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Preventing youth crime and violence through sports

A policy guide



SC:ORE

SPORT AGAINST CRIME OUTREACH-RESILIENCE-EMPOWERMENT

Following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2022, between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the “Sport against Crime: Outreach, Resilience, Empowerment of at-risk youth” (SC: ORE).

SC:ORE programme is created as a joint UNODC/IOC initiative to furthering the synergies between the UN system’s priorities and the Olympic movement and support the effective use of sport in preventing violence and crime and enhance the role of sport and the sport sector in building peaceful and safe communities. Within this context, this publication has been developed jointly by UNODC and IOC.

SC: ORE builds on the UNODC Youth Crime Prevention through Sport initiative, including the Line Up Live Up programme and the IOC Olympic Education Values Programme (OVEP) and contributes to the realization of strategic priorities set in the Olympism365 Strategy and UNODC Strategy 2021-2025, placing the realization of Sustainable Development Goals and the welfare of people and local communities at the centre.

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Preventing youth crime and violence through sports



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Executive summary

Sport has been recognized as a tool for education, to support social development goals, foster tolerance, respect, well-being, and inclusion, to promote gender equality, and to empower communities and marginalized groups. The use of sport for these broader and international developmental outcomes is known as sport for development and peace.

In crime prevention settings, sport for development and peace can act as an opportunity for at-risk youth to alter and strengthen their pro-social identity as they socially, emotionally and educationally progress towards a law-abiding future. In this context, sport can leverage vast networks to enhance positive youth development, skills training and employment, and provide youth with positive role models and access to pro-social networks.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) aim to leverage the power of sport to strive towards the Sustainable Development Goals by supporting policy-makers, practitioners and the sport sector. They provide technical guidance and tools that can contribute to violence and crime prevention, and create more safe and peaceful societies through sport and sport-based interventions. This policy guide was developed as part of the IOC UNODC Sport against Crime: Outreach, Resilience, Empowerment (SC:ORE) programme that brings different stakeholders together specifically for youth crime and violence prevention, a key area for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and targets related to safety and reduction in crime and violence.

The overall goal of this guide is to summarize the research and available knowledge, and provide guidance on the integration of sport in the context of secondary and tertiary youth crime prevention focusing on youth at higher risk of engaging or re-engaging in crime and violence. Building from relevant policy frameworks and evidence, this guide will support key stakeholders, from both the sport and the crime prevention sectors, to strengthen and shape new interventions, partnerships and agendas. It seeks to inform both policy and programme development by providing an evidence-based theoretical foundation to support the design, implementation and evaluation of sport-based interventions to prevent youth crime and violence.

The United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice provide general guidance for crime prevention programming. Building on these standards, the General Assembly adopted in 2019 resolution 74/170 entitled Integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies. The Assembly encouraged Member States to advance the integration of sport into cross-cutting crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, called upon Member States to strengthen community-based support measures for youth to address risk factors of crime and violence, and encouraged them to use sport-based activities more broadly to promote the prevention of youth crime, the social reintegration of young offenders and the prevention of recidivism. In 2021, the General Assembly adopted resolution 76/183 which reiterated its call for the integration of sport-based activities into youth crime prevention and emphasized the



importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective and respecting cultural diversity in implementing sport-based crime prevention programmes. It also encouraged Member States to ensure that the necessary safeguarding measures for participants are included in the design and implementation of such programmes to prevent and combat sexual harassment, abuse and violence against children and youth in sport. Very importantly, having received the report and recommendations of an expert group meeting convened by UNODC in December 2019¹ which was requested by the A/

RES/74/170, the General Assembly invited Member States to consider the development of clear policy frameworks within which sport-based initiatives could be integrated into youth crime prevention and criminal justice programmes. Both resolutions also acknowledge the important role that the sport sector can play in this regard and call for more partnerships and cooperation. The present guide is meant to assist the development of such frameworks as it builds on the recommendations of the aforementioned expert meeting.

1. Report of the Secretariat on the outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies (A/CONF.234/14).

Integrating sport-based interventions into crime prevention strategies

Crime prevention is a broad concept that includes a variety of approaches to address risk factors of crime and violence, including developmental, environmental, situational, social, and community-based prevention initiatives. Also, for many years, experts have distinguished between different levels of crime prevention interventions: primary prevention targeting the general public focusing on social and situational conditions associated with various forms of criminal activities; secondary prevention, including interventions that are targeting individuals or groups known to be particularly at risk of committing crimes; and, at the tertiary level, various interventions to prevent individuals already engaged in criminal activity from reoffending and encouraging them to desist from crime. Programmes designed for primary, secondary or tertiary levels of prevention tend to have the following broad objectives:

- Positive youth development and resilience to violence and crime (primary)
- Risk mitigation among at-risk youth and strengthening of protective factors (secondary)
- Positive disruption and desistance from crime (tertiary)

The main contribution of sports to achieving youth crime prevention outcomes at all levels of prevention is indirect. They usually revolve around five interrelated key areas of intervention that can be delivered or achieved through sport or where sport can act as an accelerator.

1. Safe spaces
2. Social inclusion
3. Education (formal and informal)
4. Individual and community resilience
5. Empowerment

This guide uses a theory of change that builds on these five key elements to illustrate how sport and sport-based programming can be developed, tailored and integrated effectively into crime prevention strategies to achieve specific outcomes and the ultimate crime prevention objective.

Developing effective sport programming for youth crime prevention

A comprehensive crime prevention strategy – whether at community, city or national level – ought to include all three levels of intervention. Since various tools already exist on the use of sport for the promotion of positive youth

development and well-being among the general population, this guide focuses on sport-based interventions targeting at-risk youth to reduce risks for engagement in violence and crime while enhancing protective factors, and to prevent re-offending (secondary and tertiary prevention). Such programmes, generally take a “plus sport” approach, meaning they utilize sport to achieve non-sport objectives (like crime prevention), placing a strong emphasis on education and positive youth development.

Whereas research shows that mere participation in structured sport activities is unlikely to bring down crime, there is cumulative evidence that sport and sport-based activities, depending on a programme’s goals and targeted beneficiaries, can complement crime prevention interventions to (better) mitigate specific risk factors and enhance protective measures. However, the way that programmes are designed and delivered is essential to be impactful, meaning that sport-based programmes and related activities must be intentionally designed with the purpose of achieving crime prevention outcomes.

The guide warns against a tendency to overemphasize the role of individual factors in prevention programmes, leading to a neglect of the wider social and economic factors which are perceived as much more difficult to address. A well-planned prevention strategy will work to address both individual and social and economic issues and sport can play an instrumental role in doing so.

When working towards crime prevention outcomes with at-risk youth or youth in conflict with the law, especially socially vulnerable youth, a specific methodology is required. The targeted beneficiaries must be clearly identified, the method of intervention should be specified (including the role played in it by sport), and the specific crime prevention objectives and outcomes should be precisely defined.

Engaging the sport sector in multisectoral approaches to crime prevention

Like any other type of crime prevention initiative, sport-based crime prevention programmes are greatly facilitated by coordination and partnerships between different sectors, levels of government, and community organizations. Sport-based programmes benefit from an interagency cooperation approach, including activities that bring together sport organizations, schools, community actors, crime prevention specialists and, when relevant, the police and criminal justice agencies. In fact, the sport sector, which includes a large ecosystem of actors, can be an effective partner to integrate sport into crime prevention strategies at different levels and in different settings, including in marginalized communities. For example, a cooperative relationship between schools and

community sports groups can ensure that community-based prevention programmes support school (re)engagement – a key resilience factor – and prevent school dropout.

Primary level of intervention: Building individual and community resilience

At the primary level of intervention, programmes are broad social interventions that promote the general well-being of individuals, and address people's motivation to engage in criminal activity, target the social and economic factors that increase the risk of crime and victimization and, where feasible, address some of the root causes of crime. Interventions are often focused on children and youth, and building the general protective environment around them.

At the primary level of intervention, programmes should promote sport participation in school, after school or in the community to support individual, community or social development and increase resilience to crime and violence by addressing key risk and protective factors. Primary intervention programmes target the general youth population, and do not necessarily have specific crime prevention objectives. Rather, they aim to support positive and healthy youth development and well-being more broadly, and promote positive and healthy lifestyles. Some interventions are specifically meant to address exclusion, discrimination, or unequal access to sport, especially for disadvantaged or marginalized children and youth. A "sport plus" approach to programming is recommended at this level, with sport having a central role. In this context, sport and physical activity is not only used to promote physical and mental health or social inclusion, but it is also an experimental platform to teach important life skills, instill values and support education and learning.

At the primary level, sport's main contribution around the five elements of intervention revolves around the following specific outcomes:

6. Creating safe spaces, including through meaningful engagement of participants, and strengthening the protective environment around children and youth;
7. Supporting social inclusion through active participation;
8. Promoting education (formal and informal) and teaching life skills through sport;
9. Building individual and community resilience of children and youth through peer learning and critical thinking;
10. Empowering youth through leadership opportunities.

Secondary level: Mitigating risk factors and enhancing protective factors among at-risk youth

At the secondary level of prevention, programmes focus on children and youth who are at higher risk of becoming offenders or victims of crimes, often because they are exposed to several risk factors. Such programmes may address, for instance, impaired cognitive and social emotional skills, or adverse childhood experiences (e.g. abuse and neglect, poor parenting, early disruptive and aggressive behaviour and substance use, lack of social support, low school attainment, etc.).

