



**Gulu Girls Basketball Camp Report
Gulu, Uganda
August 16th - August 21st, 2009**

By Gulu Go Volunteers

Executive Summary

The 2nd Annual Gulu Girls Basketball Camp took place in Gulu, Uganda between August 16th – August 21st, 2009. The 140 camp participants ranged from ages 13-18 from various primary and secondary schools in the Gulu area; an increase in participation from last year's camp by approximately 40 girls. The camp was hosted at Kaunda Grounds in Gulu through a partnership between Friends for Peace in Africa, a US non-profit organization and Uganda International Sports Academy, a Ugandan non-profit organization.

Volunteers from the US, lead by head facilitator Atim Oti conducted an intensive six day basketball training and leadership camp for both primary and secondary aged girls. The team of volunteers was comprised of individuals with backgrounds in secondary education, high school and collegiate coaching, collegiate athletics, professional athletics, law, business, counseling, community development, communication, program management, international youth facilitation and a universal passion and love for sports and empowerment. They solicited donations (kind and in-kind) from various businesses and individuals, and brought basketballs, shoes, uniforms, water bottles and other equipment for the camp. This volunteer group's efforts were possible because of Friends for Peace in Africa's commitment to reaching out to the northern Uganda community.

The 1st annual camp was held from June 28th and July 5th, and was instrumental in bringing an awareness of girls' sports in Northern Uganda and the game of basketball to this region. As northern Uganda begins to heal itself from the civil war that has torched its community, the girl child's participation in positive and motivation activities is critical. This year, instead of focusing on skills, a related focus on character values was used to implore the type of skills needed when rebuilding and sustaining a community torn by war; the values this year were respect, love, responsibility, and courage.

This year's camp was very important, because instilling the camp's motto of, "Striving for one's greatest potential", was expressed by the camp participants in a way not seen last year. The girls' smiles, willingness, and excitement in learning the game of basketball were heard all over Gulu District. Our intention of introducing girls' sports to the northern region of Uganda is picking up attention with both the community and the girls for whom the camp is done. It is the hope to continue teaching girls in Gulu and hopefully throughout the Gulu District the game of basketball, which is but only one lesson learned by participating in this camp.

A special thank you to all those in Kampala who facilitated our journey to Gulu, those in Gulu town who assisted our camp, and to the many blessings, prayers, and thoughts which made this camp a reality. Thank you for your support.

Kindly,

Gulu Go Volunteers

Post civil war reality

After over 20 years of warfare in northern Uganda, this community continues to hold tight to the promise of peace, even amidst failed the failed peace agreement signing between the Lords Resistance Army leader; Joseph Kony and the Ugandan Government. Several attempts to capture Kony and LRA forces by the Ugandan Government, including the most recent “Operation Lightning Thunder” in 2008, have proven fruitless. Although there have been no recent LRA attacks in northern Uganda, the group continues to pose a regional security threat and the fear of their return is well alive amongst many in northern Uganda.

While the quest for official peace between the warring factions has seemingly come to a halt, many Acoli (the predominant tribe in northern Uganda) affected by the war have begun their own pursuit of peace by departing the internal displacement camps and returning to their home villages. At the height of the war in 2005, over 1.8 million Acoli had become internally displaced persons (IDP) due to the conflict.¹ In May of 2009, only 378,000 Acoli remained in the internal displacement camps, and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that the vast majority of the 1.8 million IDP’s have returned to their home villages and 244,000 have relocated to “transit sites” closer to their home villages.²

Even though two thirds of displaced Acoli in northern Uganda have left the camps, there are still many problems this population faces in relocating home. Difficulty in clearing over grown land, uncertainty in planting on disputed land, lack of access to agricultural tools, seed, fertilizer and live stock, and fear of LRA return have collectively produced less available land to cultivate for returnees.³ Furthermore, “a rapid food security assessment conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) from July 6-12th, 2009 found that a large part of the population in the worst-affected sub-counties of the districts of Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum, Pader, Katakwi and Amuria expect a yield (of a food harvest) of less than 50% compared to normal”.⁴ Food security is an increasing problem in northern Uganda. An additional obstacle to returning home for displaced persons is a lack of basic services such as infrastructure, clean

¹ Uganda: Returns outpace recovery planning, The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre:Norwegian Refugee Council, August 19, 2009 at p 3, accessed at [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/C0C5A39A27DD6449C1257617004AA724/\\$file/Uganda_Overview_Aug09.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/C0C5A39A27DD6449C1257617004AA724/$file/Uganda_Overview_Aug09.pdf).

² Ibid at p 4.

³ Ibid at p 6.

