

Aiming High – Together

A Five-year Strategic Plan for Football in Hong Kong 2015-2020

Executive Summary

This Executive Summary gives an overview of the salient points of the five-year strategic plan for football. It is not a comprehensive report and should be read in conjunction with the full strategy document.

Aiming High – Together - A Vision

“To transform football in Hong Kong through a systematic and integrated strategic plan, so that players can become competitive against the best in the world and so that all organisations, systems, processes and resources are consistently focused on producing an environment which helps and motivates individuals, teams and clubs to reach their potential in their chosen area of football whether it be playing, officiating, coaching or managing.”

Aim of the HKFA Football Development Strategy:

To raise the standard of football in Hong Kong whilst ensuring that there are opportunities for all to play and fulfill their potential.

Aiming High – Together is a five-year Strategic Plan from 2015 to 2020 for Football Development in Hong Kong from the grassroots to high performance. The plan is ‘player-centric’ - the basic philosophy is: **putting players first**. This Strategic Plan aims to ‘join up’ all of the facets of football. Whilst the HKFA will lead the implementation of the plan it will need buy-in from all football stakeholders in Hong Kong.

Introduction - Recent Improvements as a catalyst for development

Since the Government's Football Development Strategy, '**Dare to Dream**' was published in 2010 and the **Project Phoenix** report was completed in 2011 there have been positive changes:

- There has been a re-organisation of the structure of the HKFA board and the association has developed stronger governance and executive capabilities
- There is a more strategic approach to the planning of football activities
- Additional Public Sector funding has been made available linked to Project Phoenix
- Additional technical expertise has been brought into the HKFA
- Plans for the Football Training Centre continue to take shape
- The Hong Kong Premier League commenced in time for the 2014/15 season
- South China FC and Kitchee FC have received AFC Champions League Licences
- Some professional teams have started to put in place structured youth development programmes
- The World ranking of the Men's team has risen and the team has been competitive in the Asian Cup
- The Hong Kong U16 team has qualified for the Asian Cup finals in 2014 (the first time an age group team from Hong Kong has qualified for the finals of a regional tournament)
- The Women's Football Association has been incorporated into the HKFA and many new girl's and women's programmes and activities have been developed
- A range of Futsal initiatives have been instigated focusing on the schools
- The Coach Education programme has been expanded
- More referees are being recruited, trained and assessed

These are all steps in the right direction and indicators that positive change is happening. Project Phoenix has started the ball rolling but it is only the start of a long journey. **Aiming High - Together** looks to put in place the coalition of factors that will lead to the top.

Aiming High - Together - Prerequisites for Success

The critical success factors that will enable football to flourish include:

- **Governance and Leadership**; inspirational and influential people at the top of football organisations
- **Resources**; people, equipment, facilities and money aligned to deliver the strategic plan
- **Philosophy**; one agreed Hong Kong style of play and a system for continuous delivery and review
- **Players and Opportunity**; a large talent pool with technically competent footballers playing in a competitive environment with a fully professional League at the apex
- **Coaching**; the bedrock for success is people who understand the style of play and have the skills, knowledge and ability to teach and to motivate

Aiming High - Together - Existing Constraints

The limiting factors that still inhibit the quality of football in Hong Kong include:

- **Lack of a Strategic and Joined-up Approach**
- **No Consistent Style of Play**

- **Insufficient Good Quality Facilities**
- **Lack of Expertise in Key Areas**
- **Lack of Player Career Prospects**

These factors create a situation where it is not possible for Hong Kong players to become as good at football as players from other countries.

If one accepts the conventional wisdom that it takes around 10,000 hours of purposeful 'deep' practice over say 15 years (equivalent to 13 hours a week) to develop the technique necessary to be a world-class footballer, then we must create the environment in which that can happen (or at least get as close to it as possible).

We must improve every aspect of football development to give all players the best chance of success. We must ensure that the systems, structures, facilities and resources are put in place to allow footballers to practice longer, harder and smarter.

There are undoubtedly a lot of talented footballers in Hong Kong. Unfortunately talent alone is not enough; it needs to be blended with opportunity and relentless hard work. **Practice** will only take a player so far however. If they are to become truly effective they need regular high quality **competition**. It is only by pitting the best against the best on a regular basis that the skills learned in practice will be honed alongside competitive instinct.

