



**FIFPRO PLAYER  
UNIONS REVEAL  
ONGOING IMPACTS  
OF COVID-19  
ON WOMEN'S  
FOOTBALL**

## SUMMARY

Following the release in April of our COVID-19: Implications for Professional Women's Football, we have continued to compile data on the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

Now, we provide the perspectives of our affiliated player unions on the unfolding impacts of COVID-19 on female players and women's football. Reduced salaries, shortened contracts, poor communication, and more, are compounding the already precarious football careers of many female players worldwide. As stakeholders across the international football community, we must focus our efforts on addressing how such circumstances are affecting players' livelihoods and impacting their physical and mental wellbeing. Setting global employment standards and protecting the rights and wellbeing of female football players is more urgent than ever.

## DATA COLLECTION & METHODOLOGY

Using our FIFPRO member platform, we distributed an online survey to member unions and candidate and observer unions<sup>1</sup>. Sixty-two unions took part, which accounts for 95% of our membership.

This has provided us with a wide-ranging and robust dataset that enables us to collaborate openly with our unions, stakeholders, partners and players to establish, recommend and implement tangible strategies and solutions in these changing and challenging times.

<sup>1</sup> FOR THE LIST OF THE NATIONAL UNIONS INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY, SEE ANNEX

## INTRODUCTION

It is now close to half a year since the widespread outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent roll-out of national and local lockdowns worldwide. While we remain in the middle of an unprecedented and ongoing global pandemic, with no clear response, end point or recovery plan in place, the football ecosystem continues to be impacted at every level, particularly the livelihoods and wellbeing of players.

The extent to which it is impacting players and the sport is difficult to capture in real-time, as is analyzing trends or making projections about a post-pandemic future. However, research is already revealing that its effects and the subsequent economic fallout are having a disproportionate effect on women and a regressive effect on gender equality<sup>1</sup>.

Although the virus itself does not discriminate, experts have warned that the effects of COVID-19 could include the reversal of decades of work on gender equality if interventions are not made. This has translated into deep concern across women's sport, especially in relation to employment conditions. The International Labour Organization (ILO) recently reported that progress in workplace gender equality risks being reversed by the disproportionate impact on women of the deepening global jobs crisis<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, a British parliamentary committee report in July states that the coronavirus pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women's elite sport and exacerbated inequality<sup>3</sup>.

According to the UN Women's recent report, COVID-19: Women, Girls and Sport: Build Back Better<sup>4</sup>, the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in sports has yet to be extensively researched. It is recommended that institutions gather gender disaggregated data, monitor their actions for gender equality, and support research for evidence-based decision-making, advocacy, policy and resource allocation.

At FIFPRO, we have been monitoring these impacts and collecting data from our unions. Understanding how this pandemic is affecting the wages, job security, benefits, health and well-being of female players is critical. It will be essential when it comes to shaping future decisions of football governing bodies, sponsors, governments, multi-lateral organisations and other stakeholders in the wider football community.

<sup>1</sup> 

MCKINSEY GLOBAL INSTITUTE - COVID-19 AND GENDER EQUALITY: COUNTERING THE REGRESSIVE EFFECTS (JULY 2020)

<sup>2</sup> 

ILO - THE COVID-19 RESPONSE: GETTING GENDER EQUALITY RIGHT FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR WOMEN AT WORK (MAY 2020)

<sup>3</sup> 

UK PARLIAMENT - IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DCMS SECTORS: FIRST REPORT (JULY 2020)

<sup>4</sup> 

UN WOMEN - COVID-19, WOMEN, GIRLS AND SPORT: BUILD BACK BETTER (JULY 2020)

## WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

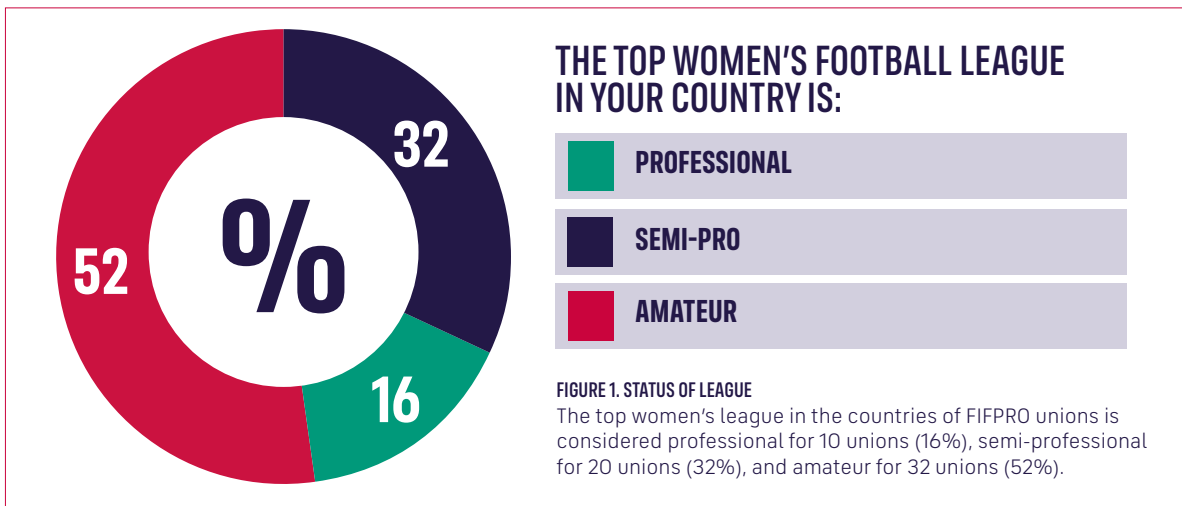
Many deemed 2019 a tipping point year for women's football, with viewership records broken around the world and game-changing sponsorship deals set in motion<sup>1</sup>. Women's football cannot afford to regress on this progress.

