



# HOW TO UNLEASH THE POWER OF FOOTBALL TO CHANGE THE WORLD

*Football:* the most popular sport in the world. The beautiful game. A source of passion, devotion, hope and joy.

With its global reach and billions of fans, football has a unique potential to change the world. We believe football can, and must, be joyful, responsible, participatory, democratic, transparent and dynamic—with these values in place, there's no stopping what football can do.

Nothing demonstrates the power of the game to transform society better than the hundreds of grassroots organisations around the world that use football to change young lives. These organisations offer young people from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to not just play football, but also overcome the social challenges that hold them back. By building issues such as social integration, gender equality and employability into their football programmes—or by building football into their social outreach programmes—organisations working in the field of football for good enable well over a million young people each year to build better futures for themselves and their communities. This is the epitome of what football is really all about—passion, teamwork and a common goal. And yet, this is only a small part of the football we know today. It's time to unleash the power of football to effect worldwide social change at every level.

Inspired by these powerful examples of local football-based programmes changing lives, and with their message of changing the world through football at our core, Unleash Football asked experts and fans from around the world for their ideas on how to make football a greater source for good.

The responses were overwhelming and all-encompassing: ideas ranged from levelling the playing field for women to channelling industry revenues into communities; from helping coaches include social and educational elements in training sessions to celebrating fair play at the highest levels. Within the hundreds of ideas, three major themes emerged:

**ESTABLISHING  
GENDER EQUALITY**

**RETHINKING THE FINANCES  
OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL**

**CONNECTING TO  
COMMUNITIES**

Better ways of thinking about football **will improve not just the game, but the world.**

## ESTABLISHING GENDER EQUALITY

The FIFA World Cup winners were awarded \$35 million in 2014 and \$2 million in 2015. The difference: 2015 was the women's tournament. FIFA's recent decision to create a more diverse, gender-equal environment and culture signals the start of a refreshing change: its Executive Committee currently consists of 24 men and just three women. Unleash respondents raised the issue of gender inequality in every aspect of the game, from promotion and media coverage to leadership and participation, and had practical ideas for creating balance. It's time to level the playing field.

### .....→ **BRING GIRLS AND BOYS, MEN AND WOMEN, ONTO THE SAME PITCH** ←.....

// "Create special leagues and competitions in which boys and girls and men and women can play football together. ... From a young age, show the world that there is room for all sorts of teams: boys, girls, mixed kids, mixed adults." – Deborah C.

// "Junior football clubs (with players under the age of 12) should be encouraged to field mixed gender teams in an organised league. This would get the young players to think about equality and inclusion from a young age." – Sarah T.

// "We could have the world's first mixed football tournament, mostly 5v5 format, in which three have to be women and two men." – Aaron T.

// "More interaction between the male and female leagues. Look at tennis as an example. You have superstar players of both genders playing at the same arenas as part of the same tournaments. The crowd and the press take interest in both the male and female matches and the likes of Serena Williams are just as recognised and respected as the likes of Roger Federer." –Andrew E.

### .....→ **ACTIVELY PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN TO PLAY... AND TO GOVERN** ←.....

// "Where there is a national affiliate of FIFA in any country, they must recruit and also recognise women's efforts in football development and support. The FIFA constitution and policies need to be gender responsive." – Babirye H.

// "Need for supportive policy environment to encourage women coaches in Premier League teams, national and international FIFA structures. FIFA needs to support women's football initiatives as there are many women able, strong and active in the field of football, but the societal challenge and policies affects their involvement, performance and participation in taking up roles dominated by men." – Ongatai A.

// "Support and encourage young women who want to pursue a career in leadership in the sport: player, coach, administrator, decision-maker. National and regional governing bodies of football could institute mentoring programs for female athletes who want to move into the coaching and administrative side of the sport. They could reach out to women's leagues/teams and seek out potential coaching candidates, even run coaching clinics for the league players. I also think that FIFA could actively reach out to its networks to identify upcoming female talent on the administrative side and actively recruit from that pool." – Molly M.