Aiming High – Together – Ten Key Goals

Through the implementation of this plan we aim to:

1. Develop a consistent style of play that yields better standards at all levels and introduce this style of play throughout Hong Kong football
2. Improve coach education through the development of a syllabus and the organization of courses that reinforce the Hong Kong style of play
3. Develop a 'high performance' football culture through the establishment of youth Academies at National and Professional Club level
4. Achieve higher AFC/FIFA ranking for all Hong Kong teams (senior, youth men's, women's)
5. Become more competitive at international competitions in both men's and women's football (Asian Cup, East Asian Games, Asian Games, Olympics, World Cup etc)
6. Significantly increase the number and quality of players, coaches and officials
7. Improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of football facilities across Hong Kong
8. Encourage more people to play football more often and to a higher standard

9. Introduce a more competitive structure for Hong Kong leagues and cup competitions, including a fully professional 'Premier' Football League with home venues, commercial revenue and higher levels of spectators

10. Make football a career that young players can aspire to with effective player welfare

Aiming High – Together – 18 Key Targets and Performance Indicators

The success of this strategy will be measured by the extent to which we can deliver the following outcomes:

- A **Hong Kong Football Curriculum** based on a the Hong Kong 'style' by early 2015
- Revised **Coach Education** Courses linked to the new Curriculum by April 2015
- The introduction of a **football development plan** which maximizes participation, utilizes the HK Football Curriculum and includes pathways from beginner to international player by the start of the 2015/16 season
- Men's Senior Team **FIFA** Ranking averaging 130 within 5 years (and 100 within ten years)*
- Men's Senior Team **AFC** Ranking averaging 15 within 5 years (and top 10 within ten years)*
- Men's Representative Team U23 Qualifying for the Olympics in 2020
- Women's Senior Team **FIFA** Ranking Top 50 within 5 years *
- Women's Senior Team **AFC** Ranking Top 10 within 5 years *
- 100% increase in the number of young people taking part in HKFA **grassroots and youth** football activities and programmes within 5 years
- 100% increase in **girls and women's** participation on HKFA programmes within 5 years
- Introduction of 'representative' age group teams for girls and women's football within 3 years
- 20,000 participants on HKFA **Futsal** programmes in conjunction with schools and Districts within 3 years
- Increase in **qualified coaches** from 800 to 2,000 including 760 new 'D' Licences, 480 new 'C' licences, 144 new 'B' licences and 48 new 'A' licences within 5 years
- Increase in **qualified referees** from 176 to 338 including 20 new Class 1 referees, 2 new FIFA referees and 28 new referee assessors/instructors within 5 years
- Sustainable and independent fully professional **Premier League** with average attendances of 3,000 within 5 years (Benchmarks 2014/15 season 1,250, 2015/16 1,600, 2016/17 2,000, 2017/18 2,500)
- **Restructured Leagues** feeding into the Premier League including a new 'Reserve' League and High Performance Youth League by the 2015/16 season
- More **inclusive HKFA with wider Membership** including accreditation schemes for Clubs and Soccer Schools by the end of 2015 (Benchmarks end 2015 Membership 80, end 2017 100)
- An agreed '**hierarchy**' of **football facilities** with better quality and culminating in a **Football Training Centre** by 2016/17

**It should be noted that the FIFA Rankings should be used as a benchmark only because the relative performance of other countries is outside of the control of the HKFA.*

The HKFA will provide an annual report on these indicators throughout the strategy period. It should also be noted that the achievement of these targets and performance indicators is subject to the provision of the identified resources required, including additional venues and funding.

Football Development Systems and Structures

‘Game Changers’

Aiming High – Together is based on a systematic and coordinated **player development continuum** where every footballer is given the chance to participate and progress to their level of competence and where the most talented footballers are identified at an early age and given more and better quality training and conditioning. This strategic plan has been written to focus on the major changes that will make a difference.

Implementing the changes identified below over the next five years should enable Hong Kong to:

- Establish a systematic and coordinated approach to football development
- Define, agree and implement a consistent style of football across Hong Kong through the development of a National Curriculum
- Get more people playing football, more often and to a higher standard
- Equip developing players with the four ‘pillars’ of football performance; technique, tactical knowledge, physical attributes and mental strength
- Develop a better system for talent identification that is objective and effective
- Develop a ‘high performance’ culture
- Align Coach Education courses and programmes to the new approach
- Coordinate the requirements of the football development plan with the use of facilities
- Monitor the effectiveness of players, coaches, activities, programmes and systems
- Make the HKFA more inclusive by overseeing and assisting all football development activity in Hong Kong

To implement the plan, we will need to make changes in a number of fundamental and **inter-related** areas. These are discussed below (numbers in brackets refer to the recommendation serial number in the full strategy document):

Game Changer 1 - Hong Kong Style of Play and National Curriculum

Current Situation: There is no recognizable uniform ‘style’ or ‘style’ of play in Hong Kong.

