



INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE FOR
SPORTS STUDIES

A project undertaken
on behalf of



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Global Football Development

Vol. 1

Comparing youth football worldwide:
Lessons and proposals for the regular
organisation of youth football competitions





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**Comparing youth football worldwide:
Lessons and proposals for the regular
organisation of youth football competitions**

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The International Centre for Sport Studies (CIES) is an independent study centre located in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. It was created as a foundation under Swiss law by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the University of Neuchâtel, and the City and State of Neuchâtel.

Using a multi-disciplinary approach (law, sociology, geography, history and management), CIES provides research, top-level education and consulting services to the international sporting community.

Since its inception, CIES has aimed to be a bridge between the worlds of research, education and sports organisations. At CIES, we strongly promote the ongoing exchange of knowledge and ideas between stakeholders from both academia and the international sports industry. We actively design, develop and support research and education projects all around the world by fully utilising our international network of universities and experts. Finally, our multi-disciplinary approach allows us to produce concrete research based solutions adapted to sports organisations' needs.

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ISBN 2-940241-27-9

Football development is one of FIFA's core missions, along with regulating and organising the game worldwide and organising international competitions.

Football is a competitive game, and staying ahead of the curve is therefore a constant focus for all of the game's stakeholders. Every team, manager, player and organisation is trying to gain an edge on their competitors and maintain this edge to compete.

On the pitch, this translates into training methods, innovative tactics and other ways to improve the results of the team. Off the pitch, one of the means of staying ahead is investing in research and development.

With this in mind, in 2014, FIFA decided to create and finance reflection sessions on global football development, organised together with CIES, with the objective of fostering innovative ideas in football development.

It is no coincidence that FIFA chose to hold the first of these sessions on the topic of youth football, as it is the enthusiasm of young people for football worldwide, regardless of gender, culture, social upbringing, etc., that will determine whether the game remains the most popular sport in the world.

FIFA hopes that this publication will encourage the whole football community to consider the needs and issues of youth football along with the innovative solutions and road maps proposed. FIFA is committed to using the conclusions of these reflections to adapt its own youth football development activities.

Raphael Morgulis

*Senior Knowledge Transfer and
Information Manager, Member Associations
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Youth football development is one of the paramount objectives of any football governing body. It equips young boys and girls with football skills, and values such as friendship, respect, fair-play, competition or commitment which are put into practice through youth football competitions. Ensuring that these can take place on a regular basis is a key precondition for widespread participation in organised football and the promise of ensuring sustainable development of youth football around the globe.

Unfortunately, evidence shows that at national level, football governing bodies are not always able to guarantee regular playing opportunities for several age groups and gender categories. Building upon the outcomes of the first edition of the Reflection Sessions on Global Football Development held in March 2015 in Switzerland, and the insightful input of the 13 participating contributors, this publication aims to provide suggestions to overcome this issue. It puts the emphasis on the lessons national football governing bodies can draw from youth football competitions organised by other stakeholders and assumes that in certain circumstances, these could also be considered as a potential and valuable alternative for young players.

Accordingly, this publication proposes a definition of a youth football competition and elaborates a three-tiered analytical model. The model is discussed with concrete examples which reveal that the regular organisation of competitions is notably explained by independent factors such as adaptation to the international youth competitions calendar.

The analysis is expanded with an account of the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the organisation of competitions and possible suggestions towards better and more sustainable involvement from the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) in youth football. For example, the construction of a reliable knowledge base on national youth football or the certification of good initiatives and committed organisations with a co-constructed global football development standard are considered.

The publication proceeds with the presentation of six case studies on youth football competitions organised by national football governing bodies and non-governmental organisations in different countries such as Mali, Denmark and Venezuela. While the existence of socio-economic, political and sporting disparities was predictable, the analysis unveils interesting similarities in the drivers and obstacles to the regular organisation of youth football competitions.

This publication concludes by arguing that ensuring the regular organisation of youth football competitions should not be the sole responsibility of FIFA, the confederations or national football governing bodies. We call for collective responsibility based on open-mindedness, mutual respect and fruitful partnerships. Stakeholders must pull together and acknowledge that the beneficiaries of a joint action are ultimately the youth of today.

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Abbreviations

ACEFOOT-MALI	Association des Centres et Ecoles de Football du Mali
AFC	Asian Football Confederation
ASF	Association Suisse de Football
AYSA	ACES Youth Soccer Academy
CAF	Confédération Africaine de Football
CAN	Coupe d'Afrique des Nations
CIES	International Centre for Sports Studies
CONCACAF	Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football
CONMEBOL	Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol
DBU	Dansk Boldspil-Union
FA	Football Association
FAS	Football Association of Singapore
FADP	Fundación Amigos del Deportivo Petare
FEMAFOOT	Fédération Malienne de Football
FFC	Football Federation of Cambodia
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FKF	Football Kenya Federation
FVF	Federación Venezolana de Fútbol
Guam FA	Guam Football Association
HDI	Human Development Index
IOC	International Olympic Committee
ISF	Indochina Starfish Foundation
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
MA	Member Association
MAYFC	Member Association Youth Football Competition
MYSA	Mathare Youth Sports Association
Non-MA	Non-Member Association
Non-MAYFC	Non-Member Association Youth Football Competition
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OFC	Oceania Football Confederation
SQS	Swiss Association for Quality and Management Systems
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
USSF	United States Soccer Federation

Of course, children and youth like to play football as other sports. But to me, they should also have a right to play games. A human right.

Dr, Dr h.c. Hansruedi Hasler



About the project

In 2014, in order to build a constructive bridge between the needs of its 209 Member Associations (MAs) and the delivery of innovative and critical thinking, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) partnered with the International Centre for Sports Studies (CIES) to initiate, frame and implement new reflection sessions on football development.

The Reflection Sessions on Global Football Development aim to bring together at regular intervals a multidisciplinary and multicultural group of contributors with the intention of providing an intellectual, thorough and pragmatic understanding of contemporary and future football development challenges throughout the world.

The sessions pursue six missions: 1) Delivering pioneering ideas on global football development issues; 2) Identifying current and future challenges; 3) Challenging existing theories and practices; 4) Building multicultural and multidisciplinary knowledge and dialogue; 5) Sharing innovative thinking; 6) Promoting change.

The contributors compare, discuss, challenge and re-think concrete situations in the light of

broader concepts. Incrementally and collaboratively, the sessions lead to the creation of a relevant “suggestion box” facilitating the resolution of existing and upcoming football development dilemmas. They are not intended to produce universal and tailor-made roadmaps which would be able to solve a vast array of problems.

The selection of the contributors is carried out in order to meet three specific criteria. Firstly, they are selected by both CIES and FIFA according to the topic under investigation. Comprehensive desk research identifies individuals with proven expertise and thorough knowledge in the chosen area of study as well as pioneering organisations in the field of football development. Secondly, the selection is further narrowed down to account for cultural diversity (the contributors come from different continents) and diversity of roles (the contributors hold diverse roles in society). Thirdly, each of the contributors is associated with one of the three following groups: FIFA MA representative (1); Non-MA representative (2); Expert (3).

In order to ease comparative analysis, the contributors associated with group 1 and group 2 are requested to present the particular features of their organisation following several sub-themes (e.g. organisation, finance, facili-

ties or challenges) as well as a set of guiding questions.¹

Experts comment on concrete cases from a critical perspective and share their knowledge on existing practices with a specific insight (e.g. marketing, coaching, football training, management or history). They stimulate reflection, encourage out-of-the-box thinking and provide fresh and useful inputs. Their contributions not only aim to “think the unthinkable” but also to guide and help football stakeholders to find new initiatives or potentially test those that are successfully implemented elsewhere.

On this basis, the first day of the sessions is dedicated to a description of the topic under investigation. Representatives of FIFA MAs and Non-MAs are invited to present a case study. An experts’ meeting brainstorms the outcomes and key lessons resulting from the case studies and structures the debate around several specific questions. These questions are answered and discussed in small groups and in plenary sessions on the second day. The presentations and discussions are framed and moderated by CIES staff.



Building upon the beneficial and valuable knowledge produced by the contributors in the framework of the sessions, the CIES also initiated a new publication series, called “Global Football Development”. This publication series develops conceptual reflections on key notions related to football development in the light of empirical evidence. It raises awareness of current and future football development issues on a global scale, formulates reflection avenues which are aimed at any individual or organisation interested in football development and offers pragmatic suggestions to representatives of FIFA MAs.

¹ See Appendix for the complete list of questions used for the first edition of the sessions.

The thirteen contributors

Dr Boubacar Baba Diarra

Fédération Malienne de Football

President

Dr Boubacar Baba Diarra is currently the President of the Fédération Malienne de Football (FEMAFOOT). He started his career in football in the late-1960s as a player for several Malian clubs and successively held numerous important managerial positions in the Malian football environment, notably President of the Association Sportive Sélingué, Vice-President of the Centre Salif Kéita, General Manager of the Malian national team during the 2002 Coupe d'Afrique des Nations (CAN) and President of Djoliba AC, which is one of the most successful Malian football clubs. He was recently nominated as a member of the CAN Organising Commission and a member of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Organising Committee. Dr Boubacar Baba Diarra holds a PhD Degree in Organisation Management from the University of Caen, France. He also occupies a senior position in the Malian police.

Mohamed Basir

Asian Football Confederation

Head of the Coach Education Department

Mr Mohamed Basir is currently Head of the Coach Education Department within the Technical Division of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). In this position, he is responsible for developing strategies, policies, procedures and organising educational events to develop coach educators and coaches for the Asian continent. He has authored documents on coach education as well as technical study reports of major AFC competitions. He delivers courses for coaches and coach educators for both FIFA and AFC as an instructor. He was also employed as a staff coach by the Football Association of Singapore (FAS). In FAS, he coached various national youth teams, namely the Men's Olympic Team and worked extensively in grassroots football. His role as a coach educator gave him the opportunity to contribute to the development of the game in Asia. He holds an Honours Degree in Sports and Events Management and is finalising his Professional Diploma in Football Coaching.

Steve Brangeon

Danone

Director of Events

Mr Steve Brangeon is currently the Director of Events at Danone, a leading French food-products company. In this position, he manages a portfolio of renowned sporting events such as the Evian Championships, one of the most prestigious international women's golf tournaments, and the Danone Nations Cup, an annual international football tournament for boys and girls aged between 10 and 12. This event includes 32 national qualifiers organised in partnership with local sports federations and/or sports or education ministries (Danone, 2011). Prior to his senior position at Danone, Mr Steve Brangeon occupied several important roles in the marketing industry in France.

Vicheka Chourp

Indochina Starfish Foundation

Country Manager

Ms Vicheka Chourp currently holds the position of Country Manager at the Indochina Starfish Foundation (ISF), an international charity helping disadvantaged children in Cambodia with football and education programmes. In this position, she has the responsibility of overseeing the running of the foundation's football and education programmes. She is also a member of both the educational and football committees who decide the overall strategy of the programmes. She joined ISF in November 2008 as Administrative Officer and was rapidly promoted to the position of Deputy Country Manager in December 2009. Before joining ISF, she spent eight years in administrative roles in two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and a business company in Phnom Penh.

Marc Duvillard

ACES Youth Soccer Academy

General Manager

Mr Marc Duvillard is a founding member and the General Manager of the ACES Youth Soccer Academy (AYSA), which is a sporting association founded in 2001, in Harare, Zimbabwe. AYSA is a non-profit organisation which provides social development support for Zimbabwe's youth through sport and academic education (Aces Youth Soccer Academy, 2012), notably for boys and girls aged between 12 and 18. His football career started in Switzerland where he played for several first division teams (such as Neuchâtel Xamax and FC Lausanne-Sport). He started his coaching career in the 1980s at the age of 30 with FC La Chaux-de-Fonds. For almost 20 years, he has successfully coached several top football teams. In Switzerland, this has included FC Lausanne-Sport and FC Lugano. In Zimbabwe the Black-Aces FC, and both the senior and U23 national teams.

