



Children are developed and taught about the dangers of HIV/Aids through the use of games such as soccer

Soccer against Aids

by Fidelis Zvomuya

With the FIFA Soccer World Cup approaching quickly, the DaimlerChrysler Group's business unit for Mercedes Benz Vans, is now assisting in the development of younger teenage children. These children are being assisted through financial, technical and material support given to Grassroot Soccer (GRS).

The company is providing GRS with new Sprinter vans to be used by new street soccer projects in the Western Cape and Gauteng. The vans transport children to soccer games and a number of other outreach events. The GRS project was founded in 2002 by two retired German soccer players, Kirk Friedrich and Ethan Zohn. The programme teaches new players, coaches and educators to deliver life skills education which is focused on HIV-prevention to youth. The programme hopes to reach more than 1,5 million kids throughout the African continent by the end of 2008.

In South Africa GRS has launched several community-based programmes. These programmes follow the successful DeBeers Pilot Project in the Northern Cape in 2006. GRS has also become a member of the Streetfootballworld Network. The network is a strong contributor to the Football for Hope movement.

The 2010 FIFA World Cup also offers an opportunity for organisations such as GRS to highlight the power of soccer as an educational tool. It also raises world awareness of the global HIV/Aids epidemic. Port Elizabeth was selected as the country's Grassroot Soccer flagship site, due to its strong local partnership with a local organisation, the Ubuntu Education Fund. Port Elizabeth also has very high HIV infection rates and a large number of under-served youth in the metropolitan area.

"We launched a Youth Football Programme at Dora Nginza Hospital in Zwede, being run in conjunction with the hospital's paediatric Aids treatment programme. Sessions combine football instruction with our organisation's HIV/Aids education programme for infected and affected children in the surrounding communities," Zohn says. For more information contact DaimlerChrysler at 043 706 9111 or De Beers at 011 374 7000 **UM**