

Report into the work of Proform and The Basketball Innovation Project in Sierra Leone

Proform and The Basketball Innovation Project has been working at a grass roots level in Sierra Leone with the regional team Kenema Shooters for the last six months.



Photo -Team Photo after renovating the court

Profile - Marcus Fagon is an England Level 2 Basketball Coach and Level 1 Referee. He has been working as a research team supervisor in Sierra Leone for the last six months and has been voluntarily coaching the local basketball team, Kenema Shooters.

How it got started - The power of a vest!

It all started with a chance meeting on the street. I was walking passed a football pitch and someone, who a later found out was called Steve and was the captain of the basketball team, started running towards me and shouting; 'Yo man you wanna play bball?' I was a little shocked, and confused about how he knew that I played basketball!? I wondered if he was talking about football but he kept asking me; 'Yo man you wanna play bball?' I hadn't played basketball in Kenema and I wasn't expecting to play. I had left my basketball and trainers in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, expecting that there wouldn't be any basketball in Kenema. I had resigned myself to playing football! Facilities for basketball in Sierra Leone are not great. Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world ranking 131st on the Human Development Index (Fourth from Bottom). There are no indoor courts and few quality outdoor courts. The national passion is football and the facilities for that are not great! Whilst in Freetown I had played in the National Stadium football pitch paying under £2 for the privilege. After meeting Steve I met with the players. They said they had a team but did not have a ball or a coach. I said I would play with the players and afterwards if they wanted to I would coach them. From there things just developed and developed. Loads of players turned up to practice wanting to be coached.



Photo - Team preparing for practice with a stretch



Photo - Marcus coaching

I was intimidated at first but things got easier and once I developed a relationship with Steve. As they say the relationship between the coach and the best player is always important! The coaching has really changed my time in Kenema. I have coached over fifty different young players and feel I know lots of young people in the local community. We have been training twice a week and been to one tournament and the players worked hard to renovate the court.



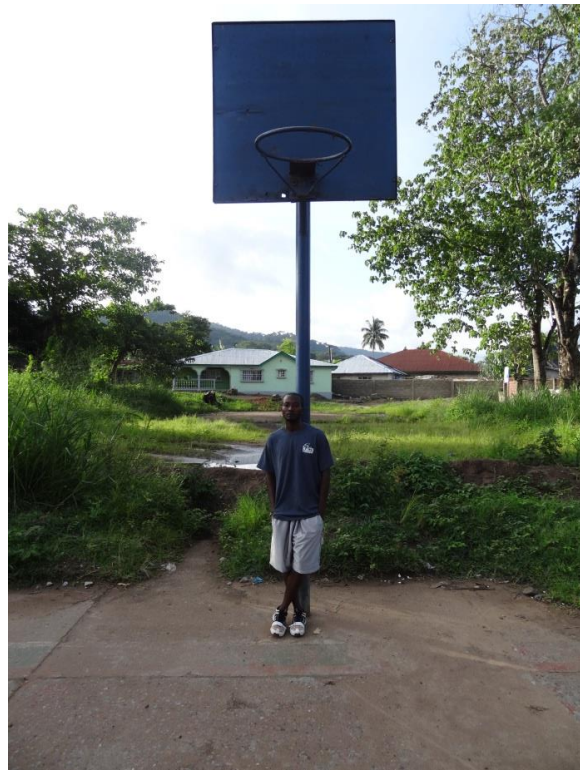
Photo – Trip to play in tournament where the team bus fell into ditch turned out to be a good team building exercise getting it out!



Photo – Team renovating the court

The next step is handing the team over to Steve to coach that's where the support of England Basketball has been so important we were able to give Steve 5 balls and to arrange a ball give away to the Sierra Leone Basketball Coaching Association to send Steve on a Basketball Level 1 coaching course in Freetown. Steve has lots of plans for the team to continue when I leave I am excited about basketball there and where it can go! When I asked Steve how he knew I was a basketball player when he first saw me he just said it was the vest you were wearing!

Steve Katta Profile and Interview on basketball in Sierra Leone



When did you start playing basketball?

I started playing basketball in 2007.

Why do you play basketball?

Personally, I find so much pleasure in it and it's been my dream my whole life but haven't been able to play that much because there are no balls! On a grander level basketball is a social game that has brought people together after the war in Sierra Leone.

Can you tell me about Eastern shooters?

Easter shooter's is a small basketball team representing the Eastern part of the country (Kenema District). We have young and talented youths who have committed themselves to the game. The team is the best in the entire region!. We have won several I local competitions and dreaming for more but we have several constraints in making the game our

future.

What are some of the challenges of playing basketball in Sierra Leone?

There are so many challenges we face like: lack of standard basketball courts, lack of experienced coaches, and no sponsorship. The game is popular and in the bigger towns but there are little or no Standard facilities. The national basketball team is not doing well. Most of the talent is self-developed by individuals who love the game and hope to get better opportunities to play in the future.

What plans do you have for 'Kenema Shooters' after I leave?

Carry on an advocating for about basketball to the local various secondary schools, target young talented players who have love for the game. Train the youth player's aged 10-18yrs with the little knowledge we have and after every three months we want to organise Tournaments among them.



Photo – Marcus (in black) giving instructions

What differences have the donated balls and having an England Basketball Level 2 coaching made to Kenema Shooters?

It is a blessing, the coaching improves our skills and tactics and helped us to love the game more than before! The presence of a coach has changed the team also provided lots of other important things like, balls maintenance of the court and also encouraging the boys. And the balls is simple We want to play! We love the game! But how can we? when there are no facilities!?

Where would you like basketball in Kenema and Sierra Leone to be in 10 years?

We would like basketball to be established in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions. We want an inter-regional league among schools. We still need help from donors who love and believe in the game. We want a standard court quality balls and among other things.