



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

# The Contribution of Sport to the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 Development Agenda

## The Position of the International Olympic Committee, on behalf of the Olympic and Sport Movement

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OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER FOR THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The enormous potential of **sport**, its global reach, its universal language, its impact on communities in general, and young people in particular, is a fact and is increasingly recognised around the world.

The possibility to play and enjoy recreation and sport in a safe and healthy environment is a human right embedded in numerous international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The fundamental role of *Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace* was re-emphasised in UN Resolution A/69/L.5 adopted by Member States on 16 October 2014. The resolution “*encourages Member States to give sport due consideration in the context of the post-2015 development agenda*”.

The Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary General on the post-2015 Agenda also recognizes that sport plays a significant role in youth education and life-long learning and contributes to ensure healthier lives.

## 2. SPORT AS A COST-EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

The sport sector, which gathers millions of people, practitioners, and professionals from all ages across the five continents, has contributed significantly to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is looking forward to accelerating its efforts in within the post-2015 Development Agenda.

The IOC recognises that this Agenda is a historical opportunity to ensure that sport and physical activity are integrated as a meaningful and cost-effective tool to achieve the sustainable development goals. Founded on evidence-based research<sup>1</sup>, the IOC, on behalf of the Olympic and sport movement, is globally advocating for the use of sport to:

- promote health and the prevention of non-communicable diseases;
- achieve quality education through values-based learning;
- promote gender equality, including the empowerment of girls and women;
- promote sustainable cities and human settlements;
- contribute to peaceful and non-violent societies; and
- develop human capital and human potential.

Investing in sport and physical activity brings a number of socio-economic returns to society which are outlined in the following info graphic<sup>2</sup>.

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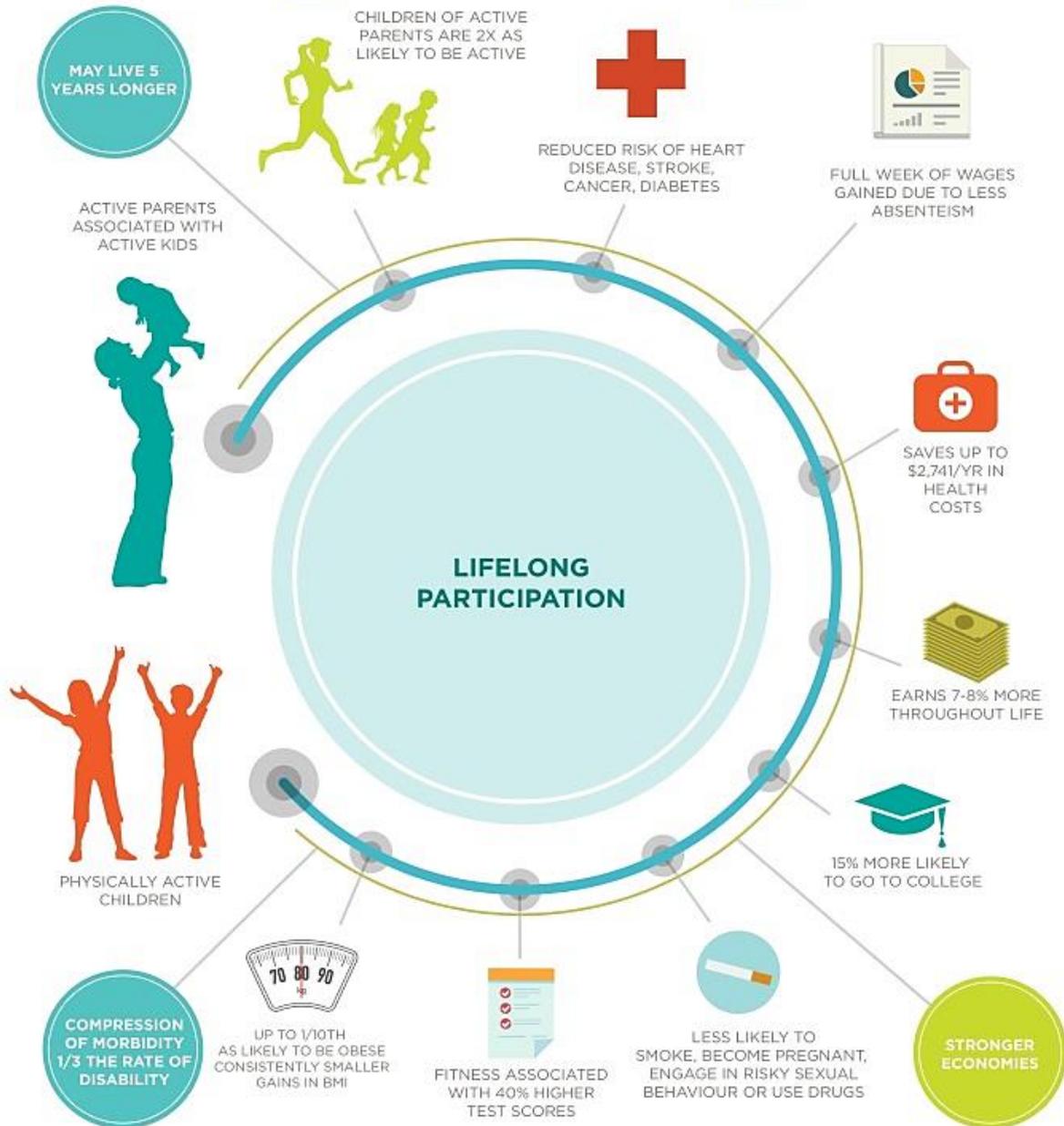
<sup>1</sup> *Harnessing the Power of Sport for Peace and Development – Recommendations to Governments, Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, Right to Play, 2008.*

