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UN leadership camp aims to empower youth through sport



Programme participants attend the opening session in Doha. Photo: UNOSDP

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Thirty young people from nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the occupied Palestinian territory will participate in a United Nations leadership camp which kicks off today in Doha, Qatar, and aims to empower underprivileged youth through sports-based activities.

The camp consists of 10 days of experiential learning activities addressing themes such as health, gender, disability, education and peace, and seeks to invoke greater change in communities driven by young leaders.

“The United Nations has long understood the unique power of sport for change, but for change to happen, strong leadership is needed,” said Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Wilfried Lemke.

“[The camp] provides concrete and practical leadership skills from some of the best leaders and experts in the field, in a truly collaborative spirit. This ensures that the lessons learned will guide these young leaders in their future endeavours,” he said.

The participants, aged 18 to 25, have already made significant contributions to their communities through grassroots projects that use sport as a method to foster peace and development. At the camp, they will develop an action plan to implement in their local community with the support of camp organizers and partners to ensure the legacy of the project.

The initiative was led by the UN Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) in close collaboration with the Canadian-based non-governmental organization (NGO) Right to Play and the Aspire Zone Foundation based in Doha. Other partners include the English Premier League, the German Agency for International Cooperation, the International Paralympic Committee and Liverpool Football Club.

The 18 women and 12 men taking part in the camp come from South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Ghana, Burundi, Tanzania, Namibia and the occupied Palestinian territory. They will also be joined four youth from Qatar who have been identified by the NGO Reach Out Asia (ROTA), giving the event a local element and exposing the youth to different cultures, backgrounds and ideas.

Mr. Lemke said the project represents a new starting point for the beneficiaries of the programme. “We want to give them now the opportunities they did not get before,” he said.

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