

# Volunteer Orientation Manual

Your Guide to OA Projects

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OA Projects

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**Introduction**

We’re pumped that you would like to volunteer with OA Projects. To make things easier we’ve created this document to provide you with grounding in OA Projects, what we do, how we do it and why. It should provide you with the answers to many of your questions about volunteering and help you be able to accurately represent the need we are addressing and the change we are striving to make. We hope that you enjoy volunteering with us and look forward to working with you.

## About OA Projects

OA Projects (OA), (OA = Opportunitas Aequa, Latin for “Equal Opportunity”) is a grassroots organization that uses soccer to build stronger communities for war-affected youth. Our objective is to increase opportunities for youth in war-affected regions to participate in soccer-based community building activities. We support locally-driven peace and gender equity building activities.

Equal Opportunity and Opportunitas Aequa are the organizations that make up OA Projects. The first is a new entity (registered in 2009) and is a charitable organization in Canada. The second is the original organization behind OA Projects and is a non-profit society in Canada. As of the end of 2009, Equal Opportunity is taking over from Opportunitas Aequa for the responsibility of working to build peace and gender equity in war-affected communities. Opportunitas Aequa is going to continue working on Play Soccer So They Can and the 1 for 1 shop to support Equal Opportunity and to help get more soccer balls into the hands of local peace and gender equity building programs.

## History

Opportunitas Aequa (OA) was founded in 2006 by a group of university students from across Canada. Most of the founders had grown up playing soccer and wanted to share their experiences with others. The founders were inspired by a passage in Canadian Lt. General Romeo Dallaire account of his time as head of the United Nations mission in Rwanda before and throughout the 1994 Genocide. Early in the book, the Lt. General travels to a camp for people fleeing the civil war and encountered a group of children who, amidst violent chaos, temporarily escaped the horror surrounding them by playing soccer with a home-made ball.

“As I stood struggling to regain my composure, I was surrounded by a group of the camp children, who were either laughing outright or smiling shyly at this strange white man in their midst. They had been playing soccer with a ball made out of dried twigs and vines, and they had tugged at my pants, eager to have me join their game. I was awed by their resilience.”

Lt.Gen. Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, page 64

Since 2006, OA has completed three overseas projects - Ecuador in 2007, Rwanda in 2008, and northern Uganda in spring 2009. OA also hosted soccer camps for underprivileged children in our hometown of Victoria, British Columbia. The combined impact of these projects has reached more than 7,000 children and youth in over 25 communities. Some of the results are:

- Over 7,000 youth have been given greater access to soccer based activities;
- Four community soccer fields have been rehabilitated: one in Gulu, Uganda; one in Kigali, Rwanda; and two in Chimborazo, Ecuador;
- Two Soccer Camps for Peace for over 150 youth in Gulu, Uganda
- One coaching and leadership workshop for 16 youth leaders in Gulu, Uganda; and,
- Over 1,600 soccer balls and nearly 1,000 pairs of cleats have been donated to peacebuilding groups, schools, community-building organizations and community centres.

At the end of 2009 OA, with the addition of Equal Opportunity Society, became officially known as OA Projects.

Moving forward, OA Projects is planning an expansion on our work in northern Uganda by reaching out to new communities and implementing a new activity in 2010. We are really excited to see how the Soccer League for Peace, the latest addition to our list of activities, unfolds.

### **Mission and Goal**

**Our mission:** To be the most effective grassroots organization using soccer to help youth in communities affected by war.

**Our goal:** To build local frameworks that connect war-affected youth with youth leaders to play soccer and to discuss important community issues, such as, peacebuilding and post-conflict healing.

### **The Organization**

We are a small team where each member has a couple roles. The roles can be divided into projects & administration, public engagement and development. Projects & administration designs the overseas projects, liaises with local partners, keeps track of our funding, and oversees research, and the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the projects. The public engagement team looks after the web site, our social media presence and works on the films, blogs and photos that provide supporters with a transparent look at our projects. Finally, development seeks out new sources of funding, supports fundraising efforts within our community, runs the “1 for 1” Shop and works with our donors. When it comes to implementing the projects, all three areas work closely together.

### **Why we do what we do**

We believe that sport, soccer in particular, can be used as tool to help war-affected youth heal, rebuild their communities and start planning a future without violence. Through soccer, our partner organizations help to bring together community youth leaders with war-affected youth and build awareness about peace and reconciliation and to increase gender equity. Soccer is the platform through which we can help war-affected youth deal with the past. Soccer is one of those rare and unifying activities that is accessible to all youth regardless of their socio-economic circumstances. Soccer helps mobilize youth, bringing them together and bridging the gap between genders, backgrounds and generations. It is also quite simple to implement and is the most popular sport in the communities that we work in.



