



# PLAYING FOR PEACE

SPECIAL ISSUE, JUNE 2010



**Beyond the Big Stage:  
Football for Peace and  
Development in Africa**



**Profiles of**

- **Didier Drogba**
- **Michael Essien**
- **Samuel Eto'o**
- **Nwankwo Kanu**
- **Steven Pienaar**

Cover: Players of the all female '113' soccer team take part in a training session in Cabinda, Angola. The team was established 20 years ago and competes in the women's national league.

REUTERS / THE BIGGER PICTURE



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Message from

# Jean Ping

Chairperson of the  
African Union Commission



**THE** 2010 FIFA World Cup has been identified by many as Africa's World Cup, becoming a source of pride for our people.

Indeed, through football, children, women and men share a common language and a spirit of fair play that transcends the divisions and despair that are the fruit of conflict. In Africa, 'the beautiful game' has become more than a sport. It is a vehicle for rebuilding broken societies.

This is why I am pleased to join in solidarity with the people of South Africa around this event that will bring hope to our people, uniting us around a common positive cause. I am honoured to join ACCORD in this important endeavour to tell the story of football and its contribution to peace in Africa through this publication.

2010 is also the Year of Peace and Security in Africa, offering an unprecedented opportunity for African governments, citizens and institutions, in partnership with the international community, to celebrate our accomplishments and to review current efforts to peace-building on the continent.

This year we are pushing for a day of non-violence in every country on Peace Day, 21 September. So that while Africa makes history by staging the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Africans will be making another kind of history too: One billion people working together to make peace happen for one day. We will show that peace is possible and establish a stronger platform for sustained peace in Africa.

This is Africa's moment to leave a legacy for our people and to make history. Let's make peace happen!

Jean Ping





Message from

# Danny Jordaan

**Chief Executive Officer 2010 FIFA World Cup  
Organising Committee South Africa**

I am confident that everything possible has been done to successfully stage this historic tournament on African soil and that South Africa will make Africa proud. I am also convinced that the participating African teams will prove their strength in contests with the best in the world.

In 1976, we welcomed FIFA's decision to impose sanctions on South Africa as part of our struggle against racism, apartheid and minority rule, a system which denied a black child the right to play football with a white child. We attained our freedom in 1994. Ten years later FIFA made the momentous announcement that our young

democracy had won the privilege to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup. This was not only a victory for South Africa, but for the African continent as a whole.

A better future in Africa requires sustainable peace and economic development for all. In the same way as the game of football has contributed towards national reconciliation and progress in South Africa, we trust that it will do so in countries torn by conflict in Africa and elsewhere.

Danny Jordaan

**ON** behalf of the 2010 FIFA World Cup Organising Committee South Africa, it gives me true pleasure that, finally, the FIFA World Cup™ has come to Africa.

Message from

# Graça Machel

**Chairperson of the ACCORD  
Board of Trustees**



**IN** my capacity as Chairperson of the ACCORD Board of Trustees, I am happy to be associated with this initiative. As we celebrate the FIFA 2010 World Cup, it is appropriate to recall the positive, constructive role the game of football can play for peace and development, in Africa and elsewhere.

While the competing teams in the tournament represent the pinnacle of men's elite players in the world, let us also acknowledge the thousands of African women and children who at the community level use football as a tool

to heal war-torn societies and create the necessary conditions for sustainable development. As described in this publication, from the *collines* of Rwanda and Burundi, via the streets of Liberia and Sierra Leone, to the villages in Kenya and Sudan, through football women and children take the initiative to bridge ethnic divides; offer meaningful recreation to former child soldiers, amputees and other war victims; and, thus, lay the basis for post-conflict reconstruction.

As we enjoy the athletic artistry during the World Cup, let us not forget those

women and children who on modest stages beyond the limelight in the most difficult of circumstances truly make football more than just a game!

Graça Machel



**AS** the world focuses its attention on the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, 'the biggest show on earth', we must not forget that political instability and intra-state conflict remain realities on the African continent. As sadly illustrated by the attack on the Togolese national football team in Cabinda, Angola, just before the Africa Cup of Nations in the beginning of the year, and subsequent outbreaks of armed violence in Nigeria, as well as continued strife and protracted warfare in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Sudan, northern Uganda and elsewhere, there is a dire need for peace and stability. Dialogue and peace are keys to development. Conflicts not only result in untold suffering for millions of men, women and children across the continent, but stand in the way of much needed socio-economic progress. Against this background, the African Union (AU) declared the year 2010 a 'Year of Peace and Security', with the clarion call of 'Make Peace Happen!'

With 2010 both the year of the World Cup and Peace and Security in Africa, ACCORD is issuing this special publication on football, peace and

development, which in mid-year replaces our regular *Conflict Trends* magazine. As a practitioner organisation, ACCORD has for eighteen years across the continent been directly and actively involved in conflict resolution through training, capacity-building, mediation and sharing of best practices. Training of soccer coaches in conflict management has formed part of our practice. We are cognisant of the fact that passions surrounding football at the elite, inter-club level - and sometimes internationally, as demonstrated by the tensions between Algeria and Egypt after their deciding World Cup qualifier at the end of last year - may turn ugly. In Africa, however, the game has always been, and still remains, above all a 'beautiful game'.

Beyond the skills and artistry displayed by professional stars on the big stage, football on the African continent has in the past played a major role in the struggles for national liberation, self-determination and democracy. Today, in post-colonial Africa, the game is used by the United Nations, international organisations and local NGOs as an important and effective vehicle to bridge ethnic or political divides, heal wounds and pave a way for unity, post-conflict reconstruction and socio-economic development. Through its 'Football for Hope Movement', FIFA is making significant contributions in this regard. In countries such as Rwanda and Burundi - with horrific legacies and scars from recent genocides - football for national reconciliation, unity and peace is actively promoted by the state.

In the 1990s, Liberia and Sierra Leone in the West and Burundi and Rwanda in Central Africa were torn apart by fratricidal wars, resulting in hundreds of thousands of lives lost; uncountable numbers of wounded, maimed, orphaned and internally displaced; streams of refugees; collapse of state institutions; and enormous material losses. Today, these four countries have made

admirable strides towards sustainable peace and post-conflict national reconstruction. As will be seen in our interview with President Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi - himself an active soccer player - football played a significant part in and for this positive development. In recognition of its peaceful transition to democracy, in June 2006 ACCORD granted its Africa Peace Award to the nation of Burundi. The award was received by President Nkurunziza. In April 2010, we similarly had the pleasure of handing the award to President Ernest Bai Koroma on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone. Present at the ceremony in Durban was Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa and as a young political prisoner on Robben Island the captain of one of the teams in the extraordinary Makana Football Association.

In addition to socio-political articles on football, peace and development in Africa, this magazine includes profiles of African star players who will participate in the World Cup. Coming from deprived and difficult backgrounds, they are using the success achieved on the football field to uplift, enrich and inspire their communities off the field, often dedicating considerable private efforts and resources to combat racism and xenophobia, to promote health and education or to pursue national dialogue and peace. Together with the tens of thousands of boys and girls who in disadvantaged, impoverished rural areas and urban townships across Africa combine football with schooling, HIV/AIDS awareness, community services or leadership training, they are true African role models.

As the World Cup kicks off, let us together follow their example and kick out the roots and causes of violent conflict in Africa! Let us Make Peace Happen! 🌍

**Vasu Gounden, Founder and Executive Director of ACCORD**

# Make Peace Happen

**SOUTH AFRICA** hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup epitomises Africa's dream of transcending strife and struggle. On another field of play, the leaders of the African Union (AU) have declared 2010 the 'Year of Peace and Security' through a 'Declaration on the Elimination of Conflicts in Africa and the Promotion of Sustainable Peace'. Adopted in Tripoli, Libya in August 2009, the call is to 'Make Peace Happen!'.

Africa's wars are commonly low-intensity conflicts, where groups of armed combatants engage in battles inside a country. Civilians are cut off from protection and services. Hardest hit by direct violence in recent times have been the people of Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), northern Uganda and Chad. In each of these conflict zones, men, women and children have been forced to leave their homes and are faced with starvation and disease. Fortunately, elsewhere in Africa accords and elections in countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone promise hope, but peace is unlikely to last without significant political, socio-economic and security reforms.

Africa has the highest number of deaths due to war, but the continent has also established significant institutions and mechanisms for securing peace. The AU's Constitutive Act gives it powers to intervene in African countries in order to stop war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and serious threats to peace and security. The body has established a Peace and Security Council to moderate over conflicts and threats. It's Panel of the Wise is composed of African elders keen to

# 2010 MAKE PEACE HAPPEN

[www.makepeacehappen.net](http://www.makepeacehappen.net)

advise on new ways to build peace. The organisation is further building an African Standby Force (ASF) which will be comprised of troops from each region in Africa, trained to be deployed as peacekeepers.

These institutions and mechanisms are poised to support local, national, regional and, indeed, global efforts. Through interaction with citizens in Africa and beyond, during this 'Year of Peace and Security', the AU seeks to shore up support for mediation, disarmament and reconciliation - all part of a spectrum of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding

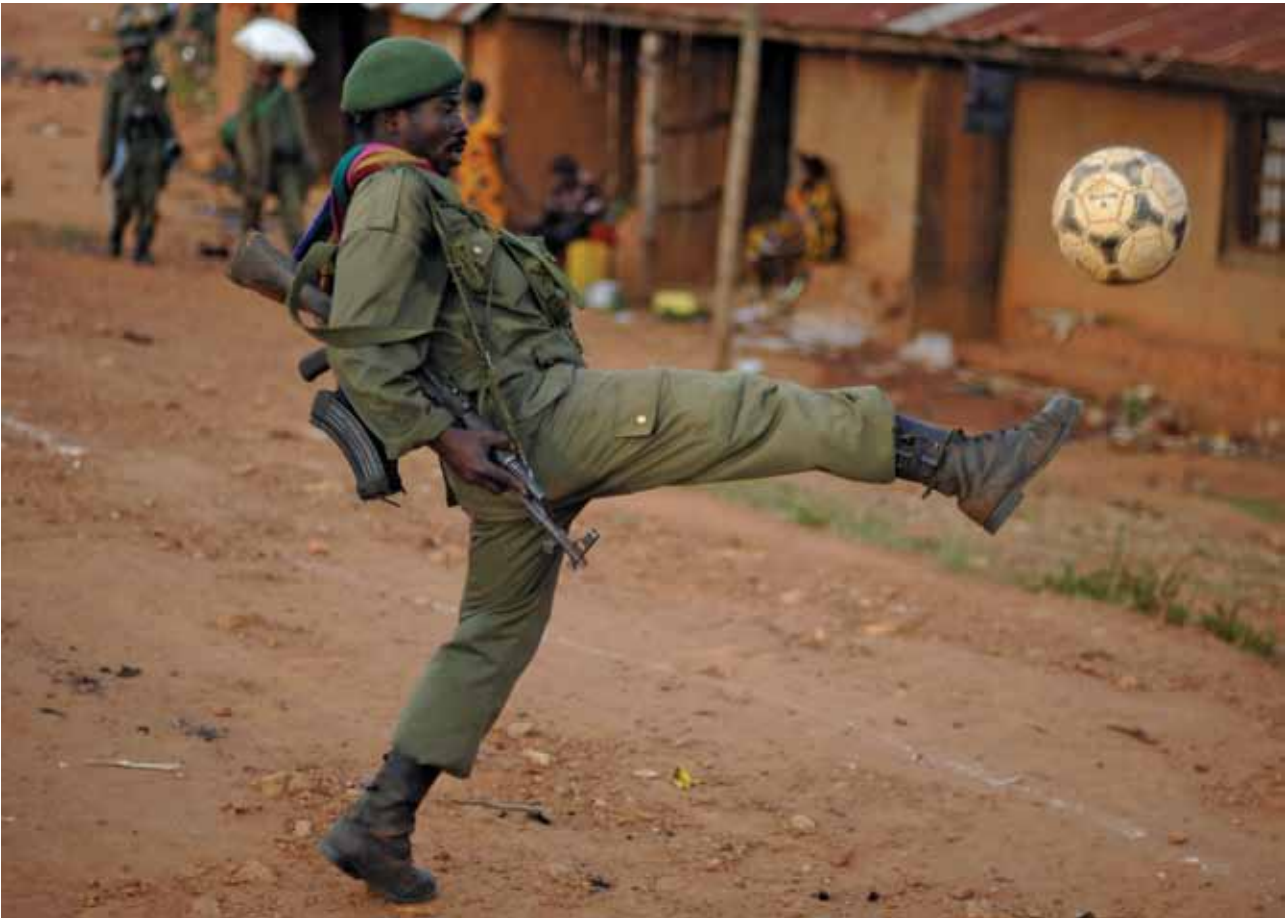
initiatives crucial to ending violence and rebuilding communities affected by conflict.

The AU's 'Year of Peace and Security' calls on us all to take action to achieve a lasting peace in Africa's war-torn societies, making peace happen for all. 🌍

For more information about the "Year of Peace and Security" visit <http://www.africa-union.org>.



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# Football for Liberation and Peace in Africa:

## South Africa, Algeria and Ivory Coast

**TOR SELLSTRÖM,  
SENIOR ADVISOR TO ACCORD**

### **Introduction**

The history of sports - in particular football<sup>1</sup> - in Africa is intimately linked to the struggles for racial justice, national liberation and peace. Several of the leaders of the anti-colonial campaigns, as well as many founding fathers of

independent Africa, were either prominent football players themselves or promoted the game in their quest for national unity and freedom. Largely overlooked by historians, “[f]ootball constructed a fragile sense of nationhood in political entities arbitrarily created by colonial powers and

fueled Africa’s broader quest for political liberation”.<sup>2</sup>

Although not an active athlete, Ghana’s first President, Kwame Nkrumah, identified football as an efficient vehicle for unity in the former British colony and took a close personal interest in



the national team, the 'Black Stars'.<sup>3</sup> In neighboring Nigeria, Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe, the father of modern nationalism and chief architect of the country's independence, was an accomplished football player and sportsman.<sup>4</sup> Popularly known as 'Zik', during the independence struggle he founded *Zic's Athletic Club* (ZAC), which not only became a hub of sporting and social activity, but also an important anti-colonial platform.<sup>5</sup> And in Algeria, the leading liberation fighter, founder of the National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération National* - FLN) and future President, Ahmed Ben Bella, had in 1939–40 been a mid-field player for the French professional football club *Olympique de Marseille*.<sup>6</sup> As will be seen in this magazine, the tradition of combining football with politics is today continued by contemporary African leaders such as Presidents Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi.<sup>7</sup>

Most African nations are as independent entities only 50 years old, or younger.<sup>8</sup> After a long and hard-fought struggle, South Africa achieved democracy only 16 years ago. With six African nations among the 32 participating in the 2010 FIFA World Cup - the first ever on African soil - this article looks at how historically the game of football in Africa has been a powerful force for social and political mobilisation against injustice, racism and foreign domination, a dimension which is very much alive in the psyche of the young nations. Examples will be taken from the history of the host nation, South Africa, as well as from Algeria, two countries that are competing in the World Cup. A note on the role for peace played by the Ivory Coast's 'Elephants' with regard to the civil war in that country will conclude the text. Captained by Didier Drogba, African Footballer of the Year in 2009, Ivory Coast is also a participant in the World Cup.

**South Africa: From Gandhi via Robben Island to Bafana Bafana**

Introduced to South Africa by working-class British soldiers sent to fight in the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War, not only did football become a popular military pastime, but soon also an organised activity among

Whites, Indians and Africans. In the beginning, football mainly took hold in and around the port city of Durban, but soon spread to Cape Town, Johannesburg and across the country. As with all other social activities, it was strictly segregated and organised along racial lines.

The first formal soccer organisation, the all-White *Pietermaritzburg County Football Club*, was set up in 1879. Seven years later, there were four Indian soccer clubs in Durban, and in 1903 a South African Indian Football Association was founded. As the African workforce expanded, so also did football in the African locations, as well as among Africans at their leading (mostly mission) schools. Among the first African clubs were *Wild Zebras* at the Ohlange Institute, *Shooting Stars* at Adams College and *Natal Cannons* at the Inanda seminary. By 1910, there were at least seven African soccer clubs in and around Durban. In 1916, they formed the Durban and District Native Football Association (DDNFA), the first major African football organisation in the country.<sup>9</sup>

Not only was football racially segregated, but the conditions under which the game developed were fundamentally unequal, unjust and discriminatory. All over the country, white-ruled town councils refused to provide recreational facilities for non-whites, with the result that African, Indian and Coloured clubs had to play their matches in open, unattended fields, without stands

or other services. Against this background, and recognising the mobilising force of the sport, it is not surprising that football drew the attention of the first generation of South Africa's resistance and liberation leaders.

John Langalibele Dube, who in 1900 had founded the Ohlange Institute, in 1903 launched *Ilanga Lase Natal* - the first newspaper in isiZulu - and in 1912 became the founding President of the then South African Native National Congress, later re-named the African National Congress (ANC). Dube played an important role in the early history of football in Natal and in South Africa at large. *Ohlange Wild Zebras FC* was formed in 1901, and from its first year of publication *Ilanga* regularly covered the local African soccer competitions. Less known, but of considerable historical significance, is that Dube's neighbor at the Phoenix settlement outside Durban, Mohandas 'Mahatma' Gandhi, similarly promoted football in his non-violent campaign against racial discrimination.

Gandhi came to South Africa in 1893, setting up the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) the following year. While in South Africa, he developed his guiding philosophy of *satyagraha*. A firm believer in non-violent resistance against racial injustice, he was actively involved in local Indian affairs. Little known is the fact that this included football. In or around 1913 - not long before his return to India - he organised three football teams in Natal. To the author's knowledge, Gandhi himself did



**The Passive Resisters: Mahatma Gandhi set up football teams as part of the struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa (circa 1913).**





**Chief Albert Luthuli with the 'Shooting Stars' of Adams College in Durban, South Africa, 1929.**

not produce anything in writing about these teams, nor about the game of soccer. For posterity, however, he had a photo taken of him and other NIC leaders with two of the Indian teams, appropriately dubbed the 'Passive Resisters'.<sup>10</sup>

From the beginning, football in South Africa became an integral part of the quest for racial justice and equality, playing an increasingly important role on the political agenda. In the 1920s, for example, under its President, Clements Kadalie, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) recognised soccer's contribution to the formation of a politically conscious popular culture. Together with boxing, the ICU actively promoted football among its followers.

