In 2017, we celebrated a milestone: Grassroot Soccer has now reached over 2 million young people in nearly 50 countries with life-saving health programmes. This achievement has only been possible with the support of donors, advisors, and research partners like you.

The last 15 years have seen profound gains in global public health, including in the response to HIV and AIDS. But adolescents continue to be left behind. While mortality for children and adults has declined over the last decade, it hasn’t improved enough for adolescents. Young people face the most acute combination of preventable diseases and disorders of any age group in the world — yet many organizations lack the tools to reach them.

This is where Grassroot Soccer comes in. We are uniquely positioned to address the adolescent health gap, combining the appeal of soccer with a rigorous, evidence-based approach.

In 2017, we reached more youth than ever — over 200,000 — achieving 45% growth between 2016 and 2017. We are proud to have partnered with research institutions and non-profits from 6 different countries, presented at 10 international public health conferences, and been involved with 16 studies since 2016.

This research has deepened our understanding of what works and strengthened our linkages to health service providers. Our involvement in research keeps the perspectives and needs of participants at the forefront, and ensures that intentional, adolescent-centered design is the core of our approach.

We’re humbled that Grassroot Soccer has played a part in the lives of so many young people, and that we can work alongside leading researchers and non-profits contributing to the global evidence base on adolescent health.

Thomas S. Clark, MD, Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Chelsea Coakley, Director of Research, Curriculum & Innovation
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.

CHALLENGE

"The world is about to undergo an unprecedented transformation: the largest generation of young people in human history is coming of age." - Melinda Gates, May 2017

There are more adolescents in the world than ever before (1.8 billion), and they face unprecedented social, economic, and health challenges. Young people in sub-Saharan Africa face the most acute combination of health issues of any population in the world: HIV, unwanted pregnancy, and gender-based violence (among other issues) are undermining a population that is projected to double by 2050. While childhood mortality has improved 80% in the past 50 years, adolescent mortality hasn’t budged. The evidence is clear — adolescents are being left behind.

Yet the future depends on young people having the tools to lead healthy and productive lives. The Lancet Commission has estimated that every dollar invested in adolescent health yields a 10x economic return.

Now is the time to invest in what works.

OPPORTUNITY

At Grassroot Soccer we reach adolescents through the universal appeal of soccer, engaging adolescents through proven soccer-based curricula, caring mentor coaches, and a culture that encourages safe spaces for vital conversation. GRS is unique among adolescent health organizations. We have a deep understanding of soccer (the "hook") and our access to the world of soccer is enviable and unusual. At the same time, research, evidence, and information are at the core of what we do. GRS programs are infused with soccer activities and metaphors — which makes them fun and engaging — but are also rigorously evaluated and evidence-based. We know that data is critical to improving programmes and getting as much impact with every dollar as possible.

OUR IMPACT

OUR MODEL

ASSETS

INCREASED HEALTH KNOWLEDGE AND THE CONFIDENCE TO USE IT

ACCESS

INCREASED UPTAKE OF HIGH-QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES

ADHERENCE

ADHERENCE TO MEDICAL TREATMENT, THERAPY, AND HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS

CURRICULUM

SKILLZ SOCCER-BASED HEALTH CURRICULUM

COACHES

CARING ADULTS AND MENTORS

CULTURE

VITAL CONVERSATIONS, SAFE SPACES, INSPIRATION, AND FUN
Grassroot Soccer conducts research as systematic investigation into programme delivery impact. Our research goals are clear: to gain a deeper understanding of the complex issues we seek to address, inform our organisational development, establish credibility for our efforts, and contribute more broadly to existing evidence of effective adolescent health interventions. This report demonstrates the ways in which Grassroot Soccer is standing beside youth on HIV, AIDS, malaria prevention, positive youth development, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence.

In collaboration with a variety of research institutions and funders, Grassroot Soccer has participated in 40 research studies since 2005, including three randomised controlled trials (RCTs), in 24 countries and has utilised a variety of research methods, including cluster-randomised trials, qualitative studies, and mixed methods evaluations.

This is a summary of select findings presented in our 2016 Research Report, and a review of what we have learned in the last two years:

### 2004:
1st independent evaluation by Stanford University.

Key findings:
Significant improvement in knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of social support related to HIV/AIDS. After five months, GRS adolescent participants report that they continue to use knowledge learned.

### 2006:
1st peer-reviewed publication published in AIDS and Behaviour.

Key finding:
Diffusion of information through GRS graduates educating their peers.

### 2011:
In Zambia, the rate of HIV Testing Services (HTS) uptake for GRS adolescent participants reaches over 4x the national average.

### 2012:
- Increased uptake of HIV Testing Services (HTS) amongst adolescent girls in GRS programmes.
- The Sexual Violence in Schools in South Africa baseline study identified high levels of intimate partner violence among adolescents. GRS programming strengthens approach to violence prevention and pilots girls-focused programming.

### 2015 - 2016:
- Significant increase in girls’ self-efficacy and negotiation skills, and a decrease in girls’ acceptance of violence, after going through GRS programmes.
- Significant increase in girls’ self-efficacy and negotiation skills, and a decrease in girls’ acceptance of violence, after going through GRS programmes.

### 2016:
Study in Ethiopia suggests GRS can achieve both significant scale and quality through partnerships with civil society and government.

### 2017:
Significant decrease in boys’ attitudes towards harmful gender norms and acceptance of violence, after going through GRS programmes.
ASSETS

INCREASED HEALTH KNOWLEDGE AND THE CONFIDENCE TO USE IT

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.

