

PFEFFERVILLE – A KICKSTART FOR CHANGE

Coaching girls and boys to play soccer is part of a concerted strategy by the local Community Work Programme to break a cycle of deprivation, drugs and crime in Pefferville and Duncan Village and set these children on a different path.

The streets of Pefferville run into the streets of Parkside, Parkridge and Duncan Village – arguably East London’s poorest neighbourhoods. In the past 20 years, crime has risen and houses have fallen. Drug abuse has got stronger and families have got weaker. Unemployment and alcohol abuse are on the rise, and potholes on every street are deep enough for children to paddle in. Literacy is low and so is hope. Children born into this environment are at risk of never coming out of it.

Community Work Programme (CWP) teams at this site are involved in the full range of activities with gardens, social and community services, community safety, maintenance and support for schools. The CWP also runs vegetable gardens in schools and on vacant neighbourhood corners, and operates a litter collection service. Food is being provided from gardens to feed children at three primary schools. Gardens are being set up and maintained at schools.

They are also assisting schools at a number of other levels. The social team is providing life skills training at schools. School patrols are ongoing at nine schools. Four schools have been painted and other fixing includes tiling, plumbing and cleaning yards. But it is the focus on sport coaching that sets Pefferville apart. In addition to soccer, the CWP also coaches netball, rugby, cricket and gumboot dancing. “And we want to start a programme of indigenous games like klip-klippie,” says Clinton Morrow, the CWP supervisor who is in charge of the sports programme.

But soccer is the big game and the CWP are coaching at seven schools, including organising friendly matches and a winter league for boys and girls.

Clinton understands the hazards of growing up in

Pefferville – he grew up on the streets and he is determined to give children a better chance in life than he had. “Lots of these kids, their parents drink,” he says. “We visit them in their homes and we see – the mother’s drinking, the father’s gone off with friends, it’s chaos. Sometimes a child will faint because he didn’t eat the night before. How can a child practice with no food? So we share bread.”

More than bread, however, he and the coaches are using the opportunity to build a relationship with the children that feeds off “trust and respect”. Clinton and his committed coach colleagues, such as Benjamin Plaatjies, have emerged in these children’s lives as father figures. “They come to us to talk,” says Clinton. Benjamin agrees: “I can tell from their face if they have a problem. They have no food, there’s no money for food at home.” A spiral of dysfunction is on its way – and Clinton, Benjamin and their CWP colleagues hope to break this.

As a supervisor Clinton works five days a week. Other CWP participants work for two days a week. In reality, they are never off-duty. “If I call Babes four times a week, he’ll still come,” Clinton says, referring to Benjamin by his community name. “And weekends we give our own time.” CWP work is just for weekdays but everyone knows soccer matches are played on Saturdays and Sundays – and that weekday practices are pointless if you can’t test your skills.

The children and teenagers of Pefferville, Duncan Village and Parkside have latched onto the light these men shine into their lives. Benjamin coaches a senior team, an under-11 log and several school teams. Clinton oversees the under-9 girls’ soccer teams, under-13 boys’ teams and under-13 girls’ teams.



Clinton also helps establish teams in local schools so that Pefferville United players all have teams to play against. "We have challenges," he says. "We don't have poles to make a goal. Well, we did. But they are big, you know, and heavy. So we left them on the field for the next day's practice. They lasted two nights. So now we usually just find a few tyres and pile them up to make a goal. And, the grass is a problem.

"We try to encourage the kids to buy their own boots. You can get them for R100 at the Chinese store. But it's hard for some parents, you know. We got a sponsor to give us R500 for balls, and two guys who used to work with us sponsored some kit. Next year we're hoping to put boxes in schools so that we can get stuff like second-hand cricket bats.

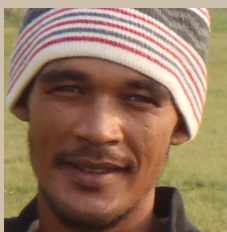
"We got one set of bibs. So, when we play two teams, the one must take off their tops so there's a difference. Then we call that one the *kaalbors* (naked chest) team. We got kit from the under-19 team but it looks like a nightie on the under-11s! But you must see those kids – they're so proud to run on the field in their nightie, just to look like a team."

The CWP works long days. At 8am, they're in the neighbourhood schools (different ones every week). They take a register of absent teachers and start the day with those classes. The gesture has provoked some ill feeling. "But," Clinton explains, "we want to assist teachers, not take their jobs. Now they are starting to realise we are here to help them."

Benjamin says: "I check the registers with the teachers and they say, 'You take all the naughty boys!' And I tell the teacher, 'I know what to do with them – I will make them right!'"

When school ends at 2pm, the CWP coaches return home to rest – but not for long. By 3pm they're down on the "groot vlak", an expanse of flat grass alongside a litter-choked stream. "It was going to be a stadium – they even built that clubhouse over there and dug the trenches. But we never heard from them again. So now we use it for soccer practice every afternoon." The ground is lumpy, the grass is tufty, and the "clubhouse" is a roofless shell. But the field is a precious lung in a densely-populated area. It has enough space for several teams to play at the same time, for adult women to do "gym" on the side. Benjamin coaches them in exercise for weight loss.

How did these men learn how to coach soccer so successfully? "I look!" says Benjamin. "And I ask! I also watch e-Shibobo (the eTV soccer show). It helps me plan what to do tomorrow. I tell them, "You must practice until you love the ball. You can't play soccer



Clinton Morrow: "I grew up in Pefferville. We used to run around as kids until 9/10 o'clock. But there were no community centres, nothing to do. So we threw stones, stuff like that. Pefferville was a community that had lost

hope. People were not schooling. People were not working. There's no incentive to stay at school because there's no knowledge that you need to stay at school to do better. You need to eat today. That's how far you think. It's not been measured, but CWP has made a difference – it has definitely contributed to reducing crime in Pefferville. It's like a ray of light has shone through. There is a sense of belonging. I've been with CWP for three years and it's given me the ability to give my kids something. I've had training. I now have certificates I didn't know I would have – could have. Working even two days a week meant I could put a little on the table. I truly believe if we unite, we can push forward and achieve great things."

Benjamin Plaatjies:

"I grew up in Parkside but I live now in Pefferville. I've been playing soccer for 40 years. I began when I was nine years old and I play still for Pefferville Masters. I play back but I can play anywhere on the field. I've been with the CWP for two years. It's made a big difference to me. I meet people. The best part is seeing the children playing soccer. With all the drugs, there's kids here from rehab and it's hard for them. So it's good to keep them busy with sport."



if you don't love this ball." He thumps his chest gently. "Soccer is my heart," he says. "But the children must do their homework first. They can't come and play until they've done their school work and whatever work around the house they must do."

The CWP coaches subscribe to a philosophy Clinton's granny employed. "Don't bend the tree when it's big," she always told me, "bend the tree while it's small. Once it's big you have to chop it off."

Tailene Treasure is 13 years old and in Grade 7 and started playing soccer this year. When asked what she likes about soccer, her answer was: "Everything!" And why does she play soccer? "For my family."

This profile is part of a series that looks at local innovation in the South African government's Community Work Programme (CWP). It was produced by Trade & Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) for the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG). For more information about the CWP go to www.cogta.gov.za/cwp.