## Our Culture

We are a grassroots organization that is focused on one or two projects that will really make a difference in the lives of youth living in post-conflict regions.

Our goal is to direct as much support and resources to our projects; we are committed to being a low-cost, high impact organization that is wary of having unnecessary administrative costs. A large part of OA Projects is a network of volunteers who collaborate online to get things done. We need enthusiastic people who can work independently and efficiently, but your organizational contact will always be able to provide guidance if you are stuck.

There are some basic values that shape how we do our work:

- **Participation** - we work with local partners who already use soccer to promote community building. The youth leaders, peer counsellors, and groups in the communities we work in are the experts in what they need and what will work best for them so projects are designed with our local partners and implemented mostly by members of the local partner organizations.
- **Transparency** – we want people to be able to follow their support from the internet to the ground. Through blogging, videos, photos, and traditional monitoring reports, we are willing to show exactly how your support was used, what worked, what was learned and what was achieved.
- **Sustainability** – we want our projects to continue long after we have left the area. We want to support local networks rather than impose structures from the outside. In addition, we take environmental issues very seriously and have committed to pursuing environmentally positive techniques in our project (mainly planting numerous trees at our project sites).
- **Action** – in all that we do, everyone involved in the projects are actors who are capable of changing their own community's outcomes and the world for the better. No one is a passive victim waiting for a handout; everyone has the potential to take action and we do our best to encourage, support and share stories of action.
- **Improvement** – we are constantly seeking to improve our projects and our own capacity. This means that we will continually seek out new information about what has worked for others, new techniques, and new insights. Our learning will never stop. We recognize that there will always be room for improvement.
- **Passion** – we all love what we do and that is what keeps us motivated.



## Getting Involved with OA Projects

There are many ways to support our grassroots projects and some of them are listed below. Our biggest needs are to build awareness about our work and to raise funds that allow for us to continue and to expand our support for the rebuilding process in war-affected northern Uganda. The best way to get started is to have a read over these ideas, then think about your strengths and what you enjoy do; from there you can move on to thinking about how you can best make an impact.

## Social Media

A lot of the support from our projects has come directly and indirectly from sharing information online. If money or time is something that you don't have, the best thing to do is to be an active promoter of our work online.

Spread the word and join our [Facebook group](#) and [Fan pages](#) or follow our Executive Director and our Project Liaison on Twitter ([@GavinHollett](#) or [@erinlynnhunt](#)). [Our videos on YouTube](#) give glimpses into the work on the ground and are great for keeping in touch with our projects. Watch our [videos](#) and send us your feedback. Pass the links around to your friends. Watch your support make a difference.

## Donations

As we've said, financial contributions are the single biggest way to directly support our work. Equal Opportunity Society is a registered Canadian charitable organization and donations in Canada are tax-deductible. We have partnered with [Give Meaning](#), which is a registered public foundation in Canada that helps charitable projects to fundraise by providing a secure online platform for donations. Your donations on our project page are safe and will go to our project in northern Uganda. The web site is [www.gummarom.givemeaning.com](http://www.gummarom.givemeaning.com) (Gum Marom is "Equal Opportunity" in the northern Ugandan language of Acholi).

This fundraising platform provided by [Give Meaning](#) allows for individuals to help in a variety ways from emailing around the link to the page to creating your own personalized fundraising page in support of OA Projects to building an online fundraising campaign where you start a unique challenge to people. An example of the last option would be a "Five by Five" campaign where you donate \$5 and ask you five of your friends to do the same. Those five friends would then do the same. These are just some examples of how you could inspire action and support for OA Projects by utilizing the platform at [Givemeaning.com](http://Givemeaning.com).

## 1 for 1 Shop

We have organic t-shirts with silkscreen logos, where we guarantee that for every shirt sold a new soccer ball is bought for a community building soccer program working with war-affected youth. These are great and tangible ways for individuals or groups to help as it is very easy to imagine the difference being made by the purchase of the shirts.

Shirts can be bought for individual use, for a fundraising purpose (e.g., organize a table at your school, community center or at a local tournament), and for prizes to give out during a soccer-based charity event. Again, these are just some ideas for how to use the shirts to build support and we encourage you to be creative about how the shirts may be used in a more appropriate manner in your region.

The t-shirts are currently available [online](#) and in-store at [HtO](#) in Victoria and [Second Wave](#) in Vancouver, Canada.

