

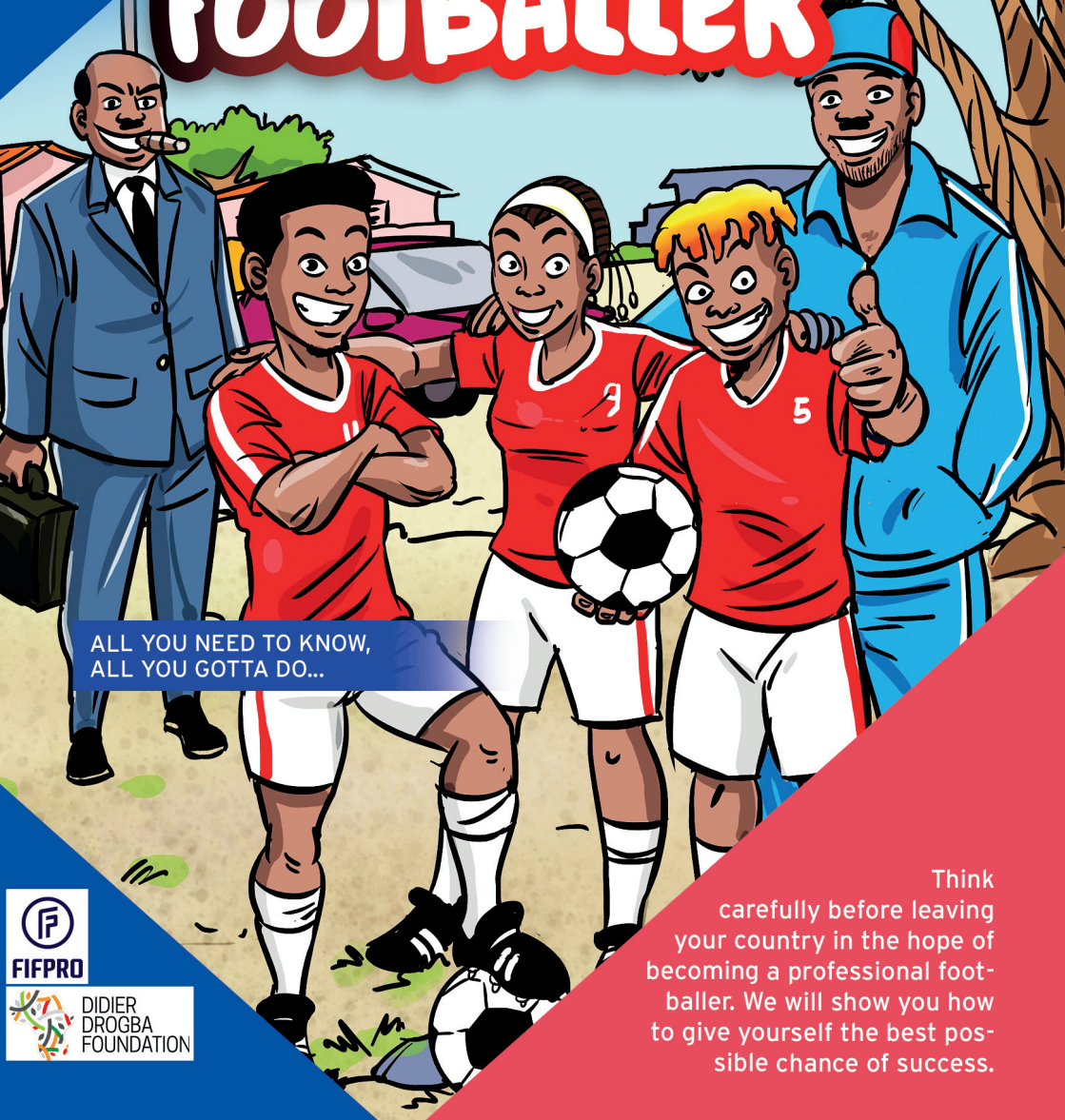


International  
Labour  
Organization

PRACTICAL GUIDE  
AND COMIC STRIP

Leaving your country to become a

# Professional FOOTBALLER



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW,  
ALL YOU GOTTA DO...

Think  
carefully before leaving  
your country in the hope of  
becoming a professional foot-  
baller. We will show you how  
to give yourself the best pos-  
sible chance of success.



DIDIER  
DROGBA  
FOUNDATION

**Copyright © International Labour Organization 2022**

**First edition 2022**

This work is published in open access under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en>). Users are authorised to reuse, share or adapt the original publication, or to use it to create a new product, according to the terms of this licence. It must be clearly stated that the ILO is the owner of the original work. Users are not authorised to reproduce the ILO and FIFPRO logo in the works they produce.