However, the fragility of the women's football ecosystem has been exposed more than ever by the current crisis due to its less established professional leagues, low salaries, narrower scope of opportunities, uneven sponsorship deals and reduced institutional investment. The lack of written contracts or short-term duration of existing employment contracts, plus the inadequate access to health insurance and medical coverage, and the absence of basic worker protections leaves many female players at risk of losing their livelihoods and subject to potential physical and mental health issues.

**SETTING GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AND PROTECTING PLAYERS' RIGHTS AND WELLBEING, WITH THE COMMON OBJECTIVE TO SAFEGUARD THE WOMEN'S GAME, IS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY. WHILE THESE STANDARDS ARE APPLICABLE FOR ALL PLAYERS, THE DATA THAT FOLLOWS DEMONSTRATES WHY THEY ARE PARTICULARLY RELEVANT FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL AND THE URGENCY OF ESTABLISHING SUCH STANDARDS WITHIN THE CURRENT CONTEXT.**

## PROFESSIONAL STATUS

One of the biggest challenges facing the women's game is that many elite female players do not have professional status, or even written contracts. This means that it can be very difficult, sometimes impossible, for female footballers to access employment rights or gain union representation. Across the 62 countries that participated in this research, only 16% of the countries reported their women's leagues are classified as professional, while 32% are reported as semi-professional and 52% as amateur.



Of note, the three categories here (Amateur, Semi-Professional, Professional) refer to the status of the league, not the players. This is an important distinction because there are still many situations across women's football worldwide where the status of players does not align with the status of the league—e.g. amateur players are playing in professional leagues and vice versa. Moreover, according to the official regulations<sup>1</sup>, the category 'Semi-Professional' does not actually exist for players, but due to the patchy composition of player statuses within leagues and even within teams, the term continues to carry significant weight in the women's game.

These findings reinforce a vital message that the women's game needs clear pathways to professionalisation, and that the blurred lines between amateur and professional status get clarification so that the thousands of women currently playing in these uncertain or precarious conditions gain representation and protection.





## CASE STUDY: ITALY AND ARGENTINA INVEST IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL DURING PANDEMIC

ITALY AND ARGENTINA HAVE EACH MADE BOLD STATEMENTS ABOUT THE TRAJECTORY OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN THEIR COUNTRIES BY INVESTING IN THEIR FEMALE PLAYERS DURING THE PANDEMIC, DEMONSTRATING THAT THE GROWTH OF THE GAME DOES NOT NEED TO BE SLOWED, BUT IT CAN INSTEAD PROGRESS DURING THIS TIME.

### ITALY

At the end of June 2020, it was announced in Italy that Serie A Femminile would, from 2022, turn professional from its current amateur status, with the backing of both the Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio (FIGC) and the government<sup>1</sup>.

Significantly, it is a landmark step for women's sport in Italy as there are currently no professional women's sports or female athletes – and this subsequent denial has meant that female athletes have not been able to access the benefits afforded to professional male athletes. It was also announced that Serie A Femminile would receive a new broadcast deal for the 2020/21 season.

### ARGENTINA

In September 2020, the Argentinian Football Association (AFA) unveiled a five-year strategy designed to further the professional status of players and focus on youth football, club licences and national competitions.

#### THE STRATEGY WILL INCLUDE:

- Women's Primera A clubs to have at least 12 players on professional contracts by 2021, and 15 by 2023
- Women's Primera A clubs to have an U-16 team and hold the AFAs National Licences certificate by 2022, and an U-14s team by 2023
- Clubs competing in the Torneos de Ascenso must have an U-14 team by 2025



## CONTRACTS

Written contracts are an essential component of recognising the professional status of players and protecting them under employment law, although it must be noted that not all players with contracts have professional status. Agreements between leagues and players, and between national federations and players, are also essential.

When asked if players in the top women's league in their countries have written contracts, almost a third of our unions (29%) responded that that players in their countries have no contracts at all. This can create situations of uncertainty, insecurity, and can leave players unprotected.

The significance of contract duration is also a factor, for a contract alone does not guarantee job security, especially if it is short-term. Moreover, short-term contracts can create immense stress for players. Add the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to a player with a short-term contract and you can imagine how their vulnerability and well-being could be further strained.



