

BUILDING A COMMUNITY GARDEN & PLAYGROUND WITH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION _ A COOPERATION BETWEEN VIETNAM AND GERMANY



ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND AND COMMUNITY GARDEN MODEL

The model of “Urban farming” and the “Adventure playground” has been practiced for many years in public spaces in Germany and has shown values in creating urban community cohesion as well as ecological solutions to create environmentally friendly public spaces in order to build a humane and sustainable city. The Covid 19 pandemic further shows us the important role of public spaces for the health, happiness and healthy public life of urban residents, especially children.

The Covid 19 pandemic has shown us even more the significance of public spaces for the physical and mental health of city residents, especially children.

In Vietnam, Think Playgrounds is a pioneer organization with the effort to apply friendly and sustainable public spaces with over 200 playgrounds and community gardens in urban areas.



What is an adventure playground?



It's a free and creative space where children can create their own playground with natural materials such as soil, sand, wood... A fully built and operated adventure playground must ensure three main elements: built by children, built for children geared towards children; completely free and with community participation. This is a model that not only contributes to the comprehensive development and connection to nature and residential areas of children but also helps raise awareness about the right to play and the importance of playing freely outdoors to the development of children.



What is a community garden?

Through promoting organic and natural community garden models (medicinal herbs, vegetables, etc.), public spaces in urban areas will be covered in green with less concrete, more diverse ecosystems, conservation of native plants, reduction of organic waste... Moreover, this is also an innovative community-based educational model, connecting generations in the community through practicing urban agriculture and waste management at the source level together.

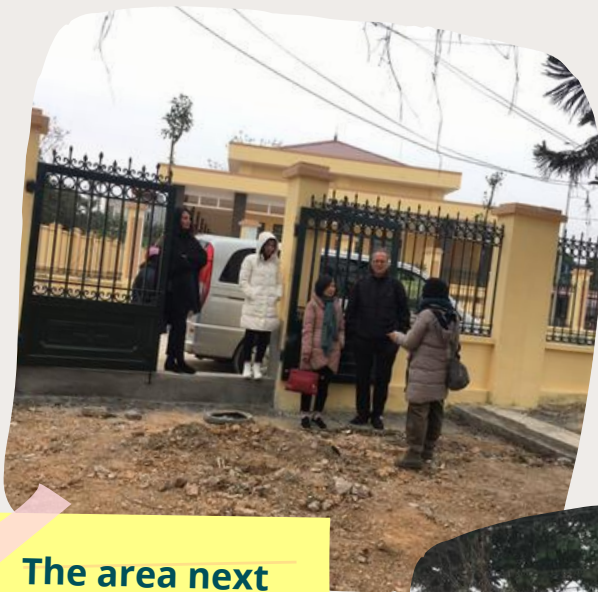


BACKGROUND

Dong Anh is a suburban district located in the North of Hanoi. In recent years, urbanization has taken place very quickly, public spaces in Dong Anh have been gradually narrowed or concreted, affecting the quality of life of the population, especially of marginalized groups such as women, children...

Since 2018, Think Playgrounds and Dong Anh Women's Union have worked with communities to build 20 playgrounds in the district's hamlets and communes. In 2020 -2021, with the support of Goethe-Institut, Think Playgrounds and Dong Anh Women's Union have cooperated with the residential community to create an adventure playground - community garden model at group 46 Dong Anh.

This area is part of group 46's public space complex (culture house, football field...). It was originally intended to be used for planting trees to provide shade. However, after being surveyed, local authorities and communities were willing to support and allow using the land for constructing playgrounds and community gardens.



The area next to the cultural house has been cleared and fenced



The solid clay foundation needs to be renovated and construction waste dealt with



THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY...



Surveying and developing ideas with the residential community

Under the coordination of Dong Anh Women's Union and community leaders, nearly 30 members of the community, including women and children, had a multi-dimensional workshop to state their needs in a public space

The information shared by the local community was crucial in helping Think Playgrounds members come up with a suitable design plan that satisfies the needs of all residents.



Co Designing a public space



Biển nội quy/
Regulation board
01



Ngựa nhún/
Horse Rider
03



Xích đu gỗ/
Swing
05



Cổng và hàng rào/
Gate and fence
07



Nhà sàn đa năng/
Multi equipment
02



Bập bênh lốp/
Seesaw
04



Hệ đi dây trên cây/
Rope system
06



Lường, trồng cây/
Garden beds
08

The narrow area demanded a scientific arrangement that ensures both the safety of children when playing and creating an overall harmonious space. The playground is designed with multi-functional equipment (for climbing, sliding, hiding...) on the sand surface with an adventure style that encourages children to self-explore and be creative in the process of playing.

A community garden space built with familiar materials (bamboo, brick, gravel...) and has spacious beds allows for a variety of plants in conjunction with each other and an area near the fences to grow fruit trees and climbing plants. A thick layer of fertile soil is added on top of the existing ground so that plants can grow quicker.

- I love swings, and a sandbox too!
- Can we have a snack shop?
- There must be an area for exercising guys!



