COVID-19: VOICES FROM UGANDA
In face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Scort has reached out to Young Coaches all over the world to give them a platform to share their experiences and challenges.

Uganda, 19. May 2020

From May 2012 to May 2013, the Football Club Social Alliance educated 30 Young Coaches in different parts of Uganda. While the country has not confirmed many COVID-19 cases, a strict lockdown has been imposed. Despite this challenge, the Young Coaches have found ways to interact with the children through videos and are using this time to plan ahead and to recruit new Peer Young Coaches.

"In the beginning, the children had to be told over and over to wash their hands. But they learned quickly", Young Coach Andrew explains.

"I am a role model for the children, so it would be a shame if I did not stay at home and follow the rules.”

He works for Noah’s Ark Children’s Ministry Uganda, an orphanage in Mukono, near the capital Kampala, with 210 children and young adults.

Since the schools have closed down due to COVID-19, Andrew and his team are busy keeping the children active. This has included drawing activities where the children could let their imagination run free, coming up with ideas what the coronavirus could look like, storytelling, and a lot of football games.

Being creative is key under these circumstances.

Since mid-March, Uganda, a landlocked country in East Africa, stands still as measures have been put in place to prevent the spread of the virus. So far, numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases reported by the Health Ministry remain relatively low.

With the lockdown, also the work of the Young Coaches in Uganda has changed drastically and looks very different, depending on where they live.

While Andrew sees and interacts with the children at Noah’s Ark every day, Young Coach Brian, who is based in Kampala, has not set eyes on his kids for weeks: “I am a role model for the children, so it would be a shame if I did not stay at home and follow the rules.”

Brian is a teacher and in his free time he coaches children from low-income neighbourhoods. Not all of the children he works with have access to internet or a phone. Sometimes he talks with some of the older kids.
on Facebook, but with most of them he has no contact at all. This is especially difficult as he has heard about the increase in domestic violence. “I think after this situation ends, everyone will have suffered.” He therefore sees his role in the long run not only as a coach, but also as a counsellor.

Up in the North in Gulu, Young Coach Albert came up with a creative way to engage with the kids he works with through SOS children’s village Uganda. He records videos with instructions, with the hope the children can practice at home.

At times he even meets up with a few kids from the SOS village to practice in groups of five, while ensuring distance is being kept. “We are trying to see how we can be creative and keep in touch with the children, while following the government’s regulations.”

Something all three have in common is their concern over the economic impact the measures have on their communities. All of the children who normally attend boarding school are now home. At the same time, parents cannot work. The result is less income and more children at the table.

According to Albert this is the biggest challenge for the families in his area.

Brian spoke of similar concerns for the people in his community: “their food is getting less and less. They used to have one and a half meals [per day], now it is three quarters of a meal.”

In response to the food crisis, the government as well as private donors stepped in to provide food for the most vulnerable. However, Brian tells us that not all families benefit from the help. Simply too many are affected by the lockdown.

And Albert urges other Young Coaches to stay in touch with the children and not to give up, because he is “optimistic in a few months, things will get back to normal.”

We thank all our Young Coaches for their ongoing commitment and work during this time! #TogetherWeInspire

For more information on the project in Uganda: click here.