



GRATITUDE REPORT

A growing body of evidence tells us that support during the earliest stages of life is an effective strategy in empowering families and communities to rise above poverty. As with all of BRAC's solutions, Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs provide solutions centered on—and developed with—the very people they are intended to benefit. To date, BRAC has transformed the lives of over 13 million children and their families through ECD and community-based education. Impact at this scale would not be possible without BRAC's global network of supporters.

Thank you.

NOVEMBER 2022



POWERING POSSIBILITY THROUGH PLAY



A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Once widely considered as solely recreational, evidence now shows that play is critical to children's brain development, especially in the first five years of life. A new study of BRAC's Play Labs by researchers at Columbia and Cambridge Universities found that these programs enable the most marginalized children to enter kindergarten as equally prepared for success as their better-off peers.

Without such high-quality programs, children may experience significant barriers to accessing education, especially in crisis-affected environments where they already face challenges in regularly attending school. BRAC has run pre-primary education programs since the 1990s, reaching millions in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Liberia, the Philippines, Tanzania, and Uganda. Building on this, BRAC developed the Play Lab model in 2015 in partnership with the LEGO Foundation. The model centers around play as a way to create joyful environments that promote children's holistic development, including healing from trauma.

According to a recent study, BRAC's Play Labs had statistically significant positive impacts on children, their parents, and their Play Leaders. Most strikingly, the most disadvantaged children were able to catch up to their peers.

PLAY-BASED LEARNING IN COX'S BAZAR

In emergency and humanitarian contexts, children are extremely vulnerable to abuse, violence, and trafficking. BRAC's intervention has become a critical lifeline for the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar. In a wide-ranging effort, BRAC has initiated holistic support, ranging from healthcare to food, sanitation, infrastructure, and more.

Given the need, thousands of child-friendly spaces have been established for early childhood programming for youth ages two through six through BRAC's Humanitarian Play Lab model. This unique model was developed by integrating existing Play Lab curricula with child protection and psycho-social support. Traditional Rohingya songs, games, and rhymes are also used to preserve culture and heritage while building children's resilience. Many Play Labs are strategically located with government primary schools to inform primary teachers about the impact of play-based approaches and support children's transition to formal school.

Of the nearly one million Rohingya refugees displaced, an estimated half are children. BRAC is now scaling its Humanitarian Play Labs to reach over 70% of the Rohingya youth ages zero through six.



SUPPORTING YOUNG WOMEN



A lesser-known byproduct of ECD is that it has been shown to improve the productivity of working parents in local economies. This worldwide phenomenon supports mothers who hold unbalanced expectations as primary caretakers. With its Play Lab model, BRAC has not only alleviated childcare concerns for women in its communities but has also created a new career track for thousands of young women who are trained as non-formal educators, known as Play Leaders. In Uganda, BRAC's partnership with the Hilton Foundation further supports a female workforce among refugee families who face inter-ethnic violence, food insecurity, and a lack of access to basic services. Through the support of this partnership, mothers in greatest need are matched with an array of BRAC services to generate income, including Play Labs and Ultra-Poor Graduation programs.

Play Labs alleviate childcare burdens, free up parents to earn income, and provide many young women with career opportunities in education.

THE FUTURE OF PLAY

ECD continues to be a transformative tool valued by a growing number of countries throughout Asia and Africa and BRAC is currently working closely with multiple governments to support the implementation of playful learning approaches and curricula into national education systems. In 2018, BRAC transitioned the management and operation of its Play Labs in Liberia to the national government and worked with the Government of Tanzania to ensure the smooth transition of thousands of Play Labs into primary schools. More recently, BRAC partnered with the Government of Sierra Leone to expand and deliver play-based ECD through their national education system. In 2022, BRAC released a series of essential materials to equip practitioners with the tools needed to adopt and scale the play-based approach. This immensely valuable resource is now freely accessible to all, and has the potential for global impact.

Though proven highly impactful, global ECD programs are extremely underfunded, accounting for only 3% of investments in development funding. Despite this, BRAC has reached millions of young children and their families through direct implementation and technical advisory services.



Scan with your phone for a video of Anas, whose participation in BRAC's Play Lab in Tanzania has impacted his entire family.

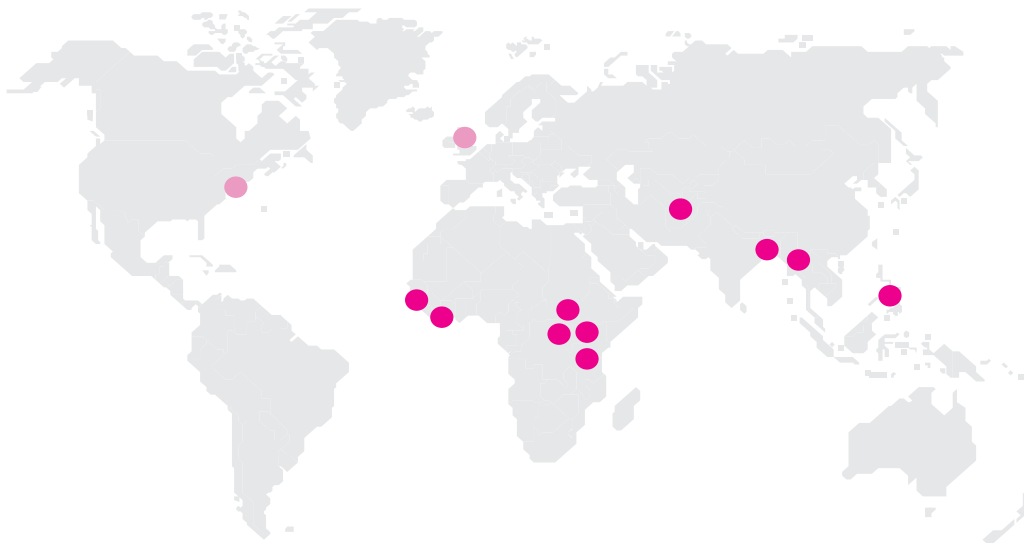
ADVOCATING FOR PLAY



Early Childhood Development is a powerful tool to disrupt poverty, and BRAC has worked with leading partners to ensure the voices of youth around the world are heard. This September at BRAC's 50th Anniversary Celebration, Faatiha Aayat, an eleven-year-old author, climate activist, and child rights advocate, issued a bold and moving call to action on behalf of children everywhere:

"Please champion BRAC USA's youth programs to enable young people to reach their full potential... Together with BRAC, let's defeat poverty, defend the planet, and demand equity."

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