



When it comes to health, adolescents in developing countries are being left behind.



We know how to reach them.

GRASSROOTSOCCER
EDUCATE. INSPIRE. MOBILIZE.



OUR MISSION

Grassroot Soccer (GRS) is an adolescent health organization that leverages the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilize youth in developing countries to overcome their greatest health challenges, live healthier, more productive lives, and be agents for change in their communities.

Grassroot Soccer connects young people with the mentors, information, and health services they need to thrive, and empowers adolescents to make educated choices about pressing health challenges such as HIV/AIDS, sexual health, gender-based violence, and malaria. Grassroot Soccer's evidence-based programs, led by trained local mentors, incorporate soccer into dynamic lessons about health and wellness that engage young people and break down cultural barriers. With proven results and a constant focus on research and innovation, GRS has reached over 1.9 million young people in nearly 50 countries with adolescent-friendly health education.



THE CHALLENGE

There are more adolescents in the world today (1.8 billion) than at any other time in history, but they are being left behind in the fight against disease and other critical health challenges. Unlike childhood mortality which has improved 80% in the past 50 years, adolescent mortality hasn't budged. Preventable diseases like HIV, and complications from pregnancies continue to be the leading causes of death among adolescents. There is a tremendous opportunity to improve the world's health by promoting healthy practices during adolescence, and taking steps to better protect young people from health risks.

Adolescence is a simultaneously exciting and tricky time; a time when many young people that lack appropriate education and support begin engaging in risky activities, including unprotected sex, alcohol and drug use, and other anti-social behaviors. At Grassroot Soccer we reach adolescents during this critical time through a combination of adolescent-friendly and proven curricula, the universal appeal of soccer, and local mentors and role models.



I've changed a lot from my time with Grassroot Soccer... now I know where I'm from, where I'm headed, and where I want to be in the future."

- Yamkela, Grassroot Soccer participant



OUR MODEL



EDUCATE

Adolescents Need Knowledge: Many young people lack a basic understanding of the facts around issues such as HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health. For example less than 30% of youth in developing countries have basic knowledge around HIV/AIDS.

Our Approach: Educate. The Grassroot Soccer SKILLZ curricula have been developed based on years of evaluation, research, and external evidence. Our curricula use soccer-based activities and lively discussions to engage learners, and they have been adapted to be culturally appropriate in different locations.

The Outcome: Grassroot Soccer graduates demonstrate significant improvements in knowledge of risky behaviors and awareness of local resources for support.

Graduates are **8 times less likely** to have had more than one sexual partner

Graduates are **5 times less likely** than their peers to begin having sex between the ages of 12 and 15



50% increase in knowledge of critical sexual health and reproductive services

32% improvement in knowledge of malaria treatment adherence

OUR MODEL



INSPIRE

Adolescents Need Inspiration: For those youth growing up in challenging circumstances where poverty, violence, and unemployment are ubiquitous, it can be difficult to envision a better future. Role models and mentors are important for inspiring hope and showing a young person what is possible.

Our Approach: Inspire. Grassroot Soccer trains young community leaders, including local professional soccer players and youth leaders, to be health educators and coaches. Our Coaches connect personally with participants and become trusted mentors. Concurrently, Grassroot Soccer provides Coaches with ongoing leadership and communication skills development

The Outcome: 100% of Grassroot Soccer participants have access to a trained, supportive, accessible role model.

Graduates are **less likely** to believe that violence in relationships is acceptable

100% reduction in positive drug testing during a 10-week young men's soccer league



Female participants report a higher sense of self-efficacy, confidence, and knowledge about the risk factors for sexual and gender-based violence and HIV

82% of GRS Coaches in South Africa go on to further employment, education, or training

OUR MODEL



MOBILIZE

Adolescents Need Access to Health Services: While adolescence is a universal experience, the quality and availability of adolescent-friendly health services is not. In addition, adolescents often lack the tools and life skills to negotiate for their own well-being in the face of structural societal barriers.

Our Approach: Mobilize. Grassroot Soccer provides referrals to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and social support for participants who access these services. We organize soccer tournaments with voluntary counseling and testing, providing opportunities to get tested for HIV and/or malaria in a safe, inclusive environment. In addition we provide young people with the life skills they need to become agents of change in their communities, so they can break down harmful social norms that negatively impact their health.

The Outcome: Our graduates are much more likely to know their status, much more likely to talk to friends and family about health issues, much more likely to stay on treatment, and more likely to access biomedical prevention. They are set up for a lifetime of accessing health services.

Graduates are **4 times more likely**
to test for HIV and know their status

Graduates are
2.5 times more likely
to undergo voluntary medical
male circumcision



Male participants
have shown improved
gender equitable attitudes

Graduates are **2.5 times more likely**
to stay on treatment if they do test positive for HIV



WHY SOCCER?

Soccer is the world's most played sport and the world's most watched sport. Travel to almost anywhere in the world, and you will see people, often youth, kicking a ball. Revered Zambian soccer commentator Dennis Liwewe once said "Football is religion here." By using a soccer-based structure and curriculum, our Coaches build trust, engage youth in activity-based learning, and create safe spaces where young people feel comfortable asking questions, sharing opinions, and supporting their teammates. Importantly, soccer is fun, and our programs create an environment where learning is not a spectator sport. We use the power of soccer to build confidence and resilience in young people so that they can take control of their lives and health, on the field and off.





“It’s our passion: to change the lives of young people around us so that they, too, can continue to make positive change for those around them.”

- Sphokazi, Grassroot Soccer Coach



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