**TEMPLATE FOR REPORTING ON RECENT INITIATIVES ON SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE**

***“Getting into the game” and “Playing the game”: UNICEF-led research on Sport for Development (S4D)***

*Provide a summary of the initiative, including a brief overview, proposed/actual outcomes and an assessment of any lessons learned and the way forward.*

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| **Please provide more details on each initiative including items below:** |
| **Objective(s):** | *Please indicate which, if any, of the following fall among the main objectives of the initiative:* |
| * Ensuring no one is left behind (advancing empowerment, inclusiveness and equality through sport)
 | * Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity
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| * Leveraging sports events to promote action to combat climate change, advance peace and/or sustainable development
 | * Conflict prevention/peace building
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| * **Research development, data collection and/or data dissemination**
 | * Safely harnessing sport for sustainable development, peace and wellbeing in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the use of technology
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| * Integrating sport for sustainable development and peace in COVID-19 recovery and/or 2030 Agenda strategies, programmes and policies
 | * Safeguarding sport from corruption and crime
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| * Strengthened global framework on sport for development and peace
 | * Other (please specify)
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| **Implementation mechanisms:** | ***What are the means/processes of implementation of the initiative?*** Together with the Barça Foundation, UNICEF is leading research initiatives on Sport for Development (S4D): from gathering global evidence on the impacts these programmes can have on children, to creating a practical, evidence-informed S4D framework and toolkit that practitioners can utilize.***What are the main deliverables/activities involved?**** The first global literature review on S4D “[Getting into the Game](https://www.unicef-irc.org/getting-into-the-game?utm_source=unicefinnocentihomepage)” (final report released 2021)
* A guiding framework and toolkit for S4D programming targeting children and youth “[Playing the Game](https://www.unicef-irc.org/playing-the-game) “(final report released 2021)
* Pinpointing S4D mechanisms that improve the mental health of refugee children (summary report expected late 2022; final report expected early 2023)

***What is the time frame of implementation?***The three-phased research project began in 2017 and will be ending in 2022. |
| **Target Audience(s):** | ***Who are the beneficiaries of the proposed/implemented initiative?***The research findings benefit a wide-range of S4D stakeholders, including children and youth participants, policy and decision-makers, practitioners/ programme implementers, donors/ funding partners  |
| **Partners/Funding:** | ***Who are the main organizations/entities involved in the initiative and what are their roles?***The [Barça Foundation](https://foundation.fcbarcelona.com/home) funds the research carried out in partnership with technical leadership of UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. The Barça Foundation also implements S4D programming, therefore a portion of the research includes studying their programme methodology (“FutbolNet”).***What are the main sources of funding of the initiative?***UNICEF Innocenti research on S4D is funded by the Barça Foundation. |
| **SDG Alignment:** | ***To what SDG goal/target/indicator is this initiative targeted?***A wealth of evidence points to the potential of sports – through S4D programming – to support the achievement of the SDGs across several child-specific targets, including SDG 1: No poverty; SDG 3: Good health and well-being; SDG 4: Quality education; SDG 5: Gender equality; SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth; SDG 10: Reduced inequalities; SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities; and SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions.*Please indicate any other national or internationally agreed goals/commitments to which this initiative is aligned.* |
| **Alignment with global frameworks:** | ***How does this initiative align with/contribute to the objectives of the*** [***Kazan Action Plan***](https://en.unesco.org/mineps6/kazan-action-plan)***,*** [***WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity***](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272722/9789241514187-eng.pdf) ***or other related internationally agreed frameworks on sport and/or physical activity?***Through UNICEF S4D research, the findings produced to date contribute to the Kazan Action Plan: * Main Policy Area II. – Maximizing the contributions of sport to sustainable development and peace, particularly components 1-6; and
* Main Policy Area III. – Protecting the integrity of sport, particularly components 1 (safeguarding) and 2 (protecting children, youth and other vulnerable groups)

