



## SLUM SOCCER U16s TOURNAMENT IN SWITZERLAND EVALUATION



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## **Introduction**

**National Children's Football Alliance** (NCFA) is a coalition of agencies and organisations that safeguard and advance the rights of children in football. As a humanistic voice and advocate for children, The NCFA also acts as a focal point and network for those individuals and organisations seeking sustainable partnerships, information, education and/or training on child-centred approaches and children's rights in football. **The NCFA ultimately seeks to protect childhood through football.**

**Slum Soccer** (SS) joined the International Children's Football Alliance (ICFA) 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2012. SS have established a number of initiatives in India sharing best practice with the ICFA community. They have been proactive promoting [India's National Children's Football Week](#) advocating mixed gender and mixed ability football for fun. In January 2015 the NCFA facilitated age appropriate coaching workshops at Slum Soccer's headquarters in Nagpur, India, January, 2015. The NCFA produced a [short film documentary of Slum Soccer](#). The film highlights SS's work in education, social inclusion, community cohesion and intergenerational relationships. Many SS values are shared with the NCFA and together their synergies are networked across the ICFA community.

SS will be launching India's National Children's Football Alliance in February 2016 in Nagpur. They will also twin a designated area of play to commemorate the First World War and celebrate peace with Flanders Peace Field, Messines, Belgium, site of the Christmas Truces, 1914.

**Football Is More** (FIM) joined the ICFA 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2012, at the same time NCFA became an official FIM partner organisation. FIM is a charitable foundation that uses the power of football to support disadvantage young people. After viewing the NCFA's film about SS, ICFA stakeholders [FIM](#) invited the NCFA to coordinate a SS special guest team to participate in their bi annual U16s Swiss International Cup Tournament.

## **Outcome aims**

- All participants will play a brand of age appropriate football, mimicking the professional game, in a mixed ability cross cultural team.
- All participants will experience cultural exchanges in a socially inclusive team and environment.
- All participants will learn different football modes from one another's country.
- All participants will perform and advocate sportsmanship.

## **Background / brief history**

The NCFA work closely with SS on sharing best practice, developing young mixed ability football players, promoting family football, working with education and designing informal socially inclusive programmes that aid sportsmanship, citizenship, health and well-being. The NCFA work closely with FIM on sharing best practice, social corporate responsibility strategies, cultural exchange and informal learning programmes. The two organizations explore and share synergies to develop and implement social projects in Europe. They provide access for children outside the radar of conventional football and use the power of football to show children and young people their possibilities and to give them the chance to evolve within the sport. The Swiss U16s International Cup, Ruggell, Liechtenstein, is hosted by FIM and provides the perfect environment for safe, fun, developmental and inclusive football. The Tournament has grown in stature over the years and invites professional clubs' youth teams as well as local clubs' youth teams and disability teams to participate.

The NCFA invited ICFA stakeholders SS and FIM to take part in the Peace Fields Project (PFP), in partnership with the Peace Village, Messines, Belgium which promotes peace through twinning designated areas of play at schools, clubs and general public areas. Both organisations are currently developing ideas to host their respective events that will formally twin their pitches or areas of play with Flanders Peace Field through the NCFA’s Peace Field Project.

Swiss U16s Cup, Rugell, 6 – 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2015.

- Correspondence with Abhijeet Barse (SS, CEO) and Hanspeter Rothmund (FIM, CEO), provided the NCFA with the requested information and advice concerning, sponsorship guidelines, International protocol and procedures, risk assessments and child protection policies.

Good relationships had been established with SS and FIM well before this event. The NCFA deemed that the time spent on achieving our mutual goals and helping to organise a special guest team to attend the tournament would benefit young people from India and raise the positive profile of all the good work being done by the organisations involved.

- Meetings with JLL, India, correspondence with Air India and Jet Airways, India was closely followed by communications with the Indian Embassy to Switzerland.

Extensive research was undertaken by the NCFA to source a sponsor to cover the SS flight costs. This proved increasingly difficult in the light of negative football headlines around the world stemming from football’s International governing bodies.

- FIM provided all Swiss costs in kind. NCFA provided all UK costs in kind. A donation was sourced through a FIM contact for 1000 CHF. SS provided flight costs and the short fall for additional accommodation and travel costs for players and staff.

Due to some participants’ anticipated visa and passport issues, there was effective correspondence between the partners with Swiss and Indian officials which resulted in all Indian players travelling to the Swiss U16 Cup.

### Recruitment

Indian players and staff recruitment was undertaken by SS management. Tournament rules stipulated that all players must be under 16 born after 01.01.2000. NCFA expressed that the selection criteria should represent players that participate in SS programmes and represent mixed ability and social inclusion. It was important that all the above-mentioned partners were confident in facilitating SS mixed ability team players in a tournament for high ability teams. Additional Swiss local players were recruited by FIM to aid the short fall of Indian players in the squad. Each Indian player had a Swiss player to befriend and support them.