- GRASSROOT SOCCER SKILLZ COACH
It means a lot to me to be a part of the Grassroot Soccer team. I am dedicated to building a new South Africa, a team that will prevent HIV by all means. People are dying out there, so why should I watch people die? Let me be part of this team that is making progress, something I see that is working. To attract the youth, bring them all together, and share knowledge, share what we have. This is how we can build a new generation that will be free from HIV.

- Grassroot Soccer SKILLZ participant

The SKILLZ asset-building approach meets the unique needs of adolescent girls, who are at higher risk of HIV infection than their male peers. The SKILLZ approach fosters girls’ empowerment, promotes awareness of sexual and reproductive health, increases access to medical, legal and psychosocial services, and prepares girls for their future.

To date, **1.1 million** adolescent girls have participated in GRS programmes globally.

55% of GRS participants globally are girls.

### GIRLS BUILDING THE ASSETS OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS: KEY TO EMPOWERMENT AND FUTURE PLANNING

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- Grassroot Soccer SKILLZ participant

**After going through SKILLZ Health, adolescent girls:**

- Reported increased self-efficacy and increased negotiation skills
- Reported increased ability to disclose and have discussions about relationships and violence
- Are more aware of available health, HIV and violence-support services
- See trust and support as important parts of relationships
- Are less likely to justify violence against adolescent girls and young women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017</th>
<th>ADOLESCENT GIRLS</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UPTAKE OF HIV TESTING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3X INCREASE IN HIV TESTING AS WELL AS AN INCREASE IN READINESS TO TEST</td>
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**GIRLS UPTAKE OF HIV TESTING**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>BASELINE</th>
<th>ENDLINE</th>
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<tr>
<td>22.6 %</td>
<td>48.3 %</td>
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**55% of GRS participants globally are girls.**

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Grassroot Soccer’s sport-based programming empowers girls to seek sexual and reproductive health services and provides a safe space to address sexuality and relationship issues as well as harmful gender norms, and to learn about the social and structural drivers of violence against women and girls.

The use of soccer language makes concepts such as HIV, sex, and gender awareness accessible, fun and non-threatening. The pairing of the participants with a Coach in their peer group, although slightly older, has proven to be powerful as it opens up safe spaces for the participants to talk about sex, sexuality, gender, pregnancy, and HIV.

SKILLZ Health for Girls is an intervention designed for girls, led exclusively by female GRS Coaches, that uses soccer as a tool to engage adolescent girls. The program combines sport-based activities with a sexual and reproductive health-focused curriculum that explores the ways in which their bodies are changing throughout puberty, incorporates gender awareness, fosters healthy equitable relationships, and addresses unintended pregnancy, contraception, and HIV prevention. This unique approach provides a platform for young girls to develop their soccer skills and participate in a sport seen as a “male domain” while building critical life skills, a sense of solidarity and support in a team environment that is affirming and encouraging of pro-social behaviour.

HIV and SRH-related knowledge
In multiple studies, GRS measured self-reported changes in attitudes, communication, and knowledge amongst adolescent girls in SKILLZ programmes, at pre-intervention and post-intervention. Adolescent girls reported overall improvements in attitudes, communication and knowledge. This increase signals the positive effect of presenting information about HIV to participants using an interactive, informative and sport-based methodology, as participants are able to process information about HIV and SRH in a non-threatening and fun way.

The largest increases were reflected in communication, which signifies increased self-efficacy and agency among participants, resulting in confidence to speak to peers, parents and guardians regarding topics discussed during SKILLZ interventions. In turn, the increased communication signifies the positive effects of creating safe spaces for adolescents to discuss sensitive topics with the support of Coaches.

Gender-Equitable Relationships
SKILLZ programming for adolescent girls proved to be beneficial in helping girls leave physically and emotionally abusive relationships and choose to be in relationships that contained greater levels of gender equality. Adolescent girls understood trust and support to be fundamental to healthy relationships. As girls showed significant increases in self-efficacy, their beliefs with regard to gender equitable relationships also improved, and the confidence gained to communicate their beliefs and challenges may have led to their choice of more gender equitable relationships. Findings from a qualitative study suggested that some girls left physically and emotionally abusive relationships and some chose to be in relationships that contained greater levels of equality. Research does not indicate exactly what informed their choices, but possible explanations could involve a shift in beliefs regarding gender-equitable relationships as well as improved self-concept and self-efficacy.

Violence Against Women and Girls
By developing adolescent girls’ assets and understanding of power dynamics in relationships and their rights, GRS programming for adolescent girls resulted in fewer girls justifying violence against women. Although challenges still exist in addressing the root cause of violence, adolescent girls in SKILLZ programmes were able to break the silence and confidently communicate with parents regarding violent relationships, receive support from parents and increase their awareness of services available within their community.
ASSETS - GIRLS
BUILDING THE ASSETS OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS:
KEY TO EMPOWERMENT AND FUTURE PLANNING

