	participatory, artistic expression, creative, cultural pertinence	help, performances, teaching, encouragement, networking, inspiration, incentive
17	RULELI	A 17-year-old boy resolved conflicts using skills learned at Ruleli, helping to improve family relationships (AM304)	empowerment, parent-child relationships, disability, supporting children, non-violence	artistic expression sports & movement	community engagement, relational, environment, encouragement,
18	Cores do Amanhã	A 10-year-old girl positively connected to her culture and identity through dance (AM104)	relationships, transformation	artistic expression cultural pertinence, equality, board games	relational, help, teaching, inspiration
19	NEDUC	A 6-year-old boy, who used to be hyperactive, listened to his classmates and could be involved in activities. (AM205)	skills, academic	creative, collaboration, child-centred, cultural pertinence	help, relational, teaching
20	NEDUC	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. (AM204)	academic, skills,	sports & movement, creative participation, artistic expression, educative, child-centred, equality	environment, relational, reflection, incentive, help