More important in the longer-term perspective was the role of Chief Albert Luthuli, President-General of the ANC

from 1952 until his death in 1967. Luthuli was closely involved with the sport. As a national political leader, administrator and organiser, he was in particular drawn to football as it brought African mission-educated elite together with African migrant and non-migrant workers. In his autobiography *Let My People Go* - first published in 1962 - he noted that "what has attracted me as much as the game [itself] has been the opportunity to meet all sorts of people, from the loftiest to the most disreputable". Strongly opposed to Pretoria's segregation policies, he added that "I confess that when I watch matches between White South Africans and visiting teams, I invariably want the foreigners to win. So do other Africans".<sup>11</sup>

In addition to his involvement in national politics, as well as in traditional governance, missionary affairs and agriculture at Groutville north of Durban, Luthuli was a prominent football administrator.<sup>12</sup> After serving for many years as Secretary of Adams College's *Shooting Stars*, in 1929 he became

Vice-President of the Durban and District Native Football Association, which - as mentioned - was the first of its kind in South Africa. Describing himself as a "compulsive football fan"<sup>13</sup>, three years later he was instrumental in uniting the Natal and Transvaal associations under the South Africa African Football Association (SAAFA), of which he also became Vice-President. And in 1952, when the ANC launched the Defiance Campaign against the apartheid state and Luthuli was elected President-General of the liberation movement, he combined political work with that of President of the Natal Inter-Race Soccer Board, set up to oversee and bridge the racial division between African, Indian and Coloured soccer associations.

At a historic conference in Durban in 1951, the South African Soccer Federation (SASF) had in the meantime been launched. Barring nobody from membership on the grounds of race, colour or creed, it brought together more than 46,000 members of the African, Coloured and Indian associations under



one umbrella body. The strong link between non-racial liberation politics and football was further underlined when in 1953 the recently formed Congress Alliance<sup>14</sup> organised a highly publicised soccer match between ‘Veterans’ and ‘Youth’ on a farm outside Johannesburg. Together with the future ANC President Oliver Tambo, stalwarts such as the Communist Party leaders Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Moses Kotane took part in the non-racial match.<sup>15</sup>

This was the context in which different non-racial South African sport associations in the mid-1950s sought international affiliation. Claiming national representativity as it had more than 80 % of South Africa’s registered football players, in 1954 SASF applied for international recognition within FIFA. Opposed by the apartheid government and by the all-White South African Football Association (SAFA), it marked the beginning of a protracted and bitter struggle. This was also the context in which the poet, journalist and anti-apartheid activist Dennis Brutus in 1955

founded the Co-ordinating Committee for International Recognition of Sport (CCIRS), with “the single, simple principle [t]hat all South Africans should be allowed to represent their country - if they are good enough”.<sup>16</sup> In 1958, Brutus also set up the South African Sports Association (SASA), which with support by the ANC lobbied international sports federations to withdraw recognition of whites-only South African affiliates. Football represented around 50,000 of its 70,000 members.

In the early 1950s, occasional, non-league matches between white and black, i.e. African, Indian or Coloured, football teams did take place in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. In 1956, however, the apartheid regime ruled that “[W]hites and Blacks should organise their sporting activities separately; there should be no inter-racial competitions [...]; mixing of races in teams should be avoided; and sportsmen from other lands should respect the country’s customs”.<sup>17</sup> At the same time and with particular wrath, Pretoria clamped down on the increasingly popular African football teams

**FIFA President Sepp Blatter (centre) and South African Minister Tokyo Sexwale (right) with former members of the Makana Football Association on Robben Island, South Africa, December 2009.**

by denying them access to proper playing grounds. The Soweto giants *Orlando Pirates* and *Moroka Swallows* were forced to use the open field in Kliptown, where in 1955 the ANC and its allies had convened the historic Congress of the People.<sup>18</sup> Eventually, however, the African clubs were evicted also from Kliptown, which in 1966 led to the demise of the popular South African Soccer League.

After the 1960 banning of the ANC and the PAC (Pan-Africanist Congress), and the sentencing to life imprisonment on Robben Island of Nelson Mandela and the ANC leadership four years later, the silence of the grave descended upon South Africa. In 1961, however, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) decided to suspend South Africa for not adhering to the



principle according to which “a national [member] association must be open to all who practice football in that country, whether amateur, ‘non-amateur’ or professional, and without any racial, religious or political discrimination”.<sup>19</sup> In 1976, finally, South Africa was expelled from FIFA. While these measures - among the very first international indictments of the apartheid system - were welcomed by the anti-apartheid movement, exclusion from international contacts, in combination with the state’s onslaught on Black soccer, had, nevertheless, negative consequences for the development of the sport in the country.

In the meantime, the political prisoners on Robben Island were using football as a means to preserve their humanity. The story of the Robben Island Makana Football Association appears elsewhere in this magazine.<sup>20</sup> Suffice it here to note that after a long, protracted struggle the political prisoners on the island - barring those in isolation, i.e. Mandela and his closest Rivonia Trial colleagues - in 1969 reluctantly were

allowed to play football on weekends on condition that their weekly quota of hard labour had been fulfilled. The prisoners set up eight teams and organised a league system. Following FIFA rules and running for over twenty years, the league was highly successful. Operating within the belly of the beast and organising thousands of anti-apartheid prisoners, the Makana Football Association on Robben Island made no little contribution to the erosion and, eventually, the downfall of apartheid.

Among those active in the Makana Football Association was Jacob Zuma, who in 1963 as a young man was imprisoned on Robben Island for a period of ten years. As captain of *Rangers FC* on the island, Zuma - since 2009 the President of South Africa - had the reputation of being both an active administrator and an uncompromising, no-nonsense defender.

After the 1990 unbanning of the ANC, the PAC, the South African Communist Party and other political organisations, followed by the release of Nelson

**French football legend Zinedine Zidane (centre) and Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (centre right) with former members of the FLN Team in Algiers, Algeria, December 2006.**

Mandela, two years later FIFA accepted South Africa back into world football. The country returned with a bang. At a packed stadium in Durban, in July 1992 South Africa played its first official international match in three decades, beating Cameroon 1–0.<sup>21</sup> The first democratic elections were held in 1994, putting a formal end to centuries of racial oppression and decades of apartheid. In 1995, the ‘new South Africa’ erupted in unity into wild celebrations when the ‘Springboks’ won the Rugby World Cup and - as portrayed in the movie *Invictus* - President Mandela handed over the coveted trophy. Later that year, *Orlando Pirates* won the Africa Champions Cup, the first and so far the only South African football club to achieve this honour.<sup>22</sup> And



in 1996, on home soil, *Bafana Bafana* triumphed in the Africa Cup of Nations.<sup>23</sup>

### **FLN of Algeria: A Team Without a Country**

The tale of the Makana Football Association has been described as “the most important soccer story ever told”.<sup>24</sup> Across the continent, in North Africa, the extraordinary formation, purpose and success of the Algerian FLN Team could similarly have been taken from a political novel. It has been described as “something dreamed up by [John] Le Carré”.<sup>25</sup>

Until national independence was achieved in 1962, Algeria was linked to France in a unique relationship, with its three northern departments (Algiers, Constantine and Oran) formally a part of France itself.<sup>26</sup> While this status facilitated migration across the Mediterranean, for the indigenous population it did not entail any privileges. On the contrary, French settlers maintained a total grip on political and economic power, relegating the Muslim Arab majority to a subservient status. The gulf between the two communities was huge, and the Arabs were, in general, “seen as an inferior race, treated with disdain, indifference or outright abuse”.<sup>27</sup> This said, contrary to the situation in apartheid South Africa, there was no legal system of institutionalised racial discrimination. On the football pitch, for example, French and Arab teams often met<sup>28</sup>, and a considerable number of Algerian players were signed up by professional clubs in France.

For the French, Algeria was the crown jewel of its Maghreb empire, the north-western part of Africa which also included Morocco and Tunisia. The latter two, however, were governed as ‘protectorates’ under international treaties, which in the early 1950s paved the way for national independence, a status both of them gained in 1956. In the case of Algeria, France resisted change and was determined to keep the territory at all costs. This, in turn, led to

increasing nationalist mobilisation in favour of majority-rule and self-determination. Beginning in November 1954, a protracted, notoriously vicious war for national liberation followed, resulting in more than one million lives lost. On the nationalist side, the liberation struggle was led by the National Liberation Front (FLN), which assumed power in the independent state of Algeria in July 1962.

Football was a popular sport in Algeria<sup>29</sup>, and during the struggle the FLN successfully used the game both at home to boycott events organised by the French<sup>30</sup> and abroad as a powerful propaganda weapon. In the latter arsenal, no weapon was as potent and effective as the FLN Team.<sup>31</sup>

In the 1950s, Algeria had become the African continent’s principal exporter of football talents. By 1958, more than 50 Algerian players had contracts with French first and second division professional clubs. Some of them - such as Mohammed

**Maouche himself - had lost relatives to the violence in Algeria. He later stated, “Okay, I would have to give up my club. And yes, I was thinking of the World Cup, but what did that count for in comparison with my country’s independence? The aim was to make a statement, because at the time the French propaganda had the FLN as a band of terrorists”**

Maouche at *Stade de Reims*, Mustapha Zitouni at *Monaco* and Rachid Mekhloufi at *Saint-Étienne* - were not only star players in their respective teams, but had as French citizens also been shortlisted to represent France in the FIFA 1958 World Cup in Sweden.<sup>32</sup>

Through Maouche, the FLN in late 1957 set in motion a dramatic plan to recruit Algerian professional football players based in France for the cause of national liberation. According to the plan, a sufficient number of players to constitute a football team should at a given moment leave the country, gather at the liberation movement’s exile

headquarters in Tunis, and represent it in international matches. It was both a dangerous and sensitive proposal, which had to be carried out in outmost secrecy. The National Liberation Front was considered a terrorist organisation by the French government, and any direct contacts with the movement would lead to imprisonment. In addition, in France the players were well paid and enjoyed life as celebrated stars. It was an exceptionally heavy demand that was put on the young footballers’ shoulders, who one by one over the following months were contacted by Maouche.

Most of the Algerian players in France were sympathetic to the cause of the FLN.<sup>33</sup> Many of them - such as Maouche himself - had lost relatives to the violence in Algeria. He later stated, “Okay, I would have to give up my club. And yes, I was thinking of the World Cup, but what did that count for in comparison with my country’s independence? The aim was to make a statement, because at the time the French propaganda had the FLN as a band of terrorists”.<sup>34</sup>

Eventually, the plan was carried out in April 1958, two months before the World Cup in Sweden. Secretly leaving France after playing for their respective teams in the regular weekend matches, a total of ten players safely made it to Tunisia. Others were not so lucky. Maouche and Chabri of Monaco were arrested by the French police, badly beaten and sent to prison.

In France, news of the flight of the Algerian footballers came as a great shock. Among those who had left was Zitouni, who was due to represent *Les Bleus* in a friendly match against Switzerland a few days later. Derogatorily called *fellaghas*, or terrorists, all the defectors had their French club contracts cancelled. In Tunisia, however, the FLN announced that the players had “answered the call to arms”<sup>35</sup> and that they henceforth would represent the Algerian government-in-exile. Preparations were immediately made for an FLN Team, the forerunners of today’s ‘Desert Foxes’, who in addition to



the ten ex-professionals would include an eleventh player and some substitutes from the liberation movement's own ranks. To compensate for their loss of income, the FLN granted them stipends which were considerably lower than their salaries as professionals, but higher than those received by the leaders of the movement.

On and off the pitch, the story of the FLN Team was a resounding success. In their first match, they beat *Union Sportive Tunisienne* 8–0 and then proceeded to defeat the Tunisian national squad twice, scoring a total of 15 goals and conceding just one. Before long, they had registered victories over the national teams of Morocco and Libya too, establishing themselves as arguably the best team in North Africa.<sup>36</sup> As many wanted to watch players such as Mekhloufi and Zitouni, the team's success through ticket sales was also financially profitable for the FLN. More importantly, it revealed for the Algerian players still based in France that it was

possible to pursue a footballing career also under the banner of the FLN. In 1960, two years after the first group had left, the largest single defection of Algerian footballers took place, bringing the number of ex-professionals in the squad to 32.

Over the following two years, the Algerian FLN Team - a national team without a country - embarked on highly successful tours to the Middle East, Eastern Europe and the Far East. In Yugoslavia, they beat the Olympic side 6–1, and in Hungary the national team by 5–2. At the time of Algeria's independence in July 1962, the team of defectors representing the liberation movement in exile had played 91 matches, out of which they had won 65, drawn 13 and lost 13.<sup>37</sup> As noted by Hawkey, "that's some record for a team who never played a match at home".<sup>38</sup>

Upon their return to Algeria, and as relations with France were being normalised, some of the members of the

**Ivory Coast's Didier Drogba with soldiers from the rebel New Forces after a match against Madagascar in Bouaké, Ivory Coast, June 2007.**

FLN Team requested their government for permission to go back to their French professional clubs. Mekhloufi, the national hero, was one of them. Perhaps due to the fact that President Ben Bella himself had played football for *Olympique de Marseille*, the request was granted. Although some of the players were not warmly welcomed back<sup>39</sup>, most were. Mekhloufi re-joined *Saint-Étienne*, who won the French championship in 1964. By then captain of the team, in 1968 he also triumphed in the French Cup final. And in 1982, he finally made it to the World Cup, although not as a player, but as the coach of the Algerian 'Desert Foxes'. After sacrificing his place in the French team for the 1958 tournament



in Sweden, two and a half decades later Mehloufi successfully steered his native Algeria to the FIFA 1982 World Cup in Spain. It was the first time ever Algeria had managed to do so.<sup>40</sup>

### **Ivory Coast: With the 'Elephants' for Peace**

In apartheid South Africa and colonial Algeria, the popularity of football was used by the leaders of the liberation movements to further the cause of freedom. In post-independent Africa, there are examples of popular soccer players who have used their influence to impact positively on events and on the leadership in their countries. During the civil war in the 1990s, for example, Liberia's George Weah - a national hero, who in 1995 was voted FIFA World Footballer of the Year - repeatedly appealed to the warring factions to lay down their arms.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in the Ivory Coast, Didier Drogba and other hugely celebrated stars in the national team, known as the 'Elephants', have during the conflict in that country intervened in favour of peace and reconciliation.

Once hailed as a model of political stability and economic development in West Africa, the Ivory Coast experienced increasing instability following the death in 1993 of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny<sup>42</sup> and a downturn of its primary export product, cocoa. In 1999, the protracted crisis culminated in a military coup, which in turn plunged the country deeper into a vortex of violence. While politicians, the military and the media resorted to ethnic rhetoric in which the issues of citizenship and 'a true Ivorian identity' played a paramount part, in 2002 Ivory Coast was split between a Muslim-dominated area in the North - with a considerable portion of people who over the years had immigrated from neighboring countries - held by insurgents from the New Forces under Guillaume Soro, and the primarily Christian southern parts, controlled by the government of Laurent Gbagbo.

In the ensuing civil war, thousands of lives were lost and an estimated 750,000 people displaced. In 2004, a first contingent of United Nations (UN)

**A spectator displaying a peace banner with the portrait of Didier Drogba at a match between Ivory Coast and Madagascar, Bouaké, Ivory Coast, June 2007.**

peacekeepers was deployed to separate the warring parties and prepare conditions for peace. This objective, however, was not initially achieved, and only after a prolonged, concerted mediation effort by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU) and the UN, was the so called Ouagadougou Peace Accord signed by Soro and Gbagbo in March 2007. In terms of the agreement, Soro was appointed Prime Minister and President Gbagbo could declare that the war was over. Ivory Coast, however, is far from being at peace. The key issues of citizenship and identity still remain to be solved, and presidential elections have been postponed time and time again.