Citations: This work must be cited as follows: Quitter son pays pour devenir foot-balleur professionnel: Tout ce que tu dois savoir, tout ce que tu dois faire, Abidjan: Bureau international du Travail, 2022.

Translations: If this work is translated, the following disclaimer must appear in it, in addition to a reference to the source of the original work: This translation was not produced by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and must not be regarded as an official ILO translation. The ILO declines all responsibility for the content or accuracy of this translation.

Adaptations: If this work is adapted, the following disclaimer must appear in it, in addition to a reference to the source of the original work: This work is an adaptation of an original publication of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ideas and opinions expressed in this adaptation are solely those of its author or authors and in no case those of the ILO.

Any question concerning rights and licences should be sent by post to Publications (Droits et licences), CH-1211 Genève 22, Suisse, or by email to [rights@ilo.org](mailto:rights@ilo.org).

The designations used in ILO publications, which are in accordance with United Nations practice, and the presentation of the data that appear in them do not imply any stance on the part of the ILO with regard to the legal status of any particular country, area or territory, or of its authorities, nor with regard to the delineation of its borders.

The opinions expressed in the signed articles, studies and other texts are those of their authors, and their publication does not signify that the ILO subscribes to them.

The fact that any particular company or commercial product or process is or is not mentioned does not imply any endorsement or unfavourable assessment on the part of the ILO.

For all information on ILO publications and digital products, please visit our website [www.ilo.org/publns](http://www.ilo.org/publns).

**Printed in Côte d'Ivoire**

**ISBN : 9789220376874 (printed), 9789220376881 (online PDF)**



# *A message from* **Didier DROGBA**

---

Are you really ready to try your hand abroad? Have you got everything planned? Have you considered all the consequences of this departure, this new life?

Africa is proud of its world-class footballers. Those of yesterday, of course (Magdy Abdelghani, Kalusha Bwalya, Didier Drogba, Michael Essien, Samuel Eto'o, Frédéric Kanouté, Salif Keïta, Geremi Njitap, Abedi Pele, George Weah, etc.), as well as those of today: Kalidou Koulibaly, Sadio Mané, Riyad Mahrez, Mohamed Salah, Karim Konaté, etc.

Not forgetting the emergence of women's football, with players like Asisat Oshoala et Raissa Feudjio.

The list goes on and on, and reflects the talent and the achievements of the continent's footballers, whose success is an inspiration to many young Africans.

Unfortunately, for every great success story there are many migrant players who see their dreams shattered, because they do not manage to join a professional club and have to abandon high-level sport.

As Samuel Eto'o put it: "We're not examples, we're exceptions!"

Those young people can find themselves facing great difficulties. Being alone in a foreign country, with no family and no network of acquaintances, they are totally vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

If their project abroad is not successful, they may find themselves with no income, no way of supporting themselves, no social security and no legal status. Before leaving your country, have you prepared your project properly and foreseen the possible risks and challenges? This brochure gives you practical advice to assess whether you are well prepared to move far away from home and become a professional footballer.

---

*Didier Drogba*

# GEREMIE

## Njitap

President of FIFPRO Africa



In view of the action carried out here by his foundation, with which FIFPRO Africa associates itself all the more since it has been acting since its creation in 2007 to protect the footballers of our continent, especially young players, by relentlessly denouncing the trafficking - for that is what it is! - that they have been suffering, it is no surprise, after all, that Didier Drogba has been our honorary president since 2009.

For a footballer, moving to another country, under the best conditions, obviously, can be a sign of progress in both sporting and financial terms. But that is just the tip of the iceberg, since only a few are chosen. This is the case in Africa, as it is elsewhere. In Africa, where Asia is now presented as the new promised land by those who trade in the hopes and dreams of our young sisters and brothers.

Like us, the former Ivorian international is perfectly well aware of this. Like us, he encourages aspiring exiles to take the most basic precautions. Like us, he seeks to alert them, to educate them - including their parents - to give all of them the means to resist temptation, to avoid the traps.

Regarding our mission in aid of players, we are too often confronted, and not only in FIFPRO Africa, with the despair of those who have been tricked and are in distress, here or there... And we help them to recover their freedom, their dignity.

It is to limit this rampant migration and the devastation it causes, while taking account of all that population who dream of making football their career - even though taking it up professionally is unpredictable - that Didier agrees with us

once again regarding the need to educate our footballers at the same time to make them accomplished women and men, aware and responsible citizens, so as to open the doors to an untroubled future for them, whatever their level of sporting success.