Dr, Dr h.c. Hansruedi Hasler

Teamcoco

Partner

Dr, Dr h.c. Hansruedi Hasler is currently an independent consultant in football and business at Teamcoco, a consulting firm he founded in 2010. In this position, he provides his expertise and knowledge of football, physical education and coaching to several sporting organisations and businesses. During his football career, he played for various first and second division teams in Switzerland between 1966 and 1976 and assumed the role of Coach of the Youth National Team for several age groups between 1976 and 1986. He then had the privilege of being the National Technical Director of the Association Suisse de Football (ASF) for nearly 15 years. In this position, he provided advice and education in the fields of technical development and philosophy, children and grassroots football, elite youth football, national youth teams, and women's football. Recently, he has held the position of technical advisor to one of the most famous Swiss football clubs, BSC Young Boys. Dr, Dr h.c. Hansruedi Hasler holds a PhD Degree in Didactics of Higher Education from the University of Berne, Switzerland and was awarded Doctor Honoris Causa for his contribution to elite youth development from a pedagogical approach.

Steen Jørgensen

Dansk Boldspil-Union

Head of Grassroots

Mr Steen Jørgensen has been the Head of Grassroots of the Dansk Boldspil-Union (DBU), the Danish football governing body, since 2012. Prior to this position, he held several roles in the Danish football landscape such as Head of the Children & Youth Department at the DBU between 2004 and 2012 as well as a member of the Board of the Danish football club Bagsvaerd BK between 1999 and 2006. He also plays a key role at European football level as member of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Grassroots Panel. Moreover, Mr Steen Jørgensen has a longstanding career as grassroots coach for children and is still an active football player. Mr Steen Jørgensen holds a Master Degree in Organisation and Management from the Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.

Jaime Oteyza

Fundación Amigos del Deportivo Petare

General Manager

Mr Jaime Oteyza is currently the General Manager of the Fundación Amigos del Deportivo Petare (FADP), a non-profit organization whose main objective is to broadly promote the practice of soccer in poorer areas of the Sucre Municipality in the capital-city of Venezuela, Caracas. The foundation promotes the fight against violence and drugs through sports and develops the little league school with the highest standards of soccer excellence. He was also General Manager of Deportivo Petare FC, a famous Venezuelan first division team which also contributes to the development of the Liga Municipal de Sucre. Since 1996 and notably as a social scientist, he worked for several NGOs and corporations in the fields of advertising, social development and research. Mr Jaime Oteyza holds a Degree in Sociology from the Andrés Bello Catholic University of Caracas and a Certificate in Sports Management from the Universidad Metropolitana of Caracas, Venezuela.

Marco Schüepp

FIFA

Performance Programme Manager

Mr Marco Schüepp is currently Performance Programme Manager at FIFA, a position he assumed in 2013. In this role, he is responsible for the strategic and organisational development of FIFA MAs, capacity building in various management areas, and enhancement of programme methodology (e.g. introduction of change management) as well as development of new modules (e.g. competition and event management). Prior to this role, he was Beach Soccer and Futsal Coordinator at FIFA and assumed various responsibilities such as designing, implementing and monitoring the strategy for global development of beach soccer and futsal, organising and leading training courses and seminars, and ensuring on-site coordination of Futsal and Beach Soccer World Cups. Mr Marco Schüepp holds a Bachelor Degree in Business Administration from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and is currently completing an MBA Degree in Leadership and Management at the Institute of Communication & Leadership in Lucerne, Switzerland.

Cheri Stewart

Guam Football Association

Executive Director

Ms Cheri Stewart is currently the Executive Director of the Guam Football Association (Guam FA), a position she assumed in 2010. After a career in various business environments in both Colorado and Guam, her involvement with the Guam FA started with volunteering as a youth soccer coach and refereeing a few games while vying for a slot on the national team. She slowly added a few more roles such as representing Guam as a player, team manager, national team coaching staff, and deputy chairman for women's football. Ms Cheri Stewart is also AFC Match Commissioner and a member of the AFC Women's Committee. She holds a Bachelor Degree in Finance.

Dr Kevin Tallec Marston

International Centre for Sport Studies
Project Manager and Research Fellow

Dr Kevin Tallec Marston is currently Academic Project Manager and Research Fellow in History at CIES. His research focuses on the history of youth football, the question of age in sport, the place of childhood in society, the evolving role of training and education of youth in and around sport, as well as other topics such as governance, legacy, diffusion and transnationalism. He also works closely on the academic coordination of the FIFA Master, as well as other educational endeavours including developing training programmes for organisations such as UEFA and FIFA. Prior to coming to CIES his background was largely in football working as a technical director, coach and club administrator in youth football. In the early years of the Major League Soccer (MLS), he gained experience in event management, stadium operations and logistics namely for the MLS and the United States Soccer Federation (USSF). Dr Kevin Tallec Marston holds a PhD Degree in History from De Montfort University, United Kingdom.

David Thiru

Mathare Youth Sports Association
Executive Director

Mr David Thiru is currently the Executive Director of Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA), a non-governmental youth sport organisation founded in 1987 and located in Nairobi, Kenya. The name derives from one of the largest slums in Africa. Among other development projects, MYSA is often depicted as the first non-governmental organisation in Africa to organise football leagues in the slums and on a self-help basis. Mr David Thiru was a player in the association from its inception and was the recipient of the first best player and sportsman award. He later captained the first MYSA all-star team to travel out of the country to the Norway Cup. He worked for a Norwegian multinational corporation in Nairobi for five years before returning to MYSA as head of Finance in 1999. He later became Director of Finance, M&E, HR and Administration in 2008. In 2009, he also became the founding director of the MYSA Sports and Community Leadership Academy. Mr David Thiru holds an MBA Degree in Strategic Management from Kenyatta University, Kenya and a Degree in Business Administration from the United States International University-Africa.

Benoit You

ASEC MIMOSAS

Director General

Mr Benoit You is currently the Director General of ASEC MIMOSAS, an Ivorian sporting association that manages one of the most successful professional football clubs in the Ivory Coast (ASEC MIMOSAS), a football academy (MIMOSIFCOM Academy), owns sporting, and leisure facilities (Sol Béni), a magazine (ASEC MIMOSAS Magazine), and broadcasts sporting news through the club's own radio station (Radio JN). Prior to this position he held several roles within the association, namely Assistant Coach of the MIMOSIFCOM Academy and Head of Marketing and Communication of Sol Béni. Also a former football player and grassroots coach in France, Benoit You is dedicated to sporting excellence and performance and has a solid knowledge and understanding of local issues regarding youth football training.

Towards the regular organisation of youth football competitions

Over the years, football has become a global sport played in almost every corner of the world. It attracts millions of players, coaches, fans, referees, clubs, volunteers, agents, public institutions, transnational corporations and NGOs. It currently represents an influential economic, social and political driver for a wide range of stakeholders.² Transnational corporations invest billions in sponsorship deals. Intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations (UN) use football as a tool for development and peace in countries torn apart by war and endemic poverty. Fans regularly gather in stadiums or in front of a television to support their favourite team. From an early age, young football players identify with superstars and reproduce their football tricks on the pitch. A particular feature of football lies precisely in the fact that it has the power to attract youth from different horizons like no other sport. It is one of the missions and responsibilities of football governing bodies³ to give them a

chance to participate in organised football competitions. Pertaining to their geographical area of competence (e.g. international, continental, national or regional), these bodies regulate the organisation of youth football competitions for several age groups (e.g. U10, U12 or U14) and gender categories (boys, girls and mixed), particularly by issuing licences/registrations for players, approving football pitches, standardising competition formats, and imposing sanctions. This multilevel structure commonly makes reference to “association” football.⁴ This is mainly because these bodies are often of an associative nature and structured as federations of football associations. Table 1 illustrates this particular setting with a focus on youth competitions organised by FIFA, the six football confederations and the 209 FIFA MAs.⁵ At international and continental levels, 32 youth competitions are organised and only 1/3 (31.3%) of them are organised for girls/women.

The regular organisation of youth football competitions in each of the geographical areas

² A stakeholder can be defined in many ways. Drawing upon Freeman’s seminal work on strategic management, a stakeholder broadly refers to any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives (Freeman, 1984).

³ A football governing body refers to an organisation that controls and sanctions the game of football.

⁴ FIFA defines association football as “the game controlled by FIFA and organised in accordance with the Laws of the Game” (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2015, p. 4).

⁵ Numerous but not always existing regional football associations also organise youth football competitions at the regional level.

Table 1: "Association" youth football competitions organised by football governing bodies

International	FIFA					
	FIFA U-20 World Cup FIFA U-17 World Cup FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup					
Continental	AFC	CAF	CONCACAF	CONMEBOL	OFC	UEFA
	AFC U-23 Championship			CONMEBOL Sudamericano Masculino Sub 20		UEFA Youth League
	AFC U-19 Championship			CONMEBOL Sudamericano Masculino Sub 17	OFC U-20 Men's	UEFA Under 21 Championship
	AFC U-16 Championship	CAF African U-20 Championship	CONCACAF Under-20 Championship	CONMEBOL Sudamericano Masculino Sub 15	OFC U-17 Men's	UEFA Under 19 Championship
	AFC U-14 Championship	CAF African U-17 Championship	CONCACAF Under-17 Championship	CONMEBOL Sudamericano Femenino Sub 20	OFC U-17 Women's	UEFA Under 17 Championship
	AFC U-19 Women's Championship		CONCACAF Girls' Under-15 Championship	CONMEBOL Sudamericano Femenino Sub 17	OFC U-20 Women's	UEFA Women's Under 19 Championship
	AFC U-16 Women's Championship				OFC U-17 Women's	UEFA Women's Under 17 Championship
AFC U-14 Girls Regional Championship						
National	MA's	MA's	MA's	MA's	MA's	MA's

of competence ensures universal access to the game for young players. It is a key precondition for widespread participation in organised football and holds the promise of sustainable development of youth football around the globe. This is particularly true at national level where many youth football competitions are

organised. The 209 FIFA MA's are the national football governing bodies responsible for the regulation, organisation, and development of "association" football on their territory. Regarding youth football competitions, Boillat and Poli show that the most common model of football governance is the one "in which the

national association organises all youth football competitions [and] when a league organises its own youth competition, it is generally [only] at an elite level" (Boillat & Poli, 2014, pp. 64-65).

In practice, most MAs run youth football competitions for several age groups on a regular basis. However, evidence shows that this does not always occur in certain countries and this is particularly true for girls' and women's football.

Regularity can be a challenge for MAs in early stages of development and professionalisation (e.g. in terms of the number of employees, availability of financial resources, and degree of specialisation and departmentalisation). In addition, other factors can be significant obstacles including: the absence of a (clear) strategic vision, mismanagement, inadequate competition format, lack of football coaches, non-existent or obsolete football pitches, lack of corporate investment in youth competitions, size of the country, or competition from other sports in countries in which youth football does not hold a dominant position in the sporting landscape.

