



Partner Emblems: UNV, Oceania Football Confederation, Government of Samoa, Samoa Soccer Federation, UN System, TALAVOU Programme and FIFA

MDGs Footykids Concert: Eight nil to Samoa

With the support of the United Nations Country Team in Samoa, International UNV Willy Morrell has recently helped organize and stage one of the largest (and surely the most entertaining) MDG advocacy events held to date in the Oceania region. On the 31st of May 2008, an estimated 1500 primary school kids from all over Samoa came together to perform a concert in front of Government Buildings in downtown Apia. This MDG Footykids Concert (which was officially included in Samoa's Independence Day celebrations) saw pupils from 12 districts compete to become the '2008 Primary School Millennium Development Goals Song Champions'. The evening concert attracted a large crowd of about 2000 onlookers including the Prime Minister of Samoa (Hon. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi) and several cabinet ministers. Willy Morrell said that "...the night was a huge success, the singing was superb and the atmosphere was really positive. My only regret is that I couldn't understand a little more Samoan so I could pick up on how the kid's were interpreting the MDGs in their song and dance...but clearly the crowd was enjoying it!".

The MDG Concert (which was held next to Samoa's new UNDP-funded MDG Scoreboard) was aimed at not only promoting the MDGs but also at demonstrating how children and teachers alike can contribute to attaining the eight MDGs and related national development outcomes focusing on issues such as *gender equality, good nutrition, anti-smoking, healthy lifestyles, volunteerism and environmental sustainability*. Samoa's UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Naheed Haque said that "...the MDG Footykids Concert was very much a collaborative initiative supported by the United Nations system in the Pacific, the TALAVOU programme (through the Samoan Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development), the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, and FIFA's Football for Hope programme. She added that "...it was fantastic to see an MDG event that was so strongly driven by Government Ministries and the Samoan Soccer Federation and I hope to see it become an ongoing annual event".

The Concert was one of many initiatives planned under the new 'MDG Footykids Programme'. This Samoa-based 'sports for development' programme has been strongly supported by the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme, which has funded Willy Morrell's IUNV post to help promote the MDGs and volunteerism in Samoa through the use of sport. The MDG Footykids Programme also represents the first major initiative under a pioneering Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") between the UN System and the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) signed in November 2006. This partnership aims to strengthen Pacific Island communities by using sport as a key development tool to educate, develop and empower young people to improve the quality of their lives. The MDG Footykids Programme is strongly dependent on the volunteer efforts of teachers, trainers and community members. This highlights the very vital role that volunteerism will play in helping achieve the MDGs and in strengthening our Pacific Island communities. In terms of direct UN support, the MDG Footykids programme is also being financially supported by both the UNDP and WHO through an ongoing "MDGs through Sports, ICT4D and Volunteers" campaign which was commenced during last year's highly successful XIIIth South Pacific Games in Samoa.



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<p>Minister of Education (Hon. Toomata Alapati Poese Toomata) opens the MDG Footykids Concert (31 May 08)</p>	<p>Concert contestants begin to arrive (31 May 08)</p>
	
<p>MDG Footykids Concert Commences with one of 12 districts competing (31 May 08)</p>	<p>Kids at the MDG Footykids Concert (31 May 08)</p>
	
<p>Happy contestants waiting for their turn on the stage (31 May 08)</p>	<p>Contestants dancing about MDG 1 at the Concert (31 May 08)</p>
	
<p>Crowd with one of 12 MDG banners made by the contesting districts (31 May 08)</p>	<p>IUNV Willy Morrell standing in front of the MDG Scoreboard on the night of the Concert (31 May 08)</p>