At this level, sport is often connected or added to other interventions and services, specifically tailored to the needs of participants and the local context and used as a 'hook' to attract participants. Research shows that this "plus sport" approach to programming is more effective at this level. Sport in this case is core but less central, and the intended outcomes, although connected to sport participation and practice, are mainly achieved through the 'non-sport' elements of the interventions. The contribution of sport to secondary prevention, across five key areas of intervention, and the objectives of such programmes can be illustrated as follows:

Safe spaces

Provide a safe sporting venue and create a safe space (physically, mentally, socially and morally) within which youth can participate, experience alternative risk to engagement in crime and violence, and positively interact with others. At this level delivering sport safely within community settings can also result in environmental transformation, for example, redesigning communal spaces to facilitate youth-led sport sessions and facilitate access to sport.

Social inclusion

Building from active participation and inclusion through sport at the primary level, sport interventions can promote a sense of belonging and mitigate the impact of discrimination and exclusion. They can provide opportunities for positive social relationships with positive role models and peers, and support changes in social networks and relational dynamics (trust building, feelings of belonging). Moreover, sport-based role models can be utilized within the programme to strengthen social cohesion.

Education

Building from life skill learning and training at the primary level of prevention, the focus at the secondary level is to strengthen specific cognitive emotional and social skills and competencies, and to reinforce school engagement and participation.

Resiliency

Building on peer learning and critical thinking at the primary prevention level, the focus at the secondary level is to develop soft skills through sport-based activities and enhance pro-social characteristics. Sport can in particular support youth's coping skills and emotional regulation and enhance values, behaviours, and attitudes that promote pro-social development.

Empowerment

Building on youth leadership at the primary prevention level, the secondary prevention level should focus on peer learning and support, creating leadership opportunities. Sport programming should provide positive social experiences and guide youth in the process of making positive decisions that prevent their engagement in violence and crime.

These objectives are in many ways similar to those pursued more generally at the primary prevention level, with the important difference that they are defined in relation to the specific needs, risks, strengths and other circumstances of at-risk youth.

When working with youth at risk, especially vulnerable youth, a specific methodology is required.^{2,3} Ideally, the selected approach should form part of a strategic and balanced crime prevention plan, which should be implemented intended, and the advantages and disadvantages of each approach in a particular context will have been considered. The specific role of sport elements and activities included in these approaches should be specified and their contribution to the desired crime prevention outcomes should clearly be articulated.

Tertiary level: Positive disruption, desistance from crime and social reintegration

Tertiary prevention approaches seek to intervene and actively untangle existing webs of social, economic, contextual and cultural drivers of youth crime and violence. The aims of crime prevention interventions at the tertiary level are to prevent reoffending and encourage offenders' desistance from crime. These include developing diversion programmes, strengthening informal justice systems and

restorative justice processes, and implementing effective rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.⁴

In this context, properly designed crime prevention programmes that contribute to these goals – either in the community or in institutional and correctional settings – often integrate sport in their strategies to enhance their reach and engagement strategy and to amplify impact. Although sport-based programmes can also be delivered in detention settings⁵, sometimes in collaboration with community groups, the focus on this guide is on community-based programmes that support desistance from crime and social reintegration.

At this level, sport programmes are designed to offer to young people who are involved in criminality an opportunity to engage in positive transitional experiences, supporting the formation of alternative (positive) identity and enhance desistance processes, while addressing social stigma and exclusion and teaching important life skills.

Sport activities, incorporated as key components in designed programmes (i.e. "plus sport"), can prevent youths' further involvement in criminal or violent activity, supporting them through a process of desistance from crime, and facilitating their social reintegration. By utilizing sports activities, these programmes effectively work towards achieving the following objectives under the five areas of intervention:

Safe spaces

Building from safe spaces and environmental transformation at the secondary level, safe spaces at the tertiary level of prevention provide additional opportunities for young people to learn and provide one another with pro-social support. A sport programme at the tertiary level should also help youth address stigma associated with their involvement with the criminal justice system.

Social inclusion

Building from sport-based role models at the secondary level, positive relationship building can create and reinforce new social networks. Sport interventions can help participants build new pro-social relationships, create a sense of belonging and bringing about positive changes in their social networks and relational dynamics.

2. Haudenhuyse, R. P., Theeboom, M. and Nols, Z., "Sports-based interventions for socially vulnerable youth: towards well-defined interventions with easy-to-follow outcomes?", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 48 No. 4 (2012), pp. 471–484.
3. Haudenhuyse, R. P., Theeboom, M. and Skille, E. A., "Towards understanding the potential of sports-based practices for socially vulnerable youth", *Sport in Society*, vol. 17 No.2 (2014), pp. 139–156.
4. Nugent & Schinkel, M., "The pains of desistance", *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, vol. 16, No. 5 (2016), pp. 568–584.
5. For example, Meek, R., (2014). *Sport in prison: exploring the role of physical activity in correctional settings*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. Also, Meek, R., *A sporting chance: an independent review of sport in youth and adult prisons* (London, UK: Ministry of Justice, 2018). and Norman, M., "Sport in the underlife of a total institution: Social control and resistance in Canadian prisons", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 52, No. 5 (2017), pp. 598–614 and Norman, M., and Andrews, G.J., "The folding of sport space into carceral space: on the making of prisoners' experiences and lives", *The Canadian Geographer*, vol. 63, No.3 (2019), pp. 453–465.

Education

Building from life skills transitions at the secondary level of prevention, the focus at the tertiary level is to develop young people's professional skills to increase employability and ultimately create opportunities for employment and volunteering. Sport and non-sport activities, along with the positive relationships youth are forming, can support participants into pursuing education, volunteering, training and employment opportunities.

Resilience

Enhanced development of values, behaviours, and attitudes within the sport programme, can lead to reconstruction of a social identity. Building on soft skill development and learning at the secondary prevention level, the focus at the tertiary level is to develop social capital and build a pro-social identity. Sport programming can be instrumental in connecting participants with supportive individuals and networks including in the sport sector, and other professional services and interventions, to enhance positive relationships and support cognitive transformation and identity shift.

Empowerment

Building on positively supporting others through sport at the secondary prevention level, the tertiary prevention level should focus on sport-based mentoring (formal or informal) to foster a future orientation and agency. Sport programmes should aim to expose young people in conflict with the law to positive role models, help them connect with mentors and other significant adults, instill their motivation to change and, to this end, provide them with experiences that build their confidence to re-integrate into mainstream society without the worry of being pulled back into crime and violence. To this end, engagement of qualified 'lived experienced' coaches in sport-based interventions can be very impactful.

Programme design and implementation

Special consideration should be given in the design and implementation of such programmes, including their outreach strategies, in order to leverage the impact of sport to crime prevention. To support effective integration of sport in crime prevention, programmes should be based on proven crime prevention methods and codesigned with or in consultation with the local community and the target population i.e., youth. Key elements for successful sport-based programming in crime prevention include:

- Specific policies, structures and practices should be adopted and enforced to prevent and respond to abuse, exploitation and violence against children, women and other sport participants.

- Necessary measures to safeguard all participants from harassment, abuse and violence should be in place for each programme and their implementation should be monitored.
- Programmes should have the structure and capacity to provide sustained, intensive and long-lasting interventions, and support as necessary.
- Programmes and interventions should be tailored to the needs of the specific target group, including the age and their developmental stage.
- Effective partnerships and cooperation within a multi-agency approach must be fostered and maintained, engaging, among others, schools, sports organizations, crime prevention specialists and, where relevant, the police and criminal justice agencies.
- Building the capacity of coaches, facilitators and other staff to deliver the various programme interventions should be a priority.
- Local and municipal governments should help create safe spaces for physical activities, and provide equal access to facilities to all young people, without discrimination or favouritism.
- Monitoring and evaluation and process and impact should be a constitutive part of every project or programme design. The relevant frameworks and indicators should be aligned with and informed by the theory of change and sufficient resources should be allocated in this regard.
- Programme evaluations must seek to elucidate the links between positive youth development outcomes and behavioural outcomes, including crime and violence, and identify the impact that the acquisition of specific life skills or values may have on criminal or violent behaviour.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Since sport-based programmes are meant to be part of a broader crime prevention strategies, it can be difficult to disentangle their impact from that of other components of the strategy. Nevertheless, a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework that is developed on the basis of a sound theory of change is a key element of effective, evidence-based sport programming for crime prevention. Linking research and evidence to policies and sport programmes is important for ensuring they are working in the ways they were intended to and for generating more data on the effective use of sport-based interventions in youth crime prevention.

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Terminology

At-risk youth	Refers to youth who may be vulnerable to engagement with crime and/or violence due to being exposed to a combination of risk factors.
Child and youth sensitive	Refers to an approach or intervention that takes into consideration the child's right to protection and the individual needs and views of children and youth, in accordance with their age and maturity.
Community-based crime prevention	Programmes that aim to change the conditions in neighbourhoods that influence offending, victimization and the insecurity that results from crime by building on the initiatives, expertise and commitment of community members.
Crime prevention	Crime prevention comprises strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence the multiple causes of crime.
Desistance	Refers to the process leading to the cessation of offending or violent behaviour.
Disengagement	The social and psychological process whereby an individual's commitment to and involvement in violence and crime or association with a violent or criminal group is reduced.
Diversion	Refers to a process for dealing with children and youth alleged, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law as an alternative to judicial proceedings, with the consent of the child and the child's parents or legal guardian. To avoid confusion, note that the term has also been used to describe the ability of sport participation to divert youth from risky activities.
Facilitator/coach	The term "facilitator" (or "coach") is used to describe all types of qualified practitioners who deliver or implement sport-based crime prevention interventions and me. It is best practice for facilitators and coaches to have appropriate qualifications to work with children and youth in crime prevention and/or sport settings, with an emphasis on positive youth development.

