We use creative & play-based activities to help the most deprived young children develop the *lively minds* to succeed in school and in life. We do this sustainably by building capacities & transforming the mindsets of parents & teachers.

Founded in 2008

Non-religious, non-political International NGO

Partnership between Lively Minds UK, Lively Minds Ghana & Lively Minds Uganda

Currently working in deprived rural communities in Northern & Upper East regions (Bolga Municipal, Talensi, Bongo, Tamale Metro, Tolon, Kumbungu, East Gonja, Mion)

Over **9600** children benefitting in **47** communities

Currently reaching 15 new communities in Ghana per year. We’re planning to increase our scale.

**Winners of Ghana UK Based Achievement (GUBA) Awards 2013**

Funding from DFID, Comic Relief, & Waterloo Foundation
We train 30 Volunteer Mothers & KG teachers in each community to run Play Centres for KG1 & 2. 

Training includes:
- how children learn
- how to make & use educational games
- child-friendly & discovery-led teaching methods

Play Centres use locally-made games.

Operates in sessions to maintain quality & cater for large class sizes - 25 children & 7 Volunteer Mothers per session (5:1). Remaining children participate in facilitated outdoor play.

Children learn through play; participating in five different skill-sets during each session to enhance cognitive & socio-emotional development.

Achieving GES KG Vision:
- Activity-based learning
- Community Engagement
- Use of Local Resources
- Holistic Approach

Numeracy games – learn to count, recognise numbers & gain basic arithmetic skills

Sensory awareness games – stimulate different senses & learn to recognise colours, sizes & shapes

Construction games – develop imagination, problem solving & motor development

Matching/sorting games – learn to recognise patterns & shapes, & improve memory & concentration

Reading & story-telling – develop an interest in reading, stimulate imagination & build literacy skills

Physical education – outdoor games to strengthen bodies, social skills, & listening to instructions

Health & hygiene – handwashing with soap/ash is compulsory to habituate children to this practise
Improving primary education through Pupil-run Reading Schemes

We train all P5 & P6 students & teachers to run regular story-telling sessions for P1 & P2.

To cater for all reading abilities training focuses on:-

- Importance of reading
- Comprehension & story-telling
- Picture-reading
- Story-telling/drama
- Questioning & interactive communication

Local language reading to maximise comprehension & enjoyment

Small group sizes to circumvent the problem of large-class sizes & enhance quality

Our Reading Scheme uses story-telling to spark imagination, creative-thinking and communication skills of all participating children.

Key Benefits of our Scheme:
- Exposure to books
- Literacy & language in local dialect & English
- Leadership & confidence of Readers
- Low cost
- Whole school benefit
- Sustainable
Our Solution:

We provide monthly **behavioural change** workshops for Volunteer Mothers on **parenting & life skills**.

- Volunteer Mothers recognise the need to *change their behaviour* & take practical action using available resources.
- Improve home-based care & stimulation
- Raise the value of education & parental involvement in school
- Improve Volunteer Mothers’ well-being & confidence
- Give the Volunteer Mothers a ‘second-chance’ at basic education and important life-skills
- Strengthen Play Centres by incentivizing Volunteer Mothers to attend & providing a forum to discuss & solve problems
- Enhance teamwork amongst the Volunteer Mothers

Training topics include:

- **Childcare**: Stimulation at home, communication techniques, positive discipline
- **Health**: nutrition, malaria prevention, oral hygiene
- **Empowerment & life skills**: self-esteem to improve Volunteers' wellbeing, financial management, energy-efficient stoves
Improving health through health education

The Need:

Poor Sanitation & Hygiene

Water-related diseases, particularly diarrheal diseases, arising from poor sanitation & hygiene are prevalent.

- In our sample, 11% of households report at least one incidence of malaria & 25% at least one incidence of diarrhea in the preceding month.
- 64% of Volunteer Mothers have had no child health training
- 74% feel they have a low or very low understanding of disease prevention.

Handwashing is one of the most effective means of preventing diarrhoeal diseases and is free. But hand-washing is not widely practiced...

Our Solution:
Incorporate hand-washing practices into the Play Centre & Reading Scheme

