



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

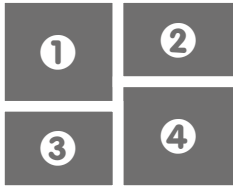


# MORE THAN A GAME

The UNHCR Sport Strategy 2022 – 2026

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November 2022



## 📷 COVER PHOTOS

- 1 World Refugee Day activities with Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Boa Vista, Roraima, Brazil. © UNHCR/Allana Ferreira
- 2 Parfait Hakizimana instructs a session for junior taekwondo students at the Paysannat L School recreational grounds in Rwanda. © UNHCR/Anthony Karumba
- 3 A group of cyclists crosses the finish line at UNHCR Peru's Great Inclusive Race 2022. © UNHCR/Emily Alvarez
- 4 Displaced and host community girls play football in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. © UNHCR/Martim Gray Pereira



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

'More than a Game' – the UNHCR Sport Strategy 2022-2026, was developed by UNHCR's Division of External Relations. Extensive consultations with both internal UNHCR and external stakeholders yielded substantive inputs which you will find in the following pages.

We would like to acknowledge all of those who contributed to the process, and thank them for giving their time and expertise, in particular UNHCR regional bureaux, country operation and headquarter colleagues and the many colleagues from partner and other external organizations, including:

Beyond Sport, Centre for Sport and Human Rights, Cricket without Boundaries, Fare Network, Fútbol Más, Global Refugee Youth Network, International Judo Federation, International Table Tennis Federation Foundation, Jesuit Worldwide Learning, Peace and Sport, SOAS University of London, Special Olympics, The International Paralympic Committee, The International Platform on Sport and development, The Olympic Refugee Foundation, United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Women Win

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Layout & Design: BakOS Design

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# ACRONYMS

<b>AGD</b>	Age, gender and diversity
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>FIFA</b>	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
<b>GCR</b>	Global Compact on Refugees
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>IAGSDP</b>	Inter-Agency Group on Sport for Development and Peace
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally displaced persons
<b>IOC</b>	International Olympic Committee
<b>IPC</b>	International Paralympic Committee
<b>LGBTIQ+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
<b>MHPSS</b>	Mental health and psychosocial support
<b>S4P</b>	Sport for Protection
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SDP</b>	Sport for Development and Peace
<b>UEFA</b>	Union of European Football Associations

# FOREWORD

## OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

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*In 2016, I – along with hundreds of millions of others, – watched ten refugees compete at the Olympic Games in Rio as members of the very first Refugee Olympic Team. As these young people competed on one of sport’s biggest stages, with the world’s best, they helped to tell new stories and create different perceptions, demonstrating what refugees can achieve if opportunities are provided.*

*The Refugee Team also reminded us of something we all intrinsically knew but have sometimes failed to formalize in our work: that the true power of sport is found in its ability to break down barriers, to connect and bring people together.*

*For the people my organization UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, serves – people whose lives have been severely affected by war, conflict, discrimination or persecution – opportunities to engage in sport and play can create a sense of belonging, helping them to feel included and integrate into their adopted communities. Most importantly, sport can normalize their lives by bringing back fun and enjoyment, improving the physical and mental well-being of young and old alike.*

*But the engagement in sport is about much more than training budding Olympians and providing fun, positive and developmental activities, although these are very important! It is also about an entire system of organizations with the capacity and potential to contribute to protecting, responding, empowering, including and solving the plight of the people UNHCR serves – the very strategic directions that we have identified as essential to improve refugees’ lives.*

*Since Rio, much has been achieved. We have developed new sport partnerships that have led to an increase in sport activities, and tools and guidance on the effective use of sport in displacement contexts. We have trained refugees to lead their own sport initiatives, have told stories about refugees through the lens of sport and have used the platform that sport provides to advocate for refugee rights.*

*Yet we recognize that we can do much more. I am therefore proud that we are launching this Sport Strategy, which will help bring greater attention to the important role sport can play for displaced and stateless people. It is built around the need to provide more opportunities to participate in protective and developmental sport- and play-based activities. This component is complemented and strengthened by recognizing the other contributions that sport can make.*

*The strategy also marks UNHCR’s intent, to both internal and external stakeholders, laying the foundation for a coherent and consistent approach to engaging and partnering with the sport network and, through this collaboration, unlocking the phenomenal potential of sport for displaced and stateless people around the world.*

*I invite colleagues and partners to read, reflect and engage further with us on sport, so that collectively we can benefit displaced and stateless people around the world, and the communities that so generously host them.*



**Filippo Grandi**  
High Commissioner for Refugees  
November 2022

📷 Mustafa Mohammed Matir works out at UNHCR's Emergency Transit Mechanism in Niger.  
© UNHCR/Sylvain Cherkaoui



# THE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

## Strategic Objectives

### **SPORT- AND PLAY-BASED PROGRAMMING:**

The communities UNHCR serves are better included in protective and developmental sport activities without any discrimination.

### **ELITE SUPPORT:**

Refugees with elite talent can fulfil their potential and access opportunities for complementary pathways through sport.

### **COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY:**

There is an increase in new communications and advocacy opportunities through engaging sport partners and media, and through sport events.

### **SPORT DIPLOMACY:**

Sport is utilized to improve diplomatic, social and political relations in support of the people UNHCR serves.

### **RESOURCE MOBILIZATION:**

The sport ecosystem is leveraged to raise funds and other resources for sport, recreation, humanitarian and other programming.

## Who has a Role to Play

- Olympic movement
- Paralympic movement
- Football governing bodies
- Regional and national sport structures
- Sport clubs, leagues and events
- Sportswomen and sportsmen – including refugees
- Civil society organizations
- Grass-roots organizations and organizations led by forcibly displaced or stateless people
- Private foundations
- Private sector
- Media organizations
- Development banks and international financial institutions
- United Nations agencies
- Educational and academic institutions and networks

## Guiding Principles and Approaches

- Whole of organization approach
- Inclusion (age, gender and diversity)
- Do no harm (protection)
- Accountability to affected populations
- Driven by data and evidence
- Partnerships and coordination
- Human rights-based approach
- Localization and sustainability
- Capacity-sharing

## Key Actions

Identify and maintain partnerships that support roll-out at the global, regional and national levels.

Initiate projects and programmes with sport, humanitarian and development partners that utilize the added value of sport and build evidence of what works.

Communicate about displacement and sport to build greater awareness of refugee issues.

Use the platform that sport provides to bring refugee issues to new audiences and forums.

Identify new financial and other resources for sport and humanitarian initiatives.

Monitor, evaluate, learn and adapt.

## Section 1

# SETTING THE SCENE

## VISION

Improved well-being and opportunities through sport for the persons UNHCR serves

## INTRODUCTION

This strategy outlines UNHCR's ambition to expand the use of sport and strengthen engagement with the sport ecosystem to benefit displaced and stateless people globally. The strategy recognizes the incredible work already being done by sport actors, and considers how, in partnership with UNHCR, the sport ecosystem can contribute to achieving the objectives of key policy frameworks such as the Global Compact on Refugees<sup>1</sup> and UNHCR's Strategic Directions.<sup>2</sup>

Section 1 builds a picture of the background to the strategy, key developments in the sport and refugee space from a UNHCR perspective and how the strategy is aligned with other relevant pieces of work. It also looks at the sport ecosystem from a refugee perspective and the various roles it can play in refugee response, as well as how UNHCR can partner with sport to benefit displaced and stateless people worldwide.

Section 2 outlines the key approaches and principles that underpin the strategy and ensure that it has a firm base from which to work.

Finally, Section 3 introduces the strategic objectives and theories of change of the strategy, which demonstrate the positive change UNHCR hopes to see for the people we serve, as a result of a global roll-out.

The strategy draws from acquired knowledge and experience, and a belief that engaging with and through sport can achieve positive outcomes for the individuals and communities UNHCR serves. Reflecting on UNHCR's role as a convener, partnership-builder and mobilizer, the strategy sets out five complementary and interlinked strategic objectives. It has been aligned with global sport policy frameworks, including the Kazan Action Plan and the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Model Indicators on Sport and the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

The strategic objectives of the Sport Strategy are five-fold and promote the potential of sport- and play-based programming to:

- ➊ strengthen the skills that young people need to get through life successfully (life skills);
- ➋ achieve protection dividends in the areas of psychosocial well-being, social cohesion and social inclusion; and
- ➌ where young people demonstrate excellence, support them to access quality training and competition while nurturing their aspirations.

The sport ecosystem also has phenomenal communications and advocacy reach, as well as expertise and other resources that can benefit displaced and stateless communities.

The strategy acknowledges the need for increased internal coherence and alignment in the approach to engaging with the sport ecosystem, reflecting the potential for actions across different areas of work to collectively achieve results.

Anchored in a set of guiding principles and core UNHCR approaches such as the Age, gender and diversity (AGD) policy, the Sport Strategy identifies the need for stronger data collection and evidence-building to demonstrate the actual added value of sport.

The strategy runs from 2022 to 2026 and encompasses multiple global, regional, national and local sporting events and festivals where there is potential for UNHCR to partner with the sport ecosystem.



# RATIONALE

Sport and games have been found in displacement settings for as long as UNHCR has been working with refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless communities. There is a well-documented history of "sport days" and inter-camp tournaments across refugee and internal displacement camps in Europe following the Second World War. These efforts were based on the belief that through the distraction of sport, people's health and well-being could be improved.

More recently, UNHCR has begun to approach sport in a more strategic way, recognizing how organized sport-based interventions can improve protection and development outcomes for the persons we serve, particularly children and youth.

With this understanding, UNHCR collaborated with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Terre des hommes (Tdh) to develop the *Sport for Protection Toolkit: Programming with Young People in Forced Displacement Settings*, launched in 2018. It aims to support humanitarian staff and sports organizations working with refugees to develop, implement and monitor sport projects that can achieve positive protection outcomes.

The understanding that well-structured, organized sport- and play-based activities can help strengthen life skills and achieve protection dividends underpins the *Sport for Protection Toolkit*, and this has translated to an increase in Sport for Protection (S4P) programming in UNHCR operations. Recently, sport- and play-based activities have been used to great effect as part of child protection, education and psychosocial well-being interventions. Such activities aim to build a stronger understanding of rights and referral pathways, to increase school retention, and to increase participants' own sense of being safe and protected. Sport- and play-based activities have also been used as a tool to enable individuals to rebuild social networks and integrate into new communities. Recent statistics indicate that 68% out of 99 UNHCR country operations have planned or implemented sport-related activities since 2020. In addition, 99% think there is potential for further sport programming in their operation, showing the interest and potential for sport across UNHCR.

As UNHCR's network of sport partners has grown and we have gained a greater understanding of each other's work, it has been possible to identify other roles that sport actors can play to support people forced to flee their homes. UNHCR now recognizes that sport plays a role that extends far beyond the practical project or programme-based interventions to other

## UNHCR Sporting Milestones

- ➔ **The creation of a dedicated position for sport within UNHCR at the Headquarters level.**
- ➔ **The inclusion of sport as a dedicated area of focus in the Global Compact on Refugees.**
- ➔ **Membership of several sport entities in the #WithRefugees Coalition who committed to join UNHCR's efforts in countering xenophobia and promoting inclusion.**
- ➔ **For the first time ever, a refugee team taking part in the Olympic Games in Rio in 2016.**
- ➔ **Development of the Sport for Protection toolkit, by UNHCR, the International Olympic Committee and Terre des hommes.**
- ➔ **Joint pledges by 87 organizations working with refugees through sport at the Global Refugee Forum and launch of the Sport for Refugees Coalition.**
- ➔ **The participation of a Refugee Olympic Team and Refugee Paralympic Team in Tokyo 2020 (2021).**
- ➔ **Signing Memorandums of Understanding with the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), Special Olympics International, the International Judo Federation and the Olympic Refugee Foundation.**
- ➔ **High-profile sports people, including professional footballer Alphonso Davies, appointed as Goodwill Ambassadors.**



📷 Cambodian refugees play ball games at a Handicap International ward in Khao I Dang Prachinburi Province Thailand in October 1991. © UNHCR/K.Singhaseni

areas of intervention and collaboration, including communications, advocacy, sport diplomacy and resource mobilization. Through engagement with the broader sport ecosystem – sport governing bodies, sports apparel manufacturers, federations, professional clubs, associations, professional sportspeople, and those who own and run major sporting events – UNHCR has been able to reach and advocate with entirely new audiences. When the Olympic and Paralympic Refugee Teams took part at the Tokyo Games, these were important moments to reach new audiences worldwide and shine a positive light on refugees as sportswomen and sportsmen. The events provided opportunities to communicate positively about refugees, to advocate on refugee issues, and to integrate refugee issues into new spheres of influence. They provided an opportunity to show refugees as individuals with talent and agency, and as people who are keen and able to rebuild their lives.

This newfound understanding of the role that sport and the sport ecosystem can play was, for the first time, integrated into UNHCR doctrine in 2018 with the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) by member States. Paragraph 44 *“recognizes the important role that sports [...] can play in social development, inclusion, cohesion, and well-being, particularly for refugee children (both boys and girls), adolescents and youth”*.

## SCOPE AND ALIGNMENT

For UNHCR, this Sport Strategy is global in scope, and aims to provide coherence across the organization’s work at the global, regional, national and local levels.

Although the most frequently used terms in relation to who the strategy serves are “displaced persons”, “stateless persons” and “refugees”, the strategy encompasses everyone that UNHCR serves: refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons, and their host communities.

The strategy outlines how sport can, across five interlinked areas, contribute to the GCR objectives and the High Commissioner’s Strategic Directions. Furthermore, the strategy is aligned with internal strategies and frameworks covering education, health, gender-based violence and child protection<sup>3</sup> as well as internal results-based planning instruments, to ensure internal coherence.

