

# Prisoners of Their Own Dream

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## Website Text


The trafficking of young African footballers is on the rise. Every year thousands of children make their way to Europe in the hope of becoming the next footballing superstar. Yet the majority of these players will end up on the streets of Europe's cities, abandoned by so-called agents who have promised so much and delivered so little. But what are the personal stories behind this illegal trade in humans?

I have carried out interviews with those who are directly connected to this international crime. I have spoken to Fabrice (not his real name) to find out first-hand what happens to a victim of trafficking and have interviewed Jean-Claude Mbvoumin, president of the anti-trafficking organisation Foot Solidaire, to see what is being done in the fight against the problem.

The football world also adds their opinions in interviews with BK Häcken's Sporting Director, Sonny Karlsson, and Swedish 'super-agent' Patrick Mörk, and world football's governing body FIFA outlines its position on the matter.

The outcome is a sometimes distressing insight into a side of world football that many are unaware exists, an ugly blemish on the beautiful game. The investigation uncovers that it is far from simply being a matter for football's executive committees, but one for governments and other international authorities, and proves the point that it is a problem that concerns us all.





# Prisoners of Their Own Dream

**This year's World Cup in Brazil brings together some of the planet's greatest players, men who have dreamt since they were boys of the opportunity to play at the highest level. Yet thousands of children with that very same dream are destined to end up destitute and homeless on the streets of Europe's cities.**

**Text: James Milford**

**“I was 16, very young, and very scared.”**

**F**abrice found himself in a shoddy hotel room near Charles de Gaulle airport, where he had arrived from Cameroon a few hours earlier, glowing with the promise of a trial at one of France’s top football teams.

The night ahead was long and sleepless. The agent had told him to wait, he would be back soon. But Fabrice was still waiting.

When the knock on the door finally came it was the hotel manager telling him he had to leave –the agent had paid for only one night’s stay. Suddenly, he was on his own, one of the thousands of young Africans trafficked into Europe each year by fraudsters posing as agents for wealthy clubs.

“I didn’t know what to do,” says Fabrice (not his real name). “I rang my mum and she started to cry. She called my aunt who has a friend in Paris. I was lucky as she came to pick me up.”

Fabrice had just a small holdall containing a few clothes, his boots and around €500; the agent had taken his passport and visa. He stayed with his aunt’s friend for two weeks, but then the hospitality ran out. He slept on the streets or, when possible, in the city’s central bus station.

Fabrice’s story is typical of many African boys whose families are deceived by promises of football fame and riches into paying a fraudster posing as an agent to take their son to Europe.

He was just a child when Fabrice was spotted playing for his local club in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The boy dreamed of emulating his hero and countryman Samuel Eto’o, the most decorated African footballer of all time, by travelling to Europe and “playing for a club like PSG, Barcelona, even Chelsea”.

The agent told him he could make his dreams into a reality. “He told me he could fix it. He said I was a very good player and that he could get me a trial in France, so I was very happy,” Fabrice says. “He said he needed to speak to my parents as I was so young, so we went to see them.”

For Fabrice to make it as a professional footballer he needed to be in Europe, his talent was being wasted in Cameroon, the agent explained. He could give the boy the chance that he deserved, but he needed €5000. “He said that it was for plane tickets and a visa to get me out of Cameroon,” Fabrice says.

In a country where the average monthly wage is just €80, Fabrice’s mother decided the opportunity was too good for her son, and her family, to miss. “It was a lot of money, so she had to take a bank loan to pay the agent. She said that she knew it would be worth it,” Fabrice says.

After the money changed hands, Fabrice took the seven-hour flight from the Cameroonian capital to Paris, where his dream swiftly became a nightmare.



### What is Trafficking?

Human trafficking is the acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them.

Source: UNODC

## A Growing Problem

Jean-Claude Mbvoumin knows only too well the predicament of Fabrice and the other boys who are abandoned in European cities by unscrupulous agents. The former Cameroon international heads Foot Solidaire, a Paris-based charity that works to expose the problem.

“Five years ago we had about ten children per month. Today we have children contacting us every day, every single day,” Mbvoumin says.

The problem is now worse than ever, he believes, and not only in terms of numbers but also the geographical spread of the victims who contact the organisation. “Ten years ago we had requests from France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, sometimes Portugal,” he says. “Now we have requests from as far away as Eastern Europe and the Maghreb countries of North Africa, even Norway.”

The overwhelming majority of these players, some as young as 12, have been conned, duped by so-called agents who claim strong links to influential and important people within the game, and who promise trials and contracts with major European clubs.

The illegal agents thrive on families’ desperation to find a way out of their current lives. Parents, like Fabrice’s, hopeful that their son will be the next African football superstar and therefore their route out of poverty, believe the flattery and hyperbole served up by the footballing charlatans.



Mbvoumin believes the problem is worsening

“The family trust anybody who will give them just a little bit of hope,” Mbvoumin says. “But all these fake agents want is money. When they say ‘I can get your son a contract at Paris Saint-Germain, AC Milan or Barcelona’ the family trust them. They let their children go with someone that they have never seen before because they hope that there is a chance for their child to be successful.”

Many hand over their entire life-savings, sell heirlooms or even the family home in order to fund the trip. They pray that the financial risk they take will enable their son to follow in the footsteps of the continent’s footballing heroes, such as Ivory Coast’s Yaya Toure, Ghana’s Michael Essien or Togo’s Emmanuel Adebayor.

Unfortunately, these stories rarely have a happy ending, Mbvoumin says. Many boys are left at train stations or in squalid hotel rooms soon after arriving

in the country on a short tourist visa, waiting for the agent to return to take them on the next step of their journey to success and riches. But they seldom do return.

Some who make the long, arduous journey over land and sea, or by the more direct route of by air, are rewarded with a trial. Due to Europe's financial crisis, Mbvoumin explains, smaller, lower league clubs in minor footballing nations are willing to break the rules if it means surviving.

"You have fake agents, unofficial agents, working for professional European clubs. Apart from the big clubs, European clubs need low fee players. They recruit in Africa, then later transfer them to big European clubs. It's a good revenue."

But this is not the norm. Most of the young hopefuls fail to live up to their own expectations, mainly because they are not of the level that their agent has convinced them of. Unsuccessful, they find themselves in the same position as all of the other unfortunate victims.

The recurring themes of abandonment, loneliness and poverty weave their way through Mbvoumin's stories of these deserted young footballers, discarded onto the streets of Europe's cities. Without money or the correct visas they are forced into the shadows. Some survive by working on the black market or turning to crime, others fall victim to sexual abuse and are coerced into prostitution, he says.

Thousands of miles away from home, they are trapped. They still have faith that they will one day fulfil their ambition of becoming professional footballers in one of the world's top leagues. It is chasing this dream that brings these young players to Europe and, as Mbvoumin reveals, ultimately keeps them here.

"It's very hard for them to go back, to return home, because they are ashamed. They have to be a success before they can imagine to go home. They are prisoners of their own dream."

### **"A global problem"**

It is hard to determine how many children have fallen victim to fake agents, but in their book 'Den Forsvunne Diamanten (The Missing Diamond)' Norwegian investigative journalists Lars Madsen and Jens Johansson estimated, by means of several sources, that the number may be as high as 20,000.

Foot Solidaire say they are working hard to tackle the problems that young African footballers and their families face. In 2008 the organisation received the backing of FIFA, world football's governing body, and has since worked with FIFA's European counterpart, UEFA, in order to highlight trafficking. Yet Mbvoumin believes that the duty of care to combat the growing crisis falls not only at the feet of football's lawmakers, but also those of international governments.

"Our main goal is to work with important, influential bodies," he says.



At the moment he is working with the Council of Europe and several European and African governments. "This isn't just a problem for footballing bodies such as FIFA and UEFA, but a global problem which concerns everybody."

FIFA state that they have made continuous efforts to combat the exploitation of children within football over the last 10 years. The introduction of Article 19 of the Regulations for the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP) was introduced to effectively ban the international transfer of minors, with a few choice exceptions, and the creation of the electronic Transfer Matching System in 2009 further increased transparency involving transfers.

However, the measures that have been introduced pertain to the involvement of two credible, official parties and mean nothing to the fraudsters operating in Africa. FIFA are keen to point out that "the protection of minors is a matter of utmost importance", but in this instance the problem is beyond their remit and therefore beyond their control.

"Issues related to "child trafficking", like any other criminal activity, fall within the competence of the relevant national and international authorities," says FIFA.

"Such matters are outside of FIFA's jurisdiction, though we certainly welcome measures that show authorities are taking them very seriously."

The key to succeeding in the battle is information, says Mbvoumin. The need to educate the players and families that may fall prey to immoral agents is now foremost on Foot Solidaire's agenda.

"When we interview the children who have come to us we realised that the families are not informed. They know nothing about professional football in Europe, about regulations on migration of people or the necessary requirements in order to obtain permits or visas."

One vital aspect of the fight is to establish concrete programmes in these countries, a boots-on-the-ground campaign that raises awareness and informs families of the dangers

FIFA Regulations for the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP) Article 19: Protection of Minors

1. International transfers of players are only permitted if the player is over the age of 18.
2. The following three exceptions to this rule apply:
  - a) The player's parents move to the country in which the new club is located for reasons not linked to football.
  - b) The transfer takes place within the territory of the European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA) and the player is aged between 16 and 18.
  - c) The player lives no further than 50km from a national border and the club with which the player wishes to be registered in the neighbouring association is also within 50km of that border. The maximum distance between the player's domicile and the club's headquarters shall be 100km. In such cases, the player must continue to live at home and the two associations concerned must give their explicit consent.

Source: FIFA

surrounding football.

“It’s important to have prevention on the ground in Africa; sporting, professional and educational opportunities at ground level. If not, the problem will continue to increase.” Mbvoumin says.

A further problem is the lack of deterrent faced by those who entice the young footballers and defraud their parents. The usually soft-spoken 40-year-old’s voice becomes animated when the question of punishment is raised.