// "There should be a quota for female referees." – Assiri V.

.....> PUBLICLY PROMOTE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ON AN EQUAL FOOTING WITH MEN'S <.....

// "The men's and women's World Cup should be held at the same time, yet the games should not be at the same time of day. Companies that purchase the media rights must be required to show both games." – Catherine D.

// "Promote women's football with the same enthusiasm and vigour that men's football is promoted." – Brian S.

Establishing gender equality throughout football will create a more diverse voice within the game that more accurately reflects the views and goals of half of the world's population. A broader, more representative set of perspectives and approaches can only serve to improve the game as a whole, and the resulting increase in interest will boost football's reach considerably. Furthermore, gender equality on the pitch will foster self-confidence in girls and women while teaching boys and men to view the opposite sex as equals both on and off the pitch.

**Unleash recommends** a multifaceted approach that consists of building opportunities—and capitalising on existing ones—for mixed-gender teams in both amateur and professional football, focusing more resources on girls' and women's football, bringing more women into leadership roles, and promoting women's football on equal footing with the men's game.

## RETHINKING THE FINANCES OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

Last season, the 20 highest earning clubs alone generated €6.6 billion in revenues. Unleash supporters have outstanding ideas for redirecting the massive sums involved in everything from player transfers and salaries to media rights toward initiatives that capitalise on the power of football for good. While some advocated reducing the amount of funds that flow through the football industry, the greater focus was on making better use of it. One message in particular emerged loud and clear: a set percentage of revenue must be devoted to social change. Football can be an effective way to share the wealth of the rich with the disadvantaged—the business of football can, and should, benefit everyone.

.....> REDIRECT A PERCENTAGE OF ALL TRANSACTIONS TO SOCIAL GOOD <.....

// "Every transaction from the sport (sponsorships, player transfer fees, etc.) has a percentage that goes back to using soccer as a force for social good." – Annie H.

// "2% of all player salaries and every ticket sold goes to a football for good fund to be distributed to deserving organisations. There should be a salary cap for football teams; teams exceeding this cap must pay a 50% tax to football for good organisations." – Minka D.

// "Limit salaries and transfer fees. Make the profit above this cap available for social projects from the country or community where the respective player comes from." – Vladimir B.

// “A portion of revenue from professional soccer could be siphoned into a charitable fund. More specifically, a portion of ticket sales could go towards brick and mortar projects, a portion of jersey and apparel sales could go to clothing funds and programs, concessions to food security, etc. Taking it a step further, regional and municipal governments could implement a tax and adopt building match quotas (i.e. for every acre of land dedicated to a stadium or practice facility, a certain number of affordable or public housing units must be built, or for every square foot of impervious surface created, a square foot of community farmland would be created or preserved, etc.)” – Samantha S.

// “Let’s take 5% of players’ salaries and put it into community programmes.” – Sophie L.

**Rethinking the finances of professional football** will provide established experts on the ground in communities everywhere with the resources they need to scale their work.

Many organisations working in the field of football for good struggle year-round to secure the funding they need to run their ground-breaking programmes, leaving them less time to focus on expanding their outreach and maximising their impact. A regular, reliable source of funds would enable organisations to spend less time on ensuring their livelihood and more time addressing social issues within their communities. Directing finances to these programmes would also nurture a sense of pride in football fans around the world, as they see positive social change both on the ground and in the boardroom.

**Unleash recommends** creating a fund that collects and redirects 1% of all revenue in the football industry toward football for good organisations and initiatives.

## CONNECTING TO COMMUNITIES

Football is rooted in communities. From a game of pick-up with the kids down the street to a professional match with locals filling the stands, communities are at the heart of the beautiful game. And yet, so many respondents bemoaned a disconnect between professional football and local communities: players and clubs alike are forgetting where they come from. Rebuilding meaningful links between professional football and local communities would re-establish football as a democratic game in which everyone is a valuable contributor to making football great. The closer together we come, the more effectively we can work together towards a common goal.