# THE SPORT ECOSYSTEM

Sport is an ecosystem that extends from the local to the global. Recognizing its reach is central to strategically engaging and developing opportunities with sport actors. This heterogeneous and complex ecosystem is made up of a multitude of stakeholders, ranging from grass-roots and community-level associations to professional clubs and teams, from local sport teams to international sport governing bodies, from school tournaments to mega sporting events, and from niche sport equipment producers to global brands and media outlets. Sport takes place (to one extent or another) in every United Nations member State, and beyond, and so provides a ready-made architecture to engage and partner with. Separately and collectively, the sport ecosystem has global reach, touching many millions of lives. This reach includes but is not limited to sportswomen and sportsmen, parents and children, referees and umpires, coaches and medical staff, volunteers and fans.

Though united by a common set of aspirational values such as fairness, inclusion, integrity and perseverance, the sport ecosystem has, during recent decades, been grappling with internal challenges around human rights, child protection and safeguarding violations, gender inequality and racism. These challenges have, at times, called into question the legitimacy of sport and its role in society. In many instances, this has led to an internal shift in perspective, with an understanding that the sport ecosystem needs to change to deliver positive outcomes, both on the playing field and beyond it.

To address governance gaps, several sport governing bodies have taken steps to reform their systems. They have adopted policies and strategies outlining commitments to uphold and promote human rights and labour rights, tackle corrupt practices, and incorporate environmental and sustainability considerations.

## Key Policies for Refugees and Sport

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🕒 **Sustainable Development Goals: In paragraph 37 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN member States recognized that “sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development” and valued “the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives”.**

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🕒 **Kazan Action Plan: Adopted in 2017 by UNESCO’s Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, the Kazan Action Plan marks the commitment to link sport policy development to the SDGs. It sets out specific actions in the fields of sport ethics, inclusion and sustainability, with an advocacy tool presenting evidence-based arguments for investments in physical education, physical activity and sport. It also includes the development of common indicators to measure the contribution of physical education physical activity and sport to prioritized SDGs and targets.**

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🕒 **International Olympic Committee Agenda 2020 + 5: Outlines how the IOC and the Olympic Movement will engage globally using sports partnerships to contribute to the SDGs. Consisting of 15 recommendations, it builds on the results of the Olympic Agenda 2020 and acts as the roadmap for the next five years. It also sets out how the IOC, through stronger collaboration with United Nations bodies and through sport partnerships, will influence global social policy change and resource allocation and initiate social development. Recommendation 11 describes how it will strengthen its support to refugees and populations affected by displacement.**

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🕒 **Union of European Football Associations Football Sustainability Strategy 2030: The strategy, Strength Through Unity, outlines UEFA’s long-term commitment to inspire, activate and accelerate collective action on respect for human rights and the environment within the context of European football. The refugee pillar of the strategy describes how UEFA can help refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people to remain physically and mentally healthy and become part of their host community through the power of football.**



📷 French team ambassador and former footballer Laura Georges (C) is greeted during the first ever UNITY EURO Cup organized by UNHCR and UEFA in UEFA HQs in Nyon, Switzerland. The event brought together football teams consisting of a mix of refugee and national amateur players, both female and male, from eight UEFA National Associations: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Malta, Republic of Ireland, France, and Switzerland. © UNHCR/Pierre Albouy

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, highlights in the Preamble the growing contribution of sport and physical activity to development and peace. Since then, there has been rapid growth in investment in sport interventions to address development, peace, social protection and sustainability issues. There are also a growing number of sport bodies involved in supporting causes that resonate with their social and sustainability agenda.

These developments give UNHCR new opportunities to partner with sport actors to assist displaced and stateless individuals and communities. UNHCR has already established important partnerships with a range of sport entities, including governing bodies, professional clubs, civil society and grass-roots organizations. In addition, UNHCR participates in various multi-stakeholder platforms on sport for development and peace (SDP) and is a member of sport-related steering boards and advisory councils.

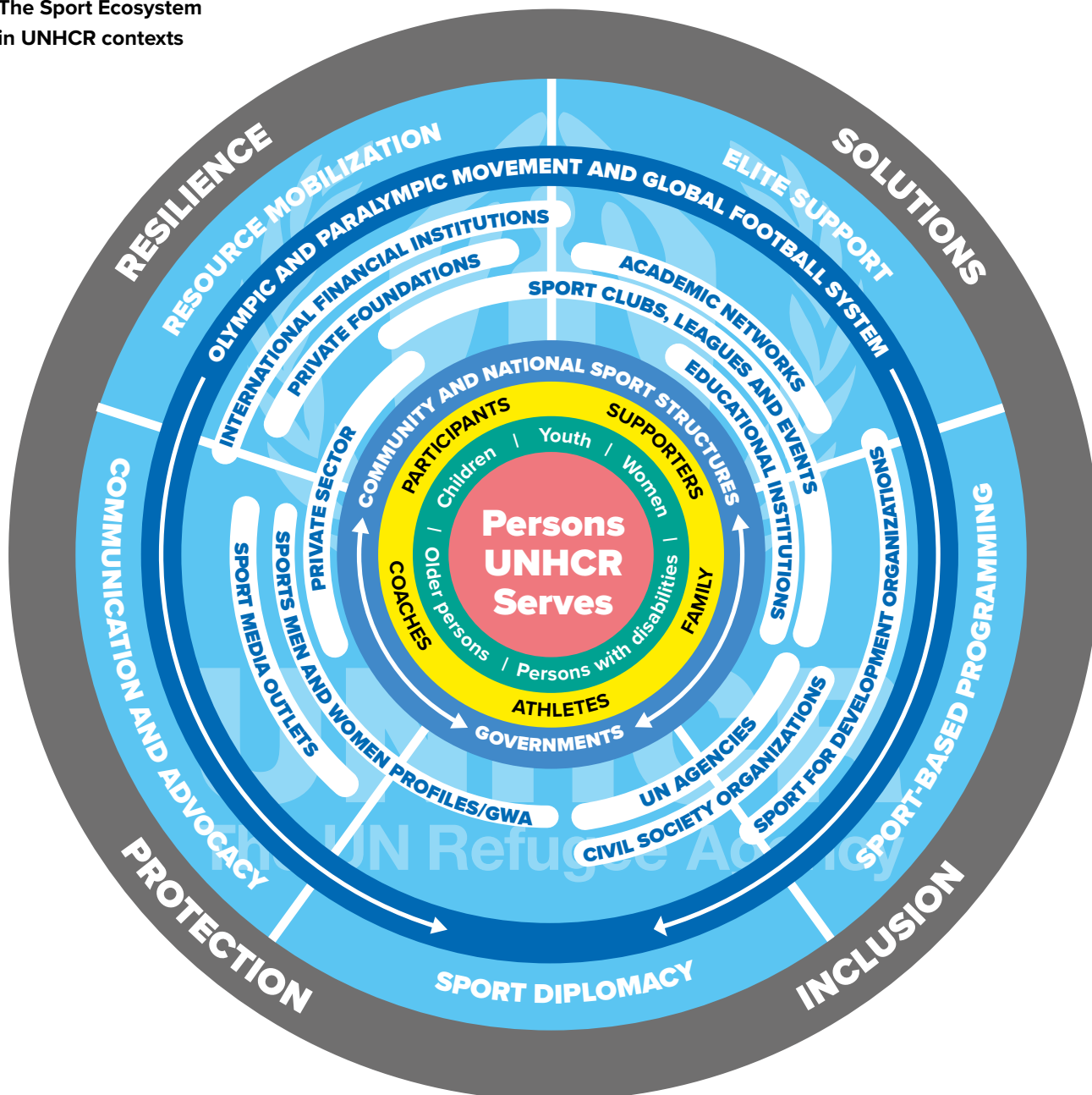
## PARTNERING WITH THE SPORT ECOSYSTEM

Within all of UNHCR's work, on, with and through sport, the organization will endeavour to work with a broad cross-section of partners from both within and outside the sport ecosystem and to align this work with the objectives of the GCR.

Partners in this process will bring complementary expertise, skills, reach and knowledge about the local, regional and global contexts. To achieve the strategy's objectives, it will be vital to broaden the base of partnerships with the sport ecosystem, and further build on those that already exist.

Thanks to UNHCR's unique mandate and its regionalized and decentralized structure, it is well-positioned to facilitate connection and collaboration between sport actors in their engagement with displaced communities and other actors in refugee, IDP and other relevant contexts.

**The Sport Ecosystem  
in UNHCR contexts**



Drawing on years of experience, UNHCR aims to continue to play a proactive role in enabling and increasing access to sporting facilities and sport- and play-based activities for the people we serve. As such, in UNHCR’s work with the sport ecosystem, the organization has a critical role to play in enabling access to camp, non-camp and urban displacement settings, facilitating information-sharing, and supporting sport actors in their engagement with the humanitarian system, including relevant government authorities at the national level to ensure increased access. UNHCR will also continue to be a strong and influential voice, from the global to local level, in promoting the power of sport as an effective tool in response to displacement both within a country’s borders and outside those borders.

UNHCR can also support and contribute to improved data collection and evidence-building on the role of sport- and play-based interventions in contributing to positive protection and development outcomes. This can, in turn, contribute to mobilizing more resources for sport activities for the people UNHCR serves.

UNHCR will develop guidance, in consultation with sport partners, on how to engage the sport ecosystem to support Regional Bureaux and Country Operations to develop partnerships that will contribute to the strategic objectives of this Sport Strategy.



📷 Sofia, 13, a Ukrainian refugee, plays hockey and table tennis with her classmates during a PE lesson at Primary School no. 58 in Warsaw. © UNHCR/Rafal Kostrzynski

## PROMISING PRACTICE:

### The Sport Sector's Response to the Ukrainian Situation

When the international armed conflict in Ukraine broke out in February 2022, a broad cross section of the sport ecosystem was quick to respond to the growing emergency. It began leveraging resources, members, networks and experience to find ways to support those fleeing Ukraine, as well as people who were internally displaced and member and partner organizations in countries affected by the crisis. Efforts ranged from mobilizing their networks to welcome refugees, establishing new funding mechanisms with a view to immediate as well as medium- and longer-term recovery, training partner organizations on sport and play-based methodologies, and public fundraising campaigns.

The sector also provided immediate material support to sport organizations that remained active in Ukraine. Athletes and professional sportspeople were supported to leave and to continue to compete in their disciplines, and sport-based programmes were re-purposing to facilitate integration and social inclusion of refugee children and youth. Using their significant reach and diverse audiences, sport organizations were important advocacy partners reaching beyond UNHCR's traditional audiences.

UNHCR consulted partners and adopted a facilitative role, supporting these efforts by leveraging its mandated role to convene partners and support a more coordinated approach. It also advised sport partners on how they could best direct resources and advocacy efforts in light of the swiftly evolving situation.

## **SPOTLIGHT:**

# The Impact of COVID on the Sport Ecosystem

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges and inequalities in society, including within sport. It resulted in the closure of stadiums, playgrounds and other sport and play facilities, particularly in schools, severely limiting the ability of individuals and communities to practice and enjoy sport.

Sport for development and peace projects, which rely predominantly on in-person and high-contact approaches, were equally negatively impacted.

The closure of education institutions around the world further reduced the possibilities for physical activity, particularly for children and youth. These age groups were also significantly affected by restrictions imposed to stop the spread of the virus. Where sport had previously been a tool to promote physical and mental well-being, self-reliance and social integration, the important support system it provided was now lost.

As the pandemic continued, however, there was an increased appreciation for the role of sport and physical activity.

Responding to the changing situation, many sport organizations found creative and innovative ways to adjust their activities by shifting to online, blended or at-home implementation, adding new health education topics to curriculums and supporting athletes through food and cash assistance.

Restrictions also led to a reduction in resources for most sport organizations. This challenged their immediate capacity to continue activities and to plan for the future.

As a result, many sport for development and peace organizations have gained valuable experience in adapting programmes to remain effective in times of unexpected change.

## CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING SPORT

Many refugees and other people forced to flee their homes encounter barriers that limit their opportunities to access sport and to enjoy the full range of benefits that participation can bring. These barriers operate at multiple levels: structural, sociocultural, interpersonal and personal. Each is also impacted by the specific context, including for example, whether it is an emergency, a protracted crisis, a resettlement or returnee situation.

Although it is widely believed that physical activity and sport can contribute to improved protection and development outcomes – for example, by creating safe spaces for displaced and stateless people to meet, have fun, play and learn – more evidence of the positive social change that sport can achieve is required. There is a need for more systematic collection of data in sport- and play-based programming. The current lack of data and evidence-driven approaches risk limiting positive change in the lives of the people UNHCR serves. It also risks limiting the evidence of change that donors are increasingly asking to see for their investments, as well as impeding much-needed future investment. The demand for such approaches should not limit the availability of sport- and play-based programming, which currently fills a much-needed gap in activities for children and youth. Common sense and adaptable approaches are needed that build on the existing evidence but do not overburden already stretched UNHCR operations, staff and partners.

Furthermore, in emergency contexts, sport- and play-based activities are not prioritized, as resources are almost always limited, and life-saving interventions such as shelter, food, health and sanitation understandably take precedence. This impacts both the availability of and access to sport facilities and organized sport activities. Other factors further limit opportunities, including policy gaps at the sporting body and State levels, a lack of communication and coordination between humanitarian actors and sport organizations, and a culture clash between the humanitarian and sport sectors.

When sport is deprioritized by humanitarian actors, this can reinforce and exacerbate existing barriers to access. These barriers can include a lack of desirable and/or familiar sports, high costs involved in accessing and participating in sport, and unfamiliar social or community norms that constrain participation opportunities. For



individuals, language barriers, lack of legal status, limited knowledge on opportunities, and more pressing needs such as work, housing, and uncertainty around ability to remain in a new country can impact motivation and interest to engage in sport.<sup>4</sup>

Barriers also differ based on age, gender, ethnicity, social class and disability. For example, girls and women may experience sociocultural barriers that prevent them participating in sport, and persons with disabilities often have few opportunities to take part in sport- and play-based activities that are accessible to them. However, wherever it is possible for them to participate in sport, it has been shown that this can contribute to improved well-being, inclusion and social cohesion.

It is not the case, however, that all sport is welcoming and open to the “other”. There is always a risk that newcomers in a community – no matter their situation, religion or ethnicity – will be exposed to discrimination in sport settings. As such, it is essential to work together with partners across the sport ecosystem to address this issue.