Gender	Refers to the social differences, as opposed to biological ones, between women and men that have been learned, are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures.
Holistic crime prevention approach	An approach to crime prevention that is comprehensive in scope and considers all aspects of a situation (e.g. background, risk factors, protective factors).
Juvenile justice	A “juvenile justice system” is comprised of laws, policies, guidelines, customary norms, systems, professionals, institutions and treatment specifically applicable to children alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed the law.
Multisectoral approach to crime prevention	A multisectoral approach to crime prevention is an approach that relies on ongoing partnerships between agencies and across different public sectors.
“Plus sport” programmes	Crime prevention programmes which add or include sport to attract, engage or reach out to youth in activities aimed at resilience building, enhancing protective factors and mitigating risk factors associated with youth crime. Within the context of “plus sport” programmes, sport is not at the core of the intervention. Rather, it is a way to get into contact with often hard-to-reach people and is used to facilitate further communication and/or serves recreational purposes.
Positive youth development	Positive youth development is an intentional process that proactively promotes protective factors in young people.
Primary crime prevention	Programmes and interventions to address social, environmental or situational conditions associated with various criminal activities.
Protective environment	An environment conducive to ensuring to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of children and youth, including physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social development, in a manner compatible with human dignity.
Protective factors	Aspects of a person’s life that enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes and lessen the possibility of negative consequences from risk exposure.
Risk factors	Conditions that increase the risk of or susceptibility to negative outcomes, including behaviours, circumstances or elements that create an environment conducive to crime and violence.

Safeguarding	A responsibility that organizations, programmes and individuals have to ensure that operations, programmes and interventions do not harm participants and beneficiaries and do not expose them to and protect them against the risk of harm and abuse.
Secondary crime prevention	Programmes specifically targeted to children and youth who are identified as being at risk of involvement in crime. They may be deficit or strength-based depending on whether they focus on mitigating risk factors or enhancing protective factors.
Social reintegration	“The process of integrating socially and psychologically into one’s social environment.” In crime prevention, social reintegration includes “various forms of interventions and programmes targeting individuals to prevent them from becoming involved in criminal behaviour or, for those who are already in conflict with the law, to reduce the likelihood that they will reoffend”. ⁶
Sport	Unless specified otherwise in the present guide, the term “sport” is used as a generic term, comprising sport for all, physical activity and play, recreation, dance and organized, casual, competitive, traditional and indigenous sports and games in their diverse forms. ⁷
Sport for development and peace	The intentional use of sport, physical activity and play to attain specific development and peace objectives including, most notably, the Sustainable Development Goals.
“Sport plus” programmes	Crime prevention programmes where sport activities are adapted and often augmented with parallel programmes to maximize their potential to achieve crime prevention outcomes.
Tertiary crime prevention	Interventions aimed at preventing reoffending by facilitating the socialization, desistance from crime or social reintegration of individuals who have engaged in criminal activity.
Trauma informed	Youth in contact with the law and those who are more vulnerable to violence and crime, as victims or perpetrators, are likely to have been exposed to adverse childhood events and trauma. It is critical that sport-based intervention actors and organizations understand how trauma affects at-risk youth and how being trained in trauma sensitive responses can help sport have positive outcomes for youth.

6. UNODC, Introductory Handbook on the Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders (Vienna, 2012)

7. UNESCO, Kazan Action Plan (2017).

Youth	The term “youth”, unless otherwise specified in the text, is used to refer to persons between 15 and 24 years of age. Nevertheless, as stipulated in article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all persons under the age of 18 years are “children” and enjoy specific rights and protection safeguards under international law and the national legal frameworks.
Youth in conflict with the law	Refers to youth who have been suspected, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law.
Youth violence	Youth violence is defined as violence that occurs among individuals aged 10–29 who are unrelated and who may or may not know each other, and that generally takes place outside of the home. It includes a range of acts and a broad spectrum of behaviours, from bullying and physical fighting to more severe sexual and physical assault to gang violence and homicide. Youth violence often occurs alongside other types of violence.

Acronyms

IAGSDP	United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Sport for Development and Peace
IOC	International Olympic Committee
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

Youth crime and violence are global concerns. Significant investments are made in youth crime prevention programmes and there is a constant search for more effective methods to improve policies and programmes. In that context, the integration of sport and sport-based initiatives into broader crime prevention and criminal justice strategies emerged as a promising approach. Thanks to the growing research on the subject, there is now a clearer understanding of the place of sports in crime prevention, and the conditions under which sport activities have an impact on the prevention of violence and crime, especially among young people.

Both the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) aim to leverage the power of sport to build safe and peaceful communities, and reduce violence and crime by supporting members, policymakers, practitioners and the sport sector. They provide technical guidance and tools that help to prevent violence or influence criminal behaviour through sport-based interventions. Their cooperation and partnership strengthens the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025, which guides the UNODC mission to contribute to global peace, security and human rights, and the IOC's Olympic Agenda 2020+5 and Olympism365 strategy to strengthen the role of sport as an enabler for Sustainable Development Goals and to ensure that more people from more diverse backgrounds benefit from community sports programmes and accessing olympism every day, everywhere.

Furthering the synergies between the United Nations system's priorities and the Olympic Movement, the Sport against Crime: Outreach, Resilience, Empowerment of At-risk Youth programme (SC:ORE) is a joint initiative from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Olympic Committee to strengthen the role of sport in youth crime prevention settings, with a focus on marginalized vulnerable and at-risk youth and leverage the power of sport to build safe and peaceful communities.

The need for policy guidance

Sport has been recognized as a tool for education, to support social development goals, foster tolerance, respect, well-being, and inclusion, to promote gender equality, and empower communities and marginalized groups. The use of sport for these broader and international developmental outcomes is known as sport for development and peace.

In crime prevention settings, sport for development and peace can act as an opportunity for at-risk youth to alter and strengthen their pro-social identity as they socially, emotionally and educationally progress towards a law-abiding future. In this context, sport can leverage vast networks to enhance positive youth development, skills training, employment and provide youth with positive role models and access to pro-social networks. However, the impact of sport for development and peace and its aligned outcomes are dependent on numerous contextual, cultural, social, operational and practical factors, including the frequency and the type of sport played, capacity of coaches, peer networks and family relationships, resources and future pathways for long-term reduction of violence and offending.

Against this background, this guide was developed as part of the SC:ORE programme in an effort to bring different stakeholders together specifically for youth crime and violence prevention, an area that is key for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and targets related to crime and violence⁸. It builds on the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention⁹ and promising international practices and research on the impacts of sport-based crime and violence prevention programmes. It aims to operationalize recent resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the topic.

The guide critically reflects on sport-based approaches to crime prevention, including ways to improve their efficacy and maximize the social return on future investments in sport-based crime prevention initiatives, and is meant to inform and support a variety of audiences including, but not limited to, policymakers from sport, justice and crime

8. UN DESA, Sustainable Development, The 17 Goals (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>).

9. UNODC, Compendium of United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice (New York, 2016).

prevention sectors, Olympic Movement stakeholders, the youth and education sector, and civil society organizations.

The guide summarizes the research and knowledge that is currently available and provides guidance on the integration of sport in the context of secondary and tertiary youth crime prevention. More specifically, it aims to inform policy development with respect to sport-based youth crime prevention.

- Propose policy guidance on the development of effective sport-based crime prevention programmes;
- Provide an evidence-based theoretical foundation to support the design, implementation and evaluation of sport-based interventions to prevent youth crime and violence;
- Support institutional capacity building and promote partnerships and multisectoral approaches to strengthen the role and capacities of crime prevention actors, including of sport, crime prevention and criminal justice sectors, to effectively integrate and utilize sport in crime prevention strategies and programming.

The scope of this guide

A comprehensive youth crime prevention strategy, whether at the local, community or national level, ought to cover all three main levels of interventions: primary, secondary and tertiary. At the primary level, addressing the general population, the promotion of sport participation and creating access to the benefits of sport initiatives (also a key aspect of Olympism³⁶⁵) can be an important aspect of crime prevention by building resilience at both the individual and community levels. The sport for development and peace and “sport plus” and “plus sport” approaches may also support interventions that address social, environmental or situational conditions associated with various types of crime, and may help build individual and community resilience, especially in vulnerable communities facing

Crime prevention programmes and interventions can operate at different levels:

- **Primary:** Universal, addressing the general population;
- **Secondary:** Selected, directed to at-risk individuals or groups;
- **Tertiary:** Indicated – directed at individuals already manifesting delinquency and criminal behaviour.

greater exposure to criminogenic factors. However, at the secondary and tertiary levels, since sport participation alone is not always sufficient to produce significant crime prevention outcomes among at-risk youth or youth in conflict with the law, other more targeted approaches to crime prevention are required, including those that build on the use of sport.

Sport-based programmes intentionally developed to mitigate risk factors and enhance protective factors can contribute to targeted crime prevention interventions and maximize impact. At the secondary level of youth crime prevention, sports may support interventions that target individuals or groups known or assumed to be at risk of violent engagement and criminal involvement. At the tertiary level, sports may create opportunities for interventions within (or outside, in some cases) the criminal justice system. This aims to prevent individuals already engaged in criminal activity from reoffending, supporting positive disruption processes and encouraging them to desist from violence and crime while successfully reintegrating into society.

This guide focuses on sport-based youth crime prevention interventions that target youth identified as at-risk of involvement in violence and crime and those who are already in conflict with the law.