“There is no punishment. Families have no information on how to prosecute. They have a fear to go to the authorities as the agents have good relations with the police. Sometimes these people work in the Sports Ministry or at the Football Association; they have important positions in the country.”

### **First v Third**

**T**he corruption that fuels this illegal industry is something that Sonny Karlsson, Sporting Director at Swedish top flight side BK Häcken, knows exists. He has been on numerous scouting missions to West and Central Africa. The club has recruited several African players over the past four years, largely from the illustrious Right to Dream Academy in Ghana, an establishment that prides itself on nurturing a player’s education just as much as their footballing skills.

But sometimes, as Karlsson explains, it is harder for the clubs to ascertain an

agent’s true credentials as the whole structure of football is so different in Africa.

“Sometimes you don’t know with the African guys if they’re agents or not. They say they are agents, but you don’t know if they are. Normally they work with somebody, so if you’re not a FIFA agent yourself you work with somebody who is. If you’re a rich African guy who buys players for himself you use the FIFA agent to do the business for you.”

Karlsson’s phone bleeps telling him yet another email has come through. He casually glances over at his computer to see who it’s from before returning to his explanation of the contrast between two worlds.

“Here in Sweden it costs a lot of money to become a FIFA agent. You have to go to school to learn about the law, but out there they’ve never been to school to be an agent. Not a chance. They just buy a license from somebody in the Ghana F.A or the Nigerian F.A.”

Someone else with first-hand experience of African football is Sweden’s most successful agent, Patrick Mörk. He has been working in Ghana for over 15 years, with an impressive clientele including AC Milan’s Michael Essien and Sulley Muntari and the country’s all-time international top-scorer, Asamoah Gyan.

“Anyone that’s been to Africa has seen there are millions of people who are doing everything to come to Europe, some even go across the Mediterranean in boats and risk drowning. I think the

desperation among people has surely led to a situation that if there is a decent young talent dreaming of becoming a professional in Europe, it could be exploited by unlicensed agents.”

He also finds it frustrating that the work of the illegal agents has somewhat tarnished the reputation of legitimate, licensed agents working in the region. “It’s very unfortunate that it’s been connected to the real agent business working in Africa. You almost have to say to people, ‘Yeah, I work with African players to Europe, but I’m a good guy!’”

Yet none of the observations that the clubs make, the obstacles that the agents face or the regulations that FIFA have set in place help boys like Fabrice left homeless and penniless thousands of miles from family and friends.

Fabrice is only too happy to attest to the role of organisations such as Foot Solidaire in making a difference to these boys’ lives. “Jean-Claude has helped me so very much, he is a great man,” he says. “They are why I am here today.”

Now 19, Fabrice is still in Paris, in the northern suburb of Saint-Denis, living with “around ten” other young men of his age in a small flat paid for by Foot Solidaire. His stammer, which he has managed to contain relatively well for the duration of our conversation, becomes more pronounced and intrusive as we talk about how he now struggles to survive.

“Some days are good and some days are bad. I don’t have a job, but I manage to find work sometimes, usually on

building sites. I can’t get a real job though as I shouldn’t be here and I don’t want to get caught as I don’t know what will happen to me.”



Fabrice: “I don’t know what will happen to me.”

One thing the teenager does know is that he doesn’t want to, or maybe can’t, return home.

“Sometimes when I speak with my mum she wants me to come back, other times not, but I can’t go home. I don’t want to go back until I have achieved my dream of becoming a professional footballer. I know it will be hard as I am getting old, but I am a man so I will try.”

*Fabrice requested anonymity due to the fear of being caught and deported by the French authorities.*



## Comment

**I**n the football world it's a no-brainer. It's a problem that has been casting an ugly shadow over the beautiful game for well over a decade now and everybody wishes it would just go away.

The sport as a whole is in agreement that the trafficking of young players by fake and illegal agents should be stopped immediately, even if the reality of it actually happening is far from near. But there's another aspect of football that seems to be far more acceptable to the majority of the football world, or at least to the clubs and agents who are looking for the next Lionel Messi.

It may, rightly, be considered to be immoral, unscrupulous and downright illegal to take money from a parent in Africa to take their child to Europe for a trial, but is it right to take a child if you *don't* take money from the parent and offer the boy a *contract* instead?

Many young children are legally transferred or signed by major European clubs every year, by means of officially licensed agents, all legal and all in accordance with world governing body FIFA's laws and regulations. "But how?" I hear you say. After all, as my previous article says, "...Article 19 of the Regulations for the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP) was introduced to effectively ban the international transfer of minors, with a few choice exceptions..."

And it is indeed within these "few choice exceptions" that allows the trade to continue. Exceptions that were added following some strong lobbying to the EU by Europe's major clubs, unhappy with how strict FIFA's rules were.

One of these exceptions (Article 19:2a) states that the transfer of a minor is acceptable if one or more of the player's parents move to the destination country for reasons "not linked to football".



Barcelona's academy trains players as young as six

According to Lars Madsen and Jens Johansson, two Norwegian journalists who spent several years investigating the trafficking of young footballers in the international game, this has led to clubs morally pushing the boundaries of FIFA regulations. They claim that they have evidence of some of Europe's top teams simply employing parents as bus drivers, gardeners or kitchen staff in order to simply bypass FIFA's laws, importantly *before* they had offered the children contracts.

It all seems like a rather Machiavellian scheme to ensure that the clubs still get their man, or boy to be more exact, and maybe when Michel Platini, president of FIFA's European counterpart UEFA, says

“paying a child to kick a ball is not that different from paying a child to work on a production line.”, you know that something may just be wrong.

We are all aghast, shocked and sickened when we hear of the heartbreak caused by ruthless unlicensed agents trafficking children across borders. And we are horrified, angered and appalled when we read that children in India are employed in illegal factories making footballs. But when we see that an eight-year-old Argentine boy is being offered a trial by Barcelona, well that’s fine.

**James Milford**

## 3. Method

### 3:1 Introduction

The subject of my investigation and subsequent article concerns the trafficking of young African footballers to Europe by fake, or illegal, agents. A fake or illegal agent is considered to be someone who claims to work as an intermediary between two professional football clubs, yet does so without the requisite accreditation from a football association affiliated to world football's governing body, FIFA.

I decided to choose this topic as I feel that it was both interesting to me and would also be for the reader. It is an issue that should be of interest not only to football fans, but to anyone who cares about the world in which we live. I also feel that the problem has not been covered in great detail over the last five years. I believe that the column inches that the topic has garnered is not proportional to the scale of the problem faced by those affected. It is important that issues such as these are made more prominent to those who consider themselves football fans. It is critical that those who follow the sport must realise that the game is not as clear and pure as many clubs, associations and governing bodies would want them to believe.

The subject is extremely relevant, not only at the time of writing, but also as an ongoing matter. The 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil is soon upon us. This year's edition of the world's largest sporting event is expected to be seen by a cumulative television audience of more than six billion people, but how many of them are aware of the trafficking of young African footballers? It is, in my opinion, the perfect time to utilise the coverage that the World Cup attracts in order to highlight the situation.

In addition to this one of the planet's most revered, respected and successful football clubs, FC Barcelona, has, as recently as April of this year, been given a 14-month transfer ban by football's world governing body FIFA for breaching rules governing the transfer of minors.<sup>1</sup> However, due to the importance of the subject matter, which is ultimately the trafficking of humans, I believe that this investigation would be relevant regardless of external factors.

The aim of the investigation is to explore further knowledge and regulations of trafficking in football by fake agents. It is also the aims to discover the experiences of a victim of trafficking. In an effort to add a new approach to the subject I wanted to see if the problem had now reached Scandinavia, and more specifically, Sweden.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/football/26852466>



### **3:2 Aims**

Does the trafficking of young African footballers to Europe continue to be a problem?

If it does, what happens to the victims once they reach Europe?

What organisations are helping these victims?

What are football's governing bodies (FIFA, UEFA) doing to combat the problem?

Has the problem reached Sweden?

### **3:3 Background**

In explicit terms this project is an investigation into human trafficking. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines human trafficking accordingly:

“Human trafficking is the acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them.”

#### *3:3:1 Previously Published Material*

Although much has been published previously on the broad subject of human trafficking and the many facets of it, very little has been specifically written on the trafficking of young child footballers.

There have been several short articles (between 300-700 words) in the press, but I was only able to find a very small handful of longer investigative pieces.

On February 8th 2008 the then BBC Europe correspondent Clive Myrie produced a special report on the subject<sup>2</sup> that described how the problem was growing in Ghana. He interviewed a 16-year-old boy in Accra who explained how the agents would constantly approach him at his academy club, offering him trials at top European clubs in exchange for a fee. The report also contained an interview with an anonymous victim who had been trafficked to France at the age of just 13. The boy's parents had paid €750 to a fake agent to secure a non-existent trial. In addition to the two children the article featured a meeting with an unlicensed agent who believed he provided as good a service as any licensed agent. Myrie also highlighted the concern the European Union had for the trafficking of children for football, and the work Save the Children were undertaking to inform families of the dangers of employing the services of unlicensed agents.

On March 25<sup>th</sup> 2013 The Sun newspaper published an article by Nick Harding entitled “Football's Secret Slave Trade”.<sup>3</sup> In it Harding echoes the fraudulent activities that Clive

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<sup>2</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7235765.stm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/mens-fabulous/4855368/Footballs-secret-slave-trade.html>

Myrie had explained five years previously. Harding's is a more elaborate piece that describes the entire process of taking the child from, in this case, Cameroon to France. The boy, who was just 12 at the time, was abandoned at a train station in central Paris soon after his arrival in the country. The article reports that the child's parents had paid £6,500 to an agent to enable their son to get to Europe and take part in a trial with a professional football club. The child, it says, now survives by occasionally finding manual work in the Paris suburbs.

Also featured is Jean-Claude Mbvoumin, president of anti-trafficking organisation Foot Solidaire. He states the experiences previously mentioned are far from rare and how the larger European teams are unintentionally fuelling the problem by buying players from lower league clubs. The article also includes a short interview with an academy coach who explains the players want to leave their homeland in order to support their family. Football's European governing body UEFA's stance is highlighted by the use of a quote from a 2009 speech.

