

4th FIFA
**Women's Football
Symposium**

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Competition & Player Development

**What are the different ways
of building structured
competitions programmes to
support player development?**

Key findings: what we know now about competitions & development

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Key finding 1: Competitive opportunities increase player retention, raise awareness and support player progression

- Routes for female players outside of grassroots programmes are critical to **keep them playing**
- The **introduction of competitions at the grassroots levels** (e.g., school competitions) **sparks interest** in participating in more structured football
- Competitions also **provide a platform to raise awareness** of women's football in general

Key findings: what we know now about competitions & development

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Key finding 2: Establish competitions that are tailored to fit with local circumstances, existing structures and resources

- **Geography** of the country **and structure** of your association (e.g., regional associations) are key factors in the design of competitions
- **Flexibility** to meet local circumstances (availability of fields, referees, uniforms) **removes barriers** to participation
- **Timing is everything** – be sure you have sufficient numbers and the correct infrastructure to support it (enough coaches, referees, volunteers and resources) – to ensure success and sustainability

Key findings: what we know now about competitions & development

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Key finding 3: National competitions and tournaments support elite women's football

- Increased level of competition **accelerates** the **development** of players to elite levels and **retains them domestically**
- National competitions provides a straightforward way to **identify talented players for national teams**
- **National age-group competitions** are important to **retain players**, drive player development to earlier ages (U-12, U-15) and to have higher standards of play at each level
- Instrumental to **further develop coaches** and **referees** but best with **concurrent development programmes** targeted for them

Case Study: Mexico

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007



*Establishing national age-group tournaments
and fostering an early approach to player
development*

Leonardo Cuellar

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Head Coach

***Women's National
Team Mexico***



4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Competition & Player Development

Establishing national age-group tournaments
and fostering an early approach to player
development

Background & context

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

- 
- Mexico is located in North America.
 - Mexico is one of the largest countries in the world with a population of over 100 million.
 - Football is the popular sport.
 - FIFA Big Count data indicating nearly 8.5 million players in the country.
 - 13,000 registered female players in 2006.
 - The Mexican association was formed in 1929.
 - The development of women's amateur football since the ends of the 1990s.
 - The amateur division staged an annual open-age national tournament.
 - In the 1990s, FIFA began to organise international women's football competitions the Mexican association saw an opportunity to raising the standard of the national team.

Key objectives

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

- The plan involved sending scouts to areas of the country where women's football was being played in order to identify talent.
- The success of the national team was the catalyst for key individuals within the association.
- The association therefore decided to develop national competitions.
- Develop national age-group tournaments for women's football.

Key objectives

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

- Establish a coordinated approach to player development.
- Increase the level of competition and the number of quality players
- Provide an opportunity for talent identification for national age-group squads.
- Provide programmes at younger ages to ensure a greater chance of progressing to the next level .
- Develop high-calibre women's football competitions in Mexico .

What was done?

Step 1

- **Reviewing the existing structure of elite women's football competitions (1999).**
 - One open age-group national tournament, which was not sufficient to support the development of players.
 - Players of all ages were competing against each other.
 - The tournament was not as competitive.
 - One open age-group tournament limited the number of players competing.

What was done?

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Step 2

- **Recommending a revised structure for women's competitions to the association and lobbying for support from the federal government.**
 - A recommendation was subsequently put forward to the association's board.
 - Regarding introducing separate national tournaments split by age group.
 - Persuade the federal government of the rationale for age-group tournaments.

What was done?

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Step 3

- **Working with regional associations to promote new national age-group tournaments.**
 - The association announced the proposed new tournament structure to each of the regional associations.
 - Each regional representative team was funded by their state government.
 - There was a great interest among sponsors when it came to supporting teams.

What was done?

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Step 4

- **Launching national age-group tournaments in 2001**
 - In 2000, hosted a trial tournament to see the response of the regional associations. 15 associations responded with U-19 teams
 - In 2001, national tournaments at senior level, U-19 level and U-17 level were launched.
 - The event was widely promoted and publicised through national and regional print media.

What was done?

Step 5

- **Reviewing national age-group tournaments**
 - The association reviewed and evaluated the event to determine how successful the event had been and how it could be further improved.
 - The key outcome of this review was that for 2003, the association determined that it would be more appropriate to have a U-15 age group.
 - In 2004, a tryout tournament was held
 - In 2006, an U-12 age group was added to the event.

What were the results?

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

- National tournaments for women and girls at U-12, U-15, U-17, elite U-19, were added to the senior open tournament
- National tournaments involve the top team from each of the different states in the country and comprise 12 teams.
- Opportunity for association scouts to select the best and most talented players for national age-group squads.

What were the results?

- **2007 Youth Olympics**
 - 32 Federal States and 3 sport organizations.
 - 4 National tournaments for girls at U-12, U-15, U-17, elite U-19
- **Number of players:**
 - State Stage: 10,000 (+)
 - Regional Stage: 2500
 - National Stage: 864
 - 70 coaches and assistant coaches (male and female)

Key success factors

- Enthusiastic individuals in key positions (e.g., the president of the association, the head coach of the women's national team).
- It was important that the association had a close working partnership with the regional association.
- The association believes that the national tournaments were introduced at the right *time*.
- The national tournaments for younger players (i.e. U-12 and U-15 age groups) enable player development to begin earlier, which gives more time for players to develop.

Getting started

4th FIFA
Women's Football
Symposium

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

1. Reviewing your existing structure of women's football competitions.
2. Recommending a revised structure for women's competitions to the association and lobbying for support from the federal government.
3. Working with regional associations to promote new national age-group tournaments.
4. Reviewing national age-group tournaments frequently.
5. Make visible your National Team to the public to your authorities and to the possible sponsors.

4th FIFA
**Women's Football
Symposium**

Shanghai, 28 and 29 September 2007

Competition & Player Development