

Team Iraq - UK Regional Prize Winner!

Iraq



FC UNITY







Organization type:

nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Budget:

\$100,000 - \$250,000

Website:

<http://www.fcunity.com>



- [Citizen participation](#)
- [Community development](#)
- [Economic development](#)
- [Disaster relief & crisis management](#)
- [Tolerance](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Youth leadership](#)

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Iraq is living through a period of violent ethnic and religious conflict. Many of its young population, 60% of Iraqis are under 25, lack positive opportunities. Yet research and experience shows that to prevent future violence and extremism, young minds need to be nurtured towards a positive role in civil society.

One of the few activities capable of unifying the whole population is football. This was shown when the Iraqi national team made up of dedicated professionals from all parts of Iraq won the AFC Asian Championship in the summer of 2007. Yet, the conflict has seen the complete destruction of grass-roots sports facilities and a widespread lack of youth football opportunities.

Team Iraq has begun to turn this situation around. It uses the power of football to bring together young people from all ethnic, religious and social backgrounds, through a number of football-related initiatives with emphasis on creating local youth led programmes to help develop and empower and ultimately employ young people.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Iraq is living through the aftermath of violent ethnic and religious conflict as well as the decades of brutal dictatorship that preceded this. Many of its young population, 60% of Iraqis are under 25, lack positive opportunities. Yet research and experience shows that to prevent future violence and extremism, young minds need to be nurtured towards a positive role in civil society. The conflict in Iraq has seen the complete destruction of grass-roots sports facilities and a widespread lack of youth football opportunities which in turn have a negative impact on youth development and in the most negative of cases leads young people to violence, due to the combination of the lack of educational, development and employment opportunities. These young men and women need to be provided with long-term sustainable development opportunities that ultimately lead to increased job prospects.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

Iraq is living through the aftermath of violent ethnic and religious conflict as well as the decades of brutal dictatorship that preceded this. Many of its young population, 60% of Iraqis are under 25, lack positive opportunities. Yet research and experience shows that to prevent future violence and extremism, young minds need to be nurtured towards a positive role in civil society. One of the few activities capable of unifying the whole population is football.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference: include its primary activities

Example. Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference, include its primary activities.

In Iraq, one of the few activities capable of unifying the whole population is football. This was shown when the Iraqi national team made up from all parts of Iraq won the AFC Asian Championship in 2007. Yet, the conflict has seen the complete destruction of grass-roots sports facilities and a widespread lack of youth football opportunities. FC Unity's Hope Tour and Team Iraq programmes were launched in July 2008 and have begun to turn this situation around. We use the power of football to bring together young people from all ethnic, religious and social backgrounds and get them to work together. We have hosted a series of events, workshops, lectures and debates in various parts of Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala and Mada'in and we will host further events in several other provinces including; Anbar, Basra, Kirkuk, Al Muthana, Mosul and Salah Al Din. So far we have worked with over 5,000 young Iraqi men and women, created over 200 young leaders.

About You

Organization:

FC Unity

[Visit website](http://www.fcunity.com)

Section 1: About You

First Name

Yamam

Last Name

Nabeel

Website

<http://www.fcunity.com>

Organization

FC Unity

Country

, LND

Section 2: About Your Organization

Organization Name

FC Unity

Organization Phone

+44 20 78649939

Organization Address

Tulip House, 70 Borough High Street, London SE1 1XF, United Kingdom

Organization Country

, LND

Your idea

Country your work focuses on

Website URL

<http://www.fcunity.com>

Innovation

Do you have a patent for this idea?

Yes

Impact

Actions

The actions are focused on creating young community leaders through programmes and workshops which include coaching, mentoring, citizenship, and leadership training and democracy education. We are establishing tournaments and leagues for young Iraqi men and women (ages 12-30) in major cities and in the provinces and setting in place sustainable programmes, which can then be replicated across Iraq.

The programme uses football-related activities to help create understanding, harmony and unity through social interaction to encourage communities to work together for the future of the country.

It trains young local people to become community coaches and mentors, referees and administrators and provides them with the tools to become positively active in helping rebuild Iraq. As a not-for-profit organisation, it brings together all relevant stakeholders including government, the international donor community and the football world to generate the partnerships and resources, which are needed to make the programme sustainable.

Results

FC Unity has already made a major impact on community relations in Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala a Mada'in. We organised multi-school and multi-community tournaments in Najaf and Baghdad in '08, and arranged distribution of football jerseys and a friendship games between the US and Iraqi military . In Baghdad we set up an 11-event programme with the highlight being a multi-community tournament and football and football jersey distribution at Iraq's National Sha'ab Stadium.

This was followed by a month-long UNITY festival partnering with the Iraqi Security Forces and the US Army's 82nd Airborne Division in Baghdad. The programme included community football festivals in the four main districts of Baghdad hosted jointly for local community teams by the Iraqi and US forces with the highlight event held over two days at Iraq's Shaab Stadium with over 32 community teams, 32 youth teams and 8 combined-forces teams playing, receiving much-needed equipment and coaching-clinics. We engaged and worked with over 2,000 young Iraqis. Since September 2009, we hosted 4 coaching and leadership clinics for over 300 young people in Najaf, Baghdad, and Mada'in.

What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Please address each year separately, if possible.