- We must have galangal, skunk vine in this vegetable garden for cooking feasts!
- It's so nice to have such a garden.
- The playground must be filled with sand to ensure safety for the children.

This is the first time we get to share our expectations for a dream playground, we were so nervous but thanks to words of encouragement, we feel so happy and proud!



The community design workshop is an important step in the process of building a successful public space. Contributions from community representatives are the building blocks for an effective design concept that fits everyone's needs. The workshop is also an opportunity for marginalized groups (children, women, immigrants...) to be empowered and voice their thoughts in community activities.

The formula for a well-prepared design workshop:

- A diverse list of participants with distinct groups attending (local leaders, women, children, immigrants, the elderly...)
- Utilizing diverse and age-appropriate methods of collecting ideas: Group discussion, drawing, modeling...
- Fully document the workshop progress to serve as input information for design ideas



LESSONS FROM GERMANY

Through Goethe-Institut, Think Playgrounds had the opportunity to learn about the journey of developing adventure playground models and Youth Farms with expert Marcus Schmidt - executive director of the Netzwerk Spiel/Kultur Association. In addition to his work at the Association, Marcus Schmidt is also an honorary advisory board member of the Federal Association for Youth Farms and Active Playgrounds.

Despite different urban contexts and cultural characteristics, expert Marcus Schmidt's experience in the process of building and operating adventure playgrounds, community participation, youth, fundraising methods... also helped Think Playgrounds gain new perspectives and connections to continue the journey of developing adventure playgrounds and community gardens in Vietnam.

In addition to discussions with expert Marcus Schmidt, Goethe-Institut representative - Mr. Eckstein Wilfried shared with Think Playgrounds related documents from the Goethe-Institut such as Creative Placemaking and The role of Artists & the Arts in Creative Placemaking. He and his colleagues also participated in the activities and consultation process for the design of playgrounds & community gardens at group 46 Dong Anh _ Hanoi.



A corner of Kolle 37 adventure playground Berlin - Germany



A multicultural urban community garden - Germany



An online experience sharing session between Think Playgrounds, Goethe-Institut Hanoi and expert Marcus



Mobilizing contributions from the local community and authorities

After the design plan was agreed upon by the parties, the Dong Anh Women's Union worked with the leaders of Dong Anh town and the community to contribute to the budget for site clearance and acquiring sand for the playground area, as well as mobilizing the community to contribute trees to the garden. Stakeholders are all very enthusiastic and committed to supporting the project so that it can soon be finished.



Working together with the community



Volunteers build garden fences with the community



Laying bricks to make vegetable beds



Beds of fresh green vegetables grown by the community



Painting the children's play equipment

Mobilizing the community to participate in construction not only contributes to the utilization of local resources, but more importantly, it is a way of helping the community bond and become more responsible in managing the public spaces. Moreover, the fact that generations participated together in construction activities is also an opportunity for the involved parties to get a lot of practical experiences, helping with promoting the spread of the model in the future.



Safe and innovative play equipment made from natural and recycled materials



Painting and checking the equipment to ensure children can play safely.



She plants herbs in the community garden so people can have more traditional ingredients!



Volunteers from Vietnam National University of Agriculture help build the first ever community garden in the residential area



... AND THE RESULTS

Every day, the children come here to play together. There are children in other areas who also come to this playground to have fun and relax after school. Along with the cheerful laughter of the children are the lively conversations of the women, young and old, working in the garden. These sounds and images have contributed to creating a small but very vibrant and friendly public space.

BUT IT'S NOT OVER...

To protect public spaces, the community has come together to form a Management Board and assign duties of maintaining, cleaning, and safety checks. Public spaces are the result of a community's nonstop work to renovate and maintain the space. Hopefully, the green sprouts of the garden of group 46 and the joy of children here will inspire other communities to build more public spaces that are friendly to children and the environment.



PROJECT PARTNERS



Goethe - Institut

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute, active worldwide. It promotes the study of German abroad and encourages international cultural exchange. Through its cultural and educational programs, the Goethe - Institut encourages the development of intercultural dialogue, which promotes the building of structures of the civil society system and promotes global mobility. For more information, please visit: <http://www.goethe.de/vietnam>



Think Playgrounds

Think Playgrounds is a social enterprise with the mission of building playgrounds, community gardens, and improving public spaces that are friendly and safe with communities throughout Vietnam. Since 2014, Think Playgrounds has built over 200 public playgrounds, community gardens and organized more than 30 campaign events to raise awareness of the community about the role of play for the comprehensive development of children.



Dong Anh Women Union

A socio-political organization operating under the Dong Anh District Communist Party Committee and the the Hanoi Women Union, directly manages 28 units, including: 23 Women Union of Commune, 01 Town Women Union, Dong Anh Policewoman Union, Dong Anh Military Women Union and 02 Non-State Enterprise Women Union.

Functions and duties: representing and protecting legitimate and legitimate rights and interests of all levels of society of women and children, participating in Communist Party development and government management. To unite, mobilize women to implement the Communist Party's program, the Government's policies and laws, and mobilize the society to implement gender equality.



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