

Ms. Mable Nedziwe
Senior Sports Development Officer
Programs, Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Child Development
Zambia

What is your current role and can you describe your experience working in adapted sports?

Adapted sports has always been part of my personal and professional work. Being a staff from the department of sports development in the Ministry Of Youth, Sport and Child Development, disability and sports has always been part of my working program.

My experience working with adapted sports in Zambia has been a challenging owing to the fact that department of sports have very limited program tailored to engage persons living with disabilities in sports at grassroots. Nonetheless, I have managed to partner with Zambian Advocacy for Persons living with disabilities (ZAPD) under the Ministry of Community and Social Welfare in Zambia to factor some sports for Health activities and policy advocacy activities. During the 2019 International Day of Persons living with Disabilities, I managed to organize a Provincial Sports for health gala which attracted two districts (Mongu and Limulunga) and was staged in Limulunga. The event was supported by the Provincial Health Director for Western Province and we staged activities such as aerobics and health checks for persons living with disabilities. Advocacy activities were also conducted.

On my personal level, I partnered with a few colleagues to design a project concept note for a project titled "Project Life in Motion (ProLim) that will supplement government efforts in promoting health well-being of persons with disabilities. The goal of the Project is to contribute to the reduction of morbidity and mortality occasioned by No Communicable Diseases among physically challenged people in Western Province of Zambia through Sports(Cardio-Vascular activities), thereby contributing to the attainment of the Global Action Plan 2013-20 targets for the prevention and control of NCDs.

This shall be operationalized through;

1. Designing Coordinated approaches in combating emerging NCDs among persons with disabilities
2. Conduct sensitization activities to develop coalitions on the fight against NCDs among persons living with disabilities
3. Facilitate capacity building programs on newly formed coalitions to scale up efforts of reducing NCDs through sports(cardiovascular activities) among persons living with disabilities
4. Identification and appraising of clients that need to be enlisted on the project
5. Introducing clients on the program activities and monitoring their progress
6. Advocacy including education, research and documentation services
7. Creation of safe spaces for the targeted population

The project is yet to be launched as we are trying to mobilize technical, material, and financial support.

What are some of the challenges you face in your community, organization, or country in designing sports opportunities for people with disabilities? How are you overcoming these?

The following are among the major challenges we are facing in pursuit to designing programs that can contribute improving lives of persons living with disabilities:

1. **Material challenges:** Majority of adapted sporting activities require tailor made sporting equipment which are usually in short supply in Zambia hence making them relatively higher on the cost side. Additionally, majority of these equipment can only be accessed in sporting centers in Lusaka and on the copperbelt, leaving enthusiastic athletes in rural areas not having equipment.
2. **Financial challenges:** in order to continue fostering activities such as advocacy, there is need for financial resources which we are lacking.
3. **Technical challenges:** currently we have very few trainers, motivators and coaches that are imbued with capacities and skills to work in adapted sports. To that effect, through the above mentioned concept note, we intend facilitate and fast-track capacity building for trainers, motivators and coaches in adapted sports in the rural communities of Western Province to help scale up participation in sports for persons living with disabilities. Additionally, partnerships and coalitions we intend to create with other stakeholders such as the correctional services, health facilities and others shall benefit a great deal by having their staff capacity built in this area.
4. **Lack of adequate disability safe spaces** where persons living with disabilities can walk in and feel so comfortable to participate without having the feeling of being judged. In rural Zambia, there still exist stereotypes and stigma on persons living with disabilities.

You participated in a sports diplomacy program via the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy, and FHI 360. Had you been to the U.S. before? What did you do in the U.S. during the program?

Yes, I visited U.S in 2018 from 7th to 21st April 2018 for the Sports Visitor Programme under the theme “Promoting Disability Rights and Inclusion.” The Programme was a fast paced two weeks exchange programs organized by the Family Health International (FHI 360) and the US Department of State (DOS) under the bureau of Educational and cultural Affairs in the Division of Sports Diplomacy. The program was aimed at tapping into the shared passion for sports around the world to address U.S foreign policy priorities and empower young people to develop leadership skills, achieve academic success, promote respect for diversity, and contribute stronger, more inclusive and stable communities.

