

## Report on the Disc Golf for UNHCR Refugees Marco Polo Project

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Ethiopia has a long standing history of hosting refugees. Ethiopia hosts over one million refugees and asylum seekers from different countries in Africa and beyond, mainly from South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Eritrea, Somalia, Burundi, DR Congo, Yemen and Rwanda, amounting to the second largest refugee population in the Africa .



In the refugee camps most basic needs like food, water and shelter are supplied by the government or humanitarian NGOs. These basic needs only help to live the day, not to love it. When you are in the camps like prisoner most time you remember the wars and conflict you had in your country, including death and other horrific memories. To help alleviate the past you need to have recreational activities you might love to engage with, but in some camps there may be no such choices, which makes one's life feel even worse.

Disc Golf for UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) Project came to my mind in 2017, with the aim to introduce disc golf as a recreational benefits to refugees. The project is to instruct the future trainers how to teach disc golf, ensuring that the sport will be sustainable with the community after the completion of this project. This training of trainers is for refugees interested in sport, and more specifically in disc golf, and will be directed towards those who demonstrate

leadership qualities. In falls of 2018 after a year of the project analysis the Ethiopian Government's National Intelligence and Security Service Administration for Refugee-Returnee Affairs (ARRA) and UNHCR granted me a permission to work in the refugee camps. It was a great success for the team to be granted this opportunity.

After all the materials of the project put in our car we journeyed 89 KM from Assosa to where the refugee camps are found and we had to drive more than 20 KM of not asphalt road, and finally we made to the camp and visited one primary school and two recreational center. The training was in one recreation center built by LWF (Lutheran World Federation). Our first morning's work was giving instruction about history of disc golf and the basics of the game, and I had to use a translator as most of the trainers don't speak English. In the afternoon we had a putt training, and basic throwing technics on a basketball court.



On our final second day there was a big crowd coming to witness the new sport. Trainers were assigned to each of 8 teams and a putting competition was held, which was won by the Jemila group team (name of a person for women). It was great to see the happiness and the laughter, the team work and the collaboration.

It was amazing to witness that all the participants were very into the game, it seemed like they already knew about the game, and by the end it was evident that they are ready for the next level of training. Follow up is still in progress from the Assosa University Disc Golf Association and there is a big interest from the refugees to participate in the upcoming Ethiopian Open 2020, there

might be some protocol on getting refugee out of the camp for the tournament but it's something we will sort out soon.



This is the first ever disc golf project entirely for refugee communities, and the reaction about disc golf from the refugees was great. The project demonstrated its positive impact and potential replicability at other refugee camps. Finally, big thanks goes for Innova Discs, PDGA, Assosa University, UNHCR, ARRA, LWF, and all volunteers for the project who support the project in finance, materials, and ideas.