Organising "association" youth football competitions at national level is one of the main responsibilities of MAs. But organising such events usually involves a wide range of stakeholders

such as players, referees, coaches, private academies, corporations, fans, or governments. Their financial, logistical, regulatory, structural, and emotional involvement as well as support play a crucial role in guaranteeing that competitions can effectively and regularly take place. Hence, adopting a networked and collaborative way of thinking by recognising the importance of these actors' input and identifying their expectations as well as learning from their experience should be of paramount importance for MAs striving for regularity. As Hamil contends, if sports organisations want to be successful, "they must constantly monitor their environment [and adjust] their strategies to match the changing stakeholder environment" (Hamil, 2012, p. 37). In this vein, and perhaps more importantly, MAs should also broaden the understanding of football development beyond the limits of "association" football and its "traditional" stakeholders by drawing on the key lessons and including the participants of what we call "non-member association" youth football competitions (Non-MAYFCs).

Non-MAYFCs take the form of organised tournaments, championships, leagues, or cups (e.g. the Danone Nations Cup). These can be distinguished from national "member association" youth football competitions (MAYFCs) firstly in their inception and leadership as they are not (directly) organised by MAs but by local

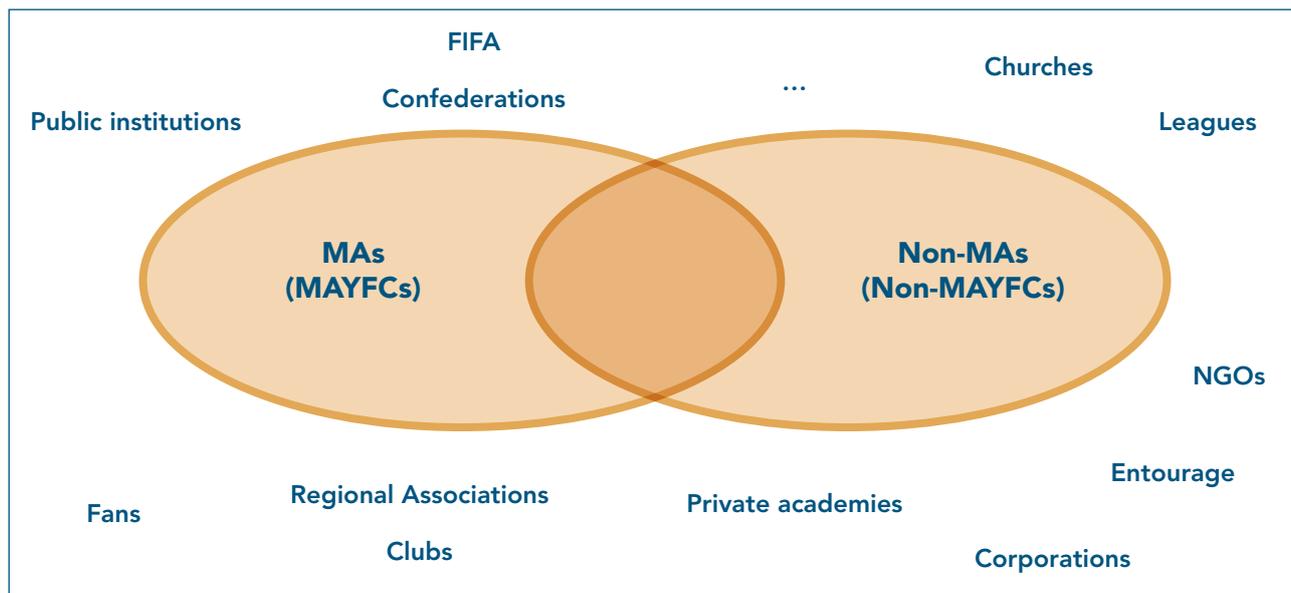
clubs, schools, churches, corporations, NGOs, or private academies (Non-MAs). Secondly, they usually follow broader missions and objectives than sporting development and competition, such as profit, integration, empowerment, socialisation, or education. Thirdly, they also have a different territorial scope as they are usually played throughout smaller territories (e.g. a region or a city).

Building upon these observations, this publication aims to reflect on ideas and provide suggestions that could guarantee the regular organisation of youth football competitions at a national level. It puts the emphasis on the lessons MAs can draw from Non-MAYFCs and Non-MAs, for instance in terms of objectives (e.g. empowerment or integration) or competition format

(e.g. five-a-side, seven-a-side or nine-a-side). It also broadens the realm of reflection and suggestions by assuming that Non-MAYFCs could also be considered as a trustworthy and valuable partner or eventually as an alternative for young players in situations where MAYFCs cannot always be guaranteed.

As depicted in Figure 1, this publication adopts a holistic approach to youth football competitions organised at a national level. We chose to define it as a configuration opposed to unorganised competitions (self-regulated setting, football played in the streets, in a field, at any time, indistinctively of a specific age group). We include competitions organised by MAs but also by Non-MAs. At the intersection of both settings (MAYFCs and Non-MAYFCs), we leave

Figure 1: Youth football competitions at a national level



room for a more hybrid reality built on collaborations and partnerships.

It is often contended that “youth is only a word”. Applying this word to “football” and “competitions” that also have their own intricacies raises, therefore, conceptual issues that need to be resolved. Starting with this assumption, the first chapter proposes a segmentation of the concept of youth football competition with a three-tiered analytical model (“the pathways of youth football competitions”). Conceptually, the model allows us to specify the distinction between MAYFCs and Non-MAYFCs. Accordingly, several questions will be addressed such as: What is a youth football competition? Why are youth competitions organised? Who is organising the competition? What does “children’s football” mean? What are the associated age groups? Where are competitions played? What is the (appropriate) competition format for youth football? Aiming to expand the reflection, the first chapter also discusses the empirical validity of the model and the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders involved in the organisation of a youth football competition, namely in the light of potential partnership opportunities between FIFA, FIFA MAs and Non-MAs.

Building on our model, the second chapter describes and compares concrete examples

of youth football competitions. A first section presents examples of MAYFCs organised by three FIFA MAs (DBU, FEMAFOOT, Guam FA). A second section presents examples of Non-MAYFCs, organised by three Non-MAs, (FADP, ISF, MYSA). In both cases, we highlight the main features of these organisations (e.g. context, organisation, finance or governance) as well as their competitions (e.g. age groups, competition format or gender categories). We complete the description with an overview of the main challenges faced by the organisations in ensuring the regular organisation of youth football competitions. The last chapter summarises the key lessons that have emerged from the conceptual discussions and concrete examples, and formulates innovative proposals towards regularity in the organisation of youth competitions from a global perspective. More broadly, it also opens the door to new avenues for reflection on global football development issues.



Segmenting a multifaceted concept

There are many different ways of approaching a concept. We deliberately chose to explore a youth football competition by identifying and describing its attributes (What is a youth football competition? Which attributes can we include in the definition?) and its essence (Why is a youth football competition organised? What are the underpinning objectives?). We assume that both reflection paths will allow us to better distinguish between the two settings of MAYFCs and Non-MAYFCs, and at the same time lay the foundation stone for a sustainable partnership between MAs and Non-MAs in an environment composed of multiple stakeholders.

The pathways of youth football competitions

In line with our approach on youth football competitions (see Introduction) but also for evident methodological and empirical reasons, we deliberately exclude unorganised and self-regulated youth football competitions such as the spontaneous gathering between friends in a neighbourhood around a football. Accordingly, we define a youth football competition as a platform where young football players meet in an organised setting.

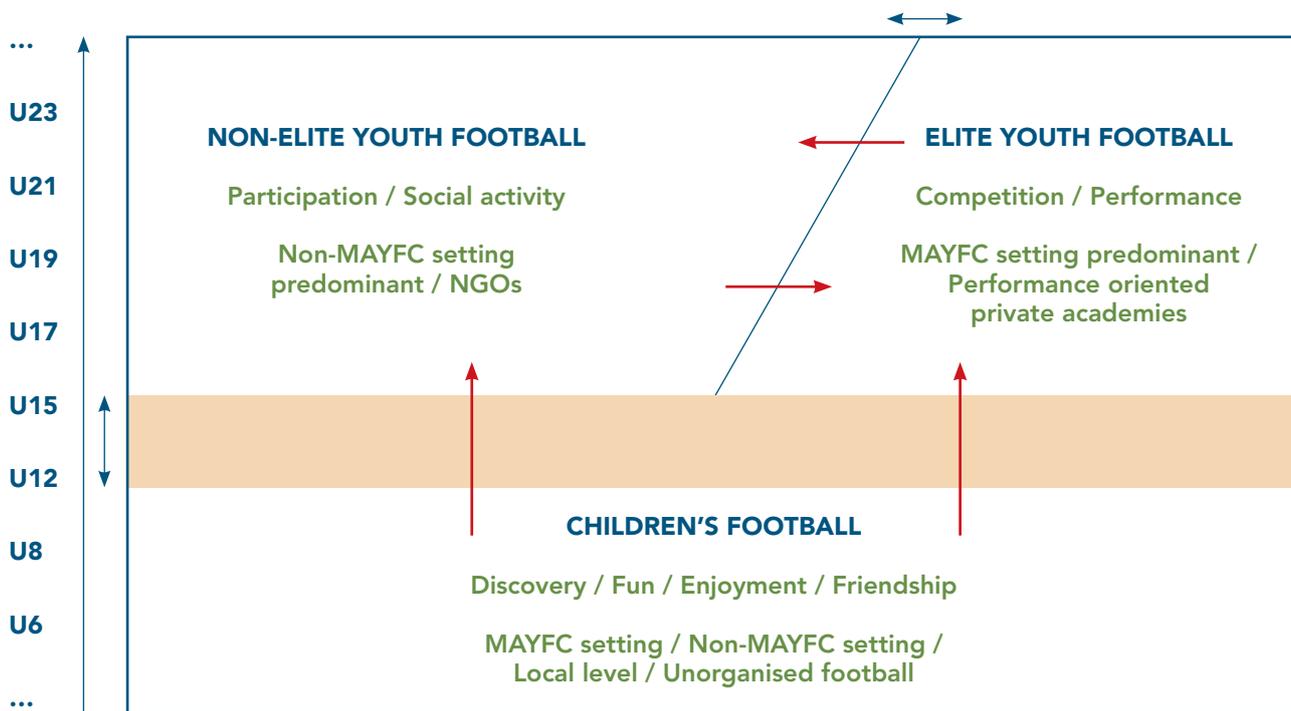
The term **“platform”** refers to the competition format (e.g. five-a-side or seven-a-side), frequency (number of competitions played

during one or more championships), volume (the duration of a game), and size of the pitch. The term **“young”** refers to the pertaining age groups (e.g. U6, U8 or U10). The term **“football”** refers to three analytical youth football segments (elite youth football, non-elite youth football, and children’s football). The term **“players”** refers to gender categories (boys, girls, and mixed). The term **“meet”** refers to the objectives of the competition such as, why is a youth football competition organised? The term **“organised setting”** refers to the two settings of MAYFCs and Non-MAYFCs. Following the deconstruction of this definition, we propose an analytical model that designs the pathways of youth football competitions (Figure 2)⁶ starting with the three segments: Children’s football - Non-elite youth football - Elite youth football.

Firstly, this model offers stimulating insights and discussions on the concept of children’s football, namely in the light of its opposition with other segments, the pertaining age groups and the transition of the players from one football

⁶This model is inspired from the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) stages which describe the things athletes need to be doing at specific ages and stages. Canadian Sport For Life. (2011). *LTAD Stages*. Retrieved from <http://canadiansportforlife.ca/learn-about-canadian-sport-life/ltad-stages>. Its main features have been presented by one group of contributors.

Figure 2: The pathways of youth football competitions



segment to another (red arrows). Secondly, it allows us to take a step back regarding the conceptual vagueness associated with the notion of “grassroots football” which sometimes includes all football that is non-professional and non-elite (in the vein of UEFA’s understanding of the concept)⁷, or solely children aged 6 to 12 (in the vein of FIFA’s understanding of the concept). Thirdly, in a more normative sense, this model also represents an “ideal” pattern in

which MAs should proactively and in a common endeavour create the necessary conditions to ensure that youth football competitions are regularly organised on their territory.