The role of sport in crime prevention programming

In recent years, crime prevention practitioners and policymakers have attempted to understand and unleash the potential of sports to contribute to these targeted crime prevention initiatives. As opposed to the general promotion of sport participation as a social development tool, specific crime prevention programming has integrated sport in two different ways, using a “sport plus” or a “plus sport” approach.¹⁰

- **“Sport plus”**: A programme that adapts and augments sports activities, especially organized sports, with other interventions and non-sport activities to achieve outcomes.
- Essentially, **“sport plus”** initiatives focus on sport skills and increasing sport participation, and they usually involve competitive sport structures. Any potential health, social, psychological and behavioural benefits are seen as a by-product of participation. Essentially, sport comes first, and specific development activities and learning are delivered around sport participation.¹¹
- **“Plus sport”**: A programme that primarily focuses on non-sport activities aimed at positive youth development, resilience building and mitigating risk factors which intentionally uses sport’s popularity to attract and retain youth to the programme, to achieve non sport outcomes.¹²
- Typically, **“plus sport”** are interventions that use sport as a hook for participants, with a primary focus on social objectives and benefits. Sport is used as a tool for creating learning and development opportunities and gaining access to often marginalized or at-risk populations and communities.¹³

In both approaches, sport is used as an experiential learning context, but its role and importance vary in each approach. In the “plus sport” approach, sport is not the primary component and there is no systematic attempt to use sport for experiential learning, while emphasis is given to the non-sport outcomes. Moreover, the non-sport activities of the intervention are delivered separate from the sport activities. In “sport plus” approaches, sport is a site for experiential learning and sport activities and practice is used to reinforce what is learned in the non-sport activities of the intervention. Although both approaches can be

very effective in engaging disadvantaged or marginalized youth, “plus sport” programmes are more often used to strive towards social development objectives, including crime and violence prevention. “Sport plus” programmes traditionally strive for international development objectives (e.g. female empowerment, HIV/AIDS education) and therefore do not always focus on specific crime prevention outcomes and goals.¹⁴ However, they could indirectly contribute to crime prevention objectives by promoting positive values, developing life skills and addressing exclusion. Against this background, “plus sport” throughout this guide is encouraged for secondary and tertiary prevention purposes. Whether a “sport plus” approach may be appropriate for secondary prevention programmes will largely depend on the context of the community and what type of approach best serves it.

When used for violence and crime prevention objectives, “plus sport” interventions normally prioritize specific outcomes such as behaviour changes, education, social inclusion, individual resilience and empowerment, and desistance from crime.

Importantly, the development of effective sport-based youth crime prevention programmes requires not only an understanding of different types of crime prevention programmes and their specific objectives, but also greater clarity about the various mechanisms and programming elements through which sports may contribute to crime prevention and other sustainable development outcomes. These mechanisms are the core elements of theories of change that can support the development of effective crime prevention programmes. Understanding these mechanisms and how they can be triggered, facilitated, supported and reinforced by sports is critical to the further development of effective sport-based crime prevention programmes. This guide first introduces the sport mechanisms for primary prevention outcomes, which are the foundation of sport-related programming at the secondary and tertiary levels of intervention. Therefore, this guide offers tailored theories of change for secondary and tertiary violence and crime prevention through sport, in effort to account for the different objectives and the specific mechanisms at work at each of these levels. In other words, the theory of change for the secondary prevention builds on the primary prevention theory of change, and the tertiary theory of change builds on the primary and secondary theories of change.

10. Fred Coalter., *A Wider Social Role for Sport: Who's Keeping the Score?* (London, Routledge, 2007).

11. UNODC, *Preventing Violent Extremism through Sport*, Technical Guide, Criminal Justice Handbook Series (Vienna, 2020).

12. Fred Coalter, *Sport for Development: What game are we playing?* (Routledge, 2013).

13. UNODC, *Preventing Violent Extremism through Sport*, Technical Guide, Criminal Justice Handbook Series (Vienna, 2020).

14. Fred Coalter, *Sport for Development: What game are we playing?* (Routledge, 2013).

Structure of the guide

The guide contains seven distinct parts to cover key aspects of youth crime prevention through sport.

1

Policy landscape

Since the 1990s, a growing range of policies and frameworks at international, regional and domestic levels have signalled progress in the use of sport for Sustainable Development Goals more broadly, and for youth crime and violence prevention specifically. This part of the guide briefly reviews the existing policy landscape and introduces some general policy considerations to guide the promotion of sport in the context of youth crime prevention and criminal justice.

2

Integrating sport in youth violence and crime prevention strategies

This part of the guide first focuses on understanding the drivers of youth crime and violence. Different approaches to crime prevention are reviewed before discussing how sport-based programmes can offer a high impact, efficient and cost-effective crime prevention tool when used in a context-sensitive and intentional way, as part of a broader crime prevention strategy. The section also reflects on the role of the sport sector in holistic, multisectoral approaches and partnerships for crime prevention.

3

The contribution of sport to primary crime prevention: Building individual and community resilience

This part discusses how sport participation and programmes can help build resilience at individual and community level. At that level of prevention, the focus is with sport's general social and community development impact and how that impact contributes, in a broad manner, to social development and well-being of general youth population, and how it helps build resilience to violence and crime.

4

The contribution of sport to secondary crime prevention: Mitigating risk factors and supporting protective factors among at-risk youth

This part examines how sport, especially well-targeted sport-based programmes, contribute to secondary crime prevention. It reviews available evidence, proposes a theory of change based on the overall theory of change, and offers programmatic elements that can help maximize the impacts of sport-based programmes for at-risk youth.

5

The contribution of sport to tertiary crime prevention: Positive disruption, desistance from crime and social reintegration of youth in conflict with the law

This part analyses how sport-based programmes can contribute to tertiary crime prevention initiatives that promote positive disruption, life-course changes, desistance from crime, and disengagement from criminal groups and environments. It reviews available evidence, proposes a theory of change based on the overall theory of change and offers programmatic elements that can help maximize the impacts of sport-based programmes for youth who have been in contact with the law or in the criminal justice system.

6

Programme design for optimal crime prevention outcomes

Successful sport-based crime prevention programmes are those that are tailored, targeted, have clear and realistic objectives, are intentionally designed to support youth positive development or, depending on the target population, the participants' desistance from crime and their social reintegration. This part reflects on this in detail, helping policymakers ensure and maximize impact.

7

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

The crime prevention outcomes of sport-based programmes are difficult to measure. Programmes should be consistently evaluated using objective measures, with a focus on identifying specific factors that promote behavioural changes and yield crime reduction outcomes. This last part includes a discussion of priorities for monitoring, evaluation and research. This section acknowledges the practical and methodological difficulties involved in measuring the impact of sport-based crime prevention programmes and considers options for addressing them. This part ends with programme policy considerations.

1

Policy landscape

Policy landscape



Within the United Nations system, sport is considered an important enabler of sustainable development, especially since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. In the field of crime prevention and criminal justice disciplines, sport features as an important and effective tool to contribute to prevention efforts. Over the last two decades, several key elements of a broad policy framework have been adopted that supported the integration of sports into crime prevention initiatives.

Sport is an important enabler of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sport has been promoted as a powerful enabler specifically for SDG 3 (health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 12, (sustainable consumption), SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Sustainable Development Goals Fund, The Contribution of Sport to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals: A Toolkit for Action, Anita Palathingal, ed. (New York, 2018).

1

Sport for development

The United Nations has been committed to leveraging sport in its global development agenda to enhance and promote effective partnerships for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁵

The use of sport as an important enabler of peace and development and Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, in particular, is also reflected in General Assembly resolution 74/16 (2019), Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal¹⁶, and in Security Council resolution 2419 (2018) on youth, peace and security. The General Assembly resolution recognizes the valuable contribution of sport in peace, solidarity and fairness, and welcomes the work of the IOC in mobilizing its stakeholders to promote and strengthen a culture of peace. The resolution also calls upon member states to cooperate with the IOC in using sport as a tool for achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

Similarly the Kazan Action Plan, adopted at the Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, held in Kazan, Russian Federation, in July 2017, and acknowledged by the General Assembly in its resolution 73/24, identifies sport as a means of promoting education, health, development and peace. It also acknowledges sport's role in promoting tolerance and respect and its contributions to the empowerment of women, young people, individuals and communities, as well as to social inclusion objectives.

The updated United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace¹⁷ provides a frame of reference for Governments, civil society and the private sector to identify and promote ways in which sport can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. It uses the overarching policy commitments of the Kazan Action Plan as the basis for a strengthened global framework on sport for development and peace, including in relation

to realizing the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To further promote the implementation of sport as a tool for sustainable development and peace, it encourages four lines of action to maximize the contribution of sport to sustainable development and peace. These include:

1. Improving cooperation and coordination through a global framework;
2. Mainstreaming sport for development and peace in policy agendas;
3. Mobilizing resources for programming and implementation;
4. Monitoring, evaluation and comprehensive measurement of progress and impact with regard to sport as a tool for sustainable development and peace.

The objective of leveraging the contribution of sport to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and specifically using sport to create safer and more peaceful communities, is a key focus area for the IOC and Olympic Movement. It is embedded in the IOC strategic frameworks, including the Olympic Agenda 2020+5¹⁸ and the Olympism365 strategy¹⁹. The IOC also supports positive youth development and well-being through the Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP).

The need for accessibility and inclusion, creating participation opportunities for all, is reaffirmed by these policies. For instance, the objectives of Olympism365 are to ensure more people, from more diverse backgrounds, benefit from participating in community sports programmes and accessing Olympism "365 days a year". Similarly, the revised International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2015, promotes inclusive access to sport for all without any form of discrimination. It sets ethical and quality standards for all actors designing, implementing and evaluating sport programmes and policies.

15. Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Sustainable Development Goals Fund, *The Contribution of Sport to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals: A Toolkit for Action*, Anita Palathingal, ed. (New York, 2018).

16. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 74/16, *Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal*, adopted on 9 December 2019.

17. United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General "Sport for development and peace: towards sport's enabling of sustainable development and peace", A/71/179, 21 July 2016.

United Nations, General Assembly, "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and, peace", A/RES/71/160, 19 January 2017.

18. Olympic Agenda 2020+5: 15 Recommendations (International Olympic Committee, 2021). [uploads/sites/22/2018/06/14.pdf](https://www.olympic.org/olympic-agenda-2020-5)

19. Olympism 365: Strengthening the role of sport as an important enabler for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (October 2021).

2

Youth crime & violence prevention and sport

The United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice provide general guidance for crime prevention programming. Several crime prevention guidelines have been adopted by Member States, namely the Guidelines for Cooperation and Technical Assistance in the Field of Urban Crime Prevention,²⁰ the Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime²¹ and the Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency.²² Together with more recent resolutions, they stress the importance of effective crime prevention strategies that promote multisector approaches and the well-being of people.

Starting in 2019, the General Assembly began to specifically promote the role of sport in crime prevention. That year, with resolution 74/170, Integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, it recognized the power sports and physical activity to change perceptions, counter prejudices and improve behaviour, as well as to inspire people, break down racial and political barriers, promote gender equality and combat discrimination.

The General Assembly also encouraged Member States to advance the integration of sport into cross-cutting crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, and called upon Member States to strengthen community-based support measures for youth to address risk factors of crime and violence. It urged Member States to use sport activities more broadly to promote primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of youth crime and the social reintegration of young offenders and prevention of recidivism.

In 2021, the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/76/183 which reiterated its call for the integration of sport-based activities into crime prevention and emphasized the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective and respecting cultural diversity in implementing sport-based crime prevention programmes. It encouraged Member States to ensure that the necessary safeguards for participants for participants are included

in the design and implementation of such programmes in other the prevent and combat sexual harassment, abuse and violence against children and youth in sport.

Importantly, having received the report and recommendations of the expert group meeting convened by UNODC in December 2019²³ and hosted by the Government of Thailand, the General Assembly invited Member States to consider the development of clear policy frameworks within which sport-based initiatives could be integrated into crime prevention and criminal justice programmes. The present guide is meant to assist the development of such frameworks.

The 2021 Kyoto Declaration on “Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” refers to the need to empower youth to become active agents of positive change in their communities to support crime prevention efforts, including by organizing social, educational, cultural, recreational and sport-related youth programmes and forums. It also calls for mainstreaming gender in crime prevention strategies and for holistic and inclusive prevention approaches that address the root causes of violence and crime, and reaffirms the importance of a multisectoral approach and multi-stakeholder partnerships.²⁴

UNODC has been developing a large set of technical tools to support Member States in the implementation of standards and norms in crime prevention. For example, the UNODC Handbook on the United Nations Crime Prevention Guidelines²⁵ provides practical guidance on how to operationalize the United Nations Standards and norms in crime prevention. It encourages crime reduction interventions that are holistic and multisectoral. Following the growing interest in the use of sport for crime prevention UNODC’s Global Initiative on Youth Crime Prevention through Sport, supports Members States in integrating sport in youth crime prevention policy frameworks and strategies.

The timeline below offers a simplified visual representation of major policy developments on sport and crime prevention in the last decade.

20. Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/9, annex.

21. Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/13, annex.

22. United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh guidelines) (A/RES/45/11).

23. Outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies.

24. Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted at the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/76/181 at its 76th session in December 2021, para. 30.

25. UNODC, Handbook on the crime prevention guidelines: Making them work (New York, 2010).

UNODC Youth Crime Prevention through Sport Initiative is created as a follow-up to the 13th United Nations Crime Congress and the Doha Declaration

The United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace is updated to offer ways that sport can contribute to the 2030 Agenda

General Assembly Resolution 74/170 proposes the integration of sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies

Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice, and the Rule of Law is adopted calling for youth engagement in crime prevention through sport programming

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is adopted recognizing sport as an important enabler of sustainable development

Kazan Action Plan is created, identifying sport as a means of promoting education, health, development and peace

The Olympic Agenda 2020+5 is created to provide the Olympic movement with a sport-based roadmap for the next five years

General Assembly Resolution 76/183 is adopted to reiterate the use of sport in crime prevention spaces

Olympism365 is created to support grassroots programmes and marginalized populations' involvement in sport

Fig. 1

Major policy developments in the last ten years

3

Key considerations for policymakers

To better use sport to reduce crime, clear policy frameworks are needed within which sport interventions can be integrated into crime prevention strategies and programmes. Based on the policy landscape briefly reviewed below, the following policy considerations can guide the promotion of sport in the context of youth crime prevention and criminal justice:

1	Strategic use of sport-based programmes	Integrate sport-based interventions into crime prevention and criminal justice strategies and programmes, with a view to strengthening known protective factors and addressing risk factors of crime and victimization.
2	Collaboration with sport sector	Increase and improve impactful collaboration between the sports movement and the crime prevention sector.
3	Inclusivity	Adopt sports policies and programmes that are inclusive and ensure that more people, from more diverse backgrounds, benefit from participating in community sports programmes “365 days a year”.
4	Safe spaces	Support the development of safe public spaces for young people and local communities to positively interact and develop.
5	Equal access	Support and encourage local and municipal governments to create safe spaces for sport and physical activities, and provide equal access to sports facilities to all young people.
6	Gender mainstreaming	Mainstream a gender perspective into sport-based crime prevention programmes and provide a wide range of safe and accessible sports programmes for women and girls that reinforce their empowerment and gender equality.
7	Cultural diversity	Respect cultural diversity in implementing sport-based crime prevention programmes.
8	Sustainability	Support sustained, intensive and longer-lasting sport-based initiatives built on proven crime prevention methods and co-designed with or in consultation with the target population.

9	Safeguarding participants	Adopt specific policies and structures to prevent harm and respond to abuse, exploitation and violence against children and young people in sport and ensure that the necessary safeguards for participants are included in the design and implementation of sport-based crime prevention initiatives.
10	Capacity building	Invest in enhancing the capacity and well-being of programme facilitators, sports coaches and trainers to deliver sport-based crime prevention interventions.
11	Multi-agency partnerships	Support crime prevention partnerships and cooperation and support a multi-agency approach, including schools, sports organizations, crime prevention specialists and, where relevant, the police and criminal justice agencies. A key role for multi-agency partnerships is establishing and utilizing referral mechanisms into a sport programme as well as creating wraparound support through services and expertise.
12	Research and evaluation	Promote and facilitate effective research in, and monitoring and evaluation of, relevant initiatives to broaden the evidence base of crime prevention interventions that use sport. Studies aimed specifically at identifying the added value of sport as a tool in crime prevention and quantifying the unique impact of sport within multicomponent crime prevention programmes.
13	Learning and knowledge dissemination	Support knowledge dissemination and exchanges about successful sport-based programmes to help build capacity in sports organizations with respect to crime prevention. Cross institutional learning and dissemination creates advocacy through a shared understanding of how and why sport can be effective in crime prevention settings. This can take the form of promoting positive role models and sharing case studies and evidence.
14	Recognizing the economic opportunity of sport	Sport should be positioned as a low-cost investment with high levels of positive disruption leading to long-term desistance.

2

Integrating sport-based interventions into crime prevention

Integrating sport-based interventions into crime prevention

Understanding the many – and often complex – factors that may increase the risk of criminal activities is what makes the effective targeting and design of crime prevention initiatives possible.



Understanding the drivers of youth violence and crime

The factors associated with crime are often termed risk factors or drivers. They include global changes and trends, factors affecting individual countries, local environments, and communities, factors relating to the family and close relationships, and individual factors. They can be represented visually as per the following diagram showing the multifaceted nature of the factors influencing crime and violence.²⁶

At the community level, poverty, social conflict, corruption, poor urban planning, discrimination, exclusion and differential access to limited economic opportunities are among many factors associated with violence and crime. Corrupt or weak local institutions, inadequate infrastructure, poor or disorganized schools, poor housing and neighbourhood conditions, high unemployment, the presence of unchecked

criminal groups and easy access to drugs or small arms can all curtail a community's resilience to crime and violence.

At the individual level, risk factors for offending include personal relationship factors. Young people face numerous personal, situational, psychological, social, economic and cultural changes challenges. Negative experiences at school, lack of education and problematic relationships with family, peers and social institutions can all make a young person more vulnerable to criminal involvement. Risk factors connected with relationships include family characteristics such as harsh or erratic parenting, family conflict, violence and abuse, family circumstances such as poverty and isolation, and relationships with friends and peers that can lead to risk-taking and law breaking.²⁷ A craving for social identity, acceptance, respect and a sense of belonging and safety can all push at-risk youth into social groups involved with crime and violence. In urban areas with high levels of economic deprivation or need, youth can be attracted to engage in crime for short-term economic gain and a sense of belonging.

There is often a tendency to overemphasize the role of individual factors in prevention programmes, leading to a neglect of the wider social and economic factors which are perceived as much more difficult to address. A well-planned

prevention strategy should work to address individual, social and economic issues, and sport can play a useful role in doing so.

Moreover, the concept of risk underlines negative factors associated with criminal activity. A more positive approach to crime prevention has been to try to build the resilience of cities, communities and individuals to avoid and prevent crime and violence, despite negative circumstances. This approach entails identifying resiliency or protective factors that can be enhanced and facilitated to build individual and collective resilience to crime and violence. Sport can in this context be a useful tool for both strengthening certain protective individual risk factors to youth violence and crime, and mitigating others, ultimately creating a ripple effect from the individual to societal level.