During the prolonged conflict, the immensely popular and star-studded



national football team has been one of the main voices in favour of peace in Ivory Coast. With players originally coming from both the rebel-held North and the government-controlled South, the multi-ethnic, closely-knit team<sup>43</sup> has consistently pleaded for reason and peace. Famously, and only moments after leading Ivory Coast to the FIFA 2006 World Cup in Germany<sup>44</sup>, the captain, Didier Drogba, for example, summoned a cameraman from the Ivorian television and stated that he had a message to deliver. Live on national TV and surrounded by his team-mates, Drogba fell to his knees in the dressing room and made an emotional appeal for a cessation of the hostilities in the country. "We have proved that all Ivorians can live together", he said, "and we can unite with the same objectives. Please, put down your weapons!"<sup>45</sup> Later interviewed about the spectacular appeal, Drogba explained, "It was just something I did instinctively. All the players hated what was happening to our country, and reaching the World Cup was the perfect emotional wave on which to ride".<sup>46</sup>

Less known is that Drogba behind the scenes has taken an active part in mediation efforts between the Ivorian warring parties. In May 2007 - shortly after the signing of the Ouagadougou Peace Accord - the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)<sup>47</sup> reported that it had "suggested the use of Ivorian soccer stars and heroes to broker the peace. That suggestion seems to have found fertile ground. Didier Drogba [...] [was over a period of] three to four months involved in lots of quiet, but successful soccer diplomacy between the two sides. [He] has admitted that he personally intervened to convince President Gbagbo and (now Prime Minister) Soro to agree on the Ouagadougou Accord".<sup>48</sup>

As a unifying gesture between the North and the South, Drogba further convinced President Gbagbo that the 'Elephants' next match - a qualifying game for the Africa Cup of Nations against Madagascar - should be played in Bouaké, the city of birth of Kolo and Yaya Touré<sup>49</sup>, but in this context more importantly the stronghold of Soro's New Forces. Before the match - the first staged in Bouaké


since the beginning of the civil war - Drogba showed the spectators his recently received award as African Footballer of the Year, and said, "[This] date will be a memorable day. It will be a victory for Ivory Coast football, a victory for the Ivory Coast people and, quite simply, there will be peace".<sup>50</sup> Later he explained that "I have won many trophies in my time, but nothing will ever top helping win the battle for peace in my country".<sup>51</sup>

Drogba is not only a mega-star in his native Ivory Coast and across Africa, but a highly celebrated football player in England, where he plays for *Chelsea*, and in the world at large. He has twice been voted African Footballer of the Year<sup>52</sup>, runs a private, charitable health and education foundation for under-privileged children

**At a time when war, violence and ethnic and religious tensions continue to obscure our common humanity, the World Cup has the real potential to break down barriers and challenge stereotypes. [It] may do more to bring our planet together than any treaty or convention could ever hope for**

**Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General, Chairman of the Africa Progress Panel**

in Ivory Coast<sup>53</sup> and serves the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a UN Messenger of Peace. As captain and spokesperson of the Ivory Coast national team, it is only natural that he is at the centre of attention. In the case of the 'Elephants', however, the urge for peace is - as the game of football itself - a shared effort. In an interview with the BBC in January 2008, for example, Drogba's much younger team-mate Salomon Kalou stated that "with war nothing can work. Ivory Coast is a good country that does not deserve to be in a war for so

long".<sup>54</sup> And when the Ivory Coast team in December 2009 collectively won the 2009 SCORE4africa Peace Award, Kalou said, "Our country went through a difficult time during the troubles. Our football team stayed together. Football helped in the peace process. As we go to the World Cup [in South Africa], we hope that the country can unite behind the team and that we can help further with reconciliation".<sup>55</sup> 

## Endnotes

- 1 In the text, the terms 'football' and 'soccer' are used interchangeably.
- 2 Peter Alegi: 'African Soccerescapes: How a Continent Changed the World's Game', Hurst & Company, London, 2010, p. 36.
- 3 Ian Hawkey: 'Feet of the Chameleon: The Story of African Football', Wild Dog Press, Lyndhurst, 2009, pp. 74-75. In 1957, Ghana was the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve independence, with Nkrumah as President.
- 4 Azikiwe, who became Nigeria's first President in 1963, was in his youth prominent in athletics, boxing, football, swimming, tennis and other sports.
- 5 Hawkey op. cit., pp. 72-74.
- 6 Ibid., p. 71. Ben Bella played for *Olympique de Marseille* as a recruit to the French army during the Second World War. He was based in Marseille.
- 7 See the article by Tor Sellström elsewhere in this magazine. Both Kagame and Nkurunziza are actively involved with the game of football. While leading the Rwanda Patriotic Front's (RPF) military campaign, Kagame was instrumental in the formation of its *APR FC (Armée Patriotique Rwandaise Football Club)*. Formally established in 1993, *APR FC* soon emerged as the leading football club in the country, for the first time winning the Rwandan premier league two years later. President Kagame is also behind the re-development of the East and Central African Cup competition, which is financially supported by his government. Formerly called CECFAFA, it is today known as the Kagame Inter-Club Cup. *APR FC* won the competition in 2007. With a university degree in physical education and sports, Nkurunziza of Burundi - like Kagame a former leader of the armed struggle - is an active football player and coach. Often called 'the footballing president', the born-again Christian is the driving force behind *Haleluya FC*, which plays in Burundi's first division.
- 8 In 2010, seventeen African nations will celebrate 50 years of independence.
- 9 This section is mainly based on Peter Alegi: 'Laduma! Soccer, Politica and

- Society in South Africa', University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2004, and on Joe Latakomo: 'Mzansi Magic: Struggle, Betrayal and Glory - The Story of South African Soccer', Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2010.
- 10 The author found the photo in the Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg. It also appears in Amy Pastan: 'Gandhi: A Photographic Story of a Life', DK Publishing, London, 2006, p. 43.
  - 11 Albert Luthuli: 'Let My People Go', Fontana Books, London and Glasgow, 1984, p. 35.
  - 12 Peter Alegi: 'Sport, Race and Liberation Before Apartheid: A Preliminary Study of Albert Luthuli, 1920s–1952', South African History Online (SAHO), [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)
  - 13 Ibid.
  - 14 The Congress Alliance included the ANC, the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the Coloured People's Congress (CPC), the (White) Congress of Democrats (CoD) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU).
  - 15 Riason Naidoo: 'The Indian in Drum Magazine in the 1950s', Bell-Roberts Publishing, Cape Town, 2008, p. 88.
  - 16 Quoted in Alegi 'Laduma', p. 112.
  - 17 Quoted in *ibid.*, pp.113–14.
  - 18 Attended by 3,000 delegates from all over South Africa, the Congress of the People was held in Kliptown outside Johannesburg on 25–26 June 1955. It adopted the Freedom Charter, which subsequently became the political programme of the ANC.
  - 19 Quoted in Alegi 'Laduma', p. 117. The principle had been adopted by the 1960 FIFA congress in Rome.
  - 20 See the article by John Daniel on the Makana Football Association .
  - 21 South Africa and Cameroon played three games. The second was played in Cape Town, where *Bafana Bafana* lost 1–2. The third was in Johannesburg, ending in a 2–2 draw.
  - 22 *Orlando Pirates* met Ivory Coast's *ASEC Mimosas* in home and away games.
  - 23 South Africa beat Tunisia 2–0 in the final.
  - 24 Chuck Korr and Marvin Close: 'More than Just a Game: Soccer v Apartheid', Collins, London, 2008. Quote from the cover of the book.
  - 25 Hawkey op. cit., p. 107.
  - 26 The three departments had the same status as the departments in metropolitan France.
  - 27 Martin Meridith: 'The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence', Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2005, p. 45.
  - 28 In 1954, a North African XI composed of players from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia beat France 3–2. The legendary Moroccan Larbi Ben Barek, the 'Black Pearl' of *Olympique de Marseille*, played a prominent part in the match.
  - 29 Among the many Algerian personalities who were attracted by the game of football was the writer and philosopher Albert Camus, in his youth a goal keeper at Algiers university. Camus later wrote, "All that I know most surely about morality and obligations, I owe to football" (Quoted in Peter Woodward: 'Extra Time' in Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (eds): 'Football in Africa: Conflict, Conciliation and Community', Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, p. 275).
  - 30 FLN put pressure on the Muslim population to boycott the local Algerian soccer league. One effect was that some of the best Algerian players moved to clubs in France, without - as will be evident from the text - giving up their nationalist allegiance.
  - 31 The presentation is mainly based on Hawkey op. cit., pp. 100–122. See also Alegi 'African Soccerescapes', pp. 45–50.
  - 32 There were four Algerian players originally selected for the French squad to the World Cup in Sweden. During the World Cup, the French-Moroccan Just Fontaine excelled for France, scoring an unbeaten record 13 goals for the eventual winners of the bronze medal.
  - 33 The Monaco player Hacene Chabri had been identified by French intelligence as an FLN supporter, suspected of smuggling money and arms to the liberation movement.
  - 34 Quoted in Hawkey op. cit., p. 106.
  - 35 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
  - 36 The FLN Team did not play against Egypt, who had won the first African Cup of Nations in 1957. Politically, Nasser's Egypt supported the FLN. The most plausible reason for Egypt's reluctance to play football against them is that FIFA did not recognize the Algerian team and that Egypt as a founder member of the FIFA-aligned Confederation of African Football (CAF) did not want to risk its international status (cf. Hawkey op. cit., p. 114).
  - 37 Hawkey op. cit., p. 122. The FLN Team scored a total of 385 goals, or more than 4 goals per match.
  - 38 *Ibid.*
  - 39 Said Amara, who had defected in 1960, received a death threat when he returned to *Girondins de Bordeaux*.
  - 40 In Spain, Algeria caused a sensation by beating West Germany 2–1 in their first match. After losing 0–2 to Austria, they won their last group match against Chile (3–2), in the process threatening to eliminate the fancied West Germans from the tournament. In what has been called "the scandal in Gijón", West Germany and Austria, however, shame-
- fully agreed to reach a result which saw them through to the next round at the expense of the North Africans. Algeria lodged a complaint with FIFA, but to no avail. Nevertheless, as a consequence of the match-fixing, FIFA changed the rules for future World Cups. Matches that decided final group positions would from then on take place simultaneously. (West Germany eventually reached the final of the 1982 World Cup, losing 1–3 to Italy).
- 41 Weah also appealed to the United Nations to send a peace-keeping force to Liberia.
  - 42 At independence in 1960, Houphouët-Boigny became the first President of Ivory Coast. He held that position until his death in 1993.
  - 43 The majority of the players in the Ivory Coast national team have known each other since they were very young. Many of them are graduates of the famous ASEC Mimosas' football academy in Abidjan. Among them are Aruna Dindane (who plays for *Portsmouth* in the English Premier League), Emmanuel Eboué (*Arsenal*), Salomon Kalou (*Chelsea*), Bakari Koné (*Olympique de Marseille*), Kolo Touré (*Manchester City*), Yaya Touré (*Barcelona*) and Didier Zokora (*Sevilla*).
  - 44 The incident took place in Omdurman, Sudan, in October 2005, after the final qualifying match against the host country. It was the first time that Ivory Coast had qualified for the World Cup.
  - 45 Quoted in Hawkey, op. cit., p. 274.
  - 46 Alex Hayes: 'Didier Drogba brings peace to the Ivory Coast' in *The Telegraph*, London, 8 August 2007.
  - 47 Together with the Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI-A) and WANEP, ACCORD has established the African Alliance for Peacebuilding.
  - 48 WANEP: 'The Ouagadougou Peace Accord: Breakthrough for Peace at Last?', WARN Policy Brief, Accra, Ghana, 31 May 2007, p. 8.
  - 49 The *Manchester City* defender Kolo Touré and the *Barcelona* mid-fielder Yaya Touré were born in Bouaké, some 350 km north of Abidjan.
  - 50 Quoted in 'Football can score for African peace' in *The Citizen*, Dar es Salaam, 9 January 2010.
  - 51 Quoted in Hayes op. cit.
  - 52 In 2006 and 2009.
  - 53 The Didier Drogba Foundation is presented in this magazine.
  - 54 BBC Sport: 'Kalou makes Ivorian peace plea', BBC, London, 24 January 2008.
  - 55 Quoted from [www.score4africa.org](http://www.score4africa.org). Score4africa is a London-based soccer magazine, focusing on Africa.



# Pierre Nkurunziza

**President of the  
Republic of Burundi**

**Above: President Nkurunziza at the Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban, South Africa, April 2010.**



## Interview

**P**ierre Nkurunziza was born in the northern province of Ngozi in 1963. His father, a member of the National Assembly, was assassinated in the 1972 massacres. Two of his six brothers and sisters were similarly killed during the 1993 conflict, while another three were reported to have died in the bush. In 1987, Nkurunziza entered the University of Burundi, where he four years later took a Bachelor of Arts degree in physical education and sports. Working as a sports teacher at secondary schools and as a lecturer at the university, in 1995 renewed clashes between the Tutsi and Hutu population groups prompted Nkurunziza to flee the country. “I was pushed into rebellion by the inter-ethnic massacres that were taking place at the university”, he later stated.

Joining the armed opposition movement CNDD-FDD (*Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie - Forces de Défense de la Démocratie*) in 1999 Nkurunziza was seriously wounded in a mortar attack. He hid in the bush without proper medical care, an experience which turned him into a born-again Christian. Rising through the ranks of CNDD-FDD, in 2001 he was elected to the leadership of the Hutu-dominated movement. Two years later, he signed a ceasefire accord with the government of Burundi, joining the cabinet as Minister of State for Good Governance. In 2005, Nkurunziza was sworn in as President of Burundi for a five-year period. On behalf of the



Burundi nation, in 2006 he received ACCORD's Africa Peace Award "for outstanding achievements in settling years of civil war in a process resulting in a negotiated settlement and the successful democratic election of a new government". Often called the 'footballing president', Nkurunziza is closely involved with the game of soccer, as a supporter, coach and player. He is the driving force behind Halleluya FC, which plays in Burundi's first division.

The interview was carried out by ACCORD in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, in February 2010

***Your excellency, in your view, how can football, in general, contribute to peace, reconciliation and socio-economic development? What is the experience of Burundi in this regard?***

Football is one of the most loved games in the world. It gives joy and promotes physical and mental health. It attracts huge audiences without there necessarily having been any previous bonds of friendship. It unites people around a common ideal, which is sport, or in other words, competition, leisure and socialization.

During such chance occasions, people who have never met before exchange and share experiences and may even discuss joint projects. Such is the reconciliatory magic of football. From a chance meeting, ideas can emerge which come together for common goals. Joy and leisure always create good ideas.

In the case of a problematic past, football provides a focus around which it is possible to sit down and hold constructive discussions. We have experienced that in our country.

In fact, many people have been surprised to see that we over the past

three years have joined forces with the rural population to promote this game. We have already participated in more than 80 matches in different parts of the country, and we have noticed that this has produced favorable conditions for community mobilisation around other ideals, such as peace and development. Football attracts crowds around leisure, but also in favour of determined joint actions.

In this way, hundreds of schools and health centres have been built through community work. In only four years, more than 1500 primary and secondary schools have been built and tens of millions of fruit trees have been planted. These are examples which speak for themselves. Football has been a driving force for these social achievements, as well as for the protection of the environment.

The starting point for these impressive accomplishments was football, which managed to unite Hutu, Twa and Tutsi, men and women, young and old, around development projects. The contact made with the population in almost all districts also enabled us to launch many farm and cattle associations across the country. With the increase in production, we anticipate setting up factories to process our crops for export.

We are thus expecting an increase in monetary value and stabilization of food security, which ties in with the fight against famine and poverty. On my initiative, I have personally created a Football Academy which comprises 300 young footballers. From these, professionals will emerge who one day will contribute not only to the development of football, but also to social and economic development in general.

At the social level, the many recently opened schools have effectively implemented the decision on free schooling. Currently, the number of

pupils has doubled at primary and secondary level, and we are heading towards universal, free and compulsory education. This means that, in the near future, Burundi will have enough educated personnel to plan and carry out sustainable development projects.

***What has been the impact of football on the peace process in Burundi?***

As mentioned, football enables the population to meet in all its diversity, i.e. displaced persons, returnees, the military, peasants, etc. Segregation has been one of the consequences of the inter-ethnic crisis which cast a shadow over Burundi for more than half a century. Previously, small groups were formed on the basis of ethnicity, regions or professions. This created a climate of hatred and suspicion between the country's different social categories. In this way, for example, the military was once considered to be "assassins", and every Hutu was regarded as a "genocide killer".

Football is one of the means which has enabled Burundians to discover each other and bring to the fore the aspiration of peace and security which all of them have close at heart. In fact, after our sports events, exchanges focusing on peace and security are constantly organised, as well as meetings to plan activities to consolidate peace.

At the highest level, a framework for dialogue between different partners has been established. It has recently led to a forum between the political parties for the strengthening of peace. Security committees are operational at all levels, and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is under preparation. It is largely inspired by that which took place some years ago in South Africa.

***The African Union has declared 2010 the Year of Peace and Security in Africa. What message could you in this context convey to the FIFA 2010 World Cup?***



strategies which can further the game of football, both at the continental and at the global level.

My most heartfelt wish is that the holding of this FIFA 2010 World Cup in Africa will create an everlasting image in the minds of the Africans, as well as an unequalled honour for FIFA. 🌍

**President Nkurunziza playing for his team, Haleluya FC, in Burundi.**

The holding of this tournament in Africa is an unforgettable event in the history of the continent. In the fairly recent past, it was unthinkable that the World Cup could be staged on the poorest continent, with very significant political and social instability. Certainly, humanity increasingly understands that sport, football in particular, has a role to play in the search for efficient solutions to the multiple challenges which plague this part of the world.

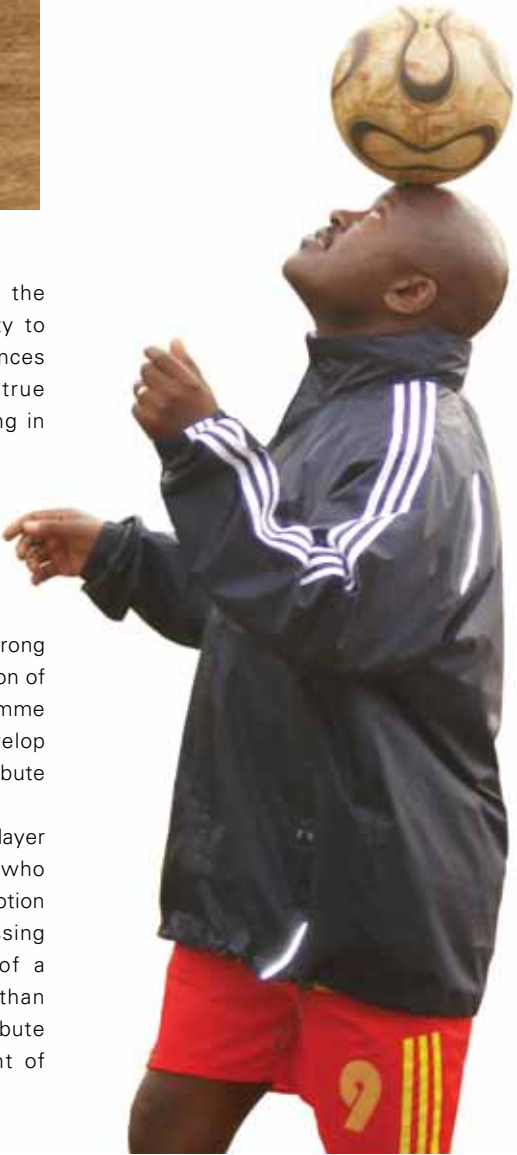
Taking into account the way in which we have used football to build and consolidate peace in Burundi, we can state that the FIFA 2010 World Cup is not an end in itself, but rather an efficient means which contributes to the strengthening of peace and promotes development on the continent as a whole.

