Project Title: Promoting Education And Cultivating Empowerment (PEACE) through Girls Basketball
Institution: University of Pennsylvania Summer 2018 ‘Projects for Peace’
Students: Summer Kollie ’19 Health and Societies, Princess Aghayere ’19 Health and Societies
Region: Grace Baptist Institute (High School), Lulu Pennoh community, Barnersville, Liberia
Non-Profits & Partners: SMART Liberia, Inbound Africa
Date: June 17 - August 10 (8 Weeks)

Background
The small West African country of Liberia has been steadily recovering from two bloody civil wars. According to The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the second civil war which lasted 14 years (1999 – 2003) claimed an estimated 250,000 lives, displaced a million people, and left a lasting imprint of violence.¹ Among the youth of Liberia, women and girls were and continue to be an especially vulnerable population.

Women in Liberia have less access to education, health care, property, and justice in comparison to men. In 2016, Liberia ranked 114 out of 144 on the Gender Inequality index.² Due to the 14 year civil war, many women and girls did not receive education. Furthermore, they face obstacles to education such as teenage pregnancy, traditions such as early marriage, poverty, peer pressure, and female disempowerment among others. The gender gap in school attendance is high thus only 60 percent of girls complete primary school in Liberia, compared to 71 percent of boys, and 19 percent of men have completed secondary school or higher, while only 8 percent of women have accomplished the same.³

Girls face obstacles to education as well as lack of motivation to go to school. First, less importance is placed on education for females because of a patriarchal traditional society. Second, opportunities that incentivize youths to go to school such as sports and extracurricular activities typically favor boys. However, when provided with the opportunity to participate, studies in developing countries show that girls can benefit from the values and physicality that sports such as basketball can offer.⁴ Sports can offer an opportunity for girls to learn skills such as cooperation, leadership, self-determination, grit, and perseverance, as well as build mental and emotional health and toughness. These are the building blocks for confidence which is the first step in empowering females. Empowered females can then take advantage of the opportunity to get an education and become leaders who can promote and maintain peace in their communities and the society at large.

Project Objectives/ Aims
The primary objective of this project is to address some of the aforementioned obstacles to female education in Liberia. We aim to promote the importance of female education first through personal development workshops, academic tutoring, and second, through basketball clinics which will help to boost confidence and morale as well as serve as an encouragement and incentive for the girls to come to school and stay in school.

Project Description and Implementation
For the first four weeks, we will implement a four series workshop that will focus on self-care, sexual health, hygiene, teen pregnancy prevention, and the importance of education. Our workshops will emphasize leadership, confidence, and comradery. The workshops will be held once a week on Fridays. Furthermore, we plan to distribute hygiene kits, books, as well as school supplies at the culmination of the workshops. In conjunction to the personal development workshops, we will also serve as academic tutors and be available three times a week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) for 2 hours after school.

In order to implement the workshops, we will seek help from female University students who volunteer as part of the SMART Liberia organization. While the workshops are going on, the construction of the basketball court will take place with the help and expertise of local people and Inbound Africa, a nonprofit organization that renovates and builds sustainable basketball courts in countries in Africa.

¹ https://www.womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/conflicts/liberia
³ https://www.poverty-action.org/printpdf/7426
⁴ W. Win, Empowering Girls, 2008
The last four weeks, we will hold bi-weekly after school basketball clinics. The clinics will focus on teaching the girls basic basketball skills to promote cooperation, leadership, self-awareness, and mental and physical strength. During the last week, we will hold a community day where the girls will invite their family members and friends to showcase their skills during a basketball tournament. The community day will raise awareness about female empowerment and will attempt to engage the entire community.

Timeline

**Week 1, June 18-22:**
- Meet with the principal to finalize logistical matters
- Begin the construction of the basketball court.
- Mobilize interested adolescents

**Week 2, June 25-29:**
- Tutoring sessions begin (Monday, Wednesday and Friday after school)
- Workshop 1 titled *Education is the Key on Friday, June 29th*

**Week 3 and 4, July 2-13:**
- Finalize the construction of the basketball court
- Workshop 2 and 3 are held. Workshop 2 about Self Care and Hygiene entitled *Be the Change You Wish to See held on July 6th.* Workshop 3 titled *Sexual Health and Wellness held on Friday, July 13th.*

**Week 5-7, July 16- Aug 3:**
- Basketball clinics begin after school biweekly on Tuesday and Thursday.
- Workshop 4 on female empowerment entitled *Girls Rule the World held July 20th.*

**Week 8, Aug 6-10:**
- Last basketball clinic held, community day and Basketball tournament

Expected Outcomes and Sustainability

- Help teenage girls gain confidence and a renewed motivation to continue their education
- The hope is that we can help to establish a girls basketball team at the Grace Baptist Institute high school by training one of their teachers to serve as a coach.
- Create a manual with endurance, strength training, basketball drills that will aid the trained volunteer to continue teaching after we are no longer in Liberia
- Donate basketball nets, deflated basketballs and jerseys that will sustain the court and team for several months after we are gone. Communicate and follow-up with the officials at the school.

Previous Experiences and Qualifications:

Princess Aghayere has played organized basketball since she was 8 years old. She is currently a NCAA division 1 athlete who plays for the University of Pennsylvania. Sports has not only enabled her to attend an Ivy league institution but it has also led to her personal, emotional, and physical maturity. She believes that sports are important empowerment tools that should not be ignored. As a child she was very reserved and shy but basketball has and continues to be a tool that she uses to foster leadership, social networking skills and teamwork. She has no doubt that without basketball she would not be who and where she is today. She has hosted several basketball clinics. During her freshman and sophomore summers at Penn, she hosted basketball clinics at Gashora Girls Academy and Agahozo Shalom youth Village in Rwanda. As a result of her past experiences she is very confident in her ability to teach and mentor others in the game of basketball.

Summer Kollie is originally from Liberia. In 2003, she and her family immigrated to America to seek refuge from the Liberian civil war. Because she has strong ties and family members back home, she is able to act as a liaison with a nuanced understanding of Liberian culture. This past summer, she worked as a mentor and Program Director for Penn Med’s High School Summer Mentorship Program where she developed and conducted public health workshops for high school students. Through her experiences working with and mentoring high school students, she has learned that education is a prerequisite for promoting peace, understanding, and equality as well as a key to open doors to opportunities. Without the support and mentorship from teachers who encouraged her to grow in her academic potential, she would not be who and where she is today.