Using the power of football to build a better future – A vision and its performance

Editorial by the YDF Project Manager

Just two years to go until the FIFA World Cup 2010TM kicks off on June 11 for the first time ever on the African continent. For four weeks the eyes of the world public will focus on the turf when the Champions compete in the game. They will also focus on South Africa.

For most people everywhere, not only in Africa, ‘Football’ means much more than Premiership, Champions and stadiums. Talking about the game, they refer to its ‘roots’ which in Africa, like in many other parts of the world, mean a grass pitch in a village or a dirt road in a township. There, football will still be played long after the final whistle is blown in the World Cup Finals. It is the ‘street’ where soccer originates from and it is the ‘street’ where boys and girls compete for the ball all across the African continent. This is why GTZ decided to add its ‘Youth Development through Football’ (YDF) project and it’s the reason, why it kicked off in the ‘streets’ of South Africa a year ago. Much has been achieved ever since. So far, the project has been implemented in the South African Tshwane region, in Mpumalanga and in the Eastern Cape. Other regions will follow as will other African countries.

The ‘Youth Development through Football’ project focuses on the game, but first and foremost on its social dimension. YDF fosters youth development and peace with the emphasis on mutual understanding, fairness and tolerance. Using football as a tool, YDF empowers girls and boys to improve their future prospects. YDF strives to overcome discrimination, improve health and combat disease, promote gender equality, fight violence and secure environmental sustainability. Thus, the project contributes actively and sustainably to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Like no other sport, football has the power to unite people and cultures all over the world. It enjoys enormous popularity, which makes the game in all its varieties an excellent means to reach masses of young people. As a team sport it promotes fairness and tolerance, fosters mutual understanding and contributes to the positive development of personality and character. Street football has a positive effect far beyond the physical experience gained in the game. It has an impact on life and its skills. This dimension is where the YDF project kicks off - it affiliates soccer with social development.

YDF’s primary target groups are girls and boys aged 12 to 20 years, but the project uses a holistic approach. It also includes peer groups, families and other important members of the community as second targets. YDF builds on existing initiatives and structures which are already successfully working throughout Africa in the field of youth development through football instead of reinventing the wheel. These initiatives deliver innovative work that deserves to be strengthened, documented and standardized in order to successfully spread the approaches and make them accessible tried-and-tested tools for other or new initiatives. Events organized or supported by YDF will showcase the accomplishments and provide highlights for the participating girls and boys.

The project is implemented in partnership with government programs, in South Africa particularly with those of the national and regional Departments of Sport and of the National Youth Council. In South Africa the Department of Sport and Recreation is the official project partner whereas the network structure remains independent and has a non-governmental status. The project management is supported by a steering committee. It consists of representatives of the South African Department of Sport and Recreation, the National Youth Commission, the South African Football Association, the Local Organizing Committee, streetfootballworld, GTZ in South Africa as well as of NGO’s working in the field of youth development through football. The steering committee is chaired by the representative of the South African Department of Sports and Recreation. Last but not least, the project focuses on sustainability. All organizations supported by YDF will be able to continue their developmental work on a sound basis within the street-footballworld network after the project is completed in 2011.

Gerald Guskowski, YDF Project Manager

NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2008
Feature: The “Mamelodi 8” Football League.

Fortune Mgidi is 13 years old and crazy about football. Whenever she has a spare minute, she heads for the soccer pitch. Fortune is growing up in Mamelodi, one of South Africa’s townships in the Tshwane/Pretoria region and she attends the Emasangweni Primary School.

Early this year, a dream came true: She was accredited for the school league making her part of the ‘Mamelodi 8’ - a league that links grassroots soccer to youth development. The ‘8’ stands for a football league of eight primary schools in Mamelodi.

Mamelodi, like other townships in South Africa, faces complex social and environmental problems. AIDS has left thousands of families short of one parent or both with the consequence that children become even more vulnerable. They often grow up lacking real alternatives in life and without positive role models. Schools are the centre of this complex reality, and perhaps the place to teach children to be aware of the environment and to build the belief that life could be a little better tomorrow.

Against this backdrop, Youth Development through Football (YDF) supports the ‘Mamelodi 8’ Football league. YDF launched this league in co-operation with the Gauteng North Sports Council (GNSC), Altus Sports and eight primary schools from Mamelodi in Tshwane. The project started in October 2007 when school sport educators from eight primary schools in Mamelodi East met for a first planning workshop, which was organised by Youth Development through Football (YDF) of the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and hosted at the Mahlasedi Masana primary school.

