**Kamara Teacher Sheet: Football Trafficking**

Thousands of African boys are said to have been tricked into coming to Europe for non-existent trials. 15,000 are travelling across Africa on the false promise that they will get trials and signed onto big European football clubs. Parents are so desperate to get their kids seen by European clubs that they will pay ‘agents’ thousands of pounds to take their child to training camps where they will be prepared to be picked up by a club.

**Why do traffickers target them?**

Traffickers target these hopeful youngsters because they are normally from deprived areas such as West Africa where there are poor conditions and families are easily convinced to send their children to academies abroad to escape poverty.

Many of these supposed agents and clubs operate in Nigeria and Ukraine and have no licences; it is difficult for parents to work out whether an agent is being truthful or not. Some of these children are just taken to European countries after the parents have paid large fees, but then abandoned on the streets without reaching any kind of club or academy. Others are taken to work for criminal gangs and for sexual exploitation.

In 2009 Fifa instituted Article 19 which seeks to protect young players from the dangers of trafficking and exploitation:

Article 19 states that no under-18 player can be transferred internationally unless:

1) the player's family is moving to the same country as his new club for non-soccer-related reasons;

2) the player is moving from one European Union nation to another and is no younger than 16; or

3) the player lives just across the border from his new club (100 kilometres or less).

However there are a number of gaps in this law and still many children are trafficked around the world today.

**How are these children exploited?**

* The money their parents have paid goes straight to the trafficker and does not benefit the child.
* Pocket money sent is also kept with the false pretence that it is needed to pay off acquired ‘debts.’
* These ‘debts’ are often non-existent and have been created by the traffickers to keep the children under their control and trapped in the academies.
* If a child is signed by a club whilst they are at the academy, the money that the club pays for that player is given to the agent with no salary going to the child/player.
* Whilst the children are promised nice accommodation and food, they are often kept in poor and dirty conditions with no access to education or healthcare.
* The children are made to train for long hours every day, with little rest which increases the likelihood of injury early on and puts the children at risk.