Whilst in the United States the following were the major activities and thematic area that we covered:

1. **Visit to the Department of State:** Bureau of Democracy and Human Right and labor. The focal personal was Ann Cod who facilitated the meeting in Washington and imbued us with what to expect during our stay in the United States
2. I learnt about the power of Positive Coaching Alliance. The session was facilitated by Monica Livingston. The Positive coach introduced us to the positive coaching sessions which was quite impactful. My major takeaway was the concept of sandwiching a negative message with two positive messages.
3. We equally learnt about Adaptive sports and fitness program with Mr. Harsh Thakkar. This was made possible after undertaking a short trip to East County Community Center where we meet Mr. Harsh Thakkar, Specialist in Spinal Cord Injury Peer Wellness, as well as Team Manager for Med Star Punishers Wheelchair Basketball Team. Whilst at the center, we had a session on

adaptive sports fitness. We also meet the Med Star basketball team during their training session. The team travels around the country and had been competing in the elite Adapted Wheelchair basketball. Mr. Harsh also took time to explain how they do their recruitment and classification of people who go to their center for therapeutic intervention and later on decides to engage in one of the adapted sports of their choice at the center.

4. I equally attended a session on the Disability rights and education where we held a discussion with the Grassroots Project on the topic of HIV/Health Education through Community Service. The project is being headed by Ms. Jane Wallis who previously volunteered at the same facility.
5. We also had a session on designing an Action Planning with Kaimana Chee. The workshop was presented based on the five-phase C.A.P.E.S model that was designed to ensure that you have both the theoretical and practical basis to successfully implement community projects. Following the successful graining, groups were formed to come up with projects to be implemented when we get back home
6. Another impactful session we had was on Mentoring Youth Athletes, Training local coaches and fundraising with a team from Special Olympics. This session was facilitated by Hunter Brislin from Kentucky Special Olympics
7. We also had a session on Adaptive and inclusion recreation by BJ Lewis with Louisville Metro Parks
8. Adaptive Learning and Physical Education Learning for Youths by Thomas Knabel with Churchill Park school which houses the Functional Mental Disabilities (FMD) program which serves students ages 5 to 21 years who have moderate to severe disabilities and need a specialized programs available.
9. Our last sessions in the United States was dedicated to the presentation of the group Action Plan Projects as well as the Photo Journalism Video. Three groups amongst the participants presented their Action Plan Projects which focused on three areas of wheelchair Basket project which included the following:
 - a. Group 1:- Coaching and training coaches in Wheelchair Basketball
 - b. Group 2:- Identification, Mobilizing and classification of athletes in Wheelchair Basketball
 - c. Group 3:- Advocacy and inclusion of disability rights for persons with disabilities

After the presentations, a certificate presentation ceremony was held and group photos were taken to mark the end of the program.

What did you learn about the United States as a country related to adaptive sports?

1. In relation to adapted sports, I was elated by how the Americans place great importance to adapted sports and inclusions, including many other disability advocacy programs that begin from early childhood. The following were my major takeaways about US in relation to adapted sports”
2. The Power of positive coaching and how it can spur performance in sports, adapted sports included. Of particular interest to this is how as a positive coach you can deliver a hurtful lesson to an athlete by sandwiching it with two soft lessons. You begin by praising an athlete, then tell them their weakness and how they can improve, the end by giving them a pat in their back.

3. I also learn the five-phase C.A.P.E.S model in Project Management with Kaimana Che that are designed to ensure that you have both the theoretical and practical basis to successfully implement community projects. I intend to utilize the lesson in the project I plant to implement.
4. I learnt about use of sports to provide much needed health literacy and social empowerment programs. Sports can be a powerful tool to drive and spread health messages in communities. I am particularly excited with the prospect of holding adapted sporting events and use them to attract attention of both able bodied persons and persons living disability to practically demonstrate that disability is not inability.
5. I learnt new strategies and methods of improving Public Speaking Skills after attending a Public Speaking session at Muhammad Ali Center 144th North 6th Street in Louisville which was held under the topic Public. The essence of this session was to help participants enhance their communication skills effectively. It also put emphasis on how to strategically communicate methods and information to effectively engage with the audience. This was done by practicing elevator pitch so that one can confidently communicate ideas and compelling messages. The session was very practical as some participants held some demonstration on how to use the elevator speech to effectively communicate. In relation to adapted sports, this came in handy as we plan to train coaches, motivators and trainers in adapted sport to effectively package and communicate to adapted athletes without judging them. Often times, some important messages have been distorted through ineffective communication.

What did you learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how has this influenced you personally or professionally?