What needs to change? Introducing a ‘**Hong Kong Football Curriculum**’ that articulates a consistent style and system of play will result in better player development. The curriculum will cover all aspects of football development from the grassroots up to the elite level and include modules on men’s and boy’s, women’s and girls’ football, futsal and coach education.

Key Recommendation:

- Hong Kong Football Curriculum – development of a Hong Kong style to be implemented consistently. The curriculum will set out the coaching methods and standards appropriate to each age and phase of the player development continuum. The Curriculum will be reflected in the Coach Education syllabus (#FDP1).

Game Changer 2 - Consistent Player Development

Current Situation: The passage of a footballer in Hong Kong from beginner to elite is currently ad hoc. Many organisations are involved in delivering football programmes including the HKFA, schools, amateur clubs and leagues, commercial soccer schools etc. There is very little structure or communication and this results in a lack of coordination. As a result opportunities for structured progression are limited.

What needs to change? Hong Kong football needs a well-structured and strategic football development continuum. This will involve a number of stages of progressive development:

- **Stage 1 – Pre-school and early years Education**
- **Stage 2 – Grass roots (6-12)**
- **Stage 3 – Youth Development (13-18)**
- **Stage 3a - Youth Development (13-18) Talented Player - Pathways**

There should be a clear development pathway through grassroots programmes to youth programmes and if the person is good enough they should progress through Regional Centres of Excellence into a central High Performance Squad or Professional Club Academy. The HKFA should have an overview of all football activity in Hong Kong so that opportunities for progression are open to all. If implemented effectively the player development continuum will be delivered and its success measured in terms of:

- More boys and girls playing football
- Better standard of coaching leading to better quality players
- A bigger and better talent pool for Clubs to pick from
- More success on the pitch at all levels in professional clubs and international competition

Key Recommendations:

- Football Development Player Pathway – Hong Kong football should adopt and implement a structured system for developing players involving all providers of football opportunities working together for the benefit of player development. (see Annex 1) (#FDP2)
- HKFA School Sport Coaching Programme –improve the scale and scope of the scheme. (#FDP3)
- Amateur Clubs' and Commercial Soccer Schools' Accreditation Programme – the introduction of a voluntary accreditation programme and affiliation to the HKFA. (#FDP4)
- HKFA Summer Youth Programme –reduce to July/August and extend to all 18 Districts as a talent ID opportunity linked to youth programmes. (#FDP5)
- Professional Club Academies – the HKFA should set the criteria for the development of Club Academies linked to the Club Licence criteria. (#FDP9).
- High Performance Academy. In the short to medium term (until the Club Academy system is fully developed), the HKFA should operate central academy squads for the very best players at U13, U14, U15, U16, U17 and U18. (#FDP10)

- High Performance Youth League – once established the Club Academies, Central Academy and the Regional Centres of Excellence should play in a separate High Performance League. (#FDP11)

Grassroots Football

Current Situation: Because there is no consistent style of play or curriculum to follow, young children (aged 6 to 12) are introduced to football in many ways and at different times. The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning is variable. The importance of this stage of a player’s development cannot be over-stated. Players must acquire the core skills, techniques and basic understanding of football between 6 to 12 years of age. The core foundations of coordination, technique and attitude must be instilled. Tactical awareness, physical conditioning and mental toughness can be built on later but if basic skills are lacking after this period, it will be very difficult to catch up.

What needs to change? The Curriculum will set out age-related progressions based on a small-sided games approach where young boys and girls are taught the skills of a footballer in a systematic and structured way.

Key Recommendations:

- That the HKFA organises a Hong Kong-wide Grassroots programme based on the new National Curriculum (#FDP1) and Coach Education syllabus (#GR1)
- To establish a grassroots football ‘volunteer’ programme designed to provide a ‘pipeline’ of enthusiastic people to attend the HKFA ‘entry-level’ courses (#GR4)
- To create a new ‘brand’ for grassroots football in Hong Kong and develop a marketing and promotion strategy designed to maximize opportunity for all in conjunction with the Education sector (#GR5)

Youth Development

Current Situation: Youth development (13 – 18) as a progression from grass roots football is fragmented across Hong Kong. The quality of coaching, training and competition is variable and there is no recognizable style or coordinated coaching syllabus.

The biggest problem at this age is the lack of opportunity to play often enough. In developed football countries aspiring footballers train and play between 10-15 hours a week. Due to the lack of facilities, variable standards of coaching and other pressures, Hong Kong footballers suffer from a lack of both quality and quantity of training and competing.

What needs to change? A more systematic approach is required. Coaches should adopt the curriculum so that players are taught in a structured way. Access to good quality facilities must be improved so that the frequency and intensity of training can be significantly enhanced. From the age of 13, children should progress to play 11 v 11, building on the grass roots small-sided games approach.

