PEACE AND SPORT

TEAMING UP FOR PEACE

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF SPORT THROUGH COALITIONS AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACHES

Peace is a multifaceted concept—one that extends far beyond the absence of conflict[1]. It encompasses social justice, inclusion, equity, safety, and opportunity. Building and sustaining peace requires continuous effort and the active participation of all segments of society[2]. Individuals, civil society, governments, international institutions, and the private sector all have a stake in fostering a culture of peace[3] and must be part of collective action to make it a reality.

Sport is a universal language that transcends borders, politics, and ideologies, uniting people in ways few other activities can. It can help prevent violence, support reconciliation, and foster dialogue across communities. **Despite its potential, sport remains overlooked in many peacebuilding frameworks**[4].

Working in coalition is essential to fully harness the transformative power of sport[5]. A multi-stakeholder approach brings together the unique strengths, resources, and perspectives of diverse actors, enabling burden-sharing and enhancing programs' sustainability. Involving grassroots organizations, in particular, reinforces local ownership and provides a more comprehensive overview of priorities on the ground[6].

Athletes can play a powerful role within such coalitions. As respected public figures and role models, they can reach broad audiences, inspire youth, engage public opinion, and influence decision makers[7].

In today's interconnected world, building peace cannot be done in silos. Coalitions are not just useful—they are indispensable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on direct observations and sharing of issues and best practices by actors on the field - as part of Peace and Sport's bottom-up approach - the following recommendations are designed to support practitioners and stakeholders in adopting multi-stakeholders approaches when planning and implementing sport-based initiatives.

[1] Positive Peace Report 2024, Institute for Economics & peace
[2] UN Secretary General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, 2024, Chapter II
[3] Culture of peace: a set of values, attitudes, behaviors and lifestyles that inspire social interactions, avoid violence and prevent conflict, by putting the focus on dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and states. UN Resolution A/RES/52/13
[4] Peace and Sport, « No sport, no peace », statement by Joël Bouzou, April 2025
[5] Finance in Common Summit, Sport Investment Forum, 2025
[6] The first CSO-UN Dialogue on peacebuilding – Outcome report, 2023
[7] International dialogue "Athletes Game on for Peace," co-organized on April 4, 2024, by Peace and Sport and UNESCO
[8] IOC news, 13 December 2024, "One year after the Global Refugee Forum: Almost half a million people reached"
[9] www.unitedagainstonlineabuse.com, September 2025
[10] www.un.org/en/footballforthegoals, September 2025
[11] www.unesco.org/en/fit4life

KEY FIGURES FROM MAJOR SDP COALITIONS

- **Sport for Refugees Coalition: 143 members across 82 countries benefiting over 445000 people affected by displacement**[8]
- **United Against Online Abuse: 11 governments 9 sport organizations 12 other organizations joining forces to tackle this phenomenon in an evidence-based and evidence-led approach**[9]
- **Football for the Goals: 410 members mainstreaming sustainable practices and advocating for the Sustainable Development Goals**[10]
- **Fit for Life Alliance: 110 Member States and multiple stakeholders adopted the MINEPS VII outcome document to harness the power of sport in addressing critical including physical inactivity, mental health decline, and social inequalities**[11]

Testimony from the field

The support and training provided by Peace and Sport have been instrumental in helping us acquire the tools and approaches we need to strengthen our collective action and promote social cohesion within our communities

Head of an organization beneficiary of the FEF-OSC project "Sport, Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Togo"

The Champion for Peace's view

My commitment comes from the values that my sport, Taekwondo, has passed on to me, but also from the experiences shared by other athletes, who have inspired me and made me aware of the need to give back to the communities that have supported me on my sporting journey.

Cheick Cissé, Taekwondo Olympic Champion, Champion for Peace

1. DEVELOPING AN HOLISTIC APPROACH

Sport contributes to a wide range of social objectives - including youth empowerment, education, health, employability, and the inclusion of marginalized individuals - making integrated approaches essential. **Dedicated coordination offices**, with clear mandates and accountability mechanisms, should be established to promote **greater convergence among supervising ministries and agencies** and to ensure the coherence and sustainability of cross-cutting initiatives.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS:

- **Including civil society organizations and grassroots stakeholders in both the design and delivery of programs to enhance relevance, ownership and sustainability;**
- **Developing a well-structured advocacy plan – together with all partners - to ensure all key stakeholders are aware of - and convinced by - sport's cost-effective contribution to their objectives.**

2. MENTORING ATHLETES

Sport governing bodies at all levels have a key role to play in supporting athletes as agents for peace. To fully harness athletes' social impact, governing bodies should:

- Integrate **mentoring throughout athletes' careers** to raise early awareness of their potential as changemakers.
- Provide **platforms for action and expression** that enable athletes to engage meaningfully and safely.
- **Collaborate with civil society and the private sector** - including sponsors - to create synergies that amplify athletes' contributions to peace and social development.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS:

- **Engaging athletes originating from the communities of intervention since the project's conception phase;**
- **Avoid mobilizing athletes merely for "photo-op" appearances;**
- **Promoting peer-to-peer mentoring between junior and retired athletes to facilitate experience sharing and collaboration.**

3. PROMOTING BEST PRACTICES

Sharing and promoting best practices is essential for advancing sport-based initiatives. Learning from others helps avoid repeating mistakes and reduces duplication of efforts, leading to more effective and sustainable programs. Transparency about challenges and outcomes fosters continuous improvement and innovation across the sector.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS:

- **Sharing failures: focus on lessons learned to help others avoid the same mistakes and contribute to the sector's collective progress;**
- **Emphasizing qualitative results alongside quantitative ones to capture the full impact of initiatives.**