streetfootballworld

EAST AFRICA PEACE FESTIVAL 2015

Iringa, Tanzania - December 6th - 11th, 2015
The streetfootballworld East Africa Peace Festival, supported by the Premier League’s International Small Grants Fund, took place December 6 – 11 in Iringa, Tanzania, where we were hosted by the Iringa Development of Youth Disabled and Children Care (IDYDC). The festival brought together representatives and young people from twelve member organisations of the streetfootballworld network, as well as other sport for development organisations in the East African region, for a six-day football festival and cultural exchange that incorporated workshops, football training and cultural performances. Participants came from across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The organisations represented were: IDYDC (Tanzania); Jambo Bukoba (Tanzania); Society Empowerment Project (Kenya); MYSA (Kenya); TYSA (Kenya); HODI (Kenya); Vijana Amani Pamoja (Kenya); South Sudan Youth Sports Association (South Sudan); The Kids League (Uganda); Soccer Without Borders (Uganda); Centre des Jeunes pour la Paix (Democratic Republic of Congo); Don Bosco (Kenya); and Jifahamu Youth Sports Talent Academy (Tanzania). Twelve teams competed in the mixed team and delegation tournaments, for a total of seventy-two players, with a further seventeen young leaders trained as football mediators and twenty-seven coaches trained through the Premier Skills programme. Other participants, including delegation leaders, staff, volunteers, and community members, brought the total number of festival participants to approximately 200.

The primary aims of the festival were:

a. to create an opportunity for young people from across East Africa to interact, learn from one another, and play football together;

b. to train young leaders to be mediators, using the football methodology;

c. to create a platform for exchange among members of the senior management of local organisations who use football as a tool for social change; and, more broadly,

d. to promote a comprehensive approach to social development that uses football to communicate messages of peace, respect, and tolerance.
The East African members of the streetfootballworld network gathered in Iringa, Tanzania, December 6 – 11, 2015, for the third edition of the East Africa Festival.

Hosted by Iringa Development of Youth, Disabled and Children Care (IDYDC), the festival brought together twelve organisations from East Africa, all of which are dedicated to the implementation of football-based development programmes. The third edition of the East Africa Festival united young people from Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. The festival took place at Lugalo School, a government secondary school located within Iringa municipality with more than 1000 students, and at the Iringa Football for Hope Centre.

During the event, participants took part in a number of activities to foster friendship and understanding and a football tournament that took place during the last two days of the festival. The festival was also an opportunity for organisations to discuss the cross-cutting issues on the agenda of the East African Network and the projects and regional programmes for 2016 and beyond.

The East Africa Festival 2015 included a youth forum, aimed at training young leaders to be mediators of the football tournament; an exchange programme, including integration activities and training in football for the young participants; and a football tournament, based on the principle that the basic values of fair play, gender equality, teamwork and respect are just as important as football skill.
The highlight of the festival was the football tournament featuring mixed-gender teams, a very special opportunity for the young players to experience football for good in practice through the three halves of the game.

The first half or pre-match discussion, when the teams come together and agree on the fair play rules; the second half or football match, when players take responsibility for their match and comply with the rules they agreed upon; and the third half or post-match discussion, when teams are brought together by the mediator to reflect on the match and award their opponents fair play points based on their respect to the rules and conduct.

The tournament had two parts: the first featured mixed teams made up of members from different organisations, countries, and linguistic backgrounds; the second part of the tournament brought participants back to their original teams with other members of their organisations. This two-pronged approach ensured that all the players had the opportunity to meet someone from another country, another culture, or who speaks another language, as well as the chance to play with familiar teammates.

The festival was a great opportunity to unite the East African regional network members and foster cooperation within the region. Director and founder of IDYDC Johnnie Nkoma noted that one of the most significant aspects of the East Africa Festival 2015 for him was to discover that the East African network members were willing to travel and make a huge effort to come together for the festival. According to him, this clearly showcases the strong desire for cooperation and teamwork within the region.

As stated by TYSA founder Francis Gichuki during the festival:

“The East African community has a lot of commonalities, including many shared issues affecting the region that can be addressed through the power of football. The East Africa Festival is driven by the communities and the organisations that believe in the potential of football to tackle those issues.

