

Approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning of early childhood innovations – sharing learnings from Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Uganda

Global Schools Forum, Lively Minds, Street Child and Tiny Totos

Background

The evidence is clear that quality early years development and education is one of the best investments for eliminating extreme poverty and improving life outcomes. Early childhood experiences have a profound impact on brain development – affecting learning, health, behaviour, and ultimately, productivity and income ([World Bank, 2023](#)). This has been recognised with the inclusion of target 4.2 in the Sustainable Development Goals, that by 2030 ‘all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education’ ([UN, 2015](#)). With this focus has been an increase in the development of tools to monitor and evaluate the access to and quality of early childhood interventions ([Brookings, 2017](#)).

However, the development of academic and research tools has not supported the implementation and utilization of data and evidence among innovators in the sector. Organisations operating early childhood programmes in low- and middle-income countries have limited partnerships with governments or research institutions developing monitoring tools, and practitioners are often left reinventing the wheel in silos. Where practitioners can access national or global monitoring and evaluation tools, there are often challenges to contextualise them to be relevant and meaningful. There is also often a gap between what is being measured and what is useful to drive learning and improvement at a programme level, leading to missed opportunities to use data to improve impact.

Our Learning Session

This session is an opportunity for practitioners to share approaches to MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) and learn from other organisations in the sector. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from a range of partner organisations about their MEL practices, as well as deep-dive discussion groups where participants can engage with presenters and exchange learning.

About Global Schools Forum

[Global Schools Forum](#) is a collaborative community, innovation accelerator, and partnership builder for non-state organisations working to improve education at scale for underserved children in low- and middle-income countries. Our community currently includes 105 non-state actors delivering education across 60 low and middle-income countries. Of these, 42 organisations currently operate in east Africa, and of these 21 organisations work with pre-primary aged children in the region. GSF (Global Schools Forum) is keen to bring together this group, and wider stakeholders in the region, to share approaches and learnings around the theme of MEL and early childhood education, and to forge collaboration between different actors in this space. This proposed learning session will bring together three organisations from the region to share key learnings from their experiences of monitoring and evaluating early childhood programmes and give participants the opportunity to discuss specific monitoring and evaluation challenges and opportunities in more detail in break out group discussions.

Collaborating Partners

We propose bringing together a range of partner organisations, all working in the early childhood space in east Africa but delivering a diverse range of programmes and implementing monitoring and evaluation activities in different ways.

[Lively Minds](#): Lively Minds trains marginalised rural parents in Uganda and Ghana to run free educational Play Schemes for all the pre-schoolers in their community, and to provide better care for their children at home using their own resources. The programme is delivered by government using a train the trainer approach. Lively Minds have implemented a range of evaluation methods, including an RCT (Randomized Controlled Trial) of their programme in Ghana and a mixed method evaluation of their programme in Uganda. They have also developed a comprehensive performance management system to enable us to easily track quality and compliance of programme delivery. Lively Minds will share their learnings through these different methodologies and show case how the development of their approaches has enabled programme iteration and improvement.

[Street Child](#): In collaboration with The LEGO Foundation, as part of its [Playful Learning Across the Years 2.0 \(PLAY 2.0\)](#) program, Street Child is undertaking a programme to contextualize, test, and use externally developed classroom observation and interview tools to measure the quality of play-based learning in Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. Street Child will share their approach to piloting these tools in different contexts, and how they are adapting global tools to be locally fit for purpose.

[Tiny Totos](#): Tiny Totos is building a network of market-based, independent, childcare providers in East Africa that provide stable livelihoods to owners, peace of mind to working mothers and nurturing care to the children they look after. Tiny Totos uses monitoring data from childcare providers, through a digital data collection tool, to monitor programme quality and to inform programme improvement and implementation. Tiny Totos will share practical examples of data for programme quality improvement, and learnings from their experience of building this data informed practice.

Presenters

Poornima Kharbanda, Global Schools Forum (chair)

Rachel Akrofie, Lively Minds

Ramya Madhavan, Street Child

Karungari Wachira, Tiny Totos

Agenda

1. Opening and overview of the session (Global Schools Forum) - 10 minutes
2. Overview from each partner organisation, approaches and learning from their programme – 30 minutes
 - a. Lively Minds
 - b. Street Child
 - c. Tiny Totos
3. Group discussions with partner organisations – 50 minutes
 - a. 'What comes after an RCT? Maintaining and tracking impact with Lively Minds in Uganda and Ghana'
 - b. 'Incorporating play-based learning to MEL approaches: learning from Street Child's pilot in Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, and Uganda'
 - c. 'Programme quality data, continuous improvement and social franchising: Tiny Totos' experience of scaling community-based childcare in Kenya'

4. Reflections from the groups panel discussion – 25 minutes
5. Closing from Global Schools Forum – 5 minutes