⁴ Commission of the European Communities. Brussels, Belgium. 2009. Commission Decision: Emergency Humanitarian aid actions in Uganda from the 10th European Development Fund #ECHO/UGA/EDF/2009/01000 - Supporting Document at p 1, assessed at http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/decisions/2009/uganda_01000_en.pdf

drinking water, education, health care, security, justice, and social support.⁵ Even 2009 Mid-Year Review of the Consolidated Appeal for Uganda noted the “inadequate or non-existent basic infrastructure and services in return areas remains of serious concern”, and the 2010 Consolidated Appeal is also expected to be the last assistance in relation to the crisis in northern Uganda.⁶

Life has not been any easier for the population that is still displaced and living in the camps. There are four main groups of the remaining inhabitants of the IDP camps:

1. extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI's), such as persons with disabilities or severe trauma, female or child headed households, and elderly,
2. persons deterred from returning due to land disputes,
3. young persons left behind to access camp services, such as education, and
4. persons not returning because of economic opportunity in or near the camps⁷

Obstacles these groups face in returning home or relocating include a lack of food security, independence from a developed dependency, and/ or reduction in hunger

relief services. Young people receiving education and persons driving the local economy around the camps must find new ways of survival as camp services cease, without losing out on their opportunity for advancement. According to an Oxfam Briefing paper, in 2007, more than half of the IDPs were under the age of 15 years, and 1/3 of these children above the age of 10 have lost a parent. With vulnerabilities to sexual violence, family and social breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental illness in the purview of many of these children, positive reinforcements are absolutely necessary.

The Ugandan Government supported its National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons with the introduction of the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda in the fall of 2007. The Plan has four main goals to enhance socio-economic indicators in areas affected by conflict and law and order break down, consolidation of state authority, rebuilding and empowering communities, revitalization of the economy, and peace rebuilding and reconciliation. Even though the PRDP is two years old, implementation only

⁵ Supra note 2, at p 7.

⁶ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs- Consolidated Appeal Process. July 21, 2009. 2009 Consolidated Appeal for Uganda- Mid Year Review, assessed at p 7, <http://ochaonline.un.org/HUMANITARIANAPPEAL/webpage.asp?Page=1770>. Supra note 2, at p 8.

⁷ Ibid. note 2, at p 5.

began in July 2009 and the Government of Uganda has only committed to funding 30% of the original three-year budget of \$606 million.⁸

“The impact of development interventions in the Acoli districts has been insufficiently visible”, and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre predicts that “people in return area may end up worse off than they were in the camps”.⁹ The under funding of international aid projects, pull out of humanitarian aid, and lack of synchronization between national and international development strategies leave the out look for socio-economic and peaceful advancement in northern Uganda very unstable.¹⁰ Northern Uganda, whose population has seen a drastic age change, is home to more than . These children are the survivors of the devastating war, whereby many of them are orphans as a result of deceased parents and abandonment. This is one of several vulnerable segments of the northern Ugandan population that must receive particular attention from the Ugandan government and allied international and national organizations.

The need for sustainable projects that empower those affected by the conflict to reclaim peaceful and productive lives is enormous. The GuluGO Basketball and Leadership Development Camp is a ground breaking project that helps satisfy this need.

GO team GO - Background to the camp

As a vulnerable group, the girl child in northern Uganda needs specific attention to the social and internal dilemmas that only a child of war can know. With many of these girls with only one parent in the household, or themselves head of households, focusing on instilling leadership qualities which are transferable to other aspect of their lives will help in the rebuilding of northern Uganda.

Basketball, is one of many sports that the girl child can learn transferable skills which can be applied to various aspects of their lives, such as in inter-personal communications and career development. The four character values practiced at this year’s camp were respect, love, responsibility, and courage. All of these skills focused on the central theme of exploring one’s greatest potential.

⁸ Ibid. note 2, at p 8.

⁹ Ibid. note 2, at p 9.

¹⁰ Ibid.



Strategic planning and fundraising for the camp began in October, 2008. Team members met once a month, then bi-monthly and weekly in May and June of 2008. This year's facilitating team were met with the challenge of planning this entire camp by telephone and the sheer will and passion to put this camp on again. Fundraising was conducted by means of direct mail campaigns, private house parties, and public events. Monetary and in-kind donations were solicited, with all goals being met, including in-kind donations of basketballs, shoes, jerseys, and shipping.

Participant demographics

In an effort to minimize travel for the camp participants, the schools closest to Kaunda Grounds were chosen to participate. Additionally, UGISA volunteered to continue to promote girls sports. The camp participants were divided into two groups: primary and secondary. The following schools participated with the correlating number of participants from their school.

