

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



GRASSROOTSOCCER

An aerial photograph of a soccer field in a community. The field is green with white markings and a goal. Several groups of people are standing in circles on the field. To the left of the field is a paved road, and to the left of the road is a dense residential area with many small houses with corrugated metal roofs. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Change the Game

Grassroot Soccer uses the power of soccer to equip young people with the life-saving health information, services, and mentorship they need to thrive.

Letter from CEO & Founder Tommy Clark

Dear Friends,

When I founded Grassroot Soccer (GRS) with three former teammates during the height of the AIDS crisis in Zimbabwe two decades ago, we recognized that soccer — a positive force in the community — could be used to engage adolescents to stop the spread of HIV and build healthier communities.

Today — more than 13 million youth reached later — GRS has proven that original belief in the power of soccer to be true time and again. And over those 20 years, we've evolved to take an integrated approach to adolescent health, recognizing the interconnectedness of young people's most pressing health challenges, such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, and mental health.

An Increased Focus on Mental Health

Since the beginning, GRS has worked to create supportive environments where adolescents can build their resilience and self-esteem. These characteristics are key to young people's ability to take control of their lives — and in particular are critical protective factors for improving physical and mental health.

In 2021, GRS significantly expanded our mental health programming and developed MindSKILLZ: a signature mental health promotion curriculum that builds on 20 years of work enhancing adolescents' mental

health resilience and linking participants with mental well-being and psychosocial support. Through this strategic focus on mental well-being, GRS is working to overcome the stigma attached to mental health and empowering adolescents to develop vital coping skills to navigate the stresses and challenges of everyday life, alongside interrelated health issues they may be dealing with (for example, depression is 2-3x more common in people living with HIV).

Partnering with Governments for Increased Impact

At GRS, we maximize our impact by working with locally led organizations to implement our programs. Through our unique network of partners — from community-based organizations to international NGOs to national and local governments — we are able to give GRS programs a far broader reach than we could ever have by ourselves. In 2021, we strengthened our relationships with governments in the countries in which we work and closely aligned our work to their priorities, allowing our programs to reach significantly more young people and increase their access to crucial health services.

Our partnership with the Ministry of Health in Zambia, for example, dramatically increased the number of referrals of youth living with HIV into the SKILLZ Plus program — GRS's youth-friendly intervention that addresses

the specific needs of adolescents living with the virus. And in Ethiopia, the "Sport for Life" initiative brings GRS programs into the classroom and has been adopted nationally in schools, reaching millions of youth.

Propelling Us Into Our 20th Anniversary Year

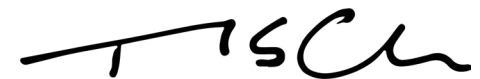
All that GRS achieved in 2021 has served as a crucial launchpad for the organization into a pivotal milestone year in 2022: our 20th anniversary.

Such an occasion is a time for both reflection and action. As we look back on how GRS has grown from an idea to impact — and how we've grown from an initial cohort of 14 trained GRS Coaches to a global network of more than 13,000 — we're grateful to the donors and partners who have stood with us every step of the way. And as we look forward, we're renewed in our conviction to respond to the growing need for our work and reach millions and millions more adolescents across the globe.

Thank You

I invite you to read more about GRS's work and impact in 2021 in this Annual Report. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to working with us to empower young people to take control of their health and reach their fullest potential.

With appreciation,



Thomas S. Clark, MD
CEO & Founder



Our Mission

Grassroot Soccer is an adolescent health organization that leverages the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilize youth in developing countries to overcome their greatest health challenges, live healthier, more productive lives, and be agents for change in their communities.

Our Model 3C's



Curriculum
Our Curricula are activity-based and provide accurate and actionable health information.



Coaches
Our Coaches care about and connect with adolescents so that they are inspired to take action.



Culture
Our Culture creates a fun and safe environment that is optimal for engaging young people around the most important, difficult, and often taboo health topics.

Our Impact 3A's



Assets
We build Assets (health knowledge and the confidence to use it).



Access
We improve Access to high-quality health services.



Adherence
We increase Adherence to crucial treatments and healthy behaviors.