## Play Soccer So They Can

Play Soccer So They Can is a grassroots community across North America of inspired people who want to share the joy of playing soccer with youth in war-affected communities. Participating in Play Soccer So They Can is as easy as asking your teammates to bring \$5 to a regularly scheduled game or as complex as organizing a large fundraising tournament in your community.

Play Soccer So They Can is an awesome way to support OA Projects because not only is it a fundraising activity but it also brings attention to our work and more importantly to the issues that war affected youth face. The coolest thing about PSSTC is that you can see what other groups around North America are doing to support our work, and share ideas – maybe there's a group on the other side of the continent who you can challenge to a fundraising competition or a team down the street who wants to participate as well.

For more details on Play Soccer So They Can, check out the web site [www.playsotheycan.com](http://www.playsotheycan.com), where an introductory brief and a longer "How To" are available for download.

## Other Events

If a soccer-related event is not really your thing, there are many other ways to support OA Projects. In the past supporters have had screenings of our videos, bake sales, donation drives and concerts, maybe something like that would be more up your ally. As is mentioned above, try to think of an idea that uses your strengths.

We are always looking for interns or volunteers who can share their passion for making a difference and help mobilize and organize support communities within their own networks. If you have an idea for how to support OA Projects, please contact [volunteer@oaprojects.org](mailto:volunteer@oaprojects.org).

## Projects and Research

Sometimes there are opportunities to assist OA Projects in research to help strengthen our projects. If you have a background in the social sciences, business, international development or other related fields, and are interested in doing some research with us, please contact [volunteer@oaprojects.org](mailto:volunteer@oaprojects.org) with the following information:

- Your background, education and experience (including a CV)
- How much time you would like to commit
- Why you want to work with OA Projects

Very rarely, we will need a volunteer or two for our overseas projects. As you've read above, our focus is on supporting our local partner organizations. Therefore, unless there is no one in our local partner's network who can do the job, we prefer to have local staff and volunteers. This policy does unfortunately limit the number of expat volunteers to those who have very specific skills which can contribute to the project with little training and are able to financially support themselves throughout the project. Skills that are most useful would be soccer coaching, intercultural communication, multimedia and project management skills. We really appreciate your interest in volunteering overseas for OA Projects and do encourage you to contact [volunteer@oaprojects.org](mailto:volunteer@oaprojects.org) to outline your experiences, your skills and how you can contribute to our projects, and please consider organizing a fundraising event as well. As our volunteers will be working with vulnerable children and youth, we may require a criminal record check before completely accepting your application.

## Sharing

Getting the word out about OA Projects is very important to building our support community and to keeping supporters engaged in the projects.

## Public Engagement

Sometimes people might want you to be able to talk to them or a group about OA Projects. Here are some key points that you can include.

Introduction – your own background and how/why you got involved.

History:

- It was founded in 2006 by university students in Victoria, Canada.
- They were inspired by a passage in Dallaire's *Shake Hands with the Devil* that describes encountering a group of children in a refugee camp right before the genocide in Rwanda. These children were smiling and laughing playing soccer amidst the horror of a civil war.
- First project was in Ecuador in 2007 where they re-built two fields with the local community and distributed soccer equipment.
- Realizing that soccer could be a tool for peace in place that are emerging from war, OA turned their focus to East Africa.
- 2008 – Rwanda, OA's first soccer camp, a field and equipment distribution in Kigali and surrounding areas. Video (<http://www.youtube.com/oafilms#p/u/14/A90p0jeUVFY>)
- 2009 - Uganda

Uganda

- More than 20 years of civil war meant that most people under 25 have never known peace – the ceasefire was signed in 2006
- People were displaced and forced to live in camps, children were abducted by the rebel army and regular people (civilians) were often targeted
- About when the ceasefire was signed, a group of young people formed the Youth Coalition for Peace (YCFP) to help their peers deal with the after-effects of the conflict and to promote peace in their communities.
- The YCFP uses sports to get youth (children and youth up to 30 or so) to come out and learn about peace so we decided to help them.

Our work

- We work with the YCFP to train coaches in both soccer skills and leadership so they can combine the sport with messages of peace, gender equity and reconciliation
- Then we let the new coaches practice by holding soccer camps for peace and inviting children aged 13-16 to come learn new skills, play and talk about peace.
- In 2009 a soccer field at a primary school was rehabilitated and all the new coaches (16) got equipment which lets them run their practices and keep talking about peace with their teams.
- We work very hard to give girls a chance to play as well because often they aren't included in sports because they have chores to do or because the sport is a male game.