The ‘Mamelodi 8 YDF School League’ kicked off in March 5th and follows a round robin system with a final tournament as a closing event at the 20th September 2008. Representatives of the eight schools selected three U-14 teams and 46 children per school to compete in 11-a-side girls, 11-a-side boys and 5-a-side mixed gender street soccer leagues.

Mamelodi 8 aims to create area-wide street football opportunities, but the project is far more than a normal football league. It combines football with life skills and environmental training, and promotes the idea of fair play and solidarity, distributing points not only for goals, but also for social behaviour.

To create environmental awareness within the schools and the community of Mamelodi, the non-governmental organization ‘Green Feet’ got on board to implement the ‘Clockworks 2010 project’. In collaboration with the eight Mamelodi schools, the craft project utilizes recyclable materials such as plastic, paper and tin to create clocks that symbolize the countdown to the forthcoming FIFA World Cup 2010.

YDF involved also ‘Karos & Kambro’, a national youth development project that combines soccer, the power of theatre and positive life skills in a holistic approach. The 24 team captains, 14 girls and 10 boys, meet on a weekly basis for a personality building workshop with facilitators from ‘Karos & Kambro’. This is an empowering process of transformation, targeting children and youth-at-risk.

YDF monitors and evaluates the league in regular workshops. As a result YDF is constantly improving its concept using football as a powerful tool for youth development. Football is not always about winning matches and trophies. It is about fair play. We, as YDF, promote this idea.
New Tool - Get Youth on Board!

The Get Youth on Board! tool kit is designed as a Training of Trainers (ToT). It will enable participants to design and implement trainings and workshops for youth in the field of sports and youth development. The training can be held in workshops on a national or regional base. It is a capacity development tool for organisations.

The tool kit has been piloted and tested in the YDF project in South Africa. The flexible concept has been adapted to the local contexts and the participants: Members of youth leadership forums, sport and development organisations and youth which have been appointed by the local sports councils were participating in the first workshop. The participants jointly worked on their mode of cooperation and developed action plans which were followed-up by YDF and their local partners.

The experiences of the testing in South Africa have been incorporated in the tool kit which has been published in May 2008. Since the partners and the participants of the workshop gave a positive feedback, the toolkit is offered by YDF as an element for capacity building for organisations working in the field of development through football. It includes relevant background information on different fields of youth promotion like youth organisations, child and youth rights, youth policies and action plans, health, violence, employment, establishment of structures for youth participation and youth promotion, and commercial sexual exploitation of minors.

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Happy Birthday Nelson Mandela


The spirit of Nelson Mandela was everywhere during the Nelson Mandela 90th Birthday Football Tournament that took place in his home village on the Qunu sports grounds July 19-20. The tournament was the highlight of a number activities at Qunu which were organised by the Eastern Cape Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture (DSRAC) together with Grassrootssoccer and YDF. Prior to the tournament, a holiday camp at the Heritage Site of the Nelson Mandela Museum in Qunu took place. Children from all Eastern Cape districts had five days of learning to improve their football game and developing life skills. Young people could see for themselves that playing football means more than just winning.

Football was used as a medium to teach children life and social skills in the field of HIV/Aids. This approach is unique and has the potential to become a best practice model. In the Eastern Cape, YDF is cooperating with the DSRAC, using their structures and capacities. DSRAC is running the Mass Participation Program (MPP) which aims to reach young children and engage them in physical activities. YDF is also building on the existing partnership between the LandesSportBund (LSB) Niedersachsen, the umbrella organization for Sport of Lower Saxony and DSRAC. The LSB assisted DSRAC in the development of a Master Plan which aims to improve sport participation in the province.

Supported by YDF, the NGO Grassrootssoccer trained 32 Mass Participation Sport Coordinators in life skills training methods at the beginning of July. The MPP Coordinators came from the Nelson Mandela Metro, the Alfred Nzo, Chris Hani and Ukhalmaba districts. It was important to focus on the rural area of the Eastern Cape since they will benefit the least from 2010. The Coordinators were able to practice at the holiday camp in Qunu what they had learned and will continue to introduce the element of life skills in their daily work. DSRAC, Grassrootssoccer and YDF will jointly evaluate the impact and then decide how they can integrate this element in all MPP Programs.

The Eastern Cape Project is part of bigger design. In South Africa the project was a joint venture between the German and the South Africa governments and has been implemented in the Western Cape, Gauteng and Mpumalanga districts as well. YDF is also implementing projects in up to 10 other African countries.
South Africa: National Youth Day

2 July 2008

“Winning through Fairness” was the motto of the football championship organised by GTZ-YDF on National Youth Day. The young winners received the cup from President Thabo Mbeki and GTZ Country Director Peter Conze on 16 June.