PLAYING IT FORWARD

By providing pathways for former SKILLZ Coaches and program participants to grow into positions of leadership, Grassroot Soccer (GRS) is led by those we serve. These individuals channel their invaluable perspectives and expertise, playing it forward for young people whose shoes they were once in themselves. Meet a few of these changemakers:



“I have been a part of GRS for over 10 years. I have left before to pursue other things, but I always found myself back in the organization because it always feels like home; it is basically a part of my DNA.”

Gift Chibwika
GRS Zambia Project Site Coordinator
Former SKILLZ Coach
SOLWEZI, ZAMBIA



“The SKILLZ program has helped me to realize that I have a hero inside me to help me overcome all challenges I am facing. I have learned that I don't need society to choose a life for me, but I have the power to write my own story.”

Dennis Dube
Global Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Coordinator
Former SKILLZ Participant and Coach
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA



“GRS helped me accept my [HIV] status and also grew my self-confidence and my ability to stand with pride in any environment or room. GRS has also helped me with my work as an activist; through peer-to-peer interaction, more and more adolescents are accepting their status and becoming game changers in the community.”

Taonga Diana Kennedy Tembo
GRS Zambia Program Coordinator
Former SKILLZ Coach
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA



“Ever since I started working as a Coach for GRS, my life has never been the same. One thing that I have realized and that I appreciate about the GRS programs is that you become the change that you preach to the adolescents.”

Godknows Ngwenya
Global Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant
Former SKILLZ Coach
BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE



“I desire the impact GRS has made in my life for every adolescent. To achieve that, I decided to be a part of GRS and continue being an agent of change.”

Nkhosana Zulu
GRS Zambia Project Site Coordinator
Former SKILLZ Participant and Coach
NDOLA, ZAMBIA



The Challenge

Despite significant gains in global health in the past several decades, young people across Africa continue to face daunting challenges.

By 2050, sub-Saharan Africa is projected to have more adolescents than any other region, and those adolescents face nearly 10x the risk of death as their peers in high-income countries (*WHO*). HIV/AIDS continues to be a leading cause of death among all adolescents in Africa, and pregnancy and childbirth the leading cause of death among teen girls (*Avert*). Thirty percent of adolescent girls report being victims of sexual violence, and the actual number is estimated much higher (*Avert*). The COVID-19 pandemic has only added yet another challenge.

For these adolescents, these challenges are not only acute, but interconnected. That's why Grassroot Soccer (GRS) takes a holistic approach to adolescent health, empowering young people to make educated choices about the most pressing and interrelated health challenges they face – including mental health and sexual and reproductive health (SRH).

Mental Health & Sexual and Reproductive Health

Poor mental health and SRH are inherently linked. Mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression can result from concurrent or past SRH challenges, including HIV/AIDS, and vice versa.

For example, during the transition to adulthood, adolescents face significant physical, neurocognitive, and social changes that influence their mental health and sexual behavior and put them at increased risk of contracting HIV (*AIDS and Behavior*). In addition to links between mental health and increased sexual risk taking, depression is also associated with impeding HIV testing and other health-seeking behaviors (*Clinical Infectious Diseases*). People with mental health challenges are 4-10x more at risk of acquiring HIV, and depression is 2-3x more common in people living with HIV (*AIDS*).



“Kids come for soccer but end up leaving with knowledge about how to make better choices for themselves, their life, and their future.”

- Coach Musa (South Africa)



The Challenge

Gender and Health Outcomes

Unequal gender norms drive harmful behaviors — such as gender-based violence, unequal power in relationships, and decreased use of family planning methods — that disproportionately affect mental health and SRH outcomes for adolescent girls.

For example, nearly 70% of adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa need contraceptives but are not using a modern contraceptive method, contributing to high rates of pregnancies, of which nearly

half are unplanned (*Avert*). Unintended pregnancy in turn puts girls at greater risk of HIV infection and pregnancy-related complications (*WHO*), and studies report elevated rates of depression, suicide attempts, and anxiety disorders among adolescent girls becoming pregnant or mothers (*Frontiers in Reproductive Health*).



“You can’t reach out to a young person without a young person.”