Risk factors are not direct causes of delinquency, violence or crime but they increase the possibility of a young person behaving in an unlawful or violent manner and becoming engaged with criminality.

Protective factors encompass factors that imply the absence of risks or factors that moderate the effects of exposure to risks. Those factors include positive personal characteristics, family relationships and community support, as well as overall societal protection of youth and the availability of opportunities for learning and skills development.

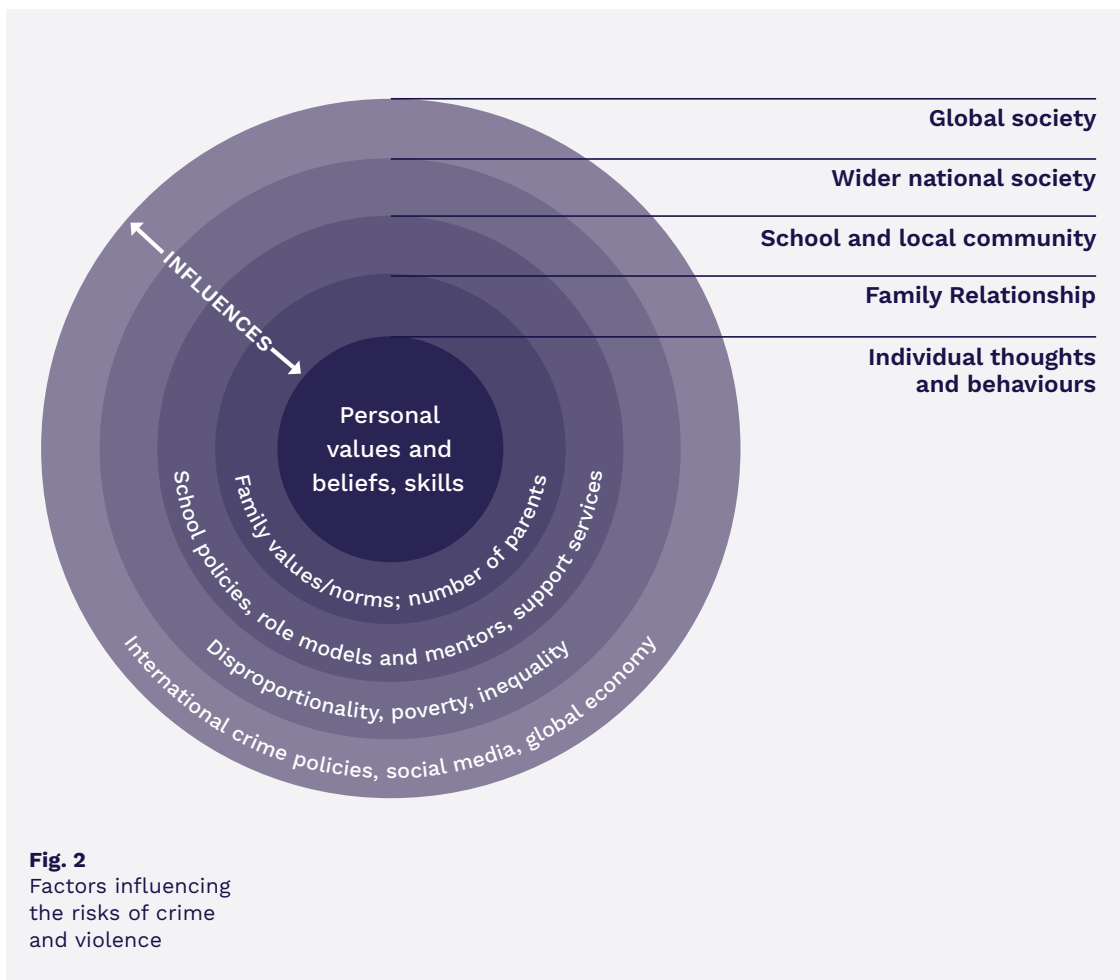


Fig. 2
Factors influencing the risks of crime and violence

26. UNODC, Handbook on the crime prevention guidelines: Making them work (New York, 2010), p. 10.
27. UNODC, Handbook on the crime prevention guidelines: Making them work (New York, 2010), p. 11.

The table below illustrates common drivers of youth crime and violence at different levels (e.g. individual, family, school, community), and how sport can positively contribute at each level.

Ecological model level	Driver/risk factor	Contribution of sport/sport-based programming to address risks
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social exclusion²⁸ • Sense of belonging • Age²⁹ • Gender³⁰ • Attitudes towards others³¹ • Feeling unsafe • Hypermasculinity³² • Neurodiversity 	<p>Sport can provide the settings and mechanisms for individuals to enhance characteristics and soft skills (e.g. empowerment, resiliency) that ultimately influence individuals to engage in non-criminal and non-violent activities. Potential outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced self-esteem, mental well-being, self-efficacy and sense of belonging; • Building of positive, trusting relationships with peers; • Creation of a positive self-image; • Creation of a pro-social identity; • Sport safely and positively mimics common features of common crime participation – risk, excitement, adrenaline.
Family and household relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor parenting or no parents • Physical and/or emotional neglect and abuse • Domestic violence • Mental illness and/or substance use • Incarceration of parents 	<p>Sometimes a household does not contain the amount of care and emotional support needed for youth to thrive. Sport programmes can be a safe space where trained professionals provide essential support and guidance. Potential outcomes at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustworthy and supportive adults and coaches acting as positive role models • A place where youth are attended to and supervised • Stability and continuity • A place of refuge from household violence, neglect and abuse • Ultimately, desistance from violence and crime

28. Squires, P., "The knife crime 'epidemic' and British politics", *British Politics*, vol. 4, No. 1 (2009), pp. 127–157.

29. Loeber, R., Menting, B., Lynam, D. R., Moffitt, T. E., Stouthamer-Loeber, M., Stallings, R., Farrington, D. P., & Pardini, D., "Findings from the Pittsburgh youth study: Cognitive impulsivity and intelligence as predictors of the age-crime curve", *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 51, No. 11 (2012), pp. 1,136–1,149.

30. Murray, C., *Young men, masculinities and imprisonment: An ethnographic study in Northern Ireland*. (London, Palgrave, 2023).

31. Rummens, A., "Criteria for the evaluation of crime prevention practices", *European Crime Prevention Network* (2016).

32. UNODC, *Line Up Live Up: Youth Crime Prevention through Sport*.

Ecological model level	Driver/risk factor	Contribution of sport/sport-based programming to address risks
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low academic performance³³ • School exclusion • Lack of qualifications³⁴ 	<p>Sport can support youth who are challenged academically by enhancing soft skills like motivation, goal setting, and the importance of education and learning new things. Potential outcomes at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved school attachment • Reduced school dropout rates • (Re)integration of youth into school • Competence in sport and non-sport skills (i.e. employability) • Transferring skills from sport to school settings • Provision of informal education
Local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor infrastructural planning and development³⁵ • Boredom³⁶ • Victimization risks • Violent subcultures³⁷ • Negative influences/role models 	<p>Sport can provide a safe space for youth to experience social inclusion in the absence of other opportunities and enhance community resilience. Sport programmes can inspire, engage, connect and create local community leaders who enact positive changes to transform their environment. Potential outcomes at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened community development, integration and partnerships • Alleviation of boredom • Integration of community leaders into activities • Leadership • Safer community spaces
National and global society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deprivation and marginalization³⁸ • Globalization³⁹ • Social media⁴⁰ • Lack of rule of law and mistrust of institutions • Structural discrimination • Excessive violence and maltreatment of marginalized and minority groups⁴¹ by law enforcement • Desire to seek local justice 	<p>Sport can help youth develop the leadership and pro-social skills necessary to improve their socioeconomic standing. Sport can also help prevent violence and crime when youth create new social networks through positive interactions with law enforcement, and employment and volunteer opportunities. Potential outcomes at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resiliency • A pro-social identity • “Self-transformation” by influencing the ways in which anti-social behaviour is dealt with by criminal justice agencies • Re-integration of young person into mainstream society • A site for institutions and law enforcement to engage with and improve relationships with youth • Fewer opportunities to be pulled into or intrigued by anti-social behaviour, thus reducing youth’s contact with law enforcement

33. Henry, K. L., Knight, K. E., & Thornberry, T. P., “School disengagement as a predictor of dropout, delinquency, and problem substance use during adolescence and early adulthood”, *Journal of youth and adolescence*, vol. 41, No. 2 (2012), pp. 156–166.

34. Kieselbach, T., “Long-Term Unemployment Among Young People: The Risk of Social Exclusion”, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 32, No. 1–2 (2003), pp. 69–76.

35. Lens, M.C., “Subsidized housing and crime”, *Journal of Planning Literature*, vol. 28, No. 4 (2013), pp. 352–363.

36. Densley, J. A., “The organisation of London’s street gangs”, *Global Crime*, vol. 13, No. 1 (2012), pp. 42–64.

37. Wolfgang, M.E. and F. Ferracuti, *The Subculture of Violence* (London, Tavistock, 1967).

38. Roberts, S., “The London killings of 2018: The story behind the numbers and some proposed solutions”, *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, vol. 21, No. 2 (2019), pp. 94–115.

39. Ray L., *Violence and Society* (London, SAGE, 2011).

40. Patton, D. et al. “Social Media as a Vector for Youth Violence: A Review of the Literature”, *Computers In Human Behavior*, vol. 35 (2014).

