

Creating Great Public Spaces in Three African Cities

Accra Project



[children jumping off a climber]

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Community Engagement.....	4
Capacity Building	14
Awareness Raising	18
Infrastructure Changes	25
Policy	37
Progress Towards Ultimate Outcome	40
Lessons Learned	41
Next Steps and Conclusion.....	42

Introduction

On the African continent - like in many other places in the world – public spaces are used for public life, commerce and interaction. However, lack of funds, planning, and maintenance, as well as priority for motorized vehicles, has turned many public spaces into unsafe, unforgiving and unconnected places. In addition, many public spaces are difficult to access, especially for those living in vulnerable situations. This is especially the case for the city of Accra, in the West African nation of Ghana. There is a significant lack of formal public spaces in Accra, particularly in the outlying areas where the slum settlements are located. Of those spaces that do exist, they are degraded, of poor quality, and under constant threat of being developed into other purposes.

Accra is expanding at a rapid pace. The pressure on the ground in the metropolis to make way for urban development translates into the cutting of age-old trees, and the taking over of playgrounds, parks, waterways, and other essential community resources. City authorities' plans and the competing, uncoordinated priorities of city dwellers, vendors, commercial vehicles, private developers and others contribute to traffic jams and congestion, infrastructure and services challenges, excluding recreational public spaces from the development policies and ignoring their importance in the shaping of sustainable cities.

In order to begin addressing the critical issue of public spaces Mmofra Foundation, in collaboration with HealthBridge and funded by UN-Habitat, has implemented a pilot project intended to test innovative solutions for:

- Conducting a community engagement process that ensures a people-centred approach to the design of the space;
- Engaging women, children, and the differently abled in the design of the parks;
- Including multiple uses that meet community needs;
- Improving access to the public spaces;
- Developing community-based maintenance;
- Formalizing the process of citizen engagement into city policies;
- Raising awareness among the public and decision-makers regarding the importance of public spaces;
- Strengthen local and national policies that protect, preserve, and enhance public spaces.

For this project we used 5 strategies:

1. Community Engagement
2. Capacity Building
3. Awareness Raising
4. Infrastructure Changes
5. Policy

These 5 strategies ensured we took a comprehensive approach to the pilot project.

Community Engagement

Mmofra Foundation approached the Teshie-Nungua Residents Association in April 2017 with the proposal to initiate redevelopment of a rundown park through the project; "Creating Great Public Spaces in Three African Cities". The community Residents Association had for many years fought to protect a piece of land which in the past had been designated for use as a Children's Park and Library. Both the park and library had fallen into disrepair and the park was now being used as a dumping ground and storage space for the local municipal office (LEKMA), while also serving as a makeshift training ground for a local youth football team and various fitness enthusiasts, and a prayer gathering ground for the Teshie United Muslims Association (TUMA).

Community engagement to ensure the participation of these stakeholders in the project was a priority. The Mmofra Team made multiple site visits to interact with people on the site and hold meetings with the Residents Association and selected schools in the community.

This informal engagement was paired with structured engagements - meetings hosted by the Resident's Association in which the Mmofra team was able to discuss the issues faced on the site and record the concerns of a sampled set of the community. The information collected from these engagements was bolstered during the Minecraft Workshops held at SAPS school in Teshie with UN Habitat Minecraft facilitator Eugenio Gastelum Pons. Over the three days the Mmofra team was able to engage both in group as well as one on one dialogues with a selection of local residents from different backgrounds and age groups (ranging from ages 10 to 60 years old). The basic concerns of the community regarding the state and use of the site were outlined and channeled into proposing new ideas for the redevelopment of the park and library.

By the end of the workshop enough information had been collected to begin concept design works on the park and library. The Mmofra team, through its designers, translated the proposed ideas by the participants of the workshop into an initial concept draft that was reviewed by the community in another meeting hosted by the Resident's Association. Invited were the Association Members, as well as the participants of the workshop and other key stakeholders. The draft concept was presented for comment and critiques were noted for design adjustment.

Following this was a period of administrative focus in which the team sought to ensure both permission to work on the site from the State Housing Cooperation (builders of the Estate) and the Municipal Building Council. Through the process Mmofra secured the support of other key community stakeholders, such as the Member of Parliament for Ledzokuku-Krowor Constituency Dr. Bernard Okoe

Boye, the constituency which the park falls under. Mediating the formation of this relationship was the head of the Teshie United Muslim Association; Imam Mallam Abu Abubhakar Kartey, who participated in the community meetings and the Minecraft workshop.

Even though all the necessary consultations had been done, it became difficult moving to the site to commence work. Mmofra needed a permit that authorized the intervention to be undertaken on the park. It took three months to secure the commitment of the Member of Parliament, the Municipal Assembly and the State Housing Company.

While waiting for the necessary permits, Mmofra engaged the greater public through advocacy using the print, electronic and social media. Two members of the Mmofra team had various radio and television interviews to create awareness on the need for good public spaces such as parks and playgrounds for children.

Also in November 2017 Mmofra hosted two Twitter Chats and a live Panel Discussion under the theme *Talking Spaces*. Through the Twitter Chats, the social media platform was used for a discussion on following questions:

- What role do public spaces play in our country?
- What are the success stories of vibrant public space that we can learn from?
- How can our public spaces help address Accra's urban challenges?
- What can we (citizens, architects, artists, planners, government, etc) do to make our public spaces more child friendly?
- Why are our parks neglected in urban development?