PRIMARY	SECONDARY
GULU TOWN P/S	AWERE S.S S

LAYIBI CENT	GULU S.S S
LAYIBI P/S	GULU ARMY S S
GRACE ACAD	GULU PARENTS
UNIFAT P/S	
CHRIST CHU'CH P/S	
POLICE P/S	
VIENNA JDB P/S	
KASUBI P/S	
PECE P/S	
VIENNA JDB P/S	
HOLY ROSARY P/S	
LABOURLLINE P/S	
GULU PRISON P/S	
HIGHLAND P/S	
BUNGATIRA P/S	
MARY IMMACULATE	
GULU PRISON P/S	
KASUBI P/S	

GuluGO Leadership

In 2008, a new dimension was added to the GuluGO Basketball Camp. A character values based leadership curriculum was added to make the impact of the GuluGO motto, "striving for our greatest potential", more intentional and real to the participants. Part of the philosophy of GuluGO is that we use basketball as a means to teach life skills and as therapy for healing the soul. The main purpose of GuluGO is to impact the lives of participants in a profoundly transformational way that enables them to carry on the lessons they learn into their everyday lives and communities. One can learn and play the game of basketball while they are young and able-bodied, but you can practice and pass on the skills you learn through the game forever.

The leadership development curriculum was taught from a character values approach that seeks to build skills through teaching by principle and example and heeding the law of consequences and rational-decision making. The character values approach allows the student to develop the ability to recognize and practice values. Character-based leadership encourages ethical practices, collaboration and open communication, and the creation of high-trust environments. The character values approach has knowledge, attitude and

behavioral components that are inextricably linked to the three attributes of character - knowing the good, desiring the good and doing the good.

The volunteer team chose character values that are consistent, universal, and trans-cultural. They build character that produces behavior that is beneficial for the individual, others and the community. The values this year were: respect, love, responsibility, and courage. Four values were chosen so that participants could focus on a value every day. Each day, the participants learned about the value of the day and heard a testimony from a UGISA volunteer about the value. Additionally, team building activities were conducted that helped to highlight the lessons to be learned from each character value. Coaches were instructed to pull out lessons from the court play and tie them to the character value for the day.

One day of camp was used to focus on the leadership curriculum. Without ball or any court play, participants were able to address each value with three central questions:

- ❖ What kind of a person am I becoming?
- ❖ What kind of a person do I want to be?
- ❖ How shall I live with others?

There were 5 minute small group activities for each value, to allow time for self disclosure and to help the participants identify with each other. Participants were also able to talk about the barriers they face in enacting the character values. The day was wrapped up with a talk from a local primary teacher, Madame Norah Nemwa Ndaha, from Unifat Primary in Gulu, Uganda. Madame Norah was the only female teacher to actively participate for the full six days. She was a local leader and role model of how education and dedication to one's community makes a difference for others.

Impact and Results

In total, the girls' basketball camp reached approximately 140 primary and secondary participants. With the debilitating drought and family obligations of fetching water and going to dig in the garden, these girls showed up to camp, with the support of their parents, who saw that this opportunity was equally important to their children's future.

Basketball fundamentals were the focus for the camp, which included: dribbling, shooting, passing, and positions, proved to be very effective. We divided the camp into five stations, with camp participants rotating stations every 15

minutes. This was done to ensure increased repetition and gave the facilitators the opportunity to work with the girls on a more individual basis. Dialogue between girls from different schools was achieved by splitting the girls up into three groups. This allowed them to rely on each other in learning the different drills and practice communication, hard work, and cooperation skills. The girls absorbed the drills in such a way, that in three days we had put together all the different drills and began to incorporate them into actual game settings, first starting with three on three, and then moving to five on five, half court.

The visible involvement of UGISA staff and assistants created a comfortable and friendly environment where learning was embraced. The assistance of the coaches' assistants from UGISA was very beneficial, as they were able to help with language translation, demonstration and explaining drills, support for facilitators, and as promoters and role models for girls sports in Gulu.

Personal Reflection by Coaches

Coach Cady demonstrates mirror defense drill during defense station



Going to Uganda was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that could not be passed up. It meant missing a week of work, but it was an experience and opportunity unsurpassed. Experiencing two weeks in another culture, specifically Acoli culture, had significant impacts, some of which are just starting to surface. During the camp, one participant hurt her knee and needed to be driven back to her home. Even though we knew the girls' living situations, it took actually going and seeing her village to fully comprehend that this is life for them, so different from our own. It was a reality check for us on health care, transportation, accommodations in general, living standards and overall wealth that we take for granted daily in the United States.



- Coach Laurie teaches a camp participant form

shooting

It was apparent that the girls thoroughly enjoyed participating in the basketball camp. It's doubtful that any of the girls will take basketball to a level like we know, but the pay-backs of basketball are evident even in Gulu, Uganda. Come rain, heat, storm and chores, the girls showed up daily to have fun and learn the game of basketball. For many, it seemed that basketball was an escape--a release--from the daily routine and also the very recent past that still haunts. Connections are made through basketball--among coaches, among players--that last a life-time. Seeing the girls interacting with each other and socializing was very rewarding. Even though it was such a short time spent with these girls, the skills and character values, especially of team-work, seemed to take hold. It was a very rewarding and all around life-changing experience.

