

FIFA, Roger Milla unite against malaria

Campaign using football to help reach shared goal to end malaria deaths by 2015.



A campaign inspired by the first FIFA World Cup in Africa has been given the full support of FIFA and World Cup legend Roger Milla in Johannesburg today. World football's governing body and the star of the 1990 World Cup underlined that they are fully behind the United Against Malaria campaign, a partnership of football teams, celebrities, health and advocacy organisations, governments, corporations, and individuals who have united around the 2010 World Cup in South Africa to help win the fight against malaria. Both FIFA and Milla intend to play their part in ending deaths from a disease that kills a child in Africa every 30 seconds.

Despite the heavy toll malaria inflicts on Africa, it is totally preventable and treatable. There has been significant progress in delivering long-lasting insecticide treated nets and indoor spraying, as well as new front line treatments, but more action is needed to reach the international target of reducing malaria deaths to near zero by 2015. The support of both FIFA and Milla will help meet the campaign's objectives of maintaining the focus of leadership in fighting the disease amongst leaders in Africa and also play a crucial role in delivering messages on using mosquito nets and seeking treatment within 24 hours.

One of the real legacies of the World Cup

"The FIFA World Cup in South Africa is a very special occasion and we hope that by holding the tournament in Africa it will have a positive impact on the whole continent. We have asked national teams in Africa to take on a cause to support and use their profile to make a difference in their countries," said Federico Addiechi, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, FIFA. "The United Against Malaria campaign is one of the real legacies to come from the FIFA World Cup and FIFA is happy to support the malaria community to achieve our collective aim of virtually ending malaria deaths by 2015."

The campaign already boasts the support of 16 national football associations in Africa, as well as top footballers such as Kei Touré, Michael Essien, Didier Drogba, Fredi Kanoute and Landon Donovan. The long-term support of Roger Milla, one of the best known African footballers of all time, will help ensure malaria remains a focus for leaders across Africa.

"I have suffered from malaria, my friends and family have suffered from malaria and Africa has suffered from malaria for too long," said Roger Milla, former Cameroon international. "This World Cup is special as the first one in Africa and by using football, the United Against Malaria campaign has built up a formidable partnership to end deaths from this terrible disease. I know I cannot make a big difference alone, and that is why I have signed up to be a member of the United Against Malaria team."

Powerful allies

One of the major challenges over the coming years will be to ensure that treatment and prevention tools are used correctly and that African leadership maintains its focus on malaria. These are both areas where football can use its almost universal appeal across the continent to help overcome these challenges. Football can reach into the most remote corners of the continent, and as such, can play an important role in delivering messages to make sure mosquito nets are firstly used and secondly used correctly.

"FIFA, and their president Sepp Blatter, have been instrumental in the success of our campaign to date. By encouraging national football associations to take on a cause we have found willing partners in countries like Ghana, Tanzania and

Uganda, amongst others," said Herve Verhoosel, external relations manager of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership. "We have the long-term support of a number of national football associations to help us to end malaria deaths. With FIFA and Roger Milla on board we have some powerful allies in our mission to one day end malaria deaths."

A number of partners have signed up to the campaign, including global health organisations, governments, corporations and football teams ahead of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. The bond that has developed between national malaria control programmes and national football associations is a particularly strong outcome of the UAM campaign so far and will make a strong contribution to behavioural change campaigns to reduce the malaria burden moving forward.

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