- Teach Volunteer Mothers & Readers how to make & use *tippy-taps* at the Play Centres, Reading Schemes and in their homes.
- Compulsory *handwashing* prior to starting the Play/Reading session.
- Associating handwashing with an enjoyable activity *habituates children* & the Volunteer Mothers to this vital practice.
- Parenting workshops include *health training* – nutrition, oral hygiene, & malaria prevention
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>What We Do</th>
<th>How it works</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empower caregivers to improve ECCE</td>
<td>Train mothers to run a <strong>Play Centre</strong> as volunteers (‘Volunteer Mothers’) &amp; use local resources to stimulate children at home</td>
<td>Volunteer Mothers run Play Centre for all KG children</td>
<td>Improved cognitive &amp; socio-emotional skills</td>
<td><strong>School readiness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten &amp; Primary</td>
<td><strong>Train teachers</strong> in child-friendly teaching methods &amp; quality control</td>
<td>Volunteer Mothers make games &amp; provide cognitive stimulation at home</td>
<td>Improved capacities of Volunteer Mothers and teachers</td>
<td><strong>Parental &amp; community involvement</strong> in children’s education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve KG teaching</td>
<td>Train all P5&amp;P6 pupils (‘Readers’) to run a <strong>Reading Scheme</strong></td>
<td>Teachers implement training in class &amp; supervise Play Centre &amp; Reading Scheme</td>
<td><strong>Empowerment &amp; improved self-esteem of Volunteer Mothers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Confident children, mothers &amp; teachers with good aspirations for the future</strong></td>
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<td>Activity-based learning</td>
<td><strong>Health, hygiene &amp; nutrition training</strong> for Volunteer Mothers &amp; Readers</td>
<td>‘Readers’ run Reading Scheme for all P1 &amp; P2 (‘Listeners’)</td>
<td>Creative &amp; child-friendly teaching widely practised at home &amp; in school</td>
<td><strong>Improved school attendance</strong></td>
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<td>Creative &amp; local learning resources</td>
<td><strong>Monitor &amp; support</strong></td>
<td>Volunteer Mothers &amp; children use tippy-taps for hand-washing</td>
<td>Increased reading level, comprehension &amp; confidence of ‘Readers’</td>
<td><strong>Improved academic achievement</strong> across disciplines</td>
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<td>Community engagement</td>
<td><strong>Improved health, hygiene &amp; nutrition</strong> for Volunteer Mothers &amp; Readers</td>
<td>Volunteers Mothers implement health practices at home</td>
<td>Increased listening skills &amp; comprehension of ‘Listeners’</td>
<td><strong>Healthy children &amp; families</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td><strong>Greater aspirations of parents for themselves &amp; their children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Improved health &amp; reduced incidence of disease</strong></td>
<td><strong>Brighter futures!</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve KG teaching</td>
<td><strong>Stimulating &amp; child-friendly activities at home</strong></td>
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Positive Impact
Improvement in KG Children’s Cognitive Skills

Child Cognitive Assessment
Basic cognitive tests with 442 children aged 3-9 years (mean age 4.9) across 13 communities carried out at baseline, 3 & 6 months.

Correct answers increased by 43% after 6 months of attending Play Centres. (statistically significant changes at \( p < .001 \) controlling for age)

### Cognitive Scores by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>No. of children</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>6 months</th>
<th>% improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Child Cognitive Test Scores

![Chart showing improvement in cognitive test scores from baseline to 3 months and 6 months.]

### Teacher Feedback

34 teachers (15 schools)

Teachers report ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ improvement in cognitive skills since the Play Centre started:

- Numbers/counting (82%)
- Language (68%)
- Problem solving (56%)
- Concentration/attention (70%)

New assessment: Semantic knowledge, sorting skills, working memory, & self-monitoring adapted from standardised neuropsychological measures (incl. NEPSY-II)
Volunteer Mothers’ Focus Groups
Four focus groups held with 35 volunteers (across 4 communities) report:

**Improved thinking skills & knowledge** in the children attending the Play Centre.

‘Some time ago, children didn’t even know the name of colours... how to count from 1 up to 10... even the names of some animals. ...And now they know what it is. They can mention, this is red, this is yellow, and this is green...they can count.... and they know the names of such animals.’
Play Centre Volunteer Mother

These new skills have **benefitted home life**

‘We used to send our children and the children would become confused because they didn’t know what to think. Now we use colours to describe things. And we say “Go into the room and bring the white container that contains salt...”. And the child goes in and gets it’
Play Centre Volunteer Mother

**Improved social behaviour & a closer mother-child relationship**

‘Because Lively Minds came with a programme, teaching us how to handle our kids, now the children don’t become confused. We send them with patience and we interact with them. And now the children also love to come closer to us, and any time the children are closer, we also teach them. And [because of this] our lives have changed in our households.’
Play Centre Volunteer Mother

**Teacher Questionnaires**
Teachers report ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ improvement in:-

- Children’s mood (85%)
- Confidence (75%)
- Social behaviour (88%)
**Reading Ability Assessment**
108 ‘Readers’ from P5 & P6 at 6 schools (aged 8-18 years; mean = 11.73 years)

**Baseline**
- 40% of children could not read 4 or more words correctly
- Only 3% could read a short story & answer a simple question about the story

**6 months after the Reading Scheme**
- 85% could now read 4 words correctly
- 65% had advanced their reading ability by one level or more

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**Improvement in Reading Ability Levels**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>6 months</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story &amp; Question</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Teacher Questionnaires**
17 teachers (across 8 schools)

88% of teachers report a good or excellent improvement in reading skills for Readers participating in the Reading Scheme.

88% of teachers report a good or excellent improvement in school attendance for both Readers and Listeners.
**Feedback from Readers**

108 ‘Readers’ from P5 & P6 at 6 schools (aged 8-18 years; mean = 11.73 years)

Feel less shy talking in class, can teach younger children, and that they will go to Junior High School.

Readers said that the Reading Scheme has improved their reading & their ability to tell stories.