The first segment refers to children’s football and usually comprises young players aged between 6 and 12. In this respect, we follow FIFA’s understanding of “grassroots football”. The competitions should be framed in order to allow children to be (simply) introduced to the game of football. Indeed, one should keep in mind that during that period, it is probably their first experience of football. But it is also not excluded that they practice other sports in parallel. As a concrete example, a recent

⁷ UEFA includes “children’s football, school or youth football, amateur football, football for disabled players, even football for veterans. In short, it is the football played by the masses at a level where participation and a love of the game are paramount” (Union of European Football Associations, 2011, n.d.).

study on sport participation in Switzerland (Lamprecht, Fischer, Wiegand, & Stamm, 2015) observed that even if football remains the most popular sport, there is a strong tendency among young boys and girls aged between 10 and 14 years for multisport practice. During this introductory stage, the contributors conveyed to the session a strong emphasis on the installation of values such as enjoyment, fun, friendship and physical and mental health. Nevertheless, children can also be trained with basic and fundamental football skills, as it is assumed that they could potentially become elite players in the future. The organisation should also be focused on increasing and ensuring regular participation and presence at training sessions and games rather than identifying and promoting future talent through performance-based selection.

Regarding competition format, emphasis should be given to small-sided games (five-a-side, seven-a-side, and nine-a-side) and short competitions (2x15 min, 2x20 min, and 2x25 min) which can also take the form of festivals or tournaments. For technical and motivational reasons, the use of large-sized pitches should be avoided as far as possible. Usually, children should not spend too much time and resources to access the pitch. Finally, since fun and discovery are given primary importance, separating gender categories is not a key

priority at this age. The teams can be mixed. Overformalisation of the regulatory frame of the competition should not be a priority. During this age period, adopting a basic set of rules is fairly acceptable to allow children to have fun with their teammates and friends. Finally, there appears to be no predominant setting regarding the organisation of youth competitions at a national level. In some countries (e.g. in Mali), children's football might also be excluded from our understanding of organised football or simply be organised at a local level.

The second segment refers to non-elite youth football and usually includes players aged between 13 and 23. More than an introduction to the game, the objective consists of maintaining youth participating in the game. Similarly to children's football, the contributors suggest placing an emphasis on the promotion of social values, such as fair play, friendship and respect, but for this particular segment, the format of the competition should not be of primary importance as long as the players have access to enough matches. From a regulatory perspective, competitions should be organised with a limited number of rules which can be modified from competition to competition, rather than by steady and strict regulation and harmonisation across competitions. For this segment, Non-MAYFC appears to be the predominant setting, including namely NGOs, which put a

strong emphasis on the transmission of social values and empowerment of youth through the game of football.

The third segment refers to elite youth football and also includes youth aged between 13 and 23 years. It is, however, different from the second as its main objectives consist of achieving performance goals and developing sporting competition. Youth participation is driven by a (potential) career as a professional football player, success, wins and personal achievement. The organiser should, therefore, give particular emphasis to the steady progression of the players but also to motivation and retention. This is particularly important as usually a significant amount of (financial) resources have already been invested since the beginning of their football development journey (notably in Europe). Regarding competition format, matches should ideally be played on large sized pitches and eleven-a-side, in particular for the older age groups. In order to allow for progression, enough competitive matches should be organised (about 40 matches a year). Teams are predominantly separated (boys + girls). From a more regulatory perspective, regulation and harmonisation is needed as more games are played at international level. For this segment, MAYFC appears to be the predominant setting regarding the organisation of youth competi-

tions at a national level, but it can also include performance oriented private academies that organise tournaments with a strong emphasis on player development.

Discussing the concept of youth football competition

Building on this analysis, we propose to discuss three key aspects which are of particular relevance for the implementation of the model: the position and size of and the transition from one segment to another.

We first discuss the limit between the two realities of children's and youth football (the orange horizontal line in the model) as it might potentially differ from one national situation to another. In some countries, especially in Europe, U12 appears to be a fairly standard age group associated to children's football. However, in some cases like in Mali, football competitions are usually not organised by the MA until U15. According to the President of the FEMAFOOT, this particular situation is namely explained by the fact that the sole goal of the children is to pursue a career in elite football and not to develop social skills. Therefore, it is only from U15, and with the help of the National Technical Division, that the association starts scouting and recruiting players. Moreover, a higher age limit (up to U15) also

implies that access to organised youth football competitions in Mali is made possible at an age when in many other countries, especially in Europe, access to organised youth football has been possible for several years. This statement similarly applies to the Ivorian football landscape, where the MA only starts to work with players at U15 level.

The segmentation of youth football is also influenced by additional and systemic top-down pressures such as the international competitions calendar and associated age groups. For example, the Guam FA sets the threshold at U14 because AFC youth competitions begin at the same age (see Table 1). Similarly, it appears that African MAs would usually organise national U17 and U20 competitions with the ultimate goal to prepare a team to compete honourably in international competitions such as the CAN or the FIFA World Cup.

A second line of discussion is of a more quantitative nature. It considers that a pragmatic modelling of youth football competitions also needs to take into account the pool of players composing the segments. A look at the Danish football landscape shows, for example, that it is mainly composed of players falling into the segment of children's football, as the DBU counts a total of 143,000 registered players between 5 and 12 years, 80,000 registered

players between 13 and 18 years, and 16,000 registered players between 19 and 24 years (Jørgensen, 2015). This observation is even more salient when compared with the number of youth elite football players, where the population is much smaller. Consequently, the development strategy and the pertaining segmentation will also have an impact on the magnitude of the pool of elite players.

Moreover, the evolution and transition of the players from one segment to another and the permeability of the related boundaries should also be taken into account. At any time, and for several reasons (e.g. demotivation, financial uncertainty or life choice), a player taking part in elite youth football competitions can exit this segment for the non-elite path. Although rarer, the opposite can also be possible. In order to guarantee widespread participation, to maintain motivation and offer possibilities of sporting development, it is paramount to leave these doors as open as possible.

The discussion on the definition of a youth football competition and its *raison d'être* shows that the above model should be flexible and adapted to each of the contexts of implementation. The understanding of the three football segments (children's football, elite football and non-elite football) and the characteristics of the attributes will, of course, depend on

organisational conditions but also on the political, social, economic and sporting environment in which the MA or the Non-MA operates. In some countries, maybe the three football segments do not exist, or even fall outside the organised pattern, which is especially true for children's football.

They can also be labelled with different names such as "amateur", "vocational", "leisure" or "professional". Building on these observations and on the basis of the main tenets of the conceptual model, we suggest that each MA segments its own youth football landscape, namely in the light of the opportunities and challenges of taking (or not) into account the reality of unorganised football.

The role of key stakeholders

In order to provide further avenues for reflection on our concept and to enhance the empirical validity of the model, it is useful to discuss the roles and responsibilities of some of the key stakeholders involved in the organisation of a youth football competition in the light of the potential partnership opportunities between FIFA, FIFA MAs and Non-MAs.

FIFA has the responsibility to develop and protect the game of football at an international level. It creates rules, sets priorities and

orientations that influence national decision-making. It also redistributes its revenues to MAs through development projects (e.g. Goal or Win-Win). Regarding its position recognising the autonomy of its MAs and the Non-MAs, and for evident practical reasons, FIFA cannot take over the responsibility of organising youth football competitions at a national level in situations where the MA does not organise them due to the specific local context. There are many youth competitions organised in different parts of the world and it would be neither feasible nor legitimate to organise or regulate this array of events.

In relation to their autonomy, MAs have the responsibility to develop football on their territory. In particular they organise youth competitions and select a team to represent the country to play in continental and international competitions. In less developed countries and due to internal and external factors, evidence shows that MAs do not always have the role they are supposed to have, and this is especially true for younger players and girls' football.

This particular situation has created a form of involuntary and uncontrolled "delegation of responsibilities" to other interested organisations (Non-MAs) such as performance-oriented private academies that recreate the conditions of MAYFCs to attract and train young football players. These academies are evidently more

interested in promoting careers (elite youth football) than in the social values that football can instil (non-elite youth football). In some countries, evidence shows that according to their own objectives and priorities, NGOs, schools or corporations are performing well with their own youth competitions and succeed in ensuring regular events and participation without the (direct) support of the national football governing body.

Building on these observations, FIFA could first adopt a clear strategic vision regarding its position towards Non-MAYFCs, non-elite youth football and children's football and include (all or part of) these realities in the scope of its activities. As there is very little presence of non-elite youth football in FIFA's regulatory framework, and that FIFA's Standard Statutes offer a rather imprecise definition of youth football and its potential structure, FIFA could perhaps complete and amend the regulatory framework (e.g. with a clear definition of youth football), notably in order to set the tone for its subsidiary bodies.

FIFA could then contribute to a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges related to this new reality. In practice, FIFA could organise regular reflection sessions inviting experts from the field and specifically dedicated to event management. It could also collect reli-

able empirical evidence from national contexts on structures, processes, best practices, challenges, behaviour or motivation (namely on the expectations of young players) where existing data is limited.

Building on a comprehensive and solid knowledge basis, it could then consolidate and enhance existing practices (e.g. member association courses) by offering new and adapted advice and education to FIFA staff in regular contact with representatives of non-elite football and also to individuals that form the backbone of the football industry for the MAs (e.g. coaches, staff or players). This should, of course, be done in an appropriate way (e.g. with follow-up workshops and seminars) allowing key stakeholders to have access and implement knowledge in an effective way.

As an example, FIFA could draw on AFC who organise workshops for grassroots managers (or someone responsible for grassroots). As explained by Mr Basir, a few months after the workshop, the confederation contacts them directly to follow up on their achievements and the use of resources they have been given (e.g. coaching manuals, funding mechanisms, information or tools). It gets regular updates which are then published on the confederations' website. AFC also organises grassroots coaching courses including education on child

protection, healthy living, and nutrition which is adapted to the expectations and qualifications of the attendees.

Alternatively, FIFA could also create specific functions, in addition to development officers or grassroots managers, who would have the responsibility to coordinate the relations and interactions between the stakeholders acting in the different settings.

In order to create the best conditions for regular participation in youth football competitions, we have already argued that imposing strict regulation (i.e. imposing statutory requirements or specifications) would be counterproductive from a global perspective. The use of softer, more context-sensitive implementation tools such as guidelines, codes of practices, reward/recognition (in cash or in kind), or even certification could be considered instead. The Danone Nations Cup could, for instance, apply the same guidelines for competitions that FIFA has for its own. The latter could communicate on best practices with a special section on its website or encourage and support initiatives with a special development fund, and also ensure that funding is properly used by means of rigorous and effective accountability checks.

MAs play a crucial role in the development of football. They are at the centre of the multi-

level structure of “association” football as the constituents of both FIFA and their continental confederation. However, in practice, MAs do not have the capacity and resources to organise all football competitions in their territory, let alone in large areas, such as in China or Russia. The complex national socio-economic, political and sporting contexts impact on the role and responsibilities of MAs. Thus, to what extent MAs should help, control, coordinate, advise, back or support Non-MAYFCs should, therefore, be understood as being influenced by organisational and contextual factors.