The emphasis should be on player development rather than ‘win at all cost’. Time on the pitch should be maximised to give the players as much opportunity to have been exposed to 10,000 hours by the time they are 18 to 21.

Key Recommendations:

- District-based Development Programme –to build on the **grass roots programme**. Youth programmes should operate at six age groups (U13, U14, U15, U16, U17 and U18). Training

should be held at least twice a week. Amateur (affiliated Clubs) and Commercial Soccer Schools should be invited to join the Leagues and the leagues separated into Divisions based on ability. (#FDP 7)

Talent Identification and Development

Current Situation: There is no systematic approach to the identification and development of talent. Players with exceptional ability are often not 'scouted' or given any special treatment if found.

What needs to change? Potential elite footballers must be spotted at an early age and given preferential treatment. They should receive expert tuition and be given the opportunity to train more frequently and to compete in a more structured environment where the best play against the best. Better players should be selected for additional training and coaching during their formative years. These 'stars of the future' should be given every assistance and should play against other talented players based on the 'best v the best' philosophy. Their development and performance should be constantly monitored to ensure that they continue to improve. The HKFA should work with other stakeholders such as schools and commercial soccer schools to provide coordinated opportunities.

Key Recommendations:

- Regional Centres of Excellence – to be improved and enhanced and seen as a high priority. Regional Supervisors to pick the best players from each District to attend training sessions taken by better qualified coaches. (#FDP8)

'High Performance' Football

Current Situation: As described above, talented players 'emerge' by accident in Hong Kong rather than being systematically developed. Our players are usually significantly behind elite football players in other countries because they simply do not get sufficient time to train and play. Hong Kong's elite footballers have no dedicated training facilities and very little sports science support.

What needs to change? There needs to be a fundamental change in the support given to elite football. This needs to start at the grass roots and youth development stages; indeed throughout the player development cycle. Elite players must be given an opportunity to compete on a level playing field with other countries. This involves improving access to facilities at all ages and being given support from elite coaches and sports scientists. Once elite players are in the system they must be given every opportunity to become full time professional footballers if they are good enough and that is what they want. This means better facilities, sports science and medical support, analysis and evaluation and the best coaching available. Top quality competition must be arranged as well.

Key Recommendations:

Representative Teams

- That the Hong Kong Representative Teams be allocated additional resources to help them to train and prepare for competition. Resources to include; people, facilities, support, technology (#HP1)
- That Hong Kong bids to host international football tournaments and competitions (#HP2)

‘Testing, Training and Caring’

- **Testing.** The HKFA should work in partnership with the HK Higher Education sector to implement a scientific study into the physiological and psychological needs of players and to establish conditioning benchmarks for footballers of different ages (#TTC1)
- **Training.** The HKFA should also employ a fulltime conditioning coach and a physiotherapist for the Senior and Academy teams. (#TTC3)
- **Caring.** The HKFA should instigate a medical programme to guarantee the health and well-being of footballers to include: Annual Screening, Medical Passport and Database, Access to Medical Advice for players and clubs, equipment, research. (#TTC4)

Player Eligibility

- The HKFA should encourage players to become eligible by adopting an inclusive approach to player selection and involvement (#PE1)
- The HKFA should implement a more pro-active international ‘scouting’ system to identify players that are or could become eligible to play for Hong Kong (#PE2)

Links with Education

- The HKFA in conjunction with the Education sector should investigate and implement ways in which a career in football can be pursued in conjunction with achieving academic success including; offering scholarships and bursaries both within Hong Kong and overseas. (#E1)

Game Changer 3 – Professional Football

Current Situation: In the 2013/14 season 12 ‘professional’ teams participated in the HKFA 12st Division. A new Licence system has been adopted for the 2014/15 season to coincide with the launch of the new Premier League. Nine teams have been granted Licences. The quality of these varies as does the level of resources at their disposal. Generally the popularity of the ‘top tier’ of football in Hong Kong has been diminishing since the heydays of the 70s and 80s. There are many, well-documented reasons for this decline.

What needs to change? The standard of football needs to be improved so that more people are encouraged to support local teams. Many of the initiatives described in this strategy should do just that but it is acknowledged that it will take some time for systems to change and for better players to emerge.

In the meantime the league itself must change and clubs must become more professional in their governance, management and operation. The key to this is the establishment of a new Premier League and Licence system.

Football must become a worthwhile career option. The top tier of football in Hong Kong must become more economically viable if it is to encourage young people to aspire to become fulltime.

This means raising the standard of play on the pitch so more people watch and more commercial revenue is generated. This will provide the resources to make playing football more lucrative.