- Coach Damilola (Nigeria)



Impact & Reach

Grassroot Soccer (GRS) equips the young people reached through its programs with life-saving health information, support, and access to services that are critical to overcoming their interconnected health challenges, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV/AIDS, mental health, and gender-based violence. GRS continuously monitors and evaluates its work, adapting and innovating to ensure programs are having the greatest impact on adolescent health. Here is GRS's 2021 impact and reach at a glance:

In 2021, GRS reached over

4 MILLION YOUTH

with health and life skills programs and services, including SKILLZ interventions, digital and media channels, and SKILLZ magazines.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS



22% increase

in adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and rights knowledge after completing SKILLZ, laying the foundation for healthy behaviors and decision-making

HIV TREATMENT



2x as high

HIV treatment adherence rates in HIV-positive GRS participants compared to the national average for youth in Zambia

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



31% improvement

in adolescents' attitudes towards gender norms after completing SKILLZ; promoting equal gender norms is a significant factor in reducing gender-based violence

MENTAL HEALTH



Half

of an initial cohort of HIV-positive GRS participants experiencing depression in Zambia reported being depression-free after participating in group therapy sessions, a key factor in adhering to treatment and making healthy decisions



Change the Game

\$1.6M raised
for GRS programs

2021 World AIDS Day Gala

On Giving Tuesday, the GRS community came together for the first time in New York City – and around the world via livestream – for Change the Game: Grassroot Soccer’s Seventh Annual World AIDS Day Gala. With a program featuring award-winning entertainers, global health luminaries, soccer stars, and GRS leaders, the evening celebrated GRS’s impact, championed the power of soccer to engage adolescents around their health, and raised over \$1.6 million for GRS programs – the highest total of any event in GRS history!



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Sir Alex Ferguson

“If you’re playing something you love and you’re out being athletic and surrounded by other people your age who are passionate about it as well, that’s when you’re most open to hearing a message.”

Seth Meyers
Award-Winning Writer and Late Night Host



Seth Meyers



Christen Press

“The game is best when it transcends the mere sport and is about true human goodness ...Grassroot Soccer represents all that is good about the game we love.”

Roger Bennett
Men in Blazers Co-Host



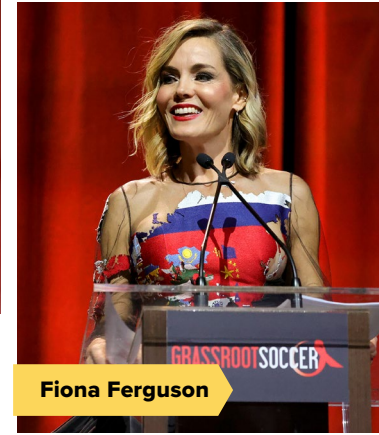
Roger Bennett

“Young people like sports, and it’s important to make sure that their love of sports becomes a mechanism for them to get better health.”

Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
Former UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, GRS Global Board Member



Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka



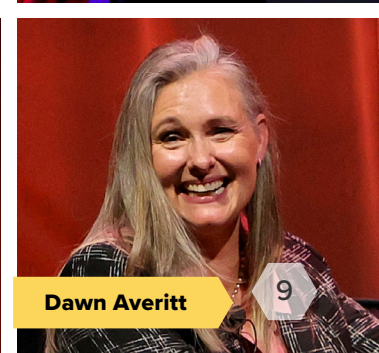
Fiona Ferguson

“Having someone in your life to look up to and help you make good decisions is something every young person deserves, no matter their circumstances. That’s why the work Grassroot Soccer Coaches are doing with adolescents in their communities resonates so much with me.”

Christian Pulisic
U.S. Men’s National Team and Chelsea F.C. Midfielder



Goldfish



Dawn Averitt

Program Highlights

Empowering Youth to Care For Their *Mental Health*

Since the organization's founding, Grassroot Soccer (GRS) has used fun and innovative approaches to build adolescents' resiliency and engage them around sensitive health topics, including mental health and well-being. In 2021, GRS expanded its mental health programming to drastically increase young people's access to youth-friendly mental health information and care.

