

IDEALS Netball Zambia

Three Netball development placements took place this year and have made an impressive impact on the sport in Zambia. The programme, supported by UK Sport, Durham University and IFNA, allows UK professionals to share their netball expertise to help create effective networks and support the development of Netball delivery across the country. In return, individuals learn different techniques from their Zambian colleagues, gain international sports development experience and an understanding of Zambian life.

Jennie Platt tells us about her placement experience, “I was lucky enough to be involved this year and travelled to Zambia in October for a three week placement. I had previously volunteered in Zambia as part of UK Sport’s International Development Through Excellence & Leadership in Sport (IDEALS) programme in 2006 and was eager to return to see friends and engage in the culture but with a very different agenda.



Building on the positive work carried out by the Netball Association of Zambia (NAZ) and the previous UK professionals, my placement had a few key focus areas; to create an environment where all parties could work together to achieve shared strategic goals; to up skill coaches and officials through courses and mentoring and to develop the competitive structure and player pathway. I worked closely with NAZ to ensure that my work was context specific and owned locally.

I was based at the newly built Olympic Youth Development Centre (OYDC). This is a fantastic facility and it was really refreshing to see young people there every day training and competing in a variety of sports. National coaches from 13 Olympic sport and netball are based there so it was great to be placed at the centre of all this sport . There are so many committed people involved in netball across Zambia, so I supported NAZ in relationship building with a wide range of stakeholders, such as local community organisations.

I developed an organisational framework for all coaching and officiating courses going forward. This meant that NAZ worked closely with key partners to ensure the appropriate locations were selected, participants were invited and the delivery was to a high standard. Linked to this I then worked to establish a timetable for courses so they were run well geographically across the capital and allowed for a development pathway for individuals. Once this was in place NAZ were able to see the benefits of collaborative working with a more structured approach.

Following a visit to the 'Independence Netball Tournament' held in the Copperbelt, I worked with NAZ to establish a more detailed plan for competition structure and player pathways. Together we worked on tournament structures to ensure players have a good experience and can learn from competition. It is important for Zambia to perform well on local and national scales to help increase the profile of the sport in the country, thus generating additional support. There UK Sport supported U14 and U17 leagues can act as a platform for player development and provide a structure all the way to international events such as the African Games.



Throughout my placement I worked closely with Lusaka City Council Netball team and their head coach. In my first week they expressed a need to improve their match fitness. As a result I coached one of their sessions; this allowed me to highlight best practice and educate the coach on Netball specific fitness drills and modified match play. During the next session the coach was able to adopt some of the new skills, while I could assist and offer advice. The team also competed in the Independence Tournament so I was able to continue my mentoring role through advice on tactics and game play. This mentoring exercise proved very useful and most importantly the coach is now able to become a mentor herself making the process more sustainable.

I also had the opportunity to mentor a community coach from EduSport. The coach attended a Basic Coaching Course I delivered at the OYDC, which involved theoretical and practical elements. From here we worked together with his team. Initially I watched him coach a session to understand his style, strengths and areas for improvement. We then planned the next session based on my feedback and he went on to deliver training with me assisting. This was a very rewarding experience as on a one-to-one basis you can witness the impact the mentoring has and how it helped with his development as a coach.

I feel that mentoring is an excellent method to develop netball in Zambia. It is important to interact with coaches and officials on an individual basis to understand their needs and respond to them. A large percentage of those involved in Netball in Zambia are volunteers; they are so appreciative of any additional support and mentoring appears to be the most effective way to achieve this.

Overall, I had an amazing three weeks in Zambia and learnt a lot on a personal and professional level. I developed an appreciation for sports development in two very contrasting environments and learnt how to adapt to a variety of situations, a skill I hope to execute back in London. My knowledge of netball in Zambia grew each day and how the country is passionate about developing all aspects of the sport. There are so many committed individuals involved that I have no doubt netball will continue to evolve at a rapid rate across the country."

IDEALS netball professional placements are run in partnership with UK Sport, Durham University, IFNA, NAZ and OYDC.

More information about the IDEALS Programme can be found at <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/pages/ideals/>