

## **OVERVIEW**

*FOSTERING PLAY* aims to build a recreational space that includes a locally-sourced playground and soccer field to execute an inclusive soccer tournament for the under-resourced children of Bech Khlok – a rural village in West Cambodia. By encouraging the values of play and teamwork, we endeavor to support the village's emerging education system and its vision for a better future. More specifically, we define peace as efforts directed towards the embetterment of communities; thus, free play and education for children coincide with and encourage peacemaking. For this project, we will:

- Build a sustainable playground using locally-sourced tires, sandbags, and wood
- Create an outdoor soccer recreation area by clearing the school's field and constructing soccer goals, storage sheds, and benches
- Provide durable sports materials including balls, clothes, nets, cones, and water bottles
- Administer a soccer tournament among diverse children to build understanding and teamwork

## **BACKGROUND**

Bech Khlok is a small, very hard to access village in West Cambodia. The people there have no access to clean drinking water, no electricity, and no medical care available to them during the rainy season (4-5 months per year). In 2012, the villagers of Bech Khlok developed a vision: give their children a chance for a better future. With the limited resources available to them, they built two makeshift classrooms and three men from the village started to teach the children on a volunteer basis. By 2014, however, the school was in a precarious condition; it did not have enough classrooms, and, except for two broken black boards and some chalk, there was no educational material.

Seed of Small Beginnings is a Swiss/German non-profit organization made up entirely of volunteers.<sup>1</sup> Founded in 2014 by Andrea Brüscheweiler, Seed aims to make a meaningful contribution to the reduction of poverty in the world by assisting the growth of sustainable communities in Cambodia. Beginning with Bech Khlok, Seed intervened to build three new classrooms, a library, and accommodation for teachers, as well as provide clean water for the whole village. This past January, Seed constructed a kindergarten building in Bech Khlok to provide much needed education for children ages 3-5. The new building was constructed in an area formerly used by the children to play soccer. Accordingly, there exists the need for a replacement soccer field and a play area for the younger children.

## **PROJECT SUMMARY & SIGNIFICANCE**

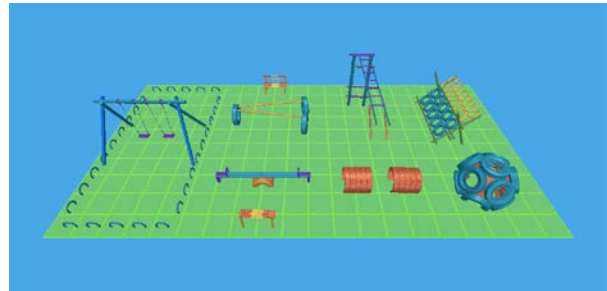
Inspired by the efforts of village locals and Seed of Small Beginnings, this project aims to support play for the children of Bech Khlok by constructing a recreation space to include a playground and soccer field. Free play has been identified as an essential part of a child's educational and social development.<sup>2</sup> Play encourages children to develop vital social skills like communication and interaction and engage with invaluable intellectual experiences like creativity and adventure.<sup>2</sup> Beyond cognitive development, children's right to play is protected by Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, we believe that upholding children's rights coincides directly with fostering peace.

In particular, the soccer field we construct will provide a lasting form of guided play beneficial to the schoolchildren, local villagers, and the surrounding community at large. Once complete, we will hold an inclusive soccer tournament with 40-50 children each from Bech Khlok and the neighboring village to break down barriers and encourage teamwork and cooperation. Additionally, we intend for the soccer field to become a community space where individuals can gather and enjoy themselves. Like the playground, it will be a space that will enable young individuals to develop outside of a classroom setting. Long term studies have shown that access to play experiences boosts life outcomes substantially.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, play

builds the critical skill of self-regulation that underpins success for a lifetime – a vision that the villagers of Bech Khlok seek for their community.

## **METHODS & PLAN**

For this project, we are partnering with Seed of Small Beginnings. We intend to complete the building projects and execute the tournament within four weeks in July 2019. We will be working closely with the Cambodian, Seed-sponsored Project Manager at Bech Khlok named Heang to source materials and extra workers to help with construction and facilitate communication. Based on advice from Seed and their recent kindergarten construction project, we will



source materials from the following cities near Bech Khlok: Moung Ruessei, Koas Krala, and Battambang. The Seed Project Manager Heang will also assist us in purchasing material and communicating with the workers by translating between Khmer and English. Heang will be compensated for an estimated 18 days: 4 days pre-construction and 14 days during construction. Additionally, we are budgeting five workers for 14 days of construction. The playground will be in an area of approximately 20 meters by 10 meters. The site plan shown above is based off the instruction manuals and 3D design builder from the non-profit Playground Ideas.<sup>4</sup> The elements of the playground will be built chiefly out of tire and wood materials which are long-lasting and durable under adverse weather including the heavy rains of monsoon season.

However, the site plan is merely provided as an example; we intend to meet with schoolchildren and seek community ideas and input for the final design. In doing so, we aim to exemplify and instill a sense of collective pride and ownership over the new play area. Moreover, Jessica has extensive project managing experience, which will prove beneficial in organizing the concurrent construction projects. Joshua is an experienced carpenter, soccer coach, and referee; he will spearhead the woodworking construction and lead the soccer tournament. We also each possess experience immersing ourselves in other cultures and navigating different languages. To share our experience with the Trinity community, we intend to document our work through photography and video footage. In particular, we are interested in holding a lecture through the Center of Urban and Global Studies Global Vantage Point series. As the volunteer coordinator of our on-campus cinema, Jessica is able to readily screen a short documentary of this project at the theater too. The purpose of these presentations is to showcase community-based efforts that foster play, education, and most importantly, peace.

## **OUTCOMES**

By seeking community input and repurposing local materials, we will apply a sustainable model for the collaborative execution of community goals and projects. We hope that our community-based efforts will provide a model for neighboring communities to adopt and adapt. Based on our definition of peace, we believe that our project effectively upholds the mission of the Davis Projects for Peace. In fostering play and teamwork, and consequently encouraging skills for success, we will bring to bear the Bech Khlok villagers' vision for a better future and promote peace in this emerging Cambodian community.

1. Brüscheiler, Andrea. *Seed*. Seed of Small Beginnings, 2004, seedbeginnings.com. Accessed 26 Jan. 2019.
2. Burdette, HL; Whitaker RC. Resurrecting Free Play in Young Children: Looking Beyond Fitness and Fatness to Attention, Affiliation, and Affect. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*. 2005;159(1):46–50.
3. "The Child's Right to Play." *IPA Promoting the Child's Right to Play*, International Play Association, ipaworld.org/childs-right-to-play/the-childs-right-to-play/. Accessed 26 Jan. 2019.
4. *Playground Ideas*. Playground Ideas, playgroundideas.org. Accessed 26 Jan. 2019.