<sup>2</sup> *Info graphics developed by UNESCO for the promotion for quality physical education and related policy guidelines for governments, 2014.*



# THE BENEFITS OF INVESTING

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC RETURNS



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### 3. SPORT'S CONTRIBUTION TO HEALTH

#### **Goal 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

3.4 by 2030 reduce by one-third pre-mature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and wellbeing.

- Physical activity is the **third pillar of NCDs primary and secondary prevention**, with recognised impact on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis<sup>3</sup>.
- Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) have committed to **reduce physical inactivity by 10% by 2025**.<sup>4</sup>
- In China, India, the U.K., the U.S., Russia and Brazil alone, the **cost of physical inactivity** is estimated to have been more than US\$ 218 billion in 2008 and is projected to reach US\$ 302 billion in direct costs by 2030<sup>5</sup>.
- If prevalence of obesity continues to grow on its current trajectory, **almost half of the world's adult population** is projected to be **overweight or obese** by 2030<sup>6</sup>.

Evidence-based research demonstrates that sport and physical activity can positively contribute to numerous health issues:

- Sport produces beneficial effects on **mental health**, enhances self-esteem, helps to manage stress and anxiety, and alleviates depression.
- Sport offers multiple avenues to address health challenges and promotes good **health for girls and women**. It can provide an important venue to share critical health information and education and a safe and neutral space where women can discuss sexual and reproductive health issues and strategies to address them.
- Sport can be a valuable **informational and educational platform** for health and development messages targeted to youth and adults alike.
- Sport can be an **effective way to reach out to people, especially youth**, and to encourage healthy lifestyle behaviours that will help to protect them against HIV and other diseases.
- Sport can help **reduce health-care costs and increase productivity**, key issues in emerging economies.

<sup>3</sup> *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, WHO, 2004.*

<sup>4</sup> *World Health Assembly, resolution 66.10, WHO, 2013.*

<sup>5</sup> *Designed to Move, A Physical Activity Action Agenda – Executive Summary, Nike, Inc., 2012.*

<sup>6</sup> *Overcoming obesity: an initial economic analysis – Discussion paper, McKinsey Global Institute, McKinsey & Company, November 2014.*



## THE COST OF NOT INVESTING

### PHYSICAL INACTIVITY...

  
CONTRIBUTES TO  
**3.2 MIL**  
PREMATURE  
DEATHS ANNUALLY

  
**80.3%**  
OF 13-15 YEAR OLDS  
WORLDWIDE DO FEWER THAN  
60 MINUTES EXERCISE PER DAY

  
ACCOUNTS FOR  
**6%**  
OF GLOBAL MORTALITY

  
IT IS ESTIMATED THAT  
NCDs WILL BECOME THE  
MAJOR CAUSE OF DEATH  
IN AFRICA BY 2030

  
CHILDREN IN EARLY CARE  
AND EDUCATION SPEND  
ONLY 2-3% OF TIME  
BEING ACTIVE

  
CAUSES MORE  
DEATHS THAN SMOKING

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## 4. SPORT'S CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION

### Goal 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all

- 4.1 by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- 4.5 by 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education, and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.

