



SPORT IS YOUR GANG
TIMOR - LESTE

City/area: Dili, Timor-Leste (with aim to extend to local districts)

Community profile:

In May 2002, Timor-Leste (formerly known as East Timor) gained independence. Violence had left the country and its families torn apart, with nearly 70% of all buildings, homes and schools destroyed, and an estimated 75% of the population displaced. With 60% of the population under 25 years of age (World Bank, 2015), Timor-Leste is one of the youngest countries in the world. Education, keeping healthy and productively employing its young population are the biggest development challenges facing Timor-Leste in the next decade (World Bank, 2015).

Timor Leste had a dark past with previous martial arts being banned due to the civil unrest these clubs created during times of conflict. Different martial arts styles, in particular Pencak Silat, were practiced in large groups as a way of intimidation for political groups and were perceived as 'gangs'.

The interest in Muay Thai and martial arts in Timor-Leste is growing but local youth still lack access to training, facilities and equipment. One of the key goals of Sport is Your Gang Timor-Leste is to provide youth with a platform to practice Muay Thai in partnership with local organisations and clubs.

About the programme:

Sport is Your Gang Timor-Leste is a community-based project. It is delivered through in-kind support such as coaching, venues and equipment donations from international organisations. It is conducted in collaboration with local organisations and sporting clubs. By collaborating with local organisations and clubs Sport is Your Gang also help strengthen the sense of community and encourage local community engagement.

Starting time frame: December 2019

Ages: 9-20

Number of participants: 10- 40 per group with the aim to grow the number of groups participating exponentially in the coming year

Sponsor/Partner: IFMA, Timorese Assassins Muay Thai Academy, Dili E Benfica, Youth off the Streets Talho Morris

Project outcomes:

- Donation of sporting goods to specific clubs
- Educational training for coaches in Timor on basic muaythai techniques
- Communication with several gangs discussing positive ways to peace utilising muaythai
- Working NGOs like PLAN International and Youth Off The Streets Timor Leste
- Promoting muaythai to disengaged youth
- Albert being appointed Sporting Director of the Timorese Muaythai Federation
- Having a large portion of female participants take part in the program

Strengths

Donation of sporting goods to specific clubs: Clubs in need of basic goods such as Thai pads, mouth guards, skipping ropes were provided with such essentials through donations gathered. These donations were given to targeted clubs and individuals who needed it most.

Educational training for coaches in Timor on basic muaythai techniques: Coaches and Volunteer pad holders were invited to a workshop to learn how to hold pads and were offered feedback on their style of holding pads for different body shapes and sizes.

Communication with several gangs discussing positive ways to peace utilising muaythai: The positive communication and dialogue with gangs was an integral part of the program that showed how muaythai could be used to instil positive change in the community. The gangs PSHT, IKS, KORK, 77 are the main groups prevalent in Dili and are violent towards each other. Speaking to groups individually and peace talking on the negatives of the violent gang life had a significant impact on troubled youth. Resulting in a potential pilot program increasing peace by where individuals from each gang were invited to participate together in harmony to train Muaythai for fun and harmony. A strong response came from all gangs describing this as a great initiative to promote a cultural change and social imprint on Timorese youth. Elders and respected members of the community from each district gave blessing in support to have youth train muaythai for its benefits in a focus on healthy lifestyle, respect, and discipline. This is something that is a cultural significance having support from individuals such as them.

Working NGOs like PLAN International and Youth Off The Streets Timor Leste: Working with NGOs such as PLAN international and Youth off the Streets Timor Leste provided a network to allow a targeted response to disengaged youth. Working with administrators from these NGOs showed how much more of an impact can be made to a more at risk group. Administrators from these organizations described the sessions as more impactful and engaging than other programs that have been delivered in the past, so impactful that participants of our program joined the local club MMA Lafaek located in Dili.

Alberts appointment of Sporting Director of the Timorese Muaythai Federation: The Timorese Muaythai Federation lacked sport administrators with a muaythai background to help develop the sport of Muaythai in Timor. Albert was elected sport director of Muaythai to help with training and the coaching side Muaythai.

Having a large portion of female participants take part in the program: From our main groups provided we had 50% of the participants in them being female, this

illustrated a future and a great way to help empower women in Timor to have self confidence in a male driven society like Timor Leste's.

Weaknesses

Not enough donations: With the demand for people to train with limited equipment does make it hard to conduct workshops, the obvious need for more gloves and pads so more efficient time of class can be used to help correct techniques.

Timing of year to implement program: December is a busy time for Timor with lots of schools and business closing for the festive season, timing for programs to align with schools and business would allow for efficient use of resources and time.

The need for more coaching staff: Classes groups would be more manageable with more coaches to help supervise but also allow for all participants in the workshops to have a better coaching experience.

Recommendations

Overall the program was a success given the target market and time we had there. With our goal to utilise muaythai as a positive vehicle to instil change in young peoples lives. Some recommendations to be made for the next time Sport is Your Gang is in Timor are the following:

1. Increasing help with the education of curriculum, so coaches can demonstrate the correct techniques to be given.
2. Continuing a focus on working with NGOs and their networks to reach more at risk youth.
3. More female coaches available to help to make it more inviting to women.
4. Programming a schedule to align with School dates.

Muaythai is a powerful sport and should be made accessible to all, so everyone can reap the benefits of its training. Programs like Sport is your gang is a great initiative and should keep building so more youth in Timor can learn Muaythai.

For more information or footage of the program follow the link

<https://www.timoresemartialarts.com/sport-is-your-gang>

Below are some pictures of some of the work done through the program.



Youth off the Streets Timor Leste

Appointment of Sport Director of MT



Providing trainers with equipment



Coaching at MMA Lafeak



Press Conference with Govt Officials

