

Observation Guide: Play setting

Sample

Observation ID#:		Settlement/region:	
Date of observation		Length of observation:	
Observer Initials:		Time of observation	

Information for observer

Objective

A key objective of PlayMatters is to incorporate playful learning into the regular interactions between children and the adults that support them, including teachers, parents, caregivers, and humanitarian practitioners. We aim to unpack the motivations, social norms, and constraints that impact the ability of these key support networks to engage in playful interaction. We can then draw on behavioural science to design solutions that respond to the specific needs of local communities.

The objectives of **observations in play settings** are to better understand: 1) how children play in target communities, 2) how children use the physical landscape as part of play, and 3) how children learn from their play, (4) who children play with, and (5) potential touchpoints for intervention.

What is an observation?

An observation involves an observer watching a particular setting and, when appropriate, participating in an activity. For the purposes of this observation, you will take the role of an '**observer as participant**', which means you will observe (in a non-disruptive way) but may sometimes engage in activities (at a safe distance). For example, you may respond to questions, engage in conversation or engage in some activities, only if it is safe to do so and if you are asked to join.

Observations can provide explanations for patterns and differences that cannot be captured through an interview, focus group, or quantitative observation. Observations are appropriate when we need to understand people's interactions within an environment or physical context (use of space, or equipment); subconscious actions or behaviour seems so everyday or 'normal' that participants find it hard to convey in words; social norms or pressures to conform with expected behaviours.

Any observations and photos taken should be aligned with IRC's Safeguarding Policies.

Location

This guide is for an observation in a **play setting**. This is defined as a space where children gather to play, and could include:

- Space outside a church or mosque
- Water point
- Market
- Health facility play space
- Youth centre
- Women's centre
- CFS (Child Friendly space)
- Outdoor play field
- School playgrounds
- Homestead compounds or yards

The site that you select for your observation will depend on availability of access, site permissions and whether this site is used by children. In addition to permission at a site level to conduct qualitative activities, facilitators must have permission to conduct observations from individuals who manage these settings. Once a suitable site has been identified, the researcher must gain consent to use the location for an observation from a relevant authority. We provide a script to guide this discussion.

Time allowance

Observations should take place during peak play times, if possible (for example, mid morning or after school). An observation in a play-based environment should take between 45 minutes and 1 hour. We would not advise that facilitators conduct more than 4 observations in one day.

COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 include a temperature, continuous cough, and a loss or change in your sense of taste or smell. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you **must not** conduct an observation. Your related incentives or future participation will not be affected if you need to stay home because of potential COVID-19 symptoms. If you are well and able to conduct an observation, it is vital you protect yourself and your participants from potential transmission. You must:

1. Only conduct observations in well ventilated, or outside environments.
2. Stay two metres away (or three big steps) from your participants at all times.
3. Wear a face covering or mask that fully covers your mouth and nose.
4. Refrain from any physical touch.
5. Wash or sanitise your hands before and after the observation.
6. Comply with temperature checks at entry points before conducting any observation.

How to use this guide

In this document, we provide an empty observation guide for you to fill out as you conduct an observation. Where possible, you should try to make notes to record what you observe. Your notes should focus on the aims and central research questions, be as inclusive as possible, and seek to document as much as possible. Rather than making highly summarised notes, it might be more helpful to write down something a participant said to you as close to verbatim as possible or describe in detail what they do.

The observation guide is split into two columns. On the left hand side, you will find information for you as a facilitator. On the right hand side, you should record your notes. The **bolded text** includes instructions for you as a facilitator. The plain text includes questions for you as a facilitator. You should record your response in the accompanying box.

Consent procedure

Consent from relevant authority / manager

You should have the consent to conduct an observation from the person who manages the site.

Script to read to relevant authority / manager

PlayMatters is a consortium of organisations, including Plan International, Innovations for Poverty Action, the International Rescue Committee, The Behavioural Insights Team, and Warchild Holland. Today, I represent PlayMatters for [Plan International / IRC / Warchild Holland] as an enumerator.

[Plan International / IRC / Warchild Holland] is conducting observations in the local community to understand how children play and learn in this context. Learning from the observations will help us develop interventions that encourage playful learning among refugee and host community children. For instance, we might use what we learn during our observations, in order to develop a new toy or song to help children learn to count. We have identified [name of site] as a potential observation site because children frequently play here and by learning how children play here, we can create better interventions for children like them. During the observation, I will watch

children and others interact with each other and the environment around them. I will record notes based on what I see, and nothing else. The observation should last no more than one hour in total.

The Behavioural Insights Team is a social purpose organisation that exists to improve people's lives and communities. My notes will be analysed by their staff, and will be used to inform a report for the other organisations in the consortium. This report will share some information about the behaviour of people in this space, but it will not share names or add any information that people could use to identify anyone.