The passionate and spirited nature of the engagement was evidence of the general public's concern about the issues raised. It also became clear that both the local and broader community would be powerful allies and a useful resource in the building of this project.

Mmofra continued with the community engagement process even after the work began at the park. The daily visits of many community members to the park to enquire what was happening was used to solicit for more ideas, participation and interest in the project. As the project progressed, they began to spend time on site with the team, eventually joining in with the work. Other members of the community began to support the team with their resources and social/business connections, facilitating a smooth workflow. The volunteer days hosted towards the end of the project were attended for the most part by local community members, who also availed themselves to the team on other days.

The children of the community were constant advisers during construction. While installing a play component, the team would ask the children playing in the park to test the component before securing it permanently. As design was adjusted

during construction the team observed how the children played and what play components they did not engage with in order to decide a final layout.

Mmofra's role in the project will close with the official opening of the park, during which management of the park will be handed over to the Residents Association, who will manage the park in collaboration with the MP's office.



Image 1: Minecraft Workshop

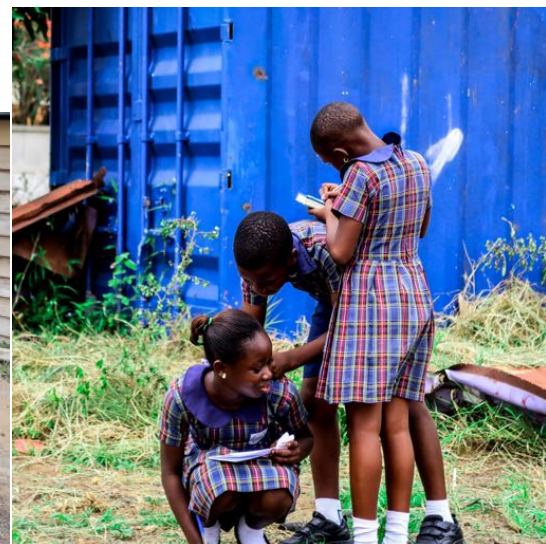


Image 2 and 3: Site Inspection during Minecraft workshop



Image 4: Participants working with Minecraft



Image 5: Participants presenting their ideas at Minecraft Workshop



Image 6: Community Meeting with MP



Image 7: Community Meeting



Image 8: Community Meeting with Interim Park Management Team



Image 9: Sample Minecraft design from Workshop



Image 10: Final site plan

Activity, Result, and Outcome Table:

Activity	Outcome	Result
<p>A community engagement process for the design of the parks was established using informal meetings, the Minecraft workshop, the media[print, electronic, and social media] to mobilize and create the active participation of children, youth, women and the community at large in the project.</p>	<p>4 meetings hosted with the Teshie –Nungua Estate Residents Association.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting 1: Introduction to the Association and established their concerns regarding the park. A plan of action was drafted. - Meeting 2: After the community Minecraft workshop; feedback from the workshop. - Meeting 3: (With some participants from the workshop) An initial concept design incorporating the outcomes of the 	<p>The overall objective was to increase community participation in the creation and maintenance of the park. The outcomes of this process were positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community participated in and contributed to the development of the park by offering their time and resources. - Ghs 1,365 in donations was raised towards grassing the park.

	<p>workshop was presented to those present for feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting 4: Before the commencement of construction; introducing Dr Bernard Okoe Boye (Member of Parliament for Ledzokuku-Krowor Constituency) to the Association, discussing the way forward - Between 5 and 15 community participants (mainly of retirement age as the Estates is an aging community). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ghs 500 in donations was raised to pave a portion of the park. - A contributor loaned the team his generator and some construction tools for the duration of the build. - The same contributor allowed the team access to his welding workshop for additional work on site. - Another contributor donated towards the supply of water to the site during construction, and facilitated the obtaining of the water.
<p>Organized and facilitated a 3 day workshop hosted at SAPS School in Estate, involving multiple stakeholders to discuss and conceptualise the park with the aid of Minecraft software.</p>	<p>19 community members participated ranging between ages of 8 and 65. Participants included but were not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students and Teachers from SAPS and Precious Jewel Schools in Teshie (Precious Jewel is adjacent to the Site) - The Residents Assoc. Members - Ledzokuku Municipal Assembly Staff - University Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two volunteers donated plants to the park. - SAPS school in Teshie donated free use of their computer facilities for the duration of the Minecraft workshop. - 19 community members

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - living in the Estate Leaders of the Teshie United Muslims Association. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participated in the Minecraft workshop.
<p>Organized opportunities for community members to contribute to park development.</p>	<p>2 publicised volunteer days. The last 2 weeks of construction were opened to the public to allow them the opportunity to get involved with the finishing of the park.</p> <p>Volunteers included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents of Teshie and the surrounding localities - Accra-based followers of Mmofra Foundation's 'Talking Spaces' platform on Facebook and Twitter - Rising Stars of Africa Football Academy, based in Teshie - Artists from the Foundation for Contemporary Art Ghana network - Former residents of Teshie - MoWorks Ltd, a construction company whose Managing Director grew up in the neighbourhood. MoWorks committed a team of 8 skilled and unskilled labourers to work a full day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 60+ volunteers worked with the team for a total of approximately 144 hours on the project.

