INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF CP FOOTBALL

Providing Competitive Playing Opportunities for Women and Girls in CP Football – A Guide for IFCPF Member Nations

Introduction

Women and girls with cerebral palsy (CP) face unique challenges in accessing competitive football opportunities due to smaller player numbers, limited resources, and structural barriers. However, with creativity and commitment, national federations can develop pathways for female athletes to compete and thrive.

This document provides practical recommendations for IFCPF member nations to create national championships, leagues, and other competitive opportunities for women and girls in CP football.

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1. Starting Small: Small-Sided Matches & Festivals

Objective: Provide playing opportunities even with limited numbers.

Recommendations:

- Host small-sided tournaments (3v3, 4v4, or 5v5) to maximize participation.
- Organize football festivals with short, rotating matches to keep engagement high.
- Include skill challenges (dribbling, shooting) alongside matches to create a fun, competitive environment.

Example: A nation with only 8-10 female players could run a round-robin 4v4 tournament with mixed teams.

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2. Mixed-Gender Competitions

Objective: Integrate female players into existing structures.

Recommendations:

- Allow women to compete in men's/open national championships.

Example: Provide dispensation which allows men and women to play together in mixed-gender competition.

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3. Women's Divisions Within National Championships

Objective: Grow dedicated women's competitions.

Recommendations:

- Start with a regional qualifier system leading to a national final.
- Combine age groups if needed to form viable divisions.
- Partner with schools, rehab centers, or disability organisations to recruit players.

Example: A country with 20+ female players could organise a 5-a-side league culminating in a championship playoff.

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4. Exhibition & National Team Matches

Objective: Raise visibility and provide high-level competition.

Recommendations:

- Organise women's national team friendlies with youth teams from mainstream football.
- Host international friendlies or training camps with neighbouring nations.
- Feature women's matches as a showcase linked to men's CP Football events.

Example: A federation could schedule an annual "Unified Football Day" where men's and women's national teams play back-to-back.

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5. Regional & Cross-Border Collaboration

Objective: Overcome small player numbers through partnerships.

Recommendations:

- Create a regional women's CP Football cup with nearby nations.
- Rotate hosting duties to share costs and logistical burdens.
- Use virtual meetings to coordinate development programs and scouting.

Example: Three neighboring countries could form a "Women's CP Football Tri-Nations Cup" held annually.

Conclusion

Growing women's CP Football requires flexibility, innovation, and collaboration. By implementing these strategies; whether through small-sided games, mixed competitions, or regional partnerships; IFCPF member nations can create meaningful playing opportunities for female athletes.

The key is to start small, build gradually, and celebrate every step forward.

Next Steps:

- Assess current female player numbers and interest.
- Choose 1-2 strategies to pilot in the next season.
- Share successes and challenges with IFCPF for collective learning.
- For further support, contact IFCPF.