I will wear a mask and keep a distance from others to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. I will sanitize or wash my hands before the observation and once the observation has ended.

There is no obligation for you to accept the observation in this location. If you do not want [Plan International / IRC / IPA / Warchild Holland] to conduct an observation in [name of site] you can decline, and the observation will not go ahead.

If the observation goes ahead, and you change your mind, you can contact [name of contact], and we will make sure the data from this site is removed from the analysis.

Now I will read out a few questions to you. Please answer yes or no to each.

[pause for participant to say yes/ no after each question]

- A. Has the consent statement, that is the explanation I just gave you, been read to you and do you understand what will happen if you agree that we may conduct an observation in [name of site]?
- B. Have you been able to ask any questions you might have?
- C. Do you understand you can choose to end the observation at any time, without giving a reason?
- D. Do you agree that we may enter [name of site] and record notes based on what we see?
- E. Do you agree that [IRC/ Warchild/ Plan] may securely store the notes from this interview and share them with the Behavioural Insights Team?
- F. Do you agree that the Behavioural Insights Team may securely store the notes and analyse them?

- G. Do you understand that you can ask us to remove this observation from the data set after it has taken place, so it will not be analysed?
- H. Do you agree to the information gained from the observation being published in a report that will be shared within the PlayMatters consortium?

[Only continue if manager has answered 'yes' to all questions]

In some cases, we may like to take photos at this location, which may include children playing. These photos will only be used for internal purposes by the consortium partners to recall and review the site and activities that we may observe. They will never be shared externally, and they will be deleted after 2 years. There is no obligation to agree and you can choose to ask us to remove any photos after the observation has taken place, so the photos will be deleted and will not be included. Do you agree to having photos of this location, including of the children playing here, taken by [Plan International / IRC / IPA / Warchild Holland]?

[You may take pictures only if the manager has answered 'yes' to the above question]

Informed consent from caregivers

Where possible, you should have the consent of the caregivers of children who congregate in this space, and the consent of the facilitator in charge of facilitating activities in the space.

Script for caregivers

PlayMatters is a consortium of organisations, including Plan International, Innovations for Poverty Action, the International Rescue Committee, The Behavioural Insights Team, and Warchild Holland. Today, I represent PlayMatters for [Plan International / IRC / Warchild Holland] as an enumerator.

[Plan International / IRC / Warchild Holland] is conducting observations in the local community to understand how children play and

learn in this context. Learning from the observations will help us develop interventions that encourage playful learning among refugee and host community children. For instance, we might use what we learn during our observations, in order to develop a new toy or song to help children learn to count. We have identified [name of site] as a potential observation site because children frequently play here and by learning how children play here, we can create better interventions for children like them. During the observation, I will watch children and others interact with each other and the environment around them. I will record notes based on what I see, and nothing else. The observation should last no more than one hour in total.

The Behavioural Insights Team is a social purpose organisation that exists to improve people's lives and communities. My notes will be analysed by their staff, and will be used to inform a report for the other organisations in the consortium. This report will share some information about the behaviour of people in this space, but it will not share names or add any information that people could use to identify anyone.

I will wear a mask and keep a distance from others to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. I will sanitize or wash my hands before the observation and once the observation has ended.

There is no obligation for you to accept the observation in this location. If you do not want [Plan International / IRC / IPA / Warchild Holland] to conduct an observation in [name of site] you can decline, and the observation will not go ahead.

If the observation goes ahead, and you change your mind, you can contact [name of contact], and we will make sure the data from this site is removed from the analysis.

Now I will read out a few questions to you. Please answer yes or no to each.

[pause for participant to say yes/ no after each question]

- I. Has the consent statement, that is the explanation I just gave you, been read to you and do you understand what will happen if you agree that we may conduct an observation in [name of site]?
- J. Have you been able to ask any questions you might have?
- K. Do you understand you can choose to end the observation at any time, without giving a reason?
- L. Do you agree that we may enter [name of site] and record notes based on what we see?

- M. Do you agree that [IRC/ Warchild/ Plan] may securely store the notes from this interview and share them with the Behavioural Insights Team?
- N. Do you agree that the Behavioural Insights Team may securely store the notes and analyse them?
- O. Do you understand that you can ask us to remove this observation from the data set after it has taken place, so it will not be analysed?
- P. Do you agree to the information gained from the observation being published in a report that will be shared within the PlayMatters consortium?

[Only continue if manager has answered 'yes' to all questions]

In some cases, we may like to take photos at this location, which may include children playing. These photos will only be used for internal purposes by the consortium partners to recall and review the site and activities that we may observe. They will never be shared externally, and they will be deleted after 2 years. There is no obligation to agree and you can choose to ask us to remove any photos after the observation has taken place, so the photos will be deleted and will not be included. Do you agree to having photos of this location, including of the children playing here, taken by [Plan International / IRC / IPA / Warchild Holland]?