GRS developed **MindSKILLZ**: a signature mental health promotion program that builds on 20 years of work enhancing adolescents' comprehensive health and well-being and links participants to mental health and psychosocial support. Through MindSKILLZ, GRS is leveraging its 3C's model for adolescent behavior change (**Curriculum, Coaches, Culture**) to reduce stigma that prevents young people from talking openly about their mental health, and to reinforce participants' positive coping skills as they navigate the challenges of life as an adolescent.

Through the **Strong Bodies, Strong Minds** program in Zambia, GRS Coaches are training to provide evidence-based group therapy treatment for participants experiencing depression.

Building off of the success of this effort, funding from USAID through IREX's Youth Excel project is supporting GRS to develop **MindSKILLZ Magazines**: a soccer-based mental health resource to engage youth living with HIV, their peers, and family members around mental well-being concepts and practices. GRS began developing the Magazines in 2021 and will launch the resource in Zambia in 2022.

In addition to these innovative, free-standing mental health programs, GRS is also strengthening basic mental health promotion content across its foundational SKILLZ programs. This is ensuring that all GRS participants have a baseline understanding of mental health concepts and are able to access safe spaces where they can openly discuss their own mental health challenges with peers and trained SKILLZ Coaches.



“As an HIV-positive youth who has suffered from depression, it was really hard to get help for my mental health problems because everyone was focused on my HIV status...Everything is intertwined, and everything has an effect on young people living with HIV. For so long, the approach has been to talk more about the HIV aspect of our lives and automatically expect every other part of our lives to fall into place once we are virally suppressed.

- Former Grassroot Soccer Coach (Zambia)

MIND SKILLZ



Program Highlights

Innovating for *Total Health*

From 2018-2021, Grassroot Soccer (GRS) and the Vitol Foundation partnered on [Total Health](#), an ambitious four-year project to improve adolescent health in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The initiative brought GRS programming to 168,750 adolescents and also catalyzed a number of strategic developments that are helping to expand GRS's impact.

The Total Health initiative generated critical organizational learnings and [innovations](#), including many developed in response to COVID-19, that are strengthening GRS's provision of youth-friendly information and adolescents' access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. For example, GRS expanded SKILLZ Coaches' roles as [essential health workers](#) and Youth Health Assistants; integrated [mental health](#) and well-being support into GRS programs; developed ways to work with key figures in adolescents' lives (including parents and guardians) to foster a positive [enabling environment](#) for accessing crucial health information and services; and scaled impact through [government adoption](#) of GRS programs.

In addition to engaging local governments — including working with Ministries of Health and Education to embed youth-centered programs and services into schools, health facilities, and community structures — GRS galvanized a wider coordinated network of partners for [collective impact](#), including clinics, implementing organizations across sectors, and over 15 funding partners including the Vitol Foundation, the Bohemian Foundation, MAC VIVA GLAM Fund, Comic Relief, Aids Healthcare Foundation, TDH Schweiz, and many more. Looking ahead, the game-changing innovations and important learnings catalyzed by the Total Health initiative will power GRS's impact on the lives of young people for years to come.