Youth Day is an important South African public holiday. It commemorates the Soweto student uprising of 16 June 1976, which is considered a milestone in South Africa’s struggle for freedom. In addressing the young people, South African President Thabo Mbeki sharply condemned current attacks against foreigners and appealed to youth’s sense of responsibility. In his speech, the president also praised the GTZ project Youth Development through Football (YDF).

Nomi Nkondlo, chairperson of the National Youth Commission in South Africa’s Office of the President, stressed in her speech the significance of cooperation with GTZ. South Africa needed successful efforts such as Youth Development through Football (YDF), she said, which gave young people a solid footing and opened up their prospects for the future.

Within the framework of this project, GTZ-YDF is cooperating with the Ministry of Sport and Recreation (SRSA), experienced non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local initiatives. YDF showed how the initiative works in practice on National Youth Day in Cape Town. Together with the local partners, an exhibition football match was held in Nyanga, one of the poorest of the townships and a social problem area in Cape Town. There the young people could see for themselves that playing football means more than just winning: it is a confrontation and an encounter at one and the same time. Through sports, young people become acquainted with principles such as fairness, team spirit and mutual respect. Girls and boys also learn strategies for dealing with defeat and conflict.

In advance of National Youth Day, YDF joined local NGOs, the National Youth Commission (YDF) and Western Cape Province to form a task team to spread the successful approach in the Western Cape. Transparency is one of the key principles that guides the operations of the new task team. The Western Cape Task Team discusses the needs and relevant issues for developing a provincial interventions plan on youth development through football. To involve all municipalities in Western Cape, YDF organises a conference in Western Cape in November.

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Olympic Fun Day

Nelson Mandela believes that sport has the power to change the world and reunite people. In this spirit, an Olympic Fun day was launched on August 2nd in Mamelodi. In close cooperation with the Gauteng North Sports Council and the Tshwane Youth Forum, YDF was addressing youth from different townships in the Tshwane area. The young people were introduced to the Olympic traditions and symbols. Through sports games the kids learned about peace, friendship and respect amongst all people of different nationalities.

The goal of this opportunity to meet and learn about one another is to help communities avoid future xenophobic attacks. Nearly five hundred young people from all over Africa attended the event. There was one highlight after another. The opening ceremony included a lighting of the Olympic flame, a country parade and the singing of the national anthem. The sports activities were fun: sack and wheelbarrow race, netball etc.

The kids also learned how to play street soccer. In addition to the sports program, the young people performed dances from their home countries. At the end of the day there was a medal ceremony: the winning teams and individuals received medals and each participant was given a certificate and sports gifts thanks to the sponsor, Nike. Together with the Gauteng North Sports Council and the Tshwane Youth Forum, YDF now plans to organise this event annually with more participants from different South African provinces and other African countries.
Refugee Sports for Understanding

Patrick, a boy from Burundi, plays soccer like a champ. “He should play in a club”, an expert from Gauteng North Sports Council says. But this is difficult because Patrick is a refugee.

He is living in the Kleksoord Camp near Pretoria, a refugee camp provided by the South African government following the xenophobic attacks in May. From the beginning of June, YDF has supported the activities of the Tshwane Youth Forum and the Gauteng North Sports Council in Kleksoord near Roslyn.

Every Thursday they assist the refugee camp in providing sports activities in football, volleyball, rugby and netball for the victims of xenophobic attacks. The highlight is always a tournament at the end of the day. Africans from nine different countries are currently living in the refugee camp near Pretoria. “First, every nationality wanted to play on separate teams. After a while, the refugees started to mix among various teams and got to know one another”, Allan Boesak from YDF reports.

From week to week, YDF and its partners were able to build up trust and understanding among the players as well as individual responsibility. For example, someone was given responsibility for a soccer ball or a group of people were responsible for volleyball net.

“The project influenced their life and somehow changed their attitude”, Boesak said. YDF also supports an education programme of the Tshwane Youth Forum in Mamelodi. The children learn about the different nationalities and cultures of their classmates as well as important information about South African history. The education programme’s kick-off started with the Olympic fun day on August 2nd.
New Database established

YDF establishes a new database to which you can have access soon on this website. Our new database provides information on stakeholders working in the field of Youth Development through Football in several African countries. The information was collected through baseline studies in South Africa, Ghana, Mozambique, Lesotho, Zambia, Namibia and Botswana. The surveys are conducted in countries where YDF is planning to implement a programme.