

## Dawson visits Japeri Project

R&A Chief Executive Peter Dawson has made his first visit to the ground-breaking Japeri project in Rio de Janeiro.

The R&A-supported community golf programme, founded in 2002, uses the sport and its values to improve the lives of youngsters in one of the city's poorest areas.

Constructed on public land that was earmarked for housing development, Japeri golf course is now home to more than 100 young golfers who attend twice-weekly lessons taken by four R&A-funded coaches.



The project also aims to make a social difference to the children of Japeri. Compulsory attendance at school is a basic requirement of the programme meaning that many children's academic prospects have been vastly improved. In exchange for this commitment both on and off the golf course, each child receives a basic food package every month - enough to keep a family going for a couple of weeks.

However, the building of a new road has recently taken out three of the course's nine holes. The programme, which has already produced golfers who have gone onto compete at international level, is continuing on a restricted six-hole layout.

Speaking during his visit, a hugely impressed Dawson promised The R&A's continued support for the programme.

"What I have seen here is an example of the positive influence golf can have on young people," he said.

"The Japeri project has proved to be a success from the very beginning and we can see how lives have improved as a direct result. Not only do the youngsters learn golf's values of integrity, honesty and hard work but their involvement is also helping their families.

"The course may have suffered a setback with the loss of some of its land but The R&A is committed to continuing its support of the project to ensure that the good work here is unaffected."

The visit by Dawson, who was in Brazil to inspect the site for the 2016 Olympic course in his role as President of the International Golf Federation (IGF), cemented links between The R&A and the project that date back to its very inception.

Construction of the course was supported with a £95,000 award from The R&A and its continued support has seen the project receive in excess of £200,000 during the first 10 years of its existence.

Vicky Whyte, one of the driving forces behind the project, said: "It was a great honour for us to receive Peter Dawson at Japeri Golf and to be able to show our progress with the project.

"We still have hope that the Governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro will come through with his promise to rebuild our three lost holes, but whatever happens our project will continue.

"As Peter saw, we are helping many families improve their lives and we are showing the kids that they are allowed to have hopes and dreams, through golf."

The success of the Japeri project in such a short amount of time has inspired R&A investment in golf development in other parts of South America. This includes funding individual golf associations and projects as well as the annual Copa los Andes, the continent's premier amateur team championship which takes place at Rio de Janeiro's Gavea course next month.