

Lake Alaotra Region GLOW Camp

Project Narrative:

Globally 62 million girls do not have access to education. Yet, we know that when girls are educated, they lead healthier and more productive lives. They gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence to break the cycle of poverty and help strengthen their societies. That is why Dining for Women has partnered with the Peace Corps Let Girls Learn Program support girls' education and empowerment activities like GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) camps and clubs.

In July 2015, four Peace Corps Volunteers and four counterparts from the Lake Alaotra region of Madagascar designed a weeklong GLOW camp to give girls the skills and knowledge to plan their future

and commit to their education. Peace Corps has been promoting empowerment camps like GLOW for the last twenty years and the agency has seen the tremendous impact they have. For the Alaotra participants, this camp was an once-in-a-lifetime trip. These girls began as strangers, but by the end of the week, they were tearfully hugging each other goodbye and wishing for more adventures together.

Four Volunteers from Lake Alaotra, four counterparts, and 20 second-level girls made the trek to Antananarivo for 7 days of GLOW camp. Some of the highlights of the week included a trip to the geophysics lab where the girls got a glimpse of the planets through a giant telescope, a visit to the embassy to listen to 11 Malagasy women discuss life and career goals, and a guest speaker from Youth First, (a local NGO) who used student-centered teaching methods to help the girls discover their leadership potential.

The Volunteers and counterparts chose to focus the regional camp on leadership, goal setting, and general life skills. One issue that affects high school girls in particular is the cost of education. These girls move from the countryside to the big city to attend school and quickly realize how expensive it is compared to their hometown. Typically the girl solves this dilemma in one of two ways: she drops out of school or tries to make money through prostitution. The Volunteers wanted to teach the girls at GLOW camp skills that could mitigate these issues. In-country counterparts led sessions on self-esteem, study tips, safe sex and relationships, and community leadership. A guest speaker from the Malagasy NGO Youth First used student-centered teaching methods to teach the girls about short and long-term goal



GLOW Camp Participants visiting the Tsimbazaza Zoo

setting. The group then visited the American Embassy in Antananarivo and listened to a panel of 11 Malagasy women discuss their career paths and the importance of education. Each time a Malagasy woman shared her story with the GLOW campers, it demonstrated a new possibility for their futures. The girls realized that finishing their education, becoming fluent in another language, or becoming leaders in their communities are all viable options.

However, the most exciting day was entirely unplanned. One organization cancelled at the last minute, but luckily a friend led the Volunteers to the Felana Maitso orphanage, where the GLOW campers met Madame Olga—a wonderful woman with a bright vision for the children’s future. She took the group on a tour of the facility and explained the "fomba" (culture) of orphanages in Madagascar. The GLOW girls prepared short, basic English lessons to teach the kids colors, animals, and clothing vocabulary. They spent hours at the orphanage, playing games and talking to the children. It was an exciting day for the children and a very powerful lesson about volunteerism for the GLOW participants.

Another highlight of the week was a trip to the geophysics lab where the girls got a glimpse of the planets through a giant telescope. All the while, Volunteers emphasized that science is not simply a boy’s subject. One morning was dedicated to teaching the girls an important piece of American culture—how to play softball. They also took the girls on a tour of ENS, the prestigious teacher’s college, to demonstrate a potential future path for their education.

A crucial element to a successful GLOW camp is encouraging the girls to return to their towns and pass on their knowledge to their peers. The skills and ideas presented at the camp can be disseminated to a much larger number of youth if each girl makes an effort to share her experience. Since July, several of the girls have done presentations at club meetings in their communities. The Volunteers are currently developing plans to begin a weekly youth club led by the GLOW participants. This practice of sustainable peer education is the most valuable aspect of a GLOW camp, and the Volunteers hope to see the impact grow in the coming months as the girls relive the exciting experiences from their week of camp.



GLOW Campers at the USA Center

Indicators of Success:

of girls impacted: 30

of females directly involved in the design and implementation of the project: 103

of organizations with increased capacity: 4