

BRAC's Playful Remote Learning



Goal: To facilitate learning and healing through play for children ages 3-6 in Bangladesh, Tanzania and Uganda in response to COVID-19.

100+
thousand

Children and their caregivers reached every week through the Pashe Achhi telecommunication model

18
million

Listeners reached through the Radio Play Labs in Tanzania

350
thousand

Listeners per episode, on average, reached through the 50 Radio Play Lab sessions in Uganda

Background

The World Bank estimated that over one billion learners around the world were out of school at the peak of the global COVID-19 pandemic—and even before the crisis, UNICEF estimated that 8 in 10 children in low-income countries do not have access to pre-primary education, depriving them of critical early language and literacy skills. BRAC's commitment to children's play, learning, and wellbeing led to the creation of BRAC's Play Labs in Bangladesh, Tanzania, and Uganda. Most recently, BRAC developed remote adaptation approaches to reach the young learners and their caregivers in response to the pandemic.

Opportunity

Early investment in the world's most vulnerable children will have long-term, positive effects on their futures—and the futures of their communities and the world at large. While governments have focused primarily on school-age children and mitigating their

learning losses throughout the pandemic, BRAC has filled the gaps to support young children's development in Bangladesh, Tanzania, and Uganda, enabling them to continue learning and healing through play during the global crisis.

BRAC's Play Labs are play-based learning centers for children ages 3-6 in Bangladesh, Tanzania, and Uganda. The children that Play Labs serve are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, not only with respect to their education, but also in terms of health, food security, and economic impacts. In low-resource, developing, and humanitarian contexts, children are disproportionately vulnerable to poverty and other adversities and stressors, which can impede brain development that are further intensified without supportive caregiving interventions. It is vital to provide these children – and their caregivers – with psychosocial support and playful early learning and stimulation opportunities that help address trauma, support healthy development, and provide a sense of routine and normalcy during this uncertain time.



A mother and child engaging in a Remote Play Lab session. ©BRAC



A Play Leader broadcasting a lesson for Radio Play Lab in Uganda. ©BRAC

Approach

With the onset of COVID-19, BRAC quickly adapted the Play Lab model for remote learning through radio and telecommunication outreach to provide quality early learning opportunities to children. Building on the play-based foundation of Play Labs, BRAC created Pashe Achhi and the Radio Play Labs.

BRAC's Pashe Achhi ('Beside You') model has safely delivered remote playful learning experiences to Rohingya and Bangladeshi children ages 0-5 and their families in Bangladesh during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The model integrates telecounseling and telelearning, covering topics like self-care, child stimulation, play-based learning and COVID-19 awareness messages. With growing interest and support from other partners, BRAC intends to scale the telecommunication model and its components further beyond COVID-19.

BRAC implemented the Radio Play Labs in Tanzania and Uganda to expand its reach even further during the COVID-19 pandemic. BRAC adapted elements of its Play Curriculum and Parenting Curriculum for radio to share interactive, playful activities for literacy and numeracy, hold storytelling sessions, and share messages on child development, positive parenting, nutrition, stimulation, safety, and wellbeing. The radio sessions have proved to be exceedingly popular among children, parents and caregivers having reached an estimated 18 million listeners in

Tanzania and an average of 350,000 listeners per episode in Uganda.

These interventions enable children and their families to stay connected, continue learning, and maintain their wellbeing beyond the classroom. BRAC believes this is also an opportunity to 'build back better' and incorporate remote learning as a valuable modality in the contexts where BRAC works, whether in an emergency setting or not.

Why BRAC?

Founded in Bangladesh in 1972 as a small relief effort, BRAC is now a world-class global development organization working in eleven countries around the world. Ranked the number one NGO in the world for the sixth time in 2020, BRAC runs programs in education, youth empowerment, health care, agriculture, humanitarian response, and more. BRAC believes every child deserves early opportunities to learn through play. Thus, BRAC is committed to protecting and engaging children and caregivers throughout the COVID-19 crisis and beyond to ensure all children have access to the resources they need for their play, learning, and wellbeing.

“ The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated innovation in the education of young children. Extending that innovation could benefit children broadly long after the pandemic has subsided. ” said Erum Mariam, Executive Director of the BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University in Bangladesh