

VCT Soccer Tournaments:

Linking sport, prevention, testing and treatment

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Issues

Across southern Africa, women and adults access voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) at higher rates than men and young adults. Among youth aged 15-24 years in Zambia, only 34 percent of females and 15.5 percent of males have ever tested for HIV. The need for increased testing uptake is urgent, as studies suggest that a majority of those living with HIV do not know their status and those accessing care and treatment do so at a late stage. Stigma and fear greatly inhibit testing, particularly among men.



Figure 1. Youth soccer tournaments serve as a platform for community mobilization.



Figure 2. At a tournament in Cape Town, youth participate in a game called Find The Ball, learning that you can't tell someone's HIV status by looking.



Figure 3. Youth queue for VCT at a tent run by pediatric testing/treatment partner Tiny Tim and Friends in Lusaka, Zambia.

all events, and immediate referrals are made for individuals testing positive. Since 2006, approximately 16,137 individuals have been tested at 68 VCT soccer tournaments in South Africa, Lesotho, Zambia, Malawi, and Namibia. At these events, 820 individuals tested positive (5.1 percent) and were immediately referred to a care and treatment partner. Approximately 52 percent of those tested at VCT tournaments were males (see Figure 4), roughly half were adolescents aged 15-24, and a majority were accessing VCT for the first time.

Individuals Tested by Sex

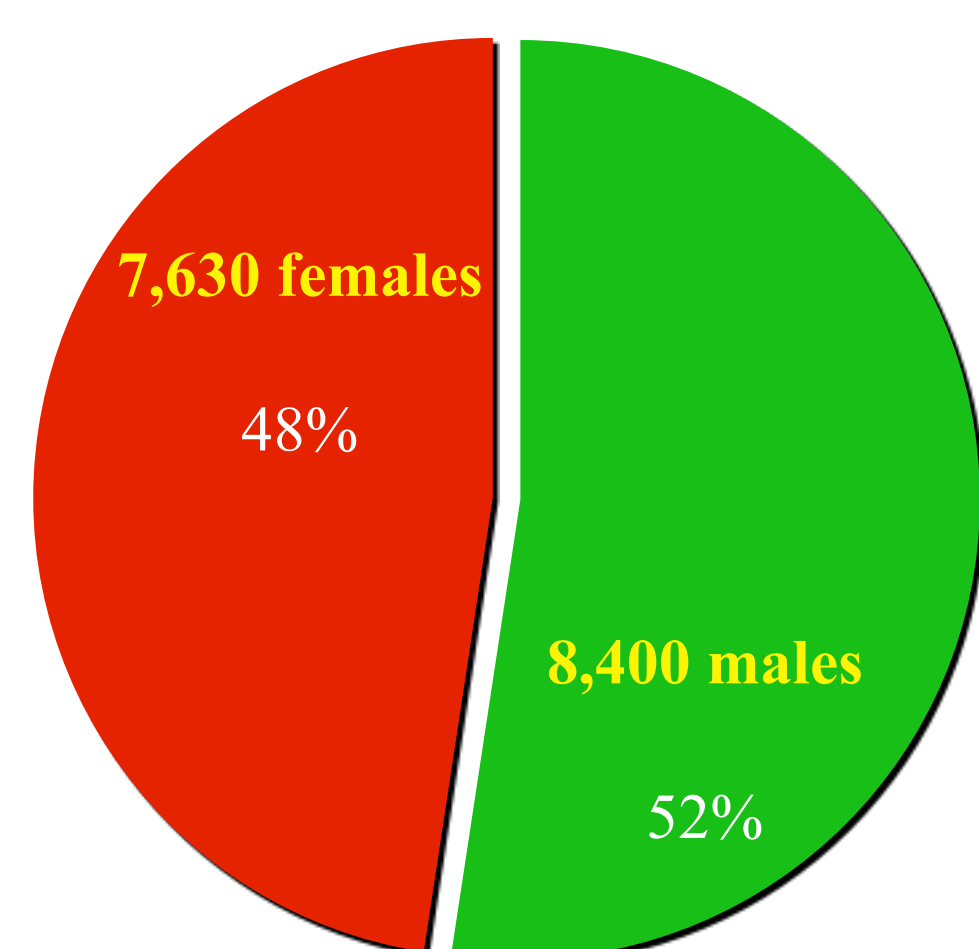


Figure 4. Pie graph of individuals tested by sex. Testers with unknown sex were excluded.

Acknowledgements

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Lessons Learned

Effective and proactive coordination between a prevention organization, testing partner, and care and treatment provider is essential to the model's success. Additionally:

- In Zambia, the majority of individuals surveyed preferred testing at VCT tournaments to the local clinic, as they had a reduced fear of stigma and felt supported by friends.
- Linking VCT soccer tournaments to home-based clinic outreach initiatives is recommended to effectively integrate patients into care and treatment services.
- Trained peer educators can assist in ensuring that those who test positive successfully enroll at clinics and adhere to treatment regimens.