Evidence-based research demonstrates that:

- Physical education, sport and learning activities in a playful format motivate children to enroll in school and promote **school attendance** as they are enjoyable and frequently not accessible outside the school environment.
- Sport and play activities can help improve **learning performance and academic achievement**.
- Sport fosters **mental health** and development in young people.



- Sport and physical education programmes can promote a broad spectrum of **life skills and values** that build on individual capacity such as team-building, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, sense of community, self-esteem, personal responsibility, empathy, moral development, resilience, and improved inclination for educational achievement.
- Sport is a **powerful vehicle** to teach children and youth positive attitudes, values and moral strength.
- At the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport “MINEPS V” organised by UNESCO and the German Government in Berlin in May 2013, Member States together with organisations and practitioners of education and sport recognised and agreed that:
  - **quality physical education** in school and in all other educational institutions **is the most effective means of providing all children and youth with the skills, attitudes, values, knowledge and understanding for lifelong participation in society**;
  - an **inclusive environment** free of violence, sexual harassment, racism and other forms of discrimination is fundamental to quality physical education and sport;
  - **traditional sports and games**, as **part of intangible heritage and as an expression of the cultural diversity of societies**, offer opportunities for increased participation in and through sport and as such must be encouraged;
  - quality and inclusive physical education classes must be included, preferentially on a daily basis, as a **mandatory part of primary and secondary education** and that sport and physical activity at school, and in all other educational institutions, must play an integral role in the daily routine of children and youth;
  - **cooperation** must be strengthened between governments, sport organisations, schools and all other educational institutions to improve the conditions for physical education and sport at school, including sports facilities and equipment, as well as qualified teachers and coaches; and
  - the important role of **inclusive extracurricular school sport** in early development and educating children and youth must be further reinforced.



## CLOSING THE POLICY-PRACTICE GAP

DESPITE THE BENEFITS, POLICY IS NOT BEING TRANSLATED INTO PRACTICE...



97%

OF COUNTRIES GLOBALLY DECLARED PHYSICAL EDUCATION COMPULSORY



BUT..



ONLY

79%

OF COUNTRIES HAVE PRESCRIBED CURRICULA



IN

54%

OF COUNTRIES PHYSICAL EDUCATION HAS A PERCEIVED LOWER STATUS THAN OTHER SUBJECTS



ONLY

71%

OF COUNTRIES ADHERE TO IMPLEMENTATION REGULATIONS AND DELIVERY

ONLY  
53%

OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS HAVE SUITABLY TRAINED PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS



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## 5. SPORT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND GIRLS AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

### **Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

5.1 by 2030, end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

5.5 by 2030, ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Access to sport is considered as an essential element in attaining rights and freedoms set out in several international human rights documents including the 1979 **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**. The **Beijing Platform for Action** referred to sport and physical education as a mechanism to achieve three main objectives:

- to develop non-discriminatory education and training;
- to strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health; and
- to eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.

There is evidence that sport can help to enhance girls' and women's health and well-being, foster self-esteem and empowerment, facilitate social inclusion and integration, challenge gender norms, and provide opportunities for leadership and achievement. In particular, it can<sup>7</sup>:

- improve physical and mental health;
- create opportunities for social interaction and friendship;
- increase girls' and women's self-confidence, and provide them with a sense of control over their bodies and their lives, encouraging them to delay sexual activity and reducing levels of teen pregnancy;
- provide incentives and support for girls to enroll in school, enhance school attendance and academic performance;
- help girls and women acquire transferable life-skills leading to increased employability;
- empower girls and women with disabilities to acquire health information, skills, social networks, and leadership experience; and
- help develop skills in management, negotiation and decision-making that empower women and girls to become leaders in the workplace, in the home and in all areas of community life; a survey of executive women found that 80% played sports in their youth; 69 % said sport contributed to their professional success.

