# Promoting Peace and Security through Sports: Lessons Learned from Selected Youth Programs

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## Acknowledgments

# ABSTRACT

Being active in sports is part of our human nature, as was recognized and exemplified in ancient times. Undisputedly, the positive effects of participating in sports are manifold. Today, international organizations have recognized the power and impact of sports on the promotion of peace and development, thus security. Besides fostering fitness and overall well-being, sports programs can be used as a tool to create encounters, raise community awareness, increase gender equality, (re)integrate marginalized or radicalized groups into society, and safeguard young women and men who have experienced violence by creating an inclusive learning environment. This research paper aims to identify good practices in the promotion of peace and security through sports activities focusing on youth with the objective to inspire and support stakeholders when designing and implementing sports activities.

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*"Sport is a fundamental and true human value. A strong vaccine against any kind of criminal disease.*

*We have a moral obligation to protect and promote sports."*

–UNOCT Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov[1]

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# 1.　　INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, an increased number of organizations have recognized the positive impact of sports on peace and development. The United Nations General Assembly has declared the 6th of April as "International Day of Sport for Development and Peace".[2] The role of young women and men in contributing to a culture of sustainability, political engagement, peaceful coexistence, justice, and dignity becomes increasingly important. At the same time, the United Nations Security Council has passed Resolution 2535 on the vital role of youth in building peace, recognizing "that today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known", and that "youth should actively be engaged in shaping lasting peace".[3] It reaffirms the responsibility of national authorities in taking action to include all voices and actively face discriminations of any kind. Governments, public institutions, civil society, the private sector, and the international community are called upon to pull together and pave the way for a prosperous future for all, one which provides and uses available tools for bringing people together.

It is not far off that sports can be a lever for integration and social inclusion. Moreover, it can be used as a tool to teach respect for rules, discipline, and teamwork, while simultaneously being a good way to burn off energy and gain physical and mental strength.[4] But how do specific programs in unstable and post-conflict regions succeed in bringing people, who have made traumatic experiences in life and have different cultures and beliefs, together? Why do young participants particularly benefit from sports programs, what do they learn, and how does their engagement in sports activities influence not only their lives, but can also have a positive impact on the community at large? This paper aims to identify the best practices and highlight key takeaways from specific

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[1] Speech on the occasion of the launch of the UN's Global Program on Sports and Security, 3 February 2020.

[2] United Nations Resolution 67/296 adopted by the General Assembly on 23 August 2013.

[3] United Nations Resolution 2535 (2020) adopted by the Security Council on 14 July 2020.

[4] Gadais, Tegwen *How sport for development and peace can transform the lives of youth.*

sports programs targeted at youth in order to find common patterns and potentially widen the scope of current peace- and security-building efforts. It builds on a descriptive research design by using qualitative data from conducted interviews with eight professionals involved in the design, organization, and implementation of different sports programs tailored to youth, while also offering a thematic literature review mainly serving the purpose of clarifying concepts.

## 2.  SITUATION AND OSCE ENGAGEMENT IN KUMANOVO, NORTH MACEDONIA

Kumanovo is a modern city of about 100.000 inhabitants located not far from the capital city of Skopje and also the largest municipality in the Republic of North Macedonia. The majority of its population are ethnic Macedonians, with a significant minority of ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs. During the First Balkan War, the "Battle of Kumanovo" played a significant role to North Macedonia's integration into Serbia, and consequently into Yugoslavia. In 1999, the "Kumanovo Agreement" led to the deployment of the still operating NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) peacekeeping contingent.[5]

In 2001, the Albanian insurgency in North Macedonia soon arrived in the region of Kumanovo. The armed conflict resulted in a division of the educational system along ethnic lines, leading to lasting divides in the community. Today, the Commission for Inter-Community Relations (CICR), a consultative body formed by representatives of the Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, Serbian, Turkish, and Vlach ethnic groups, aims to improve the relations between the ethnic groups and to ensure active participation of minorities in decision-making. Other organizations active in bridging the community divide include - among others - the local non-governmental organization (NGO) "Center for Intercultural Dialogue" (CID) with its youth centers "MultiKulti" and the local Red Cross.