DO PLAYERS IN THE TOP WOMEN'S LEAGUE IN YOUR COUNTRY HAVE WRITTEN CONTRACTS?



FIGURE 2. WRITTEN CONTRACTS

18 unions (29%) reported that no players in their country have a written contract. 19 unions (31%) reported that all players in their country have written contracts. The remaining 25 countries represent a large grey area where reportedly some players have written contracts and others do not.

**"WE ARE SEMI-PRO, BUT THE LEAGUE IS MORE AMATEUR THAN PROFESSIONAL. HOWEVER, WE SEE MORE AND MORE PLAYERS WHO ARE GETTING REAL EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS AS A RESULT OF A RECENT RULE CHANGE THAT WE ACHIEVED. WE ARE NOW IN DISCUSSION TO HAVE A MODEL WHERE MORE PLAYERS WOULD BE SPONSORED BY THE FEDERATION."**

**SWISS ASSOCIATION OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS  
(SAFP, SWITZERLAND)**

## WAGES AND COMPENSATION

Prior to the pandemic, the regular payment of wages and the guarantee of a minimum wage in women's football were already largely inadequate for many female players. Our data shows that this 'pre-existing condition' may be exacerbated by the uncertainty caused by COVID-19, with many female players being confronted with increasing instability. Between July and October 2020, our unions reported the following:

- Almost a quarter of all unions (24%) said female players' club contracts have been terminated or changed<sup>1</sup> in their country.
- Nearly half of unions (47%) said female players' club salaries/payments have been reduced or eliminated in their country.
- And 27% of unions said female players' non-financial support at clubs have been reduced or eliminated in their country.

These figures are based on players having contracts and receiving payments as a baseline, which we know excludes many female players. If more female players had contracts or received payments in the first place, the numbers of modifications to such arrangements negatively impacting players would likely be even higher. According to preliminary research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on players and player association by EU Athletes, 45% of associations have had cases of athletes' contracts being unlawfully terminated or modified by the employers<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Note: We did not ask unions to specify how players' contracts have changed, but given the financial strain confronting many clubs in this crisis and the subsequent cost-cutting measures, it is likely that these changes do not reflect improved outcomes for players.

<sup>2</sup>  EU ATHLETES - COVID-19 IMPACT ON PLAYERS AND THEIR PLAYER ASSOCIATIONS (JULY 2020)

**"PLAYERS WERE TEMPORARILY LAID OFF IN MOST CLUBS. HOWEVER, PLAYERS RECEIVED FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT COVERING MOST OF THEIR SALARY, SINCE PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS ARE CONSIDERED WORKERS IN OUR COUNTRY."**

**NORSKE IDRETTSUTØVERES SENTRALORGANISASJON**  
(NISO, NORWAY)

**"ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY THE FEDERATION AND THE ASSOCIATION WHEN A PLAYER IS IN DIRE NEED AND COMES FORTH TO ASK FOR HELP."**

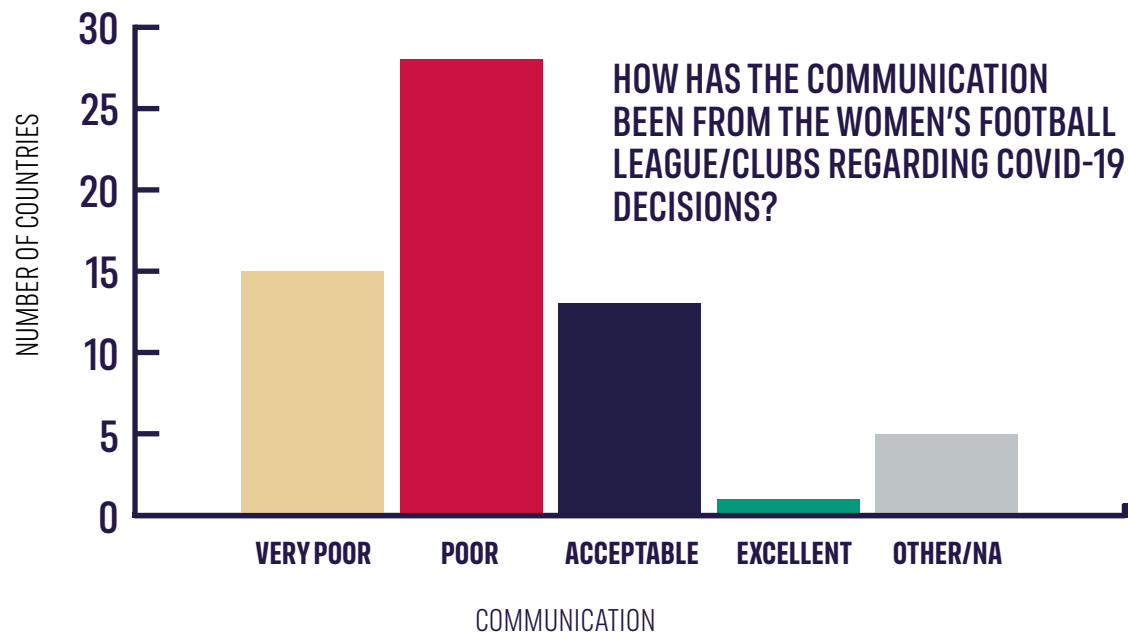
**KENYA FOOTBALLERS WELFARE ASSOCIATION**  
(KEFWA, KENYA)

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is key to ensuring that players are able to make appropriate decisions about their personal health, safety and wellbeing, and the wellbeing of their industry. To do so, they must have access to detailed and timely information on relevant health guidelines and public restrictions. Furthermore, in these unpredictable times, where job security is in question and the world is learning to work differently, women's football decision-makers will be better equipped to deal with the potential consequences of the pandemic by asking their players about their experiences, challenges and ideas.

