London football club uses the beautiful game to heal the wounds of Rwandan Genocide

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Sported awards £9,000 grant to Football for Hope, Peace and Unity (FHPU)

Football for Hope, Peace and Unity (FHPU), a community club which uses football as a tool to promote unity and reconciliation among Rwandan youth who have been affected by the 1994 genocide, has been given a massive boost with a grant of nearly £9,000 from leading Sport for Development charity, Sported, to expand its programme in the UK.

FHPU was founded in 2010 by Eric Eugene Murangwa, a former Rwandan professional footballer and survivor of the 1994 genocide, as a means of bringing together young people from the Hutu and Tutsi communities in London and promoting community reconciliation. Through weekly 'training and engagement' sessions the club uses the power of football to encourage team work, develop conflict resolution skills and fight prejudice, intolerance and hatred in their own communities.

FHPU works with the Rwandan diaspora community in London, many of whom fled the country in the wake of the 1994 atrocities when more than 700,000 orphans were abruptly forced to take on the responsibilities of adults, leaving them with little hope of a better future. Most of the club's members come from this particular group of young Rwandans who continue to suffer from the consequences of genocide. The isolation of living in a foreign country further increases their risk of experiencing social problems, such as becoming involved in the anti-social activities and crime.

For Eric the power of football was never made more evident than on the first day of the genocide when he narrowly avoided being murdered by a member of former Rwandan Armed Forces, simply because he was recognised as the goalkeeper for Rayon Sports - one of Rwanda's top professional football teams. Eric managed to escape the country when the national football team went to Tunisia to play a game. Fearing for his life on his return, he decided to stay in the country before moving to Belgium, then migrating to the UK in 1997.

Sported - a UK charity which supports grassroots clubs which use sport for social change - has been working closely with FHPU for the last five months. Through one of Sported's volunteer business mentors, Suzanna Hopwood, the charity has been helping Eric and his team to develop a sustainable business plan for the club and formalising the club's organisational structure and governance. Following this successful period, in which the foundations for the club's future growth have been laid, Sported has awarded FHPU a grant of £8,969 to support the club's running costs and expansion. FHPU currently operates in London, however with Sported funding the club is looking to expand the programme to other parts of the capital and the UK.

Eric Eugene Murangwa, founder of Football for Hope, Peace and Unity, said: "Football saved my life and now we are using the beautiful game to help heal the emotional and psychological wounds that are still felt from the Rwandan genocide 20 years on. At FHPU we do more than just teach football; we are creating opportunities for young Rwandans to interact with each other and, most importantly, learn mutual respect. We hope that through our work we can create a brighter future for Rwandans, both here and back home, and prevent tragedies like the 1994 genocide from occurring again."

He adds: "The support we have received from Sported over the last five months has been fantastic. We are now in a position to expand our programme so that we can reach and help even more young Rwandans in the UK."

Hamid Vaghefian, London Regional Manager at Sported, said: "Eric is one of football's true unsung heroes. Despite having witnessed the incomprehensible hatred and violence of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, he has a deep love for his country, but more impressively the desire and passion to make sure the atrocities never happen again. Born as a result of one man's commitment to make a difference, FHPU is doing some fantastic work in the community and Sported is proud to be able to support the club in its growth."

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For more information about Sported or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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Notes to Editors

About Sported
Sported is the UK’s largest Sport for Development charity.

Sported is a free membership organisation that supports thousands of inspirational groups and projects in the UK which deliver 'Sport for Development'. These groups use sport to help disadvantaged young people fulfil their potential in life, by improving their education, health and well-being, and reducing their risk of becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Sported works with its members to build their capacity and become more sustainable, so that they can help more young people for longer. It does this through the provision of skilled business mentors; targeted information and funding resources; training and development; and access to networking and cost saving opportunities.

Sported recognises that every community is unique and the issues and problems affecting each one are different. That’s why it has established a UK-wide network of regional and country managers, and local business mentors who understand the specific needs of its local communities and members.

In addition to helping individual organisations, Sported is committed to demonstrating the social benefits of Sport for Development and increasing investment into the sector.

Sported has been awarded the Inspire Mark by LOCOG

www.sported.org.uk - Registered charity number: 1123313

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