The years to come will see the East African network focusing on three priorities: fostering peaceful coexistence and exploring the potential of football to promote dialogue and understanding; empowering women in the East African region; and providing formal and non-formal education so young people can develop to their full potential.”
The official opening ceremony took place at the festival venue, where young leaders, players and delegation leaders from the participating organisations marked the occasion with speeches and dances. During his opening address, Johnnie Nkoma welcomed participants and special guests to the festival and expressed his gratitude to all the attendees. This sentiment was echoed and extended by Francis Gichuki, who shared with the audience the main reasons for organising the East Africa Festival:

“We have three basic reasons that brought us here together: one, we are coming from organisations that have given us a hope during the years; two, we want to build the East African community, and; three, we are here because we want to transform each other and grow - we want to transform our lives. These are the reasons for which we are here today.”

streetfootballworld representative Julia Bishop also addressed the crowd following the welcome remarks, expressing her gratitude to IDYDC for hosting the festival and reminding the audience why they were there: to celebrate football as a force for good and change the world.
The first activity of the East Africa Festival was training young leaders in the football3 methodology used in the tournament, enabling them to act as mediators during the games.

The football3 methodology places the emphasis of the game on fair play, the peaceful resolution of conflict and social inclusion, as opposed to winning. It is called football3 because it is made up of 3 ‘halves’: a pre-match discussion where rules are established for the game, the game itself, and a post-match discussion where the teams have a chance to discuss whether or not the rules established in the pre-match discussion were followed and whether they felt the game was played fairly. Teams are awarded points not only based on how many goals they score, but also based on how fairly they play. The latter points are awarded by the opposing side following the post-match discussion. All teams are made up of an equal number of girls and boys, and there must be at least two girls and two boys playing on the pitch at all times.

The youth forum was implemented this year by two young leader coordinators from the hosting organisation: Jamila Mwinuka and Razack Omary, who are both young leaders at IDYDC in Tanzania. As part of the programme, the young leader coordinators prepared the sessions for the other young leaders, facilitated the training sessions, and coordinated the training of the participants.
The young leader coordinators were supported by streetfootballworld staff and by an experienced football mediator from TYSA, Francis Ojilo, but the fact that young leaders from the host organisation led the trainings was a highly successful development in the festival structure.

TYSA representative Francis Ojilo, the most experienced young leader coordinator who supported the implementation of the programme, shared his thoughts on the benefits of the programme for the young leaders:

"Young leaders can benefit from the programme in terms of gaining confidence, in terms of expressing themselves and raising the issues they are facing."

The youth forum took place over the first day of the festival and included theoretical sessions in the morning, to understand the roots and values of football; and practical training activities in the afternoon, where young leaders were able to experience football on the pitch and prepare themselves to be football mediators.
Francis Ojilo is a young leader from TYSA with a special role at East Africa Festival 2015. As an experienced player and mediator of football, he is responsible introducing the methodology to the next generation of football for good leaders.

Francis took time out from his busy schedule to explain what it means to be a young leader and share his thoughts on football more generally:

“Being a young leader means a lot to me because it enables me to address issues that my community is facing and engage young people in getting to know these important issues of the community. When I am implementing programmes on the pitch I make sure that I am combining both football and life skills to make sure that these young people are informed of what are their rights, what does it means to work together as a team, and make sure that we are developing better community practices meeting and working together.”

On the topic of football rules, which are determined by players before the game, Francis highlighted the value of gender equality:

“I am always looking to how football can benefit the girls by giving them an opportunity and recognition. In Africa, and specifically where I am coming from, many times girls are not given the opportunity to raise their issues. For me when girls score a goal I feel very proud and if I have the ball I will always try to pass it to them and give them this opportunity. So regarding football free rule, I would say anything related to gender equality, because I want to promote girls at a community level.”

Francis also spoke at length about the importance of enlarging the network and raising the profile of football:

“We would like to enlarge the network of young leaders and brand football to achieve more popularity than it has now. We want more young leaders to join us for this reason and also to enable them to grow holistically and better help the community. East Africa has a big percentage of young people so we are in a position where young leaders can be a great support for their communities. I am personally very proud of training these young leaders and spreading the world about football. I am looking for bringing new ideas and innovation in terms of developing the methodology of football and promoting it in East Africa, as well as exploring new ways on how football can be a tool to approach the challenges that we are facing nowadays.”