Legislation requiring nurses to perform HIV tests limited testing numbers in South Africa and Namibia. Zambia tournaments (at which counselors performed tests) tested 2.6-times as many individuals per day as tournaments in South Africa, where (until May 2010) counselors were prohibited from performing tests (see Figure 5). Likewise, half-day events in Malawi tested more individuals, on average, than full-day events in South Africa and Namibia.

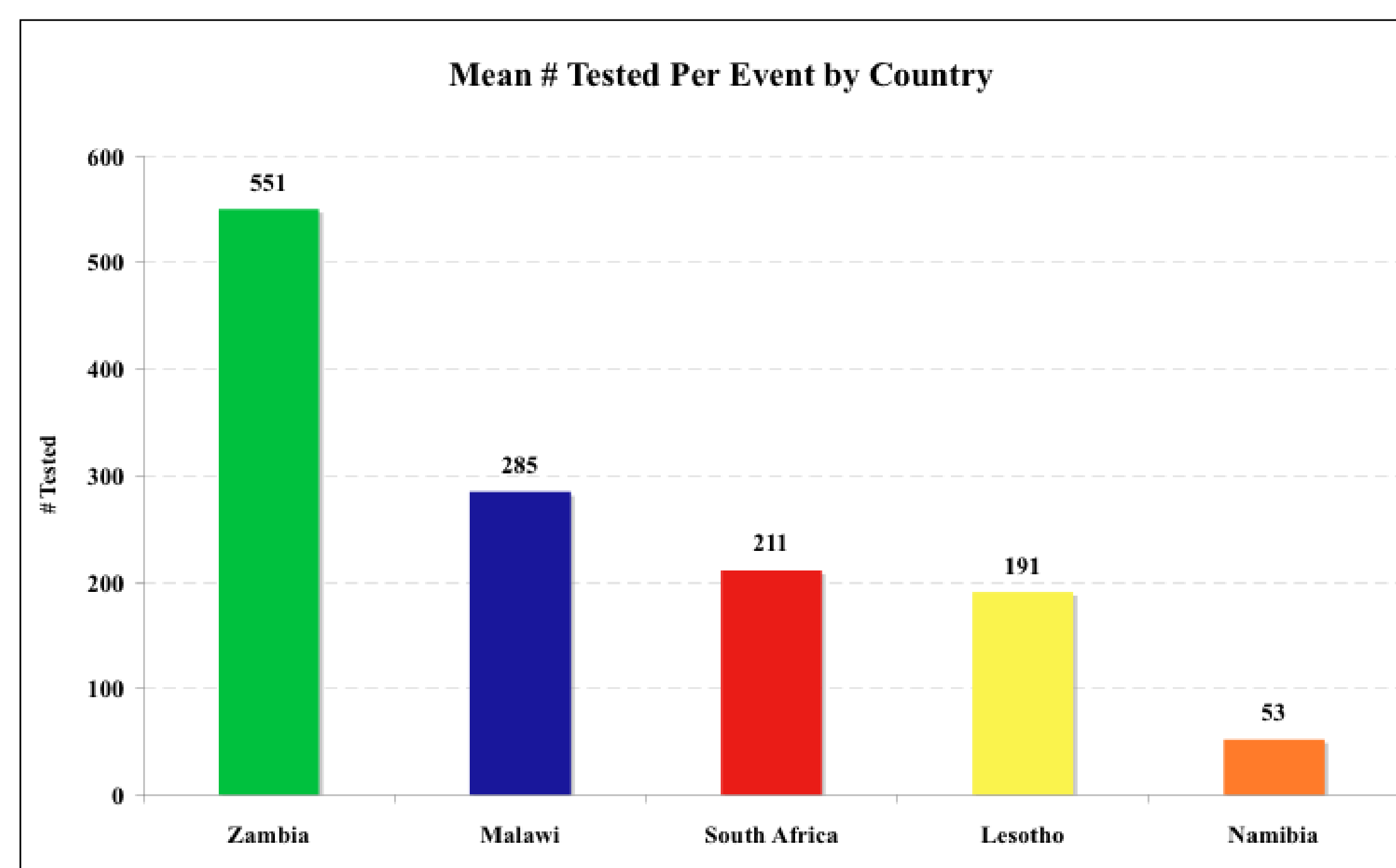


Figure 5: Average number of individuals tested per event by country. Zambia has held the largest events, while Lesotho has held smaller but more numerous events.