Without doubt, Africa, through South Africa, is ready to welcome thousands of visitors from various backgrounds, bankers, entrepreneurs, politicians and

others. The tournament presents the continent with a good opportunity to make the most of diverse experiences from around the world. It is a true meeting place for giving and taking in various fields.

The event should also give rise to deep reflection, in particular aiming at reducing the inequalities we observe in world football. FIFA should seize this opportunity to propose strong interventions to promote the inclusion of African youth. An integrated programme for the building of grounds to develop the game of football and thus contribute to social cohesion is called for.

As far as I am concerned, as a player and as a coach licensed by FIFA who already has contributed to the promotion of professionals currently progressing overseas, and as the founder of a football academy hosting more than 300 youth, we are ready to contribute our expertise to the development of





# Roger Palmgren

**Sports Director at  
AmaZulu FC, Durban,  
South Africa**

Currently holding the position of sports director at the South African premier league football club AmaZulu FC in Durban, at the age of twenty-seven Roger Palmgren started his coaching career with FC Café Opera in his native Sweden. After consecutively winning the fourth, third and second Swedish divisions, in 1993 he moved to AC Arezzo in the Italian third division. Despite his young age, he was the following year contracted as national coach of the Sierra Leone ‘Stars’, taking them to the African Cup of Nations in both 1994 and 1996. After a spell with Degerfors IF in Sweden and, again, AC Arezzo in Italy, in 1999 Palmgren returned to Africa as technical director of the national selection of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Once again, he steered his team to the 2000 African Cup of Nations. Between 2004 and 2006, he served as national coach and technical director of the Rwanda national squad, the ‘Bees’ (*Amavubi*), who famously held Nigeria to a 1–1 draw in the qualification for the FIFA 2006 World Cup in Germany. During his years in Rwanda, the *Amavubi* twice became runners-up in the East and Central CECAFA Cup.

Staying in Africa, in 2006–2007 Palmgren coached the Nigerian first division team Kwara United FC and in 2007–2009 the South African premier league club



TOR SELLESTROM

Thanda Royal Zulu FC. He moved to AmaZulu FC in 2009. During the World Cup, he will in an unofficial capacity assist the Swedish head coach of the Ivory Coast team, Sven-Göran Eriksson.

Closely involved with the national teams of Sierra Leone, the DRC and Rwanda, Palmgren has first-hand experience of football at the national level in African countries ravaged by war, conflict and genocide.

The interview was carried out by ACCORD in Durban, South Africa, in March 2010.



**After a year with AC Arezzo in the Italian third division, in 1994 - only 30 years old - you became the coach of the national team of Sierra Leone. How did you end up in Sierra Leone?**

I was in Sweden on vacation from AC Arezzo. At the same time, the national team of Sierra Leone was at a training camp there. I was asked if I had the time and interest in leading the team for two weeks at the camp. I did. We played a couple of friendly games and also took part in a tournament, which we won.

The Sierra Leone Football Association was satisfied with my work and offered me the job as national coach. That same day I got a telephone call from the then President of Sierra Leone, Valentine Strasser. He personally invited me to meet him in the capital, Freetown.

I am crazy about football and I am always looking for opportunities to educate and develop myself to become a more understanding human being. There is no better way to do that than to live in other countries, with different cultures. So, I had no doubts. To lead a national team was - and is - an honour. I did not know that Sierra Leone was in turmoil and deeply divided. But the opportunity was too big not to be interested.

During my first visit, and before I had made up my mind and signed a contract, President Strasser told me that a lot of people in Sierra Leone already knew about me and about the great results we had achieved in Sweden. "Roger", he said, "football unites people! Especially if the results are good!" I never asked him what would happen if we did not win...

**How were you received by the football fraternity and the people of Sierra Leone?**

It was just magic! Almost everybody greeted me wherever I went. From day one, I was treated like a good king. Of course, I was also lucky with the results we achieved.

**You stayed as national coach of Sierra Leone during the difficult years**

**1994–96. During this time, Sierra Leone qualified for the 1994 Africa Cup of Nations in Tunisia and the 1996 Africa Cup of Nations in South Africa. How did the successes impact on the divisions in the country?**

Believe me, I know. Football in Africa is very, very important! Whether we played at home or away, everybody was happy and celebrated for a couple of days. It seemed that everything else was forgotten, or gone.

**Vice versa, how did the civil war affect the performance of the national team?**

It was hard to tell what the players really were thinking about when they were playing, but during my time the Sierra Leone national team performed as never before or after. In the changing room before the games, we always said, "Let us make our people happy and proud!" But I also remember an away game very well. There had been an outbreak of violence back home in Freetown, and two of the players came to my room and said that they did not want to play the next game. Members of their families had been killed. We were then preparing for our return game against Algeria during the qualifications for the 1996 Africa Cup of Nations in South Africa.

There was a lot of talent in Sierra Leone at the time, even though some of the players were very young. Among them was Mohamed Kallon, who was only sixteen years old and went on to play for Inter Milan and Bologna in Italy, as well as for Monaco in France. Kewullay Conthe was seventeen. He later played for Atalanta, Chievo Verona and Palermo in Italy.

**In a highly divided environment, to what extent could you act as an independent team selector?**

As long as you are a winning coach for a national team, nobody will interfere. That said, the President of Sierra Leone himself

used to call me the day before our games. He wanted to know about my game plan and the starting line-up. Only once did he interfere with my team selections. The reason he gave was a private, economic issue between him and two players who played professional soccer in Belgium.

**Were you ever under pressure by any of the feuding factions to support them?**

Yes, I was kidnapped by two soldiers from the rebel leader Foday Sankoh's army. It was just after finishing a World Cup qualifying game in Abidjan, the capital of Ivory Coast. I was in my hotel room having a rest before the dinner. It was not as frightening as it may sound. Although they were demanding, the two soldiers were also friendly. They took me in a big Toyota 4x4 Landcruiser to some place in Abidjan, where I stayed overnight. Mr. Sankoh and I, or should I say, he had a long talk. At first, he talked about his ideology, how he wanted to rule and develop Sierra Leone. Then he said that he wanted me to bring money to the Sierra Leone Football Association to show his support. He also

**I am crazy about football and I am always looking for opportunities to educate and develop myself to become a more understanding human being. There is no better way to do that than to live in other countries, with different cultures**

wanted to give the players some kind of bonuses for the game we had played.

**In 1999, you were appointed technical director of the national team of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This was at the height of the war in that country. Once again, you managed to qualify for the Africa Cup of Nations. Are you driven by a belief that the game of football can act as a reconciling and unifying force?**



**Roger Palmgren leading a training session with the Rwandan national team in Kigali, Rwanda, June 2005.**

Yes, I do believe that football reconciles and unites. When I came to the DRC, I had already seen that happen in Sierra Leone. Although life for many is difficult, the game of football seems to give people hope and joy, even if just for a short time. And it is important to give people dreams and hope. Football can to a certain extent do that.

During my last six months in Sierra Leone, I was helping at a boys camp one hour's drive outside Freetown. There were about one hundred boys from ten to between sixteen and eighteen years of age in the camp. They had been used by the rebel army in one way or another. Many of them had killed a lot of people. They had all run away from the rebels and had been found by the government soldiers in the forest. I was visiting them twice a week and started a soccer league in the camp. The people working there said that I was like a Messiah for the boys. There was no bigger satisfaction for me than to see these boys smile every time I came to the camp. The feeling can not be described in words.

**Your position as national coach of the Rwanda national team - the Amavubi, or 'the Bees' - during the period 2004–2006 appears as particularly challenging. Ten years after the genocide, the country was still struggling to come to terms with the horrors of the recent past.**

**Nevertheless, the Amavubi became a force on the African football scene. How did you approach the challenge of building a national team?**

From day one, I was advised by the President of the Rwandan Football Association, who at the same time was an army officer, never to ask or talk about the horrors of the genocide in front of the players. I did, however, sometimes talk about it in private with some of the players if there had been tensions in the team. I could not see that by myself. Naturally, I emphasised to the media the importance of having united supporters behind us.

I also enjoyed a personal friendship with President Kagame, which, of course, was on his initiative. Although he wanted to know about every single moment I had with the national team, he never interfered or tried to change things. However, before every game he invited the entire team to his place and "pumped up" the players.

**The African Union (AU) has declared the year 2010 the Year of Peace and Security in Africa. How can football contribute towards this objective?**

If those of us who are working with football on a daily basis want to change things in life for the better, we must teach our children to do it in the right way. We must start by putting more efforts into youth development, so that

the youth will learn for the future and spread the message. Football players are ambassadors, whether you like it or not. If we educate them at an early age, they will spread good messages and also vibes in the future.

**In this context, do you have a message for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa?**

Yes, South Africa must seize this big opportunity to show the world the beauty of the country and its people. To send a message around the world that although it has a recent past of turmoil and division, people with many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds can actually live in peace. 🌍



## Profile

# Didier Drogba

## Ivory Coast

VARUN MATHURE



REUTERS / THE BIGGER PICTURE

**The** winner of the 2009 African Footballer of the Year award, Didier Drogba is arguably the best player Ivory Coast has ever produced, and his success on the football pitch is matched by his activities off it. “I am lucky enough to have made a career out of my passion and to play at Chelsea, one of Europe’s biggest clubs. Now it is my turn to return the favour”, he writes about the *Didier Drogba Foundation*. “I want others to have the same chance. I want underprivileged children to blossom out and to make something out of their lives”.

The foundation, which aims to make health care and education more accessible in Drogba’s native Abidjan, is supported by many of his colleagues at Chelsea and other players from around the English Premier League.

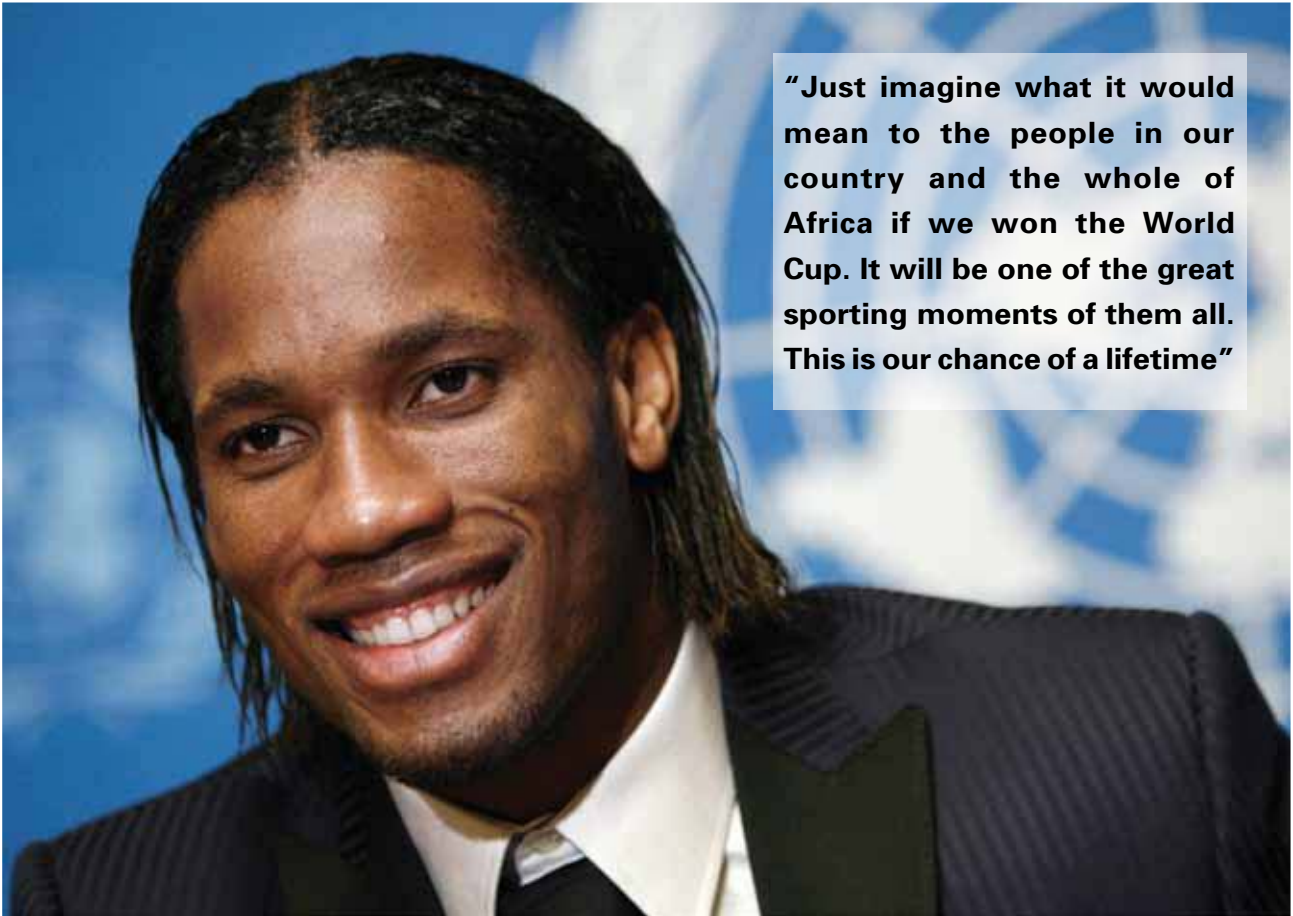
Together with the other players in the Ivory Coast national team, Drogba has been closely involved with the peace process in his home country. During the civil war, he appealed to the warring sides to put down their weapons, and later he took part in the mediation efforts leading to the 2007 peace accord. He represents the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) as a UN Messenger of Peace. In recognition of his huge following and humanitarian contributions, *Time* magazine named Drogba one of the 100 most influential people in the world in May 2010

The Sky Sports television crew call him ‘The Bull’, but for his adoring Chelsea fans he is just ‘Drogs’. For a man who has etched his name into the history books of the Premier League, Didier Drogba carries an aura of humility around him.

“My son came to me four months after I had joined Chelsea and said he wanted to go back to Marseille. I didn’t





**“Just imagine what it would mean to the people in our country and the whole of Africa if we won the World Cup. It will be one of the great sporting moments of them all. This is our chance of a lifetime”**

know what to do”, Didier told BBC in an interview last year. But to the delight of the Blues’ fans, the Ivorian decided to stick around. He has claimed eight trophies in the past five years, scoring 122 goals in the process. The best foreign player in Chelsea’s ranks may be a fierce competitor on the field, but off it he is a family man who holds Africa close to his heart. “People have an opinion of Africa that is not so good, but we have to let sport unite us all”, he said at the start of this year’s Africa Cup of Nations tournament.

Drogba perceives the World Cup in South Africa to be a great opportunity to change the image of the continent in the minds of outsiders. “[People] see us as being behind the rest of the

world in financial and in sporting terms, but this year gives us a chance to show people a different Africa”. He believes that a successful tournament can be a landmark change in perceptions. “Africa has some problems, we all know that, but we all have a chance to make 2010 the special year that puts this continent on the sporting map forever”.

Ivory Coast have been drawn in the so called ‘Group of Death’ with Brazil, Portugal and North Korea. Despite the daunting odds stacked against his side, Drogba is not intimidated, “Just imagine what it would mean to the people in our country and the whole of Africa if we won the World Cup. It will be one of the great sporting moments of them all. This is our chance of a lifetime”. 🌍

**Didier Drogba appointed UNDP Goodwill Ambassador in Geneva, Switzerland, January 2007.**

Created in 2007, the *Didier Drogba Foundation* aims to provide financial and material support in health and education to the underprivileged in Ivory Coast, especially women and children. For more information about the foundation, visit [www.thedidierdrogbafoundation.com](http://www.thedidierdrogbafoundation.com)



# Michael Essien

**Ghana's Michael Essien is one of the game's most versatile players and his resourcefulness extends beyond the field**

**VARUN MATHURE**

Like his Chelsea team-mate Didier Drogba of Ivory Coast and many other African football stars, Essien is dedicated to improving conditions in his home country. His recently established *Michael Essien Foundation* (MEF) in Accra, Ghana, is a sign of this commitment, "I would love to win more trophies and keep playing football. But my personal dream is to enrich peoples' lives

through the *Michael Essien Foundation*". The charitable organisation aims to provide basic health care and other amenities to the underprivileged in both his home town of Awutu Breku in central Ghana, as well as to other deprived communities in the country. At the launch of his foundation in November 2009, Essien said, "I have won many trophies and accolades, but I reckon this tops them all. The MEF will be

a journey, not a sprint, and as long as we work hard we will be able to put a smile on the faces of normal people who are suffering through no fault of theirs. Let the story of hope and inspiration start from here".

"Football has become a way out of poverty in Africa, as it is a way for people to get away from where they come from", Essien said in an interview last year.

He recognises the impact football has on kids from around the continent. “If you’re a kid in Africa and you’re into football, you just want to play every day. It doesn’t matter where; anywhere you go, you can just play with other people or yourself”.

At a recent event in South Africa, he expressed his concern about the limited opportunities people from Africa have to follow the game, “I am among a few from Africa who have made it on the international football scene. Yet very few people from this continent get the opportunity to watch us perform”. However, Essien is hopeful that the upcoming World Cup will change the way things stand, “The 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa will be a rare platform for ordinary people to witness the world’s most talented players on the soccer pitch doing extraordinary things”.

**“Racism is not a good thing. We are all human beings and it is only the colour that changes”**

Essien’s involvement with awareness activities and charitable work is not limited to his own foundation. Along with Didier Drogba, he is part of ‘Kick It Out’, an organisation aiming to clamp out racism in football. “Racism is not a good thing. We are all human beings and it is only the colour that changes”. More recently, he has been selected as a part of FIFA’s ‘Eleven for Health Programme’, which aims to use football to improve the health of both individuals and communities around the world. Essien participates in the programme together with a group of elite players which include Drogba, Lionel Messi of Argentina and Cristiano Ronaldo of Portugal. 🌍



The *Michael Essien Foundation* was set up in November 2009. For further information, visit [www.michaellessiengh.com](http://www.michaellessiengh.com)

**Michael Essien of Ghana during a match against Bafana Bafana in Johannesburg, South Africa, June 2005.**





GETTY IMAGES



CAMEROON

# Samuel Eto'o

**A winner of three consecutive African Footballer of the Year awards (2003, 2004 and 2005), Samuel Eto'o is one of football's household names and an idol for millions around the world**

**VARUN MATHURE**

**The** Cameroonian striker has an enviable trophy cabinet, but most football fans will always remember him as part of the 'Majestic Barcelona' side of 2009.