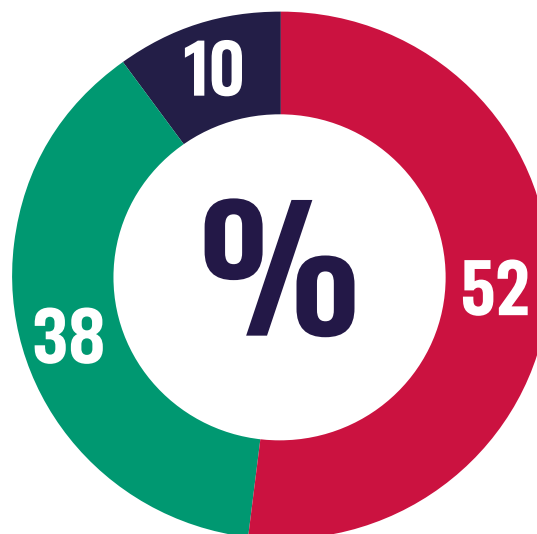
When FIFPRO unions were asked about the level and quality of communication with leagues and clubs regarding COVID-19, only one respondent reported that communication has been excellent. Disappointingly, 43 unions (69%) said it has been very poor to poor, meaning players have not been informed of any decisions or outcomes, or were informed but not involved in the process. Thirteen unions (21%) reported communication as acceptable.

Poor communication is also apparently occurring at national team level. FIFPRO unions were asked if their national federation has been in dialogue with women's national team players – either directly or through the union – to address the impact of COVID-19 on women's football. Just over half of unions (52%) reported that this hasn't been the case.

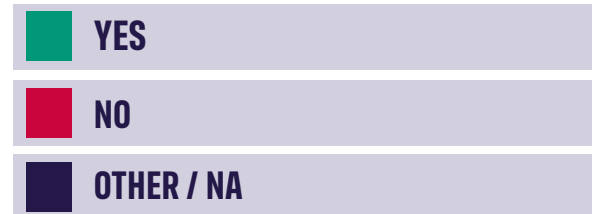


**FIGURE 3. COMMUNICATION OF LEAGUES AND CLUBS**

15 unions (24%) reported that the communication from the league/clubs has been very poor, 27 unions (45%) unions reported poor. 13 unions (21%) reported acceptable. 1 union (2%) reported excellent. 5 unions (8%) reported other or not applicable.



## HAS THE FEDERATION BEEN IN DIALOGUE WITH WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM PLAYERS TO ADDRESS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN'S FOOTBALL?



**FIGURE 4. COMMUNICATION OF NATIONAL FEDERATIONS**

32 unions (52%) reported that their federation has not been in dialogue with women's national team players to address the impact of COVID-19 on women's football. 24 unions (38%) reported that the federation has been in dialogue. 6 unions (10%) reported other or not applicable.





## CASE STUDY: NWSL CHALLENGE CUP

THE NWSL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION (NWSLPA) WORKED CLOSELY AND COLLABORATIVELY WITH LEAGUE MANAGEMENT TOWARDS THE COMMON GOAL OF A SAFE, PLAYER-PRIORITISED RETURN-TO-PLAY AT THE NWSL CHALLENGE CUP.

The NWSLPA drew on extensive feedback and direct communication with NWSL players and supported their strong desire to return to sport while also prioritising player concerns regarding safety and security.

### IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NWSL AND ITS OWNERS, THE NWSLPA SECURED:

- Contract guarantees for all contracted NWSL players – including salary, housing, and benefits
- Insurance coverage for the entire 2020 calendar year
- Accommodation for players with children during the tournament (including plans for both the parent and children's health and safety)
- Input on tournament procedures and structure to ensure player safety and wellbeing





## SUPPORT TO PLAYERS

The level of support provided to female players is critical when considering the heightened pressures they have faced, and continue to face, as a result of the pandemic.

We asked FIFPRO unions if clubs have been offering support to female players during the COVID-19 crisis and, if so, what type. The greatest level of support offered by clubs, according to our members, was regarding players' physical well-being, but only 34% of unions said this form of support was offered. Perhaps more concerning, given the pandemic has contributed to strain on players' mental health, was that just 16% reported female players are receiving support from their clubs regarding their mental well-being. Overall, 40% reported that clubs in their country are not providing any support.