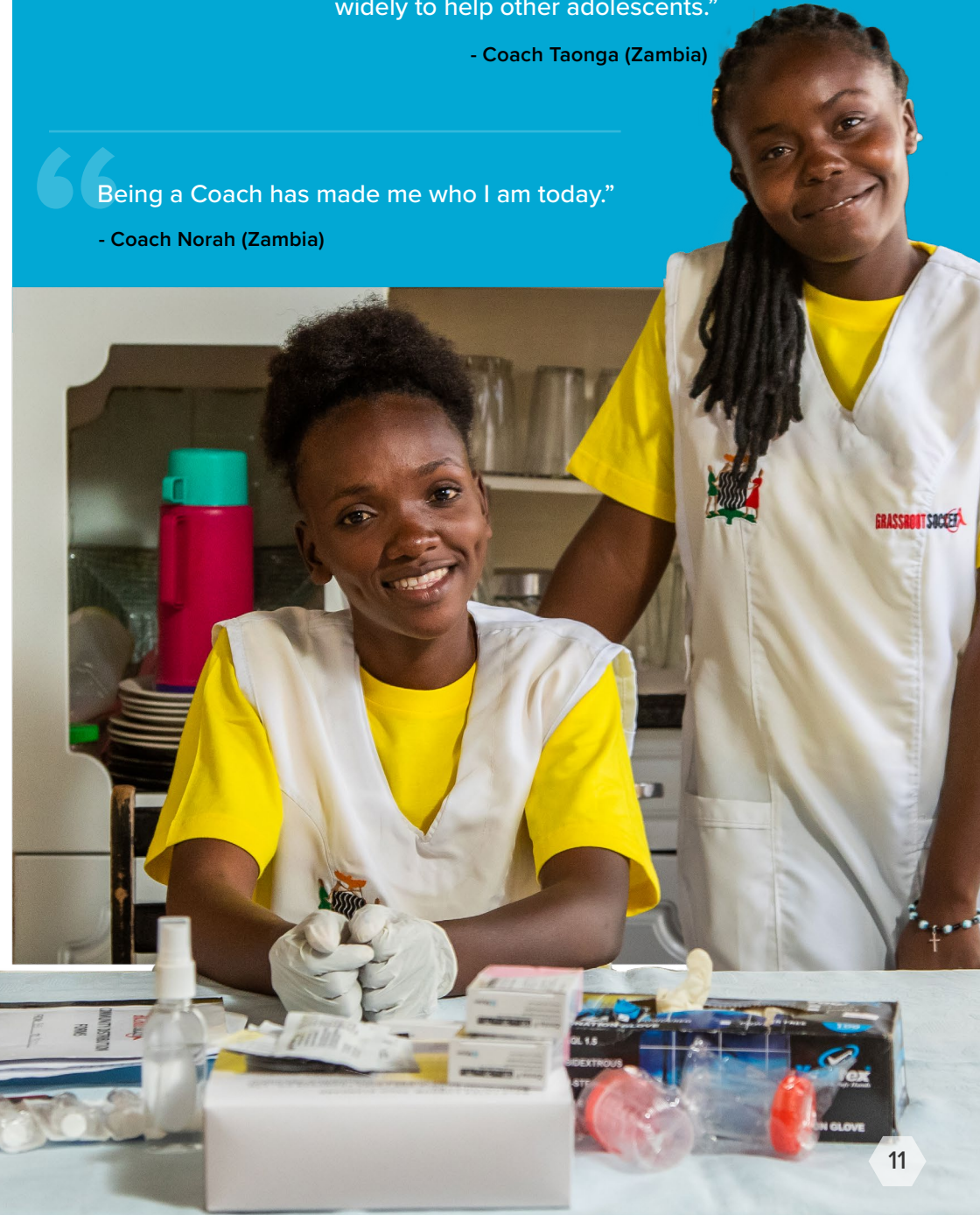
15+
funders
supporting
collective impact

“Being on a journey with Grassroot Soccer has been so important to me; getting to have that information and knowledge, I'm able to use it widely to help other adolescents.”

- Coach Taonga (Zambia)

“Being a Coach has made me who I am today.”

- Coach Norah (Zambia)



Research Highlights

From managing rigorous evaluations to conducting rapid impact assessments of program data, Grassroot Soccer (GRS) is committed to contributing to the global understanding of what works in adolescent health. GRS integrates these insights, along with the latest science and research in the field, into its programs so that they have the greatest impact possible.

In 2021, ongoing GRS research and evaluation projects spanned a number of critical and interconnected topics in adolescent health, such as sexual and reproductive health (SRH); family planning; mental health; gender-based violence; and HIV prevention, care, and treatment.



7

research and evaluation projects ongoing in

4

countries in 2021



Research Highlights

MINDSET Evaluation **Scotland**

Research Question: What is the effectiveness of the MINDSET mental health intervention at improving interpersonal skills and emotional regulation among adolescents in Aberdeen, Scotland?

Method: Mixed-methods evaluation in six primary and secondary schools

Synopsis: Developed in 2019 in partnership with Aberdeen F.C. Community Trust (AFCCT), the MINDSET program engages and empowers young people to develop knowledge and skills that promote mental well-being. In 2021, an external evaluation analyzed pre- and post-intervention surveys from 92 MINDSET participants and explored the perspectives of teachers and AFCCT coaches who facilitated the sessions through surveys, qualitative interviews, and focus group discussions.

