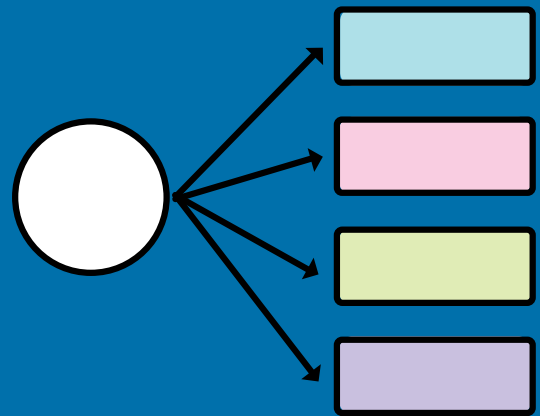


play▲  
to●  
learn■

# Co-Creation, Iteration, and Adaptation:

---

Real-World Examples from  
Play to Learn Programs



JUNE 2024



### THE PLAY TO LEARN PROJECT

Play to Learn is an innovative humanitarian program from Sesame Workshop, BRAC, and the International Rescue Committee that harnesses the power of play to deliver critical early learning to children and caregivers affected by the Rohingya and Syrian refugee crises. Made possible with the support of the LEGO Foundation, Play to Learn reaches families in their homes, health centers, and play spaces—providing them with the tools needed to foster nurturing care and help children learn and thrive. Partnering with NYU’s Global TIES for Children as an independent evaluator, we are measuring the program’s impact on children’s development and caregivers’ mental health and well-being. By generating tested, scalable, and transportable approaches and educational content, Play to Learn is laying the foundation for transformational change—allowing us to reach generations of children affected by crisis, no matter where they are.

### THIS RESOURCE

This resource was created to help curate and synthesize the expertise and insight from practitioners in early childhood development who worked with children and families affected by conflict and crisis under the Play to Learn project from 2018-2024. This resource was developed by Childhood Education International under a consulting agreement with the Play to Learn Project in consultation with Play to Learn partners. This collaborative effort underscores the power of co-creation in addressing the complex challenges of education in emergencies and advancing meaningful change.

The full collection of program resources can be found at the [Play to Learn Resource Hub \(https://sesameworkshop.org/our-work/impact-areas/play-to-learn-resource-hub/\)](https://sesameworkshop.org/our-work/impact-areas/play-to-learn-resource-hub/).

Written by: Childhood Education International

Edited by: Anjali Shivshanker

Designed by: Jennifer Geib {Communication design}



Childhood Education  
International

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

The **LEGO** Foundation

Play to Learn used co-creation, iteration, and adaptation processes to develop and implement programs built on evidence-based practices that could be transported or scaled to young children and their families affected by conflict and crisis in Bangladesh, the Middle East, and beyond. Integrating co-creation, iteration, and adaptation into Play to Learn’s program design and management processes ensured interventions were relevant, exciting, and effective.

## Three distinct processes

### CO-CREATION

**Definition:** a process through which program staff and communities share power and decision-making in mutual partnership to develop or adapt programs or parts of programs.

**Why Play to Learn used the process:** Play to Learn used co-creation to ensure our programs reflected the needs of all groups.

**Requirements:** Co-creation requires a commitment to building trust and mutual understanding across partners, overcoming language and cultural barriers, and creating ways for diverse stakeholders to contribute to building programs collaboratively.

### ADAPTATION

**Definition:** a process through which a program changes partially or entirely to effectively serve young children and families under the conditions of a new context.

**Why Play to Learn used the process:** Play to Learn used adaptation to adjust effective or promising program models or approaches used by BRAC, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Sesame Workshop in other contexts.

**Requirements:** Adaptation requires hiring relevant local expertise as well as planning and budgeting for activities and time to adapt program content and implementation to the languages, cultures, and values of the communities in a new context.

### ITERATION

**Definition:** a process through which actions or steps are repeated until a goal is reached.

**Why Play to Learn used the process:** Play to Learn most often used iteration when converting in-person programs to digital programs, particularly at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Requirements:** Iteration requires at least one round of repetition as well as careful monitoring and assessment to compare the performance of each iteration against a specific goal.

# REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES

## EXAMPLE 1:

### Co-creating content, activities, and a physical space that fits Rohingya culture and needs

**INTERVENTION:** Humanitarian Play Labs

**PARTNER:** BRAC

**LOCATION:** Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

BRAC had an existing Play Lab intervention operating in many parts of rural Bangladesh that was designed with the needs of Bangladeshi families in mind. Following the mass forced migration of the Rohingya to Bangladesh in 2017, BRAC established a small number of child friendly spaces that had huge enrollment—more than they could accommodate. They began working with Rohingya parents and families at these spaces to co-create a Play Lab for the Rohingya, incorporating relevant culture, practices, and language over a period of several months. Examples of the co-created components include:

- Use of Rohingya songs, games, and rhymes throughout the curriculum
- Culturally meaningful design (posters, set up, building materials) of Play Lab spaces
- Engaging men and women in the building of structures and materials
- Integration of psychosocial support for both children and their parents

This collaboration happened over at least a year prior to the launch of the Humanitarian Play Labs and continued during the early stages of its implementation.



