



Grassroot Soccer South Africa Capacity Statement

Grassroot Soccer is an adolescent health organisation that uses the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilise young people to live healthier lives and be agents for change in their communities.

Organisational Capacity:

Grassroot Soccer (GRS) was founded in 2002 by former professional soccer players who sought to improve the HIV prevention response in Zimbabwe through skills-based behaviour change programming. The Grassroot Soccer model and methodology is based on training local young adult mentors (Caring Coaches) to implement activity-based and sport-themed health education curricula to young people. The programme has since been expanded to provide a wide range of health education interventions and scaled to reach over two million young people worldwide. Grassroot Soccer implements its own programmes through locally-registered affiliate organisations in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe and shares its model through innovative partnerships with a wide range of civil society organisations and governments in over 50 countries. Grassroot Soccer brings extensive experience in **adolescent sexual and reproductive health, gender transformative positive youth development, HIV prevention, testing, and linkage to treatment and care, voluntary medical male circumcision, and community mobilisation**. Highlighting the gender-transformative nature of its interventions, over **50% of current Grassroot Soccer programme participants are adolescent girls and young women**.

In collaboration with a variety of research institutions and funders, Grassroot Soccer has participated in **27 research studies focussed on the health of adolescents and young adults since 2005 in over 20 countries**. Findings published in publications such as *AIDS and Behavior*, *New Directions for Youth Development*, and *the British Journal of Sports Medicine* have shown that the Grassroot Soccer model has successfully increased participant knowledge, health seeking behaviours, uptake and adherence to health services, increased communication about sexual health, and improved attitudes toward gender norms and stigma and discrimination, as well as provided young people with the skills to empower themselves and others.

History of Grassroot Soccer South Africa

GRS South Africa (GRS SA) was founded in 2006, and is the largest affiliate of Grassroot Soccer. It is an independently registered non-profit organisation (registered with the Department of Social Development) with its own fully-fledged Board of Directors. GRS SA has grown rapidly over the last decade and boasts a staff component of almost 100 employees, with approximately 200 Caring Coaches who deliver evidence-based programmes to between 20,000 - 50,000 adolescents and young adults per year in communities across South Africa. This includes direct delivery in Gauteng and Western Cape Provinces, as well as established partnerships across the country. Since inception in 2006, GRS SA has reached over 300,000 participants and tested over 45,000 youth across all nine provinces in South Africa.

Funders include government, foundations and private sector partners, such as the Ford Foundation, Comic Relief, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, ExxonMobil, the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, the Centre for Communication Impact, PEPFAR and USAID.



Read an independently-produced USAID Photo Essay about GRS's Model and Programmes [here](#).

GRS SA is an important member of the South Africa National AIDS Council (SANAC) and has aligned its work to the country's HIV and AIDS response and government health priorities, whilst using international evidence to frame its programmes. GRS SA is one of a few select organisations that has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) allowing the organisation to cascade its programmes through primary and secondary schools. GRS has South African headquarter offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and programmatic sites in Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

GRS SA has established partnerships with a wide range of partners, including ANOVA Health Institute, CARE, TB/HIV Care Association, SANTA, Aurum Institute, and the Johannesburg Regional Health Department. Other partners include Standard Chartered Bank, Childline, Thuthuzela Care Centers, Sonke Gender Justice, Soul City Institute for Social Justice and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading.

In addition, GRS SA has relationships at multiple levels with the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Social Development, the South African Football Association, South African Football Association Cape Town, the South Africa Police Services, and the Department of Sport and Recreation. The organisation's multi-faceted approach (health, education, soccer, youth development, child protection) puts GRS in a unique position to serve as a link between various wings of government and social services. Finally, GRS SA has strong relationships with researchers from the University of Western Cape, the University of Cape Town and University of Witwatersrand. GRS SA is an affiliate member of the Sport for Social Change Network.

Evidence-based Approaches and Programmes:

Grassroot Soccer's interventions contribute directly to UNAIDS' global **90-90-90** targets, and thus the organisation is well-positioned to support a range of public health initiatives both as a direct implementer and technical assistance provider to both large consortia and local partners.

To see more about the research underlying GRS programmes, see this [link](#) to the most recent research report.

GRS Example: Gender, Sexuality, and Reproductive Health Education for Adolescent Girls

Grassroot Soccer has developed age appropriate programmes to strengthen the assets of adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 10 and 19. Underlining the demonstrated impact of Grassroot Soccer's girls-focussed programme, in 2016 USAID selected Grassroot Soccer as a **DREAMS sub-grantee in both South Africa and Zimbabwe** and recognises its SKILLZ curriculum in Malawi as one the **core DREAMS interventions** utilised by implementing partners nationwide. Grassroot Soccer uses trusted female mentors to create a safe atmosphere for learning and to improve girls' knowledge of SRHR, including HIV, gender-based violence (GBV), and encourages reflection and dialogue about gender roles and norms that may limit them. It transcends barriers for girls' participation in sport and focusses on empowerment and gender-specific issues linked to the spread of HIV. GRS also works with community leaders and health workers to improve their ability to deliver adolescent-friendly services, including comprehensive services for survivors of GBV. Two independent evaluations of GRS gender and sexuality programmes for adolescent girls showed consistent improvement in **self-esteem, self-confidence, and utilisation of SRH services** amongst participants. GRS has implemented these programmes directly and/or through implementing partners in 14 countries.

[GRS's More Than Just a Game Report](#) details its approach and evidence when working with adolescent girls.