📷 Stateless tennis athlete, Dhruv Kavia 15 years old, practices in Nairobi, Kenya. He was born in Nairobi, but his parents, who were also born in the country, cannot pass down their British nationality to him and his brother, Parv, and the boys have not received Kenyan citizenship. © UNHCR/Sebastian Rich

## SPOTLIGHT:

### The Right to Participate in Sport Without Discrimination

The right to participate in sport, physical and recreational activities is increasingly recognized as being part of the international human rights framework. Whereas the right to take part in cultural life, protected in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), has been interpreted as encompassing sport and games, other international instruments clearly set out the right to practice sport without any discrimination.

The right of every child to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child [...] is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which also notes that these rights are essential to

children’s health and well-being. The Guidance to the CRC elaborates, confirming that refugee and asylum-seeking children must be afforded the same opportunities as children in the host country. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) further guarantees the right to practice sport, requiring States to take appropriate measures to encourage and promote the participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels. The right to practice sport is further recognized in UNESCO’s revised International Charter for Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport.



📷 Yosneidy Zambrano, Venezuelan football player of Dragónas Independiente del Valle team in Ecuador, overcame sexism to play the sport she loves. © UNHCR/Jaime Giménez



## SECTION 2

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

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This strategy, as with all of UNHCR's work, is informed by and aligned with a number of core principles and approaches, which are briefly outlined below.

### 🕒 **WHOLE OF ORGANIZATION APPROACH:**

To enable a coherent approach, the Sport Strategy aims to bring together the synergies, capacity and experience present across the organization (Headquarters, Regional Bureaux and at the country level).

### 🕒 **INCLUSION:**

In all areas of sport engagement – whether sport programming, elite support, communication, resource mobilization or sport diplomacy – and to the fullest extent possible, an age, gender and diversity (AGD) lens should be utilized to actively promote social inclusion. Conscious of the specific context, UNHCR will work with partners to ensure that displaced and stateless persons can enjoy their rights on an equal footing and participate meaningfully, focusing on the participation of girls, young women and persons with disabilities.

### 🕒 **DO NO HARM:**

The Do No Harm principle transcends all of UNHCR's work. For collaboration around sport-based programmes and support to elite talent, UNHCR will take steps to ensure that all partners have a high standard of child safeguarding policies and mechanisms, and the capacity and knowledge to address protection concerns and refer to appropriate protection services. Safeguarding principles should apply to all organizations' sport activities, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plans should include monitoring and reporting mechanisms for safeguarding. There should also be appropriate screening processes for anyone involved in policy implementation at the programmatic level, such as coaches, instructors or teachers. Communication and advocacy activities involving sport-based programmes and refugee athletes must be protection-centred.

### 🕒 **ACCOUNTABILITY:**

To ensure accountability to affected populations, UNHCR will work with all partners to integrate means of meaningful participation at all stages (assessment, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) in delivery of sport-based programmes. UNHCR will also work with communication, advocacy and resource mobilization partners to ensure that the voices of the people we serve are heard and that they are actively and meaningfully engaged. UNHCR will also work with all partners to ensure that robust feedback and response mechanisms are established and/or strengthened; these mechanisms will provide an opportunity for participants to provide feedback and raise concerns on sport-based programming – including sensitive issues related to fraud, abuse of authority, and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA).

### 🕒 **DRIVEN BY DATA AND EVIDENCE:**

The strategy recognizes the need for improved capacity to collect, analyse and use data to help understand how sport and play-based initiatives can contribute to improved protection and development outcomes. Disaggregated data should inform future programming, demonstrating how different groups (including girls, young women and persons with disabilities) are able to benefit from sport interventions. It will also contribute to the wider evidence-building agenda around sport as a tool to enhance protection and development in line with ongoing work across the sport for development and peace community.



UNHCR and Sesame Workshop organize educational activities for Rohingya children at Kutupalong refugee sites in Bangladesh. Here, Mohamadul Alam, shows off his Hula Hoop skills. © UNHCR/Firas Al-Khateeb

**➤ PARTNERSHIP:**

Partnerships are integral to UNHCR and to the Sport Strategy as a way of working. Through working and collaborating with diverse actors, recognizing their capacities, expertise, reach and comparative advantage, UNHCR aims to increase access to sport- and play-based activities for displaced and stateless communities and to achieve goals related to protection, advocacy and resource mobilization. In parallel with strengthening collaboration with existing partners, new partnerships will be identified, including at regional and national levels.

**➤ HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH:**

A rights-based focus recognizes and enforces the right of individuals to sport and play, as set out in relevant international treaties and national legislation. It also seeks to promote inclusion and prevent discrimination. The human rights-based approach acknowledges that persons – regardless of age, gender, ability, religion, ethnicity, political views or documentation status – are endowed with rights by virtue of their humanity and deserve to have those rights affirmed and protected. The approach recognizes displaced persons as active rights-holders and identifies States as primary duty-bearers, allowing for a gap analysis to identify discriminatory practices or other barriers limiting access to sport.

**➤ LOCALIZATION/SUSTAINABILITY:**

By working with and through national and local sport structures, UNHCR will promote inclusion of all displaced and stateless people into existing sport structures. By engaging and supporting sport organizations at grass-roots and community levels, and refugee-led organizations, UNHCR can build on local capacity and support sustainability of programmes.

**➤ CAPACITY-SHARING:**

Strengthening capacity within UNHCR and partner organizations on the use of sport- and play-based approaches, including Sport for Protection (S4P), is a crucial element of the strategy. UNHCR must also work both internally and with partners to develop an understanding of the wider role that sport can play. Strengthening capacity and understanding, and making resources, materials and tools available, will make it easier to develop quality S4P initiatives and to engage the sport ecosystem at all levels. This should include consideration of how to create learning networks in project locations to support the exchange of knowledge, tools and good practice, and how to strengthen partnerships and work to support displaced and stateless communities through sport.

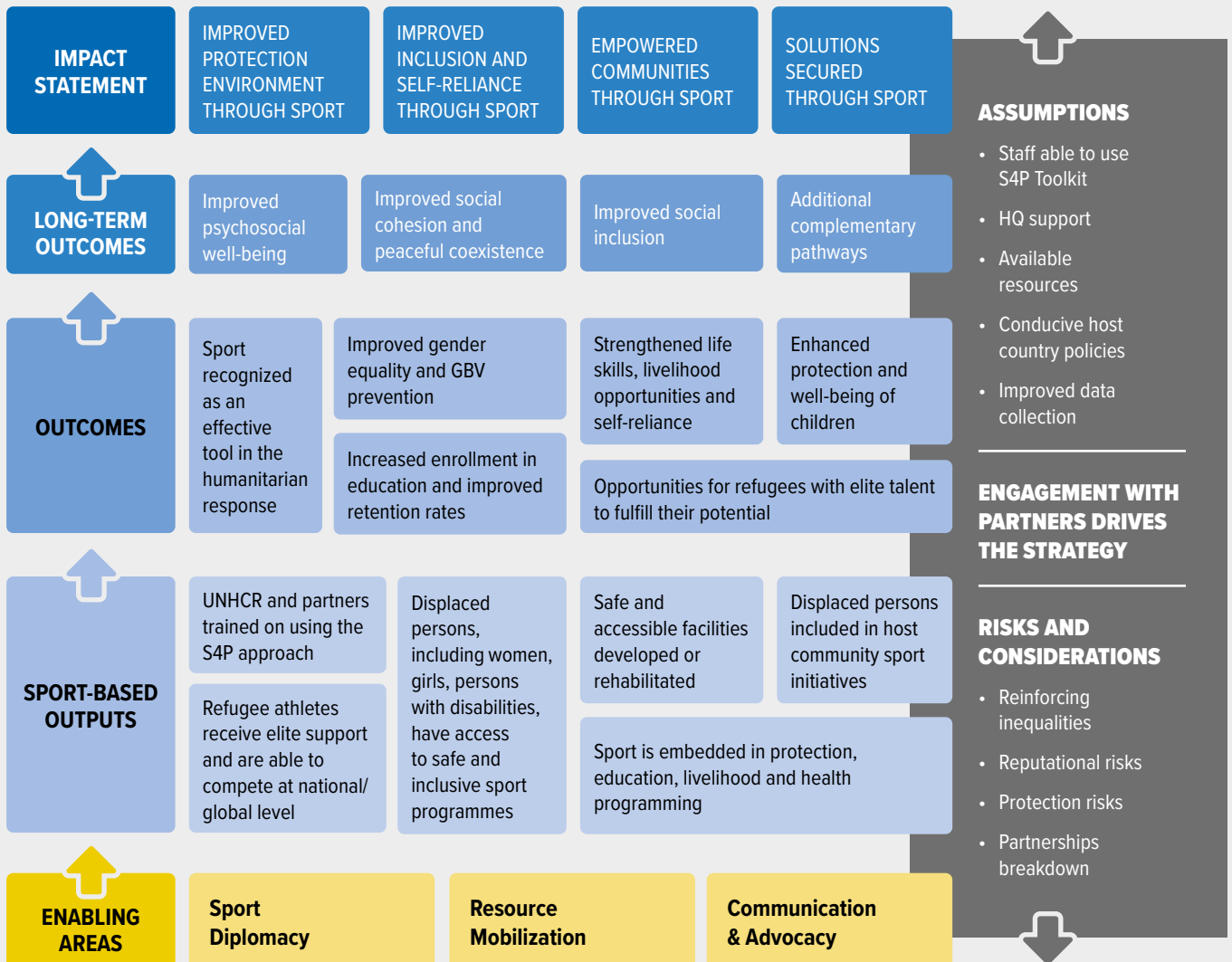
# SECTION 3

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

For the purposes of this strategy, UNHCR’s work on sport has been organized into five areas, each with an overarching objective. These areas reflect the main ways in which UNHCR has engaged with, and will continue to engage with, the sport ecosystem to benefit the people we serve. There are two programme-related strategic objectives: sport-based programming; and support to elite refugee talent. These programmatic areas are supported by the three remaining areas of work of the strategy, namely: communication and advocacy; resource mobilization; and sport diplomacy.

The Theory of Change underpinning the strategy below reflects how investments in sport- and play-based programming and elite support – when complemented by parallel and aligned efforts in communication, resource mobilization and sport diplomacy – can contribute to better outcomes for the people UNHCR serves in the form of the GCR objectives, UNHCR’s Strategic Directions, and ultimately the SDGs.<sup>5</sup>

### Global Theory of Change: SPORT STRATEGY



📷 6-year-old Muhammad Ullah and his brother Obaid Ullah want to become professional players of Taekwondo after taking classes at the UNHCR vocational centre in Timergera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. © UNHCR/Saiyna Bashir



To achieve the results the Sport Strategy envisions, we need a coherent organizational approach to engaging with the sport ecosystem. UNHCR must strengthen engagement across the five strategic objectives to ensure that throughout the displacement continuum, people are able to benefit from the opportunities that sport offers. There is also a need for more resources to strengthen UNHCR's work across each of the strategic objectives, including capacity-sharing on the S4P approach, tools to communicate with and through sport, greater understanding of sport as a diplomatic tool, and tools and guidance on resource mobilization.

UNHCR's regionalized structure means that empowered Regional Bureaux and Country Operations are central to the Sport Strategy's successful implementation. Engagement with new sport partners and in new sporting events will be accompanied by a fair but robust risk analysis. This will be particularly relevant where risks are associated with (for example) allegations of human rights violations, doping, financial mismanagement and transparency concerns, match-fixing, gender pay gaps, discrimination, and child protection concerns. Where appropriate, dedicated risk mitigation plans will be put in place.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:

# SPORT- AND PLAY-BASED PROGRAMMING



The communities we serve are better included in protective and developmental sport activities without any discrimination

## Why sport- and play-based programming?

In displacement settings, sport- and play-based programming can be a useful tool to improve protection and development outcomes. It has been used effectively as part of child protection, education and psychosocial well-being interventions.

In emergencies and protracted situations alike, sport- and play-based activities can provide children and youth with regular access to safe spaces where they can get support from peers and from trained staff such as youth workers, sport coaches, animators and facilitators. These relationships can act as a protective factor in young people's lives, contributing to stability, familiarity and normalcy, which young people need in order to thrive. This is particularly important in displacement contexts where many young people have experienced disturbing or traumatic events, been separated from family and peers, and had their education

disrupted. Safe spaces for sport and play also provide opportunities for trained staff to identify young people affected by conflict and flight, and to make referrals to appropriate services where necessary.

Quality sport- and play-based interventions build on young people's capabilities and assets and strengthen essential life skills and leadership experience. They provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with their communities and can support them to become more self-reliant. As young people experience positive development through their active participation in sport and play, their peers, families and the broader community may also benefit through a ripple effect.