	<p>with the team.</p> <p>Total of approximately 60 volunteers ranging between the ages of 3 and 84 over two weeks of construction in February 2018</p>	
<p>Pending: With community input, develop a process for park maintenance, identify, who, what, where, when and how.</p>	<p>Mmofra's aim for the meeting is to facilitate the creation of a sustainable structure to which we can commit the operational responsibilities of the park.</p> <p>A meeting has been scheduled for March 2018. In attendance will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr Bernard Okoe Boye, MP and other Assembly members - Teshie-Nungua Residents' Association - Mmofra Foundation - Imam Abubhakar, Head of the Teshie United Muslims Association - Invited Stakeholders from the community (Eg Patrick Adumua, MD of MoWorks Ltd) <p>The agenda for the meeting is outlined at the end of this document.</p>	

Capacity Building

The Capacity Building component of the project has been designed to enable the community to successfully take over further development, management and maintenance of the park in the most sustainable way possible. Mmofra's focus has been on empowering the local community through, among other things:

- Showing what is possible through the construction of the park as a prototype, employing local labour and resources in the completion of the project.
- **Skills development:** working with local artisans and unskilled labourers to complete the project, with the unskilled labourers picking up new skills in the process.
- **Alternative thinking:** Using existing skills and resources within the community to find alternative, affordable and unique solutions to challenges

Outlined below are some of the ways in which the team were able to contribute to the skills and knowledge development of those they worked with.

- **Minecraft Workshop:** The workshop served two purposes in this respect. First, the community were exposed to a new software in Minecraft, which as facilitator Eugenio Gastelum Pons pointed out, is a good software to be exposed to as an introduction to computers. While most of the participants were computer literate, the program challenged them to own the software in order to be able to express their visions. The other purpose the workshop served was to give the participants a few design tips and the language required to articulate their needs with regards to space and how they inhabit it. At the end of every session, each individual/group was invited to share what they had created, explaining their thought processes and reasons for their developments.
- **Alternative thinking:** Some of the artisans we worked with were fixed in their approach, intimidated by the idea of creating something that was not a standard in construction. The Mmofra construction management team comprised of three artists and one architect, and part of their job became sharing the possibility of alternative approaches to translate artistic concepts into functional form through unique design and the use of unusual, mostly repurposed materials.

Example: One of the carpenters (Mr Mensah) was often quite resistant to anything that challenged his understanding of structure, as was the case with the construction of the tire/pallet perimeter fence. Mr Mensah was very uncomfortable with the design and the process, but with the guidance of regular Mmofra carpenter Theo, and the coordination team, he delivered excellent work that both he and the team were extremely proud of.

Perceived Outcomes: Improved attitude/openness to new approaches, increased knowledge and skills.

- **Introduction to new tools and formworks:** As the project was not a standard construction, many elements of its construction required tools and formworks that are not common to the Ghanaian construction industry.
- **Perceived Outcome:** Increased knowledge and skills.
- **Culture, Gender Dynamics:** In the early phases of construction the women in the Mmofra team faced the challenge of exercising authority over some of the men on the construction team. It was not unusual for a labourer to ignore instructions until given by the only man on the Mmofra team.

The issue was resolved with time, as the construction team realised and began to acknowledge the Mmofra team women's capabilities. This was in part due to the fact that the team were hands-on with the project, more often than not working alongside the construction team. By the end of the project, the men who had begun the project dismissing the role of the women members of the management team at the very least acknowledged the leadership role of the women, treating them with the same respect that they gave the male team member.

The role of women on the project was not lost on the community, with a few passersby – particularly women – commenting on and praising it. This became important to the women on the team, as it meant that the girls who were playing on the site during construction were seeing the transformation of their park at the hands of women, showing them that women are as capable of leadership as men.

Perceived Outcome: The successful challenging of gender stereotypes, with the construction team and the local community seeing gender equality in practice.

- **Waste Management:** Littering is a massive problem in Accra, with inadequate waste disposal systems and plastic consumption resulting in widespread pollution. While on site, the Mmofra team undertook to ensure that the park remained litter free. Garbage disposal points were created, and builders instructed to dispose of water sachets and other plastics in them. The site was cleaned at the close of every day, and public urination was forbidden.

The main focus of this initiative was the children; they were instructed to pick up and dispose of all litter found on site before leaving after play. By the end of the project some of the children would do this unprompted and they could be heard reminding each other of the need to dispose of yoghurt and water sachets properly.

Perceived Outcome: An awareness among children and other users of the site of the need to dispose of waste properly.

- **General Empowerment:** It was important that the project feel 'do-able', that is to say that those who participated felt they could do something similar themselves, without Mmofra. This was considered in every aspect of the project, from design and choice of materials, to construction

Materials: Chosen materials had to be easily sourced/made and relatively affordable. This informed the choice of materials such as old tires, shipping pallets, bamboo and very basic construction materials.