Shorter stories include Mihir Bose's Evening Standard piece from November 12<sup>th</sup> 2013 reporting how Cameroonian international footballer Samuel Eto'o has made a donation to Foot Solidaire.<sup>4</sup> Robin Scott-Elliot's article, published on July 21<sup>st</sup> 2011 for The Independent, reports that FIFA claim players are being trafficked in order to facilitate the fixing of matches.<sup>5</sup> Kevin Rawlinson's interview with Jean-Claude Mbvoumin for the same newspaper (dated September 18<sup>th</sup> 2009) explains why the former footballer set up his organisation and for what purpose.<sup>6</sup>

### 3:3:2 Research

The only piece of full academic research I could find on the subject of trafficking in football was the thesis of Jonas Scherrens, a Masters student at Karl-Franzens University of Graz. Although the thesis thoroughly covers the trafficking of young African footballers in respects to the contravention of FIFA transfer regulations, it mentions only very briefly the work of the fake agents who promise trials that fail to materialise.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/chelseas-etoo-tackles-the-illegal-trade-in-young-african-footballers-8934990.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/news-and-comment/players-are-trafficked-to-fix-matches-claims-fifa-2317644.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/european/mbvoumin-make-no-mistake-this-is-trafficking-of-young-people-1789345.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.etc-graz.at/typo3/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ETC-Hauptseite/Programm/Aktuelles/the\\_human\\_trade\\_of\\_african\\_football\\_players.pdf](http://www.etc-graz.at/typo3/fileadmin/user_upload/ETC-Hauptseite/Programm/Aktuelles/the_human_trade_of_african_football_players.pdf)

### **3:4 Limits of Investigation**

Relatively early on in my investigation I decided to specifically concentrate on the trafficking of young footballers who had been abandoned by fake agents. During the very early stages of my investigation I found that some big European football clubs are alleged to have signed players under the age of 18 or, if within the European Union, 16. If this were true it would be contrary to Article 19 of FIFA's Regulations for the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP). However, due to several exceptions in this Article it becomes a very grey area and although it has been described as trafficking, not least by Michel Platini, the president of European football's governing body UEFA, I believe that it is very much a story in itself and should not be compared to trafficking by fake agents.

### **3:5 Process**

#### **3:5:1 Subject Choice**

The initial idea for my investigation arose through pure chance. Whilst taking a break from researching possible subjects for my project I stumbled across the 2008 BBC article that I previously cited. The article described the ordeals that young African footballers were put through at the hands of fraudulent fake agents. In return for thousands of euros the agents promised the boys contracts at major European clubs, yet on arrival the children were left them abandoned on the streets.

I was startled that the problem was so old, yet even as an avid football fan I had heard, and read, nothing about it. I attempted to find out more about the topic using simple search engines such as Google and Bing, but found there to be very little written on the subject. In any case I believed it was both extremely interesting and an important issue that deserved highlighting. In order to give the project a local angle I wondered if there was evidence of the practice reaching Sweden.

#### **3:5:2 Research Phase**

Throughout my research I was able to find just two books containing small references to the problem and one research paper. In addition to this there were several newspaper articles, some of which mentioned the anti-trafficking organisation Foot Solidaire based in Paris. However, the lack of depth in prior research meant that I would have to learn the majority of background information as my investigation went on through interviews and telephone enquiries.

In order for my article to carry any weight it was imperative that it included an interview with Foot Solidaire. The organisation was set up specifically to combat the trafficking of young African footballers so would be key to uncovering more information on the problem. It was through Foot Solidaire that I hoped to contact the second of my essential participants, a victim of this means of trafficking.



### 3:5:3 Choosing Relevant Interviewees

I decided to contact Foot Solidaire and request an interview with the organisation's president Jean-Claude Mbvoumin. This, as I found to my frustration, was far easier said than done. A message on the Foot Solidaire homepage explained that the website was undergoing reconstruction therefore any contact should be made through the organisation's Facebook page. As instructed I sent an interview request via the message option on Facebook on March 7<sup>th</sup>. It was a full week, and one more request, before I received an answer from Foot Solidaire. Thankfully Mr Mbvoumin agreed that I could ring him the following Monday to discuss my project.

Whilst attempting to reach Foot Solidaire it was also clear that would need perspectives from other parties connected to African football. With this in mind I contacted the Right to Dream Academy based in Akosombo, Ghana. I had read that the academy was the antithesis to the terrible experiences that the unfortunate victims of fake agents endured. In an attempt to show the other end of the spectrum I contacted the academy by the only means possible, through the imbedded contact form on the academy's website and by email. The lack of a phone number was, again, frustrating. Even though past experiences have taught me that an email request is customarily required, being able to talk to someone directly and having the opportunity to introduce oneself beforehand is always advantageous.

During this time I also organised an interview with Peter Gerhardsson, manager of Gothenburg football club BK Häcken. This would be a face-to-face interview at the club's training complex at Gothia Park. Häcken had, over the past four years, signed several players from the Right to Dream Academy and I wished to find out the process the club went through in order to find these players. The interview was a short one as it became clear that the person I needed to speak to was in fact the club's sporting director Sonny Karlsson. Luckily, Peter kindly organised a meeting for me with Sonny straight away. The interview was thorough and particularly interesting. Although I had entered the meeting with the intention of discussing the Right to Dream players the clubs had signed Sonny mentioned agents, so I decided to take the opportunity to move the conversation on to the subject. With hindsight I am very glad I chose to do this as the Right to Dream facet of my investigation waned (mainly due to their failure to reply), but Karlsson's comments on how agents work in Africa became an important part of my piece.

### 3:5:4 Difficulties of Securing an Interview

Unfortunately the process of securing and undertaking several of my proposed interviews was somewhat of a struggle. As I mentioned the Right to Dream Academy failed to reply to my requests for an interview, which was also the case for Michael Williams of Flyktinggruppernas Riksråd (FARR) Swedish Network of Refugee Support

Groups and Jean Marie Dedecker, a member of Belgian Parliament who carried out an investigation into trafficking within Belgian football in 2005.

Several organisations that I contacted for information and/or an interview replied in the negative as they felt they had no information concerning the subject. These included Migrationsverket, the football associations of Sweden (SvFF) and Norway (NFF) and the Swedish branch of Save the Children (Rädda barnen). I did express surprised at the latter two groups as I had been told of possible trafficking cases in Norway and I had read an article with a Save the Children representative in Ivory Coast in which they stated how bad the problem had become in the country.

### 3:5:5 The Anti-trafficking Organisation

Even interviews that had been agreed to seemed to take a very long time to materialise. My arranged interview with Jean-Claude Mbvoumin seemed doomed. We had fixed an interview for 2pm on 17<sup>th</sup> of March. However, when I called Jean-Claude's mobile phone it was diverted directly to his answerphone service. This continued for a whole week, which was maddening as it slowed the momentum I had gathered in the investigation. Finally, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, I did get to interview Jean-Claude, who also agreed to send me the details of a trafficked player that I could contact.

I now felt that I had moved on a stage and could now begin to think of the structure of my piece. Alas, my relief at acquiring the second of my vital contributors was short-lived as the awaited email did not arrive and Jean-Claude's mobile now gave a message that the answerphone could not take any more new messages. I felt deflated and dismayed as I had been promised a link to the person who could really make my article succeed, yet it was proving impossible to obtain.

Unfortunately, my investigation was met with a further delay. For the second time during the project I was unable to work as I needed to take care of my two young twin sons, this time for almost two weeks. As most of my contact was being done over the phone during office hours it was impossible to continue. Instead I focussed on research work that I could carry out during the evening time.

### 3:5:6 Making Contact with the Victim

More than one month after I last spoke to him, and dozens of phone calls, emails and Facebook messages, I managed to once again to speak to the elusive Mr Mbvoumin. Thankfully he gave me the phone number to Fabrice, a young man who had been trafficked three years previously. I luckily spoke to Fabrice the next day, which made me feel that the pieces of my investigation were coming together.

This also, again, gave me renewed vigour as much time had been wasted waiting for Jean-Claude and Fabrice's phone number. It was with much relief that I spoke to Fabrice

the next day, and also twice more in the following week. His experience of being trafficked would, as I had known, become an integral part of my story.

### 3:5:7 Contacting the authorities

With the results of my interviews with Jean-Claude and Fabrice I was then able to move on to establish contact with football's governing bodies FIFA and its European counterpart UEFA. I wished to wait to hear what both Jean-Claude and Fabrice had to say before contacting the footballing authorities due to the fact that, as a result of previous experiences with FIFA, I knew that I would only receive one opportunity to make a request for an interview. I needed to refer carefully to all the information I was hoping to find out and make sure it was correct as FIFA receive an overwhelming amount of information requests resulting in a the media department dismissing inadequate requests frequently.

One mistake that I had made earlier in my investigation was to state that I was a student when making interview requests. Although it was not specifically mentioned the tone of those I spoke to during my telephone conversations with both the SvFF and NFF changed somewhat on discovering I was not a fulltime journalist. When contacting FIFA I simply stated I was a freelance journalist. Thankfully, after several emails back and forth, I finally received a response. Unfortunately the request for an interview was declined, due to the fact that my request concerned "quite complex topics for which different departments have responsibility". I did however receive a comprehensive set of answers to the questions and areas I had outlined in my initial email. I was content with this outcome as I would not have been surprised had FIFA's reply simply contained previously published press releases.

As this was the final part of my interview process I was now able to concentrate wholly on the writing of my article.

### 3:5:8 Evidence Evaluation

Prior to writing my article it was essential to go evaluate the importance of each piece of information and evidence I had amassed and determine what would be used. I assessed each contribution individually and highlighted which elements of each interview were worthy of inclusion. I found this process significantly easier than I had first presumed, primarily because the information and experiences described by the interviewees was so strong.

### 3:5:9 Producing the Finished Article

The experience of writing up the story was split into two distinct parts. I found the writing of my first draft relatively easy as, as previously mentioned, the content was so captivating. However, following an extremely useful reviewing session with my classmates it became apparent that the structure of the article did not do the content

justice. This was also the opinion of my supervisor who suggested that I rearrange the article in order to give the piece more impact.