Country	Events	Tested	Avg Tested	Males	Females	Unknown	Positive	% Positive
Lesotho	43	8214	191	4025	4189		386	4.7%
Malawi	8	2276	285	1527	749		73	3.2%
South Africa	8	1688	211	881	737	70	100	5.9%
Zambia	7	3854	551	1944	1910		257	6.7%
Namibia	2	105	53	23	45	37	4	3.8%
Totals	68	16,137	237	8,400	7,630	107	820	5.1%

Table 1: Summarized results of VCT soccer tournaments held in five countries between 2006 and 2010.

Conclusions

Further evaluation should assess the impact of these events on participants' attitudes towards testing as well as the loss-to-follow-up rates. Prevention and testing partners can assist in ensuring that those who test positive successfully enroll at clinics and adhere to treatment regimens. With effective coordination, VCT soccer tournaments can play a valuable role in helping countries achieve testing and counseling targets, in particular for men and adolescents. USAID and the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF) are supporting scale-up of this model in South Africa and Zambia, respectively. GRS seeks additional partners who can implement or support these initiatives across Africa.

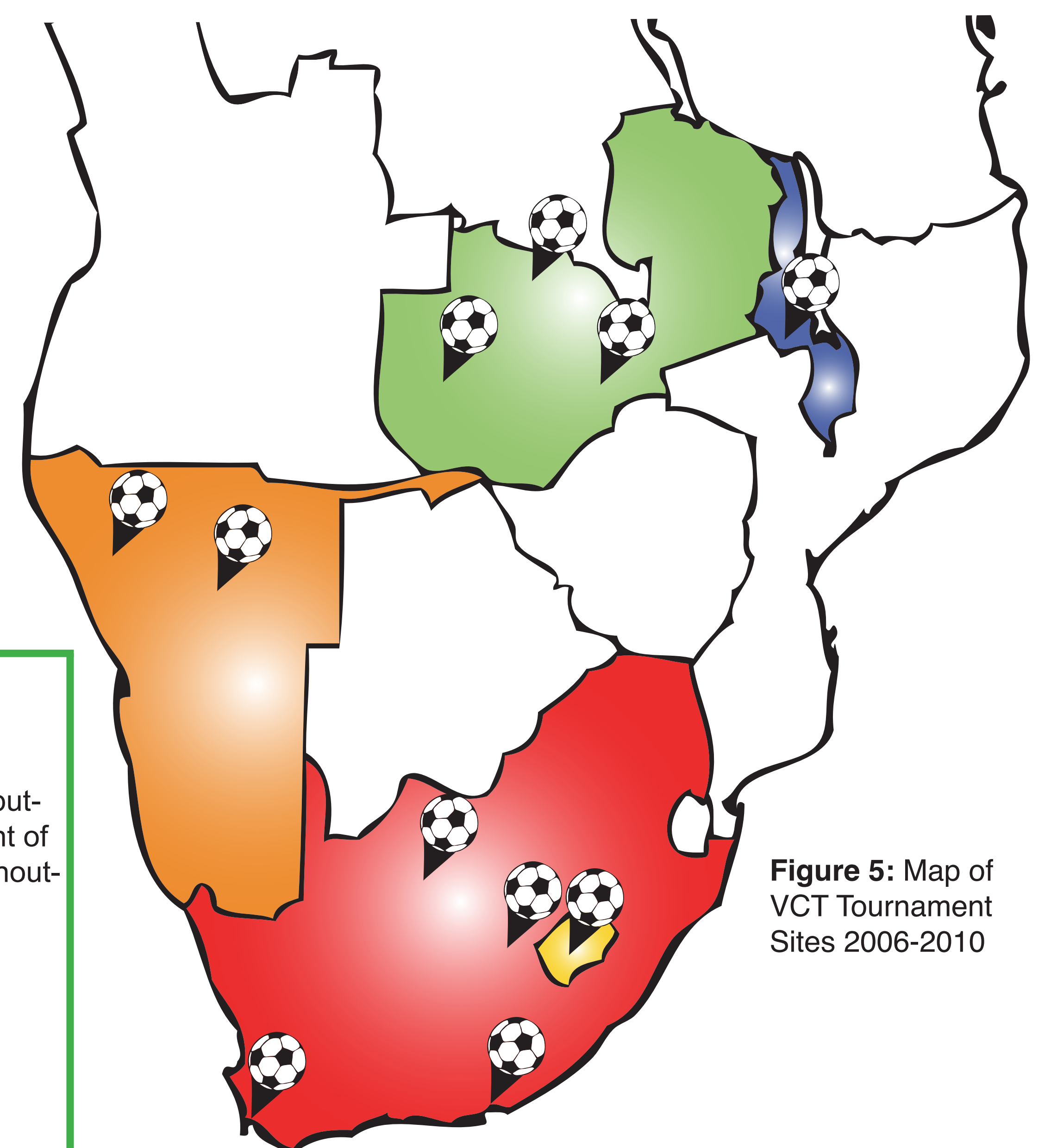


Figure 5: Map of VCT Tournament Sites 2006-2010