With the exception of "top players", who have always delighted European clubs, mainly because their economic power remains unrivalled, we are entitled to think that all the others would choose to pursue their careers in their own countries if they were offered the conditions for a better life - and not only in material terms, moreover: if they were allowed to live their dream to the full, if their status were recognised throughout our continent, if we focused on educating them, training them.

In that case, yes, they would not take the path of an exile that often leads nowhere. We are firmly convinced of this!

Within FIFPRO Africa, with the active support of CAF and the help of our partners, particularly the ILO and the IOM, this is the future that we want to offer to African footballers, because it is the only way to ensure progress, success and social justice and because it will lead our continent to lasting achievement worthy of our passion for football.

*Geremie Njitap*

# FRÉDÉRIC

## Lapeyre

**Director of the International Labour Organization Country Office for Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Togo.**



### ■ WHY THIS PUBLICATION EXISTS

Sport is regarded by hundreds of millions of people who practise it around the world as an important form of recreation, a passion and a way of promoting human health and wellbeing, but also peace and social cohesion.

Since the mid-twentieth century, professional sport has become a major industry generating billions of dollars and providing jobs for millions of people directly or indirectly linked to this sector.

For many young people around the world, particularly from low-income families, professional sport is a great opportunity for economic and social advancement. There are numerous role models, but few are chosen. Many, despite all their efforts, will not fulfil their dream because of lack of opportunity, strong competition or injury. This quest for success to turn a passion into a professional activity leads them to want to leave their country in the hope of becoming professional footballers abroad. This choice must be carefully considered and it is important to have all the necessary information before making it so as to avoid the crooks and the hazards that can swiftly turn a dream into a drama.

This publication addresses the specific question of employment and working conditions for young footballers who wish to practise their sport professionally and are planning to do so by migrating to a club abroad.

As in any other line of work, professional players' contracts lay down conditions of employment between athletes and their employers to ensure adequate protections,

compensation and termination rules.

The parties normally involved in negotiating sports contracts may include the player, their agent or players' association, the club and its federation. However, as FIFPRO has shown, too many players are still confronted with contractual problems and some of them do not have a written contract with their club, with adverse consequences, particularly for their social security, since it can deprive them of medical care coverage and sickness and injury benefits.

Living your dream also means defending your rights. That is why the International Labour Organization, together with FIFPRO and the Didier Drogba Foundation, has mobilised to promote decent employment for young professional footballers.

Read all the following advice carefully and have fun reading the comic strip, which presents situations you may be familiar with. And above all, talk about it to those around you!

My thanks to my colleagues in the ILO Sectoral Policy Department, Labour Migration Branch and Regional Office for Africa, without whom this publication would not have been possible.

*Frédéric Lapeyre*

# DO YOU HAVE TO LEAVE

## To become a professional footballer?

The first thing you need to know is that it is perfectly possible to continue to progress and to be known and recognised if you pursue the start of your career in your national league. You will then have more chance of attracting or even being recruited by a club abroad.

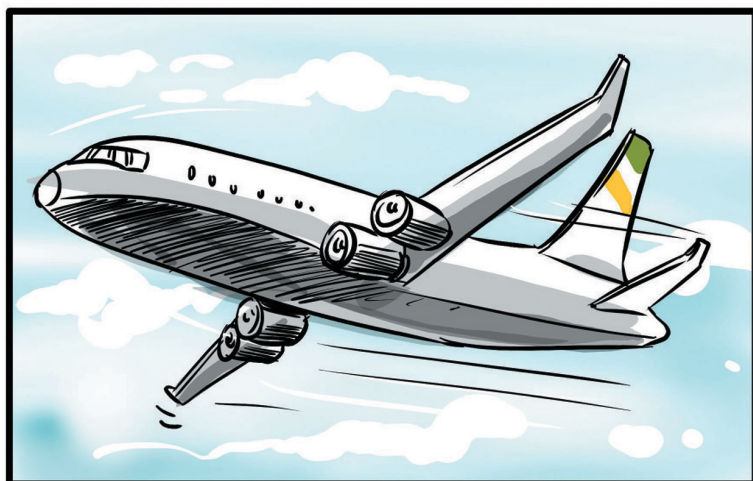
But if you have made up your mind and think you have a chance of becoming a professional footballer abroad, then follow these suggestions.

First of all, consult your coach and discuss your project with your club officials and with former professional players.