41. Longstaff, A. et al., *Neighbourhood policing: Past, present and future: A review of the literature* (2015).

Contribution of sport and sport-based interventions to substance-use prevention among youth

There is a strong link between risk and protective factors for juvenile offending and crime and substance abuse. For example, negative social conditions (family history of substance abuse, peer pressure, neighbourhood conditions) may result in a drug abuse. At the same time, delinquent behaviour may be precursory to drug abuse, as drugs are commonly embraced by criminal communities (especially gangs) involving youth⁴². Similarly, substance use among youth can lead to increased risks of juvenile delinquency, violence and criminal behaviour. Research reveals a strong correlation between substance use and youth crime with several studies indicating a high percentage of young people in substance use being charged or convicted for criminal acts, including drug related offences such as drug trade and related illicit activities.⁴³

In reference to substance use prevention, research shows that sport participation can have both positive and negative impacts. The different effects could be related to differences in the type of sports, sport-specific environments and structures, as well as competition levels.

To this end, while participation in professional and competitive sport may have a negative impact on substance use – for instance, in relation to doping – grassroots sport and sport-based interventions, which have broader social development objectives beyond the practice of sport, have strong potential to promote positive youth development and build youth resilience to substance use when based on science. Among the latter, there are programmes which, in their use of sport as a tool to deliver non-sport outcomes,

In 2015, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction conducted an environmental scan of youth sport programmes that address substance use. Stakeholders had identified a need for an overview of how sport is being used in the field of youth substance use prevention. Some sport programmes have been shown to be effective in reducing the use of some drugs. The results of the scan highlight programme that rely on evidence-based practices and include key considerations for developing future programmes based on the programme evaluations reviewed in the scan.

McKiernan, Anna, "Youth sport programs that address substance use — an environmental scan" (Ottawa, Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2016).

including skills development, youth empowerment and participation, show promising results, a number of which have been articulated in the UNODC/WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention.⁴⁴ In fact, sport and quality physical education that embraces sport values, can promote physical and mental health among youth, helping them acquire the cognitive, social and emotional skills they need to lead a healthy lifestyle and promote safe development, addressing a range of risk and protective factors related to violence, crime and substance use.

In this context the guide is, to a large extent, also relevant to sport programming for the prevention of substance use.

42. Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, Risk and Protective Factors (2005).

43. Mats Anderberg, Mikael Dahlberg and Peter Wennberg, "Criminality among Young People With Substance Use Problems in Sweden: A One-Year Follow-Up Study", *Journal of Drug Issues*, vol. 52, No. 3 (2022), pp. 406–420; and Edward P. Mulvey, Carol A. Schubert and Laurie Chassin, *Substance Use and Delinquent Behavior Among Serious Adolescent Offenders* (2010).

44. UNODC/WHO, *International Standards on Drug Use Prevention: Second updated edition* (Vienna, 2018).

2

Approaches to youth crime and violence prevention

The broad field of crime prevention includes a range of responses developed over many years, including developmental, environmental, situational, social and community-based crime prevention. In the 2002 United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime, the wide range of prevention approaches and programmes are classified under four main headings:

- **Crime prevention through social development:** Interventions that “promote the well-being of people and encourage pro-social behaviour through social, economic, health and educational measures, with a particular emphasis on children and youth, and a focus on the risk and protective factors associated with crime and victimization.”⁴⁵
- **Community-based crime prevention:** Interventions that aim to “change the conditions in neighbourhoods that influence offending, victimization and the insecurity that results from crime by building on the initiatives, expertise and commitment of community members.”⁴⁶
- **Situational crime prevention:** Interventions to “prevent the occurrence of crimes by reducing opportunities, increasing risks of being apprehended and minimizing benefits, including through environmental design, and by providing assistance and information to potential and actual victims.”⁴⁷
- **Social reintegration:** Intervention to “prevent recidivism by assisting in the social reintegration of offenders and other preventive mechanisms.”⁴⁸

All of these approaches can be part of an integrated or holistic crime prevention strategy. The potential use of sport in support of each of the approaches may take different forms.

Main types of interventions

Prevention through social development

Community-based interventions

Situational prevention

Social reintegration

Fig 3.
Types of interventions

45. United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime, para. 6(a), Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/13, Annex.

46. Ibid, para. 6(b).

47. Ibid, para. 6(c).

48. Ibid, para. 6(d).

3

Use of sport to achieve youth violence and crime prevention outcomes

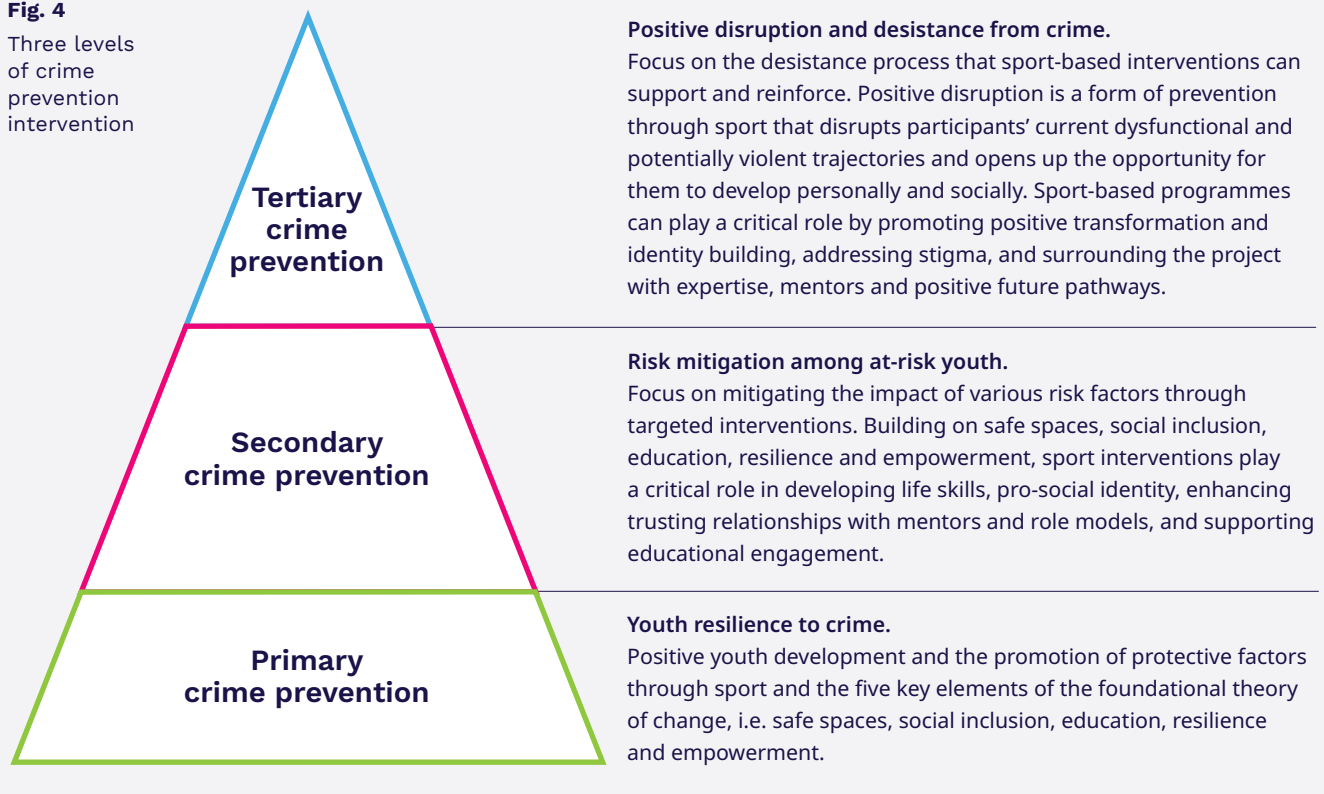
Each crime prevention intervention has specific objectives depending on which level of prevention it focuses, the target group and the type of crime it aims to prevent. The diagram below shows broad objectives at the intersection of sport and the different levels of crime prevention.

At the primary level, the field of sport and development utilizes primarily “sport plus” approaches to build community, group and individual resilience to crime as well as a protective environment around children and youth. As an important enabler of sustainable development, sport can instil positive values and promote tolerance and respect as well as the empowerment of young people, individuals and communities. It can contribute to health, education, social inclusion and general crime prevention objectives.

At the secondary and tertiary levels of intervention, sport

participation alone is unlikely to effectively address risk and resiliency factors or produce significant positive development outcomes. Rather, research shows that intentionally designed sport-based interventions may help prevent youth violence and crime by supporting the acquisition and transfer of core life skills, the affirmation of pro-social identities, exposure to positive role models, and the development of positive relationships.^{49, 50, 51, 52} This is why a “plus sport” approach is recommended for secondary and tertiary crime prevention. Additionally, depending on the programme’s goals and design, sport activities can be relied upon to contribute to several other desired programme outcomes such as: social inclusion, positive disruption, resilience from negative influences, pro-social behavioural and cognitive changes, school attachment or employment, volunteering or training opportunities, and enhanced feeling of positive empowerment. In a purposeful programming context, partaking in sport can give youth an opportunity to develop a new social identity which may lead to desistance from crime; at the tertiary level, skills learned through sport can also aid youth’s social reintegration.

Fig. 4
Three levels of crime prevention intervention



49. Bean, C. and Forneris, T., “Examining the importance of intentionally structuring the youth sport context to facilitate positive youth development”, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol. 28, No. 4 (2016), pp. 410–425.

50. Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T., and Camiré, M., “The implicit/ explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer”, *Quest*, vol. 70, No. 4 (2018), 456–479.

51. Holt, N. L., Neely, K. C., Slater, L. G., Camiré, M., Côté, J., Fraser-Thomas, J., MacDonald, D., Strachan, L., and Tamminen, K. A., “A grounded theory of positive youth development through sport based on results from a qualitative meta-study”, *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, vol. 10, No. 1 (2017), pp. 1–49.