Conference Presentations, Publications & Ongoing Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changing the game for girls: results from a mixed-methods evaluation of a soccer-based HIV and SRHR prevention programme for adolescent girls in South Africa</td>
<td>Baseline and endline questionnaires were administered to girls (n=146, average age = 13.6) in two intermediate and two secondary schools in Soweto over an 18-month period. Project monitoring data were collected, including uptake of HIV testing and disclosure of experiences requiring follow-up. An external evaluation investigated quantitative results through rapid ethnographies, focus group discussions (n=46) and interviews (n=19) with staff, coaches, mentors, SSP participants as well as male participants in mixed-sex GRS programmes.</td>
<td>89% of girls reported intimate partner violence (IPV) as unacceptable versus 70% at baseline. Some girls chose to leave abusive relationships, complemented by reported decreases in justification and experiences of IPV. HIV testing uptake (ever tested for HIV and tested for HIV in last 3 months) increased from 12.3% to 43.9% and from 4.8% to 27.4% respectively. Girls reported greater confidence, self-efficacy, and improved decision making, while disclosure of violence doubled from baseline to endline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Norms, Sexuality and Sport for Development Challenges Faced by Adolescent Girls When Participating in a Soccer-Based Life Skills Programme in Khayelitsha, South Africa</td>
<td>Qualitative study based on interviews, focus groups, semi-structured observations, and field notes.</td>
<td>Barriers to access: teachers indicated that girls who want to play soccer face no barriers in doing so, one saying that “nobody everyone knows that what a boy can do, a girl can do it too”. However, this sentiment seems disconnected from the reality that few resources are invested in girls’ soccer, community support is limited, and lack of necessary structures and infrastructure persist — all of which hinder girls’ access to soccer. Policing Sexuality: based on interviews with teachers, the idea that playing a sport ‘for males’ might have an impact on girls’ views of their sexuality is a significant barrier for girls who want to play soccer. Participants stated reasons for quitting the programme, indicating feelings of shame for not playing well, beliefs that they would become tomboys, and beliefs that girls cannot play soccer. Results indicate culturally and self-imposed gender stereotypes, which go beyond the soccer field into other areas of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementing Social Learning Theory with Communication for Social Change Techniques: A Mixed-Methods Approach to Sexuality Education and Gender-Based Violence Prevention (Jean Warren Communications)</td>
<td>Focus groups, in-depth interviews, participatory digital storytelling workshop</td>
<td>Co-creation and sharing of knowledge between workshop participants and facilitators, increased self-awareness, self-confidence and reflection amongst young women; increase in digital literacy, storytelling, and audio/visual skills; and increase in understanding of, or introduction to, digital media and communication, activism, and social change.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2016 International AIDS Conference, Durban</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls Achieve Power (GAP) 2018 International AIDS Conference, Durban</td>
<td>Using sport to empower girls at critical time of adolescent transition</td>
<td>Two-arm cluster randomized controlled trial (cRCT) with three time point repeated measurement of outcome variables at baseline (12 months), post-matric (2 months) and end line (24 months) of follow-up. The primary objective is to assess learner dropout as they transition through high school, and secondary objectives include assessing whether the intervention increases girls’ access to social, health, and educational assets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing study</td>
<td>Study underway</td>
<td>Study underway</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2018 International AIDS Conference, Amsterdam</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome evaluation of Grassroot Soccer-Zimbabwe SKILLZ for youth programmes (2015-2017)</td>
<td>Mixed methods evaluation to explore the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, utility, and sustainability of three GRS SKILLZ Health programs: Generation SKILLZ, SKILLZ Holiday, and SKILLZ Street. Quantitative methods included self-administered pre/post-intervention survey, where outcomes from 2017 were compared to previous years of program implementation. Qualitative methods included 10 focus group discussions with adolescents and 2 with coaches, as well as in-depth interviews with teachers, parents/guardians, and partner organizations.</td>
<td>Quantitative data was collected from 392 adolescents, showing a large gap in HIV and SRHR knowledge levels between female and male participants (mean 59.3% compared to 30.7%). There was a significant (p &lt; 0.01) increase in self-efficacy in resisting unwanted sex and negotiating safer sex practices, of 18.5% of participants who reported having sex, 41.7% reported using male condoms to prevent STIs and pregnancy. Evaluation results demonstrate the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of GRS Zimbabwe programmes.</td>
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Conference Presentations, Publications & Ongoing Studies

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<tr>
<td><strong>Journal of Evaluation and Planning - 2018</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls Achieve Power (GAP) Year: Using sport to empower girls at critical time of adolescent transition</td>
<td>Mixed-methods assessment of preliminary outcomes and implementation processes in three primary schools in Soweto, South Africa, from August-December 2013. Quantitative methods included participant attendance and SMS platform usage tracking, pre/post questionnaires, and structured observation. Qualitative methods included 6 focus group discussions and 4-in-depth interviews with program participants, parents, teachers, and a social worker.</td>
<td>Of 394 female participants enrolled, 97% (n=382) graduated, and 217 unique users accessed the SMS platform. Questionnaires completed by 215 participants (mean age: 10.9; SD 3.2 years) alongside qualitative findings showed modest improvements in knowledge and perceptions of power in relationships and gender equity, self-esteem and self-efficacy to avoid unwanted communication with others about HIV and sex, and HIV-related knowledge and stigma. The coach-participant relationship, safety sports, and integration of soccer were raised as key intervention components.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing study</td>
<td>Study underway</td>
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</table>
The programmes have taught me how to be mindful of my health and how I carry myself as a young person.

I learnt a lot on puberty and the knowledge will help me understand my changing body.

Grassroot Soccer SKILLS Participant
To date, **900,000** adolescent boys have participated in GRS programmes

Building assets through SKILLZ ensures adolescent boys participate in critical discussions about what it means to be a man, take small steps to achieve their goals, stay strong when faced with challenges, and support each other to be positive male role models in their communities.

I had two girlfriends before SKILLZ came to our school. I was into a sexual relationship with the two. Having two girls was so prestigious and made me a jack of all trades at the campus. I felt like a king in other ways. After SKILLZ, I have learnt that having more than one sexual partner increases the risk of HIV transmission. I have since dropped all the two and refocused my vision to school, for education indeed is the key to success. The risk of having two partners would easily have landed me into STIs and possible be a father at a tender age. I do not think school would be so dear again if I was to be a father. “Risk factor,” a topic in one of the practices, helped me change my way of living. [I] am ready to go for an HIV test for that is where my future begins.

