

A Very Special World Cup

Springboard Foundation believes it is not enough to just shelter and feed children; but to give them a chance to explore their talents in music, dance, sports as well. We were thrilled when Craig Burrows approached Springboard for help with the project to bring street children from the Philippines to compete in the first ever Deloitte Foundation Street Children's World Cup (SCWC) in South Africa.



The Springboard Foundation have once again lived up to their name; "when I was first asked to assist with the team for the Street Children's World Cup dream I did quick mental math, sorry I do not think we can raise the money and being brutally honest I was not convinced it would be worth the cost. How wrong I was! Springboard donated 50,000 pesos as soon as they heard of the project" Craig Burrows said and with the support of the Angus Lawson Memorial Trust, Deutsche Bank, the British Women's Association, The British Chamber of Commerce, a number of local donors soon followed and we had enough to send a complete team.

Now the Philippines is not a football playing nation and finding a team that would become the pride of the nation was not going to be easy so Ed Formoso organized a competition between as many street children teams as possible and asked the players from the Homeless People's World Cup team to be the scouts for our under 16 team. We then set about regular games against the strongest local teams. For gender fairness each team was supposed to have three girls and had to have one playing on the pitch throughout every match, we went one better and chose a young girl called Erica to captain the team. She proved an inspirational choice and led by example.

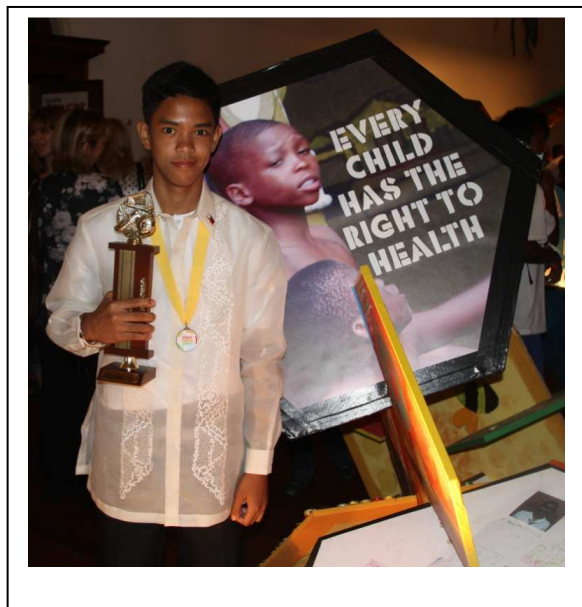


Even being well prepared we were very concerned that we would face football nations like Brazil and the UK knowing they had football so strongly engrained in their cultures. However arriving in South Africa the children quickly made friends and nerves and concerns evaporated as children united from eight countries not just for football but for a far more important reason; NGOs in South Africa had started to see street child round-ups and we wanted the world's press to focus on the need to protect street children's rights – what better way to focus the world then by showing how well street children can represent their countries. This was the point that finally won Craig over and showed not just the potential of the SCWC, but led it to achieve its objectives. On one of the first days of the tournament police were seen rounding up street children, journalists were there and took photos and were able to talk to the children while in the back of the police van. One of the children was even wearing a tournament t-shirt. The children were soon back in the care of an NGO based in Durban and a meeting was quickly arranged with city officials. With the press spotlight on the organizers, they were able to present the case for not rounding up the street children, we were pleased to see the authorities listened! That was not the only success: on the first day of the tournament a young lad from Tanzania walked in, he had seen posters up around the city and found his way to the venue. It turned out he had been bought to South Africa illegally from Tanzania and his only ID card was from the Tanzanian national youth football team. He is now reunited with his family.



So what about the Football? The Filipinos sadly lost the first match against the UK but managed to score twice against opponents who towered over them, within half an hour of losing they were up and dancing and gained the respect of all the other teams. They went on to beat Brazil, Ukraine and then came the crunch match – they had to play the hosts South Africa in the Shield Final... the game was well fought. The two team managers were Craig and a long time friend of Craig's Tom Hewitt. After full time the score was 1 -1 so extra time was in play. The Filipinos picked up the pace, though clearly exhausted, they finally scored and at the final whistle they ran for the South African flag and ran a lap of the stadium saluting the South African street kids who had played just as well. There was not a dry eye in the stadium!

The dream is that now no one will look at a street child the same way, hopefully they will now think "that child could one day represent my country".



Holding the trophy at the victory party



Raymond on the shoulders of the crowd at the victory party wearing a Barong Tagalog for the first time



Dressed for success after victory