Readers expressed their interest in the Reading Scheme and a new interest in reading, and said that it had made them feel happy.

The Readers also said that the Reading Scheme has been beneficial to their learning in general, across other lessons.

"**It makes us understand what we are taught now [in other lessons]**”

Reading Scheme ‘Reader’

"[Learning to be a Reader] was interesting... It made us happy" Reading Scheme ‘Reader’

"I didn’t have an interest in reading, but now I have changed... I am now getting interested in reading.” Reading Scheme ‘Reader’

"I didn’t know how to tell stories, and now I can tell stories nicely... We have now learnt how to tell stories in different forms.” Reading Scheme ‘Reader’
Volunteer Mothers provide **82% more cognitive stimulation** and **play activities** with children in the home after just 3 months of running the Play Centre.

Volunteers' Report of Home-Based Child Stimulation

![Graph showing improvement in child stimulation activities over 3 months](image)
After 6 months the Volunteer Mothers report **improved confidence & self-esteem** (153 Volunteer Mothers). Volunteer Mothers also said they now have **pride** in their work and their children’s learning, and felt **respected in the community**.

Volunteer Mothers said that their **mood has improved** & explained that this has the additional benefit of an **improved relationship with their children**.

‘*Now, I can even boast that I can identify [numbers] and most of my colleagues can even count up to 10. So if this is not a benefit, what else would you call benefits of the programme?!*’
Play Centre Volunteer Mother

‘*I am now very respected... It makes me happy because my name is being promoted by saying “oh she’s a teacher”.*’
Play Centre Volunteer Mother

‘*Our children didn’t like coming close to us because we were always angry at them and we were impatient talking with them. But now, we are very happy...*’
Play Centre Volunteer Mother

‘*We know that our children are happy and the children know their parents are happy*’

‘*Now we are bold enough... we all have the self-esteem*’
Play Centre Volunteer Mother

![Volunteer Mothers' Improved Wellbeing](chart.png)
Volunteer Mothers show a **new understanding of the causes of diseases** & that they themselves and the children have **learnt how to prevent disease** through personal hygiene, in particular, the use of tippy taps for hand-washing.

Volunteer Mothers’ reported understanding of diarrhoea prevention increased from **11% to 68%** & from **14% to 61%** for malaria prevention after 6 months.

‘**We have now also learnt personal hygiene, with ourselves and with the children...We have also learnt how to prevent ourselves from Malaria**’

Play Centre Volunteer Mother

**Reduced Incidence of Disease**

**Hand-washing has become a habit** for themselves and their children, at school and at home.

‘**We didn’t know that after the toilet, you have to wash your hands. Now we have the tippy taps mounted in front of our house and we step on it and put ash in our hands and wash before we even get in to the compound to start our work.**’

Play Centre Volunteer Mother

Children and Play Centre Volunteer Mothers learn to use tippy- taps to wash their hands

Volunteer Mothers report **reduced incidences of ‘sickness’, stomach pain, diarrhoea, malaria & cholera** in their households.

‘**The children used to vomit and run diarrhoea a lot, but through the programme, it is a thing of the past. Now, the programme has helped us a lot and now those things are over.**’

Play Centre Volunteer Mother
Teachers report improved ‘pupil, teacher, and parent relationship’ and the improved ‘teamwork’ from all involved.

‘It has enabled the school to get community members involved in the school activities to champion the course of education. This has also increased the enrolment at the KG level’
School Teacher

Teachers feel that the Volunteer Mothers, now have an understanding of the challenges facing schools and help by becoming good teachers themselves.

‘[Now there is] empathy on the part of the Volunteers about school cover’
School Teacher

“Both projects help raise pupil attendance in school. The children are very happy with the programmes and this gives them more encouragement to come to school. They know the days of the projects and rush to school so I have noticed an improvement in school attendance. This also helps us the teachers.

The mothers volunteer to teach the kindergarten pupils at the Play Centre. This has helped the parents see the importance of education. The mothers are very happy to be involved with the schools. It is not easy for them, as they have to take time away from the daily tasks of fetching water, or farming and income-generating activities like harvesting shea nuts. But they do come to the school to teach because they value it.”
Head Teacher
Benefits of Our Approach

- Holistic
- Activity-based
- Community-run
- Sustainable
- Local resources
- Capacity-building
- Wide-reaching
- Scalable
Scale to 500 public KGs and Primary Schools in 5 years in Northern & Upper East (20% total schools)

• RCT (with IPA, IFS) to measure effectiveness and feasibility for future scaling

• Explore various pathways to scale, including:-
  ➢ Teacher-run model (training of trainers)
  ➢ Strategic partnerships
  ➢ Social franchising
  ➢ Unbundle & scale components of the programme
  ➢ Direct expansion

• Pilot a pre-school Play Centre for 3 year old children
  ➢ Prepare 3 year olds for KG & reduce the problem of underage children in KG (this places pressure on class sizes & teacher management)

• Working together - share experiences and disseminate results

* Holistic * Activity-based * Community * Sustainable * Local resources * Capacity-building * Wide-reaching * Scalable *
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