

Narrative Report by Atim Oti to Athletes for Africa in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding with Gulu GO

Summary of the Project

The 3rd Annual Gulu Girls Basketball and Leadership Camp took place at Kaunda Grounds, in Gulu, Uganda, between August 15th – August 20th, 2010. 150 camp participants from surrounding primary and secondary schools within Gulu town were registered for this camp.

The camp was hosted by Gulu Athlete Sport Limited, GASL, a local organization promoting sports in Uganda and through the partnership of Gulu GO volunteers and Athletes for Africa, an international non-profit organization.

As the lead facilitator, I organized volunteers from the United States to come to Gulu and conduct 2 intensive three day basketball training and leadership camps 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. We solicited donations (kind and in-kind) from various businesses and individuals, and brought basketballs, shoes, uniforms, water bottles and other equipment for the camp.

The 2008 and 2009 camps set a precedent of girls' sports in Northern Uganda and the game of basketball in 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. Therefore, the leadership segment of this camp focused on building the character values of the camp participants so that they may be positive community members within Gulu. This year's leadership theme, gratitude, built on last year's five core themes of respect, love, responsibility, and courage.

Building on the camp's motto of, "Striving for one's greatest potential", 2010 camp participants came ready to participate and learn the game of basketball. So much energy, determination, and natural talent were seen at this year's camp. On the last day of each camp, both primary and secondary were split into teams of approximately 7 players and a camp tournament was held; a first for the Gulu Girls Basketball and Leadership Camp. Girls basketball has arrived in Gulu, Uganda and will hopefully continue to spread throughout Northern Uganda with more camps to come

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

Activities carried out during the period of agreement (directly related to the project description and activities foreseen in this agreement)

On August 14th, we conducted a preliminary camp meeting with GASL coaches' assistants who were recruited from previous camps to assist in the camps. The primary aged camp began on August 15th and ended on August 17th, 2010. The secondary camp started on August 18th and ended on August 20th, 2010. During each daily camp session, held between 9am to 12pm, we focused our instruction on the fundamentals of dribbling, passing, shooting, and defense through repetitive drills, active demonstrations, and creative challenges.

The camp participants engaged in the leadership curriculum for this year's camp with the assistance of the GASL coaches assistants. On each day of camp, a different character value based on the central theme of Gratitude was discussed and a correlating activity was used to explain in detail the value. The following character values were taught at this year's camp: The choice to be Positive/Enthusiasm, thankfulness, and generosity.

At the end of each camp day, the volunteer coaches and the assistant coaches gathered for lunch to discuss and reflect on the day's camp activities in order to refine the next day.

During the afternoons, the coaches and myself were able to conduct other volunteer activities, mainly at St. Jude Orphanage, where clothing donations were taken for the orphans and assisted the house mothers in food preparation. We were also able to distribute shoes through BOSCO Uganda, a local nonprofit organization to a neighboring computer/youth center in Pagak, Uganda, and to youth in Anaka, Uganda, through the efforts of the Straight Talk Foundation and the Gulu Youth Centre.

Difficulties encountered and measures taken to overcome problems

The third annual Camp GuluGo was an overall success; however, there were some challenges:

There were two bags of shoes that did not reach Gulu until the third day of camp, therefore, we were not able to give shoes to both primary and secondary girls as part of their reward for participating in this year's camp. On a positive note, we were able to arrange with local transport to get shoes from the Entebbe Airport to Gulu in time for the secondary camp.

Due to the upcoming presidential elections, a government policy directed that student's holidays be shortened to two weeks instead of four, therefore, several participants were not able to attend camp. This challenge was out of the project's control. Despite this new challenge, a large number of girls from various schools were able to participate in the camp.

Storage of camp equipment from year to year has always been a challenge due to the lack of a safe storage facility in Gulu. This year, an interested community member has graciously to store shoes, basketballs, and jerseys for next year's camp in his home.

Some camp days were hotter than others, and so training in an open space can be exhausting for camp participants and coaches. In an effort to remedy this challenge, more water breaks were given and camp activities were carefully planned to be completed in the morning before the extreme afternoon heat.

A recurring challenge for the camp is being able to provide athletic shorts for all camp participants. This has always been a challenge for this project and we will continue to try to secure more shorts for all camp participants.

Several schools which have previously participated did not participate this year. Since recruitment is coordinated through the local school's administrations, it is important to build working relationships with these institutions in order to convey the importance of positive activity for girls. This is a constant challenge that we will continue to work on.

The coach to camp participant ratio was the greatest it's been in the last three years, which minimizes the individual attention that each camp participant can be given. Ordinarily when teaching basketball, the coach to camp participant ratio should be on average 15:1, as opposed to this year's ratio of 25:1. Efforts to recruit more volunteer coaches will be done throughout this year to remedy this situation.

Changes introduced in implementation

In an effort to strengthen the local leadership and presence of girls basketball in Gulu, a concerted effort to increase participation of the locally based coaches assistants to participate in daily camp instruction. This effort was done to address the lack of consistency that girls basketball currently has in Gulu. Teaching and empowering the assistant coaches to teach the fundamental skills they have learned will help other girls in the community learn or begin to learn the game of basketball. This change in instruction style was very effective and the assistant coaches responded well.

Achievements/results

For the 2010 Gulu Girls Basketball and Leadership Camp, a total of approximately 120 primary and secondary participated. Despite the unplanned government policy which shortened the school holiday to only two weeks, we still had a great turnout. The strong recruitment process conducted this year by GASL was critical in the success of the camp.

Drawing from our challenges of the 2009 camp, the camp instruction itself was shortened from 6 days to 3 intensive days. This was a rewarding challenge for the coaches, and we all felt that the campers responded well rested each day. The quality of the camp. This was the first time in 3 years of the camp's history that the camp participants have been able to put all the fundamentals together and compete against each other. That is a sign that the willingness and ability of girls in

northern Uganda to play basketball is growing participants ability to learn and play the game of basketball is improving with each camp. For the first time, we were able to hold a 5 on 5 tournament on the last day of each camp due to their excitement and eagerness to play.

Local young leaders, the assistant coaches, are being given the opportunity to develop their abilities to lead in positive ways. Many of these youth are in difficult situations and do not have many opportunities to engage in activities that relate to things other than their own basic substance and survival. This camp has given them an opportunity to not only participate in a skill-building activity to do, but has given them responsibility and ownership over their actions towards others in their community.

The girl child in Africa, and locally in northern Uganda is vital in the development of this continent. In a region that has seen war, death, and hopelessness, the rebuilding process of northern Uganda will take time. A sport, girls basketball, has given some of the youth in this area, the vision of a new day, laughter, and a smile to strengthen a community. The 2010 Gulu Girls Basketball and Leadership Camp was a tremendous success. We will continue to build on the want and desire of these girls to play basketball and learn the tools to being a positive community member in northern Uganda.

Photos, videos, stories of the camp and the participants, leaders and volunteers

See the attached link for pictures - public Facebook link

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=2089970&id=1349795380&l=ca7086fc77>

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