


Getting into the Game

Understanding the evidence for
child-focused sport for development



**BARÇA
FOUNDATION & unicef** 

In 2006, Barcelona Football Club (FC Barcelona) and the Barça Foundation signed a pioneering partnership with UNICEF. Since then, over two million children in seven countries have been reached through UNICEF programme support amounting to €19 million. The partners' focus is to improve children's lives through sport, play and protection.

While delivering projects, the partners have identified a critical gap in the availability of robust evidence to underpin sport for development (S4D) practice. Therefore, in 2017, they expanded their strategic direction to include initiatives designed to build the body of global knowledge on S4D and demonstrate the need for greater understanding of evidence on child-focused S4D.

The partners engaged UNICEF's Office of Research – Innocenti to undertake the first phase of the research, which has culminated in the study: *Getting into the Game: Understanding the evidence for child-focused sport for development* – the first comprehensive global research effort of its kind on S4D for children. This document is a summary of the full research report.

A second phase of research will take place in 2019. Current findings will be tested, including emerging theories of change, utilizing secondary analysis of the data collected in the *Sport for Development Programming Survey*. Primary data collection tools will be designed, piloted and refined to help understand the common characteristics and practices running through S4D initiatives which are needed for transferability and scaling up in different contexts. This will also involve meaningful consultation with young people, S4D experts and other stakeholders.

Another important initiative the partnership has undertaken was to establish an international multi-sectoral S4D working group to promote better coordination and knowledge sharing. Professionals from a range of institutions and sectors are convened to contribute to the design of a specific framework on S4D for children. In the culmination of Phase 2 of the research, efforts will focus on translating the knowledge gathered into policy, practice and actionable recommendations for organizations and policymakers developing and delivering programmes for children that have an S4D component.



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Report Summary

Introduction

Purpose of the study

Sport is a powerful tool for involving all children – including the most marginalized and vulnerable – in group activities from an early age (UNHCR, 2013). For this reason, sport for development (S4D) organizations use sport as an inclusive means of helping children to improve their health; to develop their physical abilities; to develop their social, educational and leadership skills; and of course, to play and have fun.

S4D initiatives come in various forms – from those that build personal and social programmes around sport, to those that include sport as one of many approaches to achieving social goals.

Reviewing evidence on sport for development

The new UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti report, *Getting into the Game: Understanding the evidence for child-focused sport for development*, analyses available evidence on S4D initiatives for children and youth, to identify what works, how it works, and how to improve S4D policy and practice. This document is a summary of the full research report, which can be accessed in final manuscript form at www.unicef-irc.org/getting-into-the-game.

Getting into the Game – the first phase of a two-stage research project – seeks to strengthen the evidence base on policies and practices for S4D and to build knowledge on how to effectively use S4D to promote positive outcomes in four specific areas:

- Education
- Social inclusion
- Child protection
- Empowerment

The goal of the research is to map current initiatives and present evidence on harnessing the power of sport to improve the lives of children and youth. This study first defines sport and presents data to show the coverage, content, and monitoring and evaluation approaches of S4D programmes from an array of organizations surveyed in this research, including UNICEF and the Barça Foundation. It then compares a diverse set of evidence-based programmes and practices to refocus attention on the advantages of S4D approaches to meet the needs of children and youth and to foster cross-national learning.

This summary of the *Getting into the Game* report highlights lessons learned on the positive contribution of

S4D programmes, and recommendations for policymakers, practitioners and researchers, articulated in four sections:

- Sport and sport for development: Background
- Getting into the Game: Key messages
- Summary of findings in four outcome areas
 - Education: Teaching and learning with and through sport
 - Social inclusion: All children in the game
 - Child protection: Risk and security – the sport-protection paradox
 - Empowerment: New skills, team support and confidence building
- Sport and the Sustainable Development Goals

Where next?

The findings cover how the key outcomes of education, social inclusion, protection and empowerment link to sport; what works in practice; the main challenges for implementation; and recommendations for better policy, practice and research.

A group of young boys in blue soccer uniforms are running on a green field during a training session. They are wearing blue jerseys, black shorts, and blue and white socks. The background shows a fence and some buildings.

Sport for development: A definition

Sport for development (S4D) refers to the use of sport, or any form of physical activity, to provide both children and adults with the opportunity to achieve their full potential through initiatives that promote personal and social development.

