

PEACE ME THE BALL: Promoting Peace Through Soccer

Davis Project for Peace 2012

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“Soccer offers a shot at social mobility for a poor child, usually a black or mulatto who had no other toy but a ball. The ball is the only fairy godmother he can believe in. Maybe she will feed him; maybe she will make him a hero, maybe even a god. Misery trains him for soccer or for crime” Eduardo Galeano – Uruguayan Writer and Journalist.

Background and current situation:

Although Brazil is the world’s sixth largest economy it remains one of the most unequal of all countries. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, more than six percent of the Brazilian population lives in vast urban shantytowns, called the *favelas*. The community of Lauro de Freitas, a large suburb of Salvador, the capital of the State of Bahia, serves as an example of this inequality. Like many other big cities in Brazil, Lauro de Freitas suffers serious social problems and juvenile crime due to high immigration from the countryside and economic inequality. As results of these socio-economic inequalities, poverty clusters exist and an increasing number of adolescents spend their days in “the streets.” Too often, these children lack access to adequate forms of recreation. Through sport, adolescents not only develop long-life skills but, if directed, they can also learn avoid the crime, drugs, and violence of their environment.

Project proposal:

Our project seeks to create a space in which kids from the community of Lauro Freitas will develop conflict resolution skills and positive sense of community through soccer. In many parts of Latin America, soccer is one of the few spaces where children are valued for their own merits, beyond any social-economic inequalities and prejudices. We intend to generate an egalitarian space in order to foster a social environment where debate, ideas, and different opinions are encouraged among participants. Our project will encourage the spirit of competition and excellence with the understanding that respect for others and fair play prevails at all times as a transcendent value. When taught holistically, with carefully designed supplementary programming, soccer can become a metaphor for everyday life and a means by which to teach conflict resolution skills and community empowerment – two important pathways to peace.

Objectives:

- To encourage the practice of sport within the community of Lauro Freitas.
- To educate the children about the dangers of drugs and juvenile delinquency.
- To promote conflict resolution education within the community of Lauro Freitas.
- To encourage participants to engage and lead the larger community about conflict resolution methods.

Project’s beneficiaries:

This project is designed to directly benefit thirty children ranging from the age of 10 to 17 who currently live in one of the most dangerous areas of Lauro de Freitas. Children who will be part of this project will not only receive free soccer training, but they will also develop other tools such as values, tolerance, respect, humility, and honesty. The project seeks to empower children to become agents of change in their own communities while contributing to their human development. Moreover, the targeted children will be encouraged to share their ideals and opinions with other members of their community so that they can help create a better society. The program will benefit thirty adolescents and create an impact on the larger Lauro Freitas community generally.

Methodology:

This project will be guided by interactive soccer training sessions, incorporating the methodologies of peace education (i.e. conflict resolution). Following a 3-day schedule during every 4 weeks, we will use the facilities provided by the SOS Children’s Villages in Lauro de Freitas (SOSCVB) to establish a learning environment geared towards soccer and peace education. The training sessions are planned to be held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. These training sessions will start at 3 p.m. and will last one hour and a half. These training sessions will be led by a credentialed soccer coach

(selected with assistance of the SOSCVB) and by us, the two student assistant-mentors (Mauricio Santiago and Luis Reyes). During these sessions the group of thirty adolescents will be divided into two groups according to their ages: the first group made up of 10 to 13-year-old and the second group will have 14 to 17-year-olds. Our goal is to have equal number of participants in both groups so that we can most effectively coach, mentor, teach, and model behavior for.

In the afternoon, after the training sessions, we plan to lead an activity called “What If?” This activity consists in asking the participants questions that encourage them to put themselves in a situation related to the workshop’s topic of that week. For example, if the topic for the week concerns discrimination, the kids will be asked questions similar to the following: What would you do if another kid discriminated against you due to your skin color during a soccer match? What would you do if the same kid discriminates against you in the streets? What would you do if a boy does not let you play because he says that soccer is a male sport?

Each Friday we will also have special workshops. These workshops will be conducted by a speaker and each topic will center on conflict resolution that is related to soccer: discrimination, use of drugs, hooliganism, and corruption. Through these workshops, which will also include interactive learning (group games and videos) the participants will be engaged in the practice of peace in a dynamic manner. Speakers will be contacted in coordination with SOSCVB.

On at least one of the Saturdays we plan to have a soccer match against other local teams. On another Saturday we plan to take the group to watch a match of the most popular soccer team of that region: FC Bahía. On the final Saturday we will have our last event that will take place at SITIO CANTO VERDE, where the participants will play a final match. Following this match they will evaluate the project and reflect on how they have changed.

In order to have more resources for the project we plan to raise extra money for equipment and other needs through fundraising events, including soccer tournaments and FIFA Play Station competitions at our college during the 2012 spring term. A portion of the budget will also be allocated for the continuation of the project in Lauro de Freitas, helping to extend the project going forward.

Example of the 1st week of “Peace me the ball”						
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Training session N° 1	Buy materials for the soccer field	Training session N° 2	Start repairing the soccer field	Training session N° 3	Practice match (against other local team)
4:45 – 5:20 p.m.	What if? Activity	Buy materials for the soccer field	What if? Activity	Repair the soccer field	-----	
5:00 – 6:30 p.m.	-----	-----	-----	-----	1st workshop: Discrimination	-----
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.	-----	Plan activities for the next day	-----	Plan activities for the next day	-----	Go to the stadium and watch FC Bahía

Expected outcomes:

- To show how soccer not just as a sport but as a vehicle to teach peace.
- To help train adolescent leaders who can spread the knowledge they have acquired from the program.
- The creation of a 10 to 15 minutes video that will be used to share and promote the experience to other organizations.
- The creation of a sustainability plan, based on the evaluation results, that will help us promote and maintain the project after the four weeks.
- Potentially spreading this project to other organizations that work with children and sports (not only soccer).

Partnership:

- SOS Children’s Villages Brazil: laurodefreitas.ba@aldeiasinfantis.org.br Tel: +55(71)3378-4066 (Jussara)
- SITIO CANTO VERDE – Fabio Ornelas: fabiornelas@terra.com Tel: +55(71)9131-6174

Projected time frame: 29 days (Starting on July 30th and finishing on August 25th)