According to a recent survey conducted by FIFPRO and Amsterdam University Medical Centers between March 22 and April 14, 2020 on the mental health of football players in the COVID-19 pandemic, the strain on players is indeed being felt. The uncertainty they are feeling about their future in the football industry is a significant factor in increasing symptoms consistent with diagnoses of anxiety and depression<sup>1</sup>. Further, the percentage of players reporting symptoms was significantly higher among those worried about their future in the football industry.

One additional consequence of these findings could be an increase in the number of women leaving the game ahead of their expected retirement age. FIFPRO has been examining this subject through research since our 2017 FIFPRO Global Employment Report on the Working Conditions in Professional Women's Football, which revealed that many female players have been quitting the game before what might be considered their peak. Poor pay, financial insecurity and a lack of support for those wishing to have children were among the key reasons women cited for leaving football<sup>2</sup>. With insecurity around these issues exacerbated by the pandemic, further research is needed to understand the specific impact on female football players and their propensity to leave the sport.

## HAVE CLUBS BEEN OFFERING SUPPORT TO FEMALE PLAYERS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS?

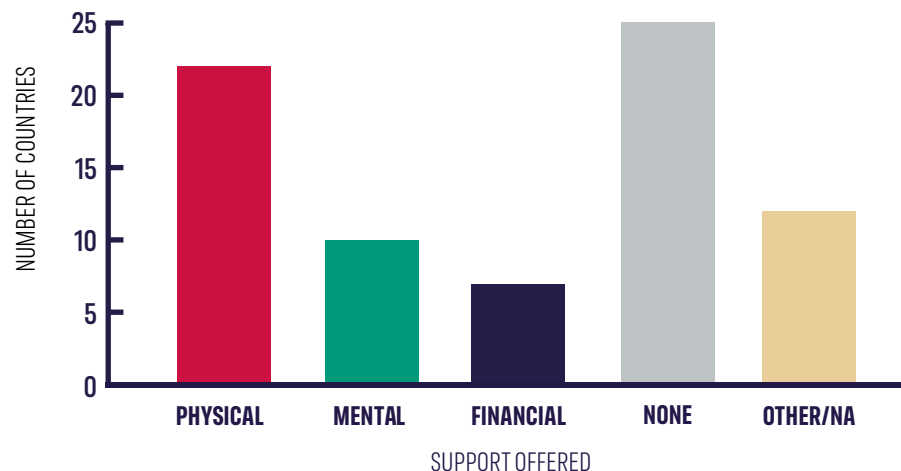


FIGURE 5. SUPPORT FROM CLUBS

21 unions (34%) reported that players are receiving support from their clubs for their physical well-being. 10 unions (16%) reported that female players are receiving support for mental well-being. 25 unions (40%) reported that clubs in their country are not providing any support to female players in their country during the COVID-19 crisis.

**"THE PLAYERS ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED. BEFORE THE PANDEMIC THEY DID NOT RECEIVE MUCH SUPPORT, AND NOW IT WILL BE WORSE."**

ASOCIACIÓN DE FUTBOLISTAS DE HONDURAS  
(AFHO, HONDURAS)

1  FIFPRO - CORONAVIRUS SHUTDOWN: SHARP RISE IN PLAYERS REPORTING DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS (APRIL 2020)

2  FIFPRO - GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT REPORT: WORKING CONDITIONS IN PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S FOOTBALL (2017)

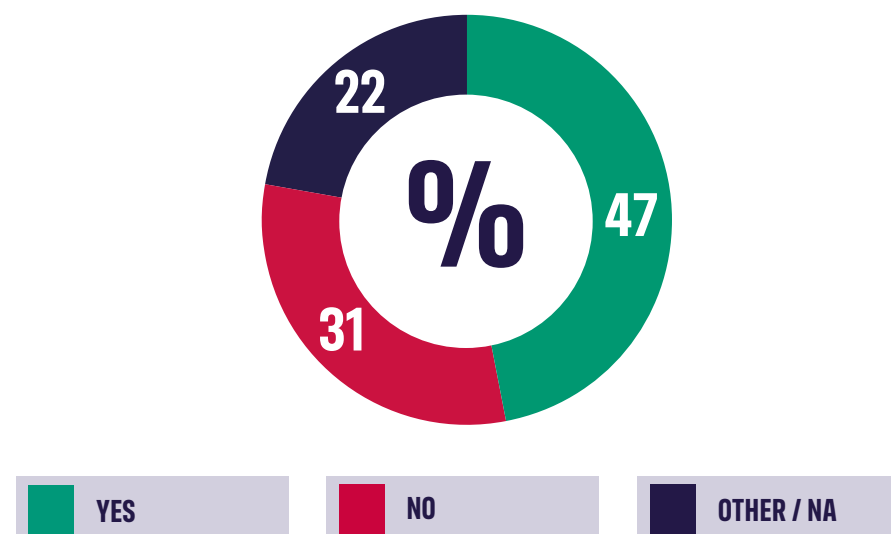
## SPONSORSHIP

Brands have been increasingly entering women's football in the past several years, a trend we detailed in the 2020 Raising Our Game Report. However according to projections, global sports sponsorship rights fees could fall significantly in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