Skills: The project had a distinct DIY feel to it, exemplified by the valuable contributions of the 60+ volunteers over the last two weeks of construction. Volunteers were given tasks such as the treating of timber with engine oil, with an explanation of the purpose of the process beforehand.

Student Exposure: A few architecture students and recent graduates availed themselves to the team on a few occasions, gaining insights into the construction process and gaining hands- on experience in minor construction exercises.

Perceived Outcome: A sense of understanding and ownership of the park, as well as increased confidence in the ability to intervene in such areas and implement changes to create safe, child-friendly public spaces.



Image 11: Carpenter Mr Mensah during construction of the perimeter fence



Image 12: One of the female team leads providing direction

Activity, Result, and Outcome Table:

Activity	Outcome	Result
<p>Various consultations have been held with the Member of Parliament Ledzokuku-Krowor Constituency aimed at getting the Municipal Assembly on board the project</p>	<p>The Member of Parliament Ledzokuku-Krowor Constituency where the park is situated has given his full commitment to the further development of the park.</p> <p>2 representatives from the Municipal Assembly took part in the Minecraft Workshop.</p>	<p>Cooperation of the Municipal Assembly in preparation of the site.</p> <p>A three-member interim management committee has been formed by the community to manage the park and see to the further development of the other phases of the park, which will eventually consist of a library.</p>
<p>Over the period of the</p>	<p>2 volunteer days of</p>	

<p>construction of the park, community members who have shown keen interest, volunteered time and participated in the construction of the park have been given onsite training on the making of different components of that make up the park.</p>	<p>trainings 20 to 30 community members participated</p> <p>Four community members have currently taken over the interim management of the park.</p>	<p>As a result of the park development process community artisans have increased their skill and capacity in delivering “non-traditional” designs. Park development process also resulted in challenging gender stereotypes, increased understanding of the importance of proper litter disposal, and increased understanding and ownership of the park.</p>
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Awareness Raising

#TALKINGSPACES #IWASAPARK

Mmofra Foundation has already gained traction in Ghana as an advocate for public spaces, particularly those that are child-friendly. Mmofra Place, the Foundation’s children’s park in Accra, hosts a children’s club, also serving as an events venue for clients who prefer to host in green spaces. The Foundation has also successfully hosted a recurring Climate Change exhibition in the park, which draws a large number of children and adults.

It was the team’s intention to use this existing reach to ignite the public spaces dialogue, aimed at policy makers and the greater community (more on policy below). The aim was to begin with smaller initiatives with great presence, working up to larger events/discussions; visible interest from the public would serve to draw the attention of politicians and policy makers, allowing Mmofra to lobby them to place public space making as a priority in future development plans.

It was decided that Mmofra would spearhead a year-long public awareness drive, with the goal of eventually hosting a forum targeting high level policy makers; community based events and discussion would serve the purpose of building interest in the topic. To begin the drive, the team planned a series of events on social media and at Mmofra Place as a launch pad for a sustained campaign. Using Facebook (<http://bit.ly/2GByMJM>) and Twitter (@talkingspaces_) internet platforms, profiles were created under the theme ‘Talking Spaces’, through which Mmofra aimed to engage the general public both in Ghana and abroad.

The campaign included regular text and visual posts on both Facebook and Twitter aimed at global advocacy messaging on the value of livable cities and

accessible green public space, making Mmofra amongst the most visible Africa-based champions on this topic.

With the assistance of African Urbanism's Victoria Okoye [a Nigerian PhD Urban Planning Candidate based in the United Kingdom], Mmofra designed and scheduled a series of Twitter Chats and Panel Discussions which aimed to engage the public in a dialogue interrogating the fall of public space in Accra's urban hierarchy, and begin the laying of a new urban framework around urban public spaces for which Teshie –Nungua Children's Park could be a prototype.

The first two sessions of public engagement were 1.5 hour Twitter chats hosted on the Talking Spaces platform and moderated by Mmofra, African Urbanism and the Foundation for Contemporary Art Ghana. For each session a maximum of 6 questions were set and tweeted out at regular intervals. Both Twitter chats ended up running for 2 hours as participants were engaged. The chats are in the process of being archived via the Storify platform.

Twitter Chat 1_7 November 2017

For the first chat, the structure was as follows:

• Theme 1

- Begin with definition of public space.
- Children's parks in Ghana [name existing templates].
- What is our relationship with space/public space?
- Address neglect, quality, lack of use, lack of parks. Are there any beacons of hope?

• Theme 2

- Broader. Begin with definition of public space. Are they contemplative, relaxed spaces?
- Parks in African cities [green/kid accessible].
- Cross section through a number of interesting models across Africa.

• Theme 3

- Public spaces in African cities.
- Narrow down to public spaces for kids, then play spaces.

The questions:

1. How do we understand public spaces in Ghana?
2. What role does public spaces play in our country? What is our relationship with space/public space?
3. Why the neglect of existing parks?

4. Where there any beacons of hope that we can learn from?
5. How can our public spaces be used to foster community in the face of Accra's urban challenges?

The chat, attended by just under 20 people, was spirited, with participants from across Ghana expressing a real concern with the state of Ghana's public spaces, from parks to transport stations.



Participants also shared community-run initiatives that have attempted to create safe spaces for children in Ghana's cities, mainly Accra.