[You may take pictures only if the manager has answered 'yes' to the above question]

Assent from children/informing other participants

You should be open with those around you and explain why you are interested in what they are doing in the space. You should ask for the assent (using the script below) of any children who appear to be over 7 years old. You should let them know that you can stop the observation if they feel uncomfortable.

Script to read to children (over 7 years old) to get assent for photos

I am observing how you use this space so I can understand how to make it better. We are working on a project to improve learning among kids, from ages 3-12. Our goal is to understand how children are currently learning and playing, and if there are things we can do to help make sure you are learning and growing in a fun way! We have identified [name of site] as a potential observation site because children like you frequently play here. During the observation, I will watch you, other children and adults interact with each other and the environment around them. I record notes based on what I see, and nothing else.

If you agree, I would like to observe the way you, adults and other children in this area and if you also agree, to take some photos of this area. You might be in those pictures, while you are here. Any notes I take or photos I take will give us will help us understand how children like you play in areas like this.

Do you agree to participate and be part of the observations I make?

Do you agree to me taking some photos of this area while you are here, and that you might be included in some of these photos?

If anyone feels uncomfortable and wants me to stop observing or stop taking photos, then I will. You can tell me, or signal to me, at any time. If you ask me to do so, any of my notes or photos I have taken will be destroyed and they will not be analysed by us. I will then leave the area.

Script to read to relevant authority / manager

I am observing how you use this space so I can understand how to make it better. I am working for **[name of organisation]** as part of a big project called 'PlayMatters'. We are working to see how we can encourage children to play in this community. We have identified **[name of site]** as a potential observation site because children frequently play here. During the observation, I will watch children and adults interact with each other and the environment around them. I record notes based on what I see, and nothing else.

These notes will be analysed by a researcher at the Behavioural Insights Team, and will be used to help write a report. This report will share some information about the behaviour of people in this space, but BIT will not share names or add any information that people could use to identify anyone.

If anyone feels uncomfortable and wants me to stop observing, then I will. You can tell me, or signal this, at any time. The notes I have made will be destroyed and they will not be analysed by the Behavioural Insights Team. I will then leave the area.

Observation guide

Aims

To understand:

1. How children play in target communities
2. How children use the physical landscape in play
3. How children learn from their play
4. Potential touchpoints for an intervention

1. What is your location?

- Space outside home
- Space outside a church or mosque
- Water point
- Market
- Health facility play space
- Youth centre
- Women's centre
- Food distribution sites
- Child Friendly Space; if so, which organization manages it: _____
- Other, please state: _____

<p>2. What time is it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Early morning (06.00-09.00) <input type="checkbox"/> Morning (9.00-12.00) <input type="checkbox"/> Early afternoon (12.00-15.00) <input type="checkbox"/> Late afternoon (15.00-18.00) <input type="checkbox"/> Evening (18.00 - 21.00) <input type="checkbox"/> Night (21.00 - 06.00)
<p>3. How would you describe the location?</p>	<p>Is the space outdoors, inside a building, or sheltered (partially covered)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors <input type="checkbox"/> Inside (completely covered) <input type="checkbox"/> Sheltered (partially covered) <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state: _____ <p>Is the space enclosed (i.e. circled by a fence), or open (i.e. people can freely walk in and out)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed <input type="checkbox"/> Open <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state: _____ <p>What is the ground like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Dirt <input type="checkbox"/> Grass <input type="checkbox"/> Sand <input type="checkbox"/> Paved <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state: _____

	<p>What physical features are there?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hill / ramp <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetation <input type="checkbox"/> Shaded areas <input type="checkbox"/> Large waste (tyres, bricks, plastic material, cloth or metal) <input type="checkbox"/> Small waste or litter (bottles, packaging, glass) <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state: _____ <p>Other observations:</p>
<p>4. Draw a picture of the space you are observing (or if you got consent for photos, take a</p>	<p>If you have consent for photos, take a photo of the space and save it so it can be uploaded with these notes.</p> <p>If you did not get consent for photos, draw a picture of the space you are observing in this box. To do this, imagine that you are looking at the observation site from above. What would it look like?</p>

photo of the
space.)

5. How would you describe the people who are here?

What kind of people are here? Tick all that apply.

- Children
- Caregivers
- Community leaders
- Teachers / ECD
- Other, please state: _____

Approximately how many adults are here?

- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 50+

Approximately how many children are here?

- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 50+

Approximately how old are the children that are here? Tick all that apply.

- Early years (3-6 years old)
- Lower primary (7-10 years old)
- Upper primary (11-14 years old)
- Adolescents (14+ years old)

When playing, children tend to interact in small groups of 3-10 people. How many groups of children can you see interacting with one another?