Key Recommendations:

HKFA Premier League

- That the new Premier League established for the 2014/15 season becomes more sustainable and ultimately independent and that the HKFA Club Licence Scheme criteria become 'harmonised' with the AFC Champions League Club Licence requirements. (#PF1)

Youth Development

- That the HKFA works with the Premier League Clubs to establish Youth Academies based on the Club Licencing criteria (#PF3)

Game Changer 4 - Women's Football

Current Situation: Women's football is acknowledged to be the world's fastest growing sport. Participation in Hong Kong remains quite low and the resources given to women's football are limited.

What needs to change? Women's football must be taken more seriously and be allocated more resources at all levels from the encouragement of mass participation to the development of talented players. There should be a similar development continuum with pathways for girls as there is for boys with a coaching syllabus, more playing opportunities and structured competition (see Annex 2).

Key Recommendations:

- The systems, structures and programmes for girl's and women's football will mirror those of the boy's and men's in so far as there will be a Hong Kong Football Curriculum and player development pathways (#WFD1)
- The HKFA will employ a National Coach and Academy Coach (#WFD2)
- The HKFA will work with partners to secure regular and appropriate training facilities for women's football (#WFD3)
- The HKFA will improve the marketing and promotion of girl's and women's football (#WFD4)
- The HKFA Women's Football Department will work closely with the Coach Education Division and Referees Department to increase the number and quality of female coaches and officials (#WFD5)
- The HKFA will promote excellence in women's football through the establishment of leagues, teams, competitions and elite squads/teams (#WFD7)

Game Changer 5 - Futsal

Current Situation: Futsal is a sport in its own right as well as a good introduction to and complementary activity to football. The 5a-side format means that players develop good technique, agility and spatial awareness. Futsal can be played on small hard courts in schools, sports grounds etc and therefore lends itself well to the nature of facilities in Hong Kong. There is room to expand participation in futsal especially within schools for both boys and girls.

What needs to change? Futsal should receive more attention and resources both as a sport and as a contributor to the 11 a side game. There should be increased opportunities created at all ages and for both males and females. There should be similar systematic programmes and activities that create development pathways from beginner to elite player including giving additional resources to international competition.

Key Recommendations:

- The HKFA will adopt a systematic and coordinated approach to the development of Futsal and this will be coordinated with football development to ensure that the synergies are mutually beneficial (#Fut1)
- The HKFA will support the participation of Futsal teams in international competitions (#Fut2)
- The HKFA will organize local competitions within schools and at a community level (#Fut3)
- The Futsal manager will work closely with the Grassroots Manager and Women's Football manager to promote Futsal throughout the Education sector involving schools, colleges and Universities. (#Fut4)
- The Futsal manager will work closely with the HKFA Coach Education Manager and Referees Manager to increase the number of coaches and officials. (#Fut6)

Game Changer 6 - Leagues and Competitions

Current Situation: The HKFA has been slowly increasing the number of youth training schemes and youth leagues and in 2013/14 these operated at U13, U14, U15, U16 and U17/18. The leagues used to operate on a 1 Division basis with District teams playing against Club youth teams and one or two amateur clubs such as HKFC and KCC. A new divisional structure is being introduced in 2014/15 to facilitate a more competitive situation. However due to the lack of facilities teams still do not train or play frequently enough. The current system does not produce good quality footballers. In terms of adult football, the HKFA operates a league with four Divisions. A new professional Premier League of nine teams is in place for the 2014/15 season. There are many amateur leagues in Hong Kong but the HKFA has very little, if any interaction with them.

What needs to change? The structure of leagues in Hong Kong needs to change so that there is a focus on player development. Youth leagues should be more competitive with additional training and more Divisions so teams play against teams of similar standard. The emphasis of youth leagues should be player development.

The HKFA should be more inclusive so that it oversees all football in Hong Kong. This means that amateur clubs and leagues should be affiliated and eventually have an opportunity to play in HKFA organised competitions. There is a need to improve the top tier of football and the new professional Premier League should become more sustainable through additional resources and should eventually become an independent entity. The new league should be based on a Licence system (linked to the AFC) so that clubs have to meet defined criteria.

Key Recommendations:

- The HKFA will ensure that its leagues and competitions are coordinated and progressive and will increase the number of age-group Leagues (U13-U18) and initiate a new High Performance Youth League. (#LCS1)
- The HKFA will re-structure its leagues including the Premier League and will ensure that the Premier League Reserve League is targeted at developing young players i.e. there should be no more than 5 players over the age of 20 on the pitch. (#LCS2)
- The HKFA should increase the accessibility of the FA Cup by initially expanding the format of the competition to include other HKFA affiliated league teams and eventually opening it up to all affiliated Clubs in Hong Kong (#LCS3)

Game Changer 7 - Player Education and Welfare

Current Situation: For various reasons football is not a realistic career opportunity for many young talented footballers in Hong Kong. Footballers do not earn high salaries and they have no transfer value.