Key Findings:

- MINDSET is contributing to developing foundational skills for good mental health in adolescents.
- Adolescent participants surveyed demonstrated statistically significant improvements in self-reported interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, and care-seeking behaviors, as well as increases in self-reported empathy.
- Participants, teachers, and coaches alike reported that MINDSET reduced stigma around mental health by creating safe spaces for honest discussions.

Goals for Girls (G4G) Study **South Africa**

Research Question: When integrated with a government-run, in-school sexual and reproductive health (SRH) program, what is the impact of an adapted version of GRS's SKILLZ Girl curriculum on SRH outcomes amongst secondary school female learners in South Africa?

Method: Cluster-randomized controlled trial with quantitative and qualitative components

Synopsis: Forty secondary schools in Cape Town participated in this study, which included youth participatory action research, or YPAR: an innovative, power-sharing research method that actively engages young people as researchers themselves. Nine girls were trained on basic research skills and acted as "youth investigators" for the study, conducting four workshops (under the supervision of young adult researchers) to collect qualitative data from their peers and participating in collaborative analysis workshops with adult researchers.

Key Findings:

- Girls who graduated from the program showed modest improvements in self-reported access to support from a trusted adult and gender-equitable attitudes, as well as modest improvement in the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- The qualitative portion of the study, which included the YPAR workshops, revealed that the intervention was responsive to the needs of girls.
- Girls valued the intentional design of SKILLZ Girl, notably the girls-only peer group, the participatory learning approach, and the way that GRS Coaches created a safe space for them to learn and express themselves freely.

2021 Research Partners



Partnering for Impact

When it comes to adolescent health, Grassroot Soccer (GRS) operates under the belief that more can be accomplished together than by working alone. GRS has built a unique and robust partner network (including community-based organizations, national and local governments, international NGOs, and football clubs), which has allowed GRS to learn from and incorporate local knowledge into its programs — and to significantly scale its reach to more than 1,000,000 young people each year. Here are some highlights:



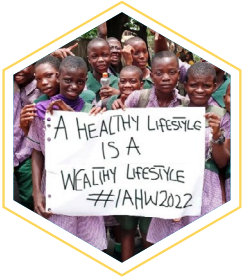
U.S. Government Partnerships

GRS's U.S. Government expertise spans key adolescent health topics including HIV prevention, care, and treatment; family planning; and mental health. In 2021, GRS was funded through a number of U.S. federal funding streams (including PEPFAR, USAID, NIH, and CDC) to support projects across Botswana, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In addition, through its global partnership with the U.S. Peace Corps, the GRS methodology also reached youth in Cameroon, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.



A Decade of Impact with ExxonMobil

Over the past decade, GRS, the ExxonMobil Foundation, and local partners have reached more than 325,000 young people with health information and services. In 2021, GRS partnered with five local organizations to implement SKILLZ in Equatorial Guinea (Biriaelat), Mozambique (Girl Child Rights), Nigeria (Youth Development and Empowerment Initiative), and Papua New Guinea (Southstar Sports Development Association; YWCA of Papua New Guinea), addressing malaria prevention, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, COVID-19, and more.