Ever since, inter-ethnic tensions have undergone ups and downs with repeated escalations. Along with a deep political crisis in North Macedonia, the situation culminated in May 2015 with a security incident known as the "Kumanovo Clashes", in which a shootout erupted between Macedonian police forces and an armed group identifying itself as the National Liberation Army (NLA) with fatalities on both sides. At the time, the European Union's commissioner for negotiations on enlargement and neighborhood policy, Johannes Hahn, urged the Macedonian authorities, community leaders, and citizens to cooperate and restore calm."[6] Similarly, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, urged "everyone to exercise restraint and avoid any further escalation, in the interest of the country and the whole region."[7]

A year later, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Skopje established the grass-root initiative **"Born 2 Run" in Kumanovo** with the aim to bring the community together.[8] Designed as a conflict-prevention and confidence-building-activity, the

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[5] Encyclopedia Britannica *Kumanovo: North Macedonia.*

[6] Hahn, Johannes *Statement by Commissioner Hahn on the situation in Kumanovo the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.*

[7] Stoltenberg, Jens *Statement by the NATO Secretary General on the situation in Kumanovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.*

[8] Interview with OSCE Mission to Skopje officer.

yearly running event has the purpose of strengthening mutual trust and thus improving the security situation in Kumanovo in the aftermath of the incident. The goal is to increase youth awareness about multiculturalism and foster unity. Beyond sport, the project provides the local population with a safe space to meet and engage in peaceful relations and, thus, facilitates dialogue across ethnic lines. At the same time, it involves local stakeholders including teachers, religious leaders, and NGOs such as the "Centre for Intercultural Dialogue". So far, the initiative has addressed mainly young people who want to overcome the problems of the older generations, and are interested in becoming active members in and for their communities. The OSCE supports the process by facilitating dialogue, providing advice, and organizing regular public meetings with the authorities and community leaders in order to discuss the overall situation on the ground. In addition, the OSCE Mission to Skopje has organized youth workshops and seminars for high school students of different ethnic backgrounds aiming to increase youth engagement and advance interethnic dialogue. The OSCE Mission's efforts to improve the security situation in Kumanovo also include monitoring political developments and raising awareness among the youth branches of political parties on the importance of democratic values in the election process.[9] As this case shows, the OSCE's engagement in Kumanovo is based on a comprehensive and inclusive bottom-up approach including education, sports, and local politics. It is aimed at contextualizing the following concepts and findings.

# 3. SPORTS, YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Before looking at specific projects around the world in order to examine potential fields of opportunity, attention will be drawn to the broad terms of "youth", "peace" and "security" as well as to the notion of sports in the context of peace and development. This will be followed by an introduction to some theoretical models of how sports can be used in the context of peace and development.

## 3.1. FINDING A NEXUS: WHAT DO WE KNOW, AND WHICH RISKS DOES IT BEAR?

### 3.1.1. Human Security - a people-centered perception of security

In recent years, the broad understanding of security[10] in the international context has shifted more and more from a narrow conception of only state and national security towards a less state-centric and more comprehensive perception of "human security", according to which the individual takes

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[9] OSCE Mission to Skopje *Youth, Elections, National minority issues*.

[10] For a detailed and critical analysis of the term Huysmans, Jef. *Security! What Do You Mean?: From Concept to Thick Signifier*.

the center stage of political considerations.[11] Human security "recognizes the interlinkages between peace, development and human rights, and equally considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights".[12] Thus, it includes the right of the people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty, fear and despair as well as the right to equal opportunity to enjoy all rights and develop human potential. The adoption of the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development highlights the importance and the added value of the human security approach.[13]

With regard to sports activities, inter alia as a means to face discrimination and foster inclusiveness, a mere negative understanding of peace as just the absence of violent conflict runs short of addressing many of the causes of conflicts, such as intolerance or fear, as well as systemic roots of violence like social injustice or economic exclusion.[14] Thus, a holistic understanding of peace, that includes nonviolent and creative conflict transformation,[15] is appropriate when it comes to assessing the impact of sports activity programs.

### 3.1.2.  Sport, a tool for development

The role of sports has been the subject of numerous analyses,[16] and its assessment varies from being associated with populist manifestations of militarism, jingoism and violent nationalism on the one hand,[17] to foster peace and interpersonal relations in unstable contexts on the other hand.[18] The possible scope of application is vast: only to name a few, sports can be used as a tool to reinsert child soldiers back into society, integrate refugees,[19] teach leadership skills, bridge divides,[20] empower children to heal from abuse and war trauma,[21] mobilize and politicize youth,[22] contribute to more gender equality,[23] and overcome societal health issues.[24] Given the vast spectrum, it is not surprising that the use of sports as a tool for social development has already formed an integral part of Europe's colonial past in the late eighteenth to mid-twentieth century.[25] In this respect, it needs to be stressed that sport has been used to gain control over indigenous peoples as well as to maintain the once established European imperial control. Considering its history, sports became a

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[11] This new approach was addressed in Resolution 22/290 of the United Nations General Assembly in 2012. It is seen as a landmark Resolution because it was the first time that Member States affirmed the universal value of human security, United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, *What is Human Security?*

[12] United Nations Resolution 66/290 adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September 2012.

