

'Adopt a Nation' school campaign kicks off

The 2010 FIFA World Cup Organising Committee South Africa (SALOC), in partnership with the national Departments of Education and Sport and Recreation, has kicked off the special school campaign "Adopt a Nation", targeting over 12 million scholars from over 30 000 schools throughout the country.

One of the most important aspects of the 2010 FIFA World Cup is to involve and integrate the entire population from every corner of the country. And there's no better way to do this than to reach out to the country's school pupils, their teachers and their parents.

"Our aim is to make this global event, located here in South Africa, appeal to every province and city across the country and the continent. Schools have been identified as a primary vehicle to get the 2010 FIFA World Cup messages not only to children, but indeed families and communities in South Africa and the African continent. Our schools have a vital role to wet the appetite for the world's showcase football events - next year's FIFA Confederations Cup and the first African FIFA World Cup in 2010 - and we want every pupil in this country to be part of these historic events," said Dr Irvin Khoza, SALOC Chairman, at the launch of the programme at the Nasrec Sports Precinct in Johannesburg.

The campaign is part of the 'My 2010 School Adventure' project, focusing on three key pillars; education, development (sports skills and coaching) and participation in regional and nationwide schools football tournaments. In the first phase the pupils and teachers will as part of their school curriculum learn more about the teams participating at next year's FIFA Confederations Cup and build relationships with schools in the countries who have qualified. Schools have already been playing in provincial schools tournaments and the winning teams from all provinces will play in the schools Confederations Cup finals in March next year - standing a chance to win tickets to the tournament.

The FIFA Confederations Cup, held from 14 to 28 June 2009, also known as the "Festival of Champions" features the current champions of the six FIFA Confederations, reigning world champions and next FIFA World Cup hosts, namely Brazil, Egypt, Iraq, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, United States and hosts South Africa.

From September 2008 to January 2009, pupils from across the country will work on creative elements such as essays, poetry, art projects, music and dance performances relating to the FIFA Confederations Cup, with the winning submissions also standing a chance to win tickets for the FIFA Confederations Cup 2009 and 2010 FIFA World Cup. Another aspect of the programme is that thousands of teachers will also be given specialised coaching courses in an effort to improve the standard of schools football.

"It is of major importance for our scholars - the future of our nation - to learn about the cultures and history of other countries, and what better way than to include them through a progressive programme such as 'Adopt a Nation' which will empower our young academics with knowledge that will stand them in good stead in years to come," said Naledi Pandor, Minister of Education.

Ambassadors and representatives from the eight FIFA Confederations Cup nations joined in the launch festivities at Nasrec, at which South Africa's nine provinces symbolically 'adopted' each one of the eight

participants, as well as the African Union in a random draw. They will now learn more about the FIFA Confederations Cup, and about the countries they “adopted” today. Zakumi, the Official Mascot of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, who quickly gained popularity after his worldwide debut this week, was also on hand to entertain hundreds of school pupils at the launch event.

“The ‘Adopt A Nation’ programme is a venture that will revolutionise sport and education in SA ahead of world class soccer showpiece events of the calibre of the FIFA Confederation Cup and the 2010 FIFA World Cup. We trust that pupils’ aspirations on the sport and academic fronts will be taken to new heights as a result of their involvement in the programme,” said Minister of Sport and Recreation, Rev Dr Makhenkesi Stofile.

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