

INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL FOR FRIENDSHIP AWARD FRIENDSHIP, EQUALITY & FAIRNESS



FOOTBALL FOR EVERYONE

MALEEKA AMITH

SRI LANKA

Unity Through Football

UNITY THROUGH FOOTBALL



Sri Lanka as a country has suffered a lot through communal tension. We had a Civil War which lasted more than 25 years. In this backdrop Unity Through Football was launched to use football as a tool to unite everyone especially the children and youth as they are our future. Football is played all over the island and is popular with all ethnic groups making it an ideal tool to promote unity as well as our sporting, social and community targets.



Developing communities



Empowering girls



Getting the kids and community involved in social projects



Creating youth community leaders

STEPS AND GOALS

- ✓ Introduce football to kids as a recreational sport.
- ✓ Introduce values and social causes as part of the training in ground to promote unity.
- ✓ Place a great emphasis on ensuring players are mixing with each other and take swift action to remedy any cliques that form.
- ✓ Monitor the education and health of the kids.
- ✓ Get the parents involved in their kids development.
- ✓ Teach IT, English and raise awareness of social causes to kids.
- ✓ Aim for sporting success following our code of conduct to empower the kids and to get the community behind the project.
- ✓ Get kids involved in social projects in the community.
- ✓ Get the support of the community for social projects.
- ✓ Get the support of local authority and schools.



Meeting for Kids & Parents



Discussing values and social causes during training

STEPS AND GOALS

- ✓ Conduct workshops, classes and online sessions for football, health, education and social causes.
- ✓ Conduct matches, trips, and get-togethers between academies part of the project as well as with other schools and academies.
- ✓ Conduct Football for Everyone sessions regularly so that people can interact with each other despite their age, gender, community, ethnicity etc.
- ✓ Create our own coaching and teaching manual for all the community academies incorporating football, social projects, youth leadership etc.
- ✓ Create youth leaders who will be the inspiration for the next generation of kids.
- ✓ Target community infrastructure development together with the community and local government agencies.



Getting the support of the community & local authority



DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES



Our parent club Renown is located at Kotahena, in Colombo one of the hotbeds of football talent in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately the vices in the community like gangs and drugs have been a menace as most kids don't continue their education. As football isn't fully professional it isn't a viable career choice. So it's always a struggle to convince the parents to send their kids to school, to football as well as keep young talented players in football.



We have been active in the community for more than 40 years and have their trust. The Community Academy is a big success with more than 100 kids attending regular training. They are given refreshments and their training equipment are provided for free. The interest of the kids shows the love they have for football. The goal is not only to train the young players but to make sure that these kids don't fall into problems & vices in the local community.



We have been teaching the kids social awareness and values through fun games during training. We also promote unity as we have kids from all ethnic groups. We have been given a room in the pavilion to teach English & IT to the kids. Our long term goal is to build our own structure in the ground which is owned by the local municipality so that we can have a small Futsal court, with rooms to teach English, IT and social projects to the kids.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES



Unfortunately the community was the target of the first Easter bomb blast in Sri Lanka in 2019 as the first bomb detonated at the Shrine of St. Anthony Church. It was a period of mourning for the community as several people lost their lives. The only solace was none of the Academy kids were casualties of the blast as most of them had attended midnight mass. Unfortunately the cousin of the Academy owner's wife was a victim of the blast. Her son was seriously injured but has recovered now after multiple plastic surgeries due to severe burns. His recovery was looked at as the glimmer of light from this tragedy and he has now started to play football at the Academy.



It is in this backdrop the Academy was given an opportunity to attend 2019 Football for Friendship event in Madrid, Spain. For the community it was a moment to rejoice as 2 players from the community and the community coach were part of contingent. This is something which won't be easily forgotten by the community and the Academy will always be grateful to Gazprom & Football for Friendship for giving them this opportunity at their moment of need.



In the community it was the Under 12 team who carried their hope as the first ever tournament for Academies was conducted by the Football Federation of Sri Lanka. Initially they faced several setbacks. The Easter blast which had shaken the young players psychologically, then they lost one of their stars of the team who passed away due to illness, severe weather which postponed the final round of the competition and gender bias as the girl in the team who had trained and played with the team for 2 years wasn't allowed to play as per the rules of the tournament.



2019 Football for Friendship in Madrid, Spain

DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES



Despite all the obstacles the team was victorious and it was a story worth telling. Apart from players from the local community the team had players from all over Sri Lanka who were part of our network and was a symbol for unity as they had players from different faiths and ethnic groups. Manchester City Football Club invited the team for the Man City Abu Dhabi Cup but unfortunately due to COVID-19 the tournament was cancelled for this year and the young kids missed out on the competition and for several players their first trip away from Sri Lanka.