[13] Steiner, Achim *25th Anniversary of the Human Security concept*.

[14] United Nations *Sport and Peace. Social Inclusion, Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building*, p. 205.

[15] Galtung, Johan. *Peace by peaceful means: peace and conflict, development and civilization,* p. 9.

[16] Hough, Peter *Make Goals Not War: The Contribution of International Football to World Peace*; Bertoli, Andrew D. *Nationalism and Conflict: Lessons from International Sports*.

[17] Mangan, J. A. *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*; Brohm, Jean-Marie *Sport: A Prison of Measured Time*.

[18] Giulianotti, R. *Sport, peacemaking and conflict resolution*, p. 208.

[19] c.p. Peace and Sport: https://www.peace-sport.org/.

[20] c.p. PeacePlayers International: https://www.peaceplayers.org/.

[21] c.p. Right to Play: https://www.righttoplay.ca/en-ca/.

[22] c.p. Grassroot Soccer Inc.: https://www.grassrootsoccer.org/.

[23] c.p. Hawar.help .e.V.: https://hawar.help/.

[24] Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) *Sport for Development*.

[25] Darnell, S. et al. *Handbook on Sport for Development and Peace*, p. 2 ff.

focus of struggle and resistance in African colonies and played a fundamental role in decolonization and independence movements starting in the 1940s.[26] It was only in the 1990s, that the sports for development and peace (SDP) movement emerged. Ever since, an increasing number of stakeholders, including non-governmental, intergovernmental, and international organizations, have put sports programs mainly targeted at children and young adults on their agenda with the aim of making an effective contribution to greater stability and peace in sensitive regions of the world.

### 3.1.3.  Engaging the youth

Youth is a fluid category that comprises the period of transition from childhood to adulthood.[27] Because of the fact that youth is a transitional phase that every human being enters and exits at some point, it is an extremely heterogeneous and diverse group, whose needs need to be addressed adequately. At the same time, youth as a group are extremely affected by violence at the global level; in 2016, around 408 million young people (aged 15–29) resided in surroundings affected by armed conflict or organized violence.[28] As youth are involved in all sides of conflict – as active actors, direct victims or in a different way – it has been recognized that youth play an important role as agents of security and peace.[29]

Sports activities are not only popular with children and young adults,[30] but contribute to their development by creating relationships and offering learning possibilities. Numerous examples of how sports can bring forward fundamental and lasting positive change in a peace and development context have been given (see 3.1.2). However, because of their recognized potential to influence and engage youth, sports have also been (ab)used on several occasions as a tool to form and mold youth into wanted patterns of behavior. One historic example, in which sports was used as a propaganda tool to indoctrinate youth, is the use of sports activities by the "Hitler Youth" in Nazi Germany. In this context, sports was not only used to keep fit and ready-for-combat but also to recruit and inspire youth to become loyal and persuaded citizens of the Third Reich.[31] This exemplifies the need to contemplate a proper use of sports in youth activities that want to bring about change. As the benefits of using sports in the context of youth have been recognized, sports has been used as a tool within the positive youth development approach (PYD). This approach generally aims at enhancing strengths and developing potential[32], and contradicts the understanding that youth is seen as "problems that need to be managed" and that cause unwanted behaviors when not attended to. Thus, the PYD approach depicts youth work as a potential multiplier for individual

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[26] Giulianotti, Richard, *Sport, peacemaking and conflict resolution*, p. 209 f.

[27] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) *Definition of youth,* p. 1.

[28] Institute for Economics and Peace, *Data for Youth, Peace and Security: a Summary of Research Findings.*

[29] Simpson, Graeme, *The missing peace. Independent progress study on youth, peace and security,* p. 13.

[30] According to the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. "77 percent of Canadians aged 5– 19 years old participate in some form of organized sport", *Bulletin 2: Participation in Organized Physical Activity and Sport.*

[31] c.p. Kliem, Konstantin, *Sport in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus: Entwicklung und Zielsetzung im höheren Schulwesen und in der Hitlerjugend*; Schilhan, Anton, *Körperliche Ertüchtigung und Sport in der Hitlerjugend.*

[32] Lerner, Richard M, *Commentary: Studying and testing the positive youth development model: A tale of two approaches.*

development.[33] Furthermore, the PYD approach intends "to facilitate youth development via experiences and processes that enable participants in adult-supervised programs to gain transferable personal and social life skills, along with physical competencies. These skill and competency outcomes will enable participants in youth sport programs to thrive and contribute to their communities, both now and in the future."[34] Following this approach, sports can play an important role in achieving peace and security on a community-based level because it passionates youth who tend to be curious, more open minded in bringing upon change as well as challenging stereotypes.

