

Street Child World Cup 2014 – More than a game

From March 28, 2014, Rio de Janeiro will be host to the second [Street Child World Cup \(SCWC\)](#). This initiative launched in 2010 by Street Children United – a UK based charity, is a global effort to raise awareness about the issues of millions of children living and living on the streets across the world. While SCWC is not a FIFA recognized tournament and the teams are represented by the NGOs rather than the national football bodies, the tournament remains the biggest global effort to promote the rights of street children.

Among the countless hardships that the street children have to face, lack of awareness remains a vital issue. Currently there are no concrete stats on the number of street children around the world. In addition, there are no globally accepted definitions for these children. The public at large is unaware about the criterion that includes a child as a ‘street child’. Since the notion of street life is usually negative, these children are often wrongly associated with criminals or beggar mafias. Moreover there’s a misconception that street children don’t exist in the developed countries. A general classification that is given by various NGOs is that the term ‘street child’ includes:

1. Children who run away from their homes due to several reasons
2. Children that are orphans and have no proper place to live
3. Children who are homeless and have to live on streets with their families
4. Children who have families and homes but they work at least 8 hours a day on the streets and commercial areas without any adult supervision

Keeping these categories in mind and considering that the term ‘street’ also includes parks, pavements, under construction sites, slum areas in the big cities, it becomes clear that street children can and do exist even in some of the most ‘developed’ cities of the world.

As this year’s slogan says, SCWC is ‘more than a game’. It is a unique platform which makes use of effective activism to challenge the negative perception and treatment of street children around the world. Before the tournament, extensive campaigns are organized in all the participating countries where the selected NGO lobbies with public and private organizations to initiate effective measures to create such an environment in their countries where no child has to live to the streets.

Football however is the main attraction of this cause. The inaugural edition of the tournament took place in Durban, South Africa, in March 2010, before the FIFA World Cup. Children from Brazil, South Africa, Nicaragua, Ukraine, India, the Philippines and Tanzania took part in 7-a side indoor tournament that had inter-gender teams. A team made U16 children from Manchester, UK, was the 8th team in the tournament. Indian team represented by the [Khalsa Football Academy](#) won this tournament by defeating Tanzania in the final. This tournament was a success on [multiple fronts](#) and since 2010, SCWC has gained momentum as the number of countries and supporters of this cause have increased. Various international footballers and celebrities have also [endorsed](#) the tournament.

This year, there will be separate competition for girls and boys where U-16 players will display their talent and prove that they are as important as any other human living in this world.

Girls Tournament	
Group 1	Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Brazil
Group 2	South Africa, Philippines, El Salvador
Group 3	Mozambique, England, Nicaragua

Boys Tournament	
Group 1	South Africa, Liberia, Egypt, Brazil, Indonesia
Group 2	Tanzania, Burundi, Argentina, Nicaragua, Philippines
Group 3	Mauritius, Kenya, USA, India, Pakistan

This entire tournament is all about giving these children a chance to explore the scenario that has marginalized them and to see the world from a different point of view that is usually forced on them by the adults. Group 3 of Boys tournament will play an interesting role in this as children from two neighboring yet rival countries i.e. India and Pakistan will be able to befriend each other. Similarly, Pakistani children will be able to meet the children from USA and hopefully they'll be able to build better relations with each other as compared to the ones their adults have built.

The [recommendations](#) put forward by children during SCWC, are a good starting point to work for the betterment of these children and to create a society where children don't have to face situations such as adopting street life. Popular sport such as football can provide an excellent support to this cause. The significance of this tournament can be summarized in former Arsenal and England legend David Seaman's words "Football and footballers aren't always in the headlines for the right reasons but the Street Child World Cup harnesses the power of grassroots football to change vulnerable young peoples' lives for the better across the world through the talent that they have. Good luck to all those taking part."