Twitter Chat 2_14 November 2017

The second chat was hosted a week later as a follow up to the first, and was notably better attended. The questions posed were as follows:

1. What are your favourite memories of our parks?
2. Given the situation of our #parks now, where do you go to relax, to play, to socialize?
3. How can we invigorate our parks? What are your ideas?
4. What are the success stories of vibrant public spaces that we can learn from?
5. How can our parks help address our cities' urban challenges? 6. What can we (citizens, artists, planners, architects, govt, etc.) do to improve our parks, to make them friendly for children, older generations, adults, workers, artists, the homeless - everyone in our city?

The response to these more personal questions were often more emotional, confirming that there are many in Accra who understand the value of safe, green, child-friendly spaces in the urban setting.



Talking Spaces Talk Party_30 November 2017

The final dialogue session in the series was a 2 hour panel discussion hosted at Mmofra Place. On the panel were:

- **Professor Esi Sutherland-Addy** (Moderator): Mmofra Foundation Director
- **Nat Nunoo Amarteifio**: Architectural Historian and a former Mayor of Accra
- **Nana Fredua-Agyeman Ofori-Atta**: Media Relations Consultant and member of the Talking Spaces advocacy team
- **Namata Serumaga-Musisi**: Architect

The event had in attendance 80 people. The audience consisted of a variety of people, ranging from the Director of the Department of Parks & Gardens, to veteran and emerging artists, to parents and other concerned residents of Accra.

Prof. Sutherland-Addy began the conversation by asking the panellists to define public spaces from their perspective, which set a very personal tone to the conversation and encouraged the audience to participate actively in the dialogue.

Media Partners

In an attempt to reach a wider audience and create a more inclusive space of dialogue, Mmofra reached out to media partners in both Radio and TV, be able to engage the public in local languages as well as English. Meetings were

secured with CitiFM's business manager Bernard Avle, the host of a popular morning talk show, as well as with Baisiwa, a TV host and producer with GhOne.

Media Partner: GhOne

It emerged that Baisiwa is already committed to the cause of child development as the founder of Pumpkins Foundation (www.pumpkinsfoundation.org) in Ghana, and works closely with the Department of Children. She committed to support the Mmofra initiative and sought to collaborate in the following ways:

- Meet with Gender, Health and Education ministers to review and hold them to promises made in their last meeting – this time including Mmofra initiative.
- Liaise with a number of media houses for Mmofra in order to build a network of partners.
- Pumpkins to partner Mmofra in advocating for child causes in corporate spaces.
- Promote the Mmofra initiative on air.
- Develop a series with Mmofra for GhOne, a bi-weekly discussion on public spaces to keep public interest high.

Baisiwa brought TV station GhOne to Mmofra Place for a children's play day in December 2017 (aired on Christmas Day), returning with Pumpkins Foundation for a play day for children with Cerebral Palsy. Mmofra will follow up with Baisiwa in the coming months.

Media Partner: CitiFM

Bernard Avle raised the issue of the controversial ongoing government campaign to make AstroTurf an option for parks. He also proposed that Mmofra create a lobby group to consistently contribute to the topic and generate interest for constant media attention. He wished to collaborate as follows:

- Dedicate a whole radio show to the topic, Bernard in conversation with Mmofra's Amowi Sutherland Philips;
- Support through media announcements of various Mmofra initiatives;
- Compile a series of media reports on the topic of public spaces.

The radio show conversation was aired on Thursday 23rd November 2017 and CitiFM publicised the Talking Spaces Talk Party.

Social Media Updates

For the duration of the park project, the public has been updated on progress through the Mmofra Foundation and Talking Spaces social media pages. The Mmofra Foundation Twitter handle has also been used to share relevant articles and imagery, in an attempt to maintain an ongoing dialogue. The Talking Spaces Facebook page has garnered a following of close to 12,800 social media users in 4 months, and has become the primary platform through which Mmofra

engages on this project. Followers on Facebook and Twitter have been the main contributors to the small 'Grass the Park' fundraiser campaign.



Image 13: Talking Spaces Talk Party Panellists



Image 14: Participants at Talking Spaces Talk Party



Image 15: CitiFM interview

Activity, Result, and Outcome Table:

Activity	Outcome	Result
Organized community awareness campaigns	1 meeting (Panel discussion at Mmofra Place) 2 Twitter Chats	The overall objective of increasing awareness was to generate public interest in both the dialogue on public space, and Teshie Children's Park. The activities resulted in raised awareness (on Mmofra's part) of the existing interest in the topic, and existing initiatives attempting to address the lack of designed, healthy public spaces. They also resulted in the streamlining of intentions and goals, which will serve to bolster the argument for prioritising public space making at policy level.
Conducted meetings with journalists.	2 meetings 2 journalists participating 2 media events	
Prepared press release.	1 press release 3 media instances	

Infrastructure Changes

While the site of the project was originally a park, abuse by the municipal body (LEKMA) and other parties had resulted in the land being used as a dumping ground for rubbish, the LEKMA's confiscated items from the surrounding locality, and construction materials.

