



Holiday Camp Report- October 2017

Reporting Dates: 3rd- 6th October 2017

United Through Sport
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Summary

During a mid-year holiday break for local schools, United Through Sport conducted a holiday programme for children to participate in. During these school holidays, parents from the northern areas often struggle to keep their children occupied due to the lack of resources in these areas. In order to address these issues, UTS conducted a holiday camp to occupy and educate these youngsters during this time and to keep them away from any risk factors such as drugs or alcohol. We have found that school holidays are often when children from these communities regress in their development due to lack of stimulation and, thus, this is an important time for the children to receive additional education and stimulation.

From the 3rd until the 6th October, a four-day programme was held in Hillside at Erica House, a home of safety for orphaned, vulnerable and at-risk children. These children have all been placed here due to specific physical neglect they have experienced in their home life. In addition, Erica House also offers a basic education system for these at risk and vulnerable children, and partnered with UTS to organise the holiday camp. The programme was conducted during the week of the October school holiday and, therefore, it was decided to invite learners from various organisations that are linked with Erica House rather than targeting the same children that we work with from the primary schools in the area. These are all children that come from extremely difficult backgrounds and as a result often have a variety of emotional disorders and behavioural problems. The age groups requested were 3-8-year olds and 9- 17-year olds. The targeted number of participants (100) was reached and with the exact number of 114 children, the target was surpassed. One of the various



organisations that participated in our holiday program was the Eastern Province Child & Youth centre. Children are placed in their centre as a last resort if they are found to be in need of care by the children's court. This is often because they have been exposed to violence and abuse or have been neglected by their caregivers. As a result, their children have often suffered a great deal of trauma, neglect, and sometimes abandonment and are in need of intensive support to help reach their developmental goals.

The holiday camp contained four distinct aspects: sport (hockey, netball and football), fitness, life skills and arts & crafts. Because of the diversity of activities, children with a wide range of interests, not just sport, were able to enjoy the camp and remain engaged in all sessions.

Following an opening session lead by volunteers, the children rotated through four 30-40 minute sessions each day. On the last day of the programme, prizes were handed out to the children who took part in the various sporting sessions. Conducting the camp were six UTS staff members and 16 international volunteers.

The first day of the camp was a challenge as our staff and volunteers initially struggled with the behaviour of the various children, however this made the progress of the children throughout the camp all the more vivid, as session by session, day by day the children's behaviour improved, they became less hostile, more relaxed and seemed much happier. The combination of physical activity, therapeutic arts and crafts sessions and life skills discussions seemed to have a significant impact of their emotional well being.

In a small survey of participants at the end of the camp, the group of children commented on how they enjoyed the various activities so much and how the combination of different aspects really made a difference. The sport made them full of energy and they were happy while playing. The arts and crafts was relaxing and felt calming and therapeutic for them and the life skills were engaging and they learned a lot through it. As a result of the nature of the children we were working with, we deviated slightly from the normal life skills curriculum and focussed more on positive behaviour, future aspirations and how your past does not affect your future. This seemed to have a positive impact on the participants who reported that they learned a lot and felt it had given them a different outlook on life.



The final day of the camp was an informal tournament in hockey and football. The children had great fun competing with each other and the other children from the different care centres. At the end the children received a certificate and various prizes were awarded for their participation and positive energy.

Challenges

The number of children expected on the first day was reached, however, the number was not consistent due to the bad weather on the second day of the camp. Time presented another challenge, as the camp had to unexpectedly finish an hour earlier than planned due to several organisations having transport problems with bringing the children to one central venue from the different locations. The behaviour of the children on the first day was a bit of a shock for the staff and volunteers, but this turned into a positive as the camp progressed and they saw the children's behaviour visibly improve. The group of staff and volunteers were very flexible and were able to adjust the programme accordingly.

Conclusion

The holiday programme was successful due to the flexibility and planning of staff as well as all of the international volunteers. The children were engaged through the camp and learned practical life skills, such as sportsmanship and how to conduct themselves both on and off the sports field as well as how to plan for the future and focus on the positives of their life. Various children reported the highlight of the camp as being the sport sessions where the children had the opportunity to work with coaches in small groups and receive individual attention. Since most of the schools that the children attend do not have sports equipment, decent sports fields or coaches to instruct them, the children were grateful for the opportunity to participate in structured sports coaching, something they do not normally get the chance to do. Throughout the week, children noticeably progressed in their skills in each sport and were able to continually build on the previous day's session. The combination of sport, life skills and arts and crafts had a marked impact on the children's emotional well being and as a result changed their behaviour to become much more positive. We are hopeful that this will have a lasting impact on these children into the future. We will definitely return to this partnership again as the impact on the children was very clear.







