IF Sustainability Project

AUDIO-DESCRIPTIVE COMMENTARY FOR PARTIALLY SIGHTED AND BLIND FANS
The world faces important challenges across a wide spectrum of economic, social and environmental issues, and the sport community is not immune from their impacts. The Olympic Movement has both an opportunity and a duty to actively contribute to the global sustainability debate in line with its vision of “Building a better world through sport”.

With this in mind, and in response to recommendation 5 of Olympic Agenda 2020 (“Include sustainability within the Olympic Movement’s daily operations”), the IOC conducted the International Federation (IF) Sustainability Project throughout 2016. The IOC carried out the project with three objectives: obtaining an overview of IFs’ sustainability initiatives; identifying common topics, good practices and shared challenges; and sharing information among the IFs.

As part of this project, the IOC collaborated with the IFs to compile a series of case studies reflecting how IFs are contributing towards a more sustainable world.

Each case study is aligned with one or more of the IOC’s five sustainability focus areas: infrastructure & natural sites; sourcing & resource management; mobility; workforce; and climate. These focus areas were selected through an extensive stakeholder engagement process, taking into consideration today’s key sustainability challenges and the manner in which the IOC believes the Olympic Movement can most significantly contribute to addressing them.

The case studies are also aligned with the United Nations’ (UN) framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This framework is pivotal for the Olympic Movement: in September 2015, the UN General Assembly confirmed the important role that sport can play in supporting the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.

“Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognise the growing contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives.” Paragraph 37, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
FIFA PROVIDED AUDIO-DESCRIPTIVE COMMENTARY AT FOUR STADIUMS DURING THE 2014 FIFA WORLD CUP BRAZIL™.

A pioneering audio-descriptive commentary was offered in Portuguese at 26 of the 64 matches during the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil™, describing the atmosphere in the stadium and the action on the pitch. FIFA appointed the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE) as consultants to deliver and manage the commentary at the four host stadiums in Belo Horizonte, Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

After discussions with FIFA and other key stakeholders, CAFE appointed Urece as its local partner. Urece is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that works primarily with partially sighted and blind people who wish to play sports, and has been active in improving accessibility for blind people in Rio de Janeiro since 2005.

To select the commentators, the LOC placed advertisements at university campuses in search of media students with previous experience and an interest in developing their skills. Four students from each of the four cities, eight male and eight female, were selected for the training phase, which encompassed a series of 12 weekly three-hour online sessions, a special two-day seminar in Rio de Janeiro and live tests during an official match. A total of 14 participants completed the programme.

FIFA used its communication platforms for the 2014 FIFA World Cup to promote the project and raise awareness of this new service among partially sighted and blind football fans in Brazil, as well as among the general public. To encourage usage of the service, FIFA issued a number of complimentary tickets that were distributed by a network of NGOs, coordinated by Urece, to partially sighted and blind people. Information about the service, which was accessible to everyone, was communicated to all successful ticket applicants, who were invited to carry their own radios and tune into the coverage within the stadiums.

OBJECTIVES

Audio-descriptive commentary was provided for partially sighted and blind fans at the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil™ as part of FIFA’s wide-ranging accessibility programme. The programme was designed to provide greater access to the 2014 FIFA World Cup through such initiatives as specific seating; accessible ticketing systems; toilets and walkways for disabled fans, people with limited mobility, elderly people, pregnant women and obese people. A highlight of the accessibility programme, the audio-descriptive commentary project introduced audio-descriptive commentary to Brazilian football stadiums for the first time, training the first generation of audio-descriptive sports commentators in Brazil and making the tournament more accessible for partially sighted and blind fans.
FIFA launched the initiative at the 2014 FIFA World Cup, with a total budget of USD 130,000, and has continued to support it: FIFA has donated the radio transmission equipment to Urece, and has signed an agreement to help transform this project into a regular feature at Brazilian stadiums.

**TIME & PERSONNEL**
CAFE dedicated human resources to manage and oversee the project. Urece dedicated up to two full-time employees to the project.

**COMMUNICATION**
The project was promoted locally by emailing all successful ticket applicants and informing them of the service that would be provided. Press releases were issued on the FIFA website before and after the 2014 FIFA World Cup, complemented by posts on FIFA’s social media channels. Articles were posted on both the CAFE and Urece websites, and both organisations noted significant upsurges in traffic when the articles were published. The project was also detailed in the 2014 FIFA World Cup Sustainability Report, which was released publicly. Special sessions were conducted during two FIFA World Cup matches, at which media personnel were able to watch the radio commentators in action.

**EVALUATION**
All partially sighted and blind fans that had been provided with complimentary tickets were asked to participate in a 20-question survey covering awareness of the project, technical matters and the quality of the commentary. A total of 199 forms were completed – and in general, the feedback for the project was hugely positive, with 66% of the fans who completed the form indicating that they were using an audio-descriptive commentary service for the first time.