Main Infrastructure Changes

- **Clearing of the Site:** Clearing the grounds was a priority in order to give the team a better idea of what was possible. Labourers and a digger were organised under the auspices of the MP Dr Okoe Boye to clear the site during which time it was discovered that the asbestos water mains under the site were brittle and in need of replacing. The pipes burst twice in the space of three weeks, rendering a large part of the site unworkable until

the last two weeks of construction, when Ghana Water were finally able to fix the problem.

- **Stormwater Drainage:** The site slopes west to east, terminating at a gutter on the eastern boundary line. Conversation with the neighbours revealed that every few years the stormwater gutters overflow and back up into the site, a result of illegal constructions in the immediate vicinity, as well as a bottle neck in the gutter at the north eastern corner of the site due to debris. The team briefly considered erecting a sandbag barrier along the gutter, but it was established that clearing and maintaining the gutters would solve the problem. Clearing the site also allowed for free flow of stormwater into the drains.
- **Water Supply:** Two water tanks were purchased to supply the site with water. Mmofra is working to get Ghana Water permission to place outlets on the site. 'Tippy Taps' have been erected around the park for children to wash their hands.
- **Waste Disposal:** Mmofra has created 2 disposal points on site. The Municipal Assembly has been written to by the Residents' Association requesting them to clear the rest of the park of their debris .
- **Securing of the Perimeter:** Fencing was necessary in order to protect the site. It was important that the fencing did not restrict access for community members, but served as a deterrent against abuse by defining the perimeter and being lockable at night. Mmofra's resources would not cover the securing of the entire perimeter, and so an agreement was reached with the MP that the team would construct the fence around new park, obtaining quotes for the rest of the perimeter for the MP.

Four types of fence were constructed, all of which were designed to be visually permeable and affordable:

- **Tire and Pallet Fence:** A simple construction approximately 7ft tall, with shipping pallets as base and top and painted tires in the middle. The tires were placed at a height that allows children to look into the park as they walk past.
- **Mesh Fence:** A galvanised steel fence makes up the majority of the northern portion of the site. An allowance has been made for simple advertising as a form of income for the site.
- **Chicken Wire Fence:** This serves as a divider between the play area and the sports area. It was initially constructed to protect the play area from the work of Ghana Water, and became permanent when it was decided that the flooded portion would become a multipurpose sports pitch.
- **Pallet Fence:** A simple pallet construction separates the new play area from the rest of the park, so as to ensure LEKMA and other parties do not begin to encroach on the park in the time it takes to

complete construction of the rest of the fence.

- **Play Components:** The site has a number of municipal services running under it, meaning any construction carried out could not go deeper than 2 feet. As such, the components installed on site had to be able to stand, almost independently. Every component was made by the team. Components installed were as follows:
 - o **Monkey Bar:** Painted steel frame.
 - o **Swings:** A 3 swing structure made from teak, with seats made from recycled tire rubber and fixed with steel joinery.
 - o **Tire Climber:** A wall of tires fixed to two teak poles cast into concrete.
 - o **Sand Pits:** Under every major play component, and a main sand pit next to the toddler platform.
 - o **Timber Walker:** Teak poles cast in concrete with teak beams joining them.
 - o **A Frames:** 2 climbing components erected from shipping pallets, treated and painted.
 - o **Blackboards:** Double sided, made from pallets and painted with blackboard paint.
 - o **Toddler Platform:** 2 levels, erected with 'Ecobrick', topped with concrete and grass.
 - o **Play Bench:** An 'Ecobrick' bench with a concrete seat. *Oware* a traditional Ghanaian board game was cast into the seat, for children to play. The seat is shaded by a simple steel construction with a timber and steel sheeting roof.
 - o **Shaded Seat:** A round 'Ecobrick' seat topped with concrete and shaded by a woven reed structure. The seat sits in the middle of a flower bed.
 - o **Bamboo Maze:** Bamboo cast in concrete.
 - o **Hopscotch:** Painted paving stones.



Image 16: Site before intervention



Image 17: Site before Intervention



Image 18: Site before intervention



Image 19: Site before intervention



Image 20: Preparation off site



Image 21: Preparation of site



Image 22 and 23: Park Build



Image 24: Park Build



Image 25: Park Build



Image 26: Park Build



Image 27: Complete children's play space



Image 28: Areal view of children's play space



Image 29: Children's play space



Image 30: Children's play space



Image 31: Children's play space, hand washing area



Image 32: Children's play space, toddler platform

Activity, Result, and Outcome Table:

Activity	Outcome	Result
Organized and implemented park improvements such as ground levelling, equipment construction, shelter, and water supply.	17 park improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12 play components - 5 major infrastructure improvements 	The overall objective of the infrastructure improvements was to create a space specifically designed for public use for recreation, stopping the abuse of the site.
Implemented innovative ideas suggested by community.	10+ innovative ideas suggested 4 innovative ideas implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perimeter fence - Outdoor reading area - Multipurpose sports pitch - Play component choices 	Before the intervention, the park was used by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Football players in training. - Fitness enthusiasts - LEKMA for parking and disposal of confiscated items, storage of construction materials, and garbage disposal. - TUMA for Ramadhan celebrations (twice annually)
Organized a park opening ceremony to illustrate the different components of the park.	1 event (pending)	Since development the following have also joined users of the park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vendors catering to the increased number of users from the above list. - School children after school, for play and a place to do their

		<p>homework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community members seeking somewhere to sit, particularly at lunchtime and in the evenings. <p>LEKMA are slowly being removed from the site.</p>
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Policy

The creation and maintenance of public spaces - particularly those that are child-friendly – has long fallen low on the list of priorities in Ghanaian development planning. This has not always been the case; in the early days of independence, President Kwame Nkrumah and his team of urban planners factored such spaces into plans in an attempt to create healthy, functioning cities.

