

The game of Mokou (pronounced mo-koo) is played in Lesotho by groups of children during their free time. Many of the children who live in villages have lots of jobs to do such as sweeping, collecting water, cooking, weeding and washing clothes, so there is not much time to play. They often do not have many toys to play with and so they use what is locally available, in this case some plastic bags to make a ball and some stones.

Games like these can be taught to highlight the less complicated forms of play found in many parts of Africa. The children playing are Baatile (ba-til-eh), Makhotso (ma-hot-so) and Mahali (ma-hadi) and are between the ages of 10 and 12.

How to play:

You need two teams to play Mokou. About five in one team, the builders and the same number in the rival side, the throwers. You will also need a soft ball and a selection of fairly flat stones. The ball seen in the pictures is made out of two plastic bags wrapped around and tied up.

The aim of the game is for the building team to create the highest pile of stones without getting hit with the ball by the throwing team.

- *The stones are placed in the centre of the playing space.*
- *The building team surrounds the stones and can shield those in their team placing the stones on top of each other.*
- *The throwing team throws the ball at the builders, trying to get them out and stop them building up the stones. They can pass the ball around to help them outwit the other team.*
- *The building team has to dodge the ball by jumping out of the way.*
- *As soon as a member of the building team is hit by the ball, they need to leave the game, exposing the builders making a pile of balancing stones.*
- *If the pile of stones falls over, it needs to be started again.*
- *The building team has to try and put as many stones as possible on top of each other before all of their team is out.*
- *When all of the building team is out the number of stones in the pile is counted and the teams swap over.*

It may be a good idea to mark out a circle on the ground that builders are not allowed out of, and throwers are not allowed into, to make sure the throwers do not get too close to the builders.



Mokou



The three girls show how to play Mokou in Mahile's garden.



Mokou



Baatile tries to dodge the ball – her pile of rocks has fallen over!



Mokou



She tries to pile the stones back up without being hit by the ball.



Mokou



The ball is very soft as it is made out of plastic bags.



Mokou



Finally she is hit by the ball and they swap over.