Reaching Youth in Nigeria's Most Populous Cities

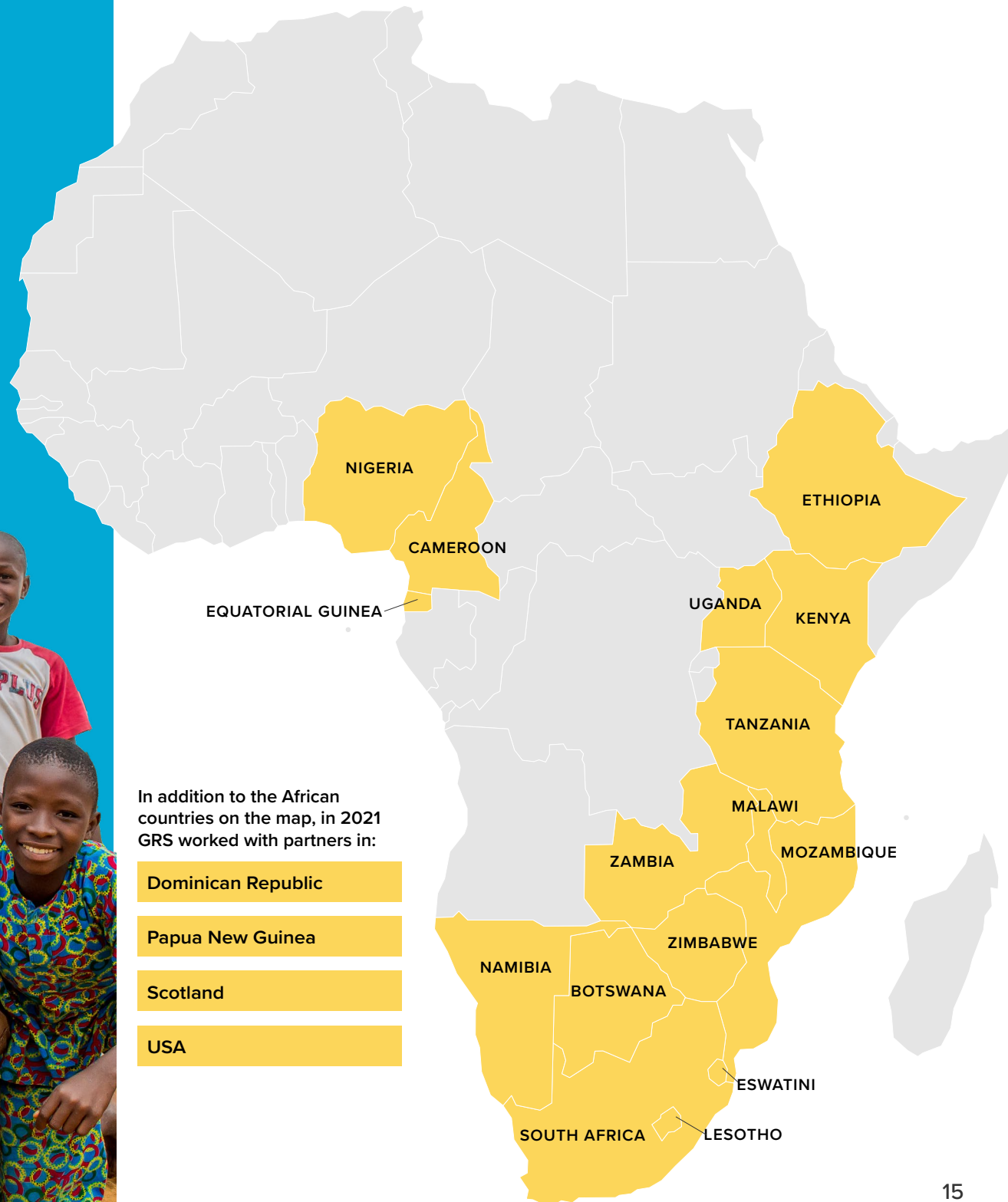
As part of the USAID-funded, five-year Youth Powered Ecosystem to Advance Urban Adolescent Health (YPE4AH) project, GRS and DAI have teamed up with a consortium of partners — Women Friendly Initiative, Yellow Brick Road, and Youth Development and Empowerment Initiative (YEDI) — to engage adolescents throughout Nigeria on important health topics such as family planning, mental health, substance abuse, and gender-based violence. Using GRS's SKILLZ curriculum, this collaborative effort is empowering Nigerian youth with the skills, social capital, and resources needed to thrive.

Throughout 2021, GRS deepened its impact by collaborating with more than **85 partners across 19 countries.**



Locations

This map shows the countries where GRS collaborated with partners for impact in 2021.



In addition to the African countries on the map, in 2021 GRS worked with partners in:

- Dominican Republic
- Papua New Guinea
- Scotland
- USA

Our Supporters

Grassroot Soccer (GRS) would like to thank our institutional donors and partners for their support in 2021. Their sustained commitment to the GRS mission enables us to continue connecting adolescents around the world with life-saving health information, services, and mentorship.