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<sup>7</sup> *Harnessing the Power of Sport for Peace and Development – Recommendations to Governments, Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, Right to Play, 2008.*



## 6. SPORT'S CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

### **Goal 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

11.7 by 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

It is known that cities which invest in **public sport and play areas**, and related physical activities and sport programmes, can:

- save money on health care and transport services;
- protect young people from unhealthy and dangerous behaviors such as alcohol and illicit substances abuse, unprotected sexual activity, smoking, delinquency and violence;
- reduce crimes;
- reduce violence against women and girls;
- have more productive citizens and workers;
- have less pollution and better access to green spaces;
- expand social networks; and
- enhance neighborhood revitalisation, social cohesion and community identity.

Increasing levels of physical activity and sport in the population demands a **population-based, multi-sectoral and culturally relevant approach**. For instance, policies that impact the mode of transport people use or that increase public space for recreational activities have the potential to increase sport and physical activity levels in the population and consequently provide significant health and social benefits. This is relevant in all types of countries and, in particular, in the low and middle-income groups.

As such, it is important to consider:

- ensuring that sport and physical activity are accessible and safe when elaborating or reviewing **urban and town planning and environmental policies** at national and local level, especially for women and girls;
- providing **local play facilities** for children;
- facilitating **active transport** to work (e.g. cycling and walking) and other sport and physical activity strategies for the working population; and
- ensuring that **school policies** support the provision of opportunities and programmes for quality physical education and sport and have the necessary safe and appropriate spaces and facilities to this end.



## 7. SPORT AS A TOOL TO PREVENT CONFLICT AND BUILD PEACE

### **Goal 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

16.1 by 2030, significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rate everywhere.

Sport is being successfully used to promote **social inclusion**, provide respite in periods of conflict, **build trust and establish bridges** between groups in conflict, contribute to peace in post-conflict situations, and **promote a culture of peace**.

Of course, sport alone cannot prevent conflict or build peace. However, it can contribute to building relationships across social, economic and cultural divides and creating a sense of shared identity and fellowship among groups that might otherwise be inclined to view each other with distrust and hostility.

- Sport can serve as a tool to **advance demobilisation and disarmament efforts** and to support the often difficult reintegration of ex-combatants, particularly former child combatants, into their communities.
- Regular sport activities can also help to **address war-related trauma and promote healing** by providing safe spaces for activities that enable victims of war to regain a sense of security and normalcy.
- Through universal reach and popularity, sport offers an important means of reaching out to and **engaging socially excluded groups**.
- The global appeal of elite sport makes it an ideal and extremely **powerful mass communication platform** that can be used to promote a culture of peace. Celebrity athletes, in particular, can be extremely influential as role models and spokespeople for peace and serve, at times, as intermediaries between hostile nations, creating openings for dialogue.

## 8. GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - THE SPORT SECTOR AS AN IMPORTANT PLAYER IN COMMUNITIES

### **Goal 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development**

The sport sector is a **powerful and active member of civil society** and can, as such, be a meaningful partner to reach out to maximise the achievements of the SDGs.

- Across five continents, sport brings together millions of people from all ages, and youth in particular, to practice sport and physical activities every day.
- Sport gathers millions of people through organisations, clubs, associations, business companies and events which contribute to the economic and social development of communities around the world.
- Sport uses its convening power to rally communities, engage youth, reach out to the most difficult and vulnerable groups, and create shared interests.



- Sport plays an active role in multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary platforms which tackle:
  - public education and social mobilisation;
  - health promotion and disease prevention;
  - child and youth development and education;
  - social inclusion;
  - conflict prevention and peace building;
  - gender equality;
  - inclusion of persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups; and
  - employment and economic development

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The sport sector is undeniably a key partner in the planning and implementation of the next global development agenda. It shall continue to be recognised as an important contributor to a better and more peaceful world, in close partnership with governments and other members of civil society.

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