Many people who have been displaced find themselves disconnected from friends, family and other support systems. For people at risk of exclusion and marginalization, such as those with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) individuals, participation in quality sport-

 A group of young judokas pose for a photograph with their coaches at the Judo for Peace dojo in Johannesburg's Berea neighbourhood in South Africa. © UNHCR/Hélène Caux

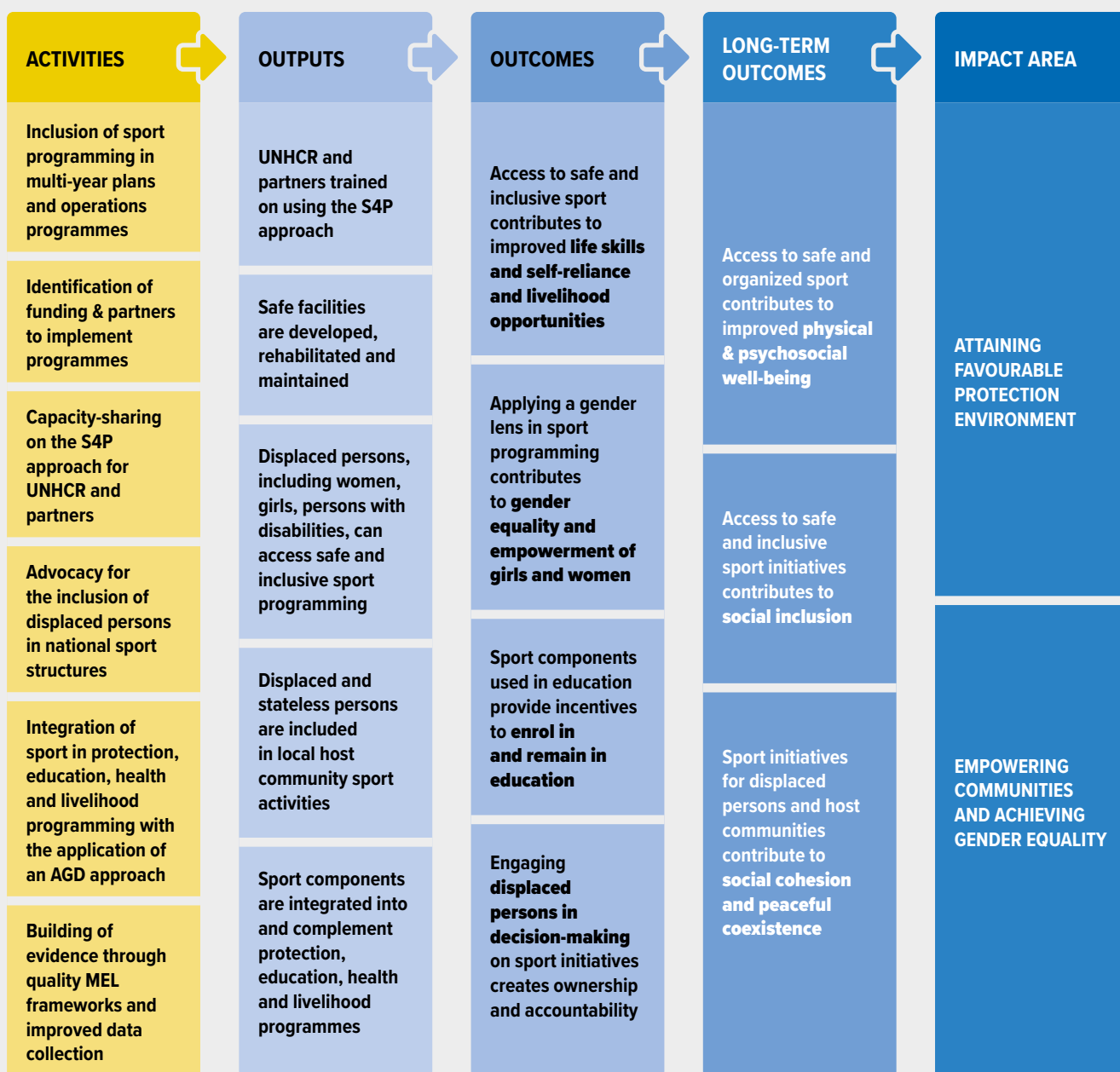


based activities is one way to support social inclusion. Programmes and sport initiatives that promote the meaningful participation of diverse groups have the power to break down barriers and challenge prejudices. Supporting the participation and inclusion of girls and women in sport can challenge discriminatory social norms and attitudes. Sport programmes and initiatives have been used as a tool to enable individuals to strengthen their sense of belonging, rebuild social networks and integrate into new communities.

## Our approach

Building on the collective experience gained in conducting structured sport initiatives in displacement settings, UNHCR will work with sport and other partners to increase access to and availability of safe and organized sport- and play-based activities for displaced and stateless persons, and host communities. Sport- and play-based initiatives will be designed, developed and implemented using an

## Theory of Change: SPORT- AND PLAY-BASED PROGRAMMING



## SPOTLIGHT:

# Sport for Protection (S4P) Approach

Sport and play can have a pivotal role in creating a safe and conducive environment that supports children and youth to learn and grow. It can help them to develop a stronger awareness of their rights, self-protection mechanisms and opportunities for building peace.

Since 2014, UNHCR, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Terre des hommes have worked together to develop a Sport for Protection (S4P) approach that aims to increase the protection and inclusion of forcibly displaced persons through the vehicle of sport. In 2018, the three agencies launched the Sport for Protection Toolkit: Programming with Young People in Forced Displacement Settings. The S4P approach utilizes the unique ability of sport to

actively and meaningfully engage young people. It uses sport as a tool to protect children and youth from abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence, while helping to develop their skills and ability to protect themselves.

The toolkit lays out the first iteration of the S4P approach. It aims to provide a framework for sport, development and humanitarian actors that guides the design and implementation of protective and developmental sport initiatives for children and youth affected by displacement. It also outlines the essential components needed to provide a safe, protective and supportive environment, and to achieve positive social outcomes, including social inclusion, social cohesion and psychosocial well-being.

S4P approach that builds on participants' life skills, enhancing their ability to protect themselves and contribute to their own protection. The approach can be implemented through stand-alone sport interventions or integrated into existing programmatic areas, including child protection, community-based protection, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), education and livelihoods.

Each sport- or play-based intervention should be adapted and tailored to the specific context, considering the situation and the protection challenges facing individuals or the community, and should involve participants to inform its design. To have the greatest chance of success, it is vital to partner with organizations that bring different expertise and experiences, including sport bodies, sport for development and peace organizations, governmental, humanitarian and development organizations, and civil society organizations. Where possible, partnerships should involve national and local sport structures as well as grass-roots organizations and refugee-led organizations, to support sustainability and maximize impact.

Interventions should be designed with an AGD approach and include the meaningful participation of communities. This entails considering how to mitigate social and cultural barriers that may limit

participation of groups at risk, including people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, women, and LGBTIQ+ individuals, and making adjustments and adaptations where needed to facilitate access by all. An inclusive approach further supports initiatives to be developed for different age groups, including children, youth, adults and older people.

Sporting events and activities can also provide an opportunity to bring together refugees and IDPs with host communities, to support social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Evidence indicates that sport- and play-based activities are more likely to be successful when held regularly over an extended period, enabling repeat participation.<sup>6</sup> It provides the space for participants to recognize their learning and for organizers to monitor and adjust activities to improve possible outcomes over time. However, longer-term approaches are not always possible, particularly in contexts where people continue to move onward. In such situations, activities and monitoring systems should be adapted to cater for more ad hoc participation.

The sustainability of sport- and play-based programming requires a realistic and effective funding model that enables activities to be implemented while at the same time building relationships that can support recurrent funding needs and future investment. This would





📷 Children and adolescents participate in the “Ven y Juega” (Come and Play) project in the municipality of Los Patios, Norte de Santander. This project is committed to social cohesion among refugees, migrants, Colombian returnees and host communities through the development of sporting events and community integration activities. © IMRD Municipality of Los Patios.

ideally include costs for maintenance, management and replacement of equipment and sport facilities, and the recruitment, training and retention of facilitators, coaches, animators and other significant adults.

To inform future programming and build evidence on the positive role that sport can play, it is necessary

to have adequate monitoring processes in place and to strengthen the collection of disaggregated data. Capacity-sharing for UNHCR and partner staff on the S4P approach, combined with new tools, will further enable the scale-up and roll-out of quality programming and evidence-building.

## SPORT FOR PROTECTION THEORY OF CHANGE

**Sport for Protection (S4P) aims to provide all young people with:**

- a safe and supportive environment;
- opportunities to build their individual skills, capacities and resources;
- meaningful engagement in, and leadership of, S4P activities; and
- the positive and sustained support and mentoring of peers, coaches and other significant adults.

...  
**So that young people will be able to:**

- experience enhanced protection and well-being (as evidenced by improved social inclusion, social cohesion and psychosocial well-being).

...  
**To such a degree that they will:**

- bring about positive changes in their lives and in the lives of others; and
- develop an increasingly safe, rights-based society.





📷 UNHCR staff play a football match against Abusalim FC veterans during the opening ceremony of the Abusalim stadium which was rehabilitated by UNHCR as a part of Sport for Peace Project in Tripoli, Libya. © UNHCR/Mohamed Alalem

## PROMISING PRACTICE:

### Sport for Peace Project, Libya

With almost 900,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and refugees needing protection and assistance, humanitarian needs in Libya remain at a high level. Prolonged conflict, political instability, ongoing violent clashes and the spread of COVID-19 have all negatively impacted the lives and well-being of Libyans and non-Libyans alike, exposing them to significant protection and human rights violations. Children are at particularly high risk.

Against this backdrop, UNHCR Libya has sought to identify protection-focused activities for some of the most affected communities. A series of consultations and participatory assessments revealed a significant interest in sport – particularly among young people. Based on this, UNHCR Libya worked with partners to tailor a sport project to provide protection against exploitation and abuse, particularly for children and

young people, and to improve social inclusion and social cohesion among the different population groups in each community. Football (the most popular sport in Libya), which has the potential to unite Libyans and non-Libyans alike, became the main vehicle for the project.

Local partnerships are often key to fostering a sense of ownership, effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Recognizing this, the Sport for Peace project has been developed and will be implemented with the active participation of local actors, including the Libyan Scouts, the Mayor's Office, relevant local municipal authorities, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and the Ministry for Displaced Affairs and Human Rights. Further to this, and in line with the recommendations of the S4P evaluation, UNHCR has engaged sport partners with the required expertise to be directly involved in implementing the project's activities.

### EXPECTED OUTCOME 1:

**An increase in Sport for Protection programmes contributes to improved psychosocial well-being.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Engage new/different partners that bring complementary expertise and skills, including local knowledge, S4P and development expertise in the organization of sport-based programming.
- ➔ Actively engage young people, other community members, parents and local leaders in the design and implementation of sport- and play-based initiatives.
- ➔ Build capacity of coaches/sport facilitators on protection (particularly child protection) in displacement settings to help them understand, coordinate and refer protection concerns to the appropriate service provider.

### EXPECTED OUTCOME 2:

**An increase in Sport for Protection programmes contributes to improved social inclusion.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Extend programmes to encompass different age groups, including younger children, adults and older persons, introducing adjustments where needed to address the barriers that exclude specific groups from participating in project activities.
- ➔ Equip programme staff, coaches and volunteers with the confidence and skills to support inclusive programming, including offering anti-bias training, values clarification and inclusive design.
- ➔ Consider offering or making available a variety of sport- and play-based activities to attract diverse groups.

### EXPECTED OUTCOME 3:

**An increase in Sport for Protection programmes contributes to improved social cohesion.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Consider integrating behaviour change strategies into programmes that seek to transform social relationships, while promoting supportive cultural norms and practices.
- ➔ Invest in sport infrastructure and facilities that benefit both displaced and host communities.
- ➔ Engage in continuous advocacy with governments and sport partners for the inclusion of refugees in national sport structures and activities.



📷 A Sawara sports team poses for a group photo after training at Inke camp, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The team is assisted by UNHCR, which includes assistance to participate in competitions abroad. The sport is also used as a way of reducing rates of sexual and gender-based violence in the refugee camp.  
© UNHCR/Hugh Kinsella Cunningham

## CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

### Apply a gender lens to the design and implementation of sport programming

Tailored sport- and play-based activities can make an important contribution to empowering women, girls and others who are vulnerable as a result of their gender by providing opportunities to build self-esteem and confidence, and by challenging sociocultural norms and gender stereotypes. To achieve the desired outcomes, wherever possible, UNHCR and partners should apply a gender lens in the design and implementation of sport- and play-based programming, also considering that the overlap of gender with other characteristics can exacerbate risk and forms of discrimination.

Through intentionally designed and delivered sport initiatives, safe spaces can be used to engage and support women and girls around different issues and can be tailored to attract and motivate girls and young women to participate in sport. These initiatives can also provide transformative opportunities to promote female leadership, change harmful norms, encourage respectful attitudes toward women and girls, and address sexual and reproductive health. Crucially, they can also be used to prevent and address gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls. The popularity and attraction of sport among many men and boys can be used as an effective way to engage them on gender issues and to address discriminatory norms, attitudes and customs.

When designing initiatives, it is necessary to involve displaced women and girls and LGBTIQ+ individuals in identifying and addressing some of the additional barriers they may face. Examples of these barriers include: lack of childcare as women and girls may have a greater burden of responsibility for housework, including the care of elderly or infirm relatives; lack of access to menstrual hygiene materials that limits mobility; financial barriers; social and cultural barriers that prevent women and girls and LGBTIQ+ individuals from accessing sports or that label some sports as more “feminine” or “masculine”; lack of transportation means; and risks of being exposed to gender-based violence when accessing sport venues (on the streets, on public transport, and in and around sports and community venues). Women and girls with disabilities, those who identify as LGBTIQ+, or those who belong to minority groups may face additional barriers, so particular interventions will be required to ensure the inclusion of such groups.

Applying a gender lens will also help identify factors that limit the opportunities for boys to access play and sport, such as they are compelled to engage in the worst forms of child labour or to join armed forces. Conscious of the specific displacement context, UNHCR will strive to develop sport initiatives to promote gender equality, taking into account the social and cultural norms and traditions that determine the position of girls within the social structure, in order to achieve greater active participation by girls in sport- and play-based programming.

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Use gender and power analysis and sex- and age-disaggregated data and, where possible, other diversity characteristics, to inform sport programming.
- ➔ Put in place measures to engage families of participants, including male heads of household, to increase participation of girls and young women in sport- and play-based activities.
- ➔ Work with diverse partners, including women-led organizations and partners experienced in GBV prevention and response.
- ➔ Engage female coaches and instructors as well as male coaches when working with men and boys on gender issues.
- ➔ Implement strategies that maximize accessibility of sports and physical safety in and around sporting environments for women, girls and other at-risk groups.

### Inclusive sport programming for persons with disabilities

Evidence shows that people with disabilities experience the impact of displacement differently to those without disabilities. They are often at greater risk of violence, discrimination, exploitation and abuse. They also often face additional barriers in accessing basic services as well as educational and livelihood opportunities. They may also experience negative attitudes from community members or service providers, due to stigma and prejudice.