- Grassroot Soccer SKILLZ Participant
SKILLZ Health for Boys uses different intervention designs in both mixed and single-sex settings. Our 3C model has proven to create meaningful changes in the lives of young men and adolescent boys in diverse contexts and towards a range of health and development outcomes. Using football as a hook seems especially appropriate for young men and boys — football is a platform already used by young men and adolescent boys, and often builds on their existing identities and preferred styles of acting and communicating.

**Shaping gender norms among very young adolescent boys**

Studies from Nigeria and South Africa have highlighted the potential of single-sex interventions for very young adolescent boys (0-14) to shift harmful gender norms. In South Africa, a 7-session SBM and gender norms intervention for adolescent boys (mean age = 13.88) found significant improvements to gender equitable views (p<0.01).1

**Results from three studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Endline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZIMBABWE</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGANDA</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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1. Two cluster-randomised trials of a sport-based voluntary male medical circumcision (VMMC) intervention in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe produced promising evidence of its effect, especially among school-going youths, finding strong evidence that the intervention increased VMMC uptake nearly threefold, from 4.6% to 12.2%.

2. A modified sport-based voluntary male medical circumcision (VMMC) intervention delivered in-school to adolescent boys (mean age = 16) found that 55% of uncircumcised participants registered for Safe Medical Circumcision, with 23% undergoing circumcision by the end of the study. 26% of male participants were also vaccinated to prevent other health issues, highlighting the potential of integrating health services or using medical male circumcision as an entry point to other health services.

**Access to health education and health services for hard-to-reach young men and boys**

Using football structures and sport-based education, GRS found that its soccer-based intervention to promote healthy living pro-social behaviours among unemployed men (18-25) recruited from local taverns was highly acceptable and resulted in reduced violence towards women, crime, and drug usage compared to a control group.

**Meaningful relationships with male mentors**

Findings from a process evaluation of a sport-based voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) demand creation intervention in Zimbabwe found that the coach-participant relationship was the key factor in increasing participants’ motivation to undergo VMMC, especially among younger male participants.

The GRS sport-based VMMC demand creation intervention has been recognised by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as one of the most innovative and effective VMMC interventions for young men and boys, recognized by PEPFAR in COP 2017 Guidance as a “Country Example of Priority Interventions for Preventing New Infections Among Adolescents and Young Adults Under 30”, recently highlighted by UNAIDS’ 2017 World AIDS Day Report “Addressing a blind spot in the response to HIV — Reaching out to men and boys”, and selected as the “Best Demonstrated Impact” winner in the Optimizing Prevention Technology Introduction on Schedule (OPTIONS) Consortium Demand Creation Challenge.

**Updated education and results from a feasibility study in Uganda**

**Results from two CRTs in Zimbabwe**

**Results from a feasibility study in Uganda**

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1. [Publication under development] HIV prevention and SRH education on the football pitch: results from a mixed-methods evaluation of an HIV prevention program delivered to adolescent boys by football coaches.

ASSETS - BOYS
BUILDING THE ASSETS OF ADOLESCENT BOYS: KEY TO ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
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<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes - 2016</td>
<td>Process Evaluation of a Sport-Based Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision Demand-Creation Intervention in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Two cluster Randomised Control Trials (RCTs), were conducted along with 17 interviews and 2 focus group discussions with coaches and 29 interviews with circumcised (n = 10) and uncircumcised participants (n = 16).</td>
<td>Findings demonstrate high program acceptability, highlighting the coach-participant relationship as a key factor associated with uptake. Specifically, participants valued the coaches’ openness to discuss their personal experiences with VMMC and the accompanying LFA coaches to the VMMC site.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Brown University, National University of Science and Technology)</td>
<td>Social-based promotion of voluntary medical male-circumcision: A mixed-methods feasibility study with secondary students in Uganda</td>
<td>A mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) approach was used to explore the feasibility and acceptability of a soccer-based VMMC intervention in Uganda. 210 boys were enrolled in a cross-sectional survey.</td>
<td>55% of boys reported being circumcised already; findings showed high levels of knowledge and generally favourable perceptions of circumcision. Initial implementation resulted in uncircumcised boys (90.3%) becoming circumcised. Following changes to increase engagement with parents and schools, uptake improved to 26.1%. In-depth interviews highlighted the important role of family and peer support and the coach in facilitating the decision to circumcise. The study showed the intervention may be effective, since it is time-intensive, further work is needed to assess the cost-effectiveness of the intervention conducted at scale.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plus ONE - 2017</td>
<td>Changing gender norms, improving health: a sport-based sexual and reproductive health programme in Lagos, Nigeria</td>
<td>YEDI and GRS designed and pilot-tested SKILLZ Guyz, an SRH and gender transformative life skills intervention for adolescent boys. The programme uses soccer metaphors to build self-efficacy, challenge risky behaviors, and encourage participants to become positive role models. Leveraging the power of soccer is an innovative approach expanding the potential to engage boys who may not otherwise participate in SHR and gender programming.</td>
<td>To date, 706 participants completed the programme with a 92% graduation rate (attending at least 7 out of 11 sessions). Overall pre/post questionnaire results showed a 26% increase in attitudes, communication, and knowledge – and large gains specifically on gender equitable norms, self-efficacy, knowledge of reproductive health, and risk of multiple concurrent partners. Findings from this study will inform intervention revisions and research methods for a rigorous mixed-methods evaluation starting in 2018 (see ongoing study below).</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative)</td>
<td>Using a sport-based Intervention to improve sexual and reproductive health including health-seeking behaviours among adolescent males in Lagos, Nigeria</td>
<td>A convergent parallel mixed methods design will be used to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of the intervention. The qualitative methods will include focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, providing deeper understanding of the processes related to planning, training, implementing, monitoring, and reporting on intervention activities. Quantitative data will include self-administered questionnaires, standard routine monitoring data on fidelity, and uptake of HIV testing.</td>
<td>Study underway</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative, Nigeria Institute of Medical Research)</td>
<td>HIV prevention and SHR education on the football pitch results from a mixed-methods evaluation of a HIV prevention programme delivered to adolescent boys by football coaches</td>
<td>Participants (mean age = 13.8) completed a 17-item questionnaire at baseline (September-December 2016, n=974) and immediately after the intervention (March-May 2017, n=974). Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with participants (n=9) and coaches (n=1) and in-depth interviews (IDI’s) were conducted with GBS staff (n=2) and LFA administrators (n=4).</td>
<td>All questionnaire items showed significant improvements pre- to post-intervention. The largest changes were seen in items about communication about HIV with friends, gender equitable decision-making responsibility in relationships, and drinking alcohol increasing HIV risk. Larger changes were seen in older participants (14-17) in items pertaining to decision-making responsibility in relationships and attitude toward people living with HIV. Qualitative data found unanticipated improvements to communication and discipline on the football pitch. These findings suggest that local football structures may be under-utilised in reaching adolescent boys. The intervention and delivery channel present opportunities for scale and merit more rigorous, longer-term evaluation.</td>
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In South Africa, 65% of 18-25-year-olds are unemployed. This is caused by a faltering education system that limits knowledge and skills development, systematic economic and social exclusion of those historically disadvantaged, as well as unequal access to training, networks, and resources to find employment.