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10+

What languages are spoken? Please note down all the languages you hear.

Are children mostly interacting with children from their same community (same ethnic background) or from different communities (i.e. different ethnic backgrounds) interacting together?

- Children interacting mostly with other children from *same* community (same ethnic backgrounds)
- Children interacting mostly with other children from *different* communities (different ethnic backgrounds)
 - Please write down the different tribes/ethnic groups you can identify:

<p>6. What are the children doing in this space?</p>	<p>How are the children interacting with one another? Please include all the activities you see children doing, and add any other observations.</p> <p>For any activity you observe, write down if there are more boys or girls participating, or if adults are participating.</p> <p>Pretend play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Role play (pretending to be someone or something else) <input type="checkbox"/> Shooting game <input type="checkbox"/> Mimicry (copying one another) <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state: _____ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> More girl children participating <input type="checkbox"/> More boy children participating <input type="checkbox"/> Adults participating <p>Social play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Talking in a group (< 5 children) <input type="checkbox"/> Talking in a large groups (> 5 children) <input type="checkbox"/> Resting / sleeping <input type="checkbox"/> Braiding/brushing hair

- Collecting and sharing items
- Other, please state: _____
 - More girl children participating
 - More boy children participating
 - Adults participating

Creative play

- Drawing / painting
- Building or sculpting
- Making a shelter
- Dancing
- Singing
- Writing
- Storytelling
- Making music
- Other, please state: _____
 - More girl children participating
 - More boy children participating
 - Adults participating

Competitive play

- Chasing
- Hiding
- Fighting
- Ball game / sports

- Racing
- Other, please state: _____
 - More girl children participating
 - More boy children participating
 - Adults participating

Active play

- Running
- Skipping
- Hitting object
- Throwing object
- Cycling / skating
- Jumping
- Carrying one another
- Climbing
- Other, please state: _____
 - More girl children participating
 - More boy children participating
 - Adults participating

Schoolwork

- Reading
- Writing
- Arithmetic / maths
- Other, please state: _____

- More girl children participating
- More boy children participating
- Adults participating

Chores

- Cleaning
- Fixing fences
- Fixing gardens
- Carrying bricks
- Other, please state: _____
 - More girl children participating
 - More boy children participating
 - Adults participating

Technology

- Playing with a mobile phone
- Listening to spoken radio
- Listening to music
- Watching television
- Playing with tablet
- Other, please state: _____
 - More girl children participating
 - More boy children participating
 - Adults participating

Local games

Please write what type of game(s) they are _____

Please write the name of the game(s), if known: _____

- More girl children participating
- More boy children participating
- Adults participating

For any others not listed above, please state type of activity here _____

Other observations:

7. How are the children interacting?

What physical objects are the children interacting with?

- Sand
- Plastic bottles
- Fabric
- Toys
- Tyres
- Shelter
- Sticks
- Stones
- Rope
- Balls
- Repurposed items/handmade toys please state _____
- Other, please state _____

How are the children communicating with each other?

- Shouting
- Laughing
- Crying
- Pointing
- Signing
- Dancing
- Singing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Clapping <input type="checkbox"/> Whispering <input type="checkbox"/> Talking <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting <input type="checkbox"/> Hitting <input type="checkbox"/> Teasing or mocking <input type="checkbox"/> Other please state: _____ <p>Are there any children who are unable to play?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, some children are unable to play. I think this is because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> They have a disability <input type="checkbox"/> Other reason, please state: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No, all children here can play. <p>Other observations</p>
<p>8. How are the adults behaving?</p>	<p>If you see adults, what are they doing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing a baby <input type="checkbox"/> Resting <input type="checkbox"/> Interacting with children <input type="checkbox"/> Watching over <input type="checkbox"/> Chores (i.e. washing)

- Walking by
- Shopping
- Working
- Other, please state _____

How engaged, or disengaged, do you think the adults are with the children?

- Strongly engaged (i.e. talking or holding children)
- Somewhat engaged (i.e. doing another activity with occasional engagement with children)
- Somewhat disengaged (i.e. looking over the children)
- Very disengaged (i.e. doing another activity)

Are adults interacting with the children? If so, what are they doing?

- They're not interacting with the children
- Physically supporting children (i.e. helping a child to walk, carrying a baby)
- Monitoring the play (i.e. watching over the play)
- Rewarding children (i.e. giving praise or prizes)
- Teaching (i.e. explaining rules)
- Playing with children (i.e. as a participant)
- Scolding the children (i.e. shouting)
- Other, please state _____

If you see any adults scolding or punishing children, can you describe any details about what type of punishment or scolding was given to the child and why?

	Other observations:
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