📷 No limits for this refugee child who competed at a high jump event during the Special Olympics trial in Kakuma, Kenya.  
© UNHCR/Samuel Otieno

Beyond contributing to improved physical and psychosocial well-being for persons with disabilities, their active and meaningful participation in safe and organized sport- and play-based activities can help them to acquire useful life skills, promote self-esteem and strengthen resilience. Their participation in sport initiatives can also help to break down barriers and challenge prejudices by highlighting their skills and abilities, thereby promoting social inclusion.

Displaced and stateless persons with disabilities face multiple challenges that limit their opportunities to access safe sport and to develop elite talent. To ensure that they can engage in sport activities, the activities must be designed and carried out in an inclusive and accessible manner, bearing in mind the specific challenges and barriers outlined above.

UNHCR will strengthen its existing collaboration with disability sport organizations and disabled persons' organizations to provide targeted activities for people with disabilities while working to increase inclusion by addressing barriers and promoting the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities. Further to this, where possible, universal design principles will be considered when sport infrastructure is developed and/or refurbished.

### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Encourage inclusion of persons with disabilities by: including children with mild disabilities in mainstream sport activities; organizing dedicated sport activities for children with disabilities; and organizing para-sport activities for children with and without disabilities (a twin-track approach).
- ➔ Explore alternative sports and sport partnerships that offer a wide range of sport and play activities.
- ➔ Check the accessibility of sport facilities by organizing a “disability walk” where children/adults with different disabilities could identify barriers to participation and potential solutions.
- ➔ Alongside working with sport partners, engage partners experienced in disability inclusion and disabled persons' organizations in the planning and implementation of sport-based programming.

# INTEGRATING SPORT INTO ESTABLISHED SECTORS

## Protection

In displacement settings, sport can be a powerful tool to improve protection and development outcomes for displaced young people and their communities. Tailored sport-based programmes can be integrated into existing protection sectors such as child protection, community-based protection and GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response. The S4P approach specifically caters for programmes intended to address protection concerns.

Sport can also be an effective connector and tool with which to engage hard-to-reach children and young people who would otherwise not access protection services. These groups include adolescent heads of household, unaccompanied and separated children, and out-of-school children and young people.

### Key components in the approach include:

- provision of inclusive and safe spaces for children and young people where they can build social networks, acquire skills, and access sexual and reproductive health (SHR) information and care for young people;
- integrating skills development and counselling with sport-based components;
- provision of referral mechanisms, including case management for protection issues.

## Education

Integrating sport into education programmes can contribute to positive education outcomes for displaced and stateless children and young people. Sport activities in the classroom and after school can serve as an incentive for children to remain in school. Sport can contribute to improved attendance, engagement and attention while in school, which can lead to improved socio-emotional well-being and an increase in potential for learning and knowledge retention. Sport can also provide a pathway to education for out-of-school children and young people, attracting new groups of students that would otherwise not attend, or encouraging participation in new educational opportunities. Using physical education (PE), which is often a national curriculum subject, certified training and capacity-sharing initiatives for teachers and school staff can also contribute to increasing capacity and knowledge around S4P programming. It can support teachers to deliver quality, inclusive, protective and developmental PE activities, and, more broadly, the national curriculum.

Dedicated sport programmes have also helped to formalize the skills of displaced young people who can then become certified sport facilitators and coaches, and gain qualifications that can support their self-reliance in the future. Building on these collective experiences, UNHCR will continue work to support initiatives that use sport in educational settings to introduce children to formal as well as non-formal schooling, provide life opportunities and reduce dropout rates.

## SPOTLIGHT:

### Evaluation of sport-based programming

An evaluation of multi-year sport projects in Rwanda and Mexico concluded that the interventions **succeeded in making sport more relevant in the refugee protection space**. This is not only demonstrated by the positive feedback from young participants and recognition by parents, communities and local leaders of the contribution sport has made to **improving the well-being and engagement of young people in their communities**, but perhaps most significantly by the unanimous recognition among the staff and leadership of project partners and UNHCR that **these investments have made an important contribution to their protection work**.

### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Support S4P development linked to inclusion in national systems and leveraging national practices and programmes.
- ➔ Foster intersectoral linkages to facilitate children's engagement with sports.
- ➔ Identify opportunities to incorporate sport- and play-based activities into pre-existing protection programmes, where it can be an important link between child protection and education, in for example, child-friendly spaces and primary schools, which can operate in emergency and protracted situations.



📷 Primary students play basketball as part of the Educate A Child (EAC) programme in Rwanda. © UNHCR/Samuel Otieno

## PROMISING PRACTICE:

# Schools and Young Sports Facilitators Join Forces to Enhance Protection and Learning Through Fun, Safe and Structured Sport Activities

The innovative UNHCR-Educate A Child (EAC) and Generation Amazing Sport for Protection initiative uses sport to enhance the protection space for and personal development of primary school-aged children. This is achieved through implementing dedicated sporting activities in selected EAC-supported primary schools, designed and led by qualified refugee and host community youth sport facilitators.

The initiative was developed through ongoing collaboration between UNHCR, Generation Amazing and the EAC programme of the Education Above All Foundation. All parties recognized the potential of using sport to enhance the learning experience and retain and increase enrolment through adding an innovative sport component to the existing programme, in a limited number of locations.

To date, the initiative has been rolled out in four countries where EAC works; Chad, Kenya (Kakuma), Rwanda and Uganda.

Since 2017, UNHCR Rwanda has continued to implement Sport for Protection activities to promote protection as well as school enrolment and retention. To maximize impact, UNHCR Rwanda is bringing together various stakeholders, including partners, school staff and trained youth sport facilitators, to scale up sport activities, integrating them into regular school timetables and as extra-curricular activities. Some primary schools have already welcomed the organization of dedicated sport activities by the trained youth facilitators, and by primary school teachers who graduated from the certified programme jointly devised by UNHCR and Jesuit Worldwide Learning. The young facilitators are supporting primary schools in delivering physical education (PE) lessons, sports and recreation programming, and organizing games and events, both in their own schools and with others.



📷 Rita Brown, a Ugandan refugee and yoga instructor, strikes a yoga pose in her compound in Kakuma camp, Kenya. Rita promotes mental wellness in the Kenyan refugee camp. © UNHCR/Samuel Otieno

## Health

Increased opportunities for refugees to access safe sport can also have positive impacts on their physical and mental health and well-being. It can lay the foundation for healthy lifestyle choices for children and youth, and improve their control of some of the determinants of health.

Regular participation in sport is associated with higher levels of general well-being, physical health and social health. In particular, provision of sport-based programming can contribute to the prevention of non-communicable diseases by increasing opportunities for participation in physical activity. Physical inactivity is one of the contributing factors to overweight and obesity – a growing problem in low- and middle-income countries and one that is also impacting displaced populations. This is linked to an increase in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease as well as maternal morbidity, preterm birth and infant mortality.<sup>7</sup> Sport- and play-based programming can also serve as a tool for education and dialogue on sexual, reproductive and other health issues.<sup>8</sup>

Globally, the linkages between physical activity and enhanced mental health and psychosocial well-being are now well-described, and sport and physical activity can be used in the treatment of a wide range of mental health conditions.<sup>9</sup> The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings list the use of sport- and play-based activities as examples of ways to promote family and community support for all emergency-affected community members and, specifically, for people at greatest risk.

The Sport Strategy recognizes that there are opportunities to use sport strategically to address health challenges in a more systematic approach and to integrate sport- and play-based components in MHPSS, sexual and reproductive health and other health interventions.

### Suggested enabling actions:

- Train health providers in refugee settings to promote engagement in sports for all ages to increase physical activity and enhance mental health and psychosocial well-being.
- Use sport events as a tool to promote information, education and communication activities as a component of a behaviour change communication strategy addressing priority health concerns.
- Train sport coaches to identify adolescents, youth and men at risk of or experiencing depression or other common mental health conditions.
- Engage elite athletes to help promote the empowerment, health and well-being of adolescent girls, including engaging girls and boys on sexual and reproductive health (e.g. prevention of teenage pregnancy; prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted infections; vaccination against human papilloma virus) and mental health conditions.
- Consider menstrual health and hygiene management as an enabler of participation in sport, and how sport can be used as a tool to break taboos and reduce stigma related to menstruation, which may prevent girls and women from engaging in sports.





📷 Newly trained cricket coaches receive International Cricket Council (ICC) Level 1 certificates, which was built into a cricket coach programme. © Cricket without Boundaries (CWB)

## Livelihoods and economic inclusion

The popularity and appeal of sport to young people also makes it an attractive setting for projects and schemes that aim to create livelihood opportunities. The sport world offers ample job training and employment possibilities, including as coaches, instructors and sport teachers, referees and sport managers but also as nutritionists, event managers, relationship managers and physiotherapists, among others.

Participating and engaging in sport can help individuals to develop networks, build confidence and foster inclusion in the host community, all of which can support displaced and stateless persons to become self-reliant. Volunteering with sport organizations or at sport events also provides opportunities to gain livelihood experience and useful skills.

Recognizing and building on these opportunities, UNHCR along with its partners will work to support and facilitate interventions to build and formalize skills within the sport ecosystem that can enable displaced and stateless persons to gain skills and qualifications and access livelihood opportunities. Sport can further

be embedded in livelihood programming through identification and recognition of qualifications, facilitated access to sport education and training, private sector opportunities with sport companies, and support for self-employment and job placement in sport careers.

### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Identify educational (vocational/professional training) and careers pathways related to sport (coaching and training, sport management).
- ➔ Explore partnerships that can contribute to job creation and placement for careers within the sport ecosystem, including clubs, brands, and other organizations engaged with sport.
- ➔ Explore the potential for professional sport careers with sport federations, sport associations and ministries of sport, particularly in countries where there are reservations against the right to work.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

# ELITE SUPPORT

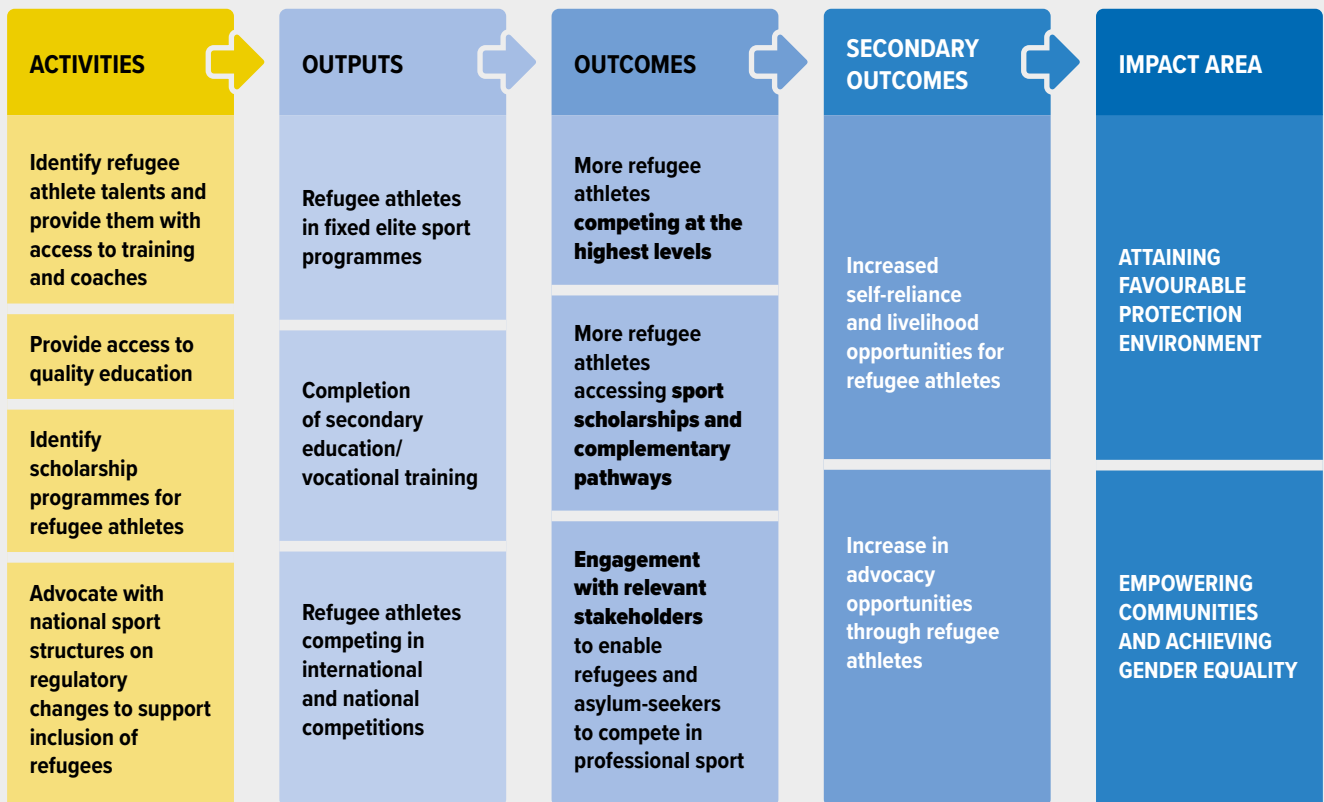
➔ Refugees with elite talent can fulfil their potential and access opportunities for complementary pathways through sport

### Why elite sport?

Refugees should have the opportunity to participate in sport at all levels, whether for fun, fitness or something more serious. The possibility for refugees to participate in elite-level sport is an important step in providing hope and different opportunities. It is a statement that fleeing your home does not have to be the end of your sporting aspirations and talent. Enabling talented refugee athletes to train and compete at the highest level can also result in livelihood opportunities as professional athletes, coaches, or in other roles within the sport ecosystem.

When combined with access to quality education or training, participation in elite sport can also provide refugees with skills and opportunities to further their lives outside of sporting careers, which can be difficult to establish and normally have a limited time span.

### Theory of Change: ELITE SUPPORT





📷 IOC Scholarship Holder Masomah Ali Zada trains with hopes of a place on the Tokyo 2020 Refugee Olympic Team.  
© UNHCR/Benjamin Loyseau

## Our approach

Building on our experience of collaborating with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International Paralympic Committee (IPC), UNHCR will endeavour to expand opportunities and support to refugees with elite sport potential through continued engagement with established partners. To that aim, UNHCR will also identify new stakeholders, including donors, sporting institutions and national sport structures.

