

## QATAR AIRWAYS AND ASPIRE ACADEMY PARTNER TO TURN FOOTBALL DREAMS INTO REALITY FOR YOUNG BOYS FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN AFRICA

**Players selected will form Qatar Airways & Aspire Academy – Football Dreams Africa team and will play against FC Barcelona’s youth team  
Final assessment included a match against Spain’s RCD Espanyol’s youth team in Senegal**

**More than 400,000 players, 650 football fields and 4,000 volunteers participated in this year's selection process**

**16 Feb 2015**

**DOHA, Qatar** – As the whistle blows indicating the end of the football match, 35 young boys run and jump, full of energy and adrenaline, celebrating not just their stellar performance on the pitch, but also, being one step closer to turning their dreams into reality. This year, Qatar Airways is proud to have partnered with Aspire Academy’s Aspire Football Dreams programme, and were on hand to welcome the youngsters as they arrived at Aspire Academy in Senegal for their final assessment in hopes of getting one step closer to a career in professional football.

Aspire Football Dreams coaches, staff and more than 4,000 volunteers, assessed 400,000 13-year-old football players, at approximately 650 football fields, in 14 countries over the last year. Those selected to enter the Academy this year, will form the Qatar Airways & Aspire Academy – Football Dreams Africa team, and will be flown to Barcelona to play against FC Barcelona’s youth team, courtesy of the airline.

Launched in 2007, Aspire Football Dreams provides young football players from developing countries with the opportunity to reach the heights of international football through training and development at their Academy located in Senegal. Each year, the programme selects up to 20 13-year-old boys who go through a rigorous assessment process in the hopes of being selected to attend the Academy where they train, compete, study and learn to manage their lives and careers successfully, with the goal of one day playing for a professional club or their respective national teams. Having already tested two million football players since the beginning of the programme eight years ago, Aspire Football Dreams is the largest-ever talent search in football.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: “Qatar Airways is extremely proud to be partnering with Aspire Football Dreams in Africa, a programme that not only encourages sport, which is in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030, but that also provides a life-changing opportunity for youth that are willing to work hard to nurture and develop their natural talents. We are pleased to be able to

fly the Qatar Airways & Aspire Academy – Football Dreams Africa team to Barcelona to participate in a friendly match between the FC Barcelona youth team, and wish both teams the best of luck.”

“The game in Barcelona is going to be a great experience for these youngsters, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We are delighted and proud that Qatar Airways partners up with us in this unique initiative. Giving young people in Africa the chance to fulfill their potential and pursue their dream of playing football on the world stage is an important objective for ASPIRE. They will grow as individuals through this special project,” said Ivan Bravo, Director General of Aspire Academy, on the upcoming game in Barcelona.

Results of the Aspire Football Dreams programme have already been made evident with a number of graduating students being signed to professional teams in Europe, including Diawandou Diagne, who signed with FC Barcelona B team this past July.

Qatar Airways is also offering fans a chance to fly to Barcelona to watch the friendly match between the Qatar Airways & Aspire Academy – Football Dreams Africa team and FC Barcelona youth team. Fans can support this project by subscribing at <http://www.qatarairways.com/footballdreamsafrica> or watch <http://youtu.be/ICVwfmY1wSA> for more information.

### **Images:**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/qatarairways/sets/72157648524009143/>

### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **About Qatar Airways:**

Qatar Airways celebrated its one year anniversary, in October 2014, of joining the oneworld global alliance. Qatar Airways was the first Gulf carrier to join this global airline alliance, enabling its passengers to benefit from almost 1,000 airports in more than 150 countries, with 14,250 daily departures. The award-winning oneworld alliance was named the World’s Best Airline Alliance 2014 by Skytrax for the second year running. At the 2014 Farnborough Air Show, the airline placed an order for 100 Boeing 777X aircraft, taking Qatar Airways’ orders to more than 340 aircraft with a value of US \$70 billion. For more information, visit our homepage [www.qatarairways.com](http://www.qatarairways.com) or our sites on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, and YouTube.

For Qatar Airways corporate images, please click here:

<http://www.qatarairways.com/corporateimages>

#### **For further information contact:**

Website: [www.qatarairways.com](http://www.qatarairways.com)

**About Aspire Academy:**

Since opening its doors in 2004, Aspire Academy for Sports Excellence has become one of the foremost national sports academies in the world. Working as part of the Aspire Zone Foundation - an international sport destination - Aspire Academy is at the heart of a sporting revolution currently taking place in Qatar and around the region. The Academy is conceiving, promoting and implementing game-changing excellence in sports training and elite athlete development that is enabling an entire generation of talented, disciplined and committed individuals, both Qataris and internationals to pursue their sports dreams. Together with the other members of the Aspire Zone Foundation (Aspire Logistics and ASPETAR Qatar Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Hospital), the Aspire Academy is developing sports champions, promoting healthy lifestyles and galvanizing the sports economy of today, and the future.

[www.aspire.qa](http://www.aspire.qa)