



PRESS RELEASE

DISCOVER FOOTBALL women's football and cultural festival in Goa/India OUR BODIES, OUR RIGHTS, OUR GAME

Over 80 women from across India will participate in a football tournament, train with international coaches and share their experience of using football as a tool for empowerment.

Mapusa, India – “Playing football makes you ugly!” “No one will marry you.” “Decent girls do not run around in shorts chasing a ball.” These are all things said to young women in India who have followed their passion to play football.

In India, as in most countries, football is a male-dominated sport. Being outside, claiming public space, moving the body and competing – these are all actions associated with masculinity and generally reserved for men. When women and girls play football these assumptions as well as traditional gender roles are questioned.

In response to women's football's subordinate role in India and the prejudice its players face, NGO DISCOVER FOOTBALL (Germany), Tibet Women's Football (India) and Foot and Ball (India) aim to use the momentum of the upcoming FIFA U-17 World Cup for boys to put the spotlight on the women and girls who, despite various challenges, play football in India.

The festival **Our bodies, Our Rights, Our Game** is about a lot more than just football. “The event's name shows that we aim to link women's football with the greater struggle for women's rights, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and gender equality. We are looking forward to meeting the players and learning about their experience of using football to challenge restrictions on mobility, policing of clothing and women's bodies,” say the organizers from DISCOVER FOOTBALL.

For one week, eight teams (80 women) will attend workshops on empowerment and technical skills hosted by Feminist Approach to Technology. They will also train under the supervision of eight international female coaches, who will team up with Indian coaches, and play a complete tournament. Explaining why the focus on women is important, Disha Malhotra, founder of the football academy Foot and Ball and coach in New Delhi says, “When girls see a woman on the pitch they are more likely to join and play as well. Role models are very important.”

For the sake of greater exchange the teams from across India will be mixed into new teams during the event. „It's extremely encouraging to collaborate and mingle with other teams doing work similar to ours here in India. The opportunity to learn from each other and gain moral support is invaluable,” explains Cassie Childers Ryle from Tibet Women's Football, which uses football to empower women of the Tibetan community living in exile.

Event Information and schedule

Eight teams from different parts of India from Punjab to Karnataka, from rural as well as urban areas will convene in Mapusa, Goa. The event will be hosted in partnership with GOA FA and is funded by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It will take place in the Duler Stadium in Mapusa, Goa. Matches are scheduled from August 8th to 12th, 2017.

The Festival Organizers

DISCOVER FOOTBALL

The German non-profit organization DISCOVER FOOTBALL advocates for a world in which girls and women can play sports without being discriminated against for any reason. DISCOVER FOOTBALL was founded by committed football enthusiasts who use sport as a tool to empower women and promote intercultural understanding. The NGO organizes international exchanges, conferences, and tournaments where women and girls build skills and share knowledge that will help them gain autonomy, mobility and power. DISCOVER FOOTBALL relies largely on the voluntary work of women, making it unique in the world of football. DISCOVER FOOTBALL'S work has been recognized by the UN, the German Football Association as well as German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Foot and Ball

Foot and Ball offers a Unique Age-Appropriate & International Standard Football Training Program with a Long Term Player Development Approach. They also encourage football as means to recreation, fitness (physical and psycho-social) and women's empowerment.

Tibet Women's Football

TWF brought football to the women of the Tibetan refugee community and bases its programs on the winning combination of fitness-empowerment-football, using physical exercise and friendly competition as a tool for the integration of leadership, communication, and teambuilding skills.

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