

What the BBC visit to Lively Minds taught us about the Future of Early Learning

In 2025, the BBC World Service selected Lively Minds as a featured case study for its *People Fixing the World* series, highlighting our work with governments to activate parents in rural communities as the first and most powerful educators of their children.

Several months on, their visit to Boufforkrum Kindergarten in Sunyani West still offers important lessons for anyone serious about fixing the foundational early learning crisis – not only in Ghana, but across low- and middle-income countries.

The BBC came to learn what it looks like when a simple, evidence-based idea is embedded into a national system and owned by communities. **In fact, the GES-LM programme has now fully transitioned to Ghana Education Services delivery and ownership – an extraordinary achievement.**

What the BBC observed confirmed five important facts.

Parents are not the problem. They are the solution.

At Boufforkrum, the BBC team watched mothers lead playful, structured learning activities using nothing more than everyday household objects.

What stood out was not just the joy in the room. It was the confidence, ownership, and skill the parents demonstrated.

One mother told the team:

“The whole world will now hear about us.”

Behind that pride is something deeper: when parents are trusted, trained, and supported, they become the most scalable workforce for early childhood development.

This is the core of the Lively Minds model.

Play is not a ‘nice-to-have’. It is how young children learn.

The BBC team came specifically to explore how play is integrated into daily routines through the GES–Lively Minds programme.





What they saw was not unstructured play, but purposeful, curriculum-linked, developmentally appropriate learning happening through games, songs, storytelling, and conversation.

This matters because across many systems, play is still misunderstood as 'extra' or 'optional'.

The evidence and what the BBC witnessed, shows the opposite:

Play is the most powerful and cost-effective delivery mechanism for early learning in the early years.

Scale happens through systems, not projects.

A crucial reason the BBC selected Lively Minds is not just *what* we do, but *how* we do it.

The programme is:

- Delivered through Ghana Education Service
- Implemented by existing government structures
- And owned by schools, districts, and communities

During the visit, the BBC spoke not only to parents and teachers, but also to district and regional education officials, who described how the programme is strengthening school readiness, family engagement, and classroom participation.

This is what system change looks like in practice.

Recognition matters - especially for rural parents.

One of the most striking moments from the visit was the emotional response of parents to being seen, heard, and taken seriously.

Their excitement was not about the BBC itself. It was about being recognised as educators.

In many rural communities, parents, especially mothers, are rarely positioned as capable partners in their children's learning. The Lively Minds model flips that narrative.

And when that happens, participation, consistency, and quality follow.

Simple ideas, well implemented, can reach everyone.





The BBC team were struck by how ordinary objects: cups, spoons, sticks, flour, became powerful learning tools.

This is the careful design of the Lively Minds approach. Everyday activities and routines provide enormous opportunities for learning and change.

Scalable solutions must be simple, affordable, and usable in real homes, not dependent on expensive materials or specialist infrastructure.

That is why this approach works in rural Ghana, and why it is now being adapted by governments in other countries too.

Why this matters beyond Ghana

The BBC did not feature Lively Minds because it is a 'nice story'. They featured it because it points to a globally relevant answer to a global problem:

How do we improve early learning outcomes at scale, with limited resources, inside real public systems?

The answer is not more pilots. It is smarter system design that puts parents at the centre.

This is why we are now working with more governments with our new technical advisory service to help them achieve ECD change at scale – fast.

What's next

The *People Fixing the World* podcast episode will air in **March 2026**.

In the meantime, you can watch highlights from the visit