Eto'o hasn't always had the best of times playing football. As an African,

he has had to fight his way to the top, enduring racist abuse along the way. He once almost walked off the field after racist taunts were directed at him during a league game in Spain. "In that moment, you start thinking whether there is something wrong in being black?", he said in an interview with

CNN's World Sport. Eto'o has since joined hands with many black players from across the African continent in their battle against racism. "I think we are all humans. Everyone's blood is the same color and we all have the same heart. I don't see any differences in skin color". In mid-2009, he visited South Africa to



**Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the Homeless World Cup in Cape Town, South Africa, September 2006. The Nobel Peace laureate is a patron of the *ONE Movement* for social change.**

launch a campaign against xenophobia and racism. Initiated by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the campaign is carried out in collaboration with his own foundation. It forms part of the 'ONE Movement', an initiative for social change under the patronage of South African Nobel Peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It aims at promoting unity and human rights throughout South Africa and Africa at large.

The two-time UEFA Champions League winner is also involved in charities in Cameroon and elsewhere in Africa. His *Samuel Eto'o Foundation* aims to educate children through the game. The organisation also helps with

various other activities around Cameroon, including sports scholarships and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. "I'm a believer, and one day I said to myself: 'If God gave me all these possibilities, why shouldn't I share what I have with others?'"

**"Africa must seize this opportunity to demonstrate that we are able to organise such an important event. I think that it will be the best World Cup ever"**

Eto'o feels very close to his home country. During his introduction to fans at Inter Milan, he asked Cameroonians carrying the national flag to join him on the field. "I feel like an older brother for children of my country. I've discovered that what really makes me happy in life is to share what I have with other people".

He is eagerly looking forward to the World Cup. "Africa must seize this opportunity to demonstrate that we are able to organise such an important event. I think that it will be the best World Cup ever". Eto'o has been nominated by FIFA to be the face of the 2010 World Cup, an honour for which he is extremely grateful and proud. With regard to Cameroon's prospects, he says, "We have a good team with [both] young players and veterans - a great mixture. I am optimistic. Cameroon could well cause a surprise at the finals".

The African continent has provided many football superstars over the course of the years. Samuel Eto'o is one of its finest - not just on the pitch, but also in his personality. 🌍

Samuel Eto'o's foundation, *Fundación Privada Samuel Eto'o*, was registered in Spain in 2006. For information on the foundation (in English), visit [www.fundacionsamueetoo.org](http://www.fundacionsamueetoo.org)



Profile

**Nwankwo Kanu**  
**Nigerian**  
**striker**

If one was to pick a contemporary player who made soccer fans sit up and take note of Africa’s footballing skills, it would have to be the Nigerian striker and captain, Nwankwo Kanu

**VARUN MATHURE**

**T**he winner of virtually every conceivable title in European club football, Kanu has played a pivotal role in enhancing the image of African football players in England, Europe and the world at large. In an international

career stretching back to the FIFA Under-17 World Cup in 1993, Kanu is the most decorated African footballer in history. In 1996, he won an Olympic gold medal with Nigeria - the first Olympic victory of any African nation - and

playing for Ajax Amsterdam in Holland, Internazionale in Italy and Arsenal in England he has a host of titles under his belt, including the UEFA Champions League with Ajax in 1995. Kanu has twice been voted African Footballer of the





Year (1996 and 1999). Throughout Africa he is admired for his philanthropic work.

The Nigerian captain was diagnosed with a serious heart condition shortly after winning the gold medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Subsequently, he set up a heart foundation to help children and young adults in Nigeria and other countries in Africa. "My heart problems changed my aspect on life. No one knows what the future holds, and that's why I started to think about others more". He became one of the first African players to set up a charity to help the people from his continent.

The *Kanu Heart Foundation* was established in 2000. It has so far been responsible for fully sponsoring the treatment of close to 300 children, but Kanu wishes to expand it further by building hospitals around Africa. "I get hundreds of letters from all over Africa and that's where the pressure comes in. You hear the story, and everyone's story deserves help, and you want to help".

With this attitude, it is no wonder that Kanu has been appointed a Goodwill Ambassador by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Commenting on the importance of football in his home country, Kanu recently noted, "Football pulls the whole country together. [It is] something that can bring peace and unity to Nigeria". At the same time, he is acutely aware of the problems footballers, and especially young Africans, face when they start their professional careers. "For years, African players have been exploited", he explained at the launch of his new Football Foundation in 2008. "Agents have preyed on young Africans, ripping them off and leaving them penniless". His organisation looks to help young African football players from falling into the trap of middlemen and agents. "In Africa, the young players have to go through a lot of things, many of which they don't know how to deal with". The Foundation helps with the careers of the aspiring stars free of any cost, and

**Nwankwo Kanu set up his *Kanu Heart Foundation* in 2000. Here, Kanu at a promotion event in London, England, February 2003.**

the advisers consult both the players and their parents.

The Nigerian captain is looking forward to the World Cup in South Africa, where he believes an African side can come out victorious. "I think we have learned our lesson, and playing in Africa where you have all the supporters behind you is the time to really do it". Kanu plans to hang up his boots from international duty after the event and will be releasing a book thereafter. The career of this great footballer may be drawing to a close, but his contributions will forever be remembered in Africa and beyond. 🌍

For more information about the *Kanu Heart Foundation*, visit [www.kanuheartfoundationng.com](http://www.kanuheartfoundationng.com)



## South Africa

# Steven Pienaar

VARUN MATHURE

**Like many of his *Bafana Bafana* team mates, Pienaar's childhood in apartheid South Africa was harsh and difficult**

**B**afana Bafana's midfielder Steven Pienaar is widely regarded as one of South Africa's most talented players. Growing up in Westbury outside Johannesburg, in 1999 - at the age of 17 - he joined the ranks of the South African premier league side Ajax Cape Town. His abilities soon caught the attention of the big professional clubs in Europe and in 2002 he moved to Ajax Amsterdam in the Dutch first division. The same

year, he made his international debut for *Bafana Bafana*. After a spell with Borussia Dortmund in Germany, in 2007 he was transferred to Everton, where he has firmly booked a place in the hearts of the English team's fans.

Like many of his *Bafana Bafana* team mates, Pienaar's childhood in apartheid South Africa was harsh and difficult. He grew up with his mother and three sisters in the coloured township

of Westbury, which was notorious for violence and drugs. Pienaar remembers being asked to serve as lookout for drug dealers and hearing gunfire punctuate the nights. Interviewed in 2009, he noted, "It was difficult to stay out of trouble. It was a dodgy area and the temptation was huge. I'd be so envious of the boys who'd turn up with new sneakers from their drugs money. But I knew I'd get a hiding from my Mum if



I got involved and I didn't want to go to school covered in bruises".

Through football, however, Pienaar found an escape and managed to move on in life. At the tender age of ten, he was taken for training at the Johannesburg School of Excellence at Elandsfontein, where soccer was combined with secondary education. But he did not turn his back on his home area, "Westbury is well known in Johannesburg for gangsterism and drugs and that kind of thing. But there's a lot of talent there too, like in all of South Africa. You've just got to try and get people out of there and develop it. I was fortunate that I was scouted at the age of ten, so I was taken out of Westbury. But it is still the place I come from, so when I go back to South Africa I go there". In Westbury, Pienaar organises an annual football tournament and supports the Jordan House for senior citizens, "Coming from a disadvantaged background without role models to guide me has enforced the spirit of humility and encouraged me to invest back in my community by helping the needy. I am not doing this for publicity, but out of love.

I have an insight of what it is like growing up without knowing when your next meal is".

Pienaar is hopeful that the World Cup will bring peace and joy to Africa, "There's a cry throughout the continent for guns to be put down. For a few weeks, people will forget problems and civil wars and have a smile on their faces. Sport can be that powerful".

Nicknamed 'Schillo' after former Italian player Salvatore Schillaci, Pienaar



is looking forward to completing his childhood dream when he takes the field for South Africa in the opening World Cup game against Mexico at the impressive Soccer City stadium in Soweto, "Not far from where my mother lives, you can actually see the stadium. I used to dream of playing in the old stadium, so to play in this new one is something [else]". 🇿🇦

**Steven Pienaar during a World Cup qualifier against Uganda in Johannesburg, South Africa, March 2005.**

This profile is largely based on the booklet 'Steven Pienaar: The World is Watching' by Lesley Beake (Penguin Books South Africa, Johannesburg, 2010).

**Varun Mathure comes from India and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Journalism at the University of Westminster in London**





# Beyond the Big Stage: Football, Reconciliation and Social Development in Africa

TOR SELLSTROM, SENIOR ADVISOR TO ACCORD

## Introduction

In an oft-quoted statement, Bill Shankly, former Scottish international football player and manager of Liverpool FC in England, argued that “some people think that football is a matter of life and death. I can assure them that it is much more serious than that.” Shankly, of course, referred to competitive soccer in Europe. In Africa, the statement could be more than a metaphor. As noted by ESPN’s Roger Bennett, whereas “in the United States and Europe the game

exists somewhere between sport and big business, in Africa [...] [football] remains a potent symbol of hope and healing”.<sup>1</sup>

Football in Africa is more than just a game. On a continent where intra-state conflict and political turmoil much too often have reversed necessary progress towards socio-economic development, pitting citizens against each other and resulting in untold suffering and prolonged misery for millions, football is not only played for pleasure and as a respite from harsh daily realities, but can also

be used as a tool for reconciliation and social development. With simple rules, regulations and an independent arbitrator; allowing for collective organisation and individual skills; open to men, boys, women and girls, as well as the physically disabled; and requiring just a ball of whatever kind, one or two pairs of goalposts and an open space, the game of football can be played everywhere. It does not require expensive equipment or infrastructure, and is therefore particularly attractive to people in the shantytowns or



in the rural areas on the African continent. At the same time, its force of attraction is such that it bridges the divide between rich and poor, the urban middle class, the township dwellers and the villagers. For the economically disadvantaged, it also offers a possibility to escape the vicious circle of poverty.

The *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA), the United Nations and a range of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in Africa have taken note of the role football can play in promoting peace and social development on the continent, particularly in the fields of education and health. More often than not, these international organisations build upon existing structures and partner with local African organisations. In addition, all over the African continent there are cases where conflict-ridden or disadvantaged urban and rural communities on their own initiative have found that football can heal wounds and lay the basis for improved social conditions. Far from comprehensive, and with examples taken

from both internationally-supported and indigenous community-based initiatives, the overview that follows will illustrate how in Africa the game of football beyond the big stage is, and has been, used for conflict resolution and socio-economic development.

#### **FIFA and the 'Football for Hope Movement'**

No follower of the game of football can be ignorant of the fact that the World Cup - 'the biggest show on earth' - is organised by FIFA. Less well known is the fact that FIFA has been supporting social development initiatives for many years. In 2005, following a decision by the FIFA congress to "build a better future", the world governing football body took its corporate social responsibility to a new level. Mirroring the United Nations appeal to the industrialised countries to set aside 0.7% of their GDP for development assistance, FIFA agreed to assign the same portion of its total revenues in favour of social programmes. They are grouped under the umbrella 'Football

**Members of Team Alexandra at the inauguration of the Football for Hope Festival site in Alexandra, Johannesburg, South Africa, March 2010.**

for Hope' and are approached under the guideline "development through football", as distinct from FIFA's core football development mandate.

To implement its social programmes and contribute towards the achievement of the UN's 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (see Box on page 34), in 2005 FIFA entered into a strategic alliance with *streetfootballworld*, a social profit organisation that brings together actors in a worldwide network of more than 80 local members in around 50 countries, many of them in Africa. Together, FIFA and *streetfootballworld* launched the 'Football for Hope Movement' which focuses on the game of football as a central vehicle for development programmes in the five areas of health promotion; peace building; children's rights and education;

## 2015 Millennium Development Goals

With 1990 as the base year, the goals range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target of 2015

**Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**

**Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education**

**Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

**Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality**

**Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health**

**Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases**

**Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability**

**Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development**

For More information, Visit: <[www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)>

## Football, Reconciliation and Reintegration in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Whereas the 'Football for Hope Movement' mainly uses soccer as a tool for socio-economic development, focusing on health and education, FIFA has over the years also paid attention to the game's contribution to reconciliation and peace-building in post-conflict situations. In 2004, for example, it entered into cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to specifically support football in countries affected by conflict. On the African continent, the programme involves Burundi, Guinea, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan.

In the field of conflict resolution, it is, however, the United Nations which as part of its expanded peace-building mandate from the early 1990s has increasingly promoted the game of football. Within the framework of various UN peace-building missions in Africa, agencies such as UNICEF and UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) have identified football as a particularly efficient means for successful implementation of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes, partnering with national institutions and local grassroots organisations. With regard to the physical rehabilitation of ex-soldiers and their victims, the same applies to international organisations such as the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross).

This is notably the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone<sup>4</sup>, the two West African countries which from the early 1990s until 2003 and 2002, respectively, were torn apart by particularly savage conflicts. It falls outside the scope of this text to discuss the horrors of these conflicts. As - in the case of Sierra Leone - vividly portrayed in the movie *Blood Diamonds*, suffice it to note that all armed actors made extensive use of child soldiers; that children - boys as well as girls<sup>5</sup> - were both the perpetrators of atrocious acts

anti-discrimination and social integration; and the environment.<sup>2</sup>

The 'Football for Hope Movement' explicitly targets youth. By 2010, it had supported some 40 organisations around the world, about half of them in Africa. Among them were the *Mathare Youth Sports Association* in Kenya, the *Association des Jeunes Sportifs de Kigali (Espérance)* in Rwanda and *Grassroot Soccer* in South and Southern Africa.

Focusing on the 2010 World Cup, the official campaign of FIFA's 'Football for Hope Movement' is '20 Centres for 2010'. The objective is to build twenty centres for public health, education and football in disadvantaged communities across Africa, of which five are in South Africa. A similar campaign will be implemented in Latin America in connection with the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. The costs of the twenty centres have been estimated at US\$10 million, of which a part has been raised by FIFA through the donation of US\$ 500 for every goal scored in the qualification matches for the World Cup. The first five centres will be ready by June 2010 - in Khayelitsha (Cape Town) and Alexandra (Johannesburg), both in South Africa; Baguinéda, Mali; Nairobi, Kenya; and Windhoek, Namibia. Shortly after the World Cup, the centres in Kigali,

Rwanda, and Cape Coast, Ghana, will be inaugurated.

Each centre will in cooperation with the local community be administered by a member organisation of the 'Football for Hope Movement'. In addition to public health services and classrooms for informal education, it will offer space for community meetings and have a small-size football pitch with grandstands. The first centre - managed by *Grassroot Soccer* - was opened by the FIFA President, Sepp Blatter, in the sprawling, impoverished township of Khayelitsha on the outskirts of Cape Town, South Africa, in December 2009. The centre in the Alexandra township in Johannesburg will during the World Cup in South Africa play a particular role. To highlight the social objectives of the 'Football for Hope Movement', 32 mixed-gender teams from across the globe made up of boys and girls aged between 15 and 18 years will during the final week of the World Cup converge on Alexandra's centre for a 'Football for Hope Festival'. Supported by FIFA, it is an official event of the World Cup. Africa will be represented by thirteen teams from various countries, the Americas by eight, Asia by two, Europe by six, the Middle East by one and Oceania by two teams.<sup>3</sup>





**Child soldiers riding through the streets of Monrovia, Liberia, April 1996.**

of violence and the victims of these brutalities; that a large proportion of the child soldiers became drug addicts; and that their rehabilitation and reintegration into the wider post-conflict society has been particularly challenging.

In Liberia, there were an estimated 15,000 child soldiers when the war officially came to an end in August

2003.<sup>6</sup> Organised and monitored by the United Nations, the DDR process began in earnest in 2004. Child soldiers were disarmed with their commanders and other adult combatants, but the subsequent demobilisation and reintegration processes were separate. 'Children associated with the fighting forces' (CAFF), as child soldiers are called, were for a period of up to three months housed at Interim Care Centres (ICCs), camps or live-in facilities where they received physical and mental treatment, basic skills training and reunification services until their families were traced and they could return to their

communities.<sup>7</sup> On behalf of UNICEF, seven different child protection agencies (CPAs) were responsible for the centres. Among them were Save the Children, Christian Children's Fund and Don Bosco, a faith-based organisation established by the Salesian Order.