The UNICEF research initiative aligns with the WHO Global Action Plan through the call for research and innovation to inform planning, policy and practice. It responds to Action 3 – “Create active people”, particularly: * 3.1: 13. Academia and research institutions should conduct research and evaluation on the policy, implementation and impact of physical education and whole-of-school approaches to strengthen the evidence base and share best practice.
* 3.5: 7. Research development agencies and researchers should support and conduct research to identify barriers facing those communities identified as least active, to inform the development and implementation of programmes and approaches, to increase participation in physical activity in these subpopulations, including conducting equity analyses of current sports and other related policies, particularly in LMICs.
* 3.5: 8. Research and development agencies and technology companies should develop and test the potential of digital technologies and other innovative approaches, to promote physical activity within the least active populations, as identified by each country.
* 3.5: 9. Stakeholders should partner and support UN agencies, such as the UNHCR, in the design, development and evaluation of programmes to promote physical activity to marginalized, vulnerable and displaced people, in order to strengthen the evidence base on impact.
* 3.5: 10. All stakeholders should support the collation and promotion of resources tailored to the least active, including examples of good practice to accelerate implementation and develop country capacity.

It also responds to Action 4 – “Create active systems”, particularly:* 4.3: 6. Partner with UN agencies, international development agencies, intergovernmental organizations, research funders and others to mobilize resources to support and strengthen research capacity on physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour, in all regions, and particularly in LMICs.
* 4.3: 9. All stakeholders should advocate for, and mobilize, financial resources to support an increase in research and innovation in the field of physical inactivity and sedentary behaviours, in health and other key sectors, particularly in areas of policy evaluation, large-scale interventions, economic evaluations, innovative fiscal instruments and effective approaches to address inequities.
* 4.3: 10. All stakeholders should support national and subnational governments to develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework, and conduct appropriate policy and programme evaluations, including the impact on equity, to inform national and subnational planning.
* 4.3: 11. Funders and researchers should support and collaborate with policy-makers and others to develop a prioritized research agenda on physical activity and sedentary behaviour to inform policy development.
* 4.3: 12. Funders and researchers should support research to evaluate the application of innovations and technology to promote physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour in different populations, settings and contexts, particularly in LMICs.
* 4.3: 14. Funders and researchers should partner to build and transfer research capacity in all regions, particularly in LMICs, for example through North–South and South–South joint research collaborations, and between countries of similar socioeconomic and cultural characteristics
* 4.4: 6. All stakeholders should implement evidence-based advocacy that calls for the acceleration and scaling-up of investment to increase physical activity, prioritizing those actions that reduce inequalities in access and opportunity and use rights-based arguments.
* 4.4: 7. All stakeholders should conduct advocacy to increase understanding of the policy connections between physical activity as a direct contributor, and as an enabler, to the achievement of the SDGs, as well as a contributor to national economic and development priorities
* 4.5: 5. All stakeholders should advocate for increased investment in physical activity, based on the strength of the evidence for the health benefits, the substantial co-benefits, and the likely return on investment.
* 4.5: 6. All stakeholders should support mobilizing resources to increase investment in research, innovation and generating practice-based evidence across multiple settings that can directly support strengthening evidence-based policies, programmes and implementation, particularly in LMICs
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| **Alignment with United Nations Action Plan on SDP:** | ***Which of the four thematic areas of the*** [***UN Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace***](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/06/14.pdf) ***is this initiative designed to align?******To which action area(s) of the Plan is this initiative designed to contribute?***Area 2: Policy development – the research findings provide an evidence base on S4D (and peace) to inform decision-making at the policy level and influence political buy-in for S4D-related investments.Area 4: Evidence of impact and follow-up – thus far, the first two phases of research project looked at global evidence around S4D and consolidated findings, informing policies and programming designed to contribute to development (and peace); the research team also supports the capacity development of implementation partners to improve monitoring and evaluation of S4D programming. |
| **Outcomes:** | ***What are the expected/actual outcomes of the initiative?***The research findings are aimed to improve policies and practices around S4D. The study initially took stock of the global evidence-base, identifying the positive impacts S4D can have on key outcomes for children’s development (education, social inclusion, child protection, and empowerment). Then, through 10 in-depth case studies, researchers identified the main components that constitute quality S4D programming. Both phases of research contribute to the evidence base and policy development around S4D, but furthermore, pinpoint gaps, opportunities, and next steps for additional research in the field.Phase 3 will utilize the research from phase 1 and phase 2 to take a deep dive around the role S4D can play in refugee children’s mental health. Through a mixed-methods pilot, the study aims to show what good mental health can look like for refugee children and understand the mechanisms that bring about positive change through their participation in an S4D programme. The study plans to engage with Mavrovouni camp residents (Lesvos) primarily from the Middle East, Central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Importantly, the humanitarian context is dynamic and the situation within the refugee camp is constantly changing, so the participants in the S4D programme are not a static demographic.  |
| **Mechanism for monitoring and evaluating implementation:** | ***What are the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation, outcomes and impact of the initiative?***The research led by UNICEF Innocenti advocates for monitoring and evaluation to be imbedded in S4D programmes. UNICEF acknowledges that data collection for monitoring, evaluation and learning purposes should not be done casually (along with other activities) but needs to be planned for and implemented with attention to detail.Monitoring the impact of the initiative has been captured through the research project and imbedded communications strategy to disseminate findings. *Getting into the Game* (phase 1) involved over 100 organizations operating in every region in the world in the survey stage of the research. The survey identified who these S4D organizations work with, how they work, and how S4D is being used. The comprehensive literature review covered all regions of the globe, highlighting the lack of quality evidence available on S4D in low and middle-income countries and the absence of children’s voices in the literature. The evidence collected in *Playing the Game* (phase 2) captured a broad geographical reach: the team identified international programmes and organizations operating in countries across different regions, namely Brazil, Columbia, Italy, Jamaica, Lebanon, Pakistan, South Africa, Spain, State of Palestine, the Netherlands, Uganda, Viet Nam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This phase of the research concluded on 21 September 2021 with the event launching the [*Playing the Game*](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Playing-the-Game-Report_A-framework-for-successful-child-focused-sport-for-development-programmes.pdf) framework and a dedicated [UNICEF Innocenti microsite](https://www.unicef-irc.org/playing-the-game). The launch video can be accessed in multiple places, including on this [event page](https://www.unicef-irc.org/events/sport-for-development-phase-ii-launch-event-playing-the-game.html)). 402 participants from 75 countries registered for the event.***What specific monitoring and evaluation tools are involved?***All monitoring, evaluation and learning tools are typically programme-specific, based on an organization’s theory of change. UNICEF recognizes that these systems can be time and resource-consuming, but they are extremely valuable as they contribute to programme improvement and effectiveness. Research findings on good practices recommended that donors support the integration of monitoring, evaluation and learning in programming and delivery.  |
| **Challenges/Lessons learned** | ***What have been/were the main challenges to implementation?***COVID-19 influenced the mechanisms around data collection and limited the types of studies (e.g. implementation research) that could be feasibly carried out. Global health restrictions limited the reach of the research team, so instead of face-to-face interviews, many were carried out online. In some cases, it was possible to hire local enumerators to conduct interviews after remote training from UNICEF Innocenti staff. ***What lessons learned have been/can be utilized in the planning of future initiatives?***The challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic presented the need for flexibility and utilizing technology when data collection efforts cannot occur face-to-face. |

[UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti](https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/sport-for-development/) has worked together with the [Barça Foundation](https://foundation.fcbarcelona.com/home) to lead research on sport for development (S4D) for children and youth. Through three different research phases, each round learns from the previous, building on the findings. The first global literature review on S4D – [Getting into the Game](https://www.unicef-irc.org/getting-into-the-game?utm_source=unicefinnocentihomepage) (final report published 2021) – found that sport can be a positive factor in four key areas of children’s lives: education, social inclusion, child protection, and empowerment. [Playing the Game](https://www.unicef-irc.org/playing-the-game) (final report published 2021) took a deep dive into the programming, harnessing the experiences of stakeholders from different contexts and provided ten in-depth case studies of S4D organizations; the report outlines an evidence-based guiding framework – from design, through implementation, to scaling and sustainability – for S4D programming targeting young people.

On the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic and on-going refugee crisis, the research project will use 2022 to build the evidence base around the role S4D can play in refugee children’s mental health. Through a mixed-methods pilot, the study aims to show what good mental health can look like for refugee children and understand the mechanisms that bring about positive change through their participation in an S4D programme. Initial findings will be available at the end of the year. Finally, the Innocenti team is also in the early stages of developing research on the links between S4D and building peace, and what that may look like in different contexts: from humanitarian settings to host countries.

The current and foreseeable S4D research carried out by UNICEF Innocenti is aligned with internationally agreed frameworks on sport and physical activity, including the [UN Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/06/14.pdf), [Kazan Action Plan](https://en.unesco.org/mineps6/kazan-action-plan), and [WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272722/9789241514187-eng.pdf). Through evidence-generation, the research findings contribute to informing any planning and investments, or policies and programmes around S4D.