Our Donors

Grassroot Soccer is very grateful to the following individuals and institutions for their unrestricted support.

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\$500,000 - \$999,999

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Thank You

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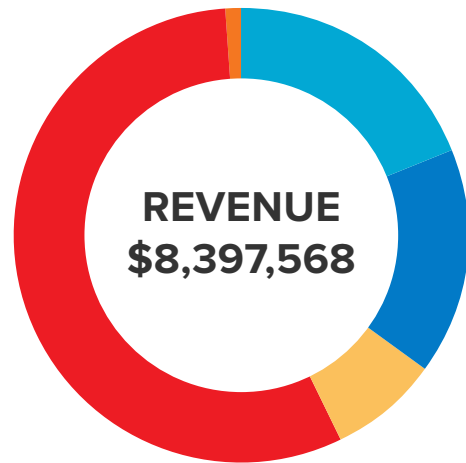
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GRS would like to thank and acknowledge the following schools and community organizations for participating in student-led fundraising events and campaigns for our cause:

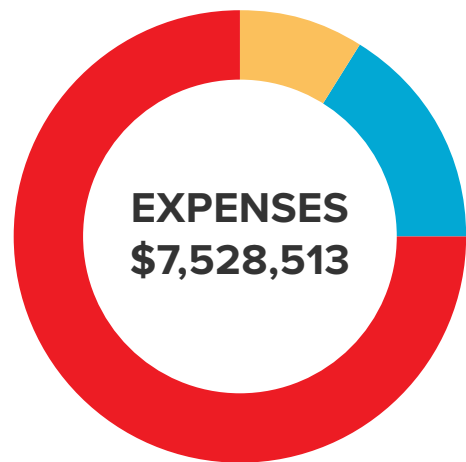
- Bates College Women's Soccer
- Brown University Men's Soccer
- Cannon School (NC)
- Castleton University
- Claremont McKenna College Women's Soccer
- Hanover High School (NH) Boy's Soccer
- Sarah Lawrence Men's Soccer
- St George's School (Vancouver, Canada)
- UMASS (University of Massachusetts Amherst) Men's Soccer
- Vassar College Men's Soccer
- Wellesley High School (MA)
- William & Mary Men's Soccer

Our Financials

Grassroot Soccer has a deep commitment to our donors and we encourage our record of accountability. You can find more information about this website, www.grassrootsoccer.org/financials.



- 56%** **Individuals**
\$4,703,244
- 19%** **U.S. Government**
\$1,580,055
- 16%** **Private Foundations**
\$1,393,387
- 8%** **Corporate/Corporate Foundations**
\$707,986
- 1%** **Other Income**
\$12,916



- 75%** **Program Services**
\$5,649,944
- 16%** **Fundraising**
\$1,170,176
- 9%** **Management & General**
\$708,393



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BSc; MBBCh
DMed (HON) (Witwatersrand)

Cynthia Carroll
Former Chair, Vedanta Holdings and
Former CEO, Anglo American PLC

James Casey
Co-Head of Global Investment Banking,
J.P. Morgan Securities LLC

Thomas S. Clark, M.D.
CEO and Founder, Grassroot Soccer

Tom Crotty
Senior Advisor, Battery Ventures

Todd H. Eckler
Senior Officer, Fiduciary Trust Company
and President, Fiduciary Trust Charitable

Fiona Ferguson
Mother/Mediator

Kenneth R. French
Roth Family Distinguished Professor
of Finance, Tuck School of Business at
Dartmouth College

Blaise Judja-Sato*
Founder, VillageReach and
The Resilience Trust

James McCaffrey
Managing Director, Eastdil Secured

Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka*
Former UN Under-Secretary-General
and Executive Director of UN Women,
Founder Of Umlambo Foundation

Methembe Ndlovu
Co-Founder, Grassroot Soccer

Christen Press
2x World Champion Soccer Star with
the U.S. Women's National Team, U.S.
Olympic Bronze medalist, Forward with
LA Angel City F.C., Entrepreneur

Todd Sisitsky
Managing Partner, TPG Capital

Lisa Stuart
MSW, MPA



**Newly elected Board Members in 2021*