Writing in ACCORD's magazine *Conflict Trends* on the reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia, Janel Galvanek noted in 2009 that "most CPA representatives wholeheartedly agreed that recreational activities, particularly football, were an excellent way to help the children find their way back to a normal childhood. Often, children from opposing factions were present at the same ICC, which had the potential to cause serious problems. Placing them on a football team together proved to be the best option of avoiding any conflict. After some time, the children were much more concerned about their teams' names and the goals they had scored than in what [armed] force they had previously fought. [...] The busy schedule and sports activities also proved to be a very good way to deal with children with drug addictions. [...] The specific punishment of not being allowed to play football [further] seemed to work remarkably well - the children simply did not want to miss out on the day's game".<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Reverend Joe Glackin of the *Don Bosco Youth Project* (DBYP) has underlined the significance of football and mixed-identity teams for the success of the Liberian Interim Care Centres, "Players on the team had come from five different warring factions. In the war, some had been winners, some losers, but the only thing they discussed were the tactics for their next game. There have been no reconciliation workshops, no formal hand shakes, no signing of any treaties, but for this group of young people the war is definitely over".<sup>9</sup>

Post-conflict reconciliation and reintegration are complex processes. In the case of Liberia, by 2005 around 12,000



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child soldiers had been demobilised and gone through the Interim Care Centres. The success rate in the subsequent family reunification and reintegration processes has been estimated to be as high as 90%.<sup>10</sup> This is to a large extent due to the commitment of a number of NGOs, many of which have used football as a gateway for former child soldiers to access longer-term rehabilitation projects, such as night shelters, skills training and theatre or music workshops. In addition to the abovementioned *Don Bosco Youth Project* (DBYP), the *Christian Home in Liberating Destitute* (CHILD) is a case in point. Targeting both children and adults aged between ten and thirty years of age, CHILD promotes football as a vehicle for peace, conflict transformation and the building of an inclusive environment, in particular in the rural areas of Liberia. As is the case with DBYP, CHILD focuses on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and encourages members of its football

network to report abuses such as rape. With regard to DBYP, it could be noted that what started as a tool for rehabilitation of child soldiers subsequently grew into a successful football club. Thus, in 2005 Bosco United Sports Association (BUSA) competed in the Liberian second division and had a network of over 100 feeder teams - comprising of about 4,500 children - in and around the capital Monrovia.<sup>11</sup>

In neighboring Sierra Leone, football has similarly been used extensively as an efficient vehicle for post-conflict reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration. Established in 2002, *Youth in Action Sierra Leone* (YASAL), for example, has since the end of open hostilities focused on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returning refugees by utilising football as a non-violent approach for the design and promotion of programmes for reconstruction and sustainable development. Targeting child soldiers as well as adult combatants,

**Demobilised child soldiers at a rehabilitation centre in N'Djamena, Chad, July 2007.**

World Vision International's *Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace* (YRTEP) programme has been particularly innovative and merits a more detailed presentation. Using football both to dispel tensions and as a long-term vehicle for the reintegration of former rebel fighters leaving disarmament camps for their home communities, YRTEP designed a simple, but comprehensive approach which at the village level comprised a truth and reconciliation element, as well as trauma treatment.

The point of departure for YRTEP's approach was the fact that during the war many members of the armed rebel forces - children as well as adults - had been forced to participate in atrocities against their own



villages, and families, as a means to block their possible return to social acceptance.<sup>12</sup> After the war and the demobilisation process, bitter and frightened villagers were often reluctant to allow their return. Conversely, the ex-combatants themselves were often unwilling to go home out of shame or fear of retribution. To overcome the distrust, at the village level YRTEP launched a programme in which football played a central role:

The three-day reintegration programme started with the ex-combatants being marched into their home village in the presence of the villagers and the family members. On the first day, the villagers played a football match, watched by the former rebels. In the evening, a musical show, a 'bush disco' or some similar event, would be arranged to ease tensions and lower levels of mutual distrust. On day two, YRTEP addressed the village, explaining that it would hand over responsibility for the ex-combatants. Thereafter, the former rebels would each in turn confess to what they had done and what had led them to do it. Once they had explained their actions and shaken hands with the villagers, a second football match would be played, this time with the demobilised rebels against the villagers. On the third day, yet another match would be played, but this time between mixed teams of ex-rebels and people from the village.<sup>13</sup>

Followed up with a three-month training programme in trauma counselling, democracy and good governance, health education, HIV/AIDS awareness etc., the format of the initial three-day session was repeated to bring the reintegration process to an end.



PLAY 31

**Working in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Republic of Guinea, the organisation *Play 31* takes its name from Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.**

The YRTEP method was in 2002–04 applied in a total of 149 chiefdoms all over Sierra Leone. In this way, some 80,000 ex-rebels were successfully reintegrated into their home communities. Although there were instances where YRTEP failed<sup>14</sup>, a centrally placed coordinator has estimated that the success rate of the combined reconciliation and reintegration process was no less than 94%.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas World Vision International has closed the YRTEP programme, other organisations in Sierra Leone continue to use football as a unifying vehicle for sustainable peace-building. Notable among them is *Play 31*, which takes its name from Article 31 of the UN Convention on

the Rights of the Child, stipulating that all children have the right to play (see Box). In partnership with the local organisation *Fambul Tok* ('Forum of Conscience'), *Play 31* started its work in the eastern parts of the country and has since 2009 extended its area of operations across the borders with Liberia and Guinea (Conakry). Recently, it held a tri-nation tournament between communities from the three countries. Organising football matches and tournaments at the community level, *Play 31* aims at uniting former combatants, victims and witnesses of the war on the pitch, as well as in gatherings off the pitch, including communal dinners for the promotion of dialogue and healing.

**UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 31**

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.





**The Sierra Leone national amputee football team before the opening match of the first All-African Amputee Football Championship in Freetown, Sierra Leone, February 2007.**

or their victims. Playing in mixed teams, the amputee football movement is very much part of the wider rehabilitation and reintegration effort in the two countries. In Liberia, for example, amputee football started as an initiative of the National Commission for Disarmament, Reintegration and Rehabilitation.

Amputee football has its own rules and regulations. Although these may vary from region to region, at the international level they have been codified: The size of the pitch, as well as that of the goals, is about half in size to those used in able-bodied football. The size of the ball is the same. Each team consists of six outfield players and one goalkeeper. The outfield players may only have one foot and the goalkeeper only one hand. The game is played without prosthesis and with metal crutches. The crutches may not be used to advance the ball. If they are, it is considered the same as a hand pass. Residual limbs may also not be used to advance the ball.<sup>18</sup> Use of the crutch against another player in an offensive manner will result in a red card and the offending player being sent off. If the ball strikes the crutch of a defending player or the arm stump of a goal keeper in or around the goal area, a penalty is awarded. There is no offside rule, and the duration of play is two periods of 20 minutes each.

In February 2007, the first ever All-African Amputee Football Championship was held in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. Some 10,000 people watched the opening game between Sierra Leone and Ghana, with the hosts winning 3–0. The other national teams in the tournament were Angola, Liberia and Nigeria. In 2008, Liberia hosted

Since the start, it has reached more than 200 villages with thousands of participants. According to the organisation, “we have seen former combatants from rival warring groups play together on the same team. We have seen women walk proudly onto the field with the vocal backing of their entire communities. We have seen surprisingly harsh conflicts over alleged off-sides or fouls being resolved in a peaceful manner between people who just years ago succumbed to resolving conflicts with AK-47s and machetes”.<sup>16</sup>

Against a common background of particularly devastating conflicts, with tens of thousands of physically injured victims of war<sup>17</sup>, it is not surprising that Liberia and Sierra Leone should be at the forefront with regard to amputee football. *The Single Leg Amputee Sports Club Sierra Leone* (SLASC), a member of the FIFA ‘Football for Hope Movement’, has gained particular fame, but there are many other clubs, such as the *Liberia Amputee Sports Association* (LASA). In both countries, the amputee footballers - today often stars in their own right - are either former combatants



**President Paul Kagame of Rwanda coaching a government selection for a match against President Pierre Nkurunziza's team *Haleluya FC* in Bujumbura, Burundi, August 2008.**

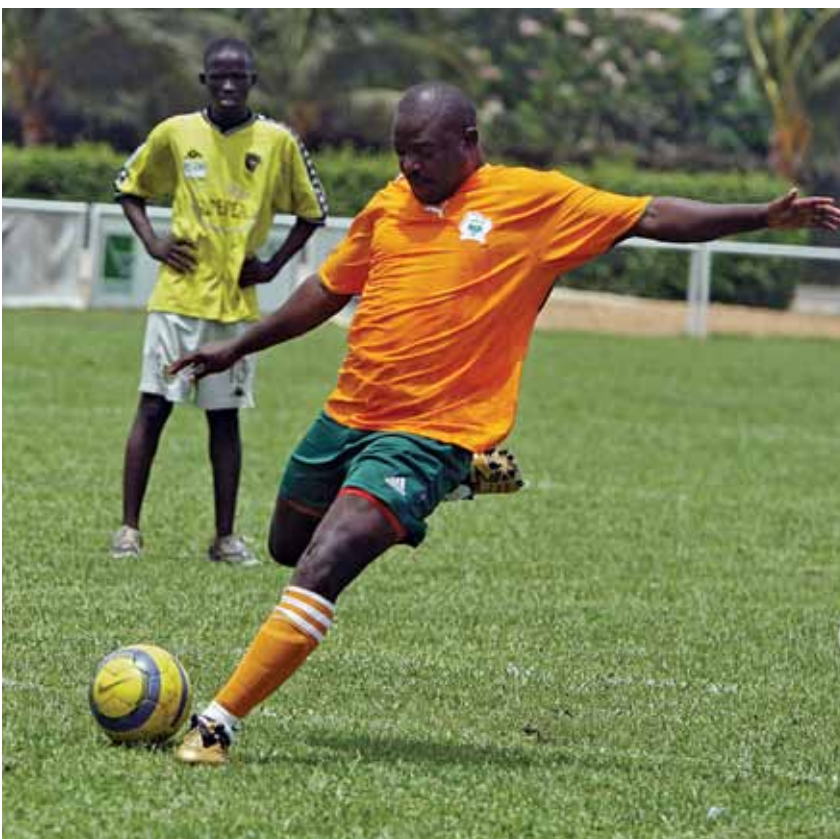
the tournament, which it eventually won.<sup>19</sup> Since 2006, there is also a biennial Amputee Football World Cup. The maiden tournament was held in Brazil. Argentina will host the 2010 tournament.

**Football as State Policy for Peace and Unity in Rwanda and Burundi**

With a shared history of deep divisions between the Tutsi and Hutu population groups, both Rwanda and Burundi experienced horrific mass killings in the 1990s. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda, during which close to one million people - primarily Tutsi - were slaughtered in a period of 100 days, counts among the greatest human tragedies in history. After several waves of massacres since independence, in Burundi, similarly, some 300,000 - mainly Hutu - were killed in 1993-94. Against this background, once peace had returned it was a gigantic challenge to reconcile perpetrators and victims, establish trust between them and on this basis consolidate unity.

In both countries, this challenge is being faced by heads of state - Paul Kagame in Rwanda and Pierre Nkurunziza in Burundi - who are passionate soccer enthusiasts and actively promote the game of football for national reconciliation, unity and development.<sup>20</sup> While some of the approaches used in Liberia and Sierra Leone have been applied also in Rwanda and Burundi, due to their personal involvement the use of football for peace and reconciliation has in the two Central

**Burundian President Nkurunziza during a training session at the ASEC Mimosas Football Academy in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, February 2007.**



GETTY IMAGES





**AIDS-affected female soccer players in Nairobi, Kenya, December 2006.**

African countries been elevated to official state policy.

Many examples could here be quoted. When President Kagame in August 2008 paid a state visit to Burundi, his host, President Nkurunziza, arranged a football match between the visiting Rwandan delegation, coached by Kagame, and Nkurunziza's own Halleluya FC, captained by himself.<sup>21</sup> Not surprisingly, the match ended in a 2–2 draw. Similarly, to celebrate the peace agreement with the armed opposition Palipehutu-FNL, in September 2008 the Burundi government in cooperation with the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUP) organised a match between the armed forces of Burundi and the former rebels in the capital Bujumbura. To underscore the significance of the

occasion, and to send a clear message of peace and unity to the people of Burundi, some of the national soldiers played for the rebels and some of the rebels for the army. Once again, it is not surprising that the game was tied at 1–1.

Beyond the protocollary aspects, in Rwanda the government's National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) regularly arranges football matches in its efforts to reintegrate perpetrators of genocide into the communities. The same is true for Burundi. Interviewed by ACCORD in February 2010, President Nkurunziza noted that "many people have been surprised to see that we over the past three years<sup>22</sup> have joined forces with the rural population to promote this game. We have already participated in more than 80 matches in different parts of the country, and we have noticed that this has produced favorable conditions for community mobilisation around other ideals, such as peace and development. [...] Football is one of the means which

has enabled Burundians to discover each other and bring to the fore the aspiration of peace and security which all of them have close at heart. In fact, after our sports events, exchanges focusing on peace and security are constantly organised, as well as meetings to plan activities to consolidate peace".<sup>23</sup>

It would, however, be wrong to conclude that in Rwanda and Burundi football as a vehicle for peace and development is the monopoly of the higher echelons of state. On the contrary, in both countries there are many NGOs active in this field. Among them, the *Association des Jeunes Sportifs de Kigali (Espérance)* stands out. Established in the Rwandan capital Kigali in 1996, *Espérance* forms part of the FIFA 'Football for Hope Movement' and will during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa be represented at the 'Football for Hope Festival' in Alexandra, Johannesburg. The organisation will together with the community of Kimisagara also manage the centre which





**Young African women often take an active part in peace initiatives involving football, as here in Sierra Leone.**

within the FIFA campaign '20 Centres for 2010' will be built in Kigali. In addition to peace, *Espérance* carries out education and HIV/AIDS awareness programmes.

*Espérance* works with young boys and girls, and has in pursuit of unity and reconciliation in deeply divided, male-dominated communities across Rwanda designed its own approach to the game of football. When football matches are arranged, each team consists of six players - three boys and three girls - and it is only the girls that can score goals. In addition, the matches are played without a referee. With no independent arbitration or guidance, the players themselves must peacefully arrive at solutions to the problems and situations that may arise during the match. This successful approach has been replicated by NGOs

in other countries, for example, by *Espérance's* sister organisation in Mali within the 'Football for Hope' network, the *Association Malienne pour la Promotion de la Jeune et de la Femme* (AMPJF).

In 2002, *Espérance* launched the programme 'Football for Peace in the Great Lakes Region'.<sup>24</sup> It includes the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where the organisation in 2009 took part in activities to promote conflict resolution and reconciliation among tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees in and around Goma, across the border from Rwanda.

#### **Football and Local Peace Initiatives in Kenya - Women Footballers in Rwanda, Mali, Cameroon and Kenya**

Elsewhere in Africa, local NGOs or individuals have identified football as an efficient peace-making vehicle. When Kenya, for example, descended into violence after the presidential elections in

late 2007, the Electoral Violence Response Initiative (EVRI) - set up by Partnership for Peace, an umbrella body hosted by PeaceNet Kenya - the *Africa Sports and Talents Empowerment Program* (A-STEP) used football in its work in Kimumu on the outskirts of Eldoret in the western parts of the country. Here, clashes between the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin population groups had seen some 20 people lose their lives and more than 1,000 driven from their homes into temporary camps. As in other cases presented here, football proved to be a peacemaker in the conflict. More than 600 young people participated in matches organised by A-STEP. After the games, discussions around reconciliation and peace were arranged, often in cooperation with local religious leaders.

Also in Kenya, with support from the *Horn of Africa Development Initiative* (HODI) a woman in the Marsabit area in the extreme north-east of the country, Fatuma Abdulrahman, is the architect behind a successful football-for-peace

initiative. Deeply troubled by violence between local communities, after the Turbi massacre in July 2005, she decided to organise boys and girls from the warring clans into mixed football teams and arrange matches between them. In this, she has been highly successful, both with regard to reconciliation and to athletic achievements. "I don't know why our fathers always fight", one boy said. "Aunt Fatuma has made us realise that we are not different and that we should live in peace. We are all brothers and sisters".<sup>25</sup> And in late 2008, the girls' under-17 team travelled all the way to the capital Nairobi to play against a team from the *Mathare Youth Sports Association*.

In 2010, HODI will organise the third Kenya-Ethiopia Cross Border Football for Peace Championships in Marsabit. The event brings together youth and young warriors from feuding clans in northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia "to shoot to score goals instead of shooting to kill".<sup>26</sup> It is divided into two parts. The first is a peace conference, where the participants will discuss conflicts in the area, as well as action plans for conflict resolution. The second is the football tournament itself.

Young African women often take an active part in peace initiatives involving football. This is notably the case in Rwanda, where, for example, the *Association of Kigali Women Footballers* (AKWOF) runs a programme called 'Women's Football for Unity in Rwanda'. To empower women and promote gender equality, AKWOF is also training 100 female football coaches in all the provinces of Rwanda. Although less focused on conflict resolution, in Mali the *Association Malienne pour la Promotion de la Jeune et de la Femme* (AMPJF) administers a similar training programme. Launched in 2000 and based in the impoverished, rural area of Baguinéda on the Niger river some 35 kilometres from the capital Bamako, AMPJF has had a notable success. Starting with only four women football teams, at the end of 2009 the number had grown to 42.<sup>27</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that the

FIFA 'Football for Hope Movement' has decided to build one of its '20 Centres for 2010' in Baguinéda and not in Bamako.

Like AMPJF, *Women in the Field* (ELENA) in Cameroon uses football to promote inter-cultural and inter-generational discussions in favour of rural women's social awareness. The organisation is based in the small town of Mamfe, in the north-western part of the country, 60 kilometres from the border with Nigeria. It was set up in 1991, but

**Every week, some 50 football teams clear garbage and drain ditches around their homes. In recognition of this environmental responsibility, in 1992 MYSA was invited to the UN Earth Summit on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where it was awarded the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Global 500 Award**

only started to use football as a vehicle for change in 2005. Two years later, it had established no less than 27 women's teams with over 400 active members.<sup>28</sup>

Even more spectacular is the development of *Moving the Goalposts* (MTG), an organisation active in the Kenyan coastal district of Kilifi, just north of Mombasa. Due to unwanted pregnancies and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, girls and young women in this disadvantaged area are often trapped in a cycle of poverty. To tackle these issues, in 2001 MTG started to use football to develop essential life skills and leadership training.<sup>29</sup> At the start, MTG organised some 120 girls. Today, there are over 3,000 girls playing, coaching, refereeing and administering football clubs, tournaments and leagues in the district.<sup>30</sup> Focusing on gender disparities, MTG has of late launched an economic empowerment programme. Together with MYSA (see below), *Moving the Goalposts* will during the World Cup in South Africa represent Kenya at the 'Football for Hope Festival' in Alexandra.

**Football against HIV/AIDS and for Education in Nigeria and Southern Africa**

All over Africa, football is being used to create awareness around HIV/AIDS and to further education. Information regarding the disease has been a regular feature in rehabilitation and reintegration processes, and HIV/AIDS campaigns are prominent when women organise around the game. In some cases, the spread of the pandemic has been one of the main motivating factors for the introduction and organisation of football.