Why should you help?

- We think that if everyone makes a small contribution, combined we can create huge change in the world.

- Through soccer, our partner organizations help to bring together community youth leaders with war-affected youth and build awareness about peace, reconciliation and gender equality.
- Soccer therefore becomes the platform through which we can help war-affected youth deal with the past.
- Soccer is one of those rare and unifying activities that is accessible to all youth regardless of their socio-economic circumstances. Soccer helps mobilize youth, bringing them together and bridging the gap between genders, backgrounds and generations.

How can you help?

- The easiest way is to join the [Play Soccer So They Can](#) Community – you can organize a fundraising game so that war-affected youth can play to.
- It can be as easy as asking your team to bring a toonie to a regular game and challenging your opponent to do the same or you could organize a tournament where anyone can donate and play.
- Check out the website [www.oaprojects.org](http://www.oaprojects.org) to see how your support is being used. There are photos and videos of past projects available and that'll be where you can see the upcoming project in northern Uganda unfold.

## Media

We encourage you to contact the media to let them know about your supportive events. Get in touch with us if you need a press release template. If the media responds, you can refer them to the web site's Press Room at <http://oaprojects.org/press-room> for photos and a media kit but most likely they will want to talk to you. The speaking notes above might give you some key points that will help you prepare for your interview. Your OA Projects contact will be able to provide you will some specific messaging if you are nervous about talking to the media.

## About Northern Uganda

OA Projects is currently concentrating on working in northern Uganda. The reason we are working in there is the strength of our partnerships with local organizations and because the region is moving out of over 20 years of civil war towards peace.

The conflict in northern Uganda started when the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony took up arms against the Government of Uganda. Quickly the LRA turned to attacking the population so the 22 year conflict has been marred by atrocities against the civilian population, including the forceful recruitment of children and adults to the ranks of the LRA through abduction during attacks on villages, schools and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP – essentially a refugee who has not crossed international borders) camps. At the height of the conflict, over one million people were confined in squalid IDP camps lacking adequate sanitation, food, infrastructure and protection from massacres, looting and raids.

The conflict has resulted in an entire generation reaching adulthood without experiencing an extended period of peace. During the conflict, the population most affected by violence, malnutrition, and societal breakdown were the children and youth. Moreover, youth were both the largest group of victims and the largest group of perpetrators of violence. According to the [Survey of War Affected Youth \(SWAY\)](#), it is estimated that 65% of those abducted by the LRA were children or adolescents. Over 58% of youth surveyed had witnessed someone being beaten or tortured and on average youth had witnessed nine of the traumatic events listed in the SWAY.

There is currently an uneasy peace in northern Uganda. The LRA and the Government of Uganda signed a ceasefire in 2006, which was followed by the commencement of the peace process in 2007 under the mediation of the Vice-President of South Sudan. The leader of the LRA has not yet signed the comprehensive peace agreement, and in late 2008 the LRA resumed attacks on populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. The violence in the DRC and Sudan has been taking a large toll on the civilian population with similar atrocities taking place. Although the LRA has largely left Uganda, some IDPs remain in the camps because they still feel vulnerable to violence perpetrated by rebel forces or due to disputes over the ownership of land. Despite this sense of continued vulnerability, northern Uganda is transitioning into a post-conflict or recovery situation.

As a volunteer with OA Projects, you should probably take a few minutes to learn about the conflict because people will ask you “what’s going on in northern Uganda?”

Here are some good places to start learning about the conflict in northern Uganda:

Starting with the [BBC’s Country Profile](#) and their coverage of the conflict would be a good idea.

[Resolve Uganda’s](#) Get Informed Section can provide a lot of valuable information

[The Change.org Northern Uganda 101 list](#) has books, films and websites all on one list

[Initiatives to end the violence in northern Uganda](#) is a look at the many attempts to end the conflict.

Chris Blattman is a Professor who has a lot of experience working in northern Uganda and has put together [a reading list](#); We recommend the Survey on War Affected Youth as a good place to start from this list.

If you are really keen and want to learn more, send us an e-mail and we’ll direct you to more information.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. How do you decide which countries to support?**

Through our experiences in previous projects, it has been determined that our resources can have the most impact in a post-conflict region where there is a high need for support for local and youth-led grassroots programs. At the moment we are concentrating on northern Uganda because we have a strong partnership in the region and we are developing experience and an understanding of the issues in northern Uganda.

### **2. Why don’t you partner with other international sports organizations to give OA Projects greater exposure?**

We focus on identifying and then supporting local groups and relationships that already exist and that are working towards rebuilding their community using soccer because we believe that local organizations will have the greatest impact and will be the most efficient.