### 3.1.4. Reverse of the medal

What is evident is that sport, as a tool, always bears risks if used inappropriately, for instance by fostering an atmosphere of increased rivalry and toxic competition. This is especially true for young adults, who experience increased stress levels and anxiety over competition.[35] Other negative behaviors that might result from competitive sports activities are participants not coping with loss, swearing at referees or other players, pushing, foul play, etc.[36] Especially with regards to projects financed by private donors and sports federations, the peace and development aspect risks falling behind as these actors have their own interests such as marketing, fulfilling Corporate Social Responsibility obligations (CSR), or the recruitment of new talents.[37] At the same time, without big donors, many projects would not have sufficient financial means to be effectively implemented, partly forcing compromising initiators to make uneasy trade-offs.

## 3.2. DIFFERENT APPROACHES OF SPORTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (SDP)

The SDP movement has established different models on how sports can be integrated into development and peace projects. A general distinction is made between a technical, a dialogical, and a critical approach.

The former assumes that communities encounter specific social conflicts that are usually best resolved by impartial third parties with a non-biased outside view on the situation. While international organizations often take the role of the imparting third, the selected sports activities are often pre-established (e.g. football, basketball) and not very adapted to the individual case. The same is true for the participants of the activities, who tend to be chosen on the basis of features such as age and gender, failing to account for ethnic or religious particularities. This approach faces some criticism as it might give participants the feeling of being patronized.[38]

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[33] Holt, Nicholas L., et al., *SDP and positive youth development*, p. 342.

[34] Holt, Nicholas L., et al., *Future directions for positive youth development through sport*, p. 231.

[35] Hansen, David M., et al, *What Adolescents Learn in Organized Youth Activities: A Survey of Self-Reported Developmental Experiences,* p. 29.

[36] Holt, Nicholas L., et al. *SDP and positive youth development*, p. 346.

[37] Giulianotti, Richard, *Sport, peacemaking and conflict resolution*, p. 216.

[38] Giulianotti, Richard, *Sport, peacemaking and conflict resolution*, p. 216.

Reflecting these challenges, the dialogical approach assumes that conflicts are socially constructed strained relationships that emerge within communities due to lack of trust, understanding and mediation mechanisms. According to this approach, external actors are seen as creators for encounters and dialogue who cooperate with the respective communities. They can act as mediators in cases of conflicts and misunderstandings with the aim to restore harmony through dialogue. Compared to the technical approach, more freedom is given to the organizers and rules on participation are loosened, allowing participants to join or drop out at any time and giving more responsibility to the coaches of sports programs in order to adapt to the conditions on the ground.[39]

Thirdly, the formally known as critical SDP approach is based on the conviction that effective peacemaking can only succeed when creating long-term autonomous learning experiences among self-directed learners.[40] Countering the often-expressed criticism of paternalistic traits in SDP, the critical approach holds that the respective communities themselves are best equipped to understand what their needs and the sources of their conflicts are. Consequently, they should be the ones finding appropriate solutions including the design and implementation of community sports programs. Hence, the focus is on the participants, who are attributed an active role, enabling them to take responsibility for their decisions as well as potential mistakes. This inclusive participant-centered approach allows for new games or sports activities to be invented and cultural activities being included in order to truly accommodate the participants' needs. This approach does explicitly involve parents, peers, teachers and other community members. While a clear distinction can and must not necessarily be made, today the critical approach takes center stage, as it seeks for an inclusive inter-communal transformation led and achieved from within the community itself.

## 4.    INTERVIEW RESULTS

Having laid down the basic strands of sports programs methodology, key findings from eight interviews conducted with professionals in the field of peace promotion through sports will be presented and grouped into different approaches backed by "real life" examples.

### 4.1. VARIOUS APPROACHES TO USE SPORTS AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

While the interviews confirmed the wide range of objectives that sports programs can have, most activities followed common trends. All in all, it seems effective to use sports as an inclusive tool embedded in a comprehensive "learning experience", following a clearly defined concept before and throughout the implementation of any project.

#### 4.1.1.   Sports as a tool to create encounters

One approach which proved to be particularly successful consists of creating encounter possibilities through physical activities. The main aim is to bring young people from different

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[39] Giulianotti, Richard, *Sport, peacemaking and conflict resolution*, p. 218 ff.

[40] Giulianotti, Richard, *Sport, peacemaking and conflict resolution*, p. 218 ff.

backgrounds and ethnicities together. Sports activities have the potential to lay the foundation for long-lasting bonds among the participants. Experiencing challenging situations together as a team fosters a strong feeling of togetherness and sets the ground for further constructive exchange.