The second draft also came relatively easy, but after reading and re-reading the piece several times it lacked bite and fluidity. It was from here that I began to find the process of editing my own writing both frustrating and difficult. It was at this junction where the help of my supervisor came to the fore. He explained that a writer needs to be ruthless when editing pieces and to remember that an article must flow in order to be easily read. With this advice in mind I made the decision to take a whole day off my project and come back with a clear mind.

On resuming my article I felt the need to return to the evaluation process. With a rested brain I found that many of the quotes I had chosen were, although very good, too longwinded. It also became clear that I had bogged down the story with too many adjectives and superfluous information that stifled the story. It was even clearer to me now that the strength of the story lay in my sources and it was important that they told the story themselves.

After a drastic re-evaluation of the first half of my third draft I was finally happy with the outcome of my fourth and final draft. I had assumed, rather foolishly, that I would be able to complete a finished article in two or, at the most, three attempts. The process of writing up my story has made me realise that to achieve the standard of writing you aspire to demands much more than simply writing the article. It requires restraint, composure and also the ability to take a step back and, if needs be, mercilessly edit your own work.

### 3:5:10 Investigation Methods

The nature of the investigation's subject matter meant that almost all of the information I desired would be accessed via interview, either in person or by telephone. This was the best and in some cases the only way to carry out this investigation.

### 3:5:11 Sources

When evaluating the information given by my sources I was required to take into consideration the veracity of the material. I found it extremely hard to corroborate or prove the information given to me by some interviewees was true and had to some degree trust my experience and instinct.

One of my main concerns was regarding the information given to me by Jean-Claude Mbvoumin of Foot Solidaire. Whilst he seemed, and I believe he is, an honest person I wanted to find another source that substantiated his claims as it could be argued that it is in his organisation's best interests to state that the problem of trafficking is growing. Due to the lack of hard statistics on the matter it was impossible to see a clear pattern regarding the number of players being trafficked. Instead I was forced to look at the

bodies that have publicly backed Foot Solidaire in order to give the anti-trafficking organisation credibility by proxy. As Foot Solidaire's supporters include the United Nations, the Council of Europe and FIFA I felt that I was justified in my decision to include Mbvoumin in my article.

Fabrice, the young man who had been trafficked as a child, was also a source that of concern. It was, of course, a relief when I was able to track down a trafficked player as it gave my story a great deal of gravity. However, I did not want to be blinkered and believe that I needed to know that Fabrice was who, and what, he claimed to be. Again, as I had no corroborating evidence I was compelled to look at those associated with him and, as I was given his details by Foot Solidaire I decided that I could be certain enough to trust him as a reputable source. To satisfy myself further I re-asked several questions at different junctions throughout the interview to see if I was given the same small details within the answer. Each time Fabrice's answers were the same as he had replied the first time, but importantly not as if they were learnt by rote. He used different adjectives and verbs, yet the stories matched.

My correspondence with the Norwegian football federation (NFF) also created uncertainty, but for a slightly different reason. Whereas Foot Solidaire and Fabrice were claiming trafficking was on the rise NFF denied any knowledge, even though Jean-Claude Mbvoumin claimed to have information regarding a leading Norwegian team. I was unsure if NFF were reluctant to discuss any negative aspects of football, as is true of the vast majority of football associations I have spoken to in the past. As Mbvoumin was unwilling to disclose confidential information I was then unable to confront NFF with solid evidence, thus creating an impasse.

### 3:5:12 Additional Time

If this investigation had the benefit of further time it would have been improved by meeting the two Paris-based sources in face-to-face interviews, both of which had agreed in principle to do.

More time would have allowed for further investigation into the experiences of the victims of trafficking in football. If it were possible to conduct interviews with several victims as opposed to just one more conclusions and comparisons could be drawn for analysis.

If time had permitted conducting interviews with relevant departments of governments across Europe and Africa may have resulted in a more thorough picture of responsibility concerning the investigation's subject matter.

If the financial aspect of the investigation was not an issue it would have been beneficial to travel to West Africa to see first-hand the football academies and conditions in which the young footballers grown up. This would have also dramatically increased the chances of making contact with an illegal agent. It would have also enabled me to



interview the parents of the children who attended the academies to ascertain how many would be willing to pay an agent to take their son to Europe.

### 3:5:13 Ethical Dilemmas

I was, surprisingly, faced by very few ethical dilemmas during my investigation, both of which concerned the same source. Very late on in my investigation, after in fact the writing of my third draft Fabrice requested that I keep his true identity anonymous. He explicitly stated that he now wished for his real name to be changed, especially as the article refers to the district of Paris in which he now lives. It was explained to him that I had used his original name in my initial draft and also in my meetings with my supervisor. I assured him that the draft would not be disclosed to the public, that the meetings with my supervisor will be confidential and that under no circumstances would I reveal his true identity. He accepted this as adequate on condition that all reference to his real name was immediately changed throughout the project.

The second problem surrounded the fact that Fabrice had agreed to provide me with a photograph of himself. It must be said that I was a little surprised that he agreed to do so, but as we had built up a good rapport he said he felt that he could trust me. In order to safeguard his anonymity I suggested that he obscure his face. I suggested that he could hold a football in front of his face with eyebrows just visible above the ball. I was, to be truthful, not expecting a picture to be sent, but to my delight he did send a photo. However, he did not feel comfortable with having the camera pointed straight at him, so instead the photo shows the back of the head. While I realise that it is not perfect I am extremely pleased that he sent a photograph at all.

### 3:6 Method and Results

This investigation relied exclusively on results collected using qualitative methods of research, namely through the process of one-on-one interviews undertaken by telephone or in person. Frey and Oishi define an interview as "a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions (interviewer) and another answers them (respondent)." (1995, p1) Due to the lack of data on trafficking by fake football agents and the difficulty in finding suitable interviewees (i.e. victims) I was unable to employ a quantitative approach to my research.

#### 3:6:1 Interviews

It was obvious from the outset that my investigation would rely heavily on first-hand evidence that could only be gathered through interviews. The rationale behind using the interview as an investigative method is to gain information on a particular topic or a particular area to be researched. (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991)

It was also evident that due to the geographical differences between many of my desired interviewees and myself the only possible way of conducting these interviews would be by telephone.

The research questions for each interviewee were specifically composed and tailored in order to extract the largest amount of relevant information possible from that source. Nichols defines this approach as an unstructured interview and describes it as:

*"..an informal interview, not structured by a standard list of questions. Fieldworkers are free to deal with the topics of interest in any order and to phrase their questions as they think best."* (1991, p131)

Open-ended questions were used in each interview with the aim of giving participants the opportunity to answer without defined boundaries.

There are however limitations on the interview as a means of research method. The technique relies on interviewees responding honestly and their answers being accurate and complete. (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 1995).

A further limitation is the fact that even if the investigation had been able to interview other victims only comparisons and contrasts could be made between the results. Due to each experience being a personal one it would still not possible to generalise on the findings.

### 3:6:2 Collection of Background Information

As the crime of trafficking in football is not yet officially recognised to be in this country initial information into the subject was conducting by using internet search engines. Existing newspaper articles were read and academic research sought. In an attempt to further investigate the subject I used the academic search indexes Docubase, the Directory of Open Access Journals and RefSeek.

However, even with the aid of today's internet-based search tools I found the subject hard to investigate. There seems to be scarcity of written material on the matter, which is surprising as articles cover a period of eight years. Finding relevant sources was also a difficult task due to the secretive nature of the subject and the fact that the vast majority of the organisations or people I wished to contact reside in other countries.

### 3:6:3 Personal Investigative Work

In order to try and gain a balanced view of the situation I wished for a wide range of respondents and participants from each facet of the subject to be included. To this end I contacted over 50 organisations and individuals with potential links to the trafficking of young African footballers to Sweden. This was to ensure a broad overview of the subject

and so as to offer each of these contacts an opportunity to participate. The following section highlights the parties whom I contacted during my investigation, along with a brief summary of their contribution.

Firstly, I made contact with Jean-Claude Mbvoumin, as mentioned previously, the founder of charitable organisation Foot Solidaire in order to request an interview (see Appendices 1 & 2). Jean-Claude became one of the main contributors to my final piece.

Following my conversations with Mr. Mbvoumin I was given a phone number to a young man from Cameroon who had fallen victim to a fake agent. After several phone calls I was able to persuade 'Fabrice' to tell me his story, asking that he remain anonymous throughout my investigation. Fabrice's story is the predominant feature of the article.

I believed that one approach to discovering whether or not the problem had reached Sweden would be to find out if any of the African footballers currently playing in Sweden's top league, Allsvenskan, had any experience or knowledge that could aid my investigation. I made contact with the Swedish Football Federation (SvFF) and asked if it would be possible to obtain the number of African players playing in Allsvenskan, only to be told that the organisation does not keep such records, nor of which nationality each player is. In order to ascertain the number I systematically analysed each individual club's current squad, accessible on their respective websites. I was then able to make a list of those players currently plying their trade in Allsvenskan (see Appendix 3). This list then allowed me to contact each relevant club with a view to interviewing these players (see Appendix 4). From the 14 clubs that I contacted I received six positive responses concerning nine of the 25 African players who began the season at Allsvenskan clubs. No emails were received from clubs that declined to take part. Their respective decisions to refrain from taking part in my investigation were given to me during follow-up phone calls that I made. The six clubs that took part in my investigation were: BK Häcken, Djurgården, Falkenbergs FF, Halmstads BK, IFK Göteborg and Malmö FF. (N.B. I also contacted local Gothenburg club Örgryte who currently play in Division 1 Södra. The fourth of the four largest clubs in Gothenburg, GAIS, did not have any African players in their squad at the time of contact). Of the nine players from these clubs, all were aware that the problem of trafficking in football existed, but only five had heard anecdotal evidence of it occurring. No player, or anyone close to them, had experienced being trafficked. Overleaf is a table of those interviewed and their general responses.