.....→ **BRING PLAYERS AND LEADERS INTO THE COMMUNITY** ←.....

// “Leaders in the football world (players, managers, owners, etc.) would each “adopt” a school, program, team, club or cause that would be theirs—it would be out of a sense of duty, a sense of pride, a desire to help the helpless ... and these leaders would then compare their accomplishments and their competitiveness would drive them to do more good.” – Jill R.

// “Peer mentoring could work on a coach2coach or player2player level between pros and community coaches/players. There is complementary knowledge that adds value on both sides.” – Jürgen G.

// “Every pro player needs to earn his good stripes before entering the big leagues. They have to commit to first spend 12 weeks teaching kids in the community football and values before being allowed to enter the first team. This also goes for all coaching staff, managers, new owners etc.” – Dylan I.

// “Every player should be contracted to spend an hour or two minimum a week volunteering to coach or raise awareness in the local community. The players should be each given a target sum of money they need to raise for a charity of their choice.”  
– Luke S.

.....➔ **GET TEAMS TO COMMIT TO THEIR ROOTS**      ←.....

// “The majority of football clubs were established in order to bring local communities together, so social development should be part of their DNA.” – Pete F.

// “Rather than simply designing new CSR programmes, teams/clubs should work in partnership with existing community and non-profit groups locally, regionally and internationally to deliver grassroots programmes that have a focus on moving beyond simply developing footballers. Values, life skills, widening participation, health, education and social equality should be at the heart of these programmes. For example, teams/clubs can offer their facilities (fields, club houses etc.), expertise (coaching, marketing etc.) and networks (fans, league etc.) as well as funding.” – Graham S.

// “Professional teams could adopt a local soccer program and reserve the amount equal to one player’s salary each year for that program. Players would visit the program throughout the year and act as guest coaches and/or mentors.” – Katharine C.

// “Motivate sports fans to work for the environment by connecting club culture to community environmental service.” – Ryan M.

// “We need to make clubs reconnect with their local community, and ensure they are connected with locals in many ways, such as work skills opportunities for local unemployed, sell food from local businesses, and teach kids in local schools.” – Robert F.

.....➔ **ENSURE COMMUNITIES HAVE SAFE SPACES TO PLAY**      ←.....  
– SO THAT EVERYONE CAN GET IN ON THE GAME

// “We need more open spaces which are not locked, cased in and bookable only on the internet but rather, free, safe and open to any who turn up with a ball.” – Jane C.

// “Every kid should have a safe space to unleash their passion for soccer.” –Drew C.

// “We need to crease more public space that is truly open to the public and increase soccer-friendly infrastructure in schools and public spaces.” – Casey G.

// “Let’s create and redefine soccer spaces to serve as vibrant hubs for community, youth inspiration and education.” – Andrew C.



**Connecting to communities** will promote responsible decision-making at all levels of football by reminding industry leaders that ‘consumers’ are real people. It will also solidify the bonds required to achieve significant social change—a feat that is only possible through collaboration. Bringing professional football closer to communities will enable players and leaders to maintain credibility and a sense of personal direction, while simultaneously showing fans and amateur players alike that they too have a role to play in the success of the world’s favourite sport. Safe places to play will allow everyone to experience the joy of the game first-hand. Bringing football back to its roots will amplify our shared passion for the beautiful game, reminding us all why this is the game we love.

**Unleash recommends** starting with a safe space to play in every community, which can then evolve into a meeting place for amateurs and professionals alike.



**LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD, MAKE SURE THAT FOOTBALL MONEY IS WELL SPENT, AND CONNECT FOOTBALL TO ITS ROOTS.**

**LET’S UNLEASH THE POWER OF FOOTBALL... FOR GOOD.**



Comments? Questions? Contact us at [hello@unleashfootball.com](mailto:hello@unleashfootball.com)