

HIV/AIDS Policy and Organisational Support for South African Football Players' Union



Enlisting professional football players in HIV/AIDS prevention

South Africa

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Client:

Swedish International
Development Agency
(SIDA) and
South African Football
Players Union (SAFPU)

With an estimated 4.7 million people living with HIV and AIDS, South Africa is one of the countries hardest hit by the pandemic. Youths between the age of 15 and 24 are the demographic group with the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in South Africa. Many people, particularly youths, regard celebrities as role models. Numerous studies have shown that public figures, such as professional football players, are in a unique position to help destigmatise HIV/AIDS and bring about sustainable behaviour change. These youths model behaviour after their idols and are most open to listen to positive, educational messages coming from them.

ECIAfrica is harnessing the tremendous potential of training and enlisting football players in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The approach is first to educate professional football players on how to deal with HIV-related issues at a personal level, so they may then serve as a positive influence in society. With South Africa playing host to the Soccer World Cup in 2010, there is a unique opportunity to scale up this project. Football is the most popular sport in South Africa. Media coverage of the 2010 World Cup is projected to reach 28.7 million television viewers, 31 million radio listeners and 1.6 billion through print locally/globally.

Through this project with the South African Football Players' Union (SAFPU), ECIAfrica is building the capacity of the organisation and providing workplace HIV/AIDS awareness and behaviour change training for professional football players and coaches. ECIAfrica has developed a comprehensive HIV/AIDS policy and strategy, which SAFPU has adopted and published.

We have also completed a detailed survey of professional football players' and club owners' attitudes and understanding of the pandemic. Based on data collected we have developed a train-a-trainer manual, which covers topics on prevention, gender based violence, assertiveness, dealing with peer pressure, goal setting, communication, decision-making, rights, testing for HIV, and treatment and care. Going forward, we will be implementing a behaviour change program to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS on the professional football sector in particular.

