

# 11. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Prior to 2000, The FA, the world's oldest football association, took a somewhat distanced view of how international football was organised abroad and tended to concentrate solely on the development of the game at the domestic level.

However, as the game has grown and developed so has The FA's recognition of its moral responsibility as one of the leading football governing bodies to share its knowledge and expertise around the world.

Effective administrative structures and good governance, as well as well-trained match officials and coaches, are vital for the long-term health of the game and The FA aims to lead by example by playing a full and proactive role within world football.

### 11.1 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (IDP)

At the heart of The FA's international strategy is The FA's International Development Programme (IDP), which is active in every continent in the world in partnership with each football confederation: AFC (Asia), CAF (Africa), CONCACAF (North, Central America & the Caribbean), CONMEBOL (South America), UEFA (Europe) and the OFC (Oceania).

The FA's IDP offers training for coaches, referees and football administrators, as well as sharing FA expertise in marketing and sports medicine.

Advanced techniques workshops for senior referees have been delivered in Ethiopia and Mali. The same course has also been delivered in Ecuador as part of the thriving co-operation programme with the South American confederation, CONMEBOL. Assistance has been enthusiastically received in the fields of refereeing, marketing, administration, stadium safety and security, and even strategic planning for South American coaches.

At a CONCACAF Congress in Grenada, FA Chairman Geoff Thompson received a special award for The FA's development work in the region of North and Central America and the Caribbean from the CONCACAF President and FIFA Vice President, Jack Warner. The FA runs three courses a year in this region, most recently an International Coaching Licence course, a Media Relations seminar and an Elite Player Development workshop - a diverse activity programme which has undoubtedly generated positive perceptions of The FA and its work throughout the area.

### 11.2 UEFA-CAF MERIDIAN PROJECT

In 1996, UEFA and its sister confederation in Africa, the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF), launched the Meridian Project which partners European Associations with African equivalents in order to provide assistance in areas such as competition design, referee and coach education and infrastructure arrangements.

Whilst this Project has just come to a close, The FA will nevertheless maintain the partnerships it has built up with the Football Associations of Botswana, Malawi and Lesotho. Indeed FA youth coaches took part in a twin coaching mission in Botswana and Lesotho as recently as November 2005. The coaching sessions helped to develop the existing skills of coaches who had participated in the same project in Lesotho the previous year, while a new batch of youth coaches graduated from the week-long workshop in Botswana.

Meanwhile, an additional three-day workshop in Lesotho demonstrated The FA's commitment to developing women and girls' football. Girls of primary school age were taught the basics of playing football whilst older students were taught how to develop their leadership skills. The visit also provided the platform to reassert messages about HIV/Aids.

This comes on the back of a highly successful awareness-raising trip to Malawi by an FA delegation which included England stars David James, Gary Neville and Rio Ferdinand.

### 11.3 PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with organisations such as the UK Government, the British Council and UK Sport represent important elements of The FA's international strategy. In 2002 funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) enabled The FA to pursue a special relationship with Afghanistan following an FA delegation's visit to Kabul just ten weeks after the fall of the Taliban. The FA is now part of an international football task force, also comprising FIFA, the AFC and the DFB (German FA) to help Afghanistan develop its football.

In 2004, the FCO initiated a youth football development programme in Iraq, demonstrating the power of football in underpinning a significant and wide-reaching international relations initiative.

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw recognised the value of a partnership between Government and football in both England and Iraq, describing it as "a wonderful opportunity to assist with the development of youth football in Iraq and to lay the foundation for continued and stronger ties between the British and Iraqi sporting communities". Iraqi coaches attended FA courses in the UK, whilst an FA coaching course for promising young Iraqi coaches was organised in neighbouring Jordan.

The FA is currently supporting a Young Leader development programme with the British Council in South Africa and is working with UK Sport in demonstrating how football can assist the health agenda in Africa, notably vis-à-vis the scourge of HIV and AIDS.

### 11.4 COMMUNIQUÉ

The International Relations Department releases a newsletter entitled "Communiqué" three times a year, which details all of The FA's activities around the globe. It is produced in three languages: English, French and Spanish.

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