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Other World Cup brings hope

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Needy claim place in spectacle

VICTORIA "Prokid" Masonga has set her sights on the coming Fifa Football for Hope festival.

The 16-year-old is part of the team that will represent South Africa during the Fifa Football for Hope tournament in Alexandria, north of Johannesburg, from July 4 to July 10.

Teams from disadvantaged backgrounds representing 32 countries will take part in the tournament.

Masonga, who is a defender, is working towards playing for the women's national team, Banyana Banyana.

She plays for Alexandra Ladies team .

"This is an opportunity of a lifetime. Soccer is my passion, and I plan to make the best out of this tournament. Alexandria has finally caught the eye of the world," she said yesterday.

Her teammate, Solly Mahlangu, said they would make South Africa proud.

"We are going to win this tournament. We are going to show the world how it's done from our own backyard," Mahlangu said.

The festival draws footballers from poor backgrounds – some are homeless while most live in slums in cities across the globe.

"They are mixed teams of 10 boys and girls, who will take part in five-a-side games. Each game lasts 12 minutes," said Jurgen Griesbeck, managing director of Streetfootballworld, organisers of the tournament.

Griesbeck said they worked with more than 2100 NGOs and other organisations to put the teams together.

"The tournament is meant to celebrate the contribution of soccer to social development. The Australian team comprises only refugees who live there," Griesbeck said.

LOC chief executive Danny Jordaan said the World Cup was not only about big stars descending on South Africa.

"This is another World Cup of Alexandra, which brings hope and opportunity to young people," Jordaan said.

"We hope that through this tournament their dreams of being counted with the best are realised."