The elite athlete strand of programming also provides other possibilities and opportunities. Refugees with elite talent can benefit from the possibility of a complementary pathway to resettlement. A current pilot project with the World University Service of Canada has provided the opportunity to obtain a pathway to citizenship, through sport and education, built on the existing Canadian community sponsorship model.

UNHCR will explore how this programme can be replicated in partnership with sport organizations, educational institutions, the private sector and governments.

## Barriers to participation

Although many people who have not been forced to flee their homes might dream of taking up professional sport, refugee athletes frequently face greater barriers to participation at the elite level.

Many sport organizations have rules that bar refugees from participation. These rules may not have been designed with that objective; they may simply be stipulations such as a national championship being reserved for citizens of the country in question, or limiting the number of non-citizens in professional clubs and teams. Refugees also often lack the correct identity documents to be properly registered for sport events, and even if they have such documents, an annual renewals process can leave them stuck in bureaucratic wrangling while they miss deadlines for registration.

Global sport bodies are advocating for and working towards the removal of barriers linked to rules of competition for refugees. It is clear, though, that UNHCR and partners can play a proactive role in advocating for adequate documentation to allow refugees to compete in their country of residence, and for national sport federations to amend regulations that effectively bar refugees from participation.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME 1:

**An increase in refugee athletes accessing elite support and opportunities to compete at elite level.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Engage national sport bodies, including National Olympic Committees, to identify and support talented refugee athletes to train and compete at elite level.
- ➔ Strengthen partnerships with international and regional sport federations to create more opportunities for talented refugee sportspeople to compete.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME 2:

**An increase in the number of refugee athletes accessing scholarships and complementary pathways.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Strengthen collaboration with academic and educational networks to increase opportunities for academic scholarships to benefit refugee athletes.
- ➔ Strengthen collaboration with sport bodies in resettlement countries to explore complementary pathways and opportunities.
- ➔ Identify sport organizations in the private sector that could support efforts to create sporting complementary pathways.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME 3:

**UNHCR works with relevant government ministries and other stakeholders to enable refugees and asylum-seekers to compete in professional sport at the country level.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Advocate with governments and sport federations to amend laws and regulations that restrict opportunities for refugees and stateless athletes to train and compete at any level.
- ➔ Use established mechanisms to follow up with governments and other stakeholders on their Global Refugee Forum pledges on access to sport.



📷 All six members of the IPC Refugee Paralympic Team gather in front of the Agitos symbols in Tokyo, Japan. © Lucas Freitas/IPC

## SPOTLIGHT:

# The Olympic and Paralympic Refugee Teams

The Refugee Olympic Team debuted at the Rio Games in 2016 and has now become an established International Olympic Committee (IOC) programme. In the lead-up to the Tokyo Games in 2021, the IOC was supporting 56 athletes to train in consideration for the team, with 29 refugee athletes selected to take part in the Games. The IOC and Olympic Refugee Foundation have confirmed that the refugee athlete scholarship programme will continue and that the Refugee Olympic Team will feature again in Paris in 2024.

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC), likewise, has supported refugees to participate in the Paralympic Games, with independent athletes competing at Rio and the first Refugee Paralympic Team taking part in the Tokyo Games. The IPC is also looking at ways to continue the programme for Paris in 2024.

UNHCR members of staff were embedded in both teams in 2021 and this close collaboration helped provide necessary refugee protection and support.

Both teams, while fantastic achievements in themselves, have also shown the importance of representation, and what refugees – including those with disabilities – can achieve when given access to the same opportunities as others.

Their participation was a demonstration to sport organizations around the world of how to provide refugee sports-people with opportunities to train and compete. They were also an inspiration to refugees globally, encouraging many to take up sport with the knowledge that for the first time they too could compete at the highest level.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

# COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY



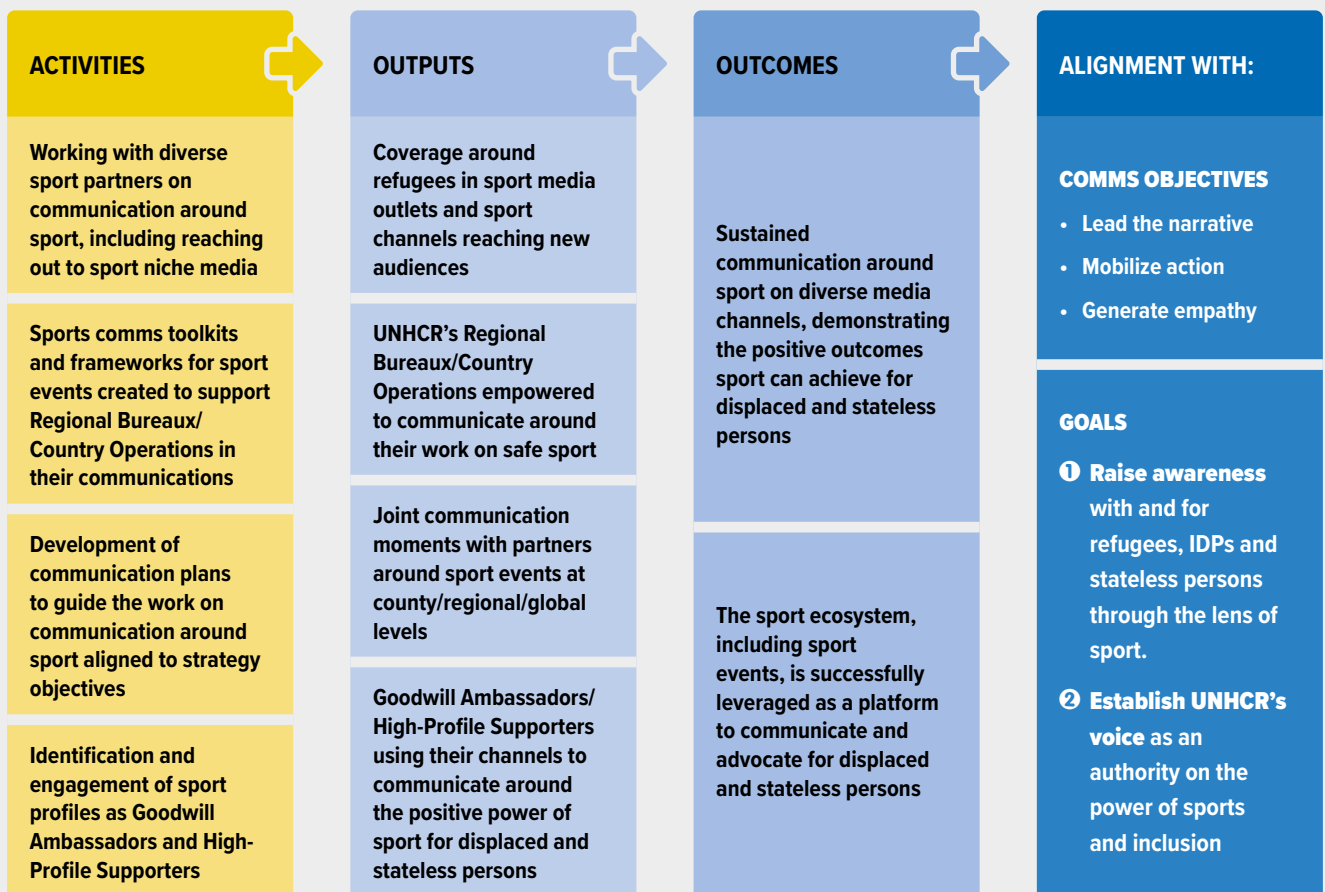
An increase in new communication and advocacy opportunities with and through the sport ecosystem

## Why use sport for communication and advocacy purposes?

With global audiences in excess of 3 billion people for mega sporting events, sport provides UNHCR with a communication platform that can reach far beyond UNHCR's traditional audiences and engage entirely new audiences in support of refugees. Thanks to its universal values and cross-cultural appeal, sport is a particularly formidable tool for reaching younger audiences. Communicating with and through sport

presents refugees with an opportunity to demonstrate their agency. It also gives UNHCR and partners the chance to show how sport can transform refugees' lives and help them build a better future. Sport also provides a familiar and compelling narrative that can break down cultural barriers and change perceptions and attitudes towards refugees.

## Theory of Change: COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY





📷 Children play with their new Dream Balls in Brazil. © UNHCR/ Camila Ignacio Geraldo

## PROMISING PRACTICE:

### Engaging Young People Through Sport

In 2021, UNHCR launched a global design competition, encouraging young artists to design the football of their dreams, and partnered with Alive and Kicking, a sport charity and ethical manufacturer of footballs, to turn the best designs into real footballs. To select the best designs, UNHCR convened a jury of athletes, artists and celebrities, including football superstar and former refugee Alphonso Davies. Around 1,600 young artists

from 100 countries submitted designs. More than 2,300 balls were bought by supporters, clubs, businesses and UNHCR offices, helping raise more than \$10,000 for sport activities and equipment. The project also generated important media and social coverage. It made the cover of Time for Kids magazine and won a Shorty Awards Gold Distinction.

This Sport Strategy also envisions using communication channels to demonstrate how UNHCR's Sport for Protection work is helping to provide refugees with protective and developmental sporting opportunities, as well as providing staff and partners with new ways to meet with refugees and protect the most vulnerable. Communication can also shed light on how sport can bring refugees and their host communities together and be a vehicle for local integration.

Communications targets will be developed in line with UNHCR's Communications Strategy.

## Approach

A regionalized UNHCR means that empowered offices communicating about their work on sport is central to the strategy. Tools and messaging will be developed to support Regional Bureau and country operations to communicate about their work with and through sport, ensuring their contribution to a combined global effort.

At the global level, UNHCR will continue to include and connect sport with other priority communication areas such as protection, education, inclusion of persons with disabilities, gender equality, and engagement with young people.

Communicating on sport events and with sport partners will also provide opportunities to expand UNHCR's audience base and the reach of our messages. This should not be limited to the benefits of sport for refugees and why they deserve the same opportunity to compete as other talented sportspeople have; it should be used more broadly to advocate for the protection and inclusion of refugees in wider society and to support resource mobilization and fundraising. With our partners, UNHCR will also focus on communicating about the benefits of sport for refugees with physical and intellectual disabilities. Central to UNHCR's communications effort will be our continued work with influential sportspeople, who can act as advocates for refugees. Their profiles in mainstream sport and media, particularly social media, offer UNHCR the opportunity to further diversify our audiences.

### EXPECTED OUTCOME 1:

**Sustained communication around sport on diverse media channels demonstrates the positive outcomes sport can achieve for displaced and stateless people.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Develop tools to support Regional Bureaux and country operations in their communications on sport, including guidance on key messaging and content collection.
- ➔ Develop a communications calendar that identifies key moments to launch messaging and works to unify UNHCR communications around sport.
- ➔ Develop a crisis communications plan identifying key areas of risk and a defined crisis communications cell to manage responses.

### EXPECTED OUTCOME 2:

**The sport ecosystem, including sport events, is successfully leveraged as a platform to communicate and advocate for displaced and stateless people.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Identify a dedicated number of sport partner engagements throughout the year at global, regional and country levels.
- ➔ Continue to develop plans of engagement around high-profile athletes and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassadors.
- ➔ Develop specific communications tools and plans to inform engagement in sport events, taking into account opportunities for UNHCR supporters, influencers and senior management to leverage support for the organization's communications, fundraising and advocacy work.





📷 Legado Project and Alianza Lima organize a Mini Olympics for UNHCR. © Legado/ Paul Vallejos

## PROMISING PRACTICE:

### Alianza Lima – Sport for Integration

UNHCR's partnership with the Peruvian football club Alianza Lima is a prime example of how a sport project can help integrate refugees into local communities and counter negative and xenophobic narratives.

In 2020, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with Alianza Lima to support inclusion of refugee communities in their men's and women's football academies and to collaborate on communication. The collaboration provides opportunities for people who have been forced to flee their homes to be integrated and protected, while healing, developing and growing in a welcoming, fun and safe space.

Since Alianza Lima was founded by the Afro-Peruvian community, the club has valued diversity as a strength, and that idea is central to the partnership. Through the joint campaign #SolidaridadAzul, UNHCR and Alianza

Lima have worked together to produce social media content for both organizations, placing strong emphasis on shared values.

By engaging well-known sport organizations and players, UNHCR can reach a key target group of persons aged 18–35 with positive messages on refugee inclusion. Wilmer Aguirre and Hernán Barcos, of Alianza Lima's men's Premier Team, and the Venezuelan football player Maria Ortegano, from the women's Premier Team, have been major supporters of these efforts.