What needs to change? A way must be found to make sure that academic achievement and football prowess are not mutually exclusive. This will mean schemes to link Education with Football Development through academies, scholarships, bursaries etc and on-going vocational education of footballers to give them second-career opportunities. A further safety net for footballers could be provided through a Professional Footballers Association that would be responsible for the welfare of players if they are injured or in dispute with their Clubs.

Key Recommendations:

- As part of the introduction of the new Premier League, the HKFA will strengthen its role in monitoring the relationship between the Clubs and Players and ensure that the FIFA Statutes in relation to player status and transfer are adhered to. (#PW1)
- The HKFA will encourage the establishment of an 'independent' Professional Footballers Association and at some stage in the future a similar independent body for Professional Managers and Coaches (#PW2)

Game Changer 8 - Coaching and Coach Education

Current Situation: The standard of coaching in Hong Kong is variable. There are too few qualified coaches operating (or at least registered with the HKFA) and often qualifications are not updated with the latest techniques. Monitoring and evaluation of coaches is sporadic and no minimum standards are set for coaches operating at different levels. Much football coaching takes place outside of the remit of the HKFA through 'commercial' soccer schools. There is no quality control in this area. Generally speaking football coaching is ad hoc, dependent on individuals who work to their own system and therefore young players often do not get the level of expert advice they need to develop and progress.

What needs to change? The HKFA intends to train more coaches to a higher level and maintain their knowledge through regular re-training and evaluation. The quality of coaching sessions needs to be constantly monitored. It is critical that our coach education syllabus reflects the Hong Kong playing style and Curriculum. Minimum standards will be set so for example, those involved in coaching high performance football will have an 'A' Licence as a prerequisite.

Key Recommendations:

- The HKFA will devise a Coach Education syllabus that reinforces and underpins the revised HKFA Football Development Plan and National Curriculum. This will be a progressive 'hierarchy' of qualifications linked to the AFC accredited courses including Youth Leader 1, Youth Leader 2, HKFA 'D' Licence, AFC 'C' Licence, AFC 'B Licence', and AFC 'A' Licence. (#CE1)
- The HKFA will promote its courses across Hong Kong in an inclusive way and will gradually increase the number of qualified coaches in Hong Kong (#CE2)
- The HKFA will employ fewer (but better) coaches and deploy them within the HKFA Development programmes and will regularly monitor their progress. The more ambitious and effective coaches will be selected to attend 'fast-tracked' qualifications (#CE4)
- Minimum standards of qualification will be adopted at the different levels of the HKFA programmes (#CE5)

Game Changer 9 - Refereeing and Officials

Current Situation: Football cannot operate without officials. They are paid low allowances and are frequently shown little respect. As a result there are too few referees and officials.

What needs to change? The standard of refereeing must reflect the standard of football; the whole . Additional referees will be identified and trained to the requisite standard. Referees will be monitored and assessed continuously to ensure on-going improvement.

Key Recommendations:

- The HKFA Referees Manager will gradually and systematically increase the number and quality of referring in Hong Kong by; running more new Referee Courses, introducing Practical Trials, Developing better systems for on-going mentoring and assessment, running more Referee Assessor Courses, improving the communication between referees and other stakeholders and promoting the concept of 'respect'. (#Ref1)

Game Changer 10 - Football Facilities

Current Situation: Hong Kong football faces many problems but undoubtedly the biggest one is the inadequate supply of good quality football facilities. The geography and topography of Hong Kong is such that there are too few facilities to cater for the demand. The facilities that do exist are over-used and the quality of the playing surface is often seriously compromised.

Deficiencies in the allocation of pitches exist at all levels of football from the grass roots programmes to the elite training and playing facilities for clubs and HKFA elite squads. By the time a footballer reaches the age of 18, he or she will have trained and played around 50% of the time enjoyed by footballers from other countries with a better supply of facilities.

What needs to change? There is a need to re-assess priorities and the current quota system. The strategic plan suggests a hierarchy of facilities from the grassroots through to the professional Clubs through to the elite international level. Again minimum standards are required on a District, Regional and National level. At the top of the hierarchy is the provision of a Hong Kong Football Training Centre. This long overdue facility is now critical to the development of football. There is a need for at least a 30-40% increase in the allocation of pitches to the HKFA. Without this, the standard of football will not improve.