Grassroot Soccer (GRS) SKILLZ Coaches come from the communities GRS works in and are 19-30 years old. Their Coach Development Journey includes:

- Training and mentorship to ensure high-quality delivery of SKILLZ Health programmes for adolescents
- Structured and supervised work experience
- A Coach Development Programme, which shows an increase in agency and leadership skills and a drastically increased likelihood of accessing employment or further study opportunities beyond their two years with GRS.

In turn, this journey that SKILLZ Coaches undertake contributes to decreasing the impact of many of the societal and economic drivers leading to high levels of HIV and gender-based violence in their own lives and close family networks.

Delivering SKILLZ Health is at the core of what GRS does in terms of our approach to adolescent health and is the vehicle through which our Curriculum, Coaches, and Culture are shared with adolescent participants. It is also a vital aspect of the journey that SKILLZ Coaches embark on towards their own development and ultimately becoming confident, independent, and employable individuals.

During the delivery of SKILLZ, Coaches gain valuable work experience that will contribute greatly towards this. It includes planning skills, engaging stakeholders, scheduling sessions, facilitating learning and discussion, working in a team, monitoring and evaluation skills, resilience, and problem-solving skills, among other skills. All of which take place under supervision and with support, structured for them by GRS staff. This gives SKILLZ Coaches the opportunity to experience aspects associated with the broader world of work, but within a safe environment.

RESULTS

Results from a longitudinal study of the first cohort of coaches to complete the GRS Coach Development programme demonstrated a significant increase in self-esteem, future orientation and planning, financial skills, community leadership, and computer literacy.

In comparison to the national average on youth unemployment in South Africa, these findings suggest that the combination of training, work experience, and a formal Coach Development programme has a positive impact on the lives and futures of SKILLZ Coaches.

This programme has been implemented comprehensively in South Africa, and at a small scale in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and in GRS partner organisation Youth Development and Empowerment Initiative (YEDI) in Nigeria.

THE COACHES

PERCENTAGE OF SKILLZ COACHES WHO HAVE OPENED THEIR OWN BANK ACCOUNT AND HAVE GRADUATED INTO FURTHER EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT

- Grassroot Soccer SKILLZ Coach

It’s difficult to believe in yourself if people can’t believe in you, so we first believe in those kids. We show them that they are important and whatever they want to achieve, they can do it, there is no limit. Low self-esteem is dangerous.
IN ADDITION TO THE PROFESSIONAL SKILLS I HAVE LEARNED, THE INTANGIBLE THINGS I TOOK AWAY WERE SO VALUABLE. GRASSROOT SOCCER MADE ME BELIEVE I CAN BE A GAME CHANGER IN MY COMMUNITY, BUT ALSO SHOWED ME I CAN BE A GAME CHANGER IN MY OWN LIFE.

- GRASSROOT SOCCER SKILLZ COACH
ACCESS

INCREASED UPTAKE OF HIGH QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES

“MY WISH FOR GIRLS GROWING UP TODAY IS THAT THEY SHOULD FOLLOW THEIR DREAMS AND NEVER LET ANYTHING OR ANYONE STAND IN THE WAY OF THEM REACHING THEIR GOALS. A GIRL WITH A VOICE IS STRONG, CONFIDENT, AND ABLE TO TAKE ON THE WORLD.”

- GRASSROOT SOCCER SKILLZ PARTICIPANT
In addition to building the assets of adolescent boys and girls, Grassroot Soccer ensures they are linked to high quality, adolescent-friendly health services. This portion of the report highlights some of the achievements and insights gained from working with service delivery partners in a few of Grassroot Soccer’s priority partnership geographies.

South Africa

**Public-Private Partnerships & Centre for Communication Impact**

In 2015 GRS established a 3-year public-private partnership to prevent HIV, provide sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and reduce the likelihood or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) by challenging harmful gender norms among adolescents, and providing clear linkages to post-violence care for survivors, HIV testing, and SRH services. GRS successfully scaled its sport-based approach through clear linkages to post-violence care for survivors, HIV testing, and SRH services. GRS has tested and referred over 2,000 people.