Nevertheless, MAs should not dismiss their overarching role in developing all forms of football and, therefore, not overlook or belittle Non-MAYFCs. It is precisely this setting where many stakeholders initiate, test and implement valuable and outstanding initiatives, for instance, the fight against violence in the slums or integration and empowerment of youth in deprived areas. Moreover, it creates room for football development and attracts, in the first instance, (more) players, coaches, referees to move in a second instance to MAYFCs and elite youth football. There seems to be much more room for improvement than in elite youth football where the social impact would not be as great. For these particular reasons, it is simply not imaginable to ignore these possibilities. Therefore, acknowledging that organised

football is also about Non-MAYFCs would be a positive first step towards a sustainable partnership.

As Mr Basir contends, wrongly used competitions, such as organising eleven-a-side games for eight year old kids, could hamper the development of players rather than enhance and promote them. From that assumption and similarly to FIFA, MAs could assume an advisory and educative role for non-MAs by initiating specific workshops and seminars dedicated to MAYFCs and (progressively) including knowledge from Non-MAYFCs, non-elite football or children's football (e.g. on the organisation of appropriate competitions relating to specific age groups and gender categories or on volunteering). Meanwhile, fulfilling this role will probably not be enough to ensure that regular competitions will be organised. MAs could also create and ensure the position of a technical director and/or a director of competitions who would have the responsibility of identifying specific youth competitions of particular interest or importance for the development of MAYFCs, initiate contacts, and develop collaborations with Non-MAs. In Asia, the MAs which have created this system seem to develop well, and especially in terms of communication.



This chapter explores and compares six cases on youth football competitions organised in different countries and continents. In order to facilitate comparisons, we present a general overview of the country in which competitions are held, a succinct account of the organisational operations or overseeing the competitions, and some of the key features of the competitions in terms of format and financing. The three first sections are dedicated to MAYFCs. The three last sections are dedicated to Non-MAYFCs.

Three case studies on Member Association Youth Football Competitions

The role and importance of the entourage in Guam

Guam is a small island located in the western part of the Pacific Ocean. This United States (US) territory is populated by 167,500 inhabitants (2014)⁸ living in an area of 549 km². The majority belong to the native community (Chamorro). The remote location of this Island has its importance since travelling to other close countries such as Japan or Australia requires at a minimum a 3.5 hours flight, let alone a 7.5 hours flight to Hawaii.

⁸ The World Bank. (2015). *Guam*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/guam>

The Guam FA was founded in 1975 by a group of men who were looking to establish recreational football in Guam.⁹ It was only 20 years later, in 1996, that the association became an official member of FIFA and the AFC. Interestingly, due to contextual factors such as the size of the territory, the small population and transportation costs, the Guam FA decided to join the AFC rather than the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC). It is currently managed by 19 staff members and numerous volunteers.

Football in Guam is structured into eight different age groups (U6, U8, U10, U12, U14, U17, Open, and Masters) and counts a total of 4,500 players, of which 3,500 are young players. With regards to its international competitive outreach, the men's national team is currently ranked 176 in the FIFA rankings (07 May, 2015) while the women's national team is ranked 86 (27 March, 2015).

Football in Guam benefits from well-developed facilities which include four pitches, a national training centre and official headquarters. The association receives institutional support from the top of the multilevel structure, namely in the framework of the FIFA Financial

⁹ Guam Football Association. (2014). *History of Guam Football Association*. Retrieved from <http://www.guamfa.com/contact-us/history-of-gfa>



Assistance Programme (FAP)¹⁰, and within AFC assistance programmes which provide coaching seminars and training sessions. Additionally, the association decided to diversify its revenue streams by signing several sponsorship deals with large corporations acting in different segments of the market, such as Kia, a South Korean car manufacturing company and United Airlines, a US airline company. It also receives funding from registration fees, the leagues and the running of its football academy.

Youth competitions are organised under a Youth League divided into six divisions and played

¹⁰ The FAP “was established by FIFA in 1999 and is designed to motivate and empower the associations and confederations to organise development programmes that meet their needs and strengthen football and its administration in the long term, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, youth football and technical development” (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 1994-2015a, n.d.).

twice a year from February to April (spring season) and from September to November (fall season). For some of the divisions, a jamboree concludes each season. As we can see in Table 2, football in Guam has experienced an overall increase in the number of youth teams competing over the years. In spring 2015, a total of 150 youth teams competed, which is 40% more than in 2013 (110 teams) for the same season.

Table 2: Number of registered teams in Guam’s youth leagues by age group and season¹¹

	SP13	FA13	SP14	FA14	SP15
U6	22	26	22	30	31
U8	21	26	25	32	32
U10	26	30	28	27	32
U12	19	18	19	17	25
U14	8	8	12	11	12
U17	14	13	12	14	18
TOT	110	121	118	131	150

Source: Stewart (2015)

In 2012, the Guam FA adopted a new development strategy for its youth competitions. From a mixed league applying to the U6-U17 age groups (with an average of 35% female players), the association decided to create a standalone

¹¹ For the spring (SP) and fall (FA) seasons.

All Girls League which has positively impacted on the number of games and competitions for the players. It also produced noticeable changes in playing performance, confidence, and girls' enjoyment and increased support and coverage from different stakeholders for such competitions.

The Guam FA also adapted the competition format to the skills and aptitude of the players. Indeed, in Guam only the two older age groups (U14 and U17) play eleven-a-side football whereas the four other age groups (U6 to U12) play with reduced teams on five-a-side to nine-a-side games. The younger groups also play on smaller pitches with shorter match length and smaller footballs.

A particular feature of the small federation lies in its coherent and holistic consideration of the entourage¹² of the young players. Coaches, volunteers, staff, sponsors, teammates, schools and parents actively participate in their development. In the collective

¹² For the International Olympic Committee (IOC) the "entourage comprises all the people associated with the athletes, including, without limitation, managers, agents, coaches, physical trainers, medical staff, scientists, sports organisations, sponsors, lawyers and any person promoting the athlete's sporting career, including family members" (International Olympic Committee, 2015, n.d.).

imagination, and especially in US culture, it is the mother who brings the kids to the game and also supports their husband playing. In Guam, women are playing an increasing role in the development of youth competitions. In 2013, in order to create a sustainable building block between girls' competitions and competitive women's competitions, the Guam FA initiated two Women's recreational leagues, a novice league for players who had no previous experience (named Mom's Soccer League) and an intermediate league for players that played at some point previously but had since stopped. Only two years after its inception, the Mom's Soccer League now sees 14 teams and 320 mothers compete. And it is not only a success on the pitch. This league has also had a tremendous impact on children participating. It received formal recognition from the government which recently adopted a resolution rewarding the women's committee of the Guam FA for its outstanding job in promoting a healthy lifestyle for the family. Fathers are currently reflecting on the idea of creating a fathers' novice league. A cellular company was also quick to take the naming rights of the Mom's Soccer League. Quite an important number of spectators attend and the coaches are enthusiastic. The entourage of the player appears to be a key component of the organisation of youth football competitions in Guam.

To conclude, the main challenge for the Guam FA is linked to its achievements. The rising number of participating youth teams, the seasonal increase, the newly created All Girls League, the massive support for the Mom's League and the recent interest in the creation of a Father's League, impacts on the overall number of played games on Guam's football pitches. These changes could potentially undermine the regular organisation of youth football competitions. The limited size of the territory and the lack of available football fields will probably hamper the inclusion of current and future youth football players in a team, a club or a league. There is an urgent need to acquire more property to build fields for the 3,500 young players while bearing in mind that the Guam FA has to collaborate with public institutions for this purpose, but also to develop, consolidate and implement a clear strategic vision for the next 10-15 years and prioritise realistic action plans.

Adapting the competition format to the environment in Denmark

Denmark is a small country located in the northern part of Europe. It is populated by 5.6 million inhabitants (2014)¹³ living in an area of

¹³The World Bank. (2015). *Denmark*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/denmark>

42,915 km². If we take into account the last count of the nominal GDP per capita (USD 60,634)¹⁴, Denmark is considered as one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The country also has a very high Human Development Index (HDI) (0.900).¹⁵

The DBU was established in 1889 and is a founding member of both FIFA (1904) and UEFA (1954). It is currently managed by 100 employees. Football in Denmark is structured into several gender categories and age groups (namely the U16, U17, U18, U19, U21, and U23 groups) and can count on a total of 330,000 registered players of which 175,000 are young players between 6 and 18 years. Football is by far the most popular sport compared to other sports such as swimming, gymnastics or golf. It also relies on more than 17,000 volunteers throughout the country. With regards to the international competitive outreach, the men's national team is ranked 29 in the FIFA rankings (07 May, 2015) while the women's national team is ranked 15 (27 March, 2015).

¹⁴The World Bank. (2015). *GDP per capita*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

¹⁵The HDI is a composite statistical tool measuring "average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living" (United Nations Development Programme, n.d., n.d.).

In line with its mission to promote and develop Danish football, from play to pro, from grass-roots to elite, the DBU pays special attention to the development of youth football and in particular younger age groups. It is committed to attracting more players, developing clubs, educating coaches, youth coaches and leaders, cooperating with the local public institutions (municipality), academic institutions and other stakeholders, as well as working on its attractiveness to potential commercial partners.

From U5 to U19, youth football tournaments are organised by the regional associations and not by the national federation which is only responsible for elite youth competitions. As a general rule, games are played throughout the year and on artificial turf.

Regarding financial aspects, clubs pay a yearly fee (approx. EUR 150) in order to be eligible to participate in competitions. The fee is paid to the regional associations, which organise the tournaments. The use of football facilities is formalised by Law. In this respect, the municipality shall notably provide every football club with facilities (pitches, goals and dressing rooms). The municipalities own and are responsible for the maintenance of the facilities, but the clubs provide the footballs and referees. Interestingly, clubs share pitches.



In 2005, the DBU initiated a strategic review of the competitiveness and future direction of football in Denmark - with a strong emphasis on youth football. At senior elite level, it observed that several factors such as the continuing lack of stars, no recent qualification to the final rounds of European and international competitions, as well as poor results in top European club competitions were increasingly a threat to the sustainable development of football in the country. At youth level, it observed a massive drop-out of young players, a lack of girls interested in football as well as an unhealthy playing environment. Youth competitions were organised to be as close as possible to senior competitions including long-lasting tournaments, large-sized pitches, seven-a-side and eleven-a-side games, and a focus on winning. There was no room for mistakes. Moreover, the DBU regretted that the parents tended to behave improperly during games. This situation

generated animosity and tensions on the pitch and surrounding area.

Drawing on these observations, and in collaboration with several Danish academic institutions, the DBU decided to implement a new strategy including a new learning based environment for youth. Children's football competitions should be exempt from results. Children should play three to four short matches on the same day. The size of the pitches is adjusted to the mental and physical level of the children and even reduced down to three-a-side games. Coaches are invited to focus on the individual development of skills and not team performance during the whole season. The association tries to set the conditions for a more pleasant and harmonious environment for the children by requesting that parents behave appropriately and keep quiet around the pitch.

A thorough evaluation of these new initiatives concluded that organising competitions on playing fields that are too small resulted in not enough effective playing time. Three-a-side and five-a-side pitches in the recommended size (12 x 18 m and 24 x 30 m) are too small for the oldest/most advanced players. The effective playing time is not high enough and players act under pressure with limited opportunity for success. Organising competitions on the basis of nine-a-side games is also inappropriate,

especially in relation to the passing game. On the other hand, for U10 and U13, the evaluation and analysis of the games shows a significant increase in successful actions (e.g. successfully completed passes).

Building on this evaluation, the DBU recommended harmonising the competition format throughout all the Danish regions (Table 3). This new strategy is designed to accommodate less advanced players as well as clubs with only a few members. The number of football facilities around the country allows for flexibility in terms of reducing pitch-sizes by up to 10% in relation to the above.

