

PRESS RELEASE

Swaziland Launches Life Skills Through Sports Initiative

Partnership with Barcelona Football Club Brings Skills Development through Sport to Swazi Schools

Lobamba, October, 2007 More than 500 children crammed the playing fields at the OlympAfrica Sports Ground in Lobamba on 12 October. The sun reflected off the matching blue, yellow and red football jerseys of the children as they ran, played and competed in celebration of the launch of the Life Skills through Sports project.

The project will use sports to educate children and youth about HIV and AIDS to help them make informed decisions about their future.

“Sports play an important role in the lives of children,” said Jama Gulaid, resident representative for UNICEF in Swaziland. “Sports help children develop potential, talent, friendships and values that will yield lifelong benefits. This foundation of skills and practices will translate into all areas of life, making for happy, healthy children.”

The generous support of a donor, combined with a unique partnership in Swaziland, allowed the Life Skills through Sports project to come alive. In 2006, the Football Club Barcelona entered into a global partnership with UNICEF. Swaziland was the first country to benefit from that partnership. Funding from FC Barcelona facilitated the collaboration between the Alliance of the Swaziland National Sports Council (SNSC), Swaziland Olymp and Commonwealth Association (SOCGA), the Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

“This unprecedented alliance brings together the power of FC Barcelona, UNICEF and sports for the betterment of children across our country,” said Zombodze Magagula, president of SOCGA. “Every child has the right to play and this programme will help spread positive messages and important life lessons that will help our children grow up to be the stars of the future.”

The project will target 100 schools around the country, using volleyball, netball, soccer, athletics and lifeskills sports to bring the students together to play and compete, as well as to learn about HIV and AIDS, to promote gender equality, educate the children about growing up and sexuality, and to attract and retain children in school. In this first phase, the programme will target 68 schools for the improvement of sports fields.

“As a Ministry, we are extremely excited about the launch of this project,” said Thuli Mamba, from the Ministry of Education. “Life Skills through Sports will expose children to learning through experience, which is the most powerful way to learn. The programme ensures there will be no spectators, only children actively participating in learning skills they will use for the rest of their lives.”

The Life Skills through Sports project acknowledges that sport is a vital activity in children's lives. The project aims to improve the children's physic, but also to improve their emotional, intellectual, and spiritual life.