This approach has been used effectively in **Israel** 15 years ago, when the project **"football for peace"** brought young Jews and Palestinians together, incentivizing them to create their very own rules to play football. Young people, whose paths would not have crossed otherwise, started to get to know each other on the football field and learned to agree on a new set of self-developed rules. The project-built bridges between the two groups in an exemplary manner.[41]

Another success was made through the comprehensive engagement of the German development organization *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)* from 2016 to 2019 in **Gaziantep, Turkey**, the country that hosts the most refugees. Especially Turkish and Syrian children and juveniles have mostly been living in parallel worlds. The program successfully created encounters and lively interaction between the two groups, significantly contributing to social cohesion between Syrian refugees and the host communities.[42] The recipe for success was embedding the sports program in a comprehensive educational concept, also consisting of cultural, tutoring, and coaching programs, which expressly accounted for the religious, ethnic, and historical character of the participating people.

4.1.2.   Sports as a tool to develop life skills

In **Colombia**, extensive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes have taken place ever since the historic peace agreement with the FARC rebels was signed in 2016. At the current stage of the peace process, the main challenge is the decent reintegration of close to 50,000 guerrilla operatives into civil society in order to prevent the deterioration of Colombia's security situation and stop the recent increase in violence, delinquency and crime. In acknowledging the positive impact of sports as a tool to teach life skills, structure the day, overcome addiction, and thereby promote peace, security, and the rule of law, the government took on a pioneering role and expanded the sports offer for young men as part of its effective reintegration plan.[43] It seems noteworthy that labelling a reintegration program with "sport" in its name leads to a considerably greater popularity and acceptance among the target group as well as the respective communities.[44]

As the country acknowledged the positive aspect of sports as a tool to promote peace, security and the rule of law, it takes on a pioneering role. In short, this example shows that sports can help to gain competencies, establish daily routine and leave behind old habits.[45]

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[41] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

[42] Interview with expert from the German Olympic Sports Federation (DOSB).

[43] Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) Peace Broker Roundtable Discussion *Engagement with Non-recognized Entities in Peace Processes: Good Practices and Lessons to be Learned.*

[44] Interview with expert from the OSCE Secretariat.

[45] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

### 4.1.3. Sports as a tool to start a learning experience

Multiple interview partners stressed the importance of sports as a tool to approach a community to start a learning experience. One example is the work of GIZ in the **Gaza** region where youth from de-favored neighborhoods came together to play sports and receive vocational training. In this context, sports served as a tool to engage with participants and as an "ice-breaker" to then start activities such as a plumbing contest or experiments with electricity, designed to get participants off the streets. Because the sport activities were co-organized and hosted together with schools and other learning facilities, parents felt comfortable with letting their children participate and did not consider doing sports as a waste of time.[46]

## 4.2. TYPES OF SPORTS – AN INFINITE VARIETY

Another important deliberation concerns the selection of the type of sport or activity. Choosing a certain activity impacts the target group of participants and whether an activity will be accepted by the local community; especially so as many sports activities are quite sensitive, not only in the context of gender, but also culturally and religiously.

Regardless of the type of activity, it is advisable not to end a project with a sports competition, but rather with an inclusive event that does not account for "winners" and "losers".

### 4.2.1. Football, a double-edged sword

Many projects use football to reach out to the communities. The main reason for using football is its huge dissemination, popularity and reputation across the globe. However, some potential downsides should be taken into account:

First of all, the participants might have very high expectations of the project. They might train very hard with the aim to become professionals on the field. In the end their expectations cannot be met, which leads to disappointment. Also, it should never be the aim of a peace or development project to mainly train hard to improve in the sport.[47]

Due to the huge popularity of football, boys often start to play football at a very young age. Consequently, the participants of the program will be at a different level; some might already be advanced players, while others are not, which can easily lead to their unwillingness to participate in the first place or exclusion from the game.[48]

Thirdly, football is mainly about winning or losing. During football matches, referees are needed to watch over the rules of the game. Considering this aspect and the fact that youth often imitate player-behaviors they have observed during big football events on television, football in many cases might teach unfair behavior and lead to further exclusion. When it is about winning, fairness often has no place.[49] Moreover, football is dominated by men, often considered as a "male" activity and

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[46] Interview with expert from GIZ (Gaza).

[47] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

[48] Interview with expert from GIZ (Gaza).

[49] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

in some cultures, girls are not allowed to play either because it is considered inappropriate, not feminine or because parents fear that their daughter might get injured. Choosing football as an activity risks excluding girls because they are not allowed to play, are not interested in the activity, or are discouraged from participating because of less experience and skills compared to their male counterparts.