Year 1

Phase 1 is aimed at creating awareness of FC Unity's work and includes a series of events in large cities where teams from different communities in the province come together. Its primary aim is to get young people to socialise and interact with their counterparts from all various ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds through a platform provided by football-related activities. It also aims to distribute football shirts and balls to participating teams. Year 1 includes a citizenship and leadership programme. Each tournament involves at least 400-500 players, ages ranging from 10 to 30 with each province having 1,000-2,000 participants. Teams from different schools and communities are encouraged to work together to promote team spirit and unity. All tournaments are played in a safe environment.

Year 2

Phase 2 aims to create strong and proactive communities and create young leaders who can lead by example. It trains young locals from diverse backgrounds, men and women, to become football coaches, referees and administrators and most importantly mentors. The training gives young people the skills to set up leagues in different age groups that are run by locals with FC Unity's support.

We understand the importance of the role media will play in the new Iraq. We will help our Young Leaders set up newsletters and web pages linked to the global FC Unity media community. This will also provide an opportunity for Young Leaders in Iraq to communicate with counterparts in other countries, providing a platform to share experiences and best-practice globally. FC Unity will recruit local young people from diverse backgrounds to receive training to become qualified coaches, referees, administrators and mentors.

Year 3

FC Unity Academy and Leagues 2010-12. In 2010 we aim to establish weekly leagues for women and men in different age groups with local sporting clubs and academic institution partners. Each league will consist of over 10 teams and will be run by the young people who have been trained by FC Unity. FC Unity will continue to provide funding, kit and support. The leagues will be established in partnership with local stakeholders.

What would prevent your project from being a success?

Despite the evident danger, due to the fragile security situation, the football community in Iraq remains one of the most organised and well-run part of civil society, providing and leading by example.

Despite the difficult situation Iraqi face today, football not only provides a much-welcomed distraction, but it actively promotes civic activism, as well respect and fair play and a healthy lifestyle.

Despite the obvious threats, FC Unity's programmes are always community-based and locally-led, which makes it flexible with the situation on the ground, so despite the evident threats we can continue our work if we can maintain the level of financial support from our partners and donors.

How many people will your project serve annually?

1001 10,000

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?

\$100 1000

Does your project seek to have an impact on public policy?

Yes

Sustainability

What stage is your project in?

Operating for 1 5 years

In what country?

, BD

Is your initiative connected to an established organization?

Yes

If yes, provide organization name.

FC Unity

How long has this organization been operating?

1 5 years

Does your organization have a Board of Directors or an Advisory Board?

Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with NGOs?

Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with businesses?

Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with government?

Yes

Please tell us more about how these partnerships are critical to the success of your innovation.

The concept of team and teamwork are primary to the FC Unity mission and since our first programmes we have created partnerships in order to achieve best results.

FC Unity is run by a senior management team in the UK and Iraq and guided by a senior advisory board governed by our chairman.

Together with international and local partners we provide a platform for education and personal and professional development opportunities for young adults.

We have established partnerships with UK and US-based NGO's and foundations, US, UK and Iraqi government departments, including the US Department of State, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, The Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sport, The National Olympic Committee of Iraq, the One World Futbol Foundation, The Sager Family Foundation, Kick for Nick Foundation and many others. Together we seek out best practice, discuss, debate and agree on policy, plans and programmes to help deliver the best possible solution to persistent problems connected with youth in Iraq.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization?

In order to create long-term sustainable programmes in Iraq, we need to confirm partnerships with the business sector who can see the development opportunities for young people in Iraq and how supporting the development and empowerment of youth can lead to a strong, sustainable pluralist democracy in Iraq which in turn can support the private enterprise, taking away from the culture of state-dependability. Being able to create long-term employment opportunities to local youth who can run FC Unity programme in Iraq is paramount, as with training provided by FC Unity and partners, our young leaders will need the opportunity to test their skills in a working environment, hence becoming active and positive stake-holders in their own community and society.

Opening up our programmes to exchange opportunities with other NGO's around the world, would also be vital in creating a viable and democratic society in Iraq, as Iraqi youth would benefit from interacting with and working with and learning from youth from around the world and it would also provide them with long-term aims and ambitions and help create possible future partnerships between Iraqi youth and their counterparts globally.

The Story

What was the defining moment that led you to this innovation?

Having worked as a television sports producer I went to interview the then Iraqi head coach (current Belarus head coach) Bernd Stange in Germany a few days before the fall of Baghdad in April 2003.

His commitment to football playing a defining and positive role in nation building, conflict resolution and peace building played a vital role in a strong friendship and working partnership we created together since our first meeting.

His friendship, personal and professional support has led to the creation of the Goodwill UK tour of the Iraq National Team in 2004 which demonstrated the positive impact of football has in bringing countries and cultures closer together.

Since then FC Unity has developed through its initial pilot project phase in 2005 and 2006 with the creation of FC Unity programmes in UK and Iraq in 2007.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.

Youth make the majority population in the world, yet they suffer from lack of opportunities of development and lack of employment in most part of the world. In developing countries as well countries that have conflict or have just come out of conflict, youth are also prone to suffer from poverty and violence.

To overcome that we need to create long-term, sustainable and viable programmes in partnership with communities and local stake-holders and we need to engage, develop and empower youth around the world to change communities and societies in a positive manner.

How did you first hear about Changemakers?

Email from Changemakers

If through another, please provide the name of the organization or company

Renata Affonso

Source URL: <https://www.changemakers.com/football/entries/team-iraq-uk-regional-prize-winner#comment-0>