Promoting children’s right to play using locally made playgrounds in Papua New Guinea and Tonga

Kym Simoncini, University of Canberra
Victoria Carr, University of Cincinnati
Elisapesi Manson, Pacific Adventist University
PNG school playgrounds
Problems with grassed areas

• Encourage competitive games like soccer and rugby

• Girls and physically less competent boys pushed to the sidelines

(Dyment, Bell & Lucas, 2009).
Recess policy

No playing allowed at recess and lunch because

• Children should sit quietly
• Children make too much noise when playing
• Children might hurt themselves
• There has been bullying
• They get sweaty and smelly
Few play resources available
1st playground site - PAU

- Primary school (Years 1 – 8) at Pacific Adventist University outside Port Moresby
- Demonstration playground site
- Large budget $US6000
- 3 week project – consultation, design and build
Playground site before development
Children’s ideas

• Younger children (Yr 1 – 6) were asked to draw pictures of themselves playing*
• Focus groups (Yr 3-6) with PNG preservice teachers asking what they played, where they played and what they wanted in the playground
• Older children (Yr 7 and 8) worked in groups to write down their favourite games, play activities, where they played
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Games</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tunnel</td>
<td>House house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyover</td>
<td>Capture the flag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide</td>
<td>Police and rascals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See-saw</td>
<td>Touch Peggy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell</td>
<td>Tin game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capture the flag</td>
<td>Mois Mois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bases</td>
<td>hide and seek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resting place</td>
<td>Goal to goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>Mr Wolf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandpit</td>
<td>Middle man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Jingle jungle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree house</td>
<td>Square ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monkey bar</td>
<td>Relay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community consultation

We also asked parents, teachers and community members about

• Their childhood play memories
• What they wanted in the playground
• Their concerns about the playground

• We presented the final design after church for feedback and further clarification
Community consultation in the school hall
Plan based on children’s ideas and topography
Pre-service teacher volunteers cutting tyres for the playground
170 parents and volunteers attended
Completed playground - official entrance to the playground. Student made rules.
Obstacle course made with old tyres and recycled timber
Man made hill for running and jumping with log bridge
Lollipop swing
Giant swing
Traditional house and vehicle for imagination games
Recycled ride on mower
Tyre motorbike
Giant sandpit
Natural climbing frame
Amphitheatre made with recycled water tank, steel, mangrove roots and tyres for seats
Giant slide
New ropes and shelter (older water cooler)
New climbing frame
Children’s voices

Is there anything else you would like to say about the playground? Yes

Some time I am happy to come to school because of the playground.

Year 5 girl (13 years)

Is the playground what you wanted? Why or why not? Yes because when

the playground was not yet made I was always left out.

Year 5 boy
Is there anything else you would like to say about the playground?

**Playground is good when we play on the. We make friends and now each other.**

Year 5 boy (15 years)

Is there anything else you would like to say about the playground?

**It's fun and enjoyable. It's fantastic. There's less bullying helps develop relationship with friends through conversation.**

Year 6 girl (13 years)
Children’s voices

Is there anything else you would like to say about the playground?

The playground makes most student who don’t come to school come and also helps people make friends.

Year 6 boy (12 years)

Is there anything else you would like to say about the playground?

The playground is a enjoyable place were we play, laugh, tell stories and play. So the only thing I’ll say is, it’s fun to play on it.

Year 6 girl (13 years)
Is there anything else you would like to say about the playground?

The playground is nice but Mrs. Kvany don't want us to play because we are big. And also we are not allowed to play on weekends. But overall the playground is good cause it make the small kids happy.

Is there anything else you would like to say about the playground? Well, it's fun to play on the play. I see a lot of kids always enjoy themselves when they play. And I think it has change there their lives.

Year 7 boy (13 years)  
Year 8 girl (15 years)
2\textsuperscript{nd} site playground – Sonoma

- Elementary and primary school (PreK – Year 8) at Sonoma College in East New Britain
- Much smaller budget $US750
- Handful of volunteers (education and building students)
- Intention was to built over a one school term (10 weeks)
Gully playground

Lower playground
- volcano
- running hill
- log
- tower with bridge
- planting
- climbing structure
- Madam Butterfly
- balance beams
- swing

Grove playground
- slide
- ropes
- amphitheatre
- tree deck with tunnel underneath
- sitting area
- sandpit
- market stalls
- PMV
- Haus Haus
- climbing tree
- drum
- tractor
- motorbikes
- bench
- placing area
Original gully playground site
Playground on opening day
Rope bridge
Viewing platform
Sandpit
Haus wind (breeze house)
Tyre motorbikes
PMV (public motor vehicle)
Volcano hill to represent the Rabaul eruption in 1994
State of completion

- Not all elements were completed - observation platform and amphitheater
- Some elements had not been started – music making, slide
- Old tractor hadn’t been located

But this is a good thing as it shows how playgrounds are never finished and should keep evolving
3rd playground site - Tonga

• Ethics application approved for Tonga project
• Community consultation completed in February 2017
• School decided to build a car park instead of the playground
• New school identified and consultation will start next month
Model for participatory playground development

• Phase 1 – school support
• Phase 2 – community consultation
• Phase 3 – playground design and planning
• Phase 4 - playground construction

• Playground maintenance must be factored in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>Phase 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School support</td>
<td>Community consultation</td>
<td>Playground design and planning</td>
<td>Playground construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain principal support</td>
<td>Consult parents/caregivers and the community—ask for their ideas and concerns</td>
<td>Consider the site topography</td>
<td>Plan construction schedule allowing for disruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain school board support</td>
<td>Consult students—ask for their ideas and current play activities</td>
<td>Consider the abilities of the children</td>
<td>Prioritize playground elements to ensure key elements are completed by opening and less important elements can be built at later dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure funding from school or other sources</td>
<td>Consult teachers—ask for their ideas and concerns</td>
<td>Consider the available local materials</td>
<td>Procure materials for elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform school community of the project</td>
<td>Invite all groups to assist with the build</td>
<td>Incorporate children’s, teachers’ and parents’ ideas</td>
<td>Allocate tasks to construction volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find volunteers to assist with the community consultation and construction of the playground</td>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporate universal design principles to ensure equal participation</td>
<td>Allocate tasks to be completed during working bees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Playgrounds can be inexpensive to build with local materials and community volunteers
• Playgrounds can inform parents and teachers about the importance of play
• Playgrounds afford children’s right to play
References