**Hope in South Africa**

Educating South African Youth About Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), is a sport-based education and prevention programme that engages and teaches children between the ages of 10 - 18 in South Africa’s Northern Cape province, which has the highest incidence of FASD in the world, about the dangers of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

**Zimbabwe**

GRS Zimbabwe programmes are an integral source of HIV and SRHR information for young people and provide important linkages to critical health services.

**Malawi**

GRS has tested and referred over 2,000 people.

**Results from 2017**

- **Kenya**
  - VAP has reached 30,000 adolescents with SKILLZ programming
  - Tested approximately 2,000 individuals for HIV

- **Nigeria**
  - 600+ Coaches trained
  - 4,900 adolescents were referred for integrated HIV and SRH services

- **South Africa**
  - 25,028 adolescent graduates
  - 400+ coaches trained
  - 132 people referred for VMMC
  - 26.9% of participants in the smaller SKILLZ week-long programme reported accessing VMMC
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
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<th>Method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016 7th African Conference on Sexual Health and Rights, Accra</td>
<td>Increasing Contraceptive Prevalence in adolescent girls in Malawi: A model for success</td>
<td>Mixed methods evaluation of sport-based intervention for in-school and out-of-school adolescent girls, including modelling exercise utilizing Marie Stopes International Impact2 (innovation tool to estimate impact of reproductive health programmes)</td>
<td>Increase in contraception prevalence rate among adolescent girls from 9% to 21%. 2,781 referred for SRH services; 2,780 untreated pregnancies averted; caring relationships built between Coaches and adolescent girl participants.</td>
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<td>2016 Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Global Health Conference</td>
<td>HIV Testing Attitudes and Behaviours at a Sports-based HIV Prevention Program in Makurwe Ruben, Nandi, Kenya</td>
<td>23-question survey to assess socio-demographics, HIV risk behaviours, HIV testing behaviours and attitudes, and knowledge of HIV self-testing (HST), HIV status, linkages and barriers to care</td>
<td>Preliminary data suggest that this population is highly motivated to test for HIV and willing to use HST on themselves and as a tool to motivate others to test. As the age of participants increased, so did the proportions of those who knew about HST and were willing to use HST.</td>
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<td>2017 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Summit, Bloemfontein (Hope in South Africa)</td>
<td>Importance of engaging parents and caregivers in the provision of HIV Testing Services (HTS) to adolescent girls 10 - 14 in Johannesburg</td>
<td>Using participatory communication model for dialogue, reflection and action, girls and their parents/caregivers discussed the importance of HIV prevention and accessing services.</td>
<td>Between 2016 - 2017, 2,215 girls aged 10 - 14 received the programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018 International AIDS Conference, Amsterdam</td>
<td>Lessons from implementing SKILLZ for Life: A sport-based HIV and life skills programme for youth with intellectual disabilities in Namibia, Nigeria, and South Africa</td>
<td>Lessons learned from the implementation of SKILLZ for Life, an HIV prevention and life skills programme for youth with intellectual disabilities (ID) in South Africa and Nigeria. The programme aims to increase knowledge of HIV and sexual rights, maternal HIV testing uptake, self-esteem, and improve attitudes toward health services of “athletes” with ID and their “partners,” participants without ID.</td>
<td>Key lessons learned from a 2015 external evaluation and 2017-2018 process evaluation include the importance of early engagement with key stakeholders and community, rigorous curriculum review and adaptation for participants with ID, and the use of Family Health Forum events to provide ID-friendly health services for participants and their families.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018 International AIDS Conference, Amsterdam (Special Olympics Nigeria, Special Olympics International)</td>
<td>Scalability of SKILLZ for Life: A sports-based behaviour change HIV/AIDS and Malaria programme for young people with intellectual disabilities</td>
<td>Mixed methods evaluation conducted from June 2017, January 2018 in order to assess the scalability of SKILLZ for Life to other geographies. Qualitative methods included 10 IDIs, 7 FGDs, and 3 observation visits, while quantitative pre/post surveys were used to examine changes in participants’ knowledge, behavior, and attitudes.</td>
<td>Quantitative survey results show significant positive changes from baseline to endpoint, including improvements on HIV stigma, and malaria knowledge, and identifying sexual abuse items. Qualitative data indicate conditions for successful scale include adaptation of curriculum to local context and including community stakeholders in the training process in order to improve health outcomes.</td>
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</table>
Grassroot Soccer has taught me that one cannot tell just by looking at someone, one needs to be tested to know if they are HIV positive or negative.

We were taught to love even those who are HIV positive and treat them as we would treat ourselves.

Grassroot Soccer SKILLZ Participant
ADHERENCE TO MEDICAL TREATMENT, THERAPY, AND HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS

Innovative Partnerships
Recognizing that more services are available to adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV) than in previous stages of the HIV epidemic, GRS is actively looking to broaden the types of support we can provide to young people living with HIV. We aim to continue building strong partnerships with local institutions, both clinical and non-clinical, and connect youth to local resources to improve adherence and retention in care.

AIDS Healthcare Foundation
Grassroot Soccer partners with the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) in South Africa and Zambia. In Durban, South Africa, GRS has partnered with AHF to build capacity and support services at a local clinic serving ALHIV in order to improve retention to care. At various sites across Zambia, GRS has partnered with AHF in order to improve linkages to quality support services; all young people who test HIV positive from AHF health facilities and testing events will be enrolled in SKILLZ Plus.

Baylor College of Medicine Children’s Foundation-Malawi
In 2017, GRS revised the Baylor College of Medicine Children’s Foundation - Malawi (BCM-CFM) Transition Training program, which aims to support young adults living with HIV as they transition into adulthood and adult HIV care. T2 was created in response to young adult patients’ requests for tips on finding jobs, starting and sustaining businesses, how to have healthy sex while living positively, and which modern contraceptive methods were most effective on ARVs. Through an asset-building approach, T2 also aims to improve psychosocial and behavioral outcomes that influence decision-making in sexual health and relationships, economic empowerment, and self-care skills.

