

CHIAWA "SPIRIT OF THE CUP" PROJECT



Chiawa celebrates at Ellis Park Stadium in the center of Johannesburg

The dust has long settled in the soccer pitches of Chiawa and the excitement of the FIFA World Cup is over with Spain taking home the trophy. Five young men were afforded the opportunity to attend the games in South Africa via the efforts of EXPLORE and our friends and donors. The concept was born over a glass of fine red wine one snowy winter evening last December in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Cherri and I decided we had to participate in some way in the FIFA 2010 World Cup to be hosted in South Africa. Thus began the Chiawa "Spirit of the Cup Project," the natural culmination of our work in the villages of Chiawa to develop a local sports league over the last couple of years.

We decided to hold a two day, six-a-side tournament at the end of May for the villages of Chiawa in Zambia prior to the commencement of the official FIFA 2010 World Cup in June and take the winners to the games. Before returning to Africa we raised the funds for the event and ordered the equipment for the games. Sixteen teams were invited to participate from the villages near Ndorochena Lodge, our home on the Lower Zambezi. When the teams arrived at the dirt and gravel soccer field for the tournament, each of their captains drew from the names of 16 of the countries which would participate in the World Cup starting in a few weeks. The respective teams would play for the duration of the tournament under the flag of that country. 160 players received shirts with their 'country' name embroidered on them and each team was given official FIFA balls and vuvuzelas (horns) which we ordered from South Africa. Our tournament was held over a weekend and formatted in the same way as the FIFA 2010 World Cup. We had four groups consisting of four teams, each team having to play each other once. The top two teams in each group progressed to the quarterfinals, semifinals and then finals.

EXPLORE'S NEXT PROJECT?

We are in the process of raising funds for university scholarships for Chiawa students... so the hope doesn't stop here! Please call us for more details!
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Participation was enthusiastic to say the least. Not only did all players receive the gifts of the equipment and fun of the competition, but the prize was a big one... **five young villagers would be heading to South Africa to watch two World Cup matches live, the dream of a lifetime!** The winners would be selected at the final by drawing one name from each of the teams playing the final. A third "wildcard" ticket would be drawn from all other participants, giving



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everyone who played a chance at the big prize. A fourth player who best exemplified the "Spirit of the Cup" was to be chosen as "Player of the Tournament". A fifth prize was reserved for a local chaperone who would escort the boys on the trip. This prize winner was chosen on the basis of his contribution to the community. The stage was set.

Competition was fierce and grew in intensity as the tournament went on, with 32 games being played in 16 hours over two days. At the end of the grueling weekend the finalists had emerged. "Germany" met "Cameroon" in the final and won 2 to 1. The draw for the winners took place before the final began to ensure that all were present for the wildcard draw. The name of the local chaperone was announced. At the end of the day, five young men could not believe their luck - they were off to the FIFA 2010 World Cup!

- Isaiah Museto / Chaperone from Chiawa
- Kizito Nchinunya / Chiawa, Chitendi High School
- Christopher Bwalya / Chiawa, Chitendi High School
- John Malomo / Zalanga near Chiawa
- Davison Kapomba / Kabwadu Village in Chiawa

After two long, drawn out weeks of seemingly endless trips to Lusaka to organize passports and other details, we eventually touched down at Oliver Tambo airport in Johannesburg. After a long wait in customs in the company of chanting and singing Ghanian fans, we were off to the Monte Casino Fan Park. It was time to get into the spirit of the World Cup. These village boys were now in a very different world and soaked up the experiences of arguably the best sporting event on the planet. It was a late first night. The next day we were up bright and early to visit the fan stores to kit up (essential as Johannesburg was experiencing one of its coldest winters on record). The cold could not deter the guys' excitement. It was off to Ellis Park to watch USA v Slovenia... a cracking game ending in a 2-2 draw. The boys were ecstatic, blowing their vuvuzelas endlessly. That night we stayed in to enjoy the hospitality of the hotel. It got even better for the boys when they saw themselves being interviewed on TV; they didn't realize the game would broadcast so soon or that they might be on international television! Hopefully their friends in Chiawa were watching at the local school which we had provided with a TV and satellite coverage. My son Chaz arrived with clothing and gifts he had collected from my family and his friends. It was like Christmas with soccer on the side, a great night for all.

The next day after a huge breakfast at the Courtyard Hotel we were off to Pretoria to see our next game, Cameroon v Denmark. Another thriller ending in a 2-1 victory for Denmark. We all wanted to see Africa win but it was not to be. After a long night of festivities, we returned to the hotel. In the morning the boys were due to fly back to Zambia. It was hard saying goodbye as I knew they were returning to a life full of extreme hardships which few of us will ever comprehend. Yet through the extreme generosity of all our donors and the contributions of many other good-hearted people, these boys were given the gift of a lifetime. I feel it instilled in them the belief that anything is possible. They told me this many times over the course of our trip.

A big thank you goes out to all of those who made this dream come true (see attached) and to Her Royal Highness Chieftaness Chiyaba for her support of the event. An even bigger thank you goes out from me to the young men whose company over those weeks has vastly enriched my life.



Richard Wilson



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