

Social Aspects to Promote International Friendship and Cooperation:

A case for Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club in Uganda Table Tennis Association

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ABSTRACT

Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club (MTTTC) was founded in 1992 but formerly established in 2003 as a social club aimed at building a generation of young, disciplined and competitive Table Tennis Players who would become all round personalities in the Table Tennis industry. The ultimate goal is to build a Table Tennis Academy that will support the building of a Table Tennis Industry in Uganda. The club then started working with Twiga and formed a Project code named Laupa Luning Table Tennis Project. The project was a result of a research carried out in Mbale Tigers Table Tennis club and its community on the impact of sports on the leadership qualities of children. However many social benefits have accrued to the functioning of the club. The social benefits realized include; social services like education, health, housing and positive social values and attitudes and relationships at local, national and international levels with good cooperation and friendship as defined in a Memorandum of understanding and cooperation signed between Laupa Luning Table Tennis Project Promoters (Stefan Laupa and Joel Lunning), the founder and promoter of Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club and the local government of Mbale District in Uganda in East Africa. Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club method combines professional training, practice and competition with good results and contribute efforts towards achieving the millennium development goals among others; groom young sportsmen and ladies in leadership skills, fight poverty and extreme hunger, promote Universal Primary Education, protect the environment, promote Human Rights and Fight against HIV/AIDS. The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) through TWIGA a Swedish NGO has made significant financial contribution to Mbale Tigers since 2005 to facilitate the strategy to identify, train and expose players to local, National, Regional and International Table Tennis competitions and also pursue the millennium development goals. (ref: www.mbaletigers.com/www.twiga.se/www.ittf.com) Children 6-18 years now dominate the national team of Cadet Boys and Girls, Girls and Boys under 17 years and also feature dominantly in the Women's Team. They have started getting to the Men's team category with ease. Kids have benefited from Education seminars and have greatly changed their social behavior, values and attitudes. Reports from schools, families and community members indicate a significant change in the life styles of most of them who happen to be residing in a slum area near the location of the project office-Maluku. Other income generating activities like Bicycle taxi, internet café and workshop for locally making table tennis tables aimed at making Mbale Tigers a self-reliant club in a near future have been implemented and have impacted positively on the outlook of the kids, workers of the club and community. SIDA and TWIGA have twice supported cultural exchange programs in which Mbale Tigers Kids and one leader have traveled to Sweden for at least three weeks to share experiences through tour and travel, competition, Conferences and training in elite Clubs like Angby and Mariedal Sports Clubs. UN Habitat which awarded a certificate of merit to Mbale Tigers in recognition of its involvement of Youth in the Project, recommended that Mbale Tigers replicate this project in the East African countries. The leadership of the Government of Uganda, ATTF, ITTF through its Goodwill Fund, Computer Aid and the population of Ugandan Table Tennis administrators, players and sponsors recognize Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club Model as the most successful sports organization worth supporting and encouraging if sports in general and Table Tennis in particular has to grow into an Industry for career development, job creation, income generation and proactive innovations to bridge gaps in the social development process in Africa south of the Sahara in general and Uganda in particular.

Key Words : International friendship cooperation Social values attitudes Uganda Table Tennis

Introduction

Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club started as a community based project drawing on the talents of children living around the main center, Maluku Youth Center in Mbale Town. As a children's project the aim was to introduce basic playing techniques and allow growth and development of the players to become competitive table tennis players. Maluku area is one of the sub-urbs of Mbale, a major town in Eastern Uganda in East Africa where the Maluku Youth Center is located. The center was granted to Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club because its founder, Matsyetsye Emmanuel

was a youth leader with exceptional social values, attitudes, management skills and basic knowledge about sports development. Emmanuel has worked in Mbale District and has several initiatives in other Districts of Bududa and Kampala involving youth in sports, Student leadership and Youth Ending Hunger development activities. The Youth leadership of Mbale District and top leaders of that District also have a great desire to support any initiative aimed at tapping and improving the talents of youth. So the free accessibility of the center to activities of Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club greatly boosted success of LLTTP project without

hindrance. It is through friendship at local and district level that such a facility was granted to Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club to start the LLTP project to have a systematic approach in identifying, training and exposing children to local, national and International competitions. Subsequently, international friendship through the Swedish NGO Twiga and the person of Stefan Laupa the project Manager in Sweden made it possible for SIDA to support Mbale Tigers to implement the LLTP project from which this paper is now being presented.

Background

Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club philosophy of Sports and Table Tennis in particular is that Table Tennis is a factor for Youth Development. That is why our target group 6-18 years now has amazing results. Youth will be able to get playing and life skills, earn income, create employment and fight HIV/AIDS, Poverty, Drug abuse and alcoholism using the Table Tennis ball. We feel we are also directly and indirectly contributing to the achievement of the millennium development goals set by world leaders. The Vision is to create a generation of all round Table Tennis personalities able to work in a Table Tennis Industry we are humbly building. That such a vision can be realized even faster when we have a Table Tennis Academy and also establish local and International manufacturing Table Tennis companies. Sports in a family, at school or through peer influence serve as a physio-therapy. Whether exercised as a cultural practice as in china where Table Tennis is a national sport or introduced as a new sport any where has a lot to do with the social development factors. Talented and not talented individuals acquire positive social values and attitudes through just playing, training, practice and competition. Positive social values, attitudes and proven good practices as defined in the Olympic charter, ITTF Constitution, UTTA Constitution and Mbale Tigers Memorandum and Articles of Association have been explored by Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club and we now have nine children whom we feel are a living example of our achievement since we started LLTP Project in Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club.