Listen to those who have acquired experience abroad or have considered doing so.

They will be able to guide you and help you make the right choices. Leaving your country may not always be the best option.

---



# BEWARE



## of fake agents

Not all those who present themselves as agents really are. They say they want to help you, they encourage your dreams, and they don't hesitate to lie, because they are actually trying to steal your money.

Your federation, and players' organisations such as the International Federation of Professional Footballers, FIFPRO, can help you to tell the difference between a real agent and a fake.

Just because someone wants to be an agent doesn't mean that they are. But do you know what an agent is?

They should not be confused with scouts, who work for a club and look for the best players for their employer, including the youngest ones.

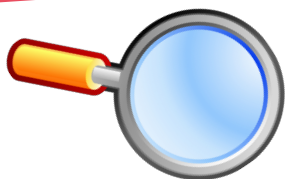
They should also not be confused with coaches or sporting directors, who are also employed by their club.

Agents, also known as representatives or intermediaries, are people entrusted with the business affairs and interests of an individual, a group or a country, on whose behalf they act.



# HOW

## to identify fake agents!



According to FIFPRO, here are certain signs that enable you to identify a fake agent ...

---

### ■ THEY ASK YOU FOR MONEY UP FRONT

Some agents ask for money to organise a trial with a club. If you are invited to try out or sign a contract, the club should, as a rule, cover all the expenses. Never pay an agent before you have signed with a club.

### ■ THEY DO NOT OFFER YOU A WRITTEN CONTRACT

Fake agents don't want to have a written and signed contract with those they are trying to deceive. And if you are offered a written agreement, do not sign it without reading it carefully and taking legal advice. Your club, the federation or your national players' union will be able to guide you on this.

### ■ YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THEM IN PERSON

Be especially wary if an agent doesn't want to meet you face to face. Fake agents prefer to seek and find their victims through social media. It is very unlikely that you will receive an invitation for a trial or a genuine contract through social media. Only work with an agent you have seen with your own eyes and

spoken to. Check them out with your club, the federation or your national players' union to make sure they are trustworthy.

### ■ THEIR OFFERS ARE TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

It is very unlikely that the best clubs will offer contracts or invitations for a trial to players who have never played professionally. If an agent shows you letters with logos of famous clubs or selfies with stars, you should check whether the agent is registered with the federation. Check whether the club that the agent says is interested knows you and knows that you are coming for a trial or to sign a contract, or ask whether the club knows the agent.

**See FIFPro: Fake agents**

**[www.fifpro.org](http://www.fifpro.org)**

---



# IF IN THE END

## you decide to leave...

If you decide to join a football academy or a club abroad, make sure you've thought carefully about the following points ...

Are you old enough to become a professional footballer abroad? According to FIFA rules, neither academies nor clubs can recruit an international player that has not reached the age of 18. There are exceptions for players who already live in the country where the club is located, or if the parents are going to accompany the player for reasons not connected with football. You must be very careful with private academies that do not observe these rules.

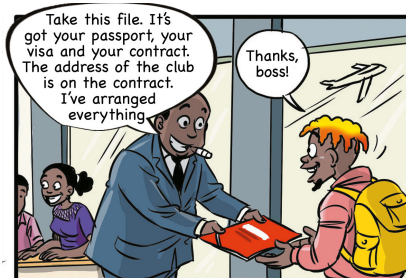
Do you have the necessary documents: passport, identity card, visa, work permit? You should never leave your country in an irregular manner, as this can get you into big trouble (arrest, imprisonment / detention, deportation, abuse, exploitation, forced labour, etc.) and cause you to lose any chance of joining a professional club abroad.

Before signing a contract, it is imperative that you seek the guidance and opinion of a legal adviser or a representative of your national players' union.

Remember that the contract should clearly indicate:

- Your name
- The name of your employer
- The address of the club or academy

- Your salary
- Your social security rights (healthcare, sickness, unemployment, pension, occupational accident, invalidity, maternity, etc.)
- Working and training hours, as well as training location
- How overtime is calculated
- Holiday and weekly rest entitlement
- Expenses and deductions, for example for accommodation
- Your duties to your club
- How and for what reasons your employment contract can be terminated
- What recourse you have in the event of disputes and which jurisdiction you can use.



# OTHER

## questions to ask yourself



Have you made enquiries with the academy or club about what happens if you are injured? Are your medical expenses covered? Are you entitled to proper social security (invalidity, occupational accident, etc.)? Are you insured by the academy or the club for accident, injury or illness? Is there a personal insurance scheme in the country that covers the risks associated with practising professional sport? If you are a woman player, what happens if you are pregnant?

