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Young sports heroes celebrate diversity in South Africa

With just one day to go before the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ kick-off, football heroes from around the globe continue to arrive in South Africa. But on 5 June, South Africa's own sports heroes in the making showed off their skills and talents across the country in the SCORE Cup of Heroes tournament. Hundreds of children and youth took part in sports activities and cultural performances based on the theme of "Celebrating Diversity: A single bracelet doesn't jingle". The eight victorious regional teams will participate in the finals of the Cup of Heroes to be held in Johannesburg from 24-26 September 2010.

The Cup of Heroes tournament is organised by SCORE, a leading sport and development organisation in Southern Africa aiming to build stronger, healthier communities through sport. This unique tournament brought together more than 700 children and youth from disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo.

The regional competitions were particularly hard fought this year with teams from Khayelitsha and Dysselsdorp (Western Cape), Mt Fletcher (Eastern Cape), Mohodi, Tshidimbini and Mapuve (Limpopo), Marapyane and Hhoyi (Mpumalanga) emerging victorious. The victors of this fourth edition of the competition will go on to represent South Africa against teams from Zambia and Namibia at the Cup of Heroes International finals taking place from 24-26 September 2010 in Johannesburg.

What makes this tournament unique is that it is not solely about achievements on the sports field. Besides football, netball and volleyball games, these teams of 30 participants also competed in cultural performances, community service projects and were judged on fair play. "This competition brings all we do together", noted Theresa le Roux, SCORE South Africa national manager. "It's not just about sports: children compete on and off the field. Of course they score points if they win a football or netball game, but they also earn points for cultural performances and community service projects. It's all about developing a young person's sports skills, life skills and leadership skills. Competing in these different areas in one single tournament is what makes the Cup of Heroes so unique".

The topic of this year's tournament was "Celebrating Diversity: A single bracelet doesn't jingle". The aim of the tournament is to bring children and youth together, and increase their awareness of and respect for other cultures and traditions. A highlight of this year's competition was the 2010 Partner Country project, for which each team has been assigned a country they had to research and then present in a display of song, dance and drama. This is especially significant as the world comes to South Africa for the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. As much as the participants get to learn about theirs and their competitor's local traditions and cultures they also learn more about the 32 countries participating the 2010 FIFA World Cup™.

Although the 2010 official countdown is in everyone's mind, Saturday's newly crowned regional heroes are already eyeing a different landmark: the excitement and anticipation of the International Cup of Heroes finals was apparent seconds after the announcement of the regional winners.

This year, the teams will compete for a brand new multi-purpose outdoor sports facility sponsored by the personal fundraising efforts of adidas South Africa Managing Director, Brian Kerby. Brian took part in the IRONMAN South Africa challenge on 25 April 2010, and used the occasion to raise money for SCORE.

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Please contact Jane Mills for further information about the Cup of Heroes tournament at jane@score.org.za.