Table 3: Adapted youth football competition format in Denmark

Age groups	Competition format	Pitch size
U5, U6, U7	3v3	13 × 21 m
U8, U9, U10	5v5	30 × 40 m
U11, U12, U13	8v8	52.5 × 68 m
U14 and above	11v11	68 × 105 m

Source: Adapted from Jørgensen (2015)

In practice, these recommendations should ease the responsibility of clubs in the management of facilities. It should also lead to a

greater involvement of all players regardless of their age and level, and hence retain and attract more children and young players. It also maintains the player development philosophy by developing technically skilled players who perform well at ball possession/passing, as well as strong dribbling players.

One of the key challenges for the DBU has to be understood in the light of its recent reforms on competition format and which constitute an essential prerequisite for the regular organisation of youth competitions. Competitions always involve teams of different playing performance and quality. This is particularly true for children's competitions where huge differences in football levels between teams often leads to demoralising results such as 10-0. These differences can potentially hamper the development of the players by hindering their motivation to play regular games. The DBU recently found a solution by adopting a new counting system for U13 and below, which creates more balanced competitions. For these age groups, if a team is losing by three goals or more, it has the possibility to put an extra player to the pitch.

The prevalence of external stakeholders in Mali

Mali is one of the largest African countries covering an area of 1.2 million km² and is populated by 15.8 million inhabitants (2014).¹⁸ Mali is also one of the poorest countries in the world. Its GDP per capita in 2014 (USD 765) was close to 80 times lower than Denmark's¹⁹ and it also has a low HDI (0.407).²⁰ Since 2012, the northern part of the country has also faced serious political turmoil which resulted in a civil war.

The FEMAFoot was founded in 1960 and became a member of the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF) in 1963 and FIFA in 1964. Youth football in Mali is structured into only a few age groups (namely U15, U17 and U19) but the youth national team can claim to have won the 2015 U17 CAN and an honourable third place at the 2015 U20 World Cup. With regards to the international competitive outreach, the men's senior national team is ranked 56 in the FIFA rankings (07 May, 2015) while the women's senior national team is ranked 97 (27 March, 2015).

¹⁸ The World Bank. (2015). *Mali*. Retrieved from: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/mali>

¹⁹ The World Bank. (2015). *GDP per capita*. Retrieved from: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

²⁰ United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). *Human Development Index (HDI)*. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>.

As the national football governing body in Mali, the FEMAFoot has the responsibility to organise national youth teams to participate in international competitions. It also participates in the development of football through the activities of the national technical committee which mentors youth, organises youth competitions and identifies talent for the national teams. It undertook an extensive talent identification programme throughout the district of Bamako, as well as the regional capitals.



It also initiated a women's football development programme throughout the country. The organisation of football is then diluted from the top to the nine regional leagues, football districts and ultimately local sports committees. The Ministry of Education also contributes to football development by organising school and university competitions, which are, however, out of the realm of the Ministry of Sports or the FEMAFoot.

Youth football competitions in Mali represent a powerful tool for cohesion which only football can bring. However, regular competitions can only be found in the capital-city of Bamako. For the moment, there are no national MAYFCs organised by the FEMAFoot. For political and economic reasons young players cannot participate in competitions in the neighbouring regions of Bamako and other parts of the country.

In order to be able to run a football competition, an organiser is only required to identify a field on which a competition can be held and obtain authorisation from the Major of the administrative entities. For that particular reason, organised football in Mali lies heavily under the responsibility of Non-MAs. Indeed, Bamako counts 253 schools and football centers which are regrouped within the Association des Centres et Ecoles de Football du Mali (ACEFOOT), an entity not regulated or controlled by the federation and operating in the Non-MAYFCs setting.

This development and solidarity association founded in 2002 brings education and football skills to youth and organises football competitions for more than sixty football schools and

²¹ACEFOOT-MALI. (n.d.). *Présentation de l'ACEFOOT-MALI*. Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/site/acefootmali/presentation-de-l-acefoot-mali>

centres²¹, with a particular emphasis on children's football. Backed by local donors or political leaders, these competitions constitute an interesting detection source for clubs and agents. There are currently more than 650 schools and training centres throughout the country that teach football skills and deliver education to young Malians outside the realm of the FEMAFOOT.

Another stakeholder falling outside the scope of the association yet gaining increasing importance in the Malian football landscape is Aspire Football Dreams which gives the Malian players the opportunity to be scouted by national and international agents or local clubs. Aspire Football Dreams is a football project empowering the youth of the world by identifying football talents.²² It is steered by the Aspire Academy²³, and organises detection sessions at national level mainly in the form of short matches (eleven-a-side games played in 25 minutes) that take place in different football centres in Bamako and neighbouring

regions. The most talented players take part in centralised sessions in the capital city and only three are ultimately selected to join the Aspire Academy to be trained for a professional career. Interestingly, the ACEFOOT can build on the existence of such Non-MAYFCs to create training centres for the players that have not been selected and which are still a potential reservoir for the U17 national team. Moreover, Aspire Football Dreams also indirectly contributes to the development of the FEMAFOOT by generating a player database.

Mali is a vast country where football is played in all regions, circles, districts, municipalities and villages. Throughout the country, there is plenty of hidden talent waiting to be discovered. The only way to reach and retain these players consists precisely in ensuring the regular organisation of youth competitions. But for this to happen, there are several challenges to be resolved. Firstly, Malian football suffers from an endemic lack of (adequate) infrastructure whether in Bamako or throughout the surrounding regions. This structural vacuum hinders proper and regular football from being played and this is especially true of youth football. Secondly, despite determined efforts by the association, the recruitment, training and retention of coaches still remains a key challenge to be resolved in order to provide an organised and structured environment for

²²Aspire Football Dreams. (n.d.b). *The Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.football-dreams.com/index.html>

²³Aspire Academy is a global organisation "with a mission to identify, educate, and train the most promising athletes in order for them to compete in the highest grade of professional competition, facilitating them with the best conditions for their sport and personal development along the way" (Aspire Football Dreams, n.d.a, n.d.).

young footballers. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the FEMAFOOT is suffering from the increasing importance and dominance of Non-MAs and Non-MAYFCs organised throughout the country which mainly see youth football as a short-term profitable activity rather than a resource for sustainable development. Nevertheless, in the light of the weakened association football landscape and the current socio-political contexts, these initiatives could perhaps be seen as a necessary evil in order to guarantee the organisation of youth football competitions.

Three case studies on Non-Member Association Youth Football Competitions

Empowering youth in Kenya with the Mathare Youth Sports Association

Kenya is one of the largest African countries by population (in 2014 45.5 million²⁴ living in an area of 582,650 km²). It is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its GDP per capita in 2014 (USD 1,337)²⁵ was more than 40 times

lower than that of Denmark. It also has a relatively low HDI (0.509).²⁶ Regarding football, the Kenya Football Federation (KFF) was founded in 1960 and affiliated to FIFA the same year. With regards to its international competitive outreach, the men's national team is ranked 117 in the FIFA rankings (07 May, 2015) while the women's national team is ranked 138 (27 March, 2015).

MYSA is a non-governmental youth sport organisation located in Nairobi, the capital-city of Kenya. It was founded in 1987 by Bob Munro, former advisor to the UN in the field of development. According to Atkins (2003), Munro realised that sport, as a universal language, could be a way of empowering the youth of the valley of Mathare, and allow them to release their energy in a controlled way. Witnessing the poverty and deprivation in the slums, he created a small self-help group where youth can participate in football and at the same time clean up the environment. Since its inception as the first non-governmental organisation in Africa to organise football leagues in the slums on a self-help basis (Atkins, 2003), MYSA has become one of the most famous sporting

²⁴The World Bank. (2015). Kenya. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/kenya>

²⁵The World Bank. (2015). GDP per capita. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

²⁶United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). *Human Development Index (HDI)*. Retrieved from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

NGOs in the world and has been nominated twice for a Nobel Peace Prize. As of 2015, changing the lives of Mathare youth by starting with sport remains its core mission.

The organisation of MYSA is unique in the sense that it is owned and managed by the local youth which allows them to develop management and leadership skills at a very young age. MYSA employ 30 full time staff members. Its executives, volunteers and coaches have an average age of 16 years, and half of the elected leaders are women (49.3%). MYSA's governance structure is characteristic of a decentralised design. At a political level, the association is steered by a Board of Trustees comprised of 10 members, including the founding father of the association and the Executive Director. At an executive level, the association is led by a 10 member Executive Council. The two core policies of MYSA (sport and community service at large) are also decided and debated in a Sports Council (16 members) and a Community Service Council (16 members). Ultimately, MYSA operates in 16 working areas (zones), each of these being directed by one Zonal Executive Committee, which is composed of youth that are elected amongst them (co-optation). Interestingly, the association rewards the young managers for their active participation at meetings (Leadership Awards) by offering them tuition and training fees.

In order to run its activities, the association can count on a budget close to USD 1 million (2014) depending to a large extent on contributions from donors. In contrast to Guam's situation and also that of many other MAs, players are not required to pay registration fees.

Across the 16 zones, MYSA offers the opportunity for young players to play football in an organised format and in locations where they live. As of 2015, the association counts 25,000 active boys and girls, which is the highest figure since its inception in 1987. A large majority of them are competing in one of the 1,811 teams, divided into four age groups (U10, U12, U14, U16, and O16) and 202 leagues. 12,000 matches are played annually on (progressively disappearing) community facilities and school properties. These impressive figures are namely explained by the lack of available space in Mathare, hindering matches from being played on large-sized pitches. A particular feature of the competitions is the rewarding of points to teams not exclusively for their wins, but also according to their commitment to slum garbage/environmental projects.

Regarding competition format, two age groups play unregulated five-a-side football (U10 and U12) usually on small fields with small goals and balls due to the large number of teams competing in this age group. In contrast, U14,

U16 and over 16 (O16) leagues play eleven-a-side football. MYSA is open to all children in these age groups. The association only requires a team to register within the stipulated time and zone.



A particular feature of MYSA lies in one of its mottos “if you do something, MYSA will do something... but if you do nothing, MYSA will do nothing”. As a community development organisation, it always endeavours to find innovative ways to get youth involved in helping themselves and their communities.²⁷ The association empowers youth through football activities and games, which can ultimately lead some of the players to join other first division teams or an academy, and also numerous community and

²⁷Mathare Youth Sports Association. (n.d.). *MYSA wins major global Beyond Sport award*. Retrieved from <http://www.mysakenya.org/mysa-wins-major-global-beyond-sport-award.html>

education projects. These include the HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention Project, the Child Rights and Protection Project or the Shootback Project, which is an innovative photography venture started in 1997 which instructs youth on the basics of photography.

The main challenge for MYSA is to engage more with public institutions who currently act more as observers than real partners. Building new partnerships and strengthening existing collaborations linked to the use of facilities would help MYSA in guaranteeing sustainable access to pitches in an era of increasing participation of youth in all of the MYSA Leagues.

Including disadvantaged children in Cambodia with the Barclays-ISF Youth League

Cambodia is an Asian country populated by 15.4 million inhabitants (2014)²⁸ living in an area of 181,000 km². After having experienced one of the most repressive political regimes in the late 1970s characterised by violence, torture, famine and mass killings, it is currently one of the poorest countries in the world with

²⁸The World Bank. (2015). *Cambodia*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/cambodia>

a GDP per capita in 2014 (USD 1,084)²⁹ close to 60 times lower than that seen in Denmark, but compared to Kenya, it has an average HDI (0.579).³⁰ Regarding football, the Football Federation of Cambodia (FFC) was founded in 1933 and affiliated to FIFA and AFC in 1954. With regards to its international competitive outreach, the men's national team is ranked 178 in the FIFA rankings (07 May, 2015).³¹

Since its inception in 2006, the ISF has been an organisation dedicated to providing education, healthcare and sporting opportunities to the poorest and most disadvantaged children in Cambodia as well as support services to the families of the children (ISF, 2012). Currently managed by more than 35 local Cambodians and counting on skilled volunteers, ISF runs both education and football programmes which play complementary roles in the strategy of the organisation.

