

PRESS RELEASE: 21st October 2015

Sport Against Racism Ireland Initiative ‘Hijabs and Hat-Tricks’ Wins International Sports Award

SARI coach and Hijab and Hat-tricker Fadhila Hajji (18) from Tallaght in Dublin collects the prize for Sport Against Racism Ireland ‘Hijabs and Hat Tricks’ from Andy Sellins at the Beyond Sports 2015 awards held in London last night October 20th. Hijabs and Hat-Tricks, which won the prize for Best New Project at the prestigious awards, aims to use football as a platform to ease the path for girls of Muslim faith into Irish society. The awards held in London, mark the world’s most inspiring and impactful sport for social change organisations. 39 projects were shortlisted for the seventh annual Beyond Sport Awards representing 23 sports from over 60 countries.

Hijabs and Hat tricks was set up in 2014 following the lifting of the Fifa ban on hijabs in football, which meant women were now able to compete in international football wearing their traditional headgear. SARI seized the opportunity and organised the Hijabs and Hat Tricks initiative which encourages young Muslim women to play football and to further intercultural dialogue. The emerging team called itself ‘Diverse City’.

SARI Coach and Hijab and Hat-Tricker Fadhila Hajji who collected the award on behalf of SARI said “ This is a huge moment for Hijabs and Hat –Tricks and I know everyone on Diverse City owns a little piece of this award. So do all the people who have offered so much support and positivity. We are determined to take this initiative even further and show people how brilliant sport is at breaking down boundaries.”

SARI Director and former Ireland Football Manager Brian Kerr said “ The players and coaches in Hijabs and Hat- Tricks are an

absolute inspiration to us all and a credit to Ireland. SARI is incredibly proud of their achievements and I have absolutely no doubt they will keep going on inspiring us all. This is a talented group of young footballers who have seen an opportunity to effect real social change, challenge stereotypes and bring people together. We couldn't be prouder of Diverse City for all that they have achieved."

Ms. Hajji and her brother and Diverse City FC Coach are part of the SARI team travelling around the Republic to deliver anti-discrimination football training sessions to children in their schools and clubs. The programme of training is part of FARE Football Weeks, co-ordinated by SARI which is bringing together professional and amateur footballers and football fans on pitches up and down Ireland to celebrate diversity and promote the social inclusion of marginalised groups.

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