Joint press releases have attracted regional attention, with one stating that Alianza Lima aims to enlist over 1 million Venezuelans in Peru as their fans: Alianza Lima quiere sumar como hinchas al millón de venezolanos radicados en Perú ([libero.pe](http://libero.pe))

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:

# SPORT DIPLOMACY

➔ Sport is utilized to improve diplomatic, social and political relations in support of the people UNHCR serves

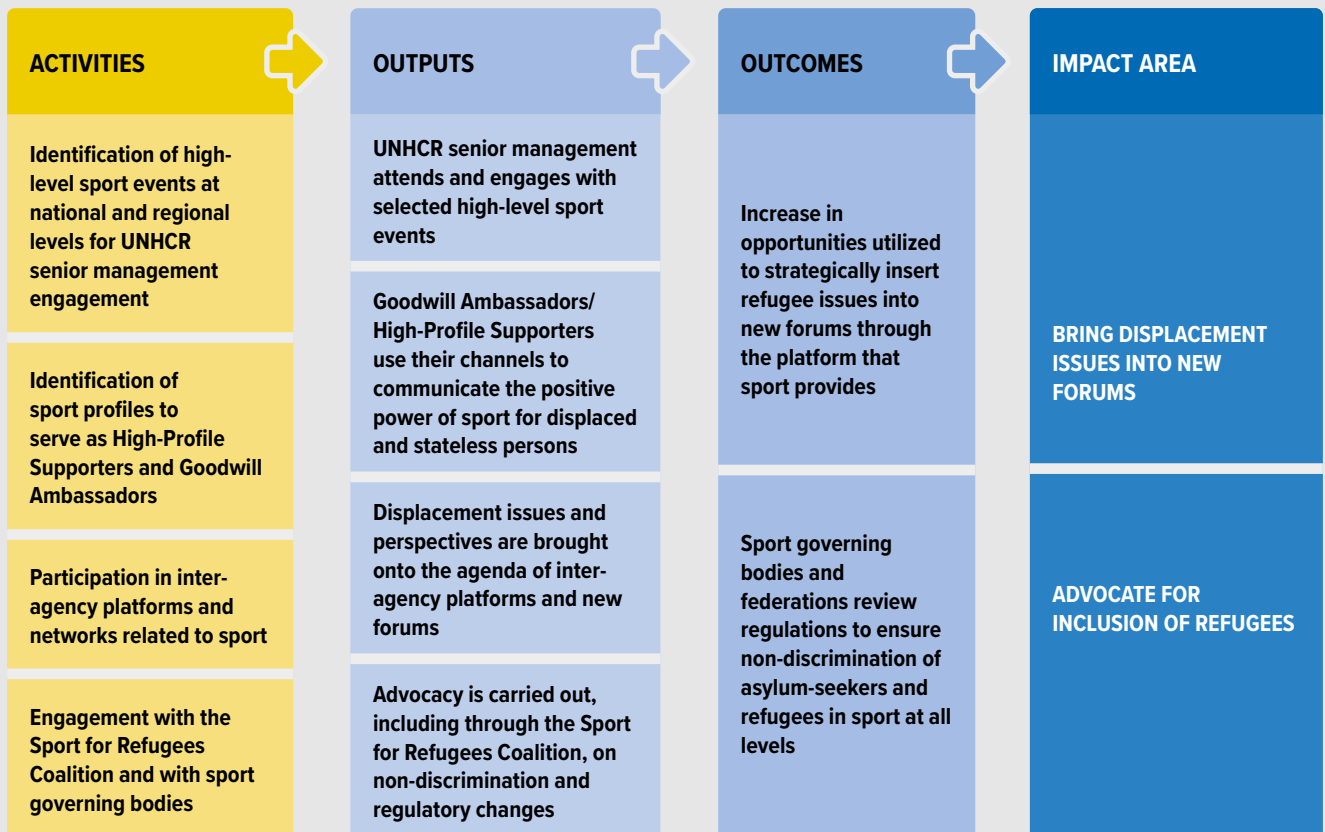
### Why sport diplomacy?

Sport has the unique potential to bring communities and nations together and, as such, can be a very practical and effective vehicle through which to improve international relations, facilitate interaction and influence public opinion. Increasingly, governments and regional bodies are embracing sport to advance foreign policy goals but also as a tool to promote development, culture, trade, investment, education and tourism opportunities. Seen as an instrument of soft power, sport can serve as an entry point for nations, international organizations and other actors to approach difficult themes and topics, and to bridge differences.

### Our approach

For UNHCR, a strategic approach to sport diplomacy can bring opportunities to insert refugee issues – through the platform that sport provides – into new sport and non-sport forums. The process is also an opportunity to advocate for support, protection and inclusion of people who have been forced to flee their homes. Building on current initiatives, the Sport Strategy aims to identify key opportunities for advocacy and engagement, and to leverage the influence and reach of sport and sport partners to this end.

### Theory of Change: SPORT DIPLOMACY



Senior-level UNHCR engagement at and around sport events, particularly where refugee sportswomen and sportsmen are participating, will provide a platform for both bilateral and public international diplomacy, by bringing the refugee cause to the attention of new audiences and sharing a positive narrative through refugees' sporting achievements. Beyond mega sporting events, engagement in regional and national sport events, including collaboration with cities, provides important opportunities to exercise sport diplomacy in this form.

A key avenue for UNHCR to pursue is that of sport ambassadors. The UNHCR Goodwill Ambassadors and High-Profile Supporters programmes engage sportswomen and sportsmen to use their interest in displacement issues, their influence and dedication, to lend their voices in support of the refugee cause. Through their communication channels, they can reach large new audiences with advocacy messages. The Goodwill Ambassadors and High-Profile Supporters programmes can also make connections to clubs, teammates and sponsors, to ensure that refugee issues are on their agenda.

## PROMISING PRACTICE:

### Sporting Goodwill Ambassadors

UNHCR's Goodwill Ambassador Programme harnesses the influence, visibility and networks of celebrity supporters and influencers to help maximize UNHCR's impact for refugees. Among UNHCR's Goodwill Ambassadors are a number of athletes, including Syrian refugee and Olympic swimmer, Yusra Mardini, and South Sudanese track and field refugee Olympian, Yiech Pur Biel.

Most recently, UNHCR appointed Alphonso Davies, a left-back for FC Bayern Munich and Canada's men's national soccer team, as the first footballer and Canadian to become a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador. (Alphonso was born in a refugee camp in Ghana and resettled to Canada when he was 5 years old.) His appointment was in line with the Goodwill Ambassador team's strategy around working with athletes with a refugee background, who can speak to their personal experience and engage a new sports audience.

A wide range of athletes with lived refugee experience support UNHCR's work, including footballers, basketball players, runners, swimmers and weightlifters. They are role models and transcend narrow audience and interest brackets. UNHCR shares the positive stories of what is possible when refugees are supported and can thrive, ensuring that refugees can see themselves represented by inspiring athletes, driving acceptance and dignity. Sport is a very effective way to do this because of the central role it plays in many people's lives.



📷 Alphonso Davies signs his Goodwill Ambassador contract for UNHCR at FC Bayern Munich's training ground. © UNHCR / FC Bayern München

By engaging in intergovernmental forums on sport, UNHCR has the opportunity to introduce a displacement angle to international policy discussions that bring member States together to drive forward collective efforts to ensure that sport offers tangible socioeconomic benefits. Sport-related multi-stakeholder platforms such as the Centre for Sport and Human Rights also provide UNHCR with a unique opportunity to bring attention to the plight of people forced to flee their homes. Engaging in such platforms broadens the understanding of sport partners around safeguarding the rights of displaced persons.

Stronger engagement with the governing bodies of international and regional sport organizations – for example, through dedicated refugee-focused multi-stakeholder groups such as the Sport for Refugees Coalition (see Spotlight box) – will provide more opportunities to advocate for the inclusion of refugees in national, regional and international sport structures and for the removal of regulations that discriminate against refugees.

## SPOTLIGHT:

### Sport for Refugees Coalition

The Global Refugee Forum, in December 2019, further galvanized support and commitment when UNHCR, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Olympic Refugee Foundation (ORF) brought together 87 organizations – from governments to National Olympic Committees, international sport federations, clubs, associations and civil society organizations – behind three broad pledges:

- To promote and ensure access for all refugees, without distinction of any kind, to safe and inclusive sporting facilities.
- To increase availability and access to organized sports and sport-based initiatives for refugee and hosting communities, actively considering age, gender, ability and other diversity needs.
- To promote and facilitate equal access to, and participation of refugees in sporting events and competitions at all levels.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME 1:

**An increase in opportunities utilized to strategically insert refugee issues into new forums through the platform that sport provides.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Identify sport events at national, regional and global levels for senior-level engagement and advocacy.
- ➔ Engage strategically with inter-agency platforms on sport to discuss the displacement angle and to advocate for the inclusion of refugees into national sport structures.
- ➔ Identify sport profiles to serve as Goodwill Ambassadors or High-Profile Supporters for UNHCR.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME 2:

**Sport governing bodies and federations review regulations to ensure non-discrimination towards asylum-seekers and refugees in sport at all levels.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Identify opportunities for senior-level engagement with national and international sport federations' governance mechanisms to advocate for refugees and for non-discrimination in regulations.
- ➔ Continue to engage with the Sport for Refugees Coalition ahead of the Global Refugee Forum 2023, with possibilities to expand pledges.
- ➔ Advocate with national sport structures in support of refugees and asylum seekers being able to access training and participate in competitions locally and nationally.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5:

# RESOURCE MOBILIZATION



The sport ecosystem is leveraged to raise funds and other resources for sport, recreation, humanitarian and other programming

### Why engage with the sport ecosystem around resource mobilization?

The vast global for-profit sports industry – including clubs, sport brands, events, professional sportswomen and sportsmen, fans and others – presents significant potential for resource mobilization to meet ever-growing humanitarian needs. Attracting attention and funding from both sport and non-sport brands, the global sport scene can be a door opener to reach new potential partners and sponsors.

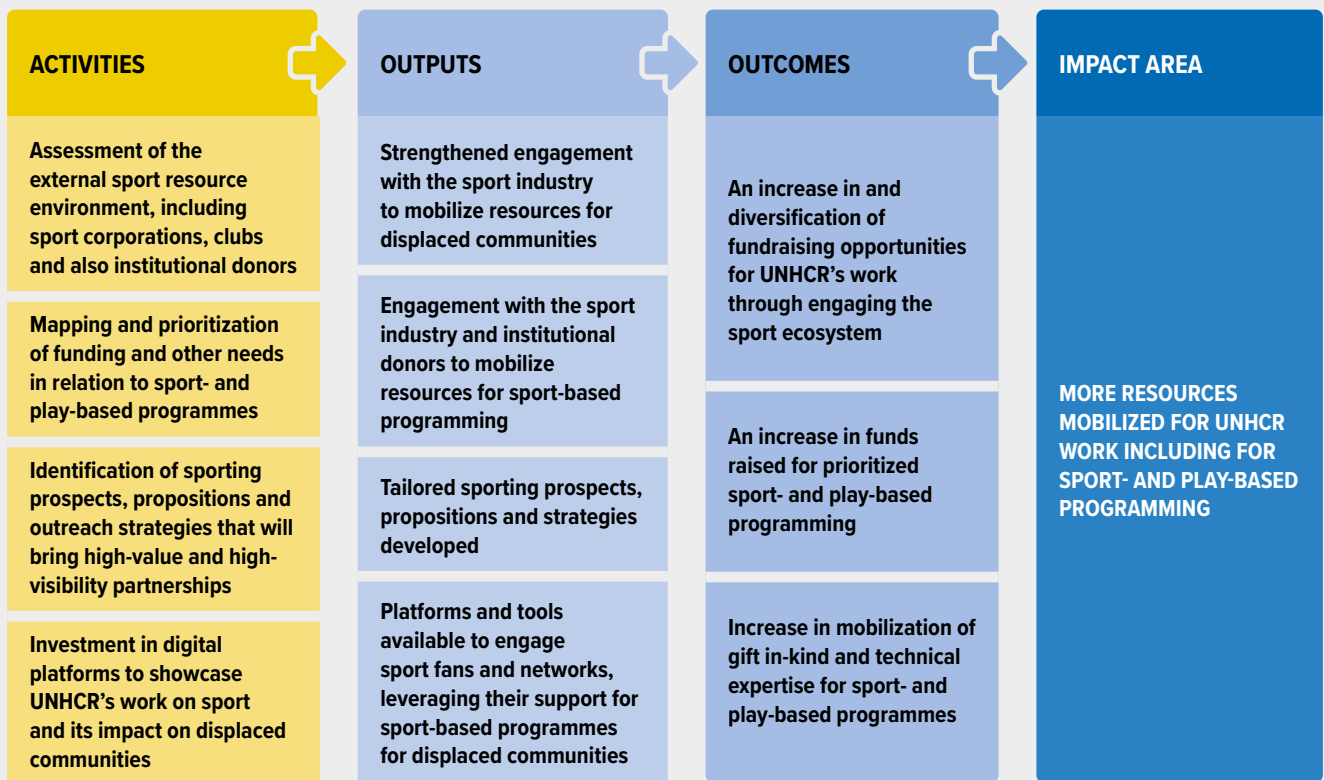
Beyond the ability to contribute direct funds and in-kind support goods and services, the sport industry carries considerable influence and power, which can be leveraged for communications and advocacy with staff, fans and supporters to bolster donations from sport in support of UNHCR's work.

Specifically, the support of the for-profit industry can be leveraged to enable more displaced persons to access sport-based programming. In the current situation, where the funding needs of many humanitarian operations are unmet, programmatic sport activities risk being deprioritized given refugees' pressing and often overwhelming needs for access to food, health and shelter.

In this context, UNHCR has a role to play in garnering support from the sport industry for the refugee cause. It will continue to champion the use of sport as an important tool in humanitarian response to achieve enhanced protection outcomes, including improved psychosocial well-being, social inclusion and social cohesion among displaced and host communities.

### Theory of Change:

## RESOURCE MOBILIZATION



## Our approach

UNHCR will seek to strengthen its engagement with the influential for-profit sports industry to generate new fundraising and resource mobilization opportunities in support of UNHCR's response to emergency situations and programmatic work, including for sport- and play-based programming.

