

Beth Swords – Rickshaw Sports Project Trip to India and Nepal, Summer 2013

Aim of Project

The Rickshaw Sports Project is a new project that built on the Rickshaw Theatre Project (RTP) that has run for 8 years. The RTP involves a team of Cambridge students working with different schools in India and Nepal in disadvantaged schools with the aim of conducting theatre workshops. The Rickshaw Sports Project, therefore, did the same but with sports projects. Our team of six spent two weeks in Lucknow and Delhi respectively and then a further two weeks in Kathmandu, with a new school assigned each week. My role was as School and Charity Liaison Officer.

The relevance and utility of sport is often overlooked with stresses being put on teaching basic English, Maths and Science. However, we aimed within the sport sessions to put sport skills into a broader 'life context' i.e. teaching teamwork, strategizing and communication.

Details of the Project

Lucknow. The first two weeks were spent in Lucknow in which we teamed up with Kids Holistic Education and Life Skills (KHEL). Their setup was fairly developed and we paired up with four of the schools they worked with. Originally it was planned to teach actual sports with buildup through the two weeks, leading to a tournament by the end. However, the ages varied from 4 through to 21 and therefore, we had to adapt to teaching smaller games, children's games such as What's the time Mr Wolf? And ball skills all loosely related to the main sport in hand, such as dodgeball.

The four schools and orphanages were brought together at the end for a big sports day or Global Peace Games 2013. We set up stalls for this capitalising on our sports capabilities. Then we finished with a game they had taught us with RSP vs the best from each school. This all seemed very effective in its level of interaction. We had given our own skills and they took those onboard and then put them into action within things they knew.

The structure we worked in was fairly well built-up and therefore, it was obvious where we could bring new ideas as well as developing some ideas the other organisers had already had. The varying ages worked well, especially when the older children started sharing their strategies with the younger ones.

Delhi. Delhi was less straightforward where we worked with Qutumb, a football academy for domestic workers' children. This was another well-developed organisation in the way it was training up 'peer coaches' to take over from the current adult coaches, teaching them the need for calm leadership and organisation. However, there was little need for outside help as it was a very one-dimensional, single sport activity. With this, we tried to show peer coaches the need to let others play too.

Kathmandu. Kathmandu was probably the most successful. Umbrella Nepal was a charity that worked with four orphanages. Us teaching them sport worked because the charity itself was not a sports charity but the orphanages did have the facilities for it. The girls had never played netball but by the end of the week were playing it before we had even arrived. This worked effectively because it was sufficiently novel and there was a clear opening for it. The level of strategizing by the end of it was impressive, especially in the Sports Day we arranged in the local school grounds.