

### Longhorns Basketball Club

The Longhorns Basketball Club provides sixty 8 – 18 year-old newly-arrived East African young people with the opportunity to meet together with other young people; to play basketball and develop their skills. The Club is led by a dedicated team of volunteers who are themselves, newly arrived to Australia, and for the main part, under 25 years old. The Longhorns Club demonstrates the clear pathways for youth participation, community participation and youth leadership made possible through community sport. The Club has been seen to be so successful, that the Club's president – 25 year-old Manyang Berberi - has been asked to develop a similar club in Melbourne's south-east. The EastWeb Fund has provided funding for the Club to hire a training space for two hours a week, and is continuing to provide assistance for the Club to access additional funding to become a part of the Sunshine Basketball Association.

Many factors inhibit young people from marginalised communities becoming involved in sports. For a young person over 15, the average annual cost of becoming involved in team sport is \$652 – uniforms, registration fees and weekly game fees add up and are often prohibitive.

Yet there is a clear evidence-base supporting the role of organised sport as an avenue to improved physical and mental health – and physical and mental health should be seen as rights, not luxuries. Team sport allows young people to become a member of a peer group; to develop long-term friendships; to develop problem-solving skills and to develop leadership skills. These skills are invaluable for building resilience in young people. When a young person has experienced trauma, this resilience is particularly important for them to cope with their past, and to begin the process of adapting to a new country and new lifestyle.

Evidence suggests that when young people are excluded from opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities, they may feel isolated, disconnected, and may engage in risk-taking behaviour. Providing young people from marginalised backgrounds with opportunities to participate in mainstream sporting competitions allows the whole of the community opportunities to mix, and to address issues of racism. By providing these opportunities through an ethno-specific team, young people are assisted to maintain pride in their cultural identity.

For more information on the benefits of supporting young people from newly-arrived communities to be involved in sport, see the websites of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation <http://www.vichealth.gov.au> and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues <http://www.cmyi.net.au>

If you or someone you know would like to support members of The Longhorns Club to purchase uniforms or to pay registration fees, please contact Kat Monson at [eastweb@infoxchange.net.au](mailto:eastweb@infoxchange.net.au)