Consequently, these aspects need to be considered when choosing football as an activity.[50] Even though football has unsuitable aspects, it can be converted into a valuable tool. The teams could, for instance, come up with their own rules. In **Berlin**, the project **"Football Three"** works with the idea to completely transform football into a game, in which no referees are needed, and points are scored though fair behavior instead of goals. As a result, participants learn that fair play and team spirit is the only way to succeed.

### 4.2.2.  Conquering the streets by making use of modern types of sport

The project **"Skateistan" in Afghanistan** [51] makes use of urban street sports such as skateboarding or parkour and freerunning. This attempt proved to be quite successful as trainers, organizers, and the respective target group get the chance to try out new and different kinds of sports. Other projects use, for instance, capoeira, martial arts or athletics.[52] The main advantage being that when nobody has practiced the type of activity before, all participants start at the same level, which strongly promotes equality.[53]

Similarly, ultimate Frisbee has often been recommended due to its great fun factor and its suitability to be played at all skill levels. Additionally, this activity is all about fair play, no referees are needed and hardly anyone has had a lot of experience playing it in the past, making it an ideal sport to practice with participants with different fitness levels. Due to the minimal physical contact, it makes it a perfect sport to play with mixed teams; even in communities that are more sensitive towards this topic.[54]

### 4.2.3.  "Dance the night away": educational games and creative activities

The interview partners held that in many cases and especially when working with younger people, it might be more effective to play educational games or come up with creative activities with a sports aspect. By choosing this approach, the organizers and trainers can make use of the positive side effects. To state an example, the participants can be asked to teach each other their national (folk) dances and listen to the traditional music. This approach enables exchange in a playful way and young people from different backgrounds get the chance to introduce the other participants

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[50] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

[51] For more information c.p. Skateistan, https://skateistan.org/.

[52] Interview with expert from German Olympic Sports Federation (DOSB).

[53] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln"; Interview with expert from GIZ (Gaza).

[54] Interview with expert from GIZ (Gaza).

to their traditions. In the best case scenario, the participants can inspire the others to learn more about their beliefs and culture.[55]

Another approach is to distribute various gadgets (cloths, [juggling] balls, chalk, hula hoops, mats, dices, jump ropes, etc...) and ask the participants to create a sports parkour or come up with their own game. The available options are limitless, and the participants are challenged to work together and find a common solution.[56]

### 4.2.4. Mixing it all together, a programmatic approach

The interview partners from the GIZ emphasized that a programmatic approach proved to be more effective than a project-based approach. This means that the concept should include many small and intersectoral projects, existing of all kinds of sportive and educational activities, which all work towards the main goal.[57] Currently, one program in **Albania** aims to raise community awareness and participation for more gender equality; another program in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** aims to safeguard children who experienced violence; a program in **Kosovo**[58] focuses on the promotion and integration of marginalized groups; another program in **Serbia** uses sports as a tool to increase the conditions for different population categories being at risk of social exclusion; and a program in **North Macedonia** reaches out to children and youth with diverse social backgrounds as well as to create an inclusive learning environment for physical, mental and social development.[59] Those aims are reached through various activities. In the end, the local trainers, who implement the activities, decide on the type of sports they want to use at their own discretion.

## 4.3.  THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Preparation and management are key for the success of every project. The interview partners stressed that each project stands and falls by the support of the people involved.

### 4.3.1.  Making use of local knowledge - creating local ownership

The GIZ implements sport pedagogical development measures in line with bilateral and regional approaches with partner countries.[60] The organization gets in touch with local governments, NGOs, sports clubs, schools, teachers and trainers, and jointly launches sports programs. This

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[55] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

[56] Interview with expert from GIZ (in North Macedonia).

[57] Interview with expert from GIZ (in Germany).

[58] United Nations Security Resolution 1203 (1998) demanded cooperation between Yugoslavia and the OSCE Verification Mission, which operated between October 1998 and June 1999 in Kosovo. In 1999, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 authorised NATO to secure and enforce the withdrawal of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces from Kosovo and established UNMIK. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008, but the "Republic of Kosovo" has not yet been recognised as an independent state by all member states of the United Nations. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo is one of the OSCE's largest field operations, see https://www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo.

[59] GIZ *Sport for Development: Western Balkans: Regional cooperation and social inclusion through sport*; Interview with expert from GIZ (in North Macedonia); Interview with expert from GIZ (in Germany).