As we develop our framework, there may be opportunities for partnering with other like-minded organizations but at this point, our preference is to target our resources and ensure our support is directed to where it will make the biggest impact.

For example, we have partnered with the Youth Coalition for Peace in Uganda as a means of supporting a local group that engages youth on the issues of peace and reconciliation and gender equity.

If you are part of an international sports organization and are interested in exploring the potential to partner with OA Projects, please email us at [oa@oaprojects.org](mailto:oa@oaprojects.org).

### **3. Do you collect used soccer equipment?**

We procure the majority of a project's equipment as close to the host community as possible to reduce shipping costs and to contribute to the local economy. Responsible financial support is the single biggest contribution you can make towards helping build peace and gender equity amongst the youth in war-affected communities. If you are interested in combining an equipment drive to any fundraising efforts, we encourage you to donate that equipment to an organization in your own community that is in need of the equipment.

### **4. Where does the money raised go?**

Funds raised will go towards implementing projects in war-affected communities northern Uganda. The goal of these projects is to:

- Improve community building infrastructure by rehabilitating community soccer fields, in an eco-friendly manner;
- Develop the capacity of local leaders and soccer coaches to implement soccer based community-building activities (e.g. post conflict healing and gender equality) through coaching workshops;
- Organize Soccer Camps and Leagues for Peace for local youth, that combine soccer instruction with community building messages and activities; and
- Provide resource support to local organizations that are using soccer-based activities in peace building, reconciliation, post-conflict healing and gender equality.

To learn all of the details of our current project in northern Uganda, please download the extended project proposal and outline from the project page – [www.oaprojects.org/project-uganda](http://www.oaprojects.org/project-uganda)

### **5. How much of my donation will go to administration?**

We are committed to using funds in the most responsible way. Our projects have an administration allotment of around 6% of the total budget. And, like all sustainable and effective charities, we do have administration costs related to our website, banking, legal/accounting, project development and in our fundraising activities. We currently have one staff member who is paid but the Centre for Sustainability and Social Innovation at the University of British Columbia currently provides the small salary.

## **Conclusion**

As we said at the beginning, we are stoked that you guys are interested in getting involved with OA Projects and in helping support local leaders rebuild their own communities after conflicts have devastated them. We hope that this manual has given you a lot more insight into what we are up to and how you can most effectively help.

Please e-mail us at [volunteer@oaprojects.org](mailto:volunteer@oaprojects.org) with any questions or with your initial idea for how think you can most effectively help. We will be able to answer questions and to give you guidance and feedback about your initial ideas.

Thank you for your time and we can't wait to have you join us in supporting war-affected youth!

The OA Projects Team

## Volunteer Code of Ethics

Welcome to OA Projects.

### Overview

OA Projects was founded on the principle that all of us, who are able, have an obligation to help those who are less fortunate – particularly children and youth – in our communities and abroad. OA Projects primarily uses soccer as a tool to create healthier and safer communities for at-risk and war affected youth.

OA Projects is devoted to involving as many members of the community as possible in its efforts. OA Projects provides enthusiastic and driven people with the opportunity to be leaders in their own and other communities. In addition to providing opportunities for action, OA Projects wants to expose people to a benevolent way of thinking that will help spread its powerful message: *many small contributions will lead to great, positive change.*

As a volunteer for OA Projects, you will be involved in as many activities and projects as you want. You will never be obligated to do something that you are not comfortable doing, but you will be expected to fulfill, to the best of your abilities, any commitment that you make to OA.

### Code of Ethics

As a volunteer for OA Projects from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ I will:

- (a) consider the social and environmental consequences of my actions;
- (b) treat others with the highest level of respect;
- (c) maintain a high level of occupational integrity;
- (d) never disclose private information about OA Projects, its projects, or its sponsors;
- (e) never misuse my access to OA Projects property and funds;
- (f) work to ensure that I fulfill any commitment made, while keeping in mind that I am not obligated to commit to anything that I am unable to or do not want to be a part of;
- (g) always keep in mind that, as a volunteer for OA Projects, I am a leader in my community and will act as such; and,
- (h) understand that my role with OA Projects is not permanent

I have contributed to and agree with the job description that outlines the expectations and goals of my volunteer position.

Finally, I am proud to be a volunteer for OA Projects and dedicated to help further its goals and its potential as a leading charitable organization.

Name of Volunteer

Signature of Volunteer

Date signed

Signature of OA Projects Representative