In line with the 2012 ADA act, physical or mental disabilities in no way diminish a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of society. I strongly believe that with the right support from Government and other stakeholders, rights of the persons with disabilities can be enhanced.

What are some similarities or differences between the U.S. and your home country in regards to inclusion of people with disabilities and adapted sports?

Similarities

1. Both countries have integrated adapted sports in their mainstream sporting programmes as both countries are signatory to a number of charters, protocols and conventions that uphold the rights and interest of persons living with disabilities through international organizations such as Special Olympics and Paralympics committees
2. Both countries have an open door policy of allowing the private sector to supplement government efforts by implementing activities of adapted sports.
3. In both countries, individuals who have experienced discrimination on the basis of disability have often had no legal recourse to redress such discrimination thereby making it hard to fight discrimination.

Differences

1. Unlike in the US, in Zambia, there are less access to opportunities for persons living with both physical and intellectual disabilities to participate in adapted sports owing to limited institutions and organizations that support them. Take for instance, out of the sixteen (16) districts of Western Province here in Zambia, we only have one school that support persons living with physical disabilities.
2. Unlike in the US, there is lack of adequate trained coaches and motivators for adapted sports in Zambia. This resources is also compounded by limited training programs in adapted sports in various tertiary learning institutions.
3. There is limited Government financial support to adapted sports thereby making it so hard for activities of adapted sports to be carried out in Zambia in comparative to the US. The huge chunk of the budgetary allocation for sports is for major sporting discipline such as football, Netball and Athletics.
4. Unlike in the US, lack of sporting equipment for adapted sports remains a big challenge in Zambia. This is due to the fact that we lack companies and firm in Zambia that can manufacture equipment for adapted sports.

How have you integrated the Sports Visitor Program experience into your professional life? How are you using the experience to promote inclusion and opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sports?

The experience greatly sharpened my knowledge and skills in adapted sports. We have incorporated adapted sports in our sports work plans for Western Province. We held some sports and physical activities on the last two International Day of Persons with Disabilities (2018 & 2019), coordinated by my office. We have also formed coalitions with other institutions in adapted sports in Western Province such as Team Mongu Fitness group in Mongu District as well as SEPO YALUNA organization based in Senanga District of Western Province to implement include persons living with disabilities in their activities. During these events, we have been preaching messages of rights of persons with disabilities as well as talking about how adapted sporting activities can enhance their health well-being.

What did you learn about U.S. society or Americans that surprised you or changed your perception of the country?

My visit to American gave me an opportunity to see American, and learn a number of things. I was mesmerized by the Freedoms and liberties that Americans enjoy. Equally important discovery I had is how hardworking Americans are, and the importance they place on working for their country to better it. I equally had a once in a life time to visit and see some world iconic features which include The White House, the Capital Building, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and also had the chance to watch a NBA match between Washington Wizards against Boston Celtics.

Have you been in touch with anyone you met during the program and what has been the result of this relationship?

I had a very cordial working relationship with the former ambassador to Zambia His Excellency Mr. Daniel Foote. In the beginning of 2019, we had a short meeting with all the U.S Alumni in Mongu Western Zambia when he visited Western Province and we took him through the advocacy work we have been doing as an Alumni group. I equally was in communication with Ann Palla-Kan. Kaimana che was amongst those that I have had long conversation with after leaving the United States. I am hoping to have more engagements with other people I met during the program now that I have a clearly defined project which I believe has a huge potential to transform lives of persons with disabilities.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us about inclusion or adapted sports?

I shall remain indebted to the American Government for facilitating this Program and allowing me to be part of it. Through the experience and lessons I acquired whilst there, my thinking was greatly enhanced. To that effect, I have been working on a concept note to carry out a project in adapted sports and health. Through the Department of state, I wish to partner with Americans to carry out this fore mentioned project in the rural communities of Western Province. I am ready to make a presentation of the concept note and how it can be operationalized to make impactful contribution to persons living with disabilities as they are among the most neglected people.

Ms. Amal Amjahid
Project Coordinator and Trainer at [CENS Academy](#)
Belgium

What is your current role and can you describe your experience working in adapted sports?

Currently, I coordinate the para-jiu-jitsu activities by playing a role of managing relationships between the children, the coaches and the parents to best meet their needs. I also play the role of the instructor who allows me to be close to the children and other coaches and thus to discuss the improvements to be made in our courses on the basis of the observations made by the team and the testimonies of the disabled children and their parent. It has been more than 15 years now that our association has been interested in this segment of population and has tried to meet their needs as much as possible by an adapted and inclusive sport practice.