Mmofra's work to enrich the cultural and intellectual lives of children in Ghana includes the aim to affect change in policymaking around the creation of child-friendly spaces. In recent years the Foundation has been a leading voice in the drive to affect this change, spearheading such initiatives such as ongoing efforts to protect the neglected 12 acre Efua Sutherland Children's Park in central Accra. The park is state property, but is currently at risk of being sold to private developers which - as an open piece of land in a coveted area of Accra, and in the current scramble for land - would almost certainly lead to the conversion of the land into a high-rise real estate.

The Teshie-Nungua Children's Park project is intended to serve as a flagship project in a year-long campaign to bring public space to the forefront of the development dialogue. Much of the focus in the past 8 months has been on building public interest in the project, and igniting discussion, allowing us to then use that interest to motivate policy-makers to pay attention. The awareness campaign outlined above has successfully garnered public interest. At the Talk Party hosted in November 2017, policy makers were present and active in the dialogue, contributing to the discussion as active stakeholders.

Teshie Policy Makers

Running parallel to this were efforts to use the Teshie Park Project to draw local policymakers into alignment with the cause. Through Teshie Community member, TUMA Imam Mallam Abu Abubhakar, Mmofra initiated dialogue with the Member of Parliament for Ledzokuku-Krowor Constituency, Dr Bernard Okoe Boye. The initial meeting was intended to share plans for the Park, in the hope that he would support the project and facilitate the acquiring of necessary permissions for the site in order for project to proceed.

Dr Okoe Boye showed an immediate interest, sharing with team the mandate of the sitting government to create sixty e-Libraries in commemoration of Ghana's 60th Independence anniversary; he mirrored the concerns of the community, emphasising the importance of securing the perimeter of the site as it would serve the dual purpose of determining authority over the park (thus preventing further abuse of the land and protecting the investment in the project), and would show the community signs of progress. The MP promised to light the park, which is in a poorly lit area, and complete the portion of fencing that Mmofra could not afford to build, all in order to ensure the site is secured.

It had taken months to secure time with the MP, but once the Mmofra team informed him of time constraints, the MP procured permission to proceed on the Park site within four working days, and further supported the project by sourcing and funding a team and equipment to clear the site in preparation for construction. He also offered his support in Mmofra's advocacy with policymakers, specifically offering assistance in identifying, accessing and securing allies in government.

The following week, the Mmofra team met with the Dr Okoe Boye again, this time inviting him to meet with members of the Teshie Residents' Association. Mmofra Director Professor Sutherland-Addy had in a prior conversation with the MP suggesting that he and the Municipal body join forces with the Residents' Association to rebuild the library in the park; this meeting was intended to introduce these stakeholders and set the foundation for future collaboration.

The Residents' Association explained the motivation behind the project and the Mmofra team shared the design developments on the project, which was followed by a discussion on logistics on the upcoming construction and the potential for continued development beyond the Mmofra mandate. Management of the site was discussed, with the Mmofra team outlining their three month management plan after which management would be handed over to the community. The MP at this point committed to take over financial responsibility of the salaries for site maintenance staff, and it was agreed that a committee be formed consisting of members from the local assembly, the MP's office, the Residents' Association, and the stakeholders to help run the activities of the park and protect its interests. Potential programming was also discussed – reading clinics, drama classes, etc - to be targeted at the local cluster of public schools and which the MP has undertaken to ensure become a part of school programming.

The MP informed those present of a much larger site in nearby Teshie Tsui Bleoo which has been earmarked for a self-sustaining multipurpose public park with library, computer laboratory, events and conference centre, inviting one of the local business men present to visit this new site with him to explore potential.

During construction Dr Okoe Boye became a close ally, using his resources to resolve issues faced with traditional leadership, and visiting the site a number of times to view progress, on one occasion even bringing the workers and children refreshments. The Mmofra team are confident that he will be a great asset to the campaign over the next year and look forward to continued collaboration. In preparation for this, Mmofra has designed small policy briefs on the Foundation and the project, targeted at policymakers. These will be shared with the MP for circulation among his peers, so as to quickly identify potential allies and allow the team to efficiently convene them for outcomes-driven dialogue.

Activity, Result, and Outcome Table:

Activity	Outcome	Result
Organized meetings with decision makers	2 formal meetings (with Dr Bernard Okoe Boye, MP for Ledzokuku-Krowor constituency) 2 decision-makers 1 public statement from government officials about their commitment to develop public spaces (Dr Okoe Boye to the Teshie Resident's Association).	The overall objective of the policy advocacy is to get the policy makers on board with the initiative, thus granting access to their resources and ensuring that the creation and maintenance of public spaces is included in future development plans. The MP has committed his office to the initiative, offering support in lobbying other policy makers.
Facilitated collaborations on public space creation and maintenance between policymakers and the public	Collaboration between Dr Okoe Boye and Teshie Residents' Assoc. Collaboration on a separate project between Dr Okoe Boye and local businessman Reginald Ayitey	This aspect of the project is ongoing.