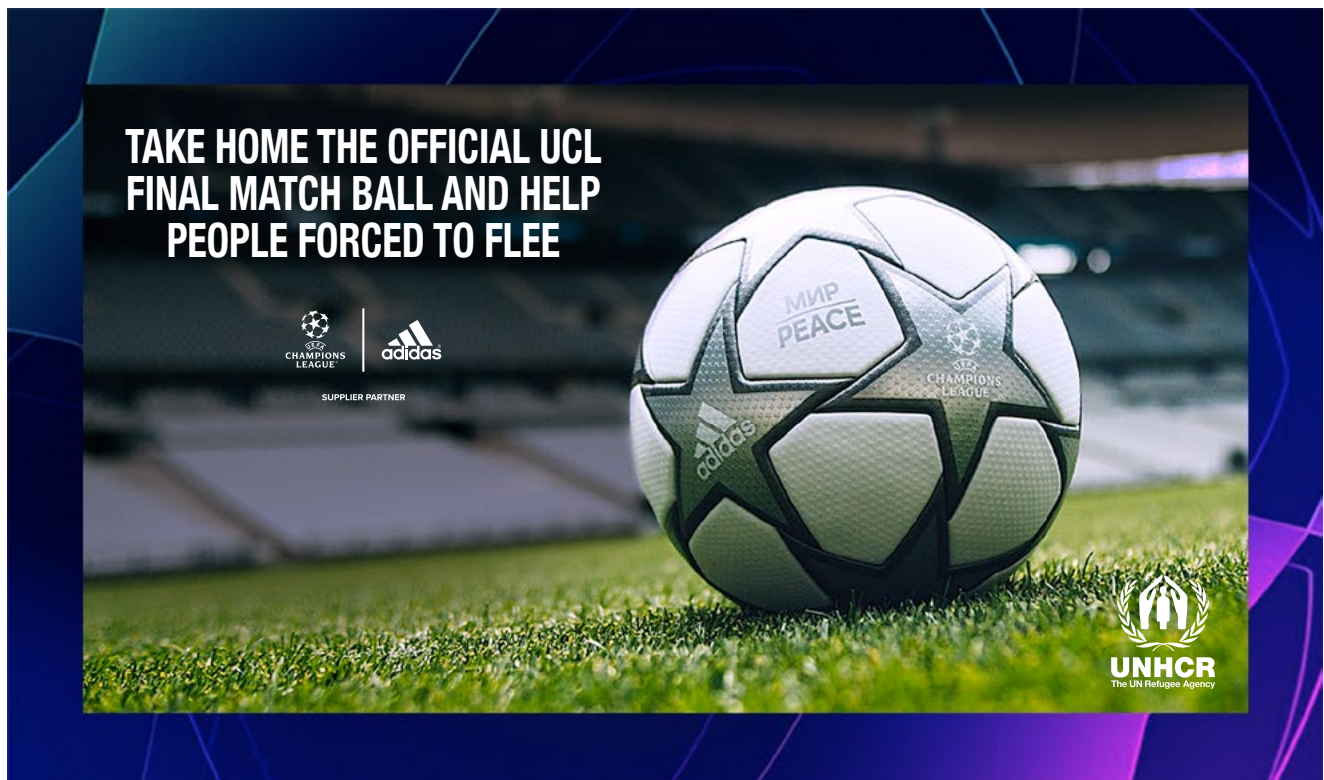
To this end, UNHCR will increase its knowledge base on fundraising with and through sport and will pursue efforts to identify new resource mobilization mechanisms within traditional sport channels, as well as through engagement with sport fans and exploring opportunities in e-sport and gaming.

Building on existing engagement with sports clubs, events and sport profiles, UNHCR will continue to explore further collaboration opportunities at the global, regional and national levels with sport partners to leverage their capacity to mobilize resources and to reach new, committed audiences. Thanks to sport's global appeal and unifying power, major sporting events draw huge audiences and often involve considerable corporate sponsorships from sport as well non-sport brands. As a result, engaging in international, regional and national sport events and collaborating with sport players and brand ambassadors presents UNHCR with key strategic opportunities for fundraising and communication.

Through discussions with corporate partners on shared values and the importance of refugees being able to access sport-based programmes, UNHCR has the opportunity to deepen these relationships and explore new channels for resource mobilization, including engaging partners' networks, sponsors, fans and events. Grants and individual donations activated through the sponsor's marketing channels, engaging loyal staff, customers and partners, also present significant opportunities to raise funds for sport- and play-based programming.

Through communicating the positive impacts of sport initiatives on protection, health, education and livelihood outcomes, UNHCR can further activate the support of and contributions from institutional donors, foundations and development cooperation agencies and banks for sport- and play-based programming.

Furthermore, UNHCR will continue to work with sport partners to mobilize technical support such as methodology and sport training expertise and organization of sport days, as well as in-kind support, including toolkits, equipment and coaching. Such collaborative approaches have proved useful for enhancing peaceful coexistence, as the host community often participates, alongside displaced people.



📷 In collaboration with Adidas and UEFA, the UEFA Champions League Final match ball was auctioned off after the game to raise money for UNHCR. © Adidas, UEFA, UNHCR

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME 1:

**An increase in and diversification of fundraising opportunities for UNHCR's work through engaging the sport ecosystem.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Map existing partners in the external sport resource environment and develop proposals to engage them financially, including during emergencies.
- ➔ Identify the sporting prospects, propositions and outreach strategies that will lead to new high-value and high-visibility partnerships, including with corporate entities engaged in sports, sport brands, teams, major sporting events and sport profiles.
- ➔ Test innovative pledge journeys to attract and convert sports fans into committed donors.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME 2:

**An increase in funds raised for prioritized sport- and play-based programming.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Map funding needs in relation to sport programmes.
- ➔ Map existing partners in the external sport resource environment and develop proposals to engage them financially around sport- and play-based programming.
- ➔ Identify bilateral and multilateral humanitarian and development cooperation partners with a focus on programming on sport for development and peace.
- ➔ Develop multi-year approach plans for priority sport partners for resource development outcomes to support long-term partnerships.

#### EXPECTED OUTCOME 3:

**An increase in gift in kind and technical support for prioritized sport-based programmes, including sport equipment and materials, development of toolkits, coaching, and organization of sport days.**

#### Suggested enabling actions:

- ➔ Map 'gift in-kind' needs in relation to sport programmes.
- ➔ Identify sports prospects and leverage common synergies for Gifts in-Kind, such as youth and sports, education and sports, and protection and sports.
- ➔ Explore sport partners who would be willing to deploy experts in their gift in-kind supported and funded sport programming.



# #Football4Ukraine Emergency Appeal



 Well known footballers were mobilized in support of the #Football4Ukraine appeal. © UNHCR/WFP

## PROMISING PRACTICE:

### Football4Refugees campaign

As the conflict in Ukraine unfolded in February 2022, UNHCR and the World Food Programme launched their first-ever joint emergency appeal, mobilizing footballers with a refugee background alongside women players and athletes with a strong philanthropic profile for the Football4Ukraine\* campaign.

Private sector donors and partners from the sport ecosystem supported the campaign by donating funds and highlighting the refugee cause during the UEFA Champions League final in May 2022 – watched by an estimated 700 million fans around the world – encouraging viewers to donate to support refugees from Ukraine.

\* The campaign was originally called Foorball4Ukraine but was later renamed Football4Refugees campaign



# GLOSSARY

**Asylum-seeker:** A general term for any person who is seeking international protection. In some countries, it is used as a legal term referring to a person who has applied for refugee status or a complementary international protection status and has not yet received a final decision on their claim. It can also refer to a person who has not yet submitted an application but may intend to do so, or may be in need of international protection.

**Child:** “Every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”, as defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Child protection:** UNHCR defines child protection as preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation; protecting and advocating against all forms of discrimination; and ensuring that solutions are in the child’s best interests.

**Complementary pathways:** Safe and regulated avenues by which refugees may be admitted and stay in a country, and have their international protection needs met while they are also able to support themselves to potentially reach a sustainable and lasting solution. Complementary pathways are not meant to substitute the protection afforded to refugees under the international protection regime; they complement it and serve as an important expression of global solidarity, international cooperation and more equitable responsibility sharing. These may include family reunification, scholarship, education and private or community sponsorship programmes, as well as labour mobility schemes.

**Internally displaced person:** A person who has been forced or obliged to flee from their home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflicts, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who has not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

**Gender-based violence:** An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private. See [UNHCR Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation, and Response to Gender-Based Violence](#) (2020).

**Gender equality:** The equal enjoyment of rights, responsibilities and opportunities by women, men, girls and boys.

**Global Compact on Refugees:** Affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018 following extensive consultations led by UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency), the Global Compact on Refugees is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing. It recognizes that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. It provides a blueprint for governments, international organizations and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities get the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives.

**Local integration:** A durable solution for refugees that involves their permanent settlement in a host country. Local integration is a complex and gradual process, comprising three distinct but interrelated dimensions: legal, economic and sociocultural. The process is often concluded with the naturalization of the refugee.

**Meaningful participation:** The full and equal involvement of all members of the community in decision-making processes and activities that affect their lives, in both the public and private spheres.

**People UNHCR serves:** All persons for whom UNHCR is mandated to provide protection, solutions and assistance. This includes refugees, asylum-seekers, refugee returnees, stateless persons and, in many situations, internally displaced persons (IDPs), including those who may also receive protection and assistance from State and other partners.

**Protection:** All activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law).

**Psychosocial well-being:** The positive state of being that allows an individual to thrive.



📷 UNHCR's project with PADF in Bahía Solano has as main components the training and strengthening of local institutions in care and protection routes for children and adolescents and the generation of local protection environments where participants receive psychosocial support, training in life skills, leadership, conflict resolution and sexual and reproductive health. © UNHCR/Ángela Hurtado Grueso

**Reasonable accommodation:** A measure that enables persons with disabilities to exercise their rights on an equal basis with others; in other words, it is a measure benefiting a specific individual. However, the action can have wider benefits. “Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

**Refugee:** A person who meets the eligibility criteria under the applicable refugee definition, as provided for by international or regional instruments, under UNHCR's mandate, and/or in national legislation. Under international law and UNHCR's mandate, refugees are persons outside their countries of origin who are in need of international protection because of feared persecution, or a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or freedom in their country of origin as a result of persecution, armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder.

**Returnee:** A former refugee who has returned from a host country to their country of origin or former habitual residence, spontaneously or in an organized fashion, with the intention of remaining there permanently and who is yet to be fully integrated.

**Social cohesion:** The ties that hold people together within a community, including the degree to which they interact, share common cultural and religious beliefs and other features and interests, and are able to minimize disparities and avoid marginalization.

**Social inclusion:** The process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice, and respect for rights.

**Sport:** All forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games.

**Sport- and play-based programmes:** For the purpose of the strategy, sport- and play-based programmes refer to activities, projects and other initiatives applying a sport or play-based methodology to improve protection and/or development outcomes for individuals and communities.

**Sport diplomacy:** For the purpose of the strategy, sport diplomacy refers to the use of sport as a vehicle to bring the refugee cause to new and existing stakeholders, including governments, cities and local authorities, international organizations, sport governing bodies, sport fans and sport brands.

**Sport for Development:** The use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youth and adults, the social inclusion of disadvantaged persons, the economic development of regions and states, and in fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution.

**Stateless person:** A person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law, either because they never had a nationality, or because they lost it without acquiring a new one.

**Theory of Change:** A method that explains how a given intervention or set of interventions are expected to lead to a specific development change, given identified assumptions and drawing on a causal analysis based on available evidence.

**Twin-track approach:** An approach that combines mainstream activities that are inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities, and targeted interventions for persons with disabilities. Both are needed to increase disability inclusion.

**Universal design:** Aims to ensure that products, environments and programmes and services, to the greatest extent possible, can be used by all people without adaptation or reconfiguration. Accessibility is the practical implementation of such a design perspective. Investment in universal design is necessary with regard to play, recreational, cultural, arts and sport facilities, buildings, equipment and services, consistent with the obligations to promote inclusion.

**Youth:** There is no universally agreed international definition of which age group is characterized by the term “youth”. For statistical purposes, however, the United Nations – without prejudice to any other definitions made by member States – defines “youth” as persons aged between 15 and 24 years.



📷 Refugee athlete Abbas Karimi trains in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in preparation for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.  
© Getty-Images / Michael Reaves

# ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The Global Compact on Refugees ([globalcompactrefugees.org](https://globalcompactrefugees.org))
- <sup>2</sup> UNHCR Strategic Direction 2022–2026. Available from <https://reporting.unhcr.org/strategic-directions-2022-2026>
- <sup>3</sup> The UNHCR Child Protection Framework (2012) recognizes that the possibility for children to play allows them to become active members of their community, and that participation in safe and inclusive sport activities can be protective in itself and support children’s resilience and coping capacities.
- <sup>4</sup> *Barriers and Future Opportunities for Sport and Non-Sport Organisations to use Sport and Physical Activities for Inclusion of Refugees: Results of a Stakeholder Consultation in the MOVE Beyond Project*. Available from <https://bit.ly/3ql00x0>
- <sup>5</sup> *Measuring the contribution of sport, physical education and physical activity to the Sustainable Development Goals Sport & SDG Indicator Toolkit V4.0 (2020)*, Commonwealth Secretariat. Available from <https://bit.ly/3RudQsT>
- <sup>6</sup> *Youth Crime Prevention Through Sport: Insights from the UNODS “Line Up Live Up” Pilot Programme (2020)*. Available from <https://bit.ly/3U8SFOP>
- <sup>7</sup> UNHCR Global Strategy for Public Health 2021-2025. Available from: <https://bit.ly/3RFaiEq>
- <sup>8</sup> *Enhancing the Contribution of Sport to the Sustainable Development Goals (2017)*. Commonwealth Secretariat. Available from <https://bit.ly/3Dk9New>
- <sup>9</sup> Rosenbaum, S., Ager, A., Snider, L., Warria, A., Collison, H., Hermosilla, S., Vancampfort, D. (2021) Physical activity, mental health and psychosocial support, in *Forced Migration Review*. Available from <https://bit.ly/3eLfw2G>
- <sup>10</sup> This broad definition of sport is used by different bodies, including the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Sport for Development and Peace in its 2003 report, *Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, and by the Council of Europe in the 1992 European Sports Charter (article 2.i).

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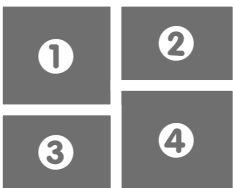
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#### **BACK COVER PHOTOS**

- ❶ Children attend chess classes at UNHCR-supported community centre in Syria.  
© UNHCR/Ola Kabalan
- ❷ Girls participating in Judo as a sport in Meheba refugee settlement in Zambia.  
© UNHCR/Sam Chisanga
- ❸ Rohingya children play football in Kutupalong camp, Bangladesh.  
© UNHCR/Vincent Tremeau
- ❹ 15 new cricket coaches from Mamha refugee camp receive training from Cricket without Boundaries (CWB) and the Rwanda Cricket Association (RCA).  
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