Key Recommendations:

- The HKFA will work with partners to agree and implement a standard 'facilities model' across Hong Kong to ensure that there are adequate good quality facilities to deliver this strategic plan and if necessary will agree a revised quota of facilities allocated to football (#FF1)
- The HKFA will work with partners to realize the Football Training Centre at Tseung Kwan O (#FF2)
- The HKFA will work with partners to ensure that the facilities for Professional Football are improved in accordance with the requirements for entry into the AFC Champions League (#FF3)
- That consideration be given to the HKFA taking over the day to day management and operation of the Mong Kok Stadium subject to further and discussion with the Government. (#FF4)

Game Changer 11 - Integrity and Equality

Current Situation: Recent events have shown that football in Hong Kong is not immune to the world-wide threat of corruption and match-manipulation. Indeed there are certain characteristics that make it especially vulnerable.

What needs to change? It is critical that football is 'clean' and seen to be 'clean'. This means being transparent in terms of governance and ensuring that all football stakeholders uphold the highest standards of personal, management and financial probity.

Systems will be put in place to monitor match-manipulation and there will be a zero-tolerance adopted to those that fail to comply with a new code of conduct.

The HKFA will abide by the principles contained in Article 3 of the FIFA Regulations on equal opportunities and anti-discrimination.

Key Recommendations:

- The HKFA will comply with FIFA Statutes and best practice and adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to match-manipulation and will work with partners to instigate monitoring systems (#Int1)
- The HKFA will work with partners to monitor the use of illegal substances and will take the appropriate action against anyone found guilty of such an offence (#Int2)
- The HKFA will apply a 'zero tolerance' approach to any form of discrimination and will take the appropriate action against anyone not complying with its Equal Opportunities Policy (#Int3)

Game Changer 12 - Resources

Current Situation: In recent years, the HKFA has had a significant injection of additional public money. Football in Hong Kong has the potential to be much better and there is much work that needs to be done (as illustrated by this strategy).

What needs to change? The delivery of the recommendations contained within the strategic plan will require additional resources. Public sector grants and charitable donations will be needed if the HKFA is to remain financially sustainable. It will take time before this financial catalyst results in more commercial revenue streams from gate receipts, broadcasting and sponsorship.

In 2013/14 the HKFA received circa HK\$37m from the Government and will receive a similar amount in 2014/15. This is a combination of Project Phoenix money (circa HK\$20m) and circa HK\$17m as an annual subvention from LCSD. A significant proportion of this (circa 25%) was 'given back' to the Government in the form of stadium levy. If this strategic plan is to be implemented fully an **increase** in funding is required. Over time the intention would be to replace this with commercial revenue but in the short to medium term further investment will be required from Government and Charity sources.

Key Recommendations:

- The HKFA will work with partners and stakeholders to determine priorities, identify resource requirements and optimize the financial position of the HKFA. It will use the resources effectively and efficiently, complying with best practice in financial management and be accountable for all income and expenditure. (#FR1)

Conclusion

Aiming High – Together is an ambitious 5-year plan for the development of football in Hong Kong covering the period 2015 to 2020. Its preparation was one of the key recommendations of Project Phoenix. The investment in Project Phoenix has been important in laying the foundations in certain areas such as improving the governance and administration of the HKFA. Project Phoenix has also provided additional funding for the Human Resources necessary to transform the organization and to identify the plans that will ultimately transform the sport itself.

It will take time for the HKFA to generate significant commercial revenue. In the meantime additional public sector funding is required to take the game forward. Football is the world's most popular participation and spectator sport. Hong Kong is no exception and similarly football is the most popular participation sport in Hong Kong. Hundreds of thousands of people play football on a regular basis and the sport contributes positively to individuals, to communities and to society as a whole. The demand for football as a spectator sport is also massive in Hong Kong. At the moment this is manifested in people watching foreign football on TV or buying tickets to watch visiting overseas teams. This strategy should help to change that and get people back into local stadia as the quality of football improves.

The HKFA should (as the governing body for football in Hong Kong), be the strategic lead and oversee all football in Hong Kong. However the sport is fragmented and the HKFA is involved in a fraction of the football in Hong Kong. There is a need for a much more inclusive and strategic approach across all football stakeholders. This strategic plan is for football in Hong Kong and not just the HKFA. For it to be successful and to deliver the targets and performance indicators it must be adopted and delivered by all of the football stakeholders.