Challenges

The second annual Camp GuluGo was an overall success; however, it experienced many challenges that should be addressed. Challenges include the following: transporting camp supplies from the U.S. to Gulu; general shortage of shoes and shorts; extreme heat and sun; too many inexperienced coaches' assistants; lack of camp funds.

One of the initial challenges we faced as camp organizers was finding a way to transport the 150 pairs of shoes, 50 basketballs, 150 t-shirts, and other camp supplies to Gulu. Lacking the funds to safely ship the gear to Uganda, we all packed and checked multiple bags on our airlines and hauled the gear to Gulu ourselves. This was not an ideal situation and will become increasingly more difficult as the number of campers and necessary gear increases. Our goal for

future camps should be to raise enough funds to safely ship all gear to Gulu, or at the very least, to Kampala.

There was a general shortage of shoes and shorts for the girls. Of the 150 pairs of shoes that were brought over, not all were of the appropriate size. The same applies to the shorts. Most were too small. Our goal for future camps should be to know the approximate size of all gear needed for the registered campers before we leave for Gulu. A correlated problem with the shoes involved the order in which we distributed them before camp. Before each camp the girls would huddle around the shoe bags and try them on until they found a pair that fit. This led to a bit of a chaotic situation that could have been avoided. Our goal for future camps should be to assign a pair of shoes to each camper and number them. Before each camp they already know and we already know which shoes are theirs for camp.

Another challenge we faced was holding camp during the heat of the day. This was less of an issue for the primary campers in the morning; however, it affected the secondary campers and coaches in the afternoon session. It affected energy levels, attitudes, and desire to have fun playing basketball. Our goal for future camps should be to restrict all camps to the morning sessions.

We had too many inexperienced coaches' assistants. The concept of teaching these young women leadership skills by making them coaches' assistants we support; however, most of these young women needed to be in camp themselves because they were too young or too inexperienced. They became more of a distraction than a help. Unfortunately, due to our limited time in Uganda, we were unable to spend more time with the assistants prior to camp setting expectations. Our goal for future camps should be to reduce the number of coaches' assistants to 10 and implement a half day training session prior to camp.

The largest challenge was the lack of camp funds. This limited our camp in a number of ways, including not providing snacks to the girls each day; gear not sized appropriately; only one van for transport of all coaches and gear; coaches coming out of pocket personally to be in Gulu; limited equipment. Our goal for future camps should be to have a better grasp on the budget and how much money we need, and then really focus on seeking dollar donations from companies and high net-worth individuals.



Lessons-learned

The luxury in teaching willing and hungry bodies and minds is often taken for granted. The camp participants of this year's camp, both new comers and returnees, was tremendous. The structure of drills facilitated quicker learning and the access to a ball per participant enabled each participant to pick up the game of basketball with ease.

This year's camp was held during a school holiday break, which allowed for a great turnout. However, more emphasis must be put on getting teachers and school administration to recognize the benefits of this camp. The District Sports Officer of Gulu, Mr. Aldo Otto Okot, was gracious to express his encouragement in girls' sports and participation during the closing ceremonies of the 2009 camp.

Due to the tremendous turnout this year, a greater need for in-kind donations of sports equipment and camp facilitation funding will be needed. Next year's camp is expected to branch out to at least one other town in Gulu District, thereby making this camp more accessible to others. In turn, this will increase camp participation numbers significantly.

Sustaining the momentum of this camp is a challenge which must be addressed as well. The visibility of UGISA as the only sports academy centrally located in Gulu Town is of the essence. Their office, located at Pece Stadium, is a place

where youth, both boys and girls go to get sports equipment, trainers, and tips on playing the various sports that interest them. Without UGISA, youth in Gulu, and the great northern Uganda, will not have a needed outlet for play and constructive learning outside of the classroom and home.

Conclusion

The 1st Annual Gulu Go Basketball Camp for girls was a success. Participants learned a new sport, many for the first time, and life lessons. The vision of the camp has been about empowering girls to develop leadership skills and learn how to build community through sports. The participants in the camp, coaches, and volunteers were all students of the great lessons that community building can do. Community development is essential in this region because the trauma of the war has inflicted so many people. Many members from Gulu town camp out to watch the girls train, several groups including boys and elders inquired about camps for them as well. This camp not only benefits the girl child, but also the community in which she lives. The practical manner in which the camp teaches personal development is one that will transfer into the daily lives of the participants and hopefully aid them in actualizing their highest potential.

See you in 2010. GuluGO!