Francis expressed his gratitude for being part of the festival, which represents a big opportunity for the East African organisations in attendance to come together for the good of the game.
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FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS - football3 TOURNAMENT

The highlight of the festival was the football3 tournament featuring mixed-gender teams, which offered a very special opportunity for young participants to experience football for good in practice through the three halves of the game.

The first half or pre-match discussion, when the teams come together and agree on the fair play rules; the second half or football match, when players take responsibility for their match and comply with the rules they agreed upon; and the third half or post-match discussion, when teams are brought together by the mediator to reflect on the match and award their opponents fair play points based on their respect to the rules and conduct.

During the first part of the tournament, the young participants played in mixed teams, including members from different delegations and countries of origin. This was a very special part of the tournament that enabled the youth to build team spirit and understand the idea of a common cultural identity within the East African community. During the second part of the tournament, the participants played with their own delegation members, when it became more challenging to balance their desired to make it to the finals versus the importance of the fair play on the pitch.

An important aspect of the football3 tournament was the role of young leaders who implemented the tournament and acted as mediators. In addition to mediating the pre-match discussion, match, and post-match discussion, the young leaders did an important job in lightening the mood and fostering friendship between all the delegations by engaging them in singing and dancing traditional songs, which set the tone during the festival.

The finals and semi-finals of the tournament took place at the Iringa Football for Hope Centre, where all the participants of the festival - including delegation leaders, young leaders and players, gather to celebrate the last day of the festival and enjoy the beauty of the game. The main highlight of the final game of the tournament was the conduct of the two teams, an example of fair play on and off the pitch.
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FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS - football3 TOURNAMENT
Having representatives from all the East African members of the streetfootballworld network and other organisations from the region that use football as a tool for social change in one place at the same time is another reason behind having these regional festivals on an annual basis.

The East African regional network within the greater streetfootballworld network is truly a leader in terms of dedication, enthusiasm, and passion to uniting around a common cause. This has been particularly evident in the past year when the organisations have taken the initiative and formed a coordination committee that ensures regular communication between all members, and leads the planning and implementation of certain regional events.

During the East Africa Festival 2015, the representatives from the participating organisations met to discuss further cooperation between the members of the East African network in the field of football for good.

Among the agenda items were an overview of major events that took place in 2015, a look forward to upcoming events in 2016, and planning for a meeting next year to review the streetfootballworld East African strategic plan. They also discussed how the coordination committee will continue to run, and that new members of the committee will be elected in April in Kitale, Kenya. Resource mobilisation and network development were also discussed.

As highlighted during the meetings, the most important goals on the agenda of the East African network for the year 2016 are: fostering peaceful coexistence within the East African region and exploring the potential of football to foster mutual understanding, empowering women in the East African region, and providing formal and non-formal education for the region’s young people.

TYSA founder Francis Gichuki spoke at length about the festival’s role in facilitating new experiences and cultural exchanges between the young people in attendance:

“The festival provides opportunities for workshops, opportunities for learning from each other and opportunities to play and have fun. When the young people are traveling 24 hours from Kampala or travelling the same hours from Burundi they are learning a lot from the experience, and that is the beauty about this festival: it provides the adventure itself.”

In addition to the meetings, the delegation leaders engaged in a football match to show the young people the potential of football to foster cooperation and friendship. They also took part in an excursion to Ruaha National Park, where they spent valuable time together amongst the beautiful flora and fauna of Tanzania.
This year’s instalment of the East Africa Festival is hosted by Iringa Development of Youth, Disabled and Children Care (IDYDC) under the leadership of Johnnie Nkoma. Johnnie shared his perspective on the East Africa Festival project, which is now in its third year:

“The main purpose of the initiative is to unite all of our youth from East Africa because we believe that, in social development, we are all one person. We are all working in similar programmes and similar activities, so this is a way to unite our youth which will bring peace and joy to all the members of East Africa.”