Sport and sport for development: Background



Sport is any physical activity – participative, casual, organized or competitive, either rule-bound or unstructured – that includes a form of active play, active recreation, or game. Sport is not restricted to nationally recognized activities, such as those with professional leagues, and equally includes indigenous games and sports.

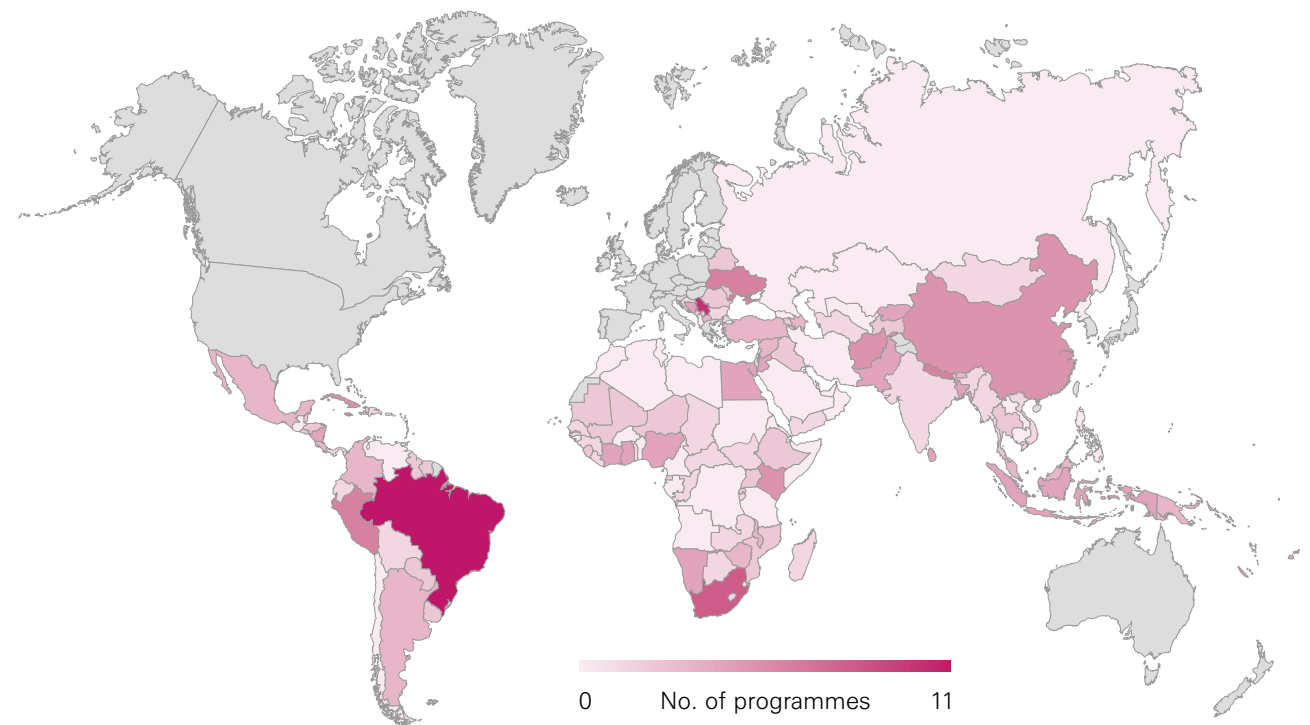
Over the last two decades, the number of S4D initiatives has increased globally. The excitement and enthusiasm for sport programming is evident. For example, Beyond Sport, a global organization based in the United Kingdom, convenes a network of 2,140 organizations with a global sample of 2,985 projects in 148 countries – many of these targeting young people.

Since the year 2000, UNICEF has advocated for the role of sport, recreation and play in child development from early childhood to adolescence. During the initial stages of UNICEF's involvement in the S4D field, multiple potential benefits of sport were verified by research (UNICEF, 2004).

UNICEF Country Offices with S4D programmes

These potential benefits include: better health; reduced stress and depression; improved confidence and self-esteem; improved learning and academic performance; reduced likelihood of smoking and illicit drug use; and reduced crime. However, evidence from real life case studies showed that the positive effects of sports participation were likely to be associated with short-term, individual-level outcomes for children rather than with long-term development goals.

