

## OUR APPROACH TO HIV PREVENTION



### INTRODUCTION

Grassroot Soccer Inc. is a non-profit organisation that uses the power of soccer to educate, inspire and mobilise communities to stop the spread of HIV. To achieve our mission, we continuously improve our innovative HIV prevention and life-skills curriculum, share our program and concept effectively, and utilise the popularity of soccer to increase our impact.

Grassroot Soccer has programs in 15 countries around the world with flagship sites in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. More than half of the countries where we work fall into the category of critically weak or weak states.<sup>1</sup> Grassroot Soccer believes that under such difficult circumstances there exists immense potential for youth to engage in a transformational process that will improve their health and wellbeing and that of their communities. Grassroot Soccer strives to find innovative ways to help youth engage in this process.

Grassroot Soccer has reached more than 400,000 youth through youth-centred life skills, resiliency and HIV prevention curricula and trained nearly 2,000 facilitators through our dynamic Training of Trainers (ToT). Grassroot Soccer, through its Research and Development team, specialises in designing participatory youth development curricula and ToTs for community-based peer educators and youth mentors.

As a winner of the 2008 Nike/Ashoka Sport for a Better World Competition, Grassroot Soccer was named one of the three most innovative, effective, and sustainable organisations in the Sports for Development Field (out of 382 organisations entered from 69 countries).

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<sup>1</sup>These figures are drawn from Susan E. Rice and Stewart Patrick, *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World*, Brookings Institution, 2008. Hewitt, Wilkenfeld, and Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2008*, Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 2008.

## GRASSROOT SOCCER'S APPROACH TO HIV PREVENTION

### GOAL

Our goal is to use the power of soccer to educate, inspire and mobilise communities to stop the spread of HIV.

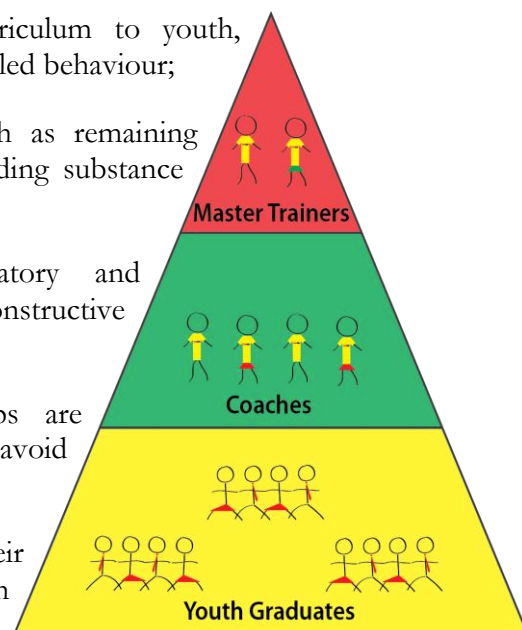
### APPROACH

Our approach to youth HIV prevention is guided by sound **health behaviour theory**, informed by **outcomes based management** that incorporates **relevant research and promising practice**, and energised by a healthy dose of **Grassroot Soccer culture**. This approach is shared, and expanded upon; with strategic partners whose expertise strengthens the impact of our programs.

### GUIDED BY THEORY

Grassroot Soccer's curriculum was developed in early 2003 following extensive consultation with the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, behavioural scientists, and educational consultants. Among the behavioural scientists that had a lasting influence on the curriculum was Albert Bandura. Bandura is best known for expanding on the Social Learning Theory (SLT) that suggests a combination of environmental (social) and psychological factors influence behavior. As a result, Grassroot Soccer applies the following principles in the design and delivery of the curriculum:

- Enthusiastic and engaging role models deliver the curriculum to youth, increasing the likelihood of a participant adopting the modeled behaviour;
- Role models demonstrate health seeking behaviours, such as remaining faithful to one partner, going for HIV testing, and avoiding substance abuse, provide positive examples for participants;
- Curricular activities are participant-centered, participatory and incorporate fun celebrations that provide youth with constructive recognition for desired outcomes;
- Support networks and caring interpersonal relationships are developed to help establish self- and group-efficacy to avoid behaviour that can lead to HIV infection; and
- Participants are given opportunities to take action in their community on key issues, solidifying the values they attach to desired behaviours and becoming a role model to others.



Based on youth resiliency literature, Grassroot Soccer believes that the key to HIV prevention extends beyond simply learning the facts about HIV, but is rooted in key life skills.