Have you got a repatriation plan? Sometimes life as a footballer abroad is difficult, especially when you are isolated in a country you don't know and where you don't know anyone. Have you asked the academy or club what would happen

if you decided to terminate your contract or if the club terminated it?

As soon as you arrive in the country, it is essential to :

- Contact and register with your own country's embassy or consulate to inform them that you are living in the country. Embassies, and more particularly consulates, perform a role as protectors and defenders of their nationals and the latter's property, whether they are resident or just visiting the host country. The consulate therefore provides a service of administrative assistance to its nationals. These contacts could be useful if you encounter problems during your stay.
- Notify your family of your address and phone number.
- Take out medical insurance, covering the risks associated with playing professional sport, if it is not offered by the academy or club.
- Join the country's footballers' union or association, or consult FIFPRO.

---

Never leave your passport with an employer or an agent or with anyone else. Don't forget to make a photocopy of your passport, residence permit, work permit and useful numbers and keep the originals in a safe place.

It is imperative that you ask for a copy of your employment contract after signing it and that you keep it safe. It is even advisable to send it to your family or to your national players' union.

If you have a problem, you can contact :

- The embassy or consulate of your country
- The footballers' union or sports association of your country or the country where you are now playing, or FIFPRO.

You should know that in most countries every foreign employee has the same human rights as the citizens of the country. Even if you are in an irregular situation, you are protected by

employment law when you are a professional. This includes the following rights:

- The right to keep your papers (passport, residence permit, work permit, contract)
- Paid holidays and rest periods
- To be paid at least every month
- To leave the training site
- To be paid for overtime
- A period of paid sickness/accident leave/maternity/paternity leave
- To play football in safe conditions (respect for the rules of the game and protection against Covid-19 and other health risks, discrimination, harassment, abuse, etc.)
- Social security coverage.



# « WHAT

## can I do if I don't leave? »



Have you thought about other life paths, still in the world of sport and football?

Sport is your passion and becoming a professional footballer is your dream. But before going abroad, you must realise that becoming a professional footballer is limited to a small number of people, whereas those aspiring to do so are very numerous all over the world.

Nowadays, clubs have the means to detect young talent, whether playing in Africa or elsewhere, and few players escape their network.

If it is not possible, in the end, for you to become a professional footballer, you can still live your passion for sport and football through other jobs directly related to it. You can have a great career in sport without becoming a professional footballer. Think carefully before you leave school, training or your country to play football.

It's always better to have an education under your belt and a steady job than to bet everything on a risky project that is not under your control.

Here are some professions related to sport :

- Maintenance and management of sports facilities
- Sports coach
- Instructor or guide in sports tourism
- Sports journalist or announcer
- Jobs in sports business
- Sports medicine and physiotherapy
- Physical and sports education teacher

Ask your club, federation, school or youth employment agency about existing vocational training and support programmes so that you can develop your skills and ensure your employability in a profession you feel passionate about.

# FIFPRO

## Africa

Like the other continental divisions of FIFPRO, the International Federation of Professional Footballers, which now includes some 70 member unions and associations worldwide, FIFPRO Africa was created in 2007, and its mission, like that of its parent body, is to work for the benefit of professional players through a constructive dialogue with all the stakeholders (CAF, federations, leagues, clubs), by advocating a fairer kind of football, based on respecting the rules, contracts and human beings to achieve untroubled and successful careers, by making diversity and inclusion the foundations of a lasting change for greater social justice, encouraging access to education and training, enhancing the image of players and their commitment to the benefit of society.

Rejecting from the outset all fanaticism and condemning all forms of exclusion, FIFPRO Africa is non-political, but engaged on a daily basis through its twelve member associations and unions (1) and thanks to its relations with some ten other national players' associations throughout the continent.

Its president since 2017 has been Gernie Njitap, from Cameroon, who, like many other African top players, past and present, has decided to place himself at the service of the continent's footballers and, through them, at the service of African professional football, which, despite economic difficulties, the culpable deviations of some and the critical lack of infrastructure, continues, in spite of everything, to make progress...