[60] GIZ *Sport for Development: Western Balkans: Regional cooperation and social inclusion through sport*.

approach ensures that the knowledge and the network of the respective country and the local communities are being used.[61] The inclusion of "locals" also serves as a trust-building measure for parents to let their children participate in various activities because they know some of the staff involved.[62] In a first step, the GIZ identifies the areas and regions in which action is needed. As a next step, municipalities are identified, a local network gets established and action plans are compiled. In the end, the local organizations conduct the projects with assistance from the GIZ, to which they must report.[63]

### 4.3.2. Learning from each other

It is of utmost importance that the coaches are skilled and that they understand the structure of the community, know the history of the region, and have professional pedagogical experience. Thus, it must be ensured that activities are guided by individuals whose hearts are entirely in it. Especially in sensitive or unstable regions, it is of the essence that the initiatives are supervised by coaches who were trained in special workshops and are able to act as neutral multipliers when it comes to promoting concrete sports activities. Only when they are convinced that the chosen path is the best way of contributing to security and peace in a region, they can pass their enthusiasm on and inspire the participants. So, when the mutual understanding is there, it becomes clear that sport is not only performance and competition, but also has a strong social dimension.

Moreover, all experts interviewed agreed that it is crucial to involve people from different backgrounds and sectors. This inter-sectoral cooperation ensures that no perspective is being left aside.[64] A key conclusion from the aforementioned project undertaken in Turkey was that the biggest impact is reached when trainers have a pronounced sense of "interculturality".[65] An option is to involve facilitators that already work with youth (e.g., teachers or youth group leaders). These facilitators benefit from an already established trustful relationship with participants, their families and other members of the community.[66]

### 4.3.3. Selecting the participants

Depending on the country, the region, and the respective program, the organizers shall weigh whether it is more efficient to select participants, to work with organizations or sports clubs, or to invite all girls and boys who are interested in participating.[67] Nevertheless, with regards to the participants it can be challenging as the targeted young people might be hard to reach or to approach. In order to guarantee long-lasting effects, it is therefore desirable to reach out to the participants' families, friends and the community. The reason is that in many countries around the

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[61] Interview with expert from GIZ (in North Macedonia).

[62] Interview with expert from GIZ (Gaza).

[63] Interview with expert from GIZ (in Germany).

[64] Interview with expert from GIZ (in Germany); Interview with expert from GIZ (in North Macedonia and Gaza).

[65] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

[66] Interview with expert from GIZ (Gaza).

[67] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

globe, families have a significant influence on the life of young people. Even though reaching out to them can be a huge organizational effort, their involvement has proven to be successful.[68]

The success of a program is dependent on the regular attendance of the participants. As stated before, once the participants' families and friends are involved and informed, the project might enjoy more trust and the participants get the support to regularly attend. It must be clear that once young people are involved on a regular basis, it is much easier to connect, to educate them, to change their behavior and to teach the respective content.[69]

## 4.4. REFLECTION

All in all, interview partners stressed that the reflection phase of every program including sports is crucial. Usually, every project shall be accompanied by a clear concept of how to look back and reappraise discordance.

One method which can be easily included into the activity itself is the so called "teachable moment" technique: Once a conflict "on the field" arises, the trainers should pause the game and work together with all participants towards a common solution. The coaches need to show that there are various alternative forms to solve a conflict. In order for this method to be successful, the trainers must develop a sensitive feeling to sense a potential conflict at an early stage. From a trainer's perspective the method is to be divided into three parts: At first, the potential conflict must be recognized. Secondly, during the reflection phase the state of affairs must be evaluated; it is crucial to understand the reason for the issue. Finally, all participants together take action, and the game continues.[70]

At the same time, it was stressed that at all stages a human rights assessment as well as an analysis of the program's impact on the SDGs shall take place. This extra step is necessary to make sure that the program is in line with the overall aims that the international community has agreed upon and does not unintentionally conquer them. Thus, a continued monitoring process shall be undertaken that evolves with the project and needs to allow for adaptations to be made over the course of the program.[71]

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Youth is the present and the future. As such it is hope and chance to overcome long-standing grievances, ethnic hostilities, discrimination, and prejudice. To seize this opportunity, sports programs targeted at young people play a fundamental role as means to promote peace, stability and security.

While it is clear that a "one fits all catalogue" of good practices cannot and should not be expected, as it would not account for the particularities of each and every case and context, the clearer it

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[68] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln"; Interview with expert from GIZ (Gaza).

[69] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

[70] Interview with expert from "Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln".

[71] Interview with expert from OSCE Secretariat.

becomes that flexibility and creativity must prevail when designing community sports activities, especially when they are targeted at youth. In this regard, inspiration can and must be sought from different intersectional programs.