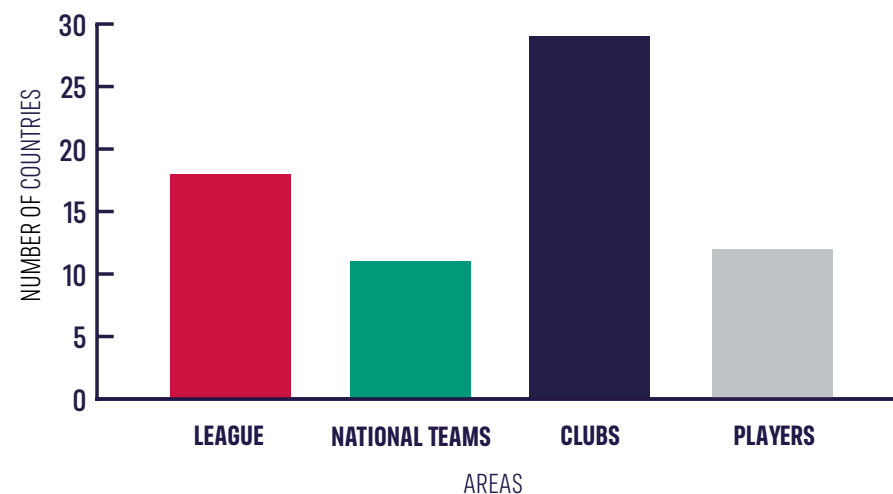
FIFPRO unions were asked whether or not there had been any indications that sponsor endorsements towards women's football in their countries may be in jeopardy and to specify the areas that may be impacted. Almost half of all unions responded yes, with the biggest area impacted by ailing sponsorship reportedly at the club level. One quarter of respondents reported that this question was not applicable to them because women's football in their country had few or no sponsors prior to the pandemic.

Given the global economic strain, there is a concern in women's football that sponsors could channel whatever limited resources they have into more 'conventional' investments, which in football, often means the men's game. At the same time, there is great potential ahead to rebuild portfolios in the women's game, particularly when it comes to partnerships that contribute to inclusion, sustainability and good business.

### HAVE THERE BEEN INDICATIONS THAT SPONSOR ENDORSEMENTS MAY BE IN JEOPARDY?



### IF YES, IN WHAT AREAS?



**FIGURES 6 & 7. INDICATIONS OF SPONSOR ENDORSEMENTS IN JEOPARDY**

29 unions (47%) reported that sponsor endorsements may be in jeopardy in their countries as a result of COVID-19. Of those, 24 unions reported that the clubs are likely to be affected. 18 reported leagues, 11 reported national teams, and 12 reported players.



## CASE STUDY: INNOVATIVE SPONSORSHIP SOLUTIONS

SOME CLUBS HAVE BEEN FINDING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO DRIVE REVENUE AND DELIVERING UNIQUE FAN EXPERIENCES THROUGH INNOVATIVE SPONSORSHIP SOLUTIONS. THESE EXAMPLES HIGHLIGHT THE IMPACT WE HAVE SEEN DURING COVID-19 THAT THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL CAN OFFER INCREDIBLE VALUE TO CLUBS, PLAYERS, AND FANS IN TIMES LIKE THESE.

The club FC Rosengård, competing in Sweden's Damallsvenskan, started a campaign to 'take a seat' in the stadium for their home games. The arrangement with local business partner CA Andersson helps fans support their team at the arena by purchasing and placing a cardboard cut-out on a seat inside the stadium. The idea is that fans can support the team through both their 'presence' as well as a financial contribution.

The club Sky Blue FC, competing in the NWSL in the United States, launched a 2020 digital season membership<sup>1</sup>. Fans who were in a position to continue supporting the club this year with a financial investment could get season tickets that were converted into an online-only offering of exclusive content and events taking place throughout 2020.

In September, the FA Women's Super League (WSL) in England brokered a deal for 50 games to be broadcast during the 2020-21 season across the NBC Sports platforms in the United States as part of a season-long partnership with Atalanta Media.