# FIFPRO

Contacts  
FIFPRO Afrique - [info@fifpro.org](mailto:info@fifpro.org)  
[@FIFProAfrica](https://twitter.com/FIFProAfrica)

(1) **Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, DR Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe.**

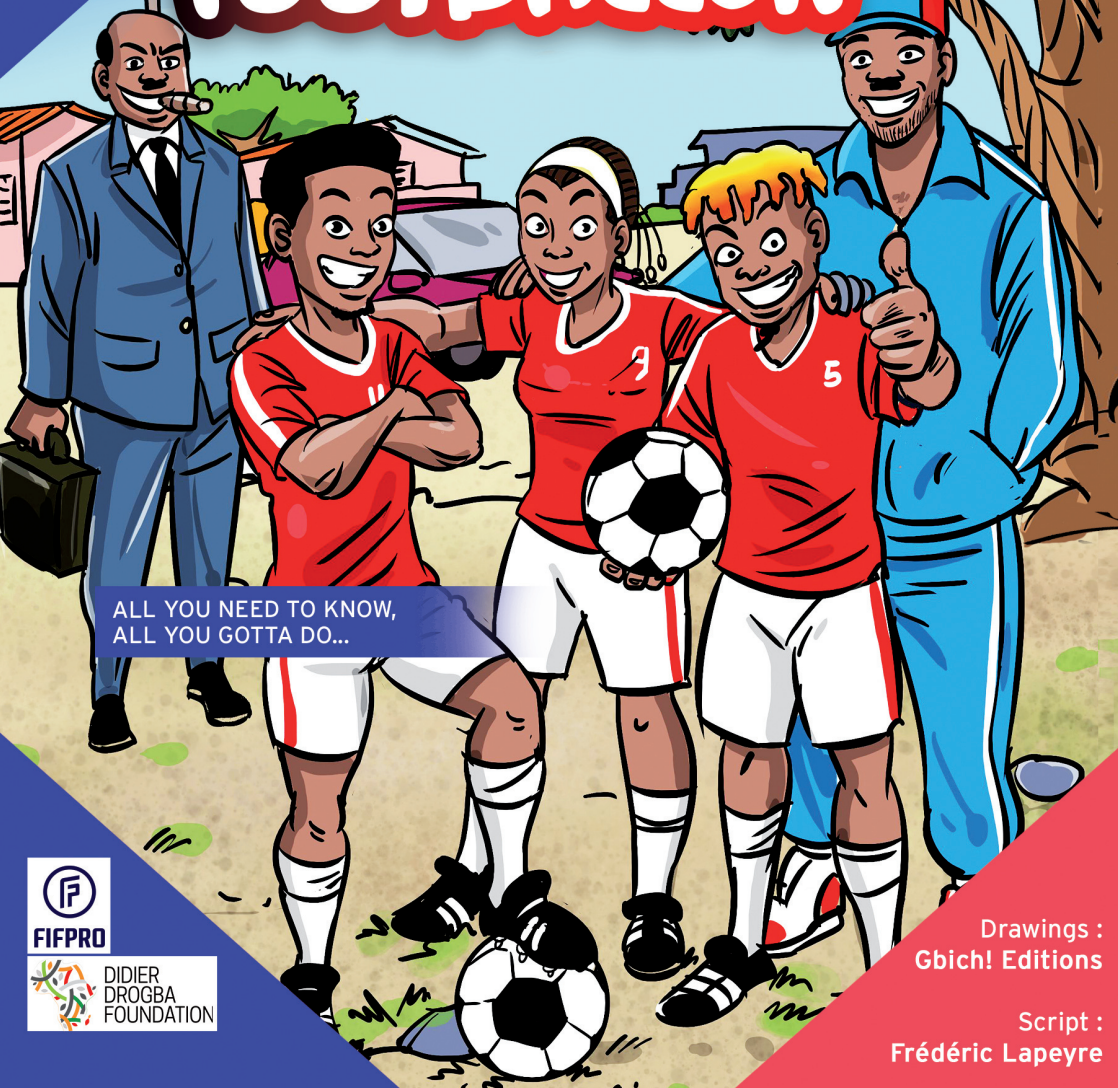


International  
Labour  
Organization

COMIC STRIP

Leaving your country to become a

# Professional FOOTBALLER



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW,  
ALL YOU GOTTA DO...