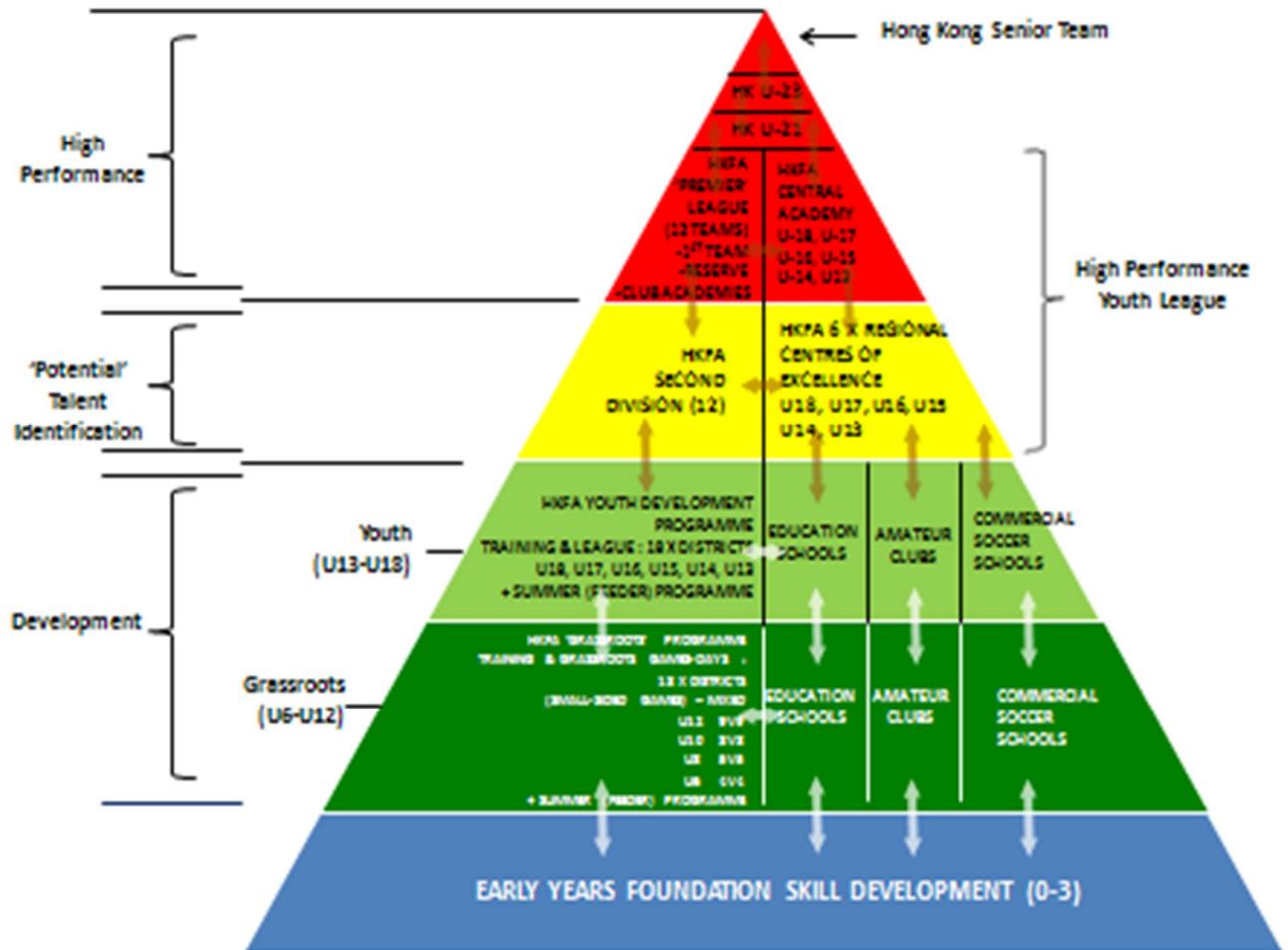
This plan has highlighted the constraints and roadblocks that are holding back the development of football at all levels and has identified the changes that are necessary to transform the sport in Hong Kong. The main challenges relate to funding, facilities, systems and skilled personnel including good quality coaches. Progress can be made in all of these areas but only if there is agreement and tangible buy-in from all stakeholders and concerted effort to implement this strategic plan, hence the name '**Aiming High – Together**'.

In **Aiming High – Together**, the HKFA now has an integrated plan for the development and enhancement of football. The strategy is designed to 'join-up' the various facets of football as well as the different providers and stakeholders. As a result of Project Phoenix the HKFA already has most of the people to lead the transformation process but to do this, the HKFA is now dependent (at least for the foreseeable future) on additional funding and partnerships.

Annex 1



HONG KONG FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT - PYRAMID AND PATHWAYS (BOYS AND MEN)



Annex 2



**HONG KONG FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT
- PYRAMID AND PATHWAYS (GIRLS AND WOMEN)**

