



Diary notice: 7.6.2023

## FOOTBALL'S 'OLYMPIC TORCH' ARRIVES IN FIJI

From June 7<sup>th</sup> until June 19<sup>th</sup>, The Ball, 'Football's Olympic Torch', will travel through Fiji. The Ball is making its way around the globe from Battersea Park in London, where the first official football match was played, to Eden Park in Auckland, New Zealand, where the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup will begin on July 20, 2023. It is in Fiji to explore gender equality through football and to investigate how this sport-crazy country is dealing with the consequences of climate change.



As The Ball makes its way around the globe, it collects signatures from people who promise to support efforts to achieve gender equality and climate action. The Ball has been signed by almost 60,000 individuals worldwide since 2002. Over 45 events and workshops that promote action on gender equality and to combat climate change have been put on by 78 partner organisations since kick-off on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July in London. So far almost 9000 people in 18 countries have signed The Ball and pledged to take action to make their communities stronger.

### The Ball in Fiji

Fiji is outspoken on climate change issues. It's population is existentially threatened by climate change. Fiji is also a sports-crazy nation. People love sports in Fiji and football itself has a long and healthy tradition. Spirit of Football aims to connect climate change and sport to encourage Fijians to come together to talk about the impacts of a changing climate on their lives and the games they love to play.

Accordingly, Spirit of Football's team will be running workshops with our partner **Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area (FLMMA)** that foster discussion about fairplay, gender equality and climate with both youth and women in the Fijian fishing communities and also in schools in Fiji. We aim too, with the help of the Fijian Football Association, to explore how football is

playing its part to help make a positive social difference in Fijian society and also how it can do even more.

The Ball in Fiji is being supported the German Embassy of New Zealand and the Swedish Postcode Foundation.

### **The Ball with the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area:**

- 8<sup>th</sup> of June – World Ocean Day at a school workshop in a village near Suva
- 14<sup>th</sup> of June – Workshop with Youth in Tavua Village
- 15/16<sup>th</sup> of June – Workshop with women in the fishing industry in Nasama Village in Sigatoka

### **The Ball with the Fiji Football Association**

- 9<sup>th</sup> of June – The Ball will be presented at the FFA Congress in Suva
- 9<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of June – The Ball at 2023 Digicel FA Cup Tournament in Suva

### **The journey so far and next steps**

Since March 2023, The Ball has been traveling through Southeast Asia visiting Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, before arriving in Fiji on June 7. After Fiji, The Ball will visit the Kiribati Islands from 19<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> of June. Kiribati is one of the world's countries most affected by climate change. Then The Ball will be in New Zealand and Australia for the FIFA Women's World Cup.



### **Prominent Supporters**

The first person to sign The Ball on its 12-month global climate action and advocacy mission was **Katie Rood**, the professional footballer who plays for Hearts FC and the New Zealand National Team had this to say:

*"Everyone loves the World Cup, but if we are to be able to continue playing it in the future, we need collective and urgent climate action. The journey of The Ball across land and sea from London to New Zealand is an opportunity for football to get its environmental act in order. I am going to take action. Are you?"*



Spirit of Football's Ambassador and Liverpool F.C. manager **Jürgen Klopp** is also supporting The Ball:

*"It is a ball for us all. Be part of our team. Everyone can play. Respect your teammates, your opponents and the environment. One Ball, One World."*

Do you want to be involved in the project? Follow The Ball's journey and [make your own pledge](#). To find out more about the non-profit organization Spirit of Football: <https://linktr.ee/spiritoffootball>

## Background Information

Supported by the **FIFA Foundation** and the **Swedish Postcode Foundation**, Spirit of Football developed and tested educational resources with our partners **Pledgeball** and **Football for Future** focusing on sustainability and football from March to December 2022. We have been using these resources running workshops in several countries and are rolling them out on a **gender equality, sustainability and climate action** tour with The Ball in 2023.

The Ball is being carried (and kicked) by a team of educators from Spirit of Football and our non-profit gender equality partner **Equal Playing Field** in collaboration with our football for good network partner **Common Goal**. Together we will deliver workshops and run an advocacy campaign that begins in Vietnam (March), makes its way across South East Asia (March to May) and into the Pacific (June), eventually reaching New Zealand (July) and Australia (August) in time for the 2023 FIFA World Cup. We are the official sustainability partner of **Festival 23** - the youth festival being organised by **Football United** (and Common Goal) in Sydney in August 2023.

People we meet are being asked to make personal **pledges in terms of gender equality and also for our planet** (sustainability). We are connecting to like-minded partners around the world and en route through Asia and into the Pacific to learn from them and to highlight their work at the same time.

The Ball was presented in cooperation with the United Nations **UNFCCC at COP 27** in Egypt last November: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRHtxL5wzjl>

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