What are some of the challenges you face in your community, organization, or country in designing sports opportunities for people with disabilities? How are you overcoming these?

Our association began in 2004 to welcome children with disabilities who were denied access to most of the sports clubs to which they attended. In order to fight against social exclusion, we made the decision to include them in our Jiu-Jitsu classes alongside able-bodied children, we were also able to educate able-bodied children and their parents on the difficulties they encountered and we were able to obtain their approval and collaboration. We had failed to include all forms of disability in the practice of Jiu-

Jitsu as was the case at the time with the severely disabled children with quadriplegia. The facilities, the space, the safety or the type of handicaps were all obstacles that did not allow to reach the desired level of a performance of Jiu-Jitsu in the best conditions. This is why we have set up for these people an electric wheelchair football activity which has enabled us to offer them a sporting practice adapted to their difficulties while allowing them to experience and feel the sensations of the sport. We have also invited able-bodied people to join them to be part of this sporting activity.

You participated in a sports diplomacy program via the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy, and FHI 360. Had you been to the U.S. before?

Yes, I have had the opportunity to go to the United States on several occasions before, specifically to Los Angeles for jiu-jitsu competitions. California is known for being home to one of the world's largest Jiu-Jitsu communities, and it also has the best fighters in that discipline.

What did you do in the U.S. during the program?

This Sports Diplomacy program offered us training, exchange of experiences, field practices and connections through new partnerships that we needed to improve our knowledge and skills in this field. We were able to visit many associations and meet many people involved in the cause of inclusion through sport. All these exchanges made with awesome people like Elaine Cooluris, Executive Director ADA San Diego who participated in the creation of the first social inclusion bill aimed at combating discrimination against people with disabilities and hiring them within the American Corporations, which is in my opinion an extraordinary advance on a national and international scale, because it has inspired and Propelled this cause in many other countries. The meetings with our various speakers in the field were all extremely rich as they displayed an extraordinary commitment and dedication to their project of inclusion through sports in favor of these marginalized communities. They sustained, enriched and inspired us throughout our stay in the United States.

In addition:

Adaptive Karate - Head Instructor Frank Mc Carroll has made a great progress with children of mental disabilities. A discipline was present among the beneficiary children, they knew how to channel themselves and they participated in a coordinated manner in the activity. The teacher rewarded at the end of the week all those who have been able to perform well in a game. He gives one his student who is a person living with mental disability the chance to teach the course, we feel the appreciation and the student takes pleasure in teaching what he has learned, the teacher occasionally intervenes to correct some details. He established a progress notebook categorized by "*Belt*" and "*Degree*" in order to facilitate the instruction of the graduation of the belts and especially the transmission of the course over to other instructors (It took him several years to write this educational and teaching guide booklet).

Star Pal - We went to meet volunteer police officers who worked to set up sports activities such as American football for young people from rough neighborhoods and dysfunctional families. They support the children, they can contact them at any time and the police try to meet their needs and help them with difficulties such as problems of family member under arrest, material need, hygiene problem, or even prevent them from joining a gang, or falling into drugs, etc. Their main partners are schools, offering several sports activities organized by the police during the academic year for children.

Monarch School - this magnificent establishment is dedicated to homeless children or children living under extreme poverty, it offers them a sports infrastructure, sports equipment and qualified sports instructors, as well as school courses to teach them to read, count and carpentry workshops as manual crafts. Some children arrive illiterate, and psychological assistance is offered to both for children experiencing trauma and for the teachers. Rachel Archer is the main calming link who revives the teams and the children. Many of the children come from across the Mexican border. They have volleyball, basketball and baseball teams and they are proud of them because their teams have won regional championships several times. They have a high proportion of girls on their teams, one of whom has received a scholarship to go to college. They offer them meals because for some children it will be their only meal of the day. They mainly funded their establishment through local donors and have a partnership with Adidas which provides them with equipment, but also with the San Diego Baseball team whose stadium is less than 200m away. They also have a vegetable garden to connect children with nature.