<b>Club</b>	<b>Player</b>	<b>Aware of Problem</b>	<b>Heard Anecdotal Evidence</b>	<b>Have Personal Experience</b>
BK Häcken	Sula Matovu	YES	NO	NO
BK Häcken	Nasiru Mohammed	YES	NO	NO
Djurgården	Yussif Chibsah	YES	YES	NO
Djurgården	Mark Mayambela	YES	YES	NO
Falkenbergs FF	Godsway Donyoh	YES	NO	NO
Halmstads BK	King Gyan	YES	YES	NO
IFK Göteborg	May Mahlangu	YES	YES	NO
IFK Göteborg	Malick Mané	YES	YES	NO
Malmö FF	Benjamin Fadi	YES	NO	NO

In addition to these footballers I made an effort to interview those who worked within the business side of football. I met Peter Gerhardsson, manager of Allsvenskan team BK Häcken, he was aware of the problem, but felt that his colleague Sonny Karlsson, the club's sporting director, would be better a better source due to his many visits to West Africa. Mr. Karlsson gave me his insight as to how difficult it can be for European clubs working in Africa. He told me of his experiences on the continent and explained how hard it can be to differentiate between a genuine and fake agent. Kent Carlzon, communications manager at Örgryte IS football club explained to me that, again he had heard anecdotal evidence of the problem, but no one at the club had any further information regarding the subject.

World football's governing body, FIFA, did, after much work, agree to take part in my investigation. As mentioned previously, I was unable to speak directly to a member of the association as my questions covered several different departments. However, the comprehensive set of questions that I asked via email (see Appendix 5) was answered and is included, to some degree, in my finished article.

In a telephone interview with the media department of FIFA's European counterpart, UEFA, I was told that as the transfer of players was under the remit of FIFA, therefore it was the global governing body that would answer question on such a matter. UEFA did state, however, that they have been campaigning to FIFA for more work to be done regarding the trafficking of young child footballers and sent me, via email, a collection of press releases and factsheets on the subject.

The Swedish Football Federation (SvFF) informed me that there have been no cases of such trafficking in Sweden and, according to press secretary Niklas Bodell, none of his colleagues, which he contacted concerning my request for information (see Appendix 6), could help me on the matter. Coincidentally, I had the exact same response from the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF). Communications officer Christer Madsen, at my behest (see Appendix 7), contacted the relevant departments within the organisation, but returned to me to say that the federation's director of competition, Nils Fisketjønn, was unable to help. I had contacted NFF as Jean-Claude Mbvoumin had informed me that he had been in contact with a player in Norway who had fallen victim to trafficking. When asked about this Mr. Madsen stated that no one in the federation had any knowledge of any incident in Norway.

Dennis Andersson is general secretary of Gothia Cup, the world's largest youth football tournament, which takes place every July in Gothenburg. More than eighty countries are represented among the 1600 teams that take part in the competition. I met Mr. Andersson to ask if anyone at Gothia Cup knew anything regarding the subject of trafficking in football. He said that although he had heard of such activities occurring nothing had happened concerning Gothia Cup.

Patrick Mörk is, in terms of total money spent on transfers and high-profile clientele, Sweden's most successful football agent. Mr. Mörk has had extensive experience in Africa, working with players from the continent for over fifteen years, and has been involved in the transfer of dozens of African players to European clubs. He told me of the affects that the work of fake agents has on his work, some of which is in my finished piece. He stated that he had heard many stories regarding the trafficking of young African footballers, but had not seen anything first-hand as he believed that fake agents prey upon players of lower quality, working in academies that he would not consider visiting.

Marko Sarranlina is a Finnish football agent also working in Africa. He also told me of his experiences in Africa, which, in many cases, echoed those of Patrick Mörk. Mr. Sarranlina too had heard of several cases, but had not seen anything personally.

Samuel Eto'o is a former African football of the Year who, at the time of my investigation, played for Chelsea Football Club in the English Premier League. Mr. Eto'o, a Cameroonian international, funded a recent project of Foot Solidaire. I wished to hear his thoughts on the subject of trafficking within football and also why he decided to donate to Foot Solidaire (see Appendix 8). Unfortunately, his publicist, Mana N'sang, informed me that Samuel would be unable to take part due to work commitments.

Two organisations within the football community failed to respond to emails. The Confederation of African Federations (CAF) (see Appendix 9) also failed to answer dozens of phone calls that I made to them. I have previously had the same experience whilst trying to contact them regarding other projects. The Right to Dream Academy, a



well-respected football academy based in Ghana, also did not respond (see Appendix 10).

Another avenue I wished to pursue was to contact organisations in Sweden that deal with the wellbeing of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers. The first of these was Röda korset (vård för papperslösa), a free healthcare drop-in centre that treats those who have no legal paperwork. I contacted nurse and team leader, Anne Sjögren, who was unfortunately unavailable. Instead I rang the clinic directly and spoke to a nurse named Ing-Marie. She had not heard of the problem occurring in Sweden, but said she would ask Anne on my behalf and ask her to ring me if she was aware of the problem. A follow-up phone call to the centre led to me being told she had not had any experience in the subject.

The second of these groups was Flyktingbarnteamet, a department of Sahlgrenska University hospital in Gothenburg that deals with the welfare of refugee children. I spoke to a lady named Ulrika who was unaware of the problem, but would ask her colleagues. Once more, a follow-up phone call led to me being informed that no one in the clinic had had contact with a trafficked footballer. However, she did state that this does not mean that the problem is not in Sweden simply that those involved may choose not to divulge such information.

Flyktingmedicinsk is a group of clinics that are a point of access of healthcare for refugees, in this instance for adults. I contacted the central reception department and was put in touch with Carina who was unable to help in my investigation as she was not familiar with the problem. Carina kindly contacted other clinics within the group and returned to me to inform me that none of her colleagues had come into contact with a victim of this kind of trafficking.

Individuella Människohjälp is an organisation that works to improve the lives of those in poverty and in need. One facet of their work is the fight against trafficking. The organisation has offices in Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm. I spoke to each office, but was unable to find anyone who had worked with trafficked footballers.

Mats Paulsson is head of Västra Götaland Police's Trafficking Unit. I spoke to Mats to enquire whether the police had any documented cases regarding the trafficking of footballers in Sweden. He said he could only speak officially for Västra Götaland, but there had been no cases to his knowledge. He also said that he was unaware of any cases throughout Sweden. He kindly said that he would talk with colleagues in other regions to discover if they were aware of the problem. I spoke to Mats again later in the month to be told that nothing had been uncovered in Sweden.

As, according to Jean-Claude Mbvoumin, the vast majority of victims of this unique class of trafficking hail from West Africa I contacted Save the Children's West Africa office which is based in Dakar, Senegal. Coincidentally this office appeared to be run by Save

the Children's Swedish arm, Rädde Barnen. After several unsuccessful attempts to contact them via email (see Appendix 11) and phone I decided to contact Rädde barnen in Sweden. I spoke to Cecilia Naclér, a press officer for the organisation, and subsequently sent her an email (see Appendix 12). During our conversation she stated that she had no knowledge of the subject but would contact departments with the charity to discover if there was someone I could discuss the matter with. Cecilia returned to me a few days later by telephone to inform me that no one had an experience of the subject. Whilst I was waiting for Ms. Naclér's response I emailed Heather Kerr, Save the Children's former Country Director for Ivory Coast (see Appendix 13). I was aware that she had now moved on to Sierra Leone, but Heather had previously spoken on the subject and I wondered if she could put me in touch with a colleague in the region who may be able to talk to me. Unfortunately, Ms. Kerr did not return my emails.

In an attempt to discover if any official cases had been recorded I contacted Migrationsverket, the Swedish government's Board of Migration. I was forwarded to the press department who, I was told, deal with all interview requests. During my conversation I was informed that I should put an official request via email (see Appendix 14), but to the press department's knowledge no one has been a victim of trafficking through football in Sweden. The lady I spoke to echoed the thoughts of Flyktingbarnteamet and said that this did not mean that the problem and not occurred, just that she believed this information would not be something that would be disclosed within a visa or asylum application. I telephoned the Board two weeks later as I was yet to receive a reply. Later that day I received a phone call stating that no department had heard of such a problem existing in Sweden.

During my research a further three parties failed to return my requests for an interview. Michael Williams, vice-chairman of Flyktinggruppernas Riksråd (FARR), the Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups did not respond to my email request (see Appendix 15) or phone messages; Interpol, the world's largest police organisation, did not reply to my requests via their embedded email form (see Appendix 16); Piet Desle, press secretary to Belgian politician Jean-Marie Dedecker, also declined to reply to my email request (see Appendix 17). Mr. Dedecker addressed the 2005 Play the Game conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, highlighting the problem of the trafficking of African footballers to Belgium. I wished to hear how he felt the fight against the crime had developed. However, I was aware before requesting an interview that the Belgium general elections were only weeks away and that a response would be unlikely.

### 3:6:4 Results

My investigation proves the existence of the trafficking of young African footballers with evidence from, most importantly a victim of the crime, however, on a localised level, the investigation failed to uncover any evidence at all of the problem reaching Sweden. The

results indicate that the trafficking of young African children to Europe at the hands of fake, or illegal, agents does exist, yet it has gone largely un-noticed outside of the football world. All of those whom I interviewed within the football world knew about the problem, but only Jean-Claude Mbvoumin and Fabrice had first-hand knowledge of the subject, all others had only heard anecdotal evidence of the problem. Interviews with those who work in the health sector, charitable organisations, the police and the migration service were fruitless as no party had even heard of the problem. The investigation did though uncover several pieces of information and evidence.

By means of the interview with Mr. Mbvoumin the investigation shows that he believes the problem is growing. He says that the number of children contacting his organisation has increased from 10 per month to a case every day. According to Mr. Mbvoumin the number of destinations the victims find themselves in has also increased dramatically. He claims that in 2004 the problem was confined to a handful of European countries, namely “France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, sometimes Portugal”. Yet now he says the affected countries include some in Eastern Europe, North African and Scandinavia.

