

Award for the Non Governmental Organisation of the Year:

## **PLAY SOCCER**



### **A decade of using education and recreation to empower children, youth and communities**

For ten years, PLAY SOCCER has pioneered a holistic educational program that unites children, youth and communities to promote grassroots development through sport. It has demonstrated a commitment to building sustainable peace and stability by empowering children and youth to lead change in Africa's most underserved communities.

PLAY SOCCER believes that sport can provide a platform for children to access education and learn the values of tolerance and sharing, loyalty and respect that go beyond any religious, racial, social and cultural conflict. PLAY SOCCER uses sport as a vector for development because it encourages understanding, mutual respect and brings human beings together.

The PLAY SOCCER program is well established with core programs in six African countries: Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, Senegal, South Africa and Zambia. This network of affiliated national organizations implement the PLAY SOCCER program and adhere to its core principles to ensure quality, consistency and accountability. In 2009 alone, over 14,000 children were registered, and the program has through the years reached a cumulative total of at least 40,000 children. As funding permits, the program continues to expand each national program, and aims to open in new countries and continents.

PLAY SOCCER's low cost development model and holistic curriculum runs all year-round and provides underserved young girls and boys, aged 5-15 with free educational access to health, social and life skills they need for their future. At the same time, children enjoy the physical and recreational benefits of participating in the world's most popular sport. Each weekly session integrates a well-defined health, social and football/soccer curriculum through activity-based education.

Topics such as peaceful solutions, respect and fair play form part of the social curriculum whereas health topics focus on how the body works and how to care for it through disease prevention, hygiene and nutrition. Life skills concentrate on encouraging children and youth to lead productive and peaceful lives through teaching self-esteem, leadership and teamwork. This is how PLAY SOCCER weaves a full curriculum into sport activities that are fun and participatory and further provide adjunct language and literacy skills.

Equally important is an investment in the training of the youth/young adults who are locally recruited as volunteer instructors for the program. Education and development activities for them are realized through well organized training workshops, helping them gain credentials and marketable experience with leaderships skills that bring personal balance and can be reinvested in their communities. A sustainable program base is created through their yearly commitment to community service, volunteerism and self-help. By drawing on community resources to run its programs, PLAY SOCCER builds from the grassroots “up” with its mission to empower and unite children and youth as agents of change.

The fundamental underlying principle of PLAY SOCCER’s program is to allow children and youth to spread the practice of recreational sport as a stabilizing factor for themselves, their families and their community at large. Soccer is used as a universal language to promote friendship, education and civic engagement across all ages and attendance and participation is independent of socio-economic status. By ensuring the program remains accessible and open to all, PLAY SOCCER encourages individuals to get involved and develop their full potential and at the same time build their solidarity of purpose, creating a powerful impetus for healthy and peaceful human development.

Beyond grassroot involvement in Africa, as a registered USA 501 C 3 charitable organization, PLAY SOCCER Nonprofit International constantly strives to foster global solidarity among children and youth around the world. The charity supports the United Nations Millennium Development Goals through the organization of an annual high-profile advocacy event: The Global Peace Games. In 2009, its international leadership for the Global Peace Games for Children and Youth, which PLAY SOCCER has organized since 2001, engaged more than 80 organizations in 55 countries, the largest ever participation for this grassroot event which unites children and youth around the world to demonstrate their central role in the mission of peace and development.

As an organization, PLAY SOCCER Nonprofit International is firmly committed to working collaboratively at all levels-- with other NGOs, Sport Federations, Universities, Government Ministries, the UN agencies and the UN Office on Sport for Development and Peace - to maximize impact and to use scarce resources in the most effective manner. PLAY SOCCER has also achieved NGO Consultative Status at the United Nations for its work in development through sport.