Management of Mbale Tigers believes that Table Tennis has the social dimension that promotes friendship and cooperation at local, national and International level. Such friendship at local and national level is the basis for international friendship and cooperation. Therefore building the international sporting fraternity begins with genuine local, national and continental friendship and cooperation for which this paper now seeks to present a case for Mbale Tigers. Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club as a registered Club in Uganda Table Tennis Association serves as a model club in Uganda and East Africa as recommended by UN Habitat 2006 MILGAP Masharik Award; where other Clubs in Universities and schools emulate their working methods. Through individuals, teams and clubs, international friendship and cooperation can be realized.

But most importantly that such friendship and cooperation are determined by different circumstances therefore are realized more quickly or slowly because of the variances in economic, political, cultural and other factors like technology, governance issues, Environmental issues, drug abuse, Human Rights violations, HIV/AIDS to mention but a few. Such factors when addressed may promote cooperation and international cooperation among individuals working in the Table Tennis institutions and related agencies for development of the entire sporting society

Strategic programs in Mbale Tigers

Identifying Talented Kids through meetings and exposure

Through regularized meetings and competitions organized within Mbale Tigers and the Uganda Table Tennis Association as per the annual calendar activities, we have made deliberate contacts with Primary and secondary schools, Universities, social clubs, families, Banks and former and current Table Tennis players and administrators. We are therefore able to identify children 6-18 years to play the game of Table Tennis. Our desire is to create a generation of young, disciplined, competitive Table Tennis players and also contribute towards the achievement of the eight Millennium development goals set by world leaders in 2000.

Training and Training Camps

Our success in Table Tennis development in Mbale Tigers has largely depended on equipping the identified talents with basic training, practice and competition skills. Training sessions have been conducted among the identified talented children who benefit as beginners. Mbale Tigers has a systematic program based on its budget to conduct such training camps within the club and the pilot schools and centers. The club management ensures all those players maintain their presence train to reach competitive standards in the Cadet class, the boys under 17 and also prepare to play in the Youth competitions. Only such players can make it in the senior competitions and can qualify to play in the elite class for Continental, Commonwealth, World Championships and the Olympic games. Our guiding principle has been the 4P plan approved by ITTF to plan, participate, popularity and profit in Table Tennis.

Exposing them to local, National and International Competitions

Mbale Tigers Kids now form the best cadet and Junior boys and Girls players who are the future of Table Tennis teams in Uganda, East Africa and perhaps Africa at large. Through local Competitions such as Mbale Open, Mbale Schools and Holiday clinics and daily training, Kids have developed a competitive spirit. The kids have represented Uganda at the East Africa Table Tennis Championships, All Africa Games in Algeria 2007, Commonwealth Games March 2006 and Commonwealth Youth Games in July 2008. They will

represent Uganda at the Uganda Open International 2nd – 5th April 2009, Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships 19th – 25th May in Glasgow and World Championships in April 28th – 5th May 2009 in Yokohama Japan if they get sponsorship.

Education Seminars, Income generation activities.

Through regularized Education Seminars on HIV/AIDS, Environment, Human Rights, Gender, Leadership, Knowledge about sports Associations and Sports injuries.

We have embarked on a canteen to provide water and snacks for players and visitors, Internet Café for training children in Computer literacy and also avail communication channel via internet for all members and neighbors, Workshop for local manufacture of Table Tennis Tables, repair and maintenance. Such a venture requires more input of finances, marketing and promotion through various activities at the club. I wish to invite investors to come to Uganda because all machinery for manufacture of all Table Tennis equipment and tools will be tax exempted. The President of Uganda has promised me this. Industrial machinery of all sorts shall be freely allowed in Uganda.

Change in Social values and Attitude of children.

Many children have changed their behaviour, attitudes and life skills in general and lived as role models. Through such good behavior with knowledge, they have won scholarships to study in their schools without paying school dues. Amina Kibone in Nabumali High School, Rita Nekesa in Mbale SS, Zura Khaukha, Eddy Omongole and Amina Namaganda in Mbale Progressive have all enjoyed scholarship because of their competence in playing Table Tennis and also exhibit good sports character and personality.

Networking

Mbale Tigers has networked with Sporting, Youth and development agencies with similar objectives. They have explored the Public – Private partnership with the Local government administration of Mbale District local government that offered space for office and playing. The club has also used the facility for a canteen and workshop for furniture for making Table Tennis Tables. Have networked with Uganda Youth Network that promotes advocacy and sensitization of youth in development activities. We have worked with TWIGA, SIDA, Computer Aid and volunteer youth from Sweden to consolidate our achievements on personal development of the youth giving them more knowledge about life and sporting skills.

