



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



The Role of Sport in Addressing Inequalities in Times of Crisis and Recovery

UN Multi-stakeholder Dialogue

Tuesday 12 April 2022, 08:00-10:00AM (NY time)

Concept Note

Background

Guided by the UN Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Division for Inclusive Social Development (DESA/DISD) has the substantive mandate globally on sport for development and peace. DISD works to maximize the positive contributions of sport through support for inter-governmental processes, research and thought leadership, capacity development and partnerships. DISD organizes the present Multi-stakeholder Dialogue as part of these efforts.

The outcome of the Dialogue will help to shape the 2022 Secretary-General Report on Sport for Development and Peace to be presented to the General Assembly in September; and inform deliberations at the 2022 High Level Political Forum.

This year's Secretary-General Report will capture the contributions of sport over the span of the COVID-19 pandemic and analyze the potential of sport to serve a catalytic role in countries' efforts to build back better. In this context, the Dialogue will bring together stakeholders from different sectors with diverse experiences to share new research and good practices and to identify challenges, opportunities, and recommendations on the role that sport can play to address inequalities in times of crisis and recovery.

Sport and Inequalities in Crises and Recovery

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that high and rising inequalities are not only an impediment to growth and human development: but also a violation of shared norms, values, and people's intrinsic sense of fairness. In setting out to *leave no one behind*, UN Member States understood that inequalities will subside only when the furthest behind benefit to a greater degree and faster pace from policies and investment.

By exacerbating and revealing the impact of inequalities and discrimination, the COVID-19 pandemic has made the case for addressing these injustices even more compelling. Poorer countries are contending with a deeper, longer-lasting pandemic crisis. Income inequality between countries is estimated to have increased for the first time in a generation^[1]. Within countries, poorer households have been slower to recover incomes, face greater losses in education and livelihoods, and are disproportionately impacted by over-burdened health systems and mental health challenges. Women, minorities, the informally employed and other disadvantaged groups have been hit particularly hard.

As countries struggle to recover from the pandemic, growing numbers of increasingly destructive climate disasters and a rising tide of conflict and violence, are generating new inequalities, while threatening to leave already disadvantaged populations even further behind. Against this backdrop of crisis and recovery, the Dialogue will explore ways to leverage sport as a low-cost, high-impact tool to address inequalities.

The sport for development and peace movement has led to an ever-expanding number of effective approaches and good practice examples. Sport is increasingly being harnessed to, inter alia: connect people to education and employment settings; grow inclusive labour markets; empower women and girls and people with disabilities; improve the wellbeing of refugees and improve mental health; advance employment competences; confront discrimination, violent extremism, and violence against women; and engage communities in disaster relief and climate action. With more concerted and coordinated effort to target the gains of these initiatives to poor and disadvantaged communities, sport can make a powerful contribution to local, national, regional, and global efforts to address inequalities.

With greater coordination and support, sport can help to address inequalities in three key ways identified for this Dialogue:

1. Catalyzing employment and livelihoods in poor and disadvantaged communities
2. Advancing the empowerment and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups
3. Enabling peace, violence prevention and facilitating disaster relief and recovery

Objectives and Outcomes

1. Take stock of the contributions of sport in addressing inequalities in recovery and crisis contexts
2. Identify the barriers and challenges to scaling up what works
3. Suggest innovative solutions and partnerships
4. Distill recommendations for inclusion in the 2022 Secretary-General Report on Sport for Development and Peace

Format

The multi-stakeholder dialogue will be a two-hour online event. It will consist of an introductory session in plenary with keynote speakers and opening remarks, and explanation of methodology that will set the stage for the second part of the event, which will consist of four thematic break-out sessions.

The thematic break-out sessions will be 40 minutes long and led by pre-selected facilitators, identified based on the theme to be discussed by each group. A rapporteur will also be identified for each break-out group.

Discussions in each break-up group will be guided by four themes: 1. Advancing policies and partnerships to address inequalities through sport (Member States). 2. Sport as a catalyst for employment in poor and vulnerable communities; 2. Sport as a catalyst for anti-discrimination, empowerment, and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups; 3. Sport as an enabler of peace, violence prevention, disaster relief and recovery. Participants in each break-out group will be asked to share good practices during and post-Covid19, highlight innovations, challenges, and opportunities to scale up what works.