Johnnie went on to express his pride at hosting the 2015 instalment of the event as well as his enthusiasm towards this year’s cultural exchange dimension:

“It is a pleasure for us in Iringa to host this festival because by inviting and hosting the other members we have the opportunity to share our culture, learn from each other and exchange experiences. The other members are coming from very far away – including for example Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan and DRC. When they come here we show them our culture, which they can experience and take the things that are good and use in their countries.”

Peacebuilding through football has been a key topic of the festivities this year and Johnnie was quick to point out the significance of this pursuit:

“We need to address our thoughts to the community and convey the message that we need peace in our countries.”

Elaborating on this point, he also stressed the footballing notion of ‘fair play’ as a great tool for communicating a positive message to young players. This, he explained, has a positive effect for the community as it enables young people to understand the importance of conflict resolution throughout the region.
A new addition to the festival this year was the Premier Skills Community Coach training sessions, led by three experienced Coach Educators from Zambia. This was a fantastic opportunity for around thirty young leaders from the participating organisations, as well as host IDYDC’s coaches, to learn coaching techniques that foster fair play and equitable behaviour, and that create a safe environment for meaningful, enjoyable, and inclusive coaching sessions.

The training had a classroom component as well as practical sessions on the pitch. The sessions were designed to be highly interactive, with the coaches learning skills to improve their coaching in a community setting to ensure that they are as inclusive and player-centred as possible. A lot of focus was placed on what makes the most effective coach, and how to address certain challenges when it comes to coaching in communities specifically.

The feedback from these sessions was very positive, and several participants and delegation leaders remarked that having the Premier Skills session as part and parcel of the festival was a highlight for them.
Alongside opportunities for regional networking were many opportunities for cultural exchange. This took place informally, with young people from different cultural backgrounds living in the same dormitories for the duration of the festival, as well as through structured activities.

Each evening of the festival featured dance performances from local dance troupes, and comedy from one of the participants from Kenya, all enjoyed over traditional Tanzanian food. With all the players, and most of the other delegates at the festival, being most comfortable in Swahili, this was also the first festival that was led almost entirely in the Swahili language (with some English translation from one of the IDYDC staff members).

Overall, the festival achieved its objectives, and participants had positive feedback on the activities and organisation of the events. For many of the younger participants, it was their first opportunity to travel any great distance, so even just the journey to Iringa itself (for most, this meant several days on a bus) was an adventure. While the organisations take a year off regional events in preparation for the global festival taking place in Lyon in 2016, we have ample time to prepare for the next East African festival in Kampala, Uganda, in 2017.
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OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS

Objective

The overarching objective of this festival was to use football as a tool to promote peace in the East Africa region.

Outcomes

The East Africa Peace Festival achieved its objectives by creating a platform for young people and representatives from football for good organisations from across East Africa to interact, exchange, and play football together. The football3 methodology was used during a two-day tournament, prior to which participants were trained in the methodology. There were also formal and informal opportunities for exchange, and delegation leaders took part in two days of workshops. Young leaders from several countries and organisations in East Africa were trained as mediators in the football3 methodology, and went on to train the players in football3 and mediate during the tournament. The festival also provided an opportunity for organisations working in the field of football for good to further strengthen their network and bonds.

New to this festival was the inclusion of a Premier Skills community coaches training course, which provided an opportunity for nearly 30 community coaches from across East Africa to improve their coaching skills through the Premier Skills curriculum.

Next steps

The streetfootballworld network members have taken the initiative to continue to develop, entrench, and promote the use of football as a tool for social change in East Africa, using the momentum of the festival as a catalyst. They have planned a meeting in April 2016 in Kitale, Kenya (hosted by TYSA), which organisations will attend at their own cost. They will use this meeting to review their strategic plan for the region and work on a road map for future regional activities.

Given that there will be a large, global festival hosted by streetfootballworld in Lyon in mid-2016 that many of these organisations will be attending, the decision was taken to hold the next East Africa Festival in 2017. Soccer without Borders from Kampala, Uganda, volunteered to host the fourth edition of the streetfootballworld East Africa Peace Festival, with support from our two other Ugandan network members, The Kids League and Youth Environment Service (YES). We are already looking forward to another successful celebration of peace and football in East Africa in 2017.