Blind community - Gardien Martial Arts - We went to meet with Joshua Loya who teaches martial arts classes adapted for the blind and mentally retarded. The instructor spoke to us explaining that we must keep constant contact with the blind. They remind us that "these bounded persons have boundless capacities" because they are constantly pushing the limits of their difficulties. Joshua is blind and also an instructor, he practices karate, jiu-jitsu, as well as surfing, he explains to us that he likes the competition whether it is against an able-bodied or a disabled, but he prefers someone with the same disability as him. Joshua is not blind from birth like so many other interlocutors that we have already met during our stay, he became blind later, but he was able to show resilience by using sport to reincarnate himself.

Poway jiu-jitsu - Jeff Mata -A blind jiu-jitsu instructor, he was part of the National Judo team at the 2015 IBSA World Games. He taught us progressive adaptivity, collaborative work between the sighted and the blind, he explained to us that jiu-jitsu is the best suited sport for the visually impaired and the blind. He explained that unlike Judo, jiu-jitsu has not yet adapted these competition rules to fit the blind. In order to better understand this deficiency, he invited us to better feel and live the condition of a blind person in his sport and how we will be able to help him learn. So, we participated as a blind person with the help of a sighted partner. It was concluded that it would be difficult to teach jiu-jitsu to a group composed only of blind people because it lacks this collaboration. He taught us that the explanations of the techniques should be as detailed as possible with precise vocabulary, that we should also not hesitate to correct the positioning of a member of his partner's body when it's poorly positioned.

Action plan with Rachel Archer - We were able to establish an action plan on an inclusion project through sport with the help and tools offered by Rachel.

It allowed us to identify the problems, the obstacles, the means, the resources and the solutions. We were able to identify 3 essential phases in this project;

1. Access to sport - People with disabilities can express themselves through a codified sport activity

2. Inclusion - People with disabilities practice Jiu jitsu with able-bodied people
3. Appreciation - By interest and accessibility to a competitive practice.

Waves4all - Joshua - Adapted surfing, we attended surfing lessons for people with mental disabilities and paraplegic people to learn about surfing. They meet once a month for this activity. Joshua taught us about the different steps to progress and stay on the board and on the waves.

Chula Vista Elite Training Center (Olympic center) - This is a training center dedicated to Olympic and Paralympic athletes, mainly Outdoor. Some athletics training is held jointly between Olympic and Paralympic athlete. We were able to meet Lex Gillette, he is several times Olympic medalist and record holder in his discipline. He shared with us his story and how his mother influenced him to return to be part in life again at start of his illness. I asked him if he had a one-sentence quote that guides him before each start of the competition and he replied that he had an eye-covering strap that reads "*No Apprehension, No Fear*".

Michael Prodor – "Talk to convince" workshop - We have learned to recognize and use the three key elements of a presentation about ourselves, association, activity, objectives and expectations, needs, ask our interlocutor specific questions. Some were able to present their project orally in less than a minute. We were advised to practice at home facing the mirror in front of friends, family, asking for feedback on what is missing, avoid improvising and prepare these presentations in advance, which can be adapted to these different interlocutors. Do not use a note but speak from the depth of the heart, because my interlocutor, my audience can be more sensitive and more receptive.

CAF Challenged athlete Foundation - We were able to meet the representatives of CAF and visit the museum retracing the history of its beginnings to the present day, various actions are carried out within the organization of adapted sports activities, but above all it plays a leading role in the resiliency of people with disabilities by providing them with extremely expensive equipment, such as prosthesis for sports practice. It offers aid to many Americans, but is not limited to the United States, it also works internationally.

Central Florida University - The meet and greet by Ricardo Liborio and his students touched us deeply. We were able to share our experiences and practices of teaching Jiu-Jitsu there. We were also able to participate in two course sessions.

San Diego University - During our visit, we met Ahkeel Whitehead who introduced us to the "Adapted Athletics" project that he set up within the San Diego University. His project aims to allow people with disabilities to pursue their athletic and academic goals within the San Diego University by providing these athletes with necessary coaching, training and infrastructure allowing them to excel in both athletic and their academic careers. And to participate in university tournaments.

Subsequently, we had the chance to visit one of the other projects set up at the San Diego University which is "Adaptive Fitness Clinic". This program welcomes citizens of the San Diego area with a physical or neuromuscular disability by allowing them to have a physical activity adapted to their disability and supervised by physiotherapy students. A sports hall is dedicated to them with an arsenal of equipment adapted to various types of handicaps.