### Who was involved.

Special Guest Team			
Partners	Indian players	Swiss players	Staff
SS	<b>11</b> male	<b>7</b> male	<b>2</b> male
NCFA			<b>2</b> Male / Female, UK based
FIM			4 Male 3. Female 1

**'I believe that this experience will change my life'. SS player.**

**'It has been the most positive coaching experience that I have ever undertaken'. SS coach.**

**'I will always remember this event for making me feel so happy'. SS Manager**

**'The event was very well organised prior to our arrival and we understood where we had to go and what was required of us. The FIM staff were excellent, the tournament players, supporters and their parents made all the SS team very welcome. This experience will change the lives of the SS players and give them aspirations for the future'. SS Acting Team Manager.**

**'Playing football with the Indian players has made me a better player technically and socially'. SS Swiss team player**

**'I have witnessed a SS team play at a standard that will always be remembered in my heart. They lost and won with respect, dignity and won the support of everyone at the tournament'. SS Swiss staff team member.**

**'I watched the SS team with half their players experiencing playing on a grass football pitch for the first time ever. This was an amazing team that played with their Swiss team mates and truly represented the game of football in all its glory'. SS Swiss team player's parent.**

### Activities

The SS Indian players were chaperoned throughout their stay in Switzerland from the moment they were picked up at the airport to the moment they waved good bye. As well as the football matches in the tournament the SS team played crazy golf, went on planned walks, attended the tournament players' street party and were represented at the Tournament Gala event held at the Grand Resort Hotel, Bad Ragaz.



**'I cannot wait to tell my friends back home how beautiful Switzerland is and how friendly all the people are'. SS player.**



**'Introducing Indian dancing at the tournament players the street party was fantastic'. SS Coach**



**'I was amazed how well the Indian players and Swiss players performed together. It was clear to see that they were learning from each other how to play different styles of football'. SS Swiss Coach**

SS team had 3 full time FIM staff members. On tournament match days the team were managed by the NCF A Acting Manager, SS Coach, SS Team Manager and SS Swiss team coach.

### **Outcomes Achieved**

The importance of socialising, eating together and spending downtime together as a team of players and staff was clear to see when it came to playing matches.

As the Special Guest Team SS won many friends especially amongst their peers. The language barrier was over-come through playing football. The SS staff's challenge was to motivate a mixed ability team of diverse cultural backgrounds and play against some of Europe's finest young footballers. This was achieved with due respect, technical coaching application, fun and respect for cultural modes of play.

The SS team also benefited from training with special needs teams during the tournament.

**'This is the first time I ever trained playing football with a special needs team. I learnt a lot about other forms of communication which helped my game'. SS player.**

**'I will never ever forget how I felt every time my team scored a goal. I have never been so happy'. SS player.**

**'I totally respect the Indian players and their abilities especially when they do not have facilities like we do'. SS Swiss Player.**

Players = 11	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Was Swiss Cup an enjoyable experience	11			
Was your trip well organised		11		
How did you find the accommodation		11		
....tournament facilities		11		
.... NCFA organisers	11			
.... SS organisers	11			
.... FIM organisers	11			

SS Staff = 2	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Was Swiss Cup an enjoyable experience	2			
Did your players enjoy playing at S Cup	2			
Was your trip well organised	2			
How was your accommodation	2			
....tournament facilities	2			
.... NCFA organisers	2			
.... FIM organisers	2			
Did you enjoy extra activities	2			

### Media

SS media strategy was mainly supported on-line by partner organisations websites and social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter.

Interviews were given by FIM CEO on local and National Swiss radio.

FIM film unit are producing audio visuals which will be broadcast online.

NCFA newsletter will feature a report in September 2015 edition.

### **CONCLUSION**

Social inclusion is a strong theme shared by NCFA, SS and FIM. This was ultimately achieved in one very special guest team; playing mixed ability football at a high performance tournament featuring academy players from professional football clubs.

A cross cultural SS team clearly demonstrated that football is a universal language; team players from India and Switzerland learnt from each other on and off the field of play. The team spirit was arguably the strongest at the tournament. How was this measured? It was gauged by the attendance and support at each of their games. The SS matches were one of the most vocal in terms of supporters and their matches generated the loudest cheers. As anticipated the SS team would find it challenging under the circumstances regarding their experience for competing at academy level and not having access to high level pitch surfaces. However, this aspect was noticeably beneficial for all the SS squad. There was clearly a high level of sportsmanship displayed by SS and all of their opponents. Fair play was highly visible at all levels. There were no SS team players booked and none of their opponents were booked for foul play.

All SS team staff were approachable, friendly and always accommodating to their opposite numbers. Coaching a multi-cultural team that have only a few days together benefited all the players tremendously. The players made friendships that will last a lifetime; it was clear when they bid one

another good bye at the end of the tournament just how affected they were by the experience of playing football together.

This was a football team like no other; half the team had never played on grass whilst the remaining players had never played in such a culturally diverse team.

Many of the SS squad consider football differently now that they have competed in the Swiss U16 Cup. They were able to reflect on and learn from the fact that they played in a culturally diverse team at a high performance tournament. At no point did either Indian or Swiss players feel intimidated or uncomfortable by the occasion this was in due part to the friendly organisers, volunteers and supporters. A major factor to the success of the FIM Swiss u16 Cup was that it allowed all players to socialise and play football without prejudice. The environment lends itself to creative, explorative and inventive young footballers to express themselves. This is an event that will hopefully continue to benefit many young people for many years to come.