The education programme mainly offers schooling opportunities to children who had to stop school for economic reasons (e.g. collect

rubbish to support their family or stay at home taking care of brothers and sister while the parents are at work) and provides them with sufficient knowledge to integrate state schools in a second instance. It also helps the parents to get out of poverty with employment training, revenue generation opportunities, and food if the children regularly attend classes (no less than four absences per month). Ultimately, it delivers interactive and informative education on social issues such as the dangers of drug use, gender equality or domestic violence in order to allow children to take informed life decisions. As of 2015, 500 young boys and girls had participated in such programmes.

ISF starts with the assumption that sport provides children with multiple benefits such as teamwork and leadership skills, health, integration, sense of community, discipline and self-confidence, fun and enjoyment. Drawing on these benefits and observing a lack of football opportunities in schools, in the neighbouring provinces of Phnom Pen and more broadly in Cambodia, the football programme adopts a holistic approach on the use of sport for development purposes. It combines training for young players, coaches and future coaches with competitions for children, deaf and hearing impaired players as well as players with learning disabilities. As of 2015, 3'800 young boys and girls had attended the football programme.

²⁹The World Bank. (2015). *GDP per capita*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

³⁰United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). *Human Development Index (HDI)*. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

³¹The women's team is not ranked.

In 2007, ISF initiated an U14 boys competition which has been an immediate success in terms of youth participation. The programme was quickly complemented by a U16 girls competition in 2009, and a deaf competition later on. In 2010 and, with the support of Barclays bank, it initiated a youth league, the Barclays-ISF Youth League, which provides youth with organised and weekly competitions and opportunities to showcase their skills. The participating teams are sponsored by partner organisations or schools. Most of the teams come from the capital-city of Phnom Penh, but it happens that one team travels more than three hours to access the pitch from the remote provinces of Cambodia. Thanks to the constant growth in the number of girls and mixed teams, the 2014/2015 season gathered 62 teams into three age groups (U10, U14 and U18) and two gender categories.³² Matches are played on Sundays from November to April.

Over the years, it has managed to develop and to maintain partnerships with several key stakeholders. It has partnered with various entities including the FFC which provides equipment to players and recruits the best candidates for trials to join the national team, 41 state schools which send their teams to participate

³²Interestingly, the boys team can only register in competitions if they bring a girls team.

in the different leagues and provides facilities as well as courses for the children, local NGOs who provide vocational training to the parents, sponsors who support the teams with equipment, and FIFA which supports ISFs activities with the FIFA Football for Hope project.³³

With the Barclays ISF Youth League and its education and sporting programmes, ISF has found an interesting equilibrium between the needs of some of the most deprived Cambodians, the overall lack of professional skills, education and sporting opportunities in the country, and the delivery of well-thought out solutions. It has managed to create a win-win situation by satisfying some of the most basic needs of the Cambodian community with the delivery of food to parents on the condition that children regularly attend classes. On the more sporting side, being part of the school team and participating in the leagues positively impacts on class attendance.

Nonetheless, for the moment, competitions are organised on pitches that ISF rents from schools or private companies. This pretty

³³FIFA offers funding, equipment and training to the organisations running FIFA Football for Hope projects and their beneficiaries (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 1994-2015b).

common situation temporarily reduces maintenance costs but implies that the regular organisation of competitions can be hindered by an unexpected decision taken by the pitch owner who gives access to another stakeholder. This situation is often combined with unpredictable weather and the increasing number of participating teams and players. Already, U17 competitions are organised after the regular season, from June to August. The main challenge for ISF, and which is currently being addressed, consists of ensuring regular access to pitches by owning its own football facilities. This would not only guarantee regular competitions to be organised but also broaden its integrative function by reaching more disadvantaged children who are excluded from sports practice.



In order to fulfil its missions, the ISF can count on the active participation of coaches. As in other contexts, this workforce plays a significant role in the education and sporting devel-

opment of the players as they represent role models for youth and the community. As such, they should display appropriate behaviour in all circumstances. For this reason, ISF has initiated leadership training courses which provide them with leadership skills and the necessary tools to build a positive environment for a competition to be appropriately organised. They have also been recruited on a full-time basis in order to ensure against absence and delays at training sessions and games.

However, educating and professionalising coaches with higher standards brings new challenges. Indeed, professional clubs have developed an increasing interest in hiring these coaches for their own teams. Recently, one of the best coaches of ISF has been recruited by a Phnom Penh team. But this new situation can also be analysed with optimism, since it can be a driver for young coaches to work harder and learn more.

The Liga Municipal de Sucre in Venezuela as a platform for social inclusion

Venezuela is a South-American country populated by 30.8 million inhabitants (2014)³⁴ living

³⁴The World Bank. (2015). *Venezuela, RB*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/venezuela-rb>

in an area of 916,445 km². Its GDP per capita in 2014 (USD 16,529) was about four times lower than the Danish figures recorded³⁵ but compared to Kenya and Mali, it has a high HDI (0.763).³⁶

Regarding football, the Football Association of Venezuela (FVF) was founded in 1926 and affiliated to both FIFA and the Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol (CONMEBOL) in 1952. With regards to its international competitive outreach, the men's national team is ranked 69 in the FIFA rankings (07 May, 2015), while the women's national team is ranked 65 (27 March, 2015).

The Liga Municipal de Sucre (the Liga) is a youth competition organised in Petare, one of the biggest slums of Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela characterised by small streets, piled up houses, high crime rate, sanitation issues, poverty and low self-esteem. The Liga is organised with the purpose of creating a critical mass of players for football practice in Petare and as a means for social inclusion and

the fight against violence in one of the most dangerous and violent cities in the world. With poor access to education and no job opportunities, the youth represent an easy target for local gangs. Organising competitions, notably during school holidays, keeps them occupied and away from drugs and street fights. Football pitches become a space for socialisation and pacification.

The Liga is a youth competition organised and backed by an alliance of various group stakeholders including the FADP, a non-profit organisation founded in 2010 whose main goal is to expand the practice of football as a means for social inclusion in the slums of Petare; the football club of Deportivo Petare FC which has a deeply rooted identity in the local community and offers a potential professional career path for the best prospects of the Liga; local public institutions, which are primarily involved in the building, maintenance and provision of free football and sporting facilities which are sometimes built over deserted landfills; a development bank which helps the Liga with a non-refundable support for coaches training; donors and financial contributors that implement corporate social responsibility programmes or with a particular interest in the demographics of Petare for financial purposes; and the local community including the entourage of the players with most notably the coaches.

³⁵The World Bank. (2015). *GDP per capita*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

³⁶United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). *Human Development Index (HDI)*. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

The alliance has also built a strong collaboration with the local police forces who advise them on the risks of holding a game in a specific location and timeframe. Interestingly, in order to maintain its autonomy, the alliance rarely collaborates with the FVF which follows other objectives than social development and inclusion. In order to fulfil its mission, the alliance develops and implements several programmes such as providing basic equipment for Liga teams, technical and logistical support, summer camps during school holidays for 300 kids, scholarship programmes for the poorest and most disadvantaged kids playing in the Liga (in terms of transportation and equipment) as well as a small contribution to their parents, and football clinics with professionals.

The Liga was established in 2010 and was entirely financed by the FADP. At that time, it included eight teams, coming from the Municipality of Sucre and grouped within three age groups (U10, U12 and U14). The 480 registered players competed from September to May (i.e. within the school calendar). As of today, the Liga is only partially funded by the FADP. Building on the rapid growth of football in Venezuela, it increased the number of participating teams to 24 (1/4 of them do not come from the Municipality of Sucre) and number of players to 1440.

Observing that at the age of 14 youth are more likely to be recruited by local gangs and enter into irreversible violence, the alliance has extended the Liga to include three older age groups (U16, U18, and U20) playing eleven-a-side games. Due to the lack of available football facilities during the regular season, this new competition runs from May to September (i.e. mostly during school holidays). As a general rule, and probably explained by a strong male culture in Venezuela, competitions are mostly played by boys. All competitions are played on artificial turf.



The creation of this new competition epitomises a particular and interesting feature of the funding of the Liga. It has indeed been backed by local businesses active in the money transfer sector. It saw an economic opportunity to invest in a youth competition run throughout an area of one million inhabitants including a second

and third generation of the Colombian diaspora sending some of their savings back home to their families. Another interesting aspect that deserves to be put into context is the integrative approach of the alliance towards non-dominant sports like basketball, baseball and swimming. It sees these sports as complementary to football in the sense that if they manage to keep youth away from violence and drugs, the goal of social inclusion through sport is ultimately reached.

The main challenges that the Liga has to deal with are access to pitches, children's desertion and coaching mentality. Firstly, even if football facilities are built in the slums and for the slums, young players still have a long, expensive and dangerous journey when they leave their homes, move across one side of the slum to the other and finally access the football facilities. Secondly, due to recurrent family problems, such as low employment and poor revenues, kids often start to play at a young age but rapidly move away once these problems become too constraining. Thirdly, similarly to the Cambodian system, coaches represent role models for young football players and also represent the backbone of an effective social development project. Nevertheless, it appears that the current and deeply rooted football mentality is still driven by performance, goals, and wins. As an example, some coaches have

disapproved of the proposal by the FADP to reduce the competition format to small-sided games. The foundation has, therefore, decided to accompany them on a daily basis and insist on the importance of football as a means for social inclusion and not competition and performance.

Synthesis

Throughout this chapter, we have presented some of the key features of MAYFCs and Non-MAYFCs organised in six countries. We have observed that each organisation frames and implements youth competitions in line with its own objectives, available resources and mentality. We also showed that the broader (socio-political) environment, which has been completed by data provided by the World Bank (GDP per capita) and the UNDP (HDI) should be taken into account in any comparative description. We believe that ensuring the regular organisation of MAYFCs and Non-MAYFC does not require the same mechanisms in a large but poor country like Mali than as in a wealthy and small country like Denmark. From there, Table 4 shows the main drivers and obstacles towards the regular organisation of youth football competitions.

Table 4: A comparative synthesis of the main drivers and obstacles towards the regular organisation of youth football competitions

Case	Main drivers	Main obstacles
Guam FA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of the country • Participation and inclusion of the entourage of the players • Financial support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing number of participants • Lack of available pitches
DBU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapted competition format • Football is by far the most dominant sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent's unethical behaviour • Strong differences in the performance levels of youth teams
FEMAFoot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority on elite youth football competitions • Decentralisation of the structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scarce financial resources • Lack of (adequate) infrastructures • Lack of (skilled) coaches • Competition with private academies
MYSAs Leagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication with public institutions
Barclays-ISF Youth League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support from corporate sponsors • Win-win situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No properties • Unpredictable weather • Increasing number of participating teams and players • Disaffection of coaches
Liga Municipal de Sucre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic interest from local businesses • Free pitches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to facilities • Mentality

Regular organisation of MAYFCs in Guam is mainly driven by the limited territory of the island which facilitates access to the pitch, broad participation and inclusion of the entourage of the players, and strong financial support

from businesses. Nevertheless, the increasing number of participants and lack of available pitches can represent obstacles towards this goal. Regular organisation of MAYFCs in Denmark is mainly driven by the adaptation of

the competition format to the football environment and ability of the young players. Indeed, football does not always need to be played eleven-a-side. Football is by far the most dominant sport in the country. Meanwhile, the parents' unethical behaviour and the strong differences in the performance levels of youth teams are some of the factors that can hinder regularity of competitions. Regular organisation of MAYFCs in Mali is mainly driven by the priority on elite youth football competitions and decentralisation, but is hindered by scarce financial resources, lack of infrastructure, lack of skilled coaches and competition from private academies.