The investigation also revealed that the parents of the trafficked children have been defrauded of thousands of euros by the fake agents who claim that the money is needed to obtain passports, visas and cover travel costs. The victims who have been promised trials with European clubs are then left abandoned on the streets of Europe without the necessary paperwork to stay in the country and very little money, becoming illegal immigrants in the process. These claims were made by Mr. Mbvoumin and subsequently corroborated during an interview with Fabrice, a victim of this form of trafficking. Many victims are unwilling to return home, even if possible, due to the shame they feel of letting their families and friends down.

Fabrice’s experience of being taken from Yaoundé in Cameroon to Paris echoed the process that Mr. Mbvoumin told of. In his interview Fabrice told how was approached by a fake agent at his local academy club and promised a trial in Europe. His mother subsequently paid €5,000 for visas and travel arrangements. On arrival in Paris Fabrice was left in a hotel room by the agent who although promised to return never did. The investigation discovered that Fabrice lives illegally in the country working, as he says many of his fellow victims do, sporadically and unofficially.

During my initial research I believed that the responsibility of solving the problem at hand would lay with FIFA, hence the importance of the organisation cooperating in this investigation. However, this seemed to be, in their opinion, not to be the case. In reply to a written list of questions sent to FIFA it was discovered that trafficking is deemed by them to be outside of their jurisdiction. The investigation shows that FIFA believe it is the responsibility of “relevant national and international authorities”. Due to the time it took for FIFA to respond to my request I was left without time to contact those relevant authorities.

Results taken from an interview with BK Häcken's sporting director, Sonny Karlsson, show that it is hard for some football clubs to ascertain fully whether an agent is licensed or not.

### 3:6:5 Omitted Results

An interview with Mats Paulsson, head of Västra Götaland Police's Trafficking unit, unearthed the fact that a young female football player from Zimbabwe had been found to have been connected to a prostitution ring in Gothenburg. However, due to the weakness surrounding the facts of the incident it was deemed unworthy of addition to the story. Mr. Paulsson could not categorically state that the girl had been trafficked into Sweden, nor could he remember the team she had played for or even the exact year this took place as it was over a decade ago. Had there been more evidence it may have led to being part of the investigation.

During my interview with Gothia Cup's Dennis Andersson he told me of one case involving young players from Sierra Leone staying on in Sweden after the tournament it was before the introduction of FIFA's regulations on the transfer of minors and the circumstances and treatment of the players were wholly different to the matter I was investigating.

### 3:7 Outcomes

After taking into consideration all evidence garnered throughout the investigation the following conclusions can be drawn in reference to the project's aims.

The trafficking of young African footballers to Europe continues to be a problem. As mentioned in the results section above anti-trafficking organisation Foot Solidaire state that the problem is growing.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that once the victims of this form of trafficking reach Europe the majority are abandoned by their agent at train stations or in hotel rooms soon after arriving in the country, many without a passport or a visa. Some survive by working on the black market or turning to crime, others fall victim to sexual abuse and are coerced into prostitution.

The investigation has discovered that one organisation in particular is helping the victims of this crime. Foot Solidaire is a Paris-based non-governmental organisation founded in 2000 by former Cameroon footballer Jean-Claude Mbvoumin. The organisation was specifically created to help young African footballers who have been trafficked to Europe.

Football's governing body FIFA has taken measures to combat the issue of children under the age of 18 being transferred between two professional football clubs, but state that "Issues related to "child trafficking", like any other criminal activity, fall within the

competence of the relevant national and international authorities” and are therefore beyond the jurisdiction of FIFA.

The investigation found no evidence that the trafficking of young African footballers had reached Sweden. All parties contacted denied any knowledge of the practice taking place in this country, although during a telephone conversation with Migrationsverket (The Swedish Migration Board) it was stated that this does not mean that it is not happening. It pointed out that due to the illegal nature of the practice those applying for work permits, visas or residency would actively withhold information regarding their illegal entry to the country.

### **3:8 Literary Reflection**

Using Nils Hanson’s (2009) idea analysis formula my proposed investigation produced a result stated as ‘risky’. However, due to the importance of the subject matter and the potential it offered for a ‘good story’ I decided to proceed.

Hanson also states in the working principles for the SVT programme *Uppdrag Granskning* that credibility demands that we as journalists remain free from ties.<sup>8</sup> This investigation involved interviews of a moving and compelling nature, so much so that it was important to remain impartial throughout no matter the evidence being presented.

Even though the experiences described by Jean-Claude Mbvoumin and Fabrice were at times distressing it was necessary to attempt to ascertain the veracity of their claims in order to maintain a high level of truthfulness in the investigation. As mentioned previously this was carried out by evaluating those organisations that supported them. However, as there are no official figures for the trafficking of young African footballers and Fabrice’s story is a wholly personal experience it is impossible to say that the statements are irrefutably true.

In his book *Grävande journalistik* Hanson (2009) declares that a reporter must be wary of the temptation to make sure that the ‘right’ conclusions are drawn from the research and analysis. Again, this demands total impartiality and the personal and professional obligation to include all relevant evidence.

In order to uphold the standards of integrity within the finished article all quotes were included verbatim, with the exception of one. During his interview, whilst discussing the work of agents in Africa, Sonny Karlsson claimed:

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<sup>8</sup>

<http://www.svt.se/ug/omug/article1908005.svt/binary/Uppdrag%20gransknings%20riktlinjer%20och%20manualer2.pdf>



*“...if you’re not a FIFA agent yourself you work with somebody who is. If you’re a rich African guy who buys players for himself you use the FIFA agent to make the business for you.”*

When using this quote in the article I altered the word “make” to “do”. I justified this action so; as Karlsson is Swedish, yet speaking English, I knew that he was, in his native language, using the word *göra* which when translated into English can mean both make and do. The meaning of the sentence remained exactly the same. Lynch (2013) draws attention to the opinion of Roy Peter Clark, writing scholar at the Poynter Institute journalism school. Clark believes that altering a quote in this manner helps the reader and that “...journalists show respect for the reader by cleaning up quotes so they can be more easily read.” (p183)

The impact of an article is dependent on the journalist’s choice of dramatic structure. In contrast to the conventional inverted pyramid of general news reporting literary, or long form journalism, employs techniques traditionally associated with fiction writing. (Sims, 1984) Applegate (1996) states “The old literary form was appropriately modified in order to give emotional impact to the story.” (pxiv) and it is with reference to this that the decision was taken to begin with the experience of the victim, Fabrice. However, according to Zdovc (2008) “a chronological ordering of events does not often serve the demands of the text.” (p26) therefore it was important to begin with a ‘hook’ that would draw the reader in, in this instance a striking quote followed by a captivating scene.

Fabrice’s story forms the spine of the narrative and most importantly bookends the article. The reader is taken away from Fabrice in order to be given important background information on the subject before returning to the victim to explain how he found himself in the opening situation. This technique is employed once more before the reader is brought back to the present and the article’s conclusion.

Although there are comparisons between the journalist and scientific approach to an investigation there are also major differences regarding how the results are displayed. Both a scientist and a journalist should be wholly impartial and only interested in a true outcome of the investigation. During the research process both approaches look to produce evidence of a hypothesis or question that has been set. However, as the Investigative Journalism Manual points out, when a journalist refers to multiple sources this may mean as few as four or five, whereas a scientist would choose a far greater number of sources to test in order to deduce a pattern.

In regards to communicating the results the difference is vast. A journalist has to present their findings in a way that is considerate of their readership. The resultant article must be interesting, clear and, above all, newsworthy. A journalistic piece is angled in a way that scientific findings cannot be and, as it is produced for an audience, a news story is a form of entertainment, not scientific research.

The function of interviewing the party who is deemed to have responsibility for a problem, in this case FIFA, is to give them the opportunity to either defend, express or further their views on the case in hand. Unfortunately, as mentioned previously, FIFA believe they should not be held accountable for such issues and that individual nations, and their relevant authorities, should bear the responsibility.

### **3:9 Future Investigation**

Following this investigation it is evident that more research on the subject is needed. One aspect of the investigation that I wished to include in the final article, but was unable to find information on, was official statistics concerning the numbers of players trafficked into Europe from Africa. Unfortunately, due to the difficulty in assessing how many children have fallen victim to this fraud I was unable to find a source with such data. It is possible that such figures will be released in the future.

I was also unable to make contact with an illegal agent in order to understand that aspect of the crime. Any future investigation would benefit from the participation of such a source.

Although there was no evidence of trafficking to be found in Swedish football a new investigation may be able to explore the possibilities of this happening in the future. There are currently 29 African players in Sweden's Allsvenskan proving that there is a market for African players in Sweden.

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Sonny Karlsson – sporting director BK Häcken: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2014  
Tel: 0704-088831  
Interview at BK Häcken training facility, Gothia Park, Gothenburg.

Jean-Claude Mbvoumin - president Foot Solidaire: March 29<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> May 2014  
Tel: +336 592 56143

Patrick Mörk - football agent: April 30<sup>th</sup> 2014  
0708 740 452

*Unquoted*

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Tel: 0707 887112  
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Tel: 0705 211199  
Email: niklas.bodell@svenskfotboll.se

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Tel: 0702 924000

Confederation of African Football  
Tel: +20 238371000  
Email: info@cafonline.com

Yussif Chibsah – footballer Djurgården IF: 18<sup>th</sup> July 2004  
Tel: 0763988803

Piet Desle – press secretary to Jean-Marie Dedecker  
Email: Piet.desle@lbb.be

Godsway Donyoh – footballer Falkenbergs FF: 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014  
Tel: 0729 330608

Benjamin Fadi – footballer Malmö FF: 30<sup>th</sup> July  
Tel: 0729 476098

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Tel: 031 3450893

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Tel: 031 7478950

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Email: christer.madsen@fotball.no

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Tel: 031 424595

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Tel: 0700 938843

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Tel: 010 4856655  
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Tel: 08 6989283  
Email: cecilia.naucer@rb.se

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Tel: +44 793 9073182  
Email: manansang@kymzusmediagroup.co.uk

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Tel: 010 5653018

Marko Sarranlina – football agent: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014  
Tel: +358 503 377922

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Tel: + 221 33 8691800  
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Email: info@righttodream.com  
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### **3:11 Images**

Front cover & main story image courtesy of:

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Image of Jean-Claude Mbvoumin courtesy of:

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Image of 'Fabrice' supplied by himself

Comment image courtesy of:

[www.soccer-training-info.com/images/masia\\_group.jpg](http://www.soccer-training-info.com/images/masia_group.jpg)

### **3:12 Target Readership**

Due to the gravity of the investigation's subject matter I believe the scope of the potential audience is very broad. It is, of course, a subject that could be categorised as sporting, but in the wider context it is simply a case of human trafficking and therefore appealing to a wide-ranging readership.