US Open Taekwondo - It was two wonderful days attending one of the biggest Taekwondo tournaments that bring together thousands of practitioners from around the world. I supported, met and chatted with para-taekwondo coaches and athletes. I really enjoyed hearing from para-taekwondo athletes about the rules and how they have been adapted to accommodate different types of disabilities. So, these are the two parts of para-taekwondo competitions that we find, one is combat, and the other is Kata. The strength, enthusiasm and energy that were displayed by athletes with a disability were as intense, the effort and passion in applying the techniques were as if from able-bodied individuals.

Building Leaders for the game of life - A great training on ethical leadership, allowing us to better define our commitment and transmit to young athletes these same ethical values over time, taking into account their history and their differences to offer them the best assistance and adapted support.

What did you learn about the U.S. as a country, related to adapted sports?

I was greatly impressed to learn and discover that there are programs at major state universities in the United States that allow people with disabilities to pursue their athletic and academic goals within the university. Universities with such programs as the San Diego University's SDSU Adapted Athletics that provide coaching and training arrangements for each student athlete in disciplines such as athleticism, basketball and tennis.

What did you learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how has this influenced you personally or professionally?

Meeting with Elaine, Executive Director of the San Diego ADA, gave me a better understanding of the fortitude of this law, which aims to include people with disabilities, and the enormous advances that have resulted from it. This law has had an incredible positive impact on many Americans whose emancipatory effects I have personally seen, but also empowerment through sport. This law that shined around the world has inspired many countries to do the same. I was able to meet the beneficiaries of this law, including several athletes with disabilities. I was able to witness the incredible power of adaptability and transformation of people with disability such as Joshua and Mata who are affected by blindness and who in turn teaches martial arts to able-bodied and People with disabilities and who are models of undeniable inclusion. Mata is a lawyer, but has also started his own business. Here are several favorite models that have touched me so much and their greatness is immeasurable.

I was touched by the remarkable work of all of our interlocutors and their association who work for the inclusion and integration of the most marginalized or discriminated people in our society.

This has allowed me to deepen my knowledge on the difficulties encountered by people with disabilities but especially how sport and more particularly martial arts have been beneficial and inclusive for many of them in their fight for an independent life by allowing them to take part in society. I am fascinated by the way in which disabilities are circumvented to allow them to take part and be part of this large community that sports represent forgetting the moment about their handicaps, because they are no longer seen as such but only as sportsmen.

What are some similarities or differences between the U.S. and your home country in regards to inclusion of people with disabilities and adapted sports?

The United States is a pioneer in the social inclusion of people with disabilities. But the similarity is that, we share a common vision that all citizens can benefit from the same opportunities. The United States being a few years ahead of the undertaking of this action, allows us to see, but also to believe in the power of sport to allow these exceptional people to bypass their difficulty and transcend who they are.

How have you integrated the Sports Visitor Program experience into your professional life?

We work to contribute to the quality of life of people with mental, physical or sensory disabilities to access sport through martial arts in order to improve health, confidence and self-image, the development of physiological, motor and cognitive qualities and belonging to the sports community.

We currently wish to reproduce and multiply models of inclusion that have been proven in the United States as demonstrated by Joshua, Mata and Frank's student who, thanks to the practice of martial arts in their club, have become instructors who teach these same disciplines to able-bodied and disabled people, which allows them to transcend their handicap and to be recognized for who they are and not for their handicap.

How are you using the experience to promote inclusion and opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sports?

By working at the local level, we allow many people with disabilities to come and play sport, thanks to the ease of proximity and access to adapted structures and their welcoming environment. For others, the distance, the means of transport and the availability of an escort can represent a barrier to the practice of sport, which is why we now offer admission to specialized establishments. But also, we enroll all of our coaches in adapted physical activity training to provide qualified and educated coaches to the public. The collaboration and partnership with specialized structures allow our activities to reach a wider audience. We are currently working on the design of a qualifying coach training course in Adapted Jiu-Jitsu in order to increase the number of clubs that can accommodate this segment of the population and thus expand the offer over a greater number of territories.

What did you learn about U.S. society or Americans that surprised you or changed your perception of the country?

I was particularly impressed to see that sport was an integral part of American culture and that it was very present in schools and universities. That young sports talented Americans could receive a scholarship and that the United States greatly valued the potential of sport in developing virtuous, and even resilience characters.

Have you been in touch with anyone you met during the program and what has been the result of this relationship?

I have kept in touch with Martial Arts instructors Joshua Loya, Jeff Mata, Frank Mc Carroll and Ricardo Liborio to continue to share and exchange the latest in our field practices.