



Diary notice: 23.3.2023

FOOTBALL'S 'OLYMPIC TORCH' ARRIVES IN CAMBODIA

U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh and the Indochina Starfish Foundation (ISF) will host "The Ball" – football's equivalent to the Olympic Torch – in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from March 23 to March 25, 2023.



The Ball is traveling from the site of the world's first official game of football in 1864 in Battersea Park, London to Eden Park in Auckland, New Zealand, the site of the kick-off game of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup on July 20, 2023. As The Ball travels around the world, it gathers signatures of individuals who pledge support to advance gender equality and climate action. Since 2002, more than 55,000 people in 55 countries have signed The Ball. From 2022 to 2023, 52 partner organizations have organized more than 30 events and workshops that have encouraged action on climate change and gender equality amongst football enthusiasts.

The Ball in Cambodia

Spirit of Football is running a two-day workshop at the "AmCam Exchange" American Space in Exchange Square Mall on March 23 and 24. The workshop will be hosted by the U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh with participants from the partner organizations **Indochina Starfish Foundation (ISF)**, **Compost City** and **COMPED**. Spirit of Football will share its educational methods on sustainability, gender equality and fair play.

U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia **W. Patrick Murphy** will sign The Ball during its journey in Cambodia: "Soccer, the beautiful game, is a fun and creative way to come together and

champion global issues that impact all of humanity. We are proud to work with partners like Spirit of Football to combat climate change and encourage Cambodia's young people especially to commit to protecting the environment."

Ms. Chourp Vicheka, Director of the Indochina Starfish Foundation (ISF), is happy to support the sustainability message of The Ball: *"At ISF, we are dedicated to sustainability. We have developed and adopted a Zero Single-use Plastic Policy to reduce our environmental impact. From providing reusable bottles, plates and bags to our students and their families, to utilizing sustainable packaging such as banana/lotus leaves to recycling compost for our school gardens and diverting waste away from landfills, we are making an effort to protect our planet. We are also actively educating our communities on the importance of waste management and reducing single-use plastic through awareness-raising activities, posters, and community clean-ups. Our students have taken on the role of advocates for climate action in their own communities, promoting environmentally conscious practices and activities. Together, we are making a positive impact for the future of our planet."*

The Ball will attend a training session with ISF on Saturday, March 25 in Phnom Penh run by **Julia Farr** from the German Bundesliga Football Club **Borussia Dortmund**. Julia Farr highlights the responsibility of football in championing sustainability and gender equality: *"Football is a reflection of society. In addition to being directly connected to Dortmund and the surrounding area, we at BVB are motivated to use our influence to take on responsibility that recognises sustainable development as a worldwide guiding principle. Promoting gender equality and climate action are core elements of the global social and ecological challenges that we actively have to rise up to in order to contribute to a sustainable future. This is the responsibility of everyone, and that includes Borussia Dortmund. We are therefore very proud to be an active part in this initiative."*

Next stops

After the workshop in Phnom Penh, The Ball will head to Battambang to visit **COMPED**'s and **SALT**'s waste management center and social football projects. In Siem Reap, the Spirit of Football team will visit **Kids Play International** before continuing to Thailand.

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=IRHtxL5wzjI>

For more information, please contact:

Iris Abulet: iris@spiritoffootball.com or Andrew Aris: andrew@spiritoffootball.de