Grassroot Soccer's curriculum focuses on building basic life skills that help boys and girls adopt healthy behaviours and live risk-free. Relying on primary and secondary youth resiliency research, Grassroot Soccer has developed interactive activities that extend beyond simply teaching participants the facts about HIV, but allow them the opportunity to practice the skills necessary for sustainable behaviour change. Key curricular topics include making healthy decisions, avoiding risks, building support networks, reducing stigma and discrimination, increasing knowledge about testing and treatment, addressing gender issues, and assessing values.

## INFORMED BY OUTCOMES AND RESEARCH

Little is known about what makes effective youth HIV prevention programs, making it imperative that programs closely monitor activities and outputs, and measure and analyse impact to inform future programs. Grassroot Soccer is at the cutting edge of these efforts by bridging the gap between the not-for-profit and private sectors. In collaboration with experts from Salesforce.com, we have developed an innovative online monitoring and evaluation database - The Skillz Scoreboard - that greatly facilitates timely data collection, analysis and reporting and enables the use of data in program management and organisational strategy decision-making.

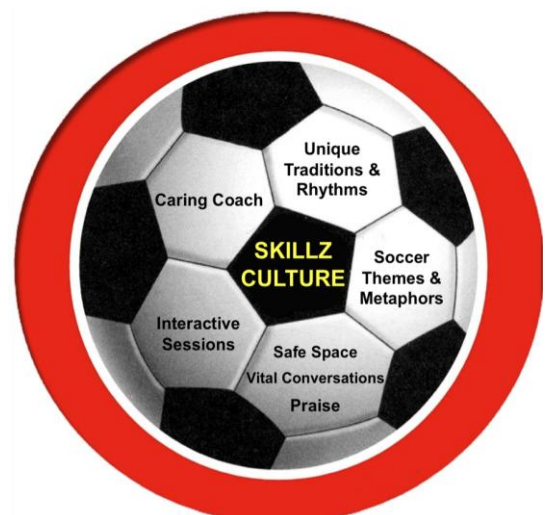
Numerous formal evaluations - conducted by Stanford University’s Children’s Health Council, consultants from The Population Council and the Harvard School of Public Health, and researchers from Dartmouth College, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Cape Town - have documented Grassroot Soccer’s effectiveness in significantly reducing sexual risk behaviour, decreasing stigma, and improving students’ knowledge, attitudes, communication, decision-making skills, and perceived social support related to HIV and AIDS. Surveying over 300 students in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, Stanford University’s Children’s Health Council concluded that “The Grassroot Soccer program is a culturally appropriate, internationally suitable, creative, and effective way to educate at-risk youth about HIV/AIDS and its prevention.” Similarly encouraging results have emerged in recent years from formal evaluations in Zambia, South Africa, Sudan, Liberia, Botswana, Ethiopia, and the Dominican Republic.

Grassroot Soccer’s commitment to staying up-to-date with research is evident in our engagement of experts in the field through our Research Advisory Council. Members of the Council advise us through their knowledge of the current research and years of experience in the fields of HIV and AIDS, education and youth development. For more information on this Council visit: [http://www.grassrootsoccer.org/who-we-are/our-team/Grassroot Soccer-research-advisory-council/](http://www.grassrootsoccer.org/who-we-are/our-team/Grassroot-Soccer-research-advisory-council/).



## ENERGISED BY CULTURE

The most intangible – but possibly most critical – component of the Grassroot Soccer approach is culture. Anyone who has ever witnessed a Grassroot Soccer practice has observed firsthand how every aspect of the intervention is infused with activity, unique traditions and rhythms, soccer themes and metaphors, and safe space where vital conversation and praise are the norm; all with a dynamic caring coach leading the way. This culture provides youth with a strong and healthy identity and has resulted in a consistent graduation rate of over 80%.