## RETURN TO PLAY

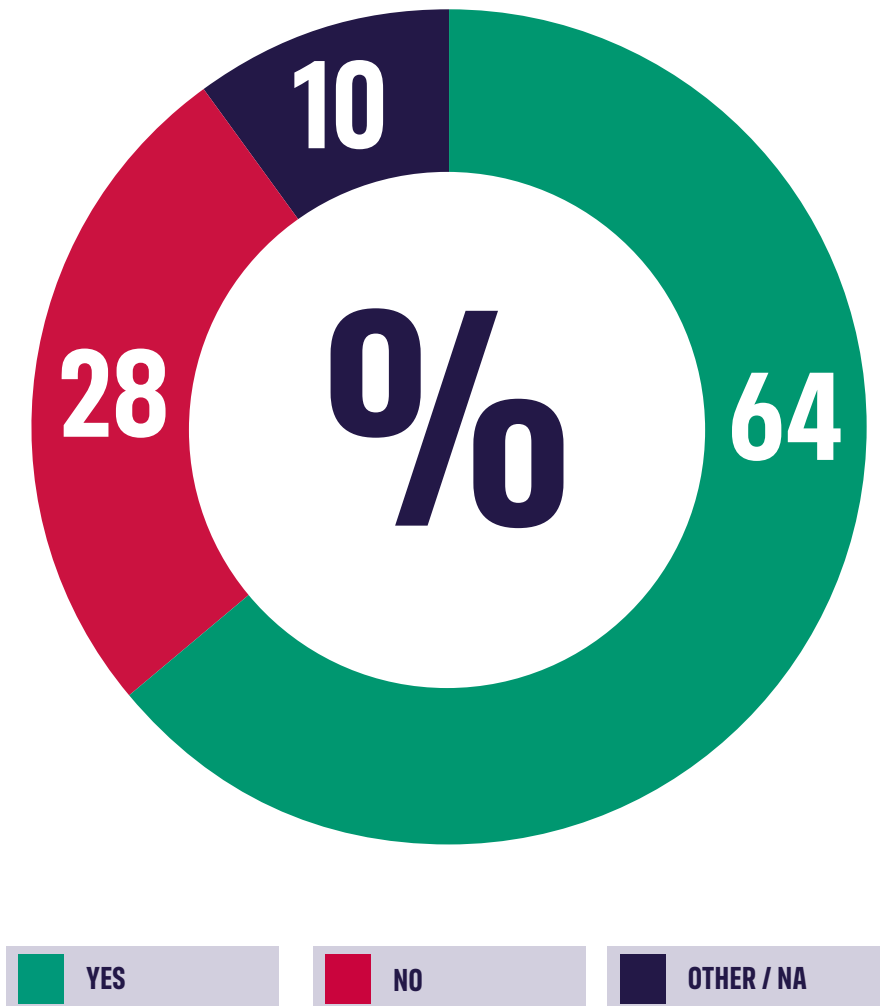
As the initial global lockdown measures started to loosen in many regions around May 2020, and leagues started playing again, FIFPRO created guiding principles for a return to play designed to help minimise the risks of spreading COVID-19<sup>1</sup>. These principles apply to both men's and women's football.

However, when asked if women's clubs were included in the 'Return to Play' protocols for football, 26% of unions replied no. FIFPRO is aware that in many countries testing capacity is limited, and that not all leagues and clubs can perform tests regularly during the return to play period (which lasts until local COVID-19 measures are lifted). However, protocols must be implemented for the health and safety of all participants in both the men and women's game.

When asked if a player returning to work is mandatory even if she has children or high-risk relatives with whom she is self-isolating, 16% of unions reported yes. Today as we face a second wave in Europe and many regions around the world continue to deal with the impacts of the pandemic, risks and legitimate concerns for players and their families remain.

We maintain that all players must have a free choice to participate, and the decision for players to prioritise possible health concerns cannot lead to sanctions under any circumstances. We will support any player's decision in this matter and would challenge sanctions where necessary<sup>2</sup>.

### ARE WOMEN'S CLUBS INCLUDED IN THE RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOLS FOR FOOTBALL IN YOUR COUNTRY?



**FIGURE 8. WOMEN'S CLUBS IN RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOLS**

40 unions (64%) reported that women's clubs are included in the return to play protocols for football. 16 unions (26%) reported there have been no Return to Play protocols for women's clubs in their countries.

<sup>1</sup> FIFPRO - RETURN TO PLAY GUIDANCE (JUNE 2020)

<sup>2</sup> FIFPRO - PLAYER AND PUBLIC SAFETY DURING COVID-19 (OCTOBER 2020)





## CASE STUDY:

### PLAYER PRESSURE AND UNITY IN THE NETHERLANDS

ON 13 OCTOBER 2020, THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT RULED THAT ADULTS COULD NO LONGER TRAIN IN TEAMS AND INSTEAD RECOMMENDED THAT THEY COULD ONLY TRAIN IN GROUPS OF NO MORE THAN FOUR. THEY CANCELLED ALL MATCHES EXCEPT THE EREDIVISIE, THE MEN'S FIRST DIVISION, CAUSING A WAVE OF CRITICISM.

In response, female players in the Netherlands united around the #equalgamemovement, and female national team players competing for clubs abroad reached out to politicians and called on the government to take action. On 14 October 2020, the Dutch Minister of Sports changed direction and enabled women's teams to train and play too.



# INDUSTRY ACTIONS

**FIFPRO AND OUR UNIONS CONTINUE TO WORK WITH PLAYERS, FEDERATIONS, AND STAKEHOLDERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL COMMUNITY TO ENSURE THAT COMPREHENSIVE PLANS AND POLICIES ARE BEING DESIGNED, ADAPTED AND IMPLEMENTED WITH SPECIFIC TARGETED MEASURES FOR THE WOMEN'S GAME.**

In FIFPRO's COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Recommendations<sup>1</sup>, published in October 2020, we outline how stakeholders and committed partners can support players and their associations in the recovery and rebuilding efforts. This includes uniting our football industry under a commitment to regional, national and global stakeholder processes, from engaging in social dialogue to promoting gender equality. Players and player associations must be included in all aspects of the recovery, rebuilding and policy-making processes, and consideration must be given to how various forms of discrimination experienced by players in the industry are exacerbated by the current crisis. Together, we must develop comprehensive measures to address these issues.

