

Youth African Soccer Cup – the Finals

On the 27 June 2009, one day before the final soccer match of the 2009 Confederation Cup in South Africa, the Youth African Soccer Cup had its finals. Four finals were organized at Jeppe Boys High School:

- Primary schools male finalists: Tanzania (Troyeville Primary) versus Nigeria (John Mitchell Primary);
- Primary schools female finalists: Uganda (Malvern Primary) versus South Africa (Sheikh Anta Diop);
- High schools male finalists: Somalia (Malvern High) versus Zambia (Jules High)
- and High schools female finalists: Cameroon (Jeppe Girls High) versus Somalia (Malvern High)

A huge crowd of learners, educators, ADF and LETU members, and various VIPs gathered to witness the event. Excitement was rife. Educators, principals, even if their team was not taking part in the finals, made a point to be present. Representatives of African embassies and high commissions were present, in particular the very supportive High Commissioner of Zambia (who stayed till the end of the finals and awarded medals and trophies himself), the Senegalese Ambassador, the first Secretary of the Moroccan Embassy. LOC was present through representatives such as Greg Fredericks, and had provided the child cabinets with FIFA fair play T-shirts. ADF long-lasting media support, the Star, was present with the Chief Editor Moegsien Williams and a journalist.



© ADF 2009. Senegal - Centurion High Principal, school coordinator, Senegalese Ambassador and ADF members – Amir and Masselis



© ADF 2009. Morocco – Child Cabinet (in FIFA Fair Play T shirts), First Secretary of the Moroccan Embassy, Moroccan Association Chair / ADF Habib Allah

The guest of the day was international soccer player Didier Drogba, invited through the LOC/ FIFA, and whom ADF Chair asked to become ADF Ambassador for ADF project '2010 Against Xenophobia'. Didier Drogba's arrival led to a huge excitement – most importantly around the learners, who struggled to get close to the soccer star; but also amongst all the audience, and a swarming media crew. Drogba arrived in the middle of a match and was led to the VIP lounge which was organized at the school; then he made a speech, emphasizing the importance of education and open-mindedness and lauding the initiative; then he gave the kick-off for the second half of the match. He was particularly moved, as was the whole crowd, by the mature and thoughtful speech of one child president, Diego, from Cyrildene Primary, representing Egypt:

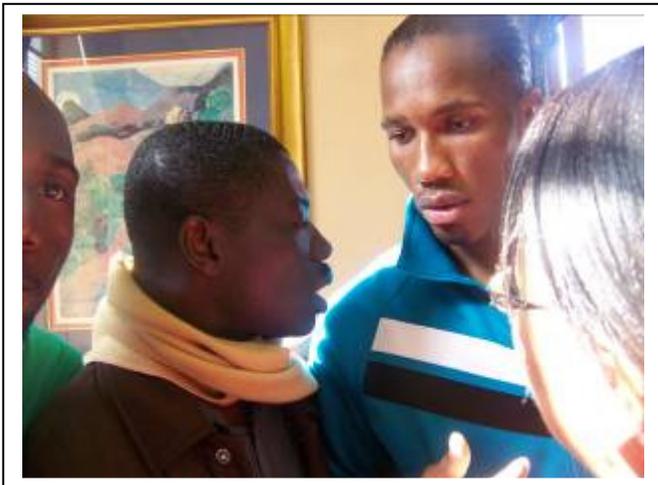
‘This project is so interesting, I’ve learnt so much about Egypt, my country. It is important in South Africa to discover our continent. It can change our mindsets. We want no more xenophobia’.



© ADF 2009. Didier Drogba greeting Tanzania child president



© ADF 2009. Didier Drogba welcomed to Jeppe High by ADF members, LOC PRO and Zambian High Commissioner



© ADF 2009. Didier Drogba and ADF Chair Marc Gbaffou in the VIP lounge



© ADF 2009. VIP lounge: Didier Drogba, Diego (Egypt child president) and Sol (LETU6 deputy chair)

The matches were hotly disputed. The winners were Uganda (Malvern Primary), Tanzania (Troyville Primary), Cameroon (Jeppe Girls) and Zambia (Jules High). Trophies, medals and prizes (soccer outfits) were distributed by ADF and LETU, and the Zambian High Commissioner himself, who said that this was an exceptional initiative, and that ADF was actually doing what the Embassies should be engaging with much more.



© ADF 2009. Zambian High Commissioner, ADF chair and LETU deputy chair giving trophy to Zambian winning team



© ADF 2009. Zambian High Commissioner giving medals to Cameroon winning female team

The success of the event was overwhelming. Euphoria was everywhere, with the learners, and also with ADF and LETU organizers.



© ADF 2009. Winning Cameroonian team, child cabinet, and ADF member/ Cameroonian Association Chair Flavien Gagoum



© ADF 2009. Celebrating Somalia – child president, ADF and LETU team



YOUTH AFRICAN SOCCER CUP June-July 2009



LETU 6



© ADF 2009. Some of the main organizers – Talla Niang (project coordinator), Estelle Banda (admin support), Fred Kasango (Soccer Fixture coordinator), Cyprian Ikani and Sam Carstine, school facilitators, and Sol (LETU6 deputy chair)



© ADF 2009. The Zambian crew – ADF admin support Benjamin Simunyola and Estelle Banda, and the High Commissioner.

Claire Benit-Gbajjou and Talla Niang, for the African Diaspora Forum, 9 July 2009.