PHOTO: BRAC IED

## EXAMPLE 2:

# Using iteration to improve system performance and client engagement

**INTERVENTION:** Gindegi Goron

**PARTNER:** The IRC

**LOCATION:** Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Gindegi Goron is a phone-based parenting intervention that uses pre-recorded calls and text messages to share information and activities with pregnant and lactating mothers and their families. Following [a successful pilot](#) in the Rohingya refugee camps and host communities in Cox's Bazar, the program's team identified components that would benefit from further testing and improvement. These included: automation and functionality of the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system; content customization to address the precise age and stage of a child; remote mechanisms for monitoring quality; flexibility of content delivery; and adding in-person support. The IRC monitored metrics like call completion rate, length of calls, and requests for call-backs, among others, and received feedback from caregivers and facilitators during the iterative process. This resulted in the addition of quizzes, content tailored more precisely to the month-to-month ages of client's children, and home visits. The IRC also piloted working with adolescent girls as community engagement staff while schools were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic.



PHOTO: THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

### EXAMPLE 3:

## Adaptation and iteration to provide early childhood education to areas without access to in-person services

**INTERVENTION:** Remote Early Learning Program

**PARTNERS:** The IRC and Sesame Workshop

**LOCATION:** Lebanon

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the IRC created the Remote Early Learning Program by adapting existing in-person preschool programming to become scripted phone calls delivered by teachers to caregivers. The adaptation focused on providing training to teachers on how to work with caregivers remotely over the phone and how to ensure child engagement in activities despite the remote format. The IRC did several iterations of various remote options, including adapting and sending lesson plans and activities over WhatsApp and supporting teachers to make instructional videos for caregivers. Based on the experience and feedback from teachers and clients, the lesson plans turned into scripted phone calls. The program also provided participants with ECD kits containing child-facing materials and shared videos, stories, and songs with caregivers via WhatsApp. The multimedia materials provided, developed by Sesame Workshop, helped parents to easily and accurately deliver the activities to children and used characters and content from the regional *Ahlan Simsim* broadcast.

New York University (NYU) Global TIES for Children evaluated the Remote Early Learning Program using a randomized controlled trial. The research showed that the program had significant positive impacts on emergent literacy and numeracy, overall child development, child play, and social-emotional and motor skills. The impacts found on child development are in the range of those seen in evaluations of in-person preschool from around the world. Following the success of the Remote Early Learning Program in Lebanon, the IRC implemented a version of it in Iraq, with similar positive results.



Read about the results of the Remote Early Learning Program's impact evaluation [here](#).

#### EXAMPLE 4:

## Using formative testing to adapt content to new contexts and cultures

**CONTENT:** *Watch, Play, Learn: Early Learning* animated videos

**PARTNER:** Sesame Workshop

**LOCATION:** Multiple countries

To ensure maximum learning, Sesame Workshop always does formative testing on new content to understand how children respond to the material and characters. In response to the growing number of humanitarian emergencies around the world, Sesame Workshop developed a new set of videos called *Watch, Play, Learn* to be used as an add-on or stand-alone learning material for children affected by conflicts or crises. Sesame Workshop conducted formative testing on these videos in 2021 with children in over seven countries. During this testing, Sesame Workshop gained valuable qualitative data about children's engagement with the videos, their knowledge of both characters and educational content after watching the videos, and other themes that emerged from their responses to the videos. This feedback was then delivered to production and education experts who used the information to improve the videos. Key insights from the testing included: the universal enjoyment of animals and music; challenges with communicating and teaching the scientific method through animated videos; and determining which storylines effectively communicated stories about emotions..



**EXAMPLE 5:**

## **Adapting a program created during COVID-19 to other acute emergencies**

**INTERVENTION:** Pashe Achhi

**PARTNER:** BRAC

**LOCATION:** Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

BRAC originally created the Pashe Achhi program during the COVID-19 pandemic to support the mental wellbeing of parents who had been participating in BRAC's Mother-Child Dyad Model. The program was fully phone-based with no in-person interaction due to restrictions in the Rohingya camps. In March 2021, a large fire broke out in the Rohingya camps leading to mass displacement of 45,000 Rohingya people. Based on the results of a rapid needs assessment, and taking advantage of the decreasing restrictions on in-person services, BRAC converted the phone-based program to an in-person home visit. After these modifications, BRAC conducted a rapid qualitative study to understand the impact of this change on both mothers and program facilitators. Mothers, children, and facilitators all reported increased happiness and trust in each other after being able to interact in person.









TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PLAY TO LEARN,  
PLEASE CONTACT:

| [ISIOperations@sesame.org](mailto:ISIOperations@sesame.org)  
| [www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org)