It is essential that grievance mechanisms and dispute resolutions systems are in place and accessible to players—and that players know the resources available to them. Players must be able to alert authorities in the event that their rights are violated. They must also be empowered to advocate about gaps and defects in the application and enforcement of decent conditions.

We must also consider how to communicate with female players who are not yet represented by a union or granted professional status and create entry-points for them to contribute in developing responses to the crisis.





## CASE STUDY: FIFA RELIEF PLAN

FIFA ANNOUNCED ITS COVID 19 RELIEF PLAN IN JUNE 2020 AND PLEDGED TO MAKE AVAILABLE UP TO USD 1.5 BILLION TO ASSIST THE FOOTBALL COMMUNITY, INCLUDING MEN'S AND WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL, YOUTH AND GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL THROUGH A SYSTEM OF COMBINED GRANTS AND LOANS UNDER STRICT COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS. UNDER THIS PLAN, EACH MEMBER ASSOCIATION WILL BENEFIT FROM USD 1 MILLION GRANT TO PROTECT AND RESTART FOOTBALL, AND AN ADDITIONAL USD 500,000 SPECIFICALLY FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL DURING THE THIRD PHASE. ADDITIONALLY, INTEREST-FREE LOANS OF UP TO USD 5 MILLION WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS.

Simultaneously, FIFA has enabled all forward operational cost payments to be released to member associations and for the Forward development grants to be converted into COVID-19 operational relief funds - with a minimum of 50% of released funds to be allocated to women's football.

FIFA asserts that women's football has been an integral part in the process of creating a relief plan, and that it remains a priority. These are good steps. The key will be to ensure that these funds make it to the women's game and filter down to the players.



# LOOKING AHEAD

RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PERIODS IN A CRISIS CAN PROVIDE A CHANCE TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY. CRISES CAN CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO REASSESS POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND BUILD MORE EQUITABLE INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS. A CRISIS CAN SPUR NEW WAYS OF THINKING AND SERVE TO SHIFT HARMFUL SOCIAL NORMS AND CREATE FERTILE GROUND FOR MORE PROGRESSIVE PERSPECTIVES AND ATTITUDES TO TAKE ROOT. LIKEWISE, IN SUCH A CONTEXT, YEARS OF NEGLECT CAN BE OVERTURNED BY RECOGNISING THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF UNDERVALUED AND MARGINALISED GROUPS.

In an industry that has long downplayed the voice and value of the player, the female player even more so, there is an opportunity at hand. However, crises can also cause people to fall back on what they know and revert to more traditional attitudes and familiar approaches. In this sense, there is a risk that progress towards more equitable and inclusive norms digress as the demands of recovery take precedence.

While it has been encouraging to see clubs and players back on the pitch, training and competing over the past several months, concerns are now emerging as a 'second wave' threatens different continents. Stakeholders in the game must continue to apply and adhere to return-to-play protocols and the evolving adjustments being made to ensure that the health and safety of everyone involved across the industry.

We also acknowledge that many female players worldwide have been working under conditions of tremendous precarity and uncertainty throughout their entire football careers – the resources and coping strategies they cultivated before the pandemic could serve as powerful sources of resilience now, and the industry may gain some invaluable insights as a result. In this, female players must be heard and given an active role in developing everything from immediate-term mitigation responses and resilience strategies, to longer-term recovery responses and rebuilding plans.

Bringing football back better means not only avoiding the risk of limited gains being reversed, but also building a football future that brings it back more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable



## ANNEX:

List of countries represented in the 2020 FIFPRO Women's Football Survey on the Impacts of COVID-19:

ARGENTINA **AUSTRALIA** BOLIVIA **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA** BOTSWANA  
**BULGARIA** CAMEROON **CHILE** COLOMBIA **CONGO, DRC** COSTA RICA  
**CROATIA** CYPRUS **CZECH REPUBLIC** DENMARK **ECUADOR** EGYPT  
**ENGLAND** FINLAND **FRANCE** GABON **GHANA** GREECE **GUATEMALA**  
HONDURAS **HUNGARY** ICELAND **IRELAND** ISRAEL **ITALY** JAPAN **KENYA**  
KYRGYZSTAN **MALAYSIA** MALTA **MEXICO** MONTENEGRO **MOROCCO**  
NETHERLANDS **NEW ZEALAND** NORWAY **PANAMA** PARAGUAY **POLAND**  
PORTUGAL **QATAR** ROMANIA **SCOTLAND** SERBIA **SLOVAKIA** SLOVENIA  
**SOUTH AFRICA** SOUTH KOREA **SPAIN** SWEDEN **SWITZERLAND** UKRAINE  
**URUGUAY** USA **UZBEKISTAN** VENEZUELA **ZAMBIA** ZIMBABWE



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