After initial success in Lilongwe, the second round of the program was initiated in 2017, with a pilot program in rural Salima District and use of the revised curriculum in Lilongwe. A mixed methods evaluation of T2 is underway, with preliminary results demonstrating modest positive changes in many domains measured in a quantitative pre/post survey, such as support, leadership/mentorship, HIV and SRH knowledge, disclosure self-efficacy, and self-concept (n=35). Greater changes were seen in the Salima (rural/peri-urban) cohort than the Lilongwe (urban) cohort, with the Lilongwe cohort demonstrating higher baseline scores. Qualitative interviews with service providers and Ministry of Health stakeholders have been conducted, with participatory focus groups and data analysis to be held with participants later in 2018. Participants will be trained in research methods using a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach in order to empower and engage them in further research and dissemination of findings.

ALHIV Working Group
Over the years, GRS’s ALHIV programmes have been adapted to the local context in which they are implemented. In order to ensure GRS is providing evidence-based and relevant programming across all of our sites and partnerships, Grassroot Soccer established an internal ALHIV working group in late 2017. The goal of the working group is to share intel, learnings, highlight innovations, and ensure that our programmes are effectively responding to the needs of ALHIV.

SKILLZ Plus & Clubs
Our work is evolving and we are piloting new and different approaches to engaging ALHIV while continuing to reach and support ALHIV through SKILLZ Plus interventions and clubs.

- SKILLZ Plus is specifically tailored to adolescents living with HIV, providing them with mentorship, life skills, information on living healthy sexual lives and links to quality health services. Grassroot Soccer’s work is evolving, which requires piloting new and differentiated approaches to engaging adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV).
- Clinical partnerships: In Zambia and Zimbabwe, the SKILLZ Plus program is implemented in partnership with Ministry of Health, where interventions and peer support meetings (see below) are held from district and community-level health facilities.
- Home visits: In Zimbabwe, home visits are conducted by Coaches and are at the request of participants, peers, or care providers in order to provide holistic support and/or follow-up.
- SKILLZ Plus Clubs: After the conclusion of the initial SKILLZ Plus intervention, participants are linked to peer support groups — SKILLZ Clubs — where they continue to access services and connect with their team of supporters. SKILLZ Clubs are held once every month, which for most participants coincides with their monthly clinical visits for check-ups and refills. Some SKILLZ Clubs are held outside of the health center at local community centers.
WITH THE REDUCTION OF STIGMA, AND INTRODUCTION OF A MENTOR, LINKAGE TO TREATMENT AND HIGH QUALITY SERVICES, ADOLESCENTS LIVING WITH HIV CAN LIVE LONGER, HEALTHIER LIVES.
TO DATE, 2,068 ADOLESCENTS (40% MALE) HAVE GRADUATED FROM SKILLZ PLUS PROGRAMMES

TO DATE, 2,068 ADOLESCENTS (60% FEMALE) HAVE GRADUATED FROM SKILLZ PLUS PROGRAMMES
TO DATE, 117 CARING COACHES (AGED 20-30) LIVING WITH HIV HAVE BEEN TRAINED AS MENTORS FOR SKILLZ ADOLESCENT PARTICIPANTS LIVING WITH HIV

**ADHERENCE**

**SUPPORTING ADOLESCENTS LIVING WITH HIV**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2018 International Social and Behaviour Change Communication Summit, Nusa Dua, study ongoing</td>
<td>Multi-disciplinary model for Increasing adherence to Antiretroviral Treatment and Employability Outcomes for Youth Living with HIV</td>
<td>Study underway</td>
<td>Study underway</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Baylor College of Medicine - Children's Foundation, Malawi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>International AIDS Conference &amp; 8th International Workshop on HIV Paediatrics, Durban - 2016</td>
<td>T2 Transferring Economic, Psychosocial, and Self-care Skills Needed for Young Adults Living with HIV in Malawi for Successful Transition into Adulthood</td>
<td>Retrospective chart reviews (n=70) and unstructured follow up interviews were conducted (n=100) between January 2013 - December 2015.</td>
<td>70 graduates from T2 had better adherence rates than adolescent patients seen at general clinic. 64 adolescent patients were retained in care, 3 were transferred out, 1 died, 1 engaged in pill-dumping, and 1 was lost to follow up. Of the 43 who had viral loads drawn since graduating, 37 (86%) were virally suppressed. During or after the programme, 15 males and 9 females disclosed their status to a friend or partner.</td>
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</table>
Grassroot Soccer collaborates with implementing partners in 20+ countries, ensuring that adolescents adhere to healthy behaviours, and partners are equipped with critical adolescent-centred tools and strategies to sustain impact.

In 2017, Grassroot Soccer (GRS) commissioned Keystone Accountability to survey partners on their experience working with GRS, and benchmark performance of GRS against other organisations globally. These are select findings from the survey:


2. 43% of GRS partners participated in the survey (56 of 131 invited to respond), 74% of which were NGOs and 20% were government.

