World Cup Wrap Up

Condoms and HIV in South Africa

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In soccer, there is nothing like a goal to bring people together. The World Cup (the Super Bowl of soccer) in South Africa this summer had that effect—on and off the field. As soccer fans from around the globe gathered, HIV/AIDS advocates prepared for them.

South Africa surely stood to benefit from the HIV spotlight. One in five adults in the country has HIV. Such statistics prompted South African President Jacob Zuma, in anticipation of the World Cup, to launch one of the largest HIV/AIDS campaigns ever—aiming to test 15 million people for HIV. Zuma also disclosed he was circumcised as a way to encourage other men to undergo the procedure to lower their HIV risk.

International athletes got busy too, appearing in campaigns encouraging men to get HIV tests. And hotels throughout Cape Town distributed free condoms to promote a “play it safe” message.

Thousands of South Africans marched on the U.S. consulate, demanding the United States increase its contributions to the Global Fund on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Activists put pressure on FIFA (the group behind the World Cup) to lift its tight restrictions on the venues in which condoms and safer-sex info could be distributed. More than 3.5 million female condoms were ordered for distribution during the month-long event including an anti-rape version with teeth-like hooks that attach to a man’s penis.

South Africa may have lost the World Cup, but it’s still a winner. A recent study found that HIV rates in South Africa declined 35 percent between 2002 and 2008. The reduction corresponds to an increase in condom use. To that we say: Goooooooal!

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