



# Driving Sustainable Development in and through Sport

## The Fit for Life Global Alliance

*The world is experiencing intersecting crises in physical inactivity, mental ill health and inequality. UNESCO's sport flagship, **Fit for Life**, promotes the systematic use of sport to tackle these contemporary challenges and to build more inclusive and peaceful societies. The systemic and behavioural changes that this requires can only be achieved through an alliance of sport and non-sport stakeholders to get more people active. Data on the impact of sport on non-sport outcomes, such as improved well-being, educational achievement, gender equality and the empowerment of people in vulnerable situations, is critical for scaling public and private investments into grassroots sport. Existing evidence demonstrates that sport is a low-cost, high impact-solution for many decision-makers and development partners who were not yet aware of the economic and social return on investment in sport. Fit for Life strengthens this evidence and connects international, national and local stakeholders to engage in innovative projects and share and upgrade sport and physical education policy frameworks and curricula, quality and ethical standards, capacities and practical resources.*

## The problem: intersecting crises in well-being, education and equality

One in four adults (28%, or 1.4 billion people) lead sedentary lives, contributing to 5 million premature deaths and costing society an estimated US\$27 billion annually. While physical inactivity alone is alarming, when combined with weakened mental and socio-emotional resilience, unemployment and inequalities, the compounding impact of these crises have severe consequences for individual and social well-being. This particularly affects young people, women, persons with disabilities, displaced and other people in vulnerable situations. This inhibits their ability to contribute to sustainable development, slowing the progress toward creating healthier, progressive, inclusive and prosperous societies.

### Contemporary Crises

- 41% global decline in **physical activity**
- 200% increase in **anxiety and depression** among young people
- 40% of female sport practitioners report gender discrimination
- 21% of athletes have faced **sexual abuse** in their careers
- 82% of PE teachers report that **classes were negatively impacted** by COVID-19
- **Youth unemployment** rose by 4 million in 2020

## The solution: powering inclusivity, peace, and resilience through sport

### Sport as a Change Agent

- Daily physical activity can **reduce obesity and depression by 30%** and has been associated with **40% higher test scores**.
- 80% of young women in Europe connect participation in sport with **increased confidence and decreased anxiety**.
- Better health could add US\$12 trillion in GDP by 2040, with a **return of US\$4 for every US\$1 invested**

There is mounting evidence that sport is not only critical to good physical and mental health, but also a powerful tool to drive equality, education, employability and sustainability outcomes off the pitch. However, the full potential of sport is not being realized in many countries, communities and school systems around the world. UNESCO's Fit for Life flagship aims to change this, offering practical tools to youth, sports coaches, teachers and policy makers to build their capacities to develop and deliver inclusive policies and programming. Using both "in sport" and "through sport" lenses, Fit for Life activities will not only increase sports participation and the quality delivery of PE and sports; they also aim to scale the use of sport as a tool to upskill and empower youth, women and other priority groups through sports-related trainings.



## The Fit for Life model: a "glocal" approach to shift systems and behaviour

Fit for Life harnesses the energy, expertise and resources of a diverse consortium of stakeholders to scale up public and private investments in grassroots sports and physical education. These partners will be engaged via the Fit for Life Global Alliance, a multi-stakeholder partnership of actors in the fields of sport, education, health, youth, and equality.

Fit for Life's activity implementation focuses on:

### Strengthening the evidence base

to make better use of existing data, address data gaps and support stakeholders in the translation of sport and PE data into impact and policy outcomes.

### Scaling investments in sport for development

through innovative, data-based funding arrangements, such as impact investments, which allow governments and investors to pay for outcomes directly.

### Advancing gender equality in and through sport

by supporting decision makers to design and deliver inclusive sport and PE policy and programmes which empower women and tackle violence against women and girls.

### Empowering youth through sport

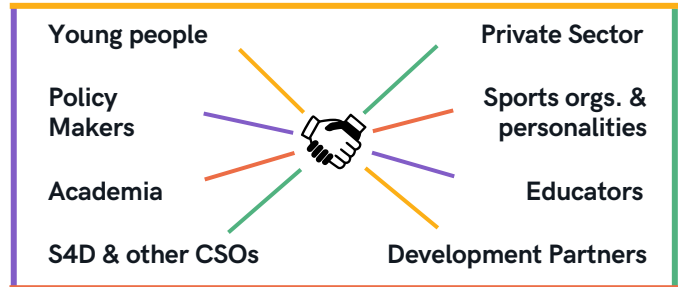
by means of capacity-building activities, scaled investments in youth-led projects and the translation of their impact into policy outcomes.

### Supporting the social and environmental legacies of major sport events

through the development of a Fit for Life Label to harmonize event policies and plans with sustainable development priorities.

### Unlocking the potential of the African sports ecosystem

through a regional assessment of needs, expertise and funding opportunities.



**Outputs:** global sport and PE surveys, status reports, integrated database, shared metrics, toolkits, infographics and trainings on how to better use data



**Outputs:** capacity-building resources, reports on impact investment and projects in Fit for Life Global Alliance countries



**Outputs:** practical policy toolkits, handbooks and trainings for policy makers and sport practitioners and projects in Fit for Life Global Alliance countries



**Outputs:** targeted sports trainings, mentoring, youth-led project implementation, professional placements, and networking opportunities



**Outputs:** impact measurement criteria and indicators, capacity-building tools and trainings



**Outputs:** gaps and needs analyses, training materials, toolkits and a regional strategy to guide and integrate activity implementation

## Want to get involved?

- **Join the Fit for Life Global Alliance** and register your interest in inputting to the development and delivery of one or more of the above streams of work
- **Drive impact investment** through inputs to survey instruments, social return on investment case studies and pilot projects, and the development of a smart investment toolkit
- **Advance gender equality** by joining the Group of Friends to support the development and rollout of the Fit for Life Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan
- **Pilot capacity-building programmes**, like the Youth Accelerator Programme, to invest in young people and enhance citizen well-being, inclusion, and employability
- **Contribute to standard setting** through inputs on the development of policy guidelines for sport and QPE and the Fit for Life Label for sustainable major sport events
- **Advocate for the Fit for Life vision**, hosting events and campaigns and nominating influencers for the Star Network

**UNESCO Social and Human Sciences Sector**

To learn more, please contact [F4L@unesco.org](mailto:F4L@unesco.org)

