

Section I

a. Session 2: Lengela Lobi Summer Camp (Prepare for Tomorrow) Empowering young women in Gemena, DRC, Country: DRC

I-House Alumni

b. Project summary: Our summer camp goal was to empower 25 young women ages 11 to 25 in our Young Scholars program through a week long summer camp focusing on increasing a positive physical, mental and relational outcomes by filling the support gaps that put them most at risk for sexual exploitation, early marriage, and poor decision making.

c. Did other fund-raising efforts contribute to your project?

No additional fundraising efforts contributed in the materialization of this project. However, using our social capital and previous relationships in the community, we were able to secure the summer camp venue at a discounted rate than the actual marketed price, which has certainly enabled us to capitalize on the resources available for a more efficient use.

d. Provide details about how your project actually worked.

In summary, this leadership summer camp scheduled to take place during the month of June and later on July has not yet taken place due to several logistical challenges prompted by last minutes changes on the ground. For a starter, we host the camp in the Equateur province of the DRC where the girls who are scholars in our leadership program are located. DRC being one of the poorest countries in the world, the Equateur province where our program is based is the poorest region of the DRC, ranking in the lowest bottom on the national indicators of health, infrastructure and opportunities. Consequently, working in the village of Gemena Equateur for us is a unique opportunity to spot talents and nurture leadership among girls who are coming from the most marginalized background in the country as we work with the poorest of the poor.

As an Ihouse alumni, I currently am based in the capital city of Kinshasa where I live and work as Deputy Director for the Women's Empowerment Program of the International Rescue Committee. I was granted two weeks of vacation in June to July, enabling me to travel in Equateur to complete this project. However, both of my colleagues in the department happened to not be in the country around the time scheduled for my leave, requiring that my original timeline for vacation be postponed to a later date. The new timeline in August however was marred by logistical difficulties as the only airline that flies into the province was encountering logistical challenges of their own (there are no roads linking the capital to the provinces, it takes 90 minutes to fly to Gemena or three weeks by boat).

Navigating these logistical challenges meant that our pre-scheduled lodging reservation was no longer valid and the earliest reservation we could obtain would be for the first week of September. The guesthouse we had an agreement with is the only venue available in the village of Gemena with the capacity to provide accommodation and on site services and safety for a large group (there are no other guest houses or venue available locally).

Nonetheless the first week of September being the week when students go back to school, the challenge that ensued was to get consent from schools and parents to allow their daughters to participate in the summer camp and potentially miss the first week of school. We were not able to secure consents for the majority of parents and after careful deliberation, hosting the camp activities in September would not be ideal both for the girls as they will need to miss school and also for speakers who needed to travel and attend.

Moving forward, this is where we stand: we have the confirmed and secured venue for the month of December. We will host this summer camp during the holiday season when the girls and speakers will have the time to peacefully travel and attend. To counter last minute changes with the airline, we are shipping camp materials via cargo to Gemena, ensuring that materials will be able to get there by December, regardless of the time and changes that may occur with the airlines in due time. Working in the DRC is quite challenging due to the lack of infrastructure available and complexity of logistics. We are truly grateful for the generosity of your support as it enables us to do great work in some of the most difficult places and context.

Section II

a. To me, one of the most meaningful ways to achieve peace is to provide people with the tools to create models of lives free from the burden of poverty, short termism, diseases and violence. This core belief is at the center of what we seek to achieve with young girls in the DRC and that is why this project will empower 25 young women ages 11 to 25 in the Young Scholars program by providing a week long summer camp that will focus on filling the informational and support gaps that put them most at risk for sexual exploitation, early marriage, and poor decision making. It seeks to increase their ability to complete their education, achieve financial self-sustainability, and increase positive physical, mental, and relational health outcomes. It will run for ten days and use an overnight camp model to ensure that attendance and participation will not be affected by family demands or a lack of nutrition or sleep. This model also has the additional benefit of building the community and trust that is optimal for sharing about these topics and giving the girls the experience of a supportive and violence free living arrangement that is different from what many of them know. Each day will include sessions on Physical Health, Personal Development, Leadership and Skills building. Music, drama, games, small and large group discussions and activities will be used to engage the participants on these topics and promote confidence and team work. Participants will complete projects daily to retain what they are learning and create tools they can use in the future for peer education.

In addition, the camp will include two community service sessions during which girls will target critical needs in their communities to which they will respond by designing and delivering a SMART solution. This will allow girls to think beyond their own direct interests and to serve as viable contributors to change in their communities.

Daily sessions and Topics	Topics	Local Speakers
Health	Nutrition, Sanitation, Reproductive health, STI&HIV prevention	Mrs. Beanwe Marthe (Nurse at local clinic), Dr Valerie B (Female doctor at nearby hospital)
Leadership Development	Goal setting, Academics & Professional opportunities, Community service, Public speaking, Technology and ICT, Politics	Mrs. Sabuli Jeanne (Founder and Director of Compassion orphanage), Sarah Thontwa, Meredith Hutchisson, A local member of parliament (TBD)
Relationships and Personal development	Social and emotional Awareness, Healthy vs. Unhealthy relationships, Cultural pressures, Growth, Friendships	Ms. Gertrude Dako Sarah Thontwa (Founder & Director of Littlethings)

The camp will take place in Gemena where we have an established base and record in the community. A selected group of local leaders will serve as speakers or experts for knowledge and experience during the summer camp.

Sustainability: An identified group of women in the community will be trained to assist and respond to threats of violence and exploitation the girls face in the future and to help them create a safety plan if needed. An anonymous hotline will be put in place for girls to reach out via mobile phone or social media to mentors in moments of crisis in order to seek out support and healthy advice. We will further work to make this resource available to young girls in the larger community upon the completion of the camp.

Expected Results: Through the Lengela Lobi summer camp, 25 young women will be directly impacted and equipped with information, tools and skills to develop as leaders as well as to better respond to the negative pressing challenges they face in their communities.

Conclusion: Through this leadership camp, attendants will learn to develop as young women who are able to grow in self-awareness, confidence and become change makers by serving in their communities. The best way to empower people is by enabling them to access the needed tools to create a future of peace, possibilities and peace. This is my understanding and vision of peace (Sarah Thontwa).