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Image 1: Learners work on a scratch project in the Mtwapa Primary School PlayLab with support of their teacher

Director's Letter

The Kenya Play Project (KPLAY) is off to a great start for 2022. This year, KPLAY intends to scale Learning Through Play with Technology (LTPT) to 100 schools in Kwale and Kilifi Counties. Humans who play will continue to support KPLAY in content development and ensuring that we maintain alignment with the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC).

The rollout of the PlayLab is now well underway after successful set up of the prototypes in Jomo Kenyatta Primary School in December 2021 and Mtwapa Primary School in January 2022. PlayLabs are customized school-based spaces for playful interactions and creativity, containing context-appropriate lo-fi and high-tech LTPT resources that speak to girls and boys. In February and March 2022, the team has set up PlayLabs in the remaining nine schools from the first year of implementation. In addition to this is the ongoing work on the community engagement strategy that will be implemented through collaboration with Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in Kilifi and Kwale Counties. Consequently, in February, the project had its first CBO and parents' awareness sessions. The outcomes of these are shared in more detail later in this newsletter. KPLAY has also continued to conduct sensitization forums with Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) and sub-county directors in preparation for their role in project

implementation in 2022. These mission critical education officers are now aware of the 100 schools that the project will be targeting and how they will support and participate in the project.

Stakeholder engagement continues to be key for the project and in February, the KPLAY had its inaugural National Level Working Group (NLWG) meeting with the support of the Ministry of Education (MoE). The meeting was attended by among others, officials from MoE, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE). In addition to national level engagement the project also held its first county steering committee meetings for 2022. The project appreciates the demonstrated commitment of these stakeholder groups and will continue to rely on their support and advice throughout the year.

This newsletter provides updates of key activities in this first quarter of 2022 and shares planned activities for the second quarter.

Diana Kwamboka,



Ag. KPLAY Project Director
IREX

PlayLab roll out

The PlayLab roll out in 2022 began with the set-up of a PlayLab prototype for Kilifi County at Mtwapa Primary School in January 2022. The PlayLab process included a parent sensitization session where participants were sensitized on the KPLAY Project, the importance of the PlayLab in enhancing learning in the school and their role in monitoring and sustaining playful learning with technology in their schools. The Mtwapa PlayLab was a combination of a renovated room as well as the PlayLab on the go, a mobile lockable pushcart. The PlayLab launch was attended by local community members, parents, teachers and learners from Mtwapa Primary School as well as KPLAY stakeholders and representatives from the Steering Committee. The guest of honor at the PlayLab Launch was Mr. Khalif Hirey, the County Director of Education Kilifi County who was represented by Mr. Mohammed Isack the Sub-County Director of Education, Kilifi South. Following the successful launch at Mtwapa Primary school, the project has now completed the setup of PlayLabs in the



Image 2: Mr. Mohammed Isack unveils plaque at Mtwapa Primary School PlayLab

remaining nine schools from the first year of implementation.

Community Based Organizations (CBO) Awareness Sessions

In 2022, KPLAY's activity will include a more robust community engagement strategy that will include collaboration with local CBOs in Kwale and Kilifi Counties. In December 2021 the project received recommendations of CBOs from the Steering committee, and these were contacted and invited to submit information about their registration and scope of work in January 2022. On February 24th and 25th a total of 13 CBO representative and 23 parents representing various zones in Kilifi and Kwale Counties participated in a KPLAY awareness session. In this session, participants were introduced to the KPLAY, the activities and their role in the project. A second forum will be organized end of March 2023 to finalize work planning process and sensitize the CBOs on administration and monitoring and evaluation requirements.



Image 3: CBO and parents' sensitization in Kilifi County

National Level Working Group (NLWG) Meeting in Nairobi

On 14th February 2022, KPLAY held the first National Level Working Group (NLWG) in Nairobi at the Sarova Stanely hotel. The purpose of the NLWG is to be a forum for sharing learning on international best practices on playful learning with technology, use KPLAY data to make LTPT work for Kenya and create potential scaling strategy at national level. The first NLWG meeting was attended by representatives from Ministry of Education (MOE), Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), Center for Mathematics Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE), Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE). IREX presented the PlayLab Model as an approach to integrating playful learning with technologies. Participants shared insights on the feasibility of this model considering existing policies on ICTs, the potential for inclusion of special needs education requirements and value of parental engagement. The working group emphasized that some of these issues raised would be important include and consider before seeking the renewal of partnership with MoE. It was also agreed that KPLAY would share regular progress reports with the working group as this is part of the requirement under the current partnership period.

Sub-County Directors Sensitization in Kwale and Kilifi

KPLAY conducted induction sessions of sub-county directors in January 2022. Sub-county directors from TSC are critical in the project strategy as they provide direct oversight to the CSOs and therefore can provide an added layer of accountability on behalf of the project. The sub-county directors' induction session sensitized these education officers on planned activities with the CSOs and how they can support the CSOs and the project. In this forum, specific activities covered include the planned Training of Trainers (TOT) of system embedded coaches, teacher workshops and classroom observations. All sub-counties were represented in the forum by a total of 11 officers signaling a good start to the relationship with these officers. The project will continue to conduct update sessions with sub-county directors through the year to sustain the buy-in secured during this first session.

Steering Committee Kwale and Kilifi County

The steering committee continues to be a critical decision-making platform for the project at county level. Therefore, in January the project hosted the first steering committee of 2022 for both Kwale and Kilifi Counties. During this meeting, the steering committee reviewed the plan for 2022 and the PlayLab Launch in Jomo Kenyatta Primary School. The project will continue to engage the Steering Committee throughout 2022 to ensure that we remain compliant to policies in each county as well as stay relevant to the context.

Next steps

The following activities are planned to take place between April and June 2022:

1. Training of Trainers (TOT) of System Embedded Coaches targeting Headteachers, Play Ambassadors and CSOs
2. Teacher Workshops in Kwale and Kilifi County to introduce LTPT to the new schools.
3. Roll out of PlayLab set up in pilot schools and assessing readiness in 50 new schools

CSO Induction and Coaching conversations

Curriculum Support Officers KPLAY Coaching is aimed at providing on-going support to CSOs in preparation for their role as LTPT co-facilitators. In February, the KPLAY Training team held four coaching sessions. The sessions were held virtually once a week from 8th February 2022 to 3rd March 2022. A total of 26 CSOs participated in the sessions which covered among other areas, how to provide teacher support for LTPT integration, conceptualization, and contextualization of playful learning with technology. The CSOs were supported with data bundles to enable them to participate in the virtual sessions.



Image 4: Guests interact with learners and teachers at the Mtwapa PlayLab Launch