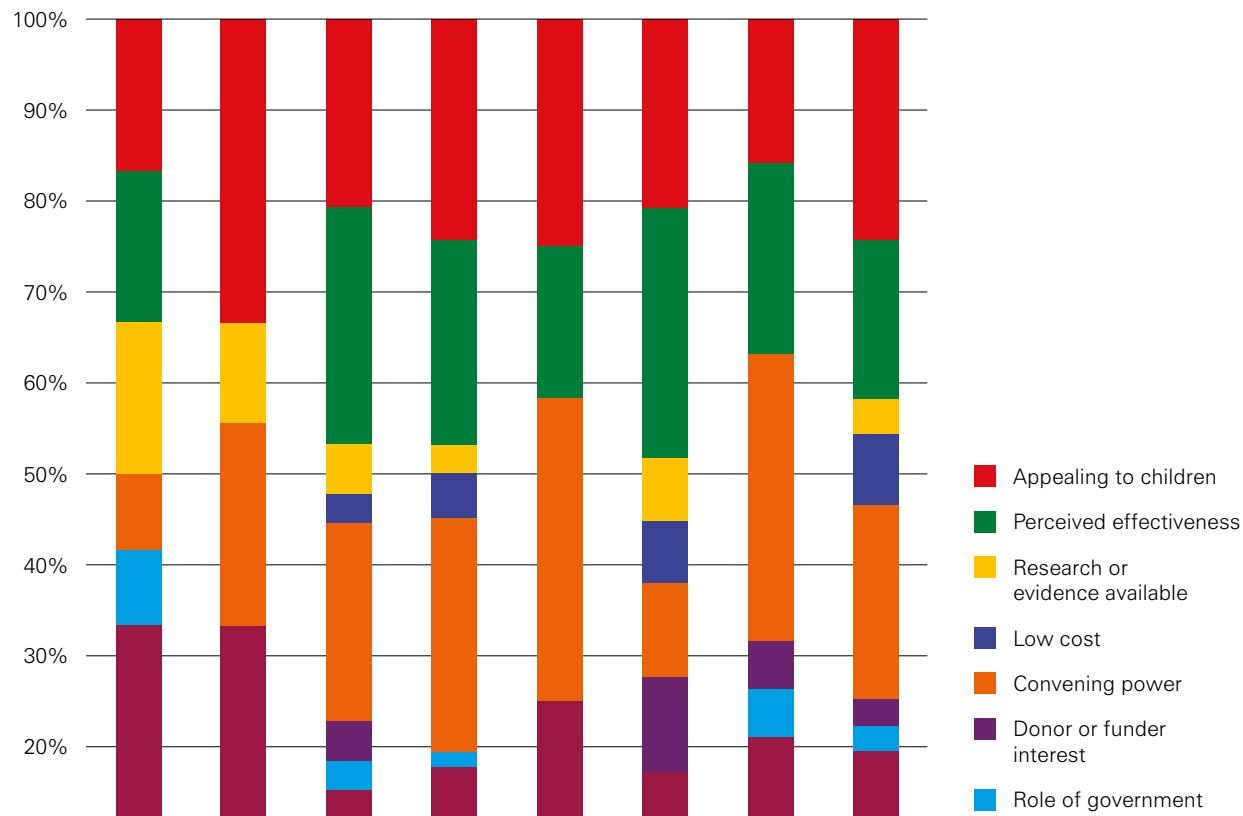
According to a recent review of S4D organizations, there may be more than 3,000 S4D initiatives (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). UNICEF, along with a wide array of other organizations, promotes every child's right to play through S4D programming. For example, UNICEF has developed partnerships in high-income countries with sports organizations, such as with the Barça Foundation, across several sectors, including education, social inclusion, child protection, and health.



Notes: Results are based on document analysis and *Country Office S4D Survey* results within UNICEF. Number of programmes by country available in the full report. Not shown: Joint regions (e.g. Eastern Caribbean = 1 programme)

Source: UNICEF-Innocenti, 2019.

Reasons why programmes chose sport to address child development needs



Research methods

Getting into the Game contains a synthesis of findings from several data-gathering components: an integrative literature review; a systematic mapping of available evidence; surveys of S4D programmes within UNICEF and those implemented by a wide range of other organizations around the world. Surveys were carried out in eight languages and were structured with the aim of understanding the evidence in each of the four key outcome areas.

A literature review enabled the research team to analyse studies using qualitative and/or quantitative

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https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_6101