All in all, interview partners stressed the importance of an elaborate and well-thought-out concept, as well as the significance of including a post-processing and reflection phase. For this purpose, a careful analysis of the context and region must precede any implementation. Sports programs should strive to primarily serve as a tool to create encounters from which long-lasting bonds can result. In order for sport to make an effective contribution to security and stability, it must be part of a larger whole, thus a comprehensive approach is key. It is not just the sports activity itself that brings the people together and thus fosters coexistence, but rather the whole event as it is embedded in a purpose, with a bottom-up approach, from the people, the local inhabitants, for the people, involving local institutions and family members where possible.

Furthermore, the possibility to develop certain skills through physical interaction bears the great advantage that participants gain competencies which go beyond the mere sports activity but do help in and prepare for life. One essential takeaway that confirms the effectiveness of a comprehensive approach as followed by the OSCE's Mission to Skopje in Kumanovo is the importance of creating local ownership. This applies all the more, since multilateral organizations should aim at setting up meaningful initiatives and program-infrastructure which can ideally be used to the advantage of the local stakeholders, institutions, and individuals on their own. Only if this is pursued and achieved, a sustainable means promoting social cohesion and thus peace and security is truly successful. Ideally, the program can function for itself even if the initiating organization pulls out. Once it is functioning, a program initiated at a local level can be replicated and scaled up while constantly continuing to be adapted where necessary.

A very useful means grasped from the sports programs that should also be considered is the so called "teachable moment" technique: Once a conflict on the field or beyond arises, the coaches or impartial viewers should freeze the situation and work towards a common solution. They need to show that there are various alternative forms to solve a conflict. The recognition of the conflict phase shall be followed by a reflection phase and end in an action, ideally in an action of approaching each other.

The key message from the conducted interviews is that precise and strategic organization of sports activities is crucial in order to reach the full potential. Only by being aware of the challenges of a specific region as well as by knowing the issues between various groups of people, the organizers can reach out to the communities. If the frame is set wisely, the sport activities can be used as a tool to create fruitful encounters, provide young people with essential life and conflict management skills, teach them self-reflection and a value-based "fair play".

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# APPENDIX

INTERVIEWEES

Due to data protection reasons, the names of the interviewees are not disclosed. The list below provides a short insight of their experience in the respective field.

- ❖ Expert working as Desk Officer *Sport and Development* for the German Olympic Sports Federation (DOSB) who was involved in Education Programs for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Turkey commissioned by the GIZ.

- ❖ Expert working for the *Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln*, whose research focuses on the evaluation of sports as an engine for development assistance.

- ❖ Assistant at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Skopje.

- ❖ Project Manager at the Secretariat of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

- ❖ Liaison Officer at the Sino-German Urbanization Partnership Office of the German International Development Organization *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbei*t (GIZ), who is closely working with staff deployed in the Balkan region for the implementation of five projects "Western Balkans: Regional cooperation and social inclusion through sports".

- ❖ Expert working for the German International Development Organization *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) "Regional cooperation and social inclusion through sport" in five countries in the Balkan region, currently based in North Macedonia.

- ❖ Expert working for the German International Development Organization *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) in Gaza.

- ❖ Researcher with expertise in the field of international cooperation and development. The current research focuses on the themes of sport for development and peace, physical education and activity, health education, outdoor physical activity and outdoor education.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire served as a guideline for the interviews:

Organization and Position:
Name of Project:
Region:
Project Duration:
Project completed: Yes/No
Region:

1. What is the main objective of the project?
2. Can you provide more information on the project (e.g., time frame, number of participants, age, nationality, religious affiliation, gender identity of participants, cultural and socio-economic background)?
3. What challenges did you expect with regards to the participants´ background? To what extent were they met?
4. How do you choose the participants? What are the criteria?
5. Do you and if so how, take into account the special needs of vulnerable groups and incorporate a gender dimension as well?
6. Do you, and if so how, involve the participants' community and family?
7. How long did the preparation phase take? What were the challenges (e.g., were there any cultural barriers to overcome first)?
8. What are the current main challenges (organizational/content-wise)?
9. How do you select instructors/people working within the respective project? Do you think it is necessary they share the same background? What educational background/competences do you consider necessary for instructors/persons involved in the project? Do they work on a voluntary basis or is it a job on a full-time basis?
10. What financial means do you need in order to run the project and how do you acquire funding?
11. What are your results so far? What worked well/what did not work? Is there a particular challenge that you have faced which you find worth mentioning?
12. If you were to start all over again, what would you do differently?
13. Were there any landmark-events or decisive moments that occurred (positive or negative)?
14. How do you measure impact? Will there be a follow-up?
15. What is the impact of the project on the whole community?