In the final session, the plenary will be reconvened, and the thematic interventions will be briefly presented by each rapporteur. An open floor discussion will follow in which participants may ask questions or make comments related to the presentations, with the aim of identifying three or four recommendations and corresponding voluntary commitments.

The Dialogue will end with closing remarks from UNDESA/DISD. After the event, rapporteurs shall send their written reports to UNDESA/DISD, to be compiled in a short report shared with all participants.

Guiding questions for the Four Break-out Groups

Group A. Intergovernmental dialogue on advancing policies and partnerships to address inequalities through sport (Member States)

This group will discuss how Member States working together with the UN and other stakeholders can increase engagement and cooperation with one another to harness sport as a tool to address inequalities, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Guiding questions:

1. What examples can be shared of good practices, approaches, and policies that harness sport to advance the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups?
2. What examples can be shared of sport as a tool to enhance the capabilities and opportunities available to poor and vulnerable communities?
3. How can public-private partnerships for funding sport for development and peace programmes be strengthened to address inequalities? How can the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs use its convening power to help build and strengthen these partnerships?
4. What priority steps (2-3) are recommended to leverage sport more fully to address inequalities

Group B. Sport as a catalyst for employment in poor and marginalized communities

This group discuss how sport can be more fully leveraged to build inclusive labour markets by generating decent work in the sports industry, connecting people to employment and education settings and building employment competencies in poor and marginalized communities.

Guiding Questions

1. How has sport been successfully leveraged to generate decent work? Connect people to employment and education settings? Build employment competencies? What elements have made these initiatives successful?
2. How have the benefits of such initiatives been targeted to poor and disadvantaged communities? What are the challenges? How were they overcome?
3. How can we achieve greater scale, coherence, and sustainability in programming that leverages sport for pro-poor growth and employment? What is the role of public-private partnerships? How can the UN use its convening power for greater impact?
4. What priority steps (2-3) are recommended to leverage sport more fully for employment in poor and disadvantaged communities?

Group C. Sport as a catalyst for anti-discrimination, empowerment, and the inclusion disadvantaged groups

This group will discuss how sport can be more fully leveraged to advance the social inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged groups, while confronting the discrimination that contributes to inequalities in all societies.

1. How has sport been successfully harnessed to counter discrimination and empower women and girls, people with disabilities, minorities, LGBTQ, older persons and other disadvantaged groups? What elements made these initiatives successful?
2. What steps have been taken to ensure all people have access to sport and physical activity, during and post COVID-19? What mechanisms are needed to enhance accountability for inclusion in sport?
3. How can we achieve greater scale, coherence, and sustainability in programming that leverages sport for anti-discrimination, empowerment, and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups? How can the UN use its convening power for greater impact?
4. What priority steps (2-3) are recommended to leverage sport more fully for anti-discrimination, empowerment, and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups?

Group D: Sport as an enabler of peace, violence prevention, disaster relief and recovery

This group will discuss how sport can be more fully leveraged to prevent violence and conflict, which in all cases generates and aggravates inequalities. The group will also consider how sport can increasingly be a vehicle to engage communities in disaster relief and facilitate recovery from man-made and natural disasters, including through the provision of psychosocial support.

1. How has sport been harnessed to build shared identities that help to prevent violence and conflict? What elements made these initiatives successful?
2. How has sport helped to engage communities to respond to disasters, including the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How is sport being used successfully to address mental health challenges in poor and disadvantaged communities? How is sport leveraged to deliver psychosocial and other support to persons impacted by conflict, climate, and natural disasters?
4. How can we achieve greater scale, coherence, and sustainability in programming that leverages sport for peace, violence prevention, disaster relief and recovery? How can the UN use its convening power for greater impact?
5. What priority steps (2-3) are recommended to leverage sport more fully to enable peace, prevent violence and facilitate disaster relief and recovery?