The participation at F4F event and winning the Under 12 Championship has created a buzz in the community with more parents wanting to have their kids attend training and a ray of hope inside the kids that they can succeed in life through football.



Under 12 Champions



What we have learnt from our Community Academy we are planning to implement in other parts of Sri Lanka. We are identifying places where there is keen interest in football but had faced communal issues in the past. As the first step we have started a Community Academy in Kilinochchi which was ravaged by the Civil War in the past. Already more than 80 kids are coming for training and the interest from the local community has been amazing.



We have earmarked Gampola, Batticaloa and Galle as our next destinations and the goal is to get the kids from the different community academies to interact with each other through matches, workshops, trips etc so that we have a new generation who don't fall into the trap of communal tension.



We will be working with the local communities to get them involved in the social projects. This will give a sense of belonging to the community. In the long term they can get infrastructure development through local and international agencies.

GIRLS FOOTBALL



Girls football is at its infancy in Sri Lanka. The truth is the fact that girls are taking up football itself is a big achievement. Apart from Army, Navy, Police and Air Force there are no other clubs which has a women's team. In such a scenario girls playing football is because of the passion they have considering even now girls playing football is looked at unusually.



We realized that there is lot of potential for girls football in rural areas. In some of these places girls football is more popular than boys football and their success in school tournaments has given the communities pride on their achievements.



As a pilot project a girls Academy was initiated in Polonnaruwa as the girls come from very poor families but have been excelling school tournaments for several years. The kids were provided all training equipment and the Academy has been a big success. The Academy team became the champions of the first ever inter academy tournament conducted by the Football Federation of Sri Lanka for girls.



Polonnaruwa Girls Football Academy

GIRLS FOOTBALL



The Academy and the girls are the pride of Polonnaruwa. They have been covered by the press and recently even the Minister of Sports, Hon. Namal Rajapaksa visited them and assured them his support. As we work with the schools in the district the education of the girls are also taken care of and monitored. Most of the girls come from farming and day worker families but this has given a real sense of empowerment to the girls. Interest in the programme has skyrocketed among parents and girls. Presently there are 100 girls in the Academy in the 10-16 age group but more are waiting to join the programme.



The next step is to build a pavilion with changing rooms, rooms to teach English, IT and social projects to the kids along with a Futsal court.



We are planning similar Academies in Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Hatton and Batticaloa where there is talent but the girls come from poor families. So the goal is to empower them as well as create a life pathway for them through football.



As for the capital of Colombo the interest in girls football is low and only 3 schools have a girls football team. A programme is to be implemented to get girls to play football in Colombo. First for fun and then if interested as a sport. The Education Ministry has given their full support to the project. The achievements of Ilavenyl Senthilkumar, who like all girls in Colombo started playing football only when she was 10, in the Football for Friendship circle and in online competitions will be used as a motivational tool to bring in the girls.



Girls from Colombo & Polonnaruwa as part of a friendly match



Training



Hon. Namal Rajapaksa, Minister of Sports visited the kids during a training session

ACHIEVEMENTS



We are the first dedicated football based social project from Sri Lanka.



We work with the Education Ministry & Sports Ministry for several of our projects.



We also work with International agencies and soon we would be a member of couple of major International Foundations working for football.



We share knowledge, attend workshops and training of couple of major football clubs on youth football development & foundation work.



Our Community Academy & Polonnaruwa Girls Football Academy are examples of what can be done through “Unity Through Football” project.



The support for the above Academies from the kids, parents, communities and the local government has been great which means we could initiate similar Academies in rural and war torn regions in future.



There are 6 girls from the Under 16 Sri Lanka National Women's Football team in our Academies.



Some of the Girls from our Academies who are Junior & National Players

ACHIEVEMENTS



Our Academy girl Maleeka Amith the first AFC Girl Youth Ambassador for Sri Lanka



A girl from the Academy got selected for the Sri Lanka National Women's Football team. This was the first time a girl from a football academy was selected for the senior women's national football team.



A girl from the Academy Maleeka S. Amith a Sri Lanka youth national player was selected to be part of the pilot Asian Football Confederation eGoal programme. She is the first Youth Ambassador for Sri Lanka. As part of her training she has been entrusted to do social awareness projects through football. She will lead some of our projects targeting girls this year.



Our Academy girl Maleeka Amith the first AFC Girl Youth Ambassador for Sri Lanka



Our community kid Rohit Peeris was named the MVP of the 2020 eF4F World Championship



Our community kids have participated in the Football for Friendship programme and couple of them are now youth leaders in the local community.



Our community kid Rohit Peeris was named the MVP of the 2020 eF4F World Championship out of kids from more than 100 countries.



Football For Friendship
Community

[Learn More](#)

Our community kid Rohit Peeris was named the MVP of the 2020 eF4F World Championship

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THANK YOU FOR ATTENTION!



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