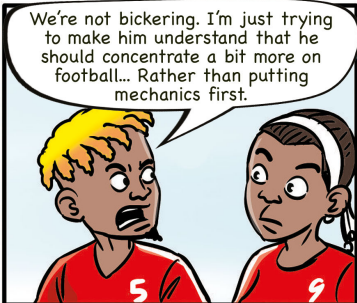
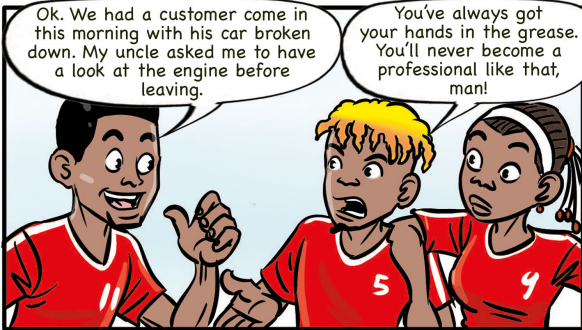
FIFPRO

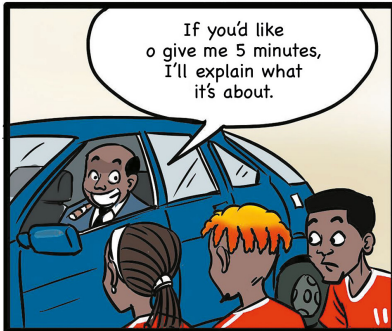
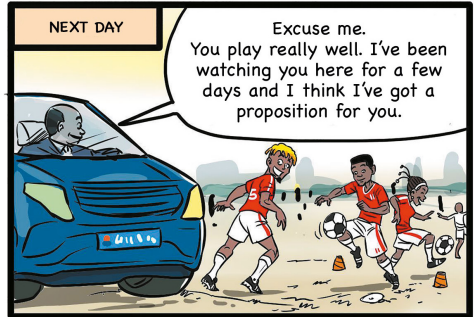


DIDIER  
DROGBA  
FOUNDATION

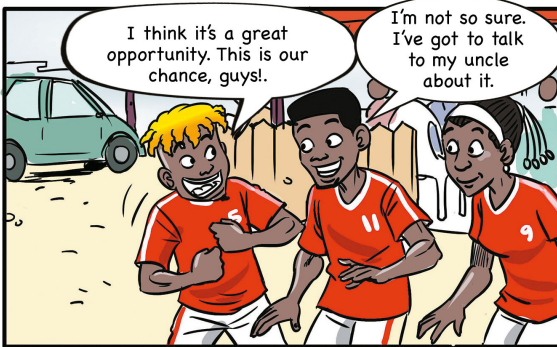
Drawings :  
Gbich! Editions

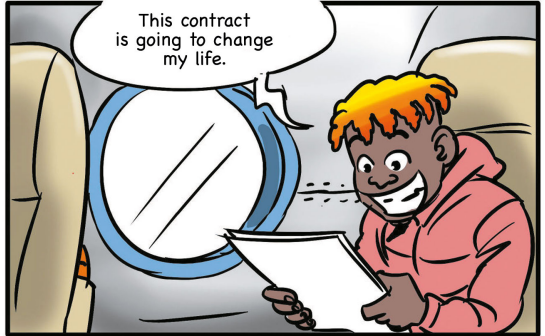
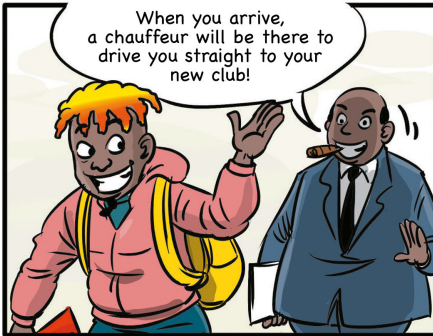
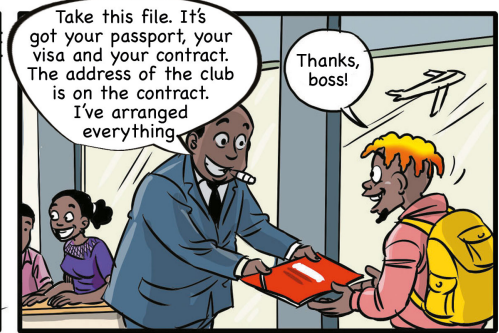
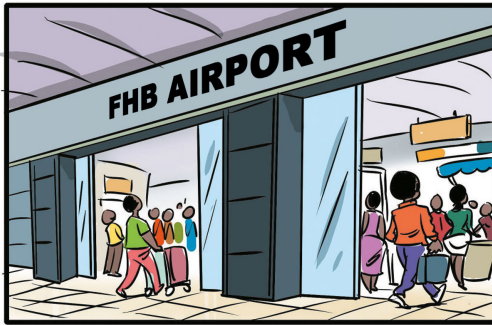
Script :  
Frédéric Lapeyre