Uniqueness of Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club

Mbale Tigers Table Tennis club has the biggest number of Children in Uganda playing Table Tennis using the approved basic playing skills because the club has a paid, committed coach and able leadership and management. Most children playing well now studying in secondary and Primary schools study on scholarship.

Table 1: A summary of internationally exposed players and officials of Mbale Tigers Table Tennis 2003-2008

Most tournaments organized in Uganda whether local or regional feature Mbale Tigers Kids as best. Usually they walk away with 90% of the prizes including trophies and medals. Without Mbale Tigers Teams of Cadets, the Girls and Boys, tournaments are not interesting.

All Tournaments attract big crowds to witness kids beating adults!! The Kids represent the female and Girls and Boys and Girls and Cadet Boys and Cadet Girl's players for Uganda. People from Kampala and Kenya take holidays in Mbale to play with the Kids so as to improve their playing skills and also learn about our method. We have attended an International conference in Sweden in November 2007 and shared our experiences about our methods with other NGO from other Asian, African, European and American countries. We have generated a lot of Friendship at local, national, regional and now International level for the children, our partners and managers/leaders in the Table Tennis fraternity in the 20 paid clubs in Uganda Table Tennis Association and in the pilot centers of the club in Mbale

Way forward and appeal

Mbale Tigers continuously attract young players in Primary schools to play the game of Table Tennis and this increases every year. We therefore need more coaches, equipment and training for the administrators who ought to keep pace with increasing demand for the Table Tennis services. A more enduring policy of development with strategic actions are required if a table tennis industry has to be built on a sustainable basis. The first major policy move is to make concrete table tennis tables in all major regions of Uganda. Secondly is to attract major sponsorship of our activities on a regularized basis atleast on a yearly basis. Establish a Table Tennis outlet with a range of Table Tennis products and services including Table Tennis basic equipment and tools, literature materials and Table Tennis electronics like Robots, TT CDs. Establish a Table Tennis Academy with a fully fledged campus of a routine school curriculum but focuses on Table Tennis development from Nursery school level to post primary education up to the age of 18 years. We have excelled in international cooperation from the level of funding to cultural exchange visits and now proposals to expand our international cooperation through friendship. We have received equipment, computers and other gifts for children ranging from scholastic materials books, pens to clothes, shoes and school fees.

References

- 1) ITTF Coaching Manual, Level 1 2005 edition
- 2) NCS Statute 1964 of Uganda government
- 3) Uganda Olympic Committee Charter
- 4) Uganda Local Government Act, 1997
- 5) Mbale Tigers Statute 2003
- 6) Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation 2003 between Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club , LLTTP and Mbale District local government

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No	Name	Sex	Age	Level of Play	International Exposure
1	Kibone Amina (Role Model in the Club) and on scholarship in SS in Nabumali High school	F	17	Participant	Kenya Burundi Commonwealth Games Melbourne Australia 2006 Cultural Exchange program in Sweden 2008
2	Nambozo Asha (On scholarship in Manafa HS)	F	16	Participant	Kenya Burundi Commonwealth Games Melbourne Australia 2006
3	Nabulondera Evalyn (On scholarship in Nabumali High School) S4	F	16	Participant	Kenya All Africa Games in Algeria 2007
4	Nekesa Rita (Voted Table Tennis player of the year 2006 in Uganda) and on scholarship in Mbale Secondary school S5	F	17	Participant	Kenya Burundi Cultural Exchange program in Sweden 2008
5	Nakibule Regina in S5 on scholarship in Mbale SS in S5	F	17	Participant	Kenya Cultural Exchange program in Sweden 2008
6	Khaukha Zura National schools champion on scholarship in Mbale Progressive	F	16	Participant	Kenya Commonwealth Games in Pune India
7	Namaganda Amina in Mbale Progressive on scholarship	F	16	Participant	Kenya Burundi Commonwealth Games in Pune India
8	Wamusi Ivan (10 th Best player in National league) has been on scholarship in Manafa HS now in S5	M	17	Participant	Kenya Cultural Exchange program in Sweden 2008
9	Omongole Eddy (Now ranked after CWTTTC in Pune India July 2008) on scholarship in Mbale Progressive	M	16	Entered main draw for Men	Kenya Commonwealth Youth Games in Pune India
10	Mutete Jude (Now national coach after German Course)	M	29	Coach/Player	Kampala International University, Mbale Tigers, Uganda Table Tennis Association, Africa University games, World University Games German Coaching Course
11	Matsyetsye Emmanuel (Now to host Uganda Open International on ITTF Calendar, have bidden to host Africa Junior Champs 2010 in Uganda), Spearheading the National Organisation of Sports Associations and Federations in Uganda a professional sports body that will supplement activities of existing sports bodies.	M	49	Executive Director Mbale Tigers Table Tennis Club & President Uganda Table Tennis Association Leader of Delegation/Team Manager	Kenya Tanzania Rwanda World Championships Manchester 1997 World Championships Netherlands 1999 World Championships China 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games Pune India 2008