The article would be published as a single investigative piece in either a daily newspaper or a football-specific magazine such as FourFourTwo, World Soccer or When Saturday Comes. Due to the style of writing publication would be more suited to a UK broadsheet newspaper, such as The Guardian or The Independent, as opposed to a tabloid. Should an offer for physical publication not be forthcoming an alternative would be web-based magazines e.g. These Football Times or Inside Futbol.

A Swedish translation of the text would be suitable for newspapers such as Aftonbladet or Expressen, but due to the inclusion of Gothenburg-based football club BK Häcken Göteborgs posten may be more suitable. Again, the article would also be appropriate for football-related magazines (Offside, FourFourTwo) or websites (fotbolldirekt.se).

### **3:13 Appendices**

#### 3:13:1 Appendix 1

##### **Foot Solidaire Email 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Hello Foot Solidaire,

My name is James Milford, a Masters Student and freelance sports journalist studying journalism at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. For my final major project I wish to further investigate the plight and exploitation of Africa's young, talented footballers and highlight CFS's on-going work in trying to help these unfortunate young boys. Would it be possible to organise a telephone interview with Mr Mbvoumin to discuss the organisation's role and efforts in helping to combat these problems and to give an update on CFS's work?

It seems in Sweden that the participation of African players in the top league (Allsvenskan) has risen somewhat dramatically in the last five years and therefore so has interest in the African game. However, I have not yet read anything in the Swedish press regarding your valuable and honourable work. With this in mind I would like to be able to focus attention on your organisation and the boys you are helping.

As I mentioned I am also a freelance journalist (I worked for CNN's World Sport show in London before moving to Sweden) so will be looking to publish the story in both Sweden and the UK, and in both Swedish and English.

I believe that your work should be highlighted regularly to remind football fans, and people in general, of the terrible circumstances in which these young players find themselves. As a passionate fan I find it extremely distressing that unscrupulous 'agents' are making money and destroying lives, all under the guise of football.

I hope that you can find time to tell me how the situation is at present and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

James Milford

Personal email: [j.milford@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:j.milford@hotmail.co.uk)

Telephone: 0046 721 958041

**Jean-Claude Mbvoumin Questions 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

1. History of the organisation and what you do?
2. What was the trigger that made you feel that you needed to create your organisation?
3. What is the general scenario of what happens to a young player when he's approached by a so-called 'agent'?
4. How old are these players?
5. What happens to these children once they are left stranded in a foreign country?
6. Are they treated/classed as illegal immigrants?
7. What impact does it have on each of the parties involved? Players, families, areas where the children are left.
8. How many children are we talk about? How often are you contacted by a player who says he has been lured/tricked?
9. Does the organisation actively go out to find these children?
10. Have things improved since you started your work in 2000?
11. How has the number of trafficked children changed from when you first began?
12. What countries are these children from and to what countries do they travel?  
Any noticeable increases recently?
13. Any evidence of the problem reaching Sweden?
14. Why are football clubs looking to take players from Africa?
15. It must cost a lot of money to help these players as they obviously have none.  
How do you manage as an organisation? How are you financed?
16. Affiliation with FIFA (2008???) How is that working out? Do you feel that you are receiving enough help from them, both financially and supportively?
17. Could FIFA and UEFA and even the clubs be doing more to combat trafficking?  
What can be done by the football authorities?
18. What more can be done by governments to combat this? French government.
19. Fake agents in Africa. What punishment do they face if caught?

20. What next for Foot Solidaire?

21. CONTACT WITH A TRAFFICKED PLAYER

### African Footballer Players in Allsvenskan 2014

Player	Birth year	Nationality	Mother Club
<b>AIK</b>			
Ebenezer Ofori	1994	Ghana	New Edubiase United FC
Ibrahim Moro	1993	Ghana	New Edubiase United FC
Ibrahim Bangura	1989	Sierra Leone	Bursaspor
Loaned Out			
Kwame Karikari	1992	Ghana	
Lalawele Atakora	1990	Togo	
<b>BK Häcken</b>			
Sula Matovu	1992	Uganda	Nalubaale FC
Nasiru Mohammed	1994	Ghana	Rainbow FC
Rene Makondele	1982	DRC Congo	Kinshasa City Star
<b>Djurgården</b>			
Mark Mayambela	1987	South Africa	Bloemfontein Celtic
Yussif Chibsah	1983	Ghana	King Faisal Babies FC
Loaned out			
Ike Fofanah	1994	Sierra Leone	
<b>Falkenberg FF</b>			
Godsway Donyoh	1994	Ghana	Right to Dream Academy
<b>Gefle</b>			
Z. Abdullai	1989	Ghana	Right to Dream Academy
<b>Halmstad</b>			
King Osei Gyan	1988	Ghana	Right to Dream Academy
<b>Helsingborg</b>			



Emmanuel Boateng	1994	Ghana	Right to Dream Academy
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David Accam	1990	Ghana	Right to Dream Academy
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### IF Brommapojkarna

NONE

### IF Elfsborg

NONE

### IFK Göteborg

Malick Mané	1998	Senegal	Sandefjord Fotball
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May Mahlangu	1989	South Africa	Alexandra United FC
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### IFK Norrköping

Alhaji Kamara	1994	Sierra Leone	Belvic United FC
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### Kalmar FF

Archford Gutu	1993	Zimbabwe	CAPS United FC Chitungwiza
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Pape Diouf	1989	Senegal	Touré Kunda FP
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### Malmö FF

Benjamin Fadi	1995	Ghana	FC Kallon
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### Mjällby AIF

Gbenga Arokoyo	1992	Nigeria	Davish Athletic FC
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Kwame Bounso	1994	Ghana	Hearts of Lions
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### Åtvidabergs FF

Mohammed Abukari	1986	Ghana	Feyenoord Academy Ghana
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Emmanuel Dogbe	1992	Ghana	Feyenoord Academy Ghana
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### Örebro

Samuel Mensah	1989	Ghana	Right to Dream Academy
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Alhassan Kamara	1993	Sierra Leone	FC Kallon
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## Club Contact List

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Sonny Karlsson - sporting director - 0704-088831

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Kommunikationschef

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Benjamin Fadi - 0729-476098

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Jens Wahlström - Press

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info@maif.se

### **Åtvidabergs FF**

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info@atvidabergsff.se

### **Örebro**

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Kent Carlzon (Sportchef) – 0702924000  
kent@ois.se

**FIFA Email 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2014**

Good morning FIFA,

Following a telephone conversation on Wednesday I was advised to send in a written request for a telephone interview.

I am a freelancer based in Gothenburg and am currently researching a piece regarding the trafficking of young African footballers. I have recently spoken to a gentleman called Jean-Claude Mbvoumin of the organisation Foot Solidaire who are working to help the victims of trafficking within football. As you may be aware FIFA has been a supporter of Foot Solidaire since 2008. Mr Mbvoumin believes that the situation involving these children has not abated in the last five years and, in fact, is of the opinion that the number of cases is increasing.

Mr Mbvoumin states that five years ago he was dealing with 10 cases a month. Now, he says, he is being contacted every day by a child requesting help. He also states that the number of countries to where these children are being trafficked is also growing. Where it was once mainly France, Belgium, Italy and Spain it is now spreading to Eastern Europe and as far north, he says, as Norway.

Would there be someone I could speak to regarding the subject so that I could ascertain FIFA's current stand and work on the protection of minors?

I am looking to find out what FIFA has done since its initial involvement with Foot Solidaire five-and-a-half years ago to further combat child trafficking within football. Obviously, the introduction of the Transfer Matching System in 2010 increased the transparency of international transfers, but this is dependent on the two parties involved being of an official and credible background. What is being done to combat the work of illegal, or fake, agents duping young players and their families to part with their life savings, or even selling the family home, in order to fund an unofficial trip abroad?

Mr Mbvoumin believes that something must be done "on the ground" in Africa in order to educate parents and players alike of the dangers of trusting someone who merely states that they can organise a trial with a major European club. It is of Mr Mbvoumin's opinion that the most important tool in the fight against trafficking is the continual flow of information to these families through "concrete", permanent resources, events and organisations on the continent. Is FIFA in the process of carrying out any such work in Africa either now or in the future?

As I mentioned it is believed that the practice is also spreading. Does FIFA keep a record of all instances of alleged and/or proven cases of football-related trafficking? And from which country these victims travel both from and to?

One further problem that Mr Mbvoumin mentions is the lack of accountability that football clubs are held to following an unsuccessful trial of a player. If a trial comes to

nothing Mr Mbvoumin states that a club has no official responsibility in regards to ensuring the safe return of the unsuccessful trialist. Does FIFA believe that both member associations and clubs *do* have such responsibilities, and if so do regulations exist in order to safeguard these rules?

Also, is it correct that FIFA no longer provides financial assistance to Foot Solidaire, and if this is the case, why so?

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards

James Milford

0046 721958041

3:13:6 Appendix 6

**Swedish Football Federation Email 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Hej Niklas,

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me.

As I mentioned I am a Masters Journalism student at Göteborgs universitet. My final piece of work is investigating the trafficking of young, African footballers to Europe by illegal agents. These children are brought to Europe, at their own cost, in order to take part in a trial for a football club. However many of these trials do either not exist, or the players are not accepted, leaving them stranded in a foreign country with no visa, passport or money. Many of these boys choose not to tell their parents that they have been tricked as these families have parted with their life savings, or even the family home, in order to pay the illegal agent's 'fees'.