3. Assessing what services GRS partners get most from GRS, respondents stated:
   - 77% achieving shared programme goals
   - 75% gaining insight and receiving advice about their sector and work
   - 74% benefiting from introductions to other organisations, people, and networks

4. Looking ahead to what respondents value about GRS and want GRS to continue delivering as a service to partners:
   - 51% evidence-based curriculum and training
   - 44% share lessons and experiences among organisations working on the same issues
   - 28% discuss strategy and plans
   - 25% develop joint strategy

5. Partners have clear recommendations for GRS:
   - They want to be involved in GRS strategy development
   - They want to have the opportunity to share learning
   - They want to strengthen the “critical mass of partners” working in the same area
   - They want GRS to be closer to their constituents

6. Adherence partnerships for sustained impact:

   - 20% of respondents were based in Southern Africa
   - 11% of respondents were based in East Africa
   - 11% of respondents were based in North America
   - 9% of respondents were based in West Africa
   - 6% of respondents were based in Central Africa
   - 6% of respondents were based in Europe
   - 3% of respondents were based in other countries

7. In 2017, Grassroot Soccer (GRS) commissioned Keystone Accountability to survey partners on their experience working with GRS, and benchmark performance of GRS against other organisations globally. These are select findings from the survey:

8. Grassroot Soccer collaborates with implementing partners in 20+ countries, ensuring that adolescents adhere to healthy behaviours, and partners are equipped with critical adolescent-centred tools and strategies to sustain impact.
SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS & INSIGHTS

The Grassroot Soccer 2017-2018 Research & Insights report reaffirms that a sport-based approach is a unique and innovative way to address adolescents’ evolving needs, engage them on their health, and support them to plan for their futures.

ASSETS: Increased health knowledge and the confidence to use it

After going through Grassroot Soccer SKILLZ programming,

- Adolescent girls are more likely to test for HIV, leave physically and emotionally abusive relationships, and choose relationships that have greater levels of gender equality and trust. Building girls’ social and health assets through SKILLZ also strengthens their capabilities and confidence to communicate with peers, parents, and guardians about their sexual health, gender-equitable beliefs and unique needs; seek critical health services; and, effectively navigate and negotiate safer sex with their partners.

- Adolescent boys are more likely to undergo preventative voluntary male circumcision, thereby reducing their risk of acquiring HIV and test for HIV; their attitudes towards gender-equitable norms improve; and their knowledge of sexual and reproductive health risk factors and services increase. Building boys’ social and health assets through SKILLZ strengthens their orientation towards the future, enhances transferable skills, promotes pro-social behaviors, improves their self-concept and self-regulation.

After working with Grassroot Soccer,

- All SKILLZ Coaches in South Africa leave with their own bank accounts, and the majority exit into further training, education or employment. Building SKILLZ Coaches’ social and health assets leads to a significant increase in self-esteem, orientation towards the future, strengthened financial skills and computer literacy, as well as demonstrated community leadership.

ACCESS: Increased uptake of high-quality health services

After building strategic SKILLZ partnerships with international and regional non-governmental organisations and local community-based organisations, Grassroot Soccer and its partners have:

- Piloted innovative adolescent-centred service delivery strategies, resulting in increased contraceptive prevalence rate in Malawi and increased willingness and motivation to self-test for HIV in Kenya.

- Delivered integrated, youth-friendly HIV Testing Services, family planning, VMMC, sexual and gender-based violence services, and malaria testing services across seven countries in West, East and Southern Africa with high burden of HIV/s sexual and reproductive health-related health challenges.

- Strengthened local service providers’ approaches to adolescent-friendliness and thereby attracted more youth to their services.

ADHERENCE: Adherence to medical treatment, therapy, and health behaviours

Grassroot Soccer is committed to ensuring that adolescents have the assets and access they need to sustain healthy behaviors over time. In the case of adolescents living with HIV, GRS identifies adolescent-friendly clinical service providers with a specialty in adolescents living with HIV, and continues to utilise routine monitoring data and select clinical data from partners to track SKILLZ participants’ enrollment, adherence and retention in care.

In order to create an enabling environment for young people and to sustain adolescent health outcomes, GRS is committed to partnering broadly with various stakeholders. In order to inform and improve our partnership approach, GRS surveyed our current and prospective partners, finding that our organisation ranks 13th out of 85 non-profit organisations partnering globally; that our partners value interactions with us; and that they want to engage in more strategic thinking with GRS, share learnings, and strengthen the critical mass of partners working in adolescent health in the future.

LOOKING AHEAD

Building on 14 years of research and insights from routine monitoring data, in collaboration with its partners, Grassroot Soccer will sharpen its focus on research to address critical gaps in the global adolescent health evidence base and strengthen existing interventions. From 2018 forward, our priorities are to:

- Evaluate, refine and scale up interventions to engage with hard-to-reach adolescent boys and young men and link them to SRH services
  - Complete and disseminate an ongoing mixed-methods evaluation of a sport-based SRH programme for in school and out of school adolescent boys in Lagos, Nigeria
  - Pilot new interventions in urban, peri-urban and rural Zimbabwe and Zambia
  - Leverage local football structures to bring male-friendly health services to the pitch

- Initiate 3-year, multi-country longitudinal cohort study in Zambia and Zimbabwe, to estimate long-term impact of an integrated package of SKILLZ Health interventions on building the health and social assets of adolescents, including tracking key adolescent health and well-being indicators

- Identify mediators, predictors and barriers to achieving health outcomes in the enabling environment and in partnerships with government, private sector and civil society

- In Zambia and South Africa, evaluate cost-effectiveness and return on investment for integrated HIV/SRH programming for adolescent girls in urban secondary schools

- Pilot non-traditional, youth-led participatory action research methods in Malawi, Nigeria and South Africa in ongoing studies, capitalising on adolescents as trend-setters and trend-setters

- Invest in and mentor youth as researchers, co-author publications and co-present in local, regional and international forums

- Integrate emerging adolescent health topics and new interventions into existing programmes and existing and future research
  - HIV Self-testing: pilots with mid-late adolescents in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Kenya
  - Mental health: building on resiliency research, pilot mindfulness micro-interventions and well-being questionnaires in South Africa
  - Non-communicable diseases: measure BMI in two randomised controlled trials in Zambia and South Africa