Regular organisation of the MYSA Leagues is mainly driven by youth empowerment, but is hindered by the lack of communication with public institutions. Regular organisation of the Barclays-ISF Youth League is mainly driven by the financial support from corporate sponsors and the creation of a win-win situation with families. Nonetheless, regularity can be impeded by the absence of playing space, unpredictable weather, the increasing number of participating teams and players, and the disaffection of coaches. Regular organisation of the Liga is mainly driven by economic interest from local businesses and free pitches, but it can be hampered by problematic access to facilities and the local mentality characterised by power issues and discrimination.

Nevertheless, it is also possible to identify several common features which could ensure regular competitions, such as the importance of trained and skilful coaches, the inclusion or exclusion of parents (namely when they prevent their child from focusing and the coaches from doing their job), adaptation to the environment, the quest for win-win situations between the organiser and financial contributors, and the importance of school facilities.



In the same vein as the missions of the Reflection Sessions on Global Football Development, this publication offers an innovative and select analysis of youth football competitions organised on a global scale. As a structural pillar of football, these are a unique catalyst for sustainable development of football throughout the world as they epitomise the entry point towards a professional career or a long-lasting social activity including friends and teammates led by values such as friendship, integration and fun.

It is of paramount importance that young boys and girls have the best conditions and sources of motivation to participate. Guaranteeing the regular organisation of youth football competitions goes in that direction, and it should be a priority and key objective for MAs and Non-MAs. As a competition platform, it offers young boys and girls the necessary skills to make their dreams of being the next Messi or Marta come true. As a social platform, it creates or reinforces the sense of belonging to a group, protects them from the dangers and risks inherent in life, and educates and equips them with the necessary skills for better integration into the world of work. In both cases, it gives them the chance to build a sense of satisfaction, pride and accomplishment, particularly in situations where the socio-economic context does not allow for such positive development to take place in other spheres of activity.

Nonetheless, the quest for regularity is and will certainly be destabilised by internal and external threats which cannot always be countered due to a lack of resources (financial and human) or institutional and contextual constraints. Thus, we assume that expanding the “classical” understanding of an organised youth competition by including Non-MAYFCs is an innovative and helpful path to explore. We propose a new and relatively wide ranging definition and concept which is deconstructed into a segmented analytical model including three youth football segments and linked objectives. We discuss each of the segments and their interconnections in the light of concrete situations. We improve the validity of our model by including a critical analysis of the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, such as FIFA, MAs and Non-MAs in each of the segments and possible reconciliation avenues between the two settings of MAYFCs and Non-MAYFCs.

In summary, we suggest that FIFA, in its position as the umbrella governing body for national football associations, should orientate the strategic compass in the direction of children’s football and/or non-elite youth football. For example, by modifying its statutes and building a comprehensive and reliable knowledge base to be made accessible to MAs or other interested parties. At national level, we suggest that

MAAs acknowledge the role and importance of Non-MAAs in the framework of organised competitions as the latter have the potential to inspire them with best practices and original initiatives. In the second instance, this could also lead the MAAs to reflect on possible communication avenues, partnership opportunities, delegation mechanisms or structural inclusion of key stakeholders such as schools, NGOs, the entourage or local businesses. At the same time, this would ensure that the MA remains the overarching decision-making body regarding youth football competitions in a country.

The presentation of the six case studies reveals interesting differences namely in terms of organisation and competition format. In some contexts, such as in Denmark, competitions for the younger age groups are organised by regional associations and not by the MA which is responsible for organising elite competitions. Evidently, such a decentralised configuration might not be appropriate in a small country or territory like Guam, where the national MA has enough resources and reach to implement its youth football policy all over the island. Each of the organisations build on different drivers in order to guarantee the regular staging of youth football competitions, but also have to deal with uneven and numerous obstacles. Local peculiarities should, therefore, never be underestimated.

One of the more transversal lessons of this publication can be found in the fact that some of the organisations have successfully implemented win-win situations by including several stakeholders (namely parents, corporate sponsors, coaches or youth themselves) in the framing and implementation of their development projects. Drawing on these initiatives, we would like to conclude this contribution by building the first foundations of a standardisation / certification process which could include several stakeholders and key aspects to consider towards the regular organisation of youth football competitions.

According to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) "a standard is a document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose. International standards ensure that products and services are safe, reliable and of good quality [...]. For businesses, they are strategic tools that reduce costs by minimizing waste and errors, and increasing productivity. They help companies to access new markets, level the playing field for developing countries and facilitate free and fair global trade" (International Organization for Standardization, n.d., n.d.). Editing and validating one of the 19,500 existing international standards follows

a complex and rigorous process composed of several steps namely new work item proposal, expert consensus, consensus building within technical committees and subcommittees, enquiry, approval/vote, and publication.

Building on our research question, conceptual segmentation and empirical findings (notably the examples of win-win situations), we suggest a six-stage standardisation/certification process.

Inception

FIFA creates a standardisation unit/function within FIFA Member Associations and Development Division. It has the responsibility to identify the outlines of a standard in the field of youth football competitions. It analyses data gathered from the numerous football development programmes, the FIFA rankings, the Big count, data provided by MAs and confederations, as well as from other sources. This unit also surveys the opinions of internal stakeholders. It collaborates with other FIFA bodies (e.g. the legal department) and reports its findings and conclusions to top management of the Division.

Call for proposals

Once the creation of the standard has been confirmed, FIFA Member Associations and Development Division publishes a call for proposals on its extranet and website. The

call includes a detailed account of the underpinning needs, aims and expectations as well as a description of the process. It stresses the importance of organising regular youth football competitions for the sustainable development of football on a global scale and the benefits of a networked and collaborative approach. The individuals or institutions (e.g. independent consultants, businesses, academic institutions, sport organisations) interested in reflecting on and contributing to the creation of a standard submit a draft proposal to the Division. Ideally, the bidders should constitute a group (working group) from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds.

Draft requirements

The FIFA Member Associations and Development Division selects the best project. The winning bidder is then responsible for laying down draft requirements and namely drawing upon ISO 20121:2012 which applies to event sustainability management systems and includes several recommendations and sub-recommendations such as determining the scope of the management system, defining governing principles of sustainable development, or assigning and communicating roles and responsibilities (International Organization for Standardization, 2012).

In order to guarantee the regular organisation of youth football competitions, our standard shall at a minimum include a clear definition of the requirements and the sub-requirements, the conditions under which they are met, and a list of documents to be provided. Content wise, it could include specific items and guidelines which have namely been presented and discussed throughout this publication but also other ideas. For example, policies against parents' misbehaviour, proper football facilities, "good" organisational governance, logistical requirements, education and training courses for coaches, or specific rules for children's football competitions based on fair-play and not competition.

With respect to the latter aspect and building on some of the cases explored above, we can suggest the requirement that the MA should have fair-play rules for its children's football competitions (i.e. pertaining to one of our three segments). In line with our networked and collaborative understanding of global football development, the following (non-exhaustive) list of sub-requirements includes different stakeholders such as parents, referees, schools and sport manufacturing companies.

- The MA has a clear understanding of fair-play.
- The MA has a detailed fair-play charter.

- The MA implements on-field anti-competition actions (e.g. it rewards teams that have not been punished by yellow/red cards or balances out the flow of the game by allowing one team to bring on extra players if the opponent scores).
- The MA trains coaches and referees on fair-play policies.
- The MA educates children on the social impact of football and the benefits of fair-play (e.g. it partners with schools to build up specific courses).
- The MA sensitises the parents on the importance and benefits of fair-play for the development of their children (e.g. it publishes a leaflet/handbook explaining how the parents should behave in the stands).
- In collaboration with sport manufacturing companies, the MA offers prizes (e.g. balls or kits) to the most deserving players (or parents) regarding fair-play.

Ultimately the working group hands its conclusions to the FIFA Member Associations and Development Division which is allowed to make the necessary amendments in order to best meet the expectations and targets of the standard.

Consultation

Once the FIFA Member Associations and Development Division has approved the draft proposal, it disseminates the document to its MAs, the confederations and the development committee for internal consultation. The aim of this phase is to make sure that the draft standard is understood by the possible users, has the feedback from as wide a range of stakeholders as possible, and is enforceable in practice. It is important that the participants have enough time to review the proposal, add their comments, and propose amendments. In parallel, the Division also disseminates the document externally and in particular to players' unions, clubs' associations, supporters' groups, and advocacy groups/NGOs (i.e. Non-MAs).

Approval

The standardisation unit collects and analyses the comments and provides its input to top management of the FIFA Development Division which has the responsibility to approve the standard. Before final approval the standard should be validated by the legal department (or other relevant FIFA body) and ideally also by external (technical) experts.

Certification

Certification confirms that the strategy and practices meet the requirements of the standard and expectations of the stakeholders. It

is performed by an independent body (third party) on the basis of existing standards. For example, the Swiss Association for Quality and Management Systems (SQS) certifies companies for the performance and quality of their management systems using ISO standards. In this regard, this function can be performed neither by FIFA nor by the stakeholders that participate in the standardisation process, and a special body should be created for that purpose. However, FIFA and its stakeholders could intervene by incentivising the organisations that have earned the certificate.

To conclude, ensuring the regular organisation of youth football competitions is not the sole responsibility of FIFA, the confederations or the MAs. It calls for a collective responsibility. Regularity will only occur following a joint effort based on open-mindedness, mutual respect and beneficial partnerships. Stakeholders must pull together and acknowledge that the beneficiaries of such a move are ultimately the youth who participate. A co-constructed standardisation and certification process is one of the many potential avenues to explore. It has the potential to create some form of harmonisation and regularity in a globalised and complex environment, patterns of which, in the limits of the prevailing local needs and customs, are key components in the sustainable development of football throughout the world.

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Framework for case studies

Sub-themes		Guiding questions	
A	Participants	1	How many competitions are run by the organisation?
		2	What is the competition format?
		3	What are the age groups?
		4	From which geographic area do participants come from?
		5	How are participants selected?
		6	Do participants come accompanied?
B	Historical conditions	1	Why has/have the competition(s) been created?
		2	When has/have the competition(s) been created?
		3	Where has/have the competition(s) been held for the first time?
		4	Who were the initiators of the competition(s)?
		5	Has the "raison d'être" changed over the years?
C	Organisation	1	What is the legal status of the organisation?
		2	What is the organisational structure of the organisation?
		3	What is the number of employees working for the competition(s)?
		4	Does the organisation rely on volunteering?
		5	How is the organisation managed on a daily basis?
D	Finance	1	What is the event budget?
		2	What are the revenue streams?
		3	What is the amount of the tournament fees?
		4	Which proportion of the overall budget of the organisation is allocated to the competition(s)?
E	Facilities	1	Does the organisation own the facilities?
		2	Who is responsible for the maintenance of facilities?
		3	Who provides the equipment for participants?
F	Challenges	1	What are the current challenges for the organisation and the event?
		2	What are the future challenges for the organisation and the event?
		3	How have past challenges been resolved?
		4	Which factors could affect the (smooth) running of the event?
		5	Which factors could undermine the management of the organisation?

Global Football Development develops conceptual reflections on key notions related to football development in the light of empirical evidence. It raises awareness of current and future football development issues on a global scale, formulates reflection avenues which are addressed to any individual or organisation interested in football development and offers pragmatic suggestions to representatives of FIFA MAs.



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