In Nigeria, for example, the organisation *Search and Groom* was established in 2003 to promote HIV/AIDS awareness, civic studies and community services. Through street football tournaments and a league system,<sup>31</sup> it provides capacity building, rehabilitation and employment opportunities for young people in disadvantaged areas of Lagos. Attracting huge attention across the city, *Search and Groom* started its activities in the impoverished area of Ajegunle, which has produced some of the players for the Nigerian national team, the 'Super Eagles'.<sup>32</sup> Over the last years, *Search and Groom* has also been increasingly active outside Nigeria. In 2006, it participated over a period of five months in an exchange with the organisation *United Action for Children* (UAC) in Cameroon, aimed at improving HIV/AIDS awareness.<sup>33</sup> During the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, it will take part in the 'Football for Hope Festival'.

In Southern Africa, where the HIV/AIDS pandemic is particularly devastating, *Grassroot Soccer* (GRS) was in 2002 set up by professional football players in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Through the involvement of local role models, including soccer stars, the organisation implements an interactive programme focusing on football and HIV/AIDS prevention in schools, at community centres and on football fields. Boys and girls are empowered as peer educators, who in turn carry out educational programmes in their communities. Highly successful, within a year *Grassroot Soccer* extended



**Sven Tumba Education Fund: Young players at Nomfihlela Primary School, Kwa-Ximba, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, October 2008.**

its activities outside Zimbabwe and set up programmes in Botswana, South Africa and Zambia. It also works in Lesotho, Namibia and elsewhere on the African continent.<sup>34</sup> To coordinate its operations, in 2008 GRS established an office in Cape Town, South Africa, where - as earlier mentioned - it also manages the recently opened FIFA-sponsored multi-activity centre in Khayelitsha.

*Grassroot Soccer* has been implementing a South Africa programme since 2006. While it covers community-based activities at ten different sites across the country, the main area of operations is in and around Port Elizabeth, where it is one of the leading NGOs in the field of HIV/AIDS education and prevention.<sup>35</sup>

Another South African organisation which successfully uses football to create awareness about HIV/AIDS is *WhizzKids United* (WKU). Based in Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, the province with the highest HIV prevalence rate in the country (and one of the highest in the world), it “uses football as the language

of instruction” for its life-skills courses, workshops and campaigns.<sup>36</sup> In KwaZulu-Natal, WKU runs a health academy in Edendale outside Pietermaritzburg and a youth centre in Lamontville, Durban, but it also operates in the provinces of Western Cape and North West. Like *Grassroot Soccer*, *WhizzKids United* has extended its activities across the borders and is today present in Ghana and Uganda.<sup>37</sup> Together with its Southern African sister organisation and as a member of the FIFA ‘Football for Hope Movement’, it will during the 2010 World Cup feature in the ‘Football for Hope Festival’. At a ceremony in Barcelona, Spain, in March 2010 *WhizzKids United* won the Global Sports Forum Award in the category ‘Best Sport and Health Programme’.

Also active in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, but focusing on education at the primary school level, is *Sven Tumba Education Fund* (STEF). A private initiative by the legendary Swedish ice-hockey and football player Sven Tumba<sup>38</sup>, and with encouragement

from FIFA, STEF was established in 2006. Its focus area of operation is the Kwa-Ximba district, situated some 60 kilometres north of Durban in what during the late 1980s and early 1990s due to protracted, violent conflicts was known as ‘the killing fields of Natal’. Here, STEF is rolling out a programme which combines teacher training with school upgrading and sports, in particular football. One of its sub-programmes is ‘Soccer for Success’, which involves 4,000 children and 100 teachers in five schools.<sup>39</sup> With regard to infrastructure, the first upgraded school - Nomfihlela Primary School, catering for around 600 pupils - was re-opened in October 2008. Believing that education “acts as a mental vaccine against drugs, crime, violence and preventable diseases such as HIV/AIDS”<sup>40</sup>, STEF’s aim is to cover all of the 18 primary schools in the district. “This”, Sven Tumba says, “is the most important match in my life”.<sup>41</sup> In this effort, he enjoys the support of a series of international sporting legends.<sup>42</sup> In Sweden, Tumba’s former club, Djurgårdens IF, has agreed to ‘adopt’ one of the schools.

### **Football against Deprivation: The Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya**

This overview of football as a vehicle for peace and socio-economic development in Africa could not be concluded without a presentation of the *Mathare Youth Sport Association* (MYSA). For more than twenty years, it has been an outstanding exemplar of good social practice through football - not only in Africa, but in the world at large - focusing on youth, relying on the principle of self-help and developing innovative approaches to combine football with community work and to





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bridge ethnic divides. Using football as the entry point for programmes in a number of areas, such as environmental services, outreach to jailed street children, education, HIV/AIDS awareness, arts, leadership training and, in general, community development, MYSA, in fact, has successfully paved a way where many traditional aid development agencies have failed. It is against this background not surprising that the organisation, which is home-grown and managed by the young members themselves, has “attracted considerable interest among aid workers, researchers and politicians dealing with development”.<sup>43</sup> Owned by community youth and guided by a self-reliant bottom-up policy, with regard to both the game of football and social development MYSA, indeed, sets an example.

MYSA is based in the Mathare Valley on the outskirts of Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. With a population of between 500,000 and one million, Mathare is one of the biggest urban slums in Africa. While the dwellers are of various ethnic backgrounds, an estimated 70% of the households are one-parent families, almost invariably a woman with many children. Incomes average less than one US Dollar per day and poverty

is endemic. Educational facilities are limited. Thousands of children do not attend school, facing the prospect of unemployment and crime. In the absence of any sanitation services provided by the state, the area is heavily polluted. As a consequence, disease is common and easily spread.

From humble beginnings in 1987, the *Mathare Youth Sports Association* has grown to become the largest independent youth organisation in Africa.<sup>44</sup> By 2010, it had around 20,000 members, first and foremost in Mathare, but also in other slum areas of Nairobi. In addition, some 10,000 destitute children from neighboring countries have been organised by MYSA in the huge Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya’s extreme north-western Turkana region. In Mathare itself, the organisation has set up around 100 football leagues, with a total of some 1,000 teams of players ranging from 9 to 18 years of age. In 1992, the first girls’ teams were established, and today there are over 3,500 girls playing for more than 40 teams in the girls’ leagues.<sup>45</sup> The leagues are organised in 16 different zones, grouped into two regions. As MYSA’s approach to football goes beyond the game itself, the leagues operate independently of the Kenyan

**Manchester United and England football legend Sir Bobby Charlton with members of the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) in Nairobi, Kenya, April 2001.**

Football Federation. In the case of MYSA, league points are thus not only won on the pitch, but also earned through community work, such as garbage collection and other clean-up services.<sup>46</sup> In addition, MYSA is governed by its own fair play code, which states that “fair play is only for those who want to be winners on and off the field”.<sup>47</sup> If this principle is violated, sanctions are applied. If, for instance, a player verbally abuses a referee, it results in automatic suspension until the offending player himself, or herself, has refereed a total of ten games.

Environmental services, such as garbage collection, clean-up operations and waste management, have due to the conditions in the Mathare slum since the start in 1987 played a prominent part in MYSA’s community work. Every week, some 50 football teams clear garbage and drain ditches around their homes. In recognition of this environmental responsibility, in 1992 MYSA was invited

to the UN Earth Summit on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where it was awarded the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Global 500 Award. Also growing out of local conditions is the 'Jail Kid' programme. Many of the street children in Nairobi are taken into custody by the police. MYSA offers them help by providing food and establishing contacts with family



members in order to get them released. Since the start of the programme in 1997, tens of thousands of street children have been assisted in this way. Under the slogan 'Kicking Aids Out!', MYSA, finally, combines football with information with regard to HIV/AIDS. Hundreds of young boys and girls have been trained as peer counselors on AIDS.

What makes MYSA unique is that it is run from below by the youth itself through elected zonal Sport and Community Service Councils. They, in turn, elect the representatives on the organisation's Executive Council. Most of the several hundred elected officials, as well as volunteer coaches and referees, are under 16 years of age. It should be noted that the players in the senior team, i.e. Mathare United (see below), are involved as coaches for junior teams, referees or AIDS' counselors, and that they also take part in community work. While the organisation heavily relies on volunteers, as it rapidly

grew the need for salaried administrative staff became obvious. Today, some 60 people, all locals from the Mathare area, are employed to administer MYSA activities, including coordination of foreign funding and domestic sponsorships. The bulk of foreign financial support has come from the government of Norway and the faith-based Norwegian Strømme Foundation.

Hugely successful off the pitch, the *Mathare Youth Sports Association* has over the years also registered great results on the pitch. After drawing the attention of the great football legend Pelé, in 1992, for example, a MYSA team was invited to Brazil<sup>48</sup>, and since that year the organisation has regularly sent teams to the Gothia Cup in Gothenburg, Sweden, and the Norway Cup in Oslo, Norway, the world's two biggest youth football tournaments.<sup>49</sup> Here, both the Mathare boys and the girls have excelled in competition with the best youth teams on the planet.

Partly against this background, in 1994 a senior football team, Mathare United FC, was established by MYSA 'graduates'<sup>50</sup> as a professional outfit and member of the Kenyan Football Association.<sup>51</sup> In a country where professional football has suffered from ethnic divisions and animosities, Mathare United was explicitly set up "out of a principle of social reconciliation, rather than local or ethnic rivalry"<sup>52</sup>. In order to represent Mathare United, the players must have gone through the MYSA league system. Their varied backgrounds reflect the ethnic diversity of the Mathare slum. Although members of a professional team, as noted above all of them have to contribute towards community work, which normally amounts to as much as 40 hours per month.

The rise of Mathare United is a true 'rags-to-riches' story. Having worked their way up through the lower divisions, already in 1998 - four years after the team was established and while still playing in the Kenyan second league - they won the national cup, the Moi Golden Cup, a feat which was repeated in 2000. In 1999, they progressed to the Kenyan premier league, at the same time representing Kenya in the African Cup Winners Cup.

And at the end of 2008 - as the country descended into post-election violence, resulting in around 1,000 people killed and close to 250,000 internally displaced - Mathare United were crowned Kenyan football champions. Reporting for the BBC, David Goldblatt<sup>53</sup> stated, "Despite the poverty and the spectre of ethnic violence, Mathare United's triumph is testament to the amazing talents and energies of Kenya's poor".<sup>54</sup>

As earlier noted, *Mathare Youth Sports Association* is a member of the FIFA 'Football for Hope Movement' and will during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa take part in the Alexandra 'Football for Hope Festival'. Within the FIFA campaign '20 Centres for 2010', MYSA will, finally, administer the centre which will be constructed at its headquarters at Komarock in Mathare. 🌍

#### Endnotes

- 1 Roger Bennett: 'Soccer plays a critical role in Africa', ESPN.com, 30 January 2010.
- 2 FIFA/streetfootballworld: 'Football for Hope: Football's Commitment to Social Development', Zurich/Berlin, (no year).
- 3 Some of the African organisations here presented will participate in the 'Football for Hope Festival', namely *Espérance* (Rwanda), *Grassroot Soccer* (South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe), *Moving the Goalposts* and *Mathare Youth Sports Association* (Kenya), *Search and Groom* (Nigeria) and *WhizzKids* (South Africa). It can be noted that the representative from the Middle East region is the *Peace Team*, made up of boys and girls from both Israel and Palestine.
- 4 Fans of football will know that although the national teams of Liberia and Sierra Leone are not among the highest ranked in Africa, in the midst of civil war the two countries produced some of the best players on the continent. Among them was George Weah from Liberia. After a successful spell in France with Monaco and Paris Saint-Germain, Weah shot to stardom at AC Milan in Italy, where he twice was voted European Footballer of the Year. In 1995, Weah was awarded the accolade of World Footballer of the Year. In the case of Sierra Leone, Mohamed Kallon should be mentioned. At the tender age of 16, he joined Inter Milan (*Internazionale*) in Italy in 1995, later *inter alia* playing for Monaco in France and AEK Athens in Greece.
- 5 During the war, many young girls were kidnapped and used as sex slaves by the rebel fighters. Their rehabilitation

- and reintegration processes have been particularly difficult.
- 6 In 2003, three major battles took place in which no less than 40 % of the combatants were child soldiers. In Liberia, particularly, girl soldiers were known for their ferocity.
- 7 Janel B. Galvanek: 'The Reintegration Process for Child Soldiers in Liberia' in *Conflict Trends*, No 3, 2009, p. 20.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 9 Quoted in Jonathan Lea-Howarth: 'Sport and Conflict: Is Football an Appropriate Tool to Utilise in Conflict Resolution, Reconciliation or Reconstruction?', MA dissertation in Contemporary War and Peace Studies, University of Sussex, 2006, p. 41.
- 10 Galvanek op. cit., p. 22. Many families were reluctant to take back children whom they saw as having perpetuated the war. In other cases, the families could not be found.
- 11 Lea-Howarth op. cit., p. 39.
- 12 This particularly savage 'tactic of war' has been extensively applied by other rebel movements in Africa, such as UNITA in Angola, RENAMO in Mozambique and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. It is commonly used in the ongoing conflict in the eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
- 13 Lea-Howarth op. cit., pp. 35–36.
- 14 Fights broke out in nine chiefdoms. In one case, notorious former rebels were killed by the villagers once YRTEP had left.
- 15 Lea-Howarth op. cit., p. 37.
- 16 <[www.play31.org](http://www.play31.org)>
- 17 During the wars, thousands of people had their arms or legs hacked off.
- 18 This rule aims at keeping the game fair, since a player with a longer residual limb would have an advantage over those with shorter residuals.
- 19 It is said that the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, is the number one fan of the national Liberian amputee selection.
- 20 See the interviews with Roger Palmgren and President Nkurunziza in this magazine.
- 21 A born-again Christian, President Nkurunziza is an active football player and has established Halleluya FC in Burundi. It should not be confused with Hallelujah FC in the national league of South Korea.
- 22 Nkurunziza became President in August 2005. National elections will be held in Burundi in mid-2010.
- 23 See the interview with President Nkurunziza.
- 24 Also known as 'Football *Amahoro*', after the Kinyarwanda word for 'peace'.
- 25 Quoted in Kibiwott Koross: 'Football for Peace' in *Young Nation/Sunday Nation*, Nairobi, 1 February 2009, p.3.
- 26 <[www.sportanddev.org](http://www.sportanddev.org)>
- 27 <[www.malikounda.com](http://www.malikounda.com)>
- 28 <[www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)>
- 29 MTG was founded by Sarah Forde, a former reporter and soccer coach from England. She is the author of the book 'Playing by Their Rules: Coastal Teenage Girls in Kenya on Life, Love and Football', Moving the Goalposts, Kilifi, 2009.
- 30 <[www.mtgk.org](http://www.mtgk.org)>
- 31 Street children's football is increasingly organised and promoted around the world. In March 2010, the Street Children Football World Championship was held in Durban, South Africa, with participating teams from Brazil, India, Nicaragua, Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania, United Kingdom and Ukraine.
- 32 Among them, Jonathan Akpoborie and Samson Siasia. In the 1990s, Akpoborie played professional football in Germany and Siasia in France.
- 33 Both *Search and Groom* and *United Action for Children* form part of FIFA's 'Football for Hope Movement'.
- 34 For example, in Ethiopia and Liberia.
- 35 *Grassroot Soccer* will participate in the FIFA 'Football for Hope Festival' in Alexandra, Johannesburg, with a combined delegation from South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- 36 <[www.whizzkidsunited.org](http://www.whizzkidsunited.org)>
- 37 In Ghana, WKU is active in Northern Province, where it operates in partnership with *Planned Parenthood Ghana*. In Uganda, the base is in Bombo, north of the capital Kampala. Here, the local football team has been renamed 'Bombo WhizzKids United'. Its players wear messages of HIV prevention on their shirts.
- 38 Active in the 1950s and 1960s, Sven Tumba represented Sweden in both ice-hockey and football. STEF is financially supported by the Swedish pharmaceutical company Astra Zeneca.
- 39 <[www.sportforeducation.org](http://www.sportforeducation.org)>
- 40 <[www.sventumba.se](http://www.sventumba.se)>
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 Among them, the golf players Jack Nicklaus (USA), Greg Norman (Australia), Arnold Palmer (USA) and Gary Player (South Africa); the tennis players Björn Borg (Sweden) and Chris Everts (USA); the sprinters John Carlos (USA) and Tommie Smith (USA); and the ice-hockey players Peter Forsberg (Sweden), Mario Lemieux (Canada) and Mats Sundin (Sweden).
- 43 Hans Hognestad and Arvid Tollisen: 'Playing against Deprivation: Football and Development in Nairobi, Kenya' in Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (eds): 'Football in Africa: Conflict, Conciliation and Community', Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2004, p. 211.
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 <[www.mysakenya.org](http://www.mysakenya.org)>
- 46 A combination of achievements on the football field and with regard to community work also serves as criteria for MYSAs's scholarship programme.
- 47 Hognestad and Tollisen op. cit., p. 226, n. 24. On the pitch, the fair play code *inter alia* demands 'no fouls' and 'no appeals'.
- 48 Pelé personally paid for MYSAs's expenses during their stay in the country.
- 49 Both the Gothia Cup and the Norway Cup annually hosts some 1,500 youth teams from between 40 and 60 countries.
- 50 The most senior MYSAs league is the under-18 league. At the age of 18, a MYSAs member becomes a 'graduate' and can try to get a contract with Mathare United FC or any other team.
- 51 Until 2000, the Norwegian company Norsk Hydro was the main sponsor, subsequently followed by the Kenyan steel and barbed wire producer KD Wire.
- 52 Hognestad and Tollisen op.cit., p. 221.
- 53 Goldblatt is the author of the book 'The Ball is Round: The Global History of Soccer', Riverhead Books, New York, 2008.
- 54 <[www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)>





# Community Soccer Projects Around Africa

Youth in Action Sierra Leone (YASAL)

<<http://bit.ly/8YmYBj>>

Single Leg Amputee Sports Club  
Sierra Leone (SLASC)

Association Malienne pour la Promotion de la Jeune et de la Femme (AMPJF)