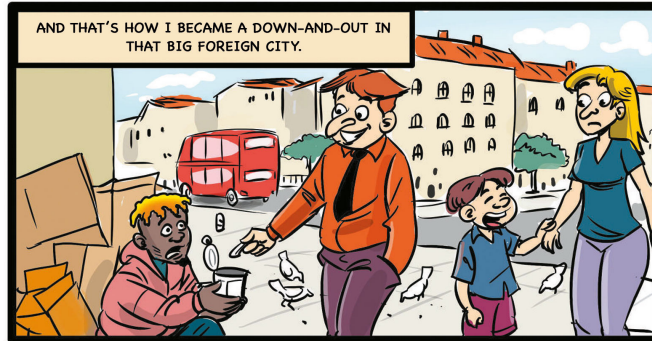


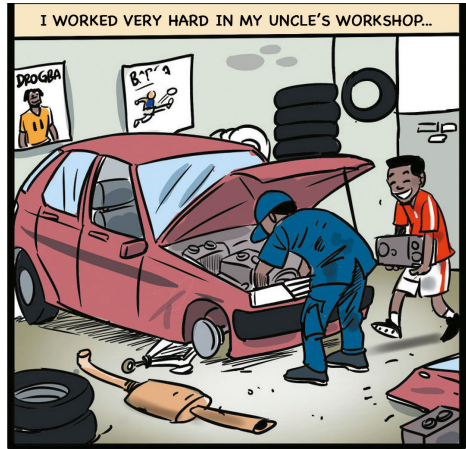












AND THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED...



... Yes, he's the best player in my team.



I'm the president of a big foreign club and we want to sign him for our youth team.



We did it!!! You're going to play for a big club next year!!! You see, you should always trust your coach!



Uncle!!! Uncle!!! I've just signed to become a professional abroad!



My boy... I knew this day would come. You've worked so hard! I'm proud of you! Sniff! Sniff!

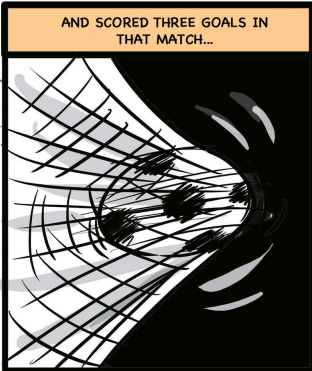
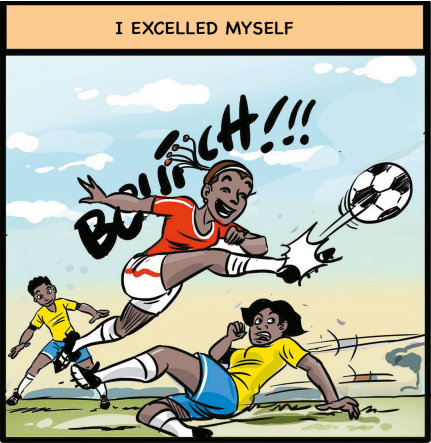


Yeah! You've been lucky. In fact... you deserve it! You worked hard to achieve this result.

Yes. He never gave up. He always believed in himself and he always listened to others!



And what about you?... How did things go then?





**TWO MONTHS LATER, I RECEIVED AN EMAIL TELLING ME THAT I'D BEEN ACCEPTED FOR THE NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR AT A PRESTIGIOUS UNIVERSITY!**













International  
Labour  
Organization



DIDIER  
DROGBA  
FOUNDATION



FIFPRO | FOOTBALL  
PLAYERS  
WORLDWIDE |

The Didier Drogba Foundation was created in 2007 on the initiative of its president, Didier Drogba. Its general objective is to support local, sub-regional and international economic development initiatives with the aim of helping to improve the living conditions of populations in general, but more specifically of grassroots populations suffering disadvantage and/or discrimination. [www.didierdrogbafoundation.org](http://www.didierdrogbafoundation.org)

The International Federation of Professional Footballers, FIFPRO, is the only recognised organisation defending the rights and interests of professional footballers worldwide. It comprises more than 70 member countries, including 11 in Africa, and has continental divisions. Since 2017 the president of FIFPRO Africa has been Geremie Njitap, from Cameroon. Didier Drogba, for his part, has been honorary president since 2009. [www.fifpro.org](http://www.fifpro.org)

The International Labour Organization, the only "tripartite" UN agency, brings together government, employer and worker representatives to establish international standards, formulate policies and design programmes aimed at promoting decent work for all the men and women in the world. Among its objectives, the ILO supports the fight against exploitation of young people in migration and in the world of sport. [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

