

The Opentree Foundation's Play Programmes Update Report for April to June 2025

When Children Reimagine Play, Possibilities Multiply

In learning environments focused on “fixed” answers, learning through play brings back the joy of asking “what if?”—and in doing so, helps children become thinkers, collaborators, and creators.

A recent Grade 5 play session at R.H. Kate English School in Chembur demonstrated this powerfully. After a quick pep-up activity, each group received a different board game. One group began playing Plot 4, a strategic token-drop game where two teams compete to make a line of four.



After the first round, the OPW asked a simple question: “**What if you played the game your way? With your own rules?**”

This one question unlocked **agency, imagination, and collaboration**—qualities often overlooked in conventional classroom settings. In minutes, a standard board game became an evolving, co-created experience, with children inventing rules, challenging each other, and sparking joy in learning.

One child suggested a new twist—before placing a token, players had to answer a general knowledge question asked by the opposing team. The others loved the idea and quickly agreed. The rules were made and remade by the children themselves, a powerful example of real-time lateral thinking, problem-solving, peer learning and empathy.

What followed was a series of playful, collaborative rounds. Children quizzed each other, debated answers, offered hints, and cheered one another on. Some responded quickly, others took their time. But every child was fully engaged throughout. The classroom was buzzing with laughter, discussion and teamwork.

Through our play sessions, we bring alive NEP 2020’s vision for each of the 1,50,000 children we work with - learning that expands through experience and imagination, where children don’t just absorb knowledge—they shape it, question it, and play with it.

- **Story from R.H. Kate English School, Play Centre MU. 352**

Key Updates from April 2025 to June 2025

1. Capacity Building Trainings for the Team

As part of the 'Playworkers Unnati Workshop Series' and in preparation for the new academic year, we conducted a series of training sessions for the Programme Outreach team, serving as both onboarding for new members and refresher training for existing Outreach Playworkers (OPWs). The objective was to equip the team to effectively deliver the programme throughout the year, while aligning them with the organisation's vision of integrating PLAY-based methodologies into classroom learning. The sessions also focused on helping the team adopt playful approaches to engage with children and build their capacities in areas such as playful facilitation, classroom and behaviour management, observing play, communication, and volunteer engagement.



TOF's Outreach Playworkers attend a series of workshops designed for them in preparation for the year ahead

2. On-ground Play Sessions

Play is the primary way in which children explore a world that is not in their control. TOF's Play centres are safe spaces for children to explore and engage in developmentally-appropriate play sessions. The play sessions are typically hour-long and begin with pep-up, fun and movement-based activities and are aimed at starting the session on a joyful note. This is followed by children engaging in carefully-curated and strategically chosen games and play-based materials. Our OPWs and teachers - Play Centre Facilitators (PCFs) support children to understand the games, learn through them, work in groups, help them think independently and more. The play session ends with another pep-up, in addition to children sharing what they liked the most about the day's play session and what they learned. These play sessions are conducted with children between 3 to 13 years at schools.

From April 25' to June 25', the Programme team members and PCFs conducted **1,584 Play Sessions** across Maharashtra.



Groups of Children engage with carefully curated board games that support in building essential life skills during Play Sessions

3. Transformative 'Power of Play' Workshops for Play Centre Facilitators (PCF):

On-ground training sessions were conducted with the school teachers (PCFs) to make them aware and knowledgeable about play-based learning and re-orient them on TOF's play programmes. These training sessions help them understand the impact of developmentally appropriate play on the childhood to adulthood outcomes in children. They are trained on new games and how to effectively use them in classrooms, as part of their daily teaching, in order to build a healthy and stronger student-teacher bond.

Our Programme Team conducted 8 'Power of Play' workshops training 68 Play Centre Facilitators of Maharashtra during this period.



Teachers from different Play centres participated in the activities, played games during the training sessions.

4. Replacement of Games:

The programme team conducts stock and quality checks at the Play centres to identify the status of games. The team ensures that children have access to not just age-appropriate and category-wise games, but also that these games are in good condition. Upon identification of the need, new games were sent to the play centres. **During April to June 2025, over 3700+ games were delivered across TOF's play centres during this period, with game materials replenished at 55 centres.**



TOF's programme team conducts frequent stock checks to ensure appropriate and quality games are accessible to children.

5. Volunteer Engagement

Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting the TOF team to ensure children continue to learn through play. The volunteers supported us with on-ground Play sessions at TOF's Play centres providing support to our OPWs in classroom management and increasing the student engagement with Play.

Total number of Volunteers engaged during this period: 21



Volunteers join our team on field to support in classroom management and engage with children during play sessions

Additional Activities:

International Day of Play Global Roundtable: “Choose Play, Everyday”:

To celebrate International Day of Play, we organised a [Global Roundtable](#) on June 11th. The Roundtable featured powerful insights from our panelists Dr. Sarah Aiono (Longworth Education), Tia Mathisen (Playworks), Ingrid Srinath (Resource Alliance) and Shweta Chari (The Opentree Foundation) where they discussed the urgent need to embed play in education systems, public policy, and community spaces, and to reframe play as a Right for every child. This roundtable, moderated by Smarinita Shetty (Indian Development Review) was attended by over 200 participants who were reminded of the importance of building a world where every child’s right to play is protected, practiced and prioritised.



International Day of Play Global Roundtable: Choose Play, Everyday organised to discuss children's fundamental Right to Play

Rebuilding Childhoods through Play

Investing in play is one of the most powerful ways to make mental well-being and learning truly accessible for children at-risk. With your support, over **1,50,000 children** can continue to **learn joyfully, grow confidently, and reclaim their right to a happy childhood.**

Thank you for being a part of the Play movement!