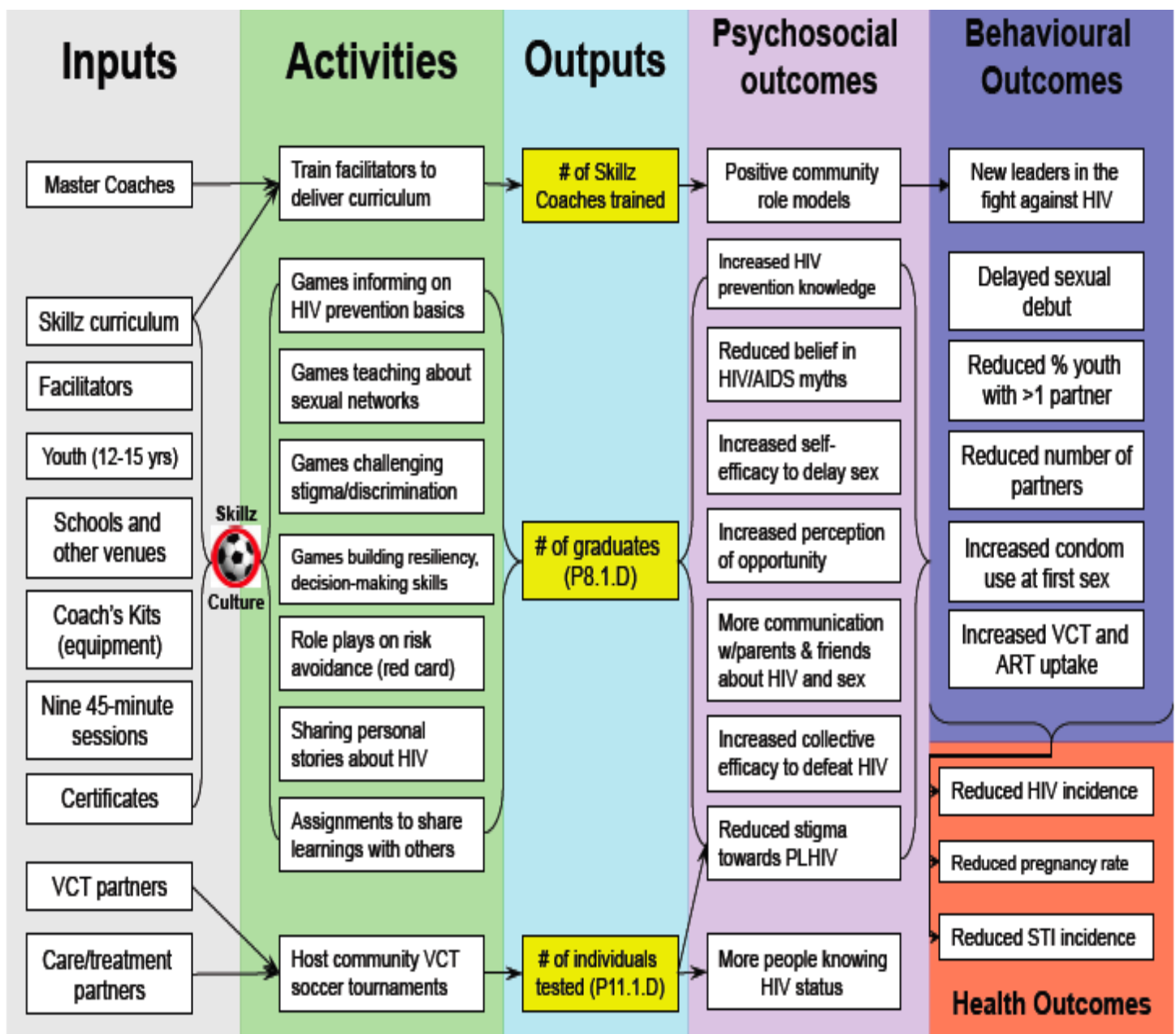


## SKILLZ CORE

Skillz is a culture, mindset, and toolkit for educators to use when teaching young people about HIV and AIDS and life skills. Skillz creates simple but powerful connections between soccer (sport) and life skills. The Skillz approach helps young people have relevant and important discussions about life, take small steps to achieve their goals, stay strong when faced with challenges, and protect themselves and others from HIV and AIDS.

The Skillz Coach's Guide is a cutting edge, youth-based and evidence-supported interactive HIV prevention and life skills curriculum designed for 12-14 year-olds. Young adult educators called Skillz Coaches deliver the curriculum in various settings including schools and other youth groups.

## SKILLZ CORE LOGIC MODEL



## SKILLZ INTERVENTIONS TABLE

Curriculum/Intervention	Target Audience	Description
<b>Skillz Core</b>	11-14 year olds	Nine practices (sessions), 45 minutes each. Coaches/Teachers deliver to young people.
<b>Generation Skillz</b>	15-19 year olds	10 practices (sessions), 45 minutes each. Coaches/Teachers deliver to young people.
<b>Skillz Holiday</b>	11-14 or 15-19 year olds	Five-day, seven hours/day intervention during school holidays. Coaches/Teachers deliver Skillz Core or Generation Skillz Coach's Guide content plus additional activities to young people.
<b>Skillz Street</b>	11-14 or 15-19 year old females	Weekly after-school intervention throughout school quarter. Coaches/Teachers deliver Skillz or Generation Skillz Coach's Guide content plus fair play soccer and additional activities to young girls.
<b>Skillz Tournament</b>	12 years old and above	One-day tournament combining Skillz activities, HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) and soccer.

For additional information on any of the above interventions, please contact James Donald at [jamesd@grassrootsoccer.org](mailto:jamesd@grassrootsoccer.org)

### Using the Power of Soccer in the Fight Against HIV and Aids