<<http://ampjf.org>>

Fambul Tok  
<[www.fambultok.org](http://www.fambultok.org)>

Search and Groom  
<[www.searchandgroom.org](http://www.searchandgroom.org)>

Horn of Africa Development Initiative (HODI)  
<<http://bit.ly/cB3mf7>>

Play 31  
<<http://playa.org>>

Moving the Goalposts (MTG)  
<[www.mtgk.org](http://www.mtgk.org)>

Christian Home in Liberating Destitute (CHILD)  
<<http://bit.ly/cTIXzx>>

Association des Jeunes Sportifs de Kigali (Espérance)  
<<http://bit.ly/9gJOVi>>

Liberia Amputee Sports Association (LASA)  
<<http://bit.ly/9Ibjfu>>

Africa Sports and Talents Empowerment Program (A-STEP)  
<<http://africa-step.org/>>

Don Bosco Youth Project (DBYP)

Women in the Field (ELENA)  
<<http://bit.ly/9iLbKN>>

Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA)  
<[www.mysakenya.org](http://www.mysakenya.org)>

United Action for Children (UAC)  
<[www.unitedactionforchildren.org](http://www.unitedactionforchildren.org)>

Association of Kigali Women Footballers (AKWOF)  
<<http://bit.ly/dAvcQj>>

Grassroots Soccer  
<[www.grassrootsoccer.org](http://www.grassrootsoccer.org)>

WhizzKids United (WKU)  
<[www.whizzkidsunited.org](http://www.whizzkidsunited.org)>

Sven Tumba Education Fund (STEF)  
<[www.sportforeducation.org](http://www.sportforeducation.org)>

## Further reading

There is an expanding literature on football in Africa. The following titles have been useful for the production of this magazine:

Peter Alegi: *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville, 2004

Peter Alegi: *African Soccerescapes: How a Continent Changed the World's Game*, Hurst & Company, London, 2010

Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti: *Football in Africa: Conflict, Conciliation and Community*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2004

Franklin Foer: *How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization*, Harper Collins, New York, 2004

David Goldblatt: *The Ball Is Round: A Global History of Soccer*, Riverhead Books, New York, 2008

Ian Hawkey: *Feet of the Chameleon: The Story of African Football*, Wild Dog Press, Lyndhurst, 2009

Chuck Korr and Marvin Close: *More Than Just a Game: Soccer v Apartheid*, Collins, London, 2008

Joe Latakomo: *Mzansi Magic: Struggle, Betrayal and Glory - The Story of South African Soccer*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2010

# THE TEAM

## A Soap Opera on Football for Reconciliation and Peace in Africa

TOR SELLSTRÖM,  
SENIOR ADVISOR TO ACCORD

Mainly associated with North and West Africa, at the international, competitive level the game of football is less prominent in East Africa. With regard to sports, Kenya and Ethiopia, for example, are widely known as global powers in athletics, regularly harvesting gold medals in middle and long-distance running at the World Championships and at the Olympic Games. On the FIFA rankings, however, the two East African countries are far from the top. Out of 202 countries in the world, in March 2010 Kenya was ranked number 114 and Ethiopia at 123, with both also appearing on the lower part of the African list.<sup>1</sup> Neither Kenya nor Ethiopia has ever qualified for the FIFA World Cup. This said, in both countries football enjoys wide popular support and - as described in the texts above - notably in Kenya the game is effectively used at the local level as a vehicle for inter-ethnic reconciliation, community development and the promotion of gender equality.

In Kenya, the extraordinary story of the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) has been mentioned elsewhere in this magazine. Produced with foreign funding through *Search for Common Ground* (SFCG), a non-profit conflict transformation organisation with headquarters in Washington, USA<sup>2</sup>, the success and impact of an initiative to create soap operas for Kenyan national television and radio on football, peace and reconciliation should also

be noted, not least as it has been replicated in other African countries and is rapidly spreading over the continent.

Initiated in response to the outbreak of post-electoral violence in late 2007, with initial funding from the UK Department for International Development (DfID)<sup>3</sup>, the 'edutainment' production *The Team* premiered on national television (Citizen-TV) and radio (Jambo) in Kenya in May 2009. From the start, the soap opera attracted scores of viewers and listeners, and was soon ranked as number seven on the list of the nation's most popular TV programmes.<sup>4</sup> During the first season, the combined television and radio audience was each week estimated at 3.5 million people.<sup>5</sup> Developed, written and directed by Kenyans, the 26-part series tells the stories of seven young footballers from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds who must overcome mutual distrust to put their team, Imani FC<sup>6</sup>, on a winning path. Each episode highlights issues that many Kenyans regularly confront, such as poverty, ethnic prejudice and corruption.

Designed to demonstrate that conflicts may be inevitable, but that everyone can respond to them in a non-violent way, *The Team* is more than a regular soap opera. From the beginning, the broadcasts on television and radio were accompanied by interactive social media such as a website and a Facebook group page, but, more

importantly, mobile cinema screenings in areas where access to television is limited or non-existent. As a rule, such screenings have been followed by moderated discussions involving the local communities. In addition, the outreach activities have been targeted on areas which were particularly hard hit by ethnic clashes after the 2007 elections, including Kisumu, Naivasha, Eldoret and Mombasa. As a result, young Kenyans have taken responsibility for some of the violence, formed local peace groups and begun a bottom-up process of reconciliation. In Naivasha, the screening of *The Team* has encouraged the formation of an inter-ethnic youth group involved in income generation in favour of people displaced by the violence.

The first season of the Kenyan production of *The Team* lasted from May until August 2009, with a repeat from the end of the year until early 2010. Season two will begin broadcasting in April 2010. Inspired by the positive impact in Kenya, SFCG has in the meantime embarked on similar productions in Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Morocco, with plans to also include Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and other African countries.<sup>7</sup> As in the case of Kenya, each national production of *The Team* - or *L'Equipe* as it is called in the French-speaking countries - follows the members of a football team who must rise above their differences in order to work together and be successful



**A scene from the production of *The Team Kenya* in 2008.**

on the field. All of the series are created and produced locally, through a partnership between Common Ground Productions and a local company. Actors, scriptwriters and others participating in the making of the series are drawn from communities who have firsthand experiences from violent conflicts.

In Ivory Coast, a country which from 2002 until 2007 was divided between a rebel-held North and a government-controlled South and where the civil war has resulted in thousands of lives lost and three quarters of a million people displaced, *L'Equipe* focuses on ethnic, religious and socio-economic divisions, promoting youth empowerment for peace. Here, the production started in 2008 and has, as in Kenya, been broadcast on both national television and radio. During the first season, the televised production had an estimated weekly audience of 3.4 million people. In 2009, it was awarded first prize for the best African television series at the African Film Festival in Verona, Italy.<sup>8</sup>

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, *L'Equipe RDC* highlights gender issues through the adventures of a women's football team which has to overcome challenges in the form of HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, rape and corruption. Shot in the suburbs of the capital Kinshasa, the storylines *inter alia* tackle the topics of tribalism and electoral manipulation, as well as reconciliation after years of war and conflict. In Ethiopia, *The Team* - known locally as *Tena Budin* - was produced as a 50-episode radio drama, broadcast nationwide in 2009. It discusses in particular community problems and collaborative ways to find non-violent solutions to conflict. In Morocco, finally, the gulf between rich and poor is the focal point. The objective is to provide young people from marginalized communities with positive messages that encourage active civic participation, tolerance and mutual understanding. Currently showing on Moroccan television, it is estimated that more than 20% of the country's 32 million inhabitants regularly follow *The Team*, which is produced in the local Arabic dialect.<sup>9</sup>

**Endnotes**

- 1 Out of 52 African countries ranked by FIFA, in March 2010 Kenya was placed as number 30 and Ethiopia as 34.
- 2 Founded in 1982, *Search for Common Ground* operates in 18 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Guided by the principle to 'understand differences and act on commonalities', through its media arm - Common Ground Productions - the organisation is particularly dedicated to harnessing the power of the media for reconciliation and peace, ranking among the biggest producers of radio soap operas in the world. In Sierra Leone, for example, it is estimated that 90 % of the population with access to a radio listens to SFCG-produced programmes. In Burundi, it set up the country's first independent radio station - Studio Ijambo - in 1995.
- 3 Subsequently, USAID, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the US-based Skoll Foundation have joined DfID in funding the production and the outreach activities of *The Team*.
- 4 <[www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com)>
- 5 <[www.sfcg.org](http://www.sfcg.org)>
- 6 '*Imani*' is kiSwahili for 'faith'.
- 7 Outside Africa, *The Team* has been produced in Palestine.
- 8 <[www.sfcg.org](http://www.sfcg.org)>
- 9 *Ibid.*



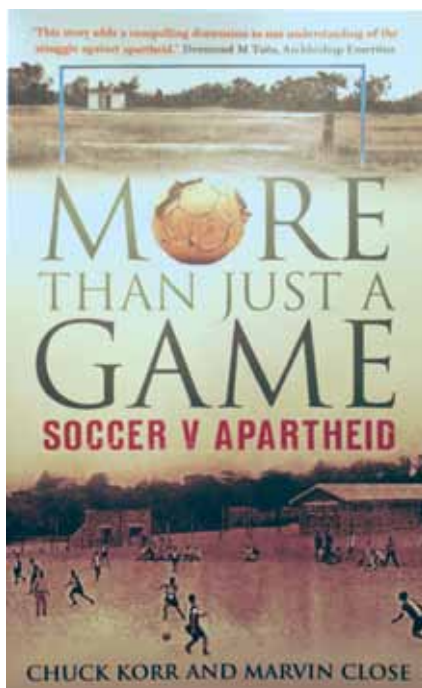
# More Than Just a Game

## The Makana Football Association

JOHN DANIEL

‘More than just a game’ is an oft-used cliché to describe the socio-political impact of sports. It is particularly apt in regard to some of the great inter-club (for example, Glasgow Rangers v Celtic, or Real Madrid v Barcelona in football) and international (Russia v Canada in ice-hockey) sporting rivalries. Annually, tens of thousands of football fans trek across Europe in support of their teams as they battle it out for coveted pan-European soccer trophies, while growing numbers of English cricket supporters - the so-called ‘Barmy Army’ - flee the European winter to follow their team around the ‘old Empire’ of India, Sri Lanka, South Africa, the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand.

Elsewhere in this magazine, Sellström has presented soccer’s impact in Africa as an instrument for peace-making, reconciliation and the forging of national identities. In each of the examples given - be they from Sierra Leone, Rwanda or colonial Algeria - soccer was a common denominator, the positive force which contributed decisively to the ending of the deadly spirals of hate and killing. Not in and of itself, of course. It was rather soccer’s potential which skilful and visionary leaders recognized and tapped into in order to effect profound changes. - In the wrong hands, chauvinistic football rivalries can have an opposite effect. No one should forget the 1969 soccer war between El Salvador and Honduras, which followed a round of World Cup qualifying



games. It lasted only for 100 hours, but cost 2,000 people their lives.<sup>1</sup>

To the accounts of soccer as a positive and liberating force in Africa, we should add an inspiring story from the apartheid era in South Africa. It is the extraordinary tale of how thousands of political prisoners on Robben Island formed the Makana Football Association (MFA) and used soccer not only to reclaim their humanity, but also to undermine apartheid. The story premiered as a docudrama in Cape Town in November 2007, coinciding with the draw for the 2010 World Cup qualifying rounds. The movie drew on eleven years of meticulous research by the American historian Chuck Knorr. Assisted by the scriptwriter Marvin Close, his account *More Than Just a Game: Soccer v Apartheid* is perhaps the

most important history to emerge from post-apartheid South Africa.<sup>2</sup> It is certainly the most heart-warming and inspiring. It is also a rare commodity, a wholly original work. It tells a story that, apart from the prisoners and their warders, nobody knew. Neither could anybody beyond the Island ever imagine what took place.

The 1960s was the grimmest of decades in the struggle against apartheid, where nothing seemed to be working for the liberation movements. Outlawed in 1960 and forced underground, the anti-apartheid leaders and thousands of their followers were either banned, exiled or gaoled on Robben Island, a prison described by Knorr and Close as “horror incarnate”.<sup>3</sup> On the Island, they were presided over by arrogant white supremacists to whom the impulse to hurt and humiliate was instinctive. In these harsh circumstances and dire times, the political prisoners demanded to be allowed to play soccer. Every week for three years, one prisoner after another made this an official request, and every week it was refused with the petitioner often being punished. But then, in 1967, the authorities relented. They hoped and believed that the agreement would be the end of a drawn out, tiresome matter and that after a few weeks the prisoners’ desire to play the game would dissipate. They could not have been more wrong. In many ways, it was at this moment that the South African authorities began to lose

their monopoly control over the infamous prison outside Cape Town.

Conceived among the political prisoners in the collective cells, the MFA never included Nelson Mandela and his colleagues in the ANC leadership. They were all locked up in isolation cells. In the meantime, however, the MFA spawned a league of many different teams, some formed along party or ideological lines and others which recruited players irrespective of their affiliations or political leanings. Run according to FIFA rules, the MFA presided over a network of working groups, including referees' and disciplinary committees. It became, in the words of one of its active members, Tokyo Sexwale, "a vehicle that united all of us. It ran across all political barriers".<sup>4</sup> While doing hard labour in the quarries, the prisoners may have been powerless automatons. In their cells, however, they reclaimed a degree of control over their lives. There, they debated for hours, planning upcoming fixtures and keeping detailed records of everything they did and decided on. Preserving the records became the task of prisoners dubbed 'the archivists'. And preserve them they did.

On a visit in August 1993 - 24 years after the formation of the MFA - to the University of the Western Cape's historical archives known as the Mayibuye Centre, its then Director André Odendaal, himself a distinguished sports historian, directed Knorr to no less than seventy boxes simply labeled 'Robben Island - Sports'. Knorr later stated: "At that time I was totally unaware that there had been any sport on Robben Island. If anyone had mentioned the two words together, I would have said that it was an oxymoron".<sup>5</sup>

Two important points should be made about the MFA's impact on political life on the Island and, at a deeper level, on the transition process underway in South Africa in the late apartheid era. The first pertains to the MFA's capacity to transcend the great political divide in the post-1960 liberation movement. With



the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) today reduced to a political smidgen, it may be hard to understand the bitterness of the schism which emerged in 1959 with the breakaway of the so called 'Africanists' from the African National Congress (ANC). It was deep to the point of paralysis when it came to the possibilities of any united front operations. Yet, on the Island the PAC and the ANC worked and talked together, sometimes playing on the same team. Two 'young Turks' of the time, Dikgang Moseneke of the PAC and the ANC's Indres Naidoo<sup>6</sup>, worked hand in glove in the MFA. In the process, they did much to defuse the prevailing hostility between the two parties, laying a basis for a future where they could cooperate.

The second relates to the remarkable chemistry which developed over time

**Samuel Eto'o of Cameroon on Robben Island, South Africa, for a ceremony celebrating the Makana Football Association, July 2007.**

between the prisoners and some of their gaolers. The exceptional friendship between Nelson Mandela and his gaoler, James Gregory, has been documented.<sup>7</sup> Another of Mandela's warders, Christo Brand, basically changed sides, after apartheid taking a job at the Robben Island Museum. Something similar took place with warders identifying with different MFA teams and in a myriad of ways becoming part of the football scene. In the process, each side became demystified in



**FIFA President Sepp Blatter, South African Minister Tokyo Sexwale and former members of the Makana Football Association on Robben Island, South Africa, December 2009.**

the eyes of the 'other'. If not humanity, a sense of community emerged between people on the two sides of the great apartheid divide. A small blow, it should be said, to those who persisted with notions of the *herrenvolk*.

In 2007, FIFA awarded the Makana Football Association associate member status in recognition of its role in keeping alive the hope that one day South Africa would change and that the Robben Island generation would rule. In May 1994, that hope, once so distant, became a glorious reality. 🌍

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**Endnotes**

- 1 On this conflict, see Ryszard Kapuscinski's 'The Soccer War', Vintage Books, New York, 1991.
- 2 Chuck Korr and Marvin Close: 'More Than Just a Game: Soccer v Apartheid', Collins, London, 2008.
- 3 Ibid, p. 259.
- 4 Tokyo Sexwale: 'Football Kept Us Alive', <[www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/newsid](http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/newsid)>. Accessed 27 March 2010. Sexwale is since 2009 Minister of Housing and Human Settlements in the Cabinet of President Zuma. He is also a former Premier of the Gauteng Province.
- 5 Korr and Close, op. cit., p. 259.
- 6 Moseneke is today Deputy Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, i.e. the highest court in South Africa. Naidoo became an ANC Member of Parliament in 1994. With Albie Sachs, he is the author of the account 'Island in Chains: Ten Years on Robben Island' (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1982).
- 7 See James Gregory: 'Goodbye Bafana: Nelson Mandela, My Prisoner, My Friend', Headline Books, London, 1995.

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ACCORD is a non-governmental, non-aligned conflict resolution institution based in Durban, South Africa. The institution is constituted as an educational trust.

Views expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the individual authors and not of ACCORD.

*Conflict Trends* is a quarterly publication. Back issues can be downloaded from the ACCORD website at <[www.accord.org.za](http://www.accord.org.za)>

**ISSN 1561-9818**

**Printing**

Colour Planet, Durban, South Africa





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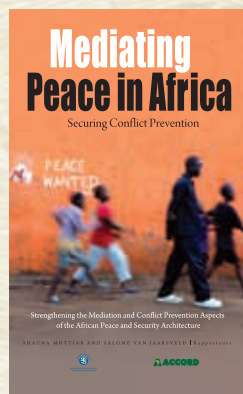
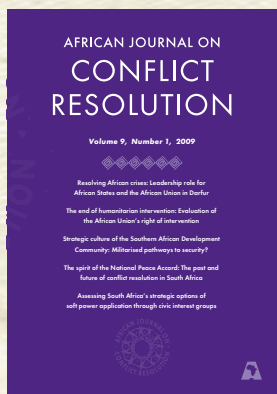
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**Make Peace  
your Goal!**



**Working to Make Peace Happen**