There have been many, many cases in mainland Europe, specifically in France and Belgium. I am trying to ascertain if there is any evidence of trafficking taking place in Sweden. The participation of African footballers in Sweden seems to have grown over the last few years and therefore, I believe, the potential for trafficking to occur also.

If it is possible to speak to someone who may know about this issue it would be much appreciated.

Kind regards

James Milford

j.milford@hotmail.co.uk

gusmilfja@student.gu.se

0721 958041



3:13:7 Appendix 7

**Norwegian Football Federation Email 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

Hello Christer,

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me earlier. As we discussed here is the project that I am currently working on.

I am a freelance journalist and Masters student at the University of Gothenburg. For my final piece I am writing about the trafficking of young, African footballers to Europe. During my research I have spoken to a gentleman called Jean-Claude Mbvoumin from the organisation Foot Solidaire who help those affected by trafficking in football. He said that he had been told of victims of trafficking within the lower leagues of Norwegian football. He did not have the names of these specific teams, but I was hoping I could speak with someone within the NFF who deals with such issues in order to ascertain if this is true.

It would only require a short telephone conversation.

Kind regards

James Milford

3:13:8 Appendix 8

**Samuel Eto'o Interview Request 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2014**

Hello Mana,

Thanks for taking the time to speak to me this morning, it is much appreciated.

As I mentioned I am a freelancer at CNN's World Sport Show, but am contacting you in a personal capacity. I am currently researching my final project for my Masters in Journalism at Gothenburg University in Sweden. The subject that I am writing about is the trafficking of young African footballers and hope that it will be possible to carry out a short telephone interview with Samuel regarding the subject.

The work of the anti-trafficking organisation Foot Solidaire compromises a large part of my piece and I have already interviewed Jean-Claude Mbvoumin, Foot Solidaire's founder. Jean-Claude explained that Samuel has donated money to help the organisation's fight against the growing problem of the trafficking of young footballers by illegal agents. It seems that the illegal trade in underage players is spreading from what was once mainly France and other Francophone countries to as far apart as Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. Foot Solidaire is now contacted daily by children as young as 12-years-old seeking help.

I wanted to know, amongst other things, why Samuel feels that this is such an important organisation and cause to support, and how he feels the illegal trafficking of these young players affects the game in Africa. I also would like to know if Samuel has witnessed first-hand the work of illegal academies and/or agents.

If Samuel would like a list of questions beforehand I can send them over.

As to if the story will be published, it is dependent on its content, so obviously I would appreciate it if someone with a profile as important in world football as Samuel could take part.

I realise that Samuel is at a busy time right now, but was hoping that he might be able to find time during his recovery to take part in a short telephone interview.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask.

Thanks again for your help.

Kind regards

James

3:13:9 Appendix 9

**Confederation of African Football Email 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a freelance journalist and Masters student at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. For my final piece I am writing about the trafficking of young, African footballers to Europe.

Would it be possible to speak to someone within your organisation regarding the subject? I wish to learn how the situation stands at the moment and what measures are being undertaken by CAF in the fight against it. I have spoken to several players and institutions regarding the subject but would like to hear how the problem is being combatted in Africa.

It would only require a short telephone conversation.

Kind regards

James Milford

3:13:10 Appendix 10

**Right to Dream Academy Email 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Hello RtDA,

My name is James Milford, a Masters Student and freelance sports journalist studying journalism at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. For my final major project I wish to investigate the plight and exploitation of some of Africa's young, talented footballers.

One aspect of my article is the horrendous treatment of desperate, young African footballers by ruthless, illegal agents, lured into parting with their families savings, then abandoned in foreign countries without money, accommodation or visas. As a comparison I wish to highlight the work of the Right to Dream Academy and your efforts to help your students improve not only as footballers, but also as people. I know that the academy has provided several players to Sweden over the past few years, most notably to my local team Häcken (Waris Majeed and Abdel Bouraima in particular) and have secured an interview with Abdel to hear about his journey.

I am writing with the hope that it would be possible to conduct a telephone interview with Mr Vernon in order to hear about your work at the academy and the struggles that many young, African footballers have to contend with.

Unfortunately, when many people hear stories about young, African footballers immediate thoughts turn to corruption and exploitation. I hope to attempt to redress the balance and feel that organisations such as yours, and the good work done by Culture foot Solidaire, should be brought to the attention of the public as often as possible. It seems in Sweden that the participation of African players in the top league (Allsvenskan) has risen somewhat dramatically in the last five years and therefore so has interest in the African game. However, I am yet to read anything in the Swedish press regarding your valuable work, only a single online interview with Mr Vernon (fotbolltransfers.se). With this in mind I would like to be able to focus attention on your organisation and the boys you are helping.

I would very much appreciate it if Mr Vernon could spare the time take part.

Kind regards

James Milford

Personal email: [j.milford@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:j.milford@hotmail.co.uk)

Telephone: 0046 721 958041

3:13:11 Appendix 11

**Save the Children West Africa Email 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Dear Sir Madam,

My name is James Milford, a Masters Student and freelance sports journalist studying journalism at the Göteborgs universitet.

For my final major project I wish to further investigate the trafficking and exploitation of Africa's young children by fake or illegal football agents and unlicensed football academies. I am keen to find out what the situation is like in 2014 and whether progress has been made in the fight against this crime.

Would it be possible to speak with a member of your organisation regarding the issue, or if that is not possible, a member of one of your affiliate members, particularly in Ivory Coast, Ghana or Nigeria?

Any help would be most appreciated.

Kind regards

James

3:13:12 Appendix 12

**Cecelia Naclér - Rädda barnen Email 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Hej Cecilia,

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me.

As I mentioned I am a Masters Journalism student at Göteborgs universitet. My final piece of work is investigating the trafficking of young, African footballers to Europe by illegal agents. These children are brought to Europe, at their own cost, in order to take part in trials for football clubs. However many of these trials do either not exist, or the players are not accepted, leaving them stranded in a foreign country with no visa, passport or money. Many of these boys choose not to tell their parents that they have been tricked as these families have parted with their life savings, or even the family home, in order to pay the illegal agent's 'fees'. There have been many, many cases in mainland Europe, specifically in France and Belgium. The anti-trafficking organisation Foot Solidaire claims as many as 15,000 young players fall victim to such scams each year.

I was wondering if there was someone within either Rädda barnen, or Save the Children International, who would be able to help me on the subject. I am keen to find out what the situation is like in 2014 and whether progress has been made in the fight against this crime. I have been trying to contact your West Africa office on the email address [scsdakar@waf.saevthechildren.se](mailto:scsdakar@waf.saevthechildren.se), but unfortunately every mail is returned as failed. If that is not possible perhaps a member of one of your affiliate members, particularly in Ivory Coast, Ghana or Nigeria would be available?

If it is possible to speak to someone who may know about this issue it would be much appreciated.

Kind regards

James Milford

[j.milford@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:j.milford@hotmail.co.uk)

[gusmilfja@student.gu.se](mailto:gusmilfja@student.gu.se)

0721 958041

3:13:13 Appendix 13

**Heather Kerr – Save the Children Email 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Hello Heather,

My name is James Milford, a Masters student studying journalism at the University of Gothenburg. For my final project I'm looking into the trafficking of young, African boys within the game of football.

I read a piece in the Guardian from 2008 in which you commented on the situation in Ivory Coast and wanted ascertain if the problem was still apparent. I realise that you are now in Sierra Leone, but wondered if you may have a point of contact I might try in Ivory Coast, or a colleague who deals with particular issue within the organisation.

Kind regards

James Milford

**Migrationsverket Email 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

Hej Presstjänsten,

I have recently spoken to a member of your staff regarding the trafficking of young footballers to Sweden. I am a Masters Journalism student at Göteborgs universitet and am currently writing my final project on the trafficking of young, African footballers to Europe.

According to the France-based organisation Foot Solidaire, who work to combat trafficking in football, there have been cases in the lower leagues of Norway. I am now trying to ascertain if this practice has reached Sweden. I have contacted Svenska fotbollförbundet who suggested that it would be better that you contact your organisation instead.

Many of the unfortunate victims of this crime find themselves abandoned on the streets, without money or the required documents to stay in the country. In order to survive many either live a life of crime or apply for asylum within that country. Has Migrationsverket evidence, either official or otherwise, of those seeking asylum claiming that football has played a role in their being in Sweden? Or indeed has anyone be found living illegally in the country that has come here to play football?

Any reply or help would be much appreciated.

Kind regards

James Milford



3:13:15 Appendix 15

**FARR Email 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Hello Michael,

My name is James Milford, a Journalism Masters student at Göteborgs universitet. I was given your mail address by one of my lecturers, David Crouch (also of the Financial Times), who said that you may be able to help me.

For my final major project I wish to investigate the plight and exploitation of the many young African footballers who are trafficked to Europe each year. I was wondering if you have had any experience of the subject through your work or would know of any other groups or organisations that I may be able to contact.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call or email me.

Kind regards

James

0721958041

[j.milford@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:j.milford@hotmail.co.uk)

3:13:16 Appendix 16

**Interpol Email 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a freelance journalist and Masters student at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. For my final piece I am writing about the trafficking of young, African footballers to Europe.

Would it be possible to speak to someone within your organisation's trafficking department regarding the subject? I wish to learn how the situation stands at the moment and what measures are being undertaken in the fight against it. It would only require a short telephone conversation.

Kind regards

James Milford

3:13:17 Appendix 17

**Jean-Marie Dedecker Email 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Dear Mr Desle,

My name is James Milford, a Masters Student and freelance sports journalist studying journalism at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. For my final major project I wish to further investigate the plight and exploitation of Africa's young, talented footballers.

Would it be possible to undertake a short telephone interview with Mr Dedecker regarding his experience within this subject and also his opinions on how matters attempts to combat the trafficking of these players has progressed (or indeed not) since his address to the Play the Game conference in Copenhagen almost nine years ago.

I appreciate that your party will be busy organising for the forthcoming elections, but I ensure you I will not take up much of Mr. Dedecker's valuable time.

Kind regards

James Milford