Progress Towards Ultimate Outcome

The ultimate outcome for which our project was initiated was *“Improved local policies, plans and designs for safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces for all which supports more compact, integrated and connected, socially inclusive cities and neighbourhoods in partner cities.”* Indicators that we are moving towards achieving the ultimate outcome include:

- The positive public response to both the Park project and the public awareness campaign. This enables Mmofra to continue to the next phase in the plan – targeting the policy makers on the back of the success of these components, using both the numbers drawn in public support and the physical evidence to push the creation of these public spaces up on the policy makers' agendas.
- Local children on the Estate and surrounding communities began using the park before construction was completed, which speaks to the need for such a space in this area and others. That they and their parents began patronising it as soon as was possible also speaks to the park being an inclusive and accessible public space as intended.
- The MP for Ledzokuku Constituency and the Residents Association have undertaken to collaborate to maintain and further develop the park. The MP will lobby for the incorporation of the park project into the sitting government's official libraries initiative, meaning the site could be fully developed within the next 5 years.
- Volunteers, passers-by and followers on social media continually make enquiries as to whether Mmofra Foundation would be willing to pursue a similar project in their areas/neighbourhoods. .
- A request was put out on social media for donations to purchase and plant grass on 150sq.m of the site; half the money was raised in the first 24 hours; the goal was exceeded within a week. Donations have been received from as far out as the US and the UK, with the majority of donations being made by residents of Accra – indicative of a concern and interest in the creation of green public spaces.
- A little over 60 volunteers have contributed their time to the development of the park, some even coming in to work on days not publicised as volunteer days.
- The children of Estate and environs are enjoying the park immensely, even bringing their homework to complete in the seating areas provided.

Lessons Learned

- The project is an ambitious one, and it was important to maintain the community's faith and optimism even when developments were not visible. Social media has a limited outreach in Ghana and so a lot of time was spent engaging with the community in person. This became the teams' greatest strength as relationships were forged with many community members, which was of great help when construction finally began. For example, The Mmofra Team was able to source an electricity generator for the site free of charge from a local restaurateur and business man. Additionally the Teshie United Muslims Association Imam was a great support in, among other things, coordinating and funding water supply to the site. While we met a number of our allies before construction commenced, many of those engaged were drawn by activity on the site, many providing information and resources that would have been of even greater use had the Team had access in the planning stages. More aggressive door-to-door community engagement could possibly facilitate this.
- Mmofra Foundation was transparent in its intentions for the site. This was important as many initially feared that the proposal by the Foundation might harbour a hidden agenda.
- As Mmofra Foundation had been invited in by the community, it was assumed that all the relevant parties had been informed and were behind the project. For this reason, none of the team approached the local Nungua traditional Chief, which created a few obstacles later on as he ordered the halt of work and on one occasion confiscated the construction team's work tools. In future all leaders – traditional and statutory will be approached and engaged independently, as well as invited to planning meetings before construction begins.
- **Delays:** The major delays experienced were all linked to state bodies. It took months to secure a meeting with the MP (who approved the project and facilitated all necessarily approvals after the first meeting). While this allowed the team to focus on other aspects of the project during the planning phase, it did then put a great deal of pressure on the team during the construction phase. In future it may be advisable to approach leaders like the MP at the very beginning of the project so as to prevent long delays.

The main obstacle was a leakage of water from the main water pipe that serves the estate; which was caused when the municipality was clearing the site, resulting in a 3 week delay in construction. The designs for the park had to eventually be reconfigured working around the affected area. It was important to have made these modifications to the plans, in order to accommodate the numerous unknown factors that came into

play during the project.

- The willingness of community to even contribute financially towards the construction of the park is in itself a great community engagement tool that can be explored in future projects. Volunteer days were a success and the volunteers committed and hardworking.
- The team were unable to bring the workshop participants back in for a day on site, due to time constraints, but did engage with many of them and others in the community during the construction process. This was important as it created a sense of ownership which will hopefully ensure that the park is maintained.

Next Steps and Conclusion

Steps have been taken towards the fully and successfully hand over the management of the park to the community. Mmofra's contribution to park management will end in early June 2018; the three months leading up to ensure sustainability.

A meeting with the primary stakeholders in March 2018 ensured the setting up of an interim management committee to facilitate the creation of a sustainable structure for the operational responsibilities of the park.

- Mmofra Foundation has allocated a portion of funding to subsidise the cost of employing a park manager and cleaner for the duration of 3 months. The Member of Parliament has undertaken to cover the remainder of the cost, and retain the employee(s) after the 3 months have lapsed.
- Mmofra Foundation is facilitating the drafting of a plan of action that will cover the continuing development of the entire site, including the Children's Library.

The foundations for a sustainable park have been laid. The community has been encouraged to take ownership of the project from the outset, through constant dialogue and participation. The interim management committee is now in charge of all the major decisions regarding the park. Mmofra has agreed to offer advice in any area concerning the park when its services are required.

Mmofra Foundation is also committed to anchoring and leading advocacy with policy makers on public space in Accra.