



BRIDGING THE GAPS

YOUTH CAMPS

A project of Pudiyador, Wind Dancers and Ultimate Players Association of India



OUR MISSION

In India, we live in a tremendously unequal society. Our mission is to inspire a generation of Indian youth to bridge the gaps created by poverty, gender, and caste through a uniquely designed sport-art camp.

CREATING CHANGE

May 21-25, 2015
Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India



WHY DO THESE CAMPS MATTER?

Our camps help **build and foster** important values:

- Empathy
- Gender equality
- Confidence
- Teamwork
- Open-mindedness

These values **translate into impactful benefits** to each participant including:

- Sense of self
- Enhanced family life
- Strengthened community
- Improved health and well-being
- Future educational and employment opportunities

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?



Rigorous coach training and leadership development



Unique pre-camp Youth Leader workshops



Thoughtfully designed curriculum for sport, art and cultural activities



Continued relationship with participating NGOs post-camp



Comprehensive coach/participant feedback and analysis for future camps



Commitment to a high energy, positive, safe and caring environment

WHO ATTENDS OUR CAMPS?

During our May 2014 (Surat) and December 2014 (Auroville) camps 120 teen boys and girls and 40 college-aged coaches from across India attended. We anticipate between 120+ and 40+ coaches at our next camp in Ahmedabad in May 2015.

The majority of our participants and many of our coaches have never traveled outside their communities and would not be able to afford to attend camp otherwise. Our participants and coaches intentionally range the socio-economic and cultural spectrums.



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO US?



The youth we work with have severely limited educational and employment opportunities and routinely face discrimination based on gender and deeply rooted caste-based delineations such as skin color and command of language. We have seen firsthand how sport and art are amazingly powerful tools to develop empathy, open-mindedness, confidence and hope among many other values.

INTENSIVE COACH TRAINING



Our camps are designed to target two age groups – teens (participants) and college-aged young men and women (coaches). Many of our coaches are from the same communities as our participants and face a similar uphill climb in regards to poverty, gender and caste discrimination. Prior to camp we hold an intensive coach training workshop which provides tremendous personal development and leadership building opportunities.

“ It was an experience of a lifetime. At the end I felt my journey to the far south was worthy and I felt the gaps being bridged. I believe it will surely help me in days to come. I lived, loved and laughed with people I have met for the first time in my life. ”

- Coach, age 23

YOUTH LEADER PROGRAM

Teens showing promise are selected for the Youth Leader Program which supports and encourages their development over the course of two years.



WHAT IS THE CAMP EXPERIENCE?

BRIDGING THE GAPS

Our camps focus on life skills development through integrated, holistic sport and art activities. Youth have a fun-filled, intense five days packed with activities that are built to challenge them to break down the barriers of language, gender, caste, and socio-economic status.

ULTIMATE FRISBEE

Ultimate Frisbee is a 7 on 7 person game played on a rectangular field with two end zones often likened to a mix of American football, soccer and basketball. The object of the game is to score a point by catching a pass in the opponent's end zone. Ultimate Frisbee camp sessions follow a curriculum designed by Australian and Indian coaches.



WHY ULTIMATE FRISBEE?

Because we believe the unique elements of Ultimate Frisbee allow more opportunities for personal development and intercultural exchange than other sports. Ultimate Frisbee's unique elements include:

● CO-ED & NON-CONTACT

The sport requires boys and girls to play together on a team - an aberration to cultural practices within Indian communities where boys and girls rarely mix in sport.

● SELF-REFEREED

Settling contested fouls through discussion between the players involved is a focus of the game – this facilitates open communication between players and fosters conflict resolution. It is rare for a sport to allow for this type of player-to-player dialogue.

● SPIRIT CIRCLES

A Spirit Circle, unique to Ultimate Frisbee, have teams come together and sit in a large circle making sure each person is seated next to a player of the opposite team.



Camp Spirit Circles are held at the end of every sport session and are an amazingly effective tool to help youth build empathy. Players can express themselves freely about the positives and negatives from the day's session and feel they are heard and accepted. Uncommon in the sports world, this sharing between players is a crucial bonding experience.

“ Youth Leaders had to speak first in Spirit Circles. People needed me to translate into English. I really had to step up and I realized how much English I knew. ”

- Youth Leader, age 16

WHAT IS THE CAMP EXPERIENCE?

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal development sessions follow a curriculum drawing from dance, theater, circus and visual art designed and facilitated on site by Wind Dancers, a collaborative group of artists that have worked with underprivileged youth across the world.

Starting from building the team name, designing a team logo, painting tournament t-shirts, and creating team cheers with a jumble of Indian languages, these activities challenge participants to question their own identity and build a group identity with teammates with whom they do not even share a common language.



“ First day of camp I didn’t feel very comfortable with my teammates, but during the t-shirt making process, I grew closer to my teammates because it was an activity that required two people to work together to accomplish. ”

- Camp participant, age 15

Camp activities help participants understand and disregard stereotypes, respect others differences and build a natural curiosity towards other cultures and traditions.



“ Each day at the camp made a difference in my life. So many realizations, so many learnings! ”

- Coach, age 21

“ It’s a feeling – all of the kids on the last day were so happy. You can see the gaps being bridged but if you ask me to say it in words I can’t. ”

- Camp Participant, age 15



WHO ARE WE?

PLEASE MEET THE ORGANIZERS OF OUR CAMPS

Liz Haynes

Combining her passion for sports and expertise in nonprofit and corporate finance, Liz works with a sports-based after-school program for underprivileged teens in Chennai, India as well as organizes Bridging the Gaps, India's first ever youth sleep-away Ultimate Frisbee camps.



Mahesh Ramamurty

Mahesh is the Joint Managing Director at Vibromech. He is passionate about building educational opportunities for underprivileged youth in India and has held leadership positions in several projects channeling corporate expertise and funds for community development.



Sangeeta Isvaran

Sangeeta is a dancer-performer who has developed the Wind Dancer technique – building programs in marginalized, underprivileged communities using the arts in education, empowerment and conflict resolution across 40 countries.

Manix Narayanan

Manix serves on the advisory board of UPAI (Ultimate Players Association of India). He is an avid Ultimate Frisbee player, creating sports for development programmes and helping grow the sport across India.



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Donate to fund a new camp model committed to merging sport and art to inspire Indian youth to bridge the gaps created by poverty, gender and caste.

Open the minds and hearts of India's youth:
www.facebook.com/bridgethegapsyouthcamps

For further information please contact Liz Haynes at
lizhaynes11@gmail.com



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Thank you for providing us with the wonderfully unique experience of coaching at the Bridging the Gaps Youth Camp. For me the best part was watching my kids overcome the language barriers, trying to communicate with each other in a language unknown to them and painting their names on their Jerseys in their teammate's mother tongues. It was heartening to see the love, warmth and friendships that were shaped by the end of camp and the visible impact it made.

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- Coach, age 24

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