52. Turnnidge, J., Côté, J., and Hancock, D. J., “Positive youth development from sport to life: explicit or implicit transfer?”, *Quest*, vol. 66, No. 2 (2014), pp. 203–217.



4

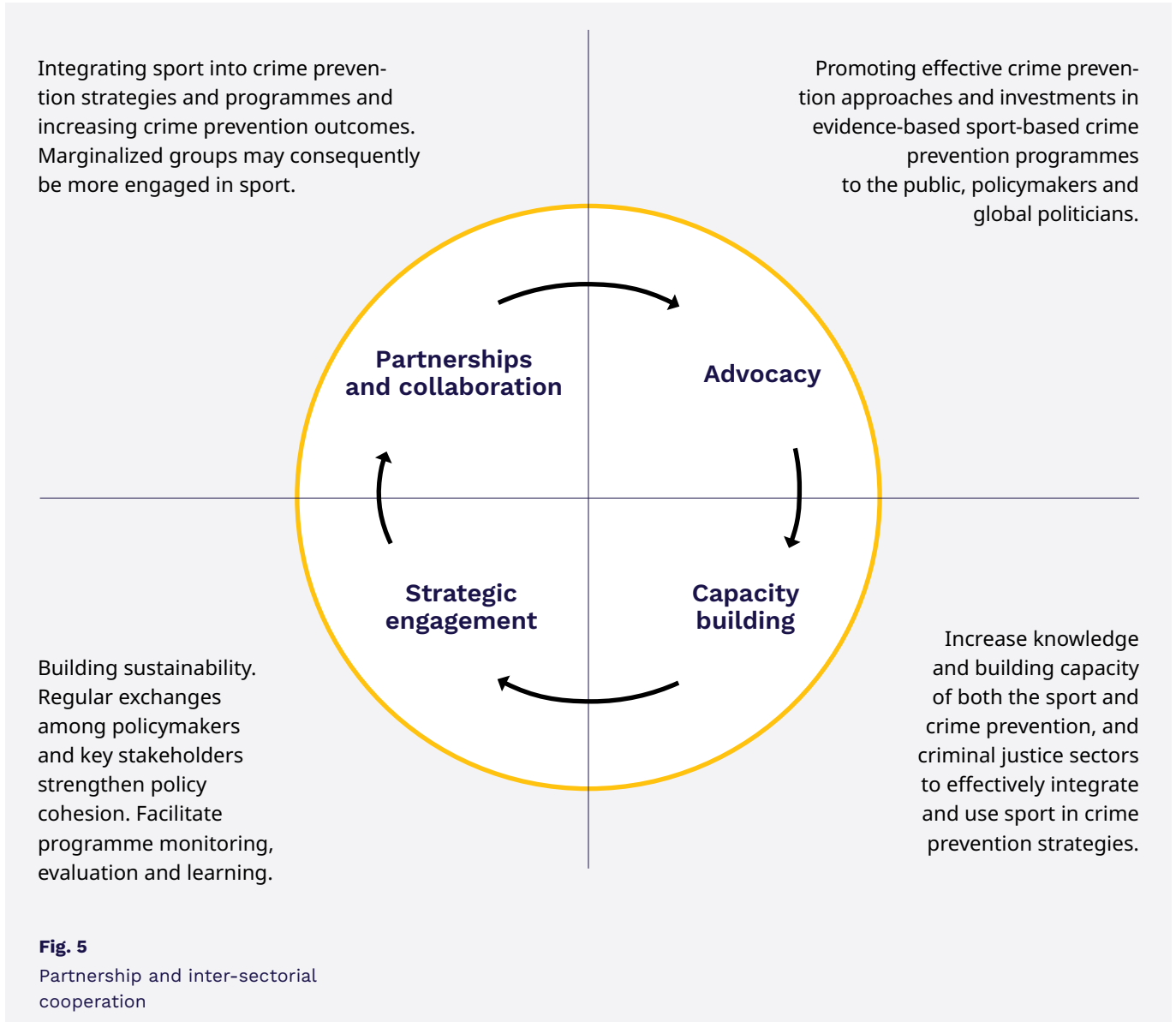
Engaging the sport sector

As emphasized in the United Nations Guidelines on Crime Prevention, effective crime prevention requires holistic and inclusive approaches that (1) address root causes of violence and crime, involve a range of stakeholders (including the youth and sport sectors), (2) build strong partnerships, and (3) are not the exclusive responsibility of law enforcement and criminal justice systems. Multi-sector and inter-agency cooperation and partnerships are required to implement proactive instead of reactive strategies to prevent crime and violence.

Like any other type of crime prevention initiative, sport-based crime prevention programmes are greatly facilitated by coordination and partnerships between different sectors, levels of government and community organizations. Sport-based programmes can benefit from an inter-agency cooperation approach, including sport organizations, schools, local recreation facilities managers, crime prevention specialists and, when relevant, the police and criminal justice agencies.⁵³ For example, a cooperative relationship between schools and community sports groups can ensure that community-based prevention programmes support school engagement, a key resilience factor.⁵⁴

53. Cameron, M. and MacDougall, C. J., "Crime prevention through sport and physical activity", *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, vol. 165 (2000), pp. 1-6.

54. Morgan, H. J. and Bush, A. J., "Sports coach as transformative leader: arresting school disengagement through community sport-based initiatives", *Sport, Education and Society*, vol. 21, No. 5 (2016), pp. 759-777.



The sport sector, which includes a large ecosystem of actors, can be mobilized to further integrate sports into crime prevention strategies, especially at the primary level. These actors include:

- Ministry of Sport and Ministry of Education officials and departments;
- Municipal and other government agencies responsible for sport and recreation facilities and programmes;
- National Olympic Committees and associated sport partners and sponsors;
- Sport federations and associations at the national and local levels;
- Community and private sport clubs and organizations;
- Athletes, coaches, trainers, operators of sport facilities and sport promoters;

- Sport equipment industry actors and corporate sport sponsors;
- The sport media;
- Sport and sport for development and peace sector and civil society organizations.

The figure above depicts the important roles that crime prevention and sport actors can play together through partnership and inter-sectorial cooperation. It is the merging of expertise and experience that provide different perspectives and novel solutions for secondary and tertiary crime and violence prevention. Collaboration between the sport and crime prevention sectors facilitates capacity-building and helps build communities of practice.



Building partnerships with sport actors

The sport sector has a critical role in contributing to the capacity, advocacy, policy development and infrastructure of sport-based interventions for crime prevention. The multiple sport actors that are included in the broad sport sector can support multisectoral partnerships and sport-based programming for crime prevention in the following ways:

There are also different actors, from the grassroots to global level, who can help strengthen the relationship between sport and crime prevention. While the list of actors below is not exhaustive, all of them have a role to play. It is vital that actors have the appropriate support and guidance to effectively mobilize themselves and necessary partners / sectors.

- **Private sport clubs:** Privately owned and operated sport clubs can support interventions through corporate social responsibility (CSR) agendas. Private sport clubs will benefit from having safe sport facilities, equipment and are well connected to the sport business sector who may be able to support volunteering, apprenticeships and training, and employment opportunities for youth participants. Private sport clubs may also be in a position to provide access to referred youth who are particularly skilled or talented, this can give at-risk youth opportunities to compete in spaces they may not have previously been able to access, enabling them to access new social opportunities.
- **Sport centres and academies:** Can identify athletes who can act as role models within the sport intervention. Youth can be exposed to athletes, often of a similar age, to model healthy masculinity and pro-social behaviours. Sports academies may also be able to offer venues and

Football for Schools (F4S) is a programme run by FIFA, in collaboration with UNESCO. The programme has been designed to promote targeted life skills and competencies through football and contribute to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and other priorities. The F4S Programme is guided by a results-based management framework and theory of change, which assumes that developing intrapersonal, interpersonal and cognitive skills among learners, in addition to producing gains in knowledge and positive attitudes, will help them to develop life skills and competencies. UNODC, among other partners, has contributed to the development of the training sessions, building an online Line up Live up programme.

More information
<https://footballforschools.fifa.com/en/>

Fig 6.
Sport sector contributions

Sport Is Your Gang is an initiative developed by the International Federation Muaythai Associations. It uses the power of sport, especially muaythai, in providing an alternative focus and a path away from crime and violence. It targets youths from challenging backgrounds. Through their participation in training and dialogue programmes, youth are guided and inspired for positive self-development and a healthy lifestyle. Sport in this context is used to provide a sense of social inclusion e.g. rather than belonging to a gang or participating in a violent lifestyle, the spirit of the project is that through sport, youths can become part of a family, a team, and a community. The programme also fosters a sense of personal growth, respect, and empathy for others, shining a light for those who have taken steps down a destructive path, guiding them out of violence and crime.

More information
Sport Is Your Gang – International Federation of Muaythai Associations

equipment for sports events, workshops or training sessions. Sport academies represent the competitive sport sector and therefore are well placed to influence policy development and communicate to the wider sport sector the role of sport academies in supporting local interventions to reduce youth crime and violence.

- **Community sport clubs:** Often play an important role in primary prevention efforts. Community sport clubs can support crime prevention efforts by strengthening community support and driving mobilization of key actors, services and community leaders. Community sport clubs can also help to develop capacity through training others in community settings, sharing experiences to staff and enhancing contextual awareness. Community sports clubs should have an important voice in influencing policy development by sharing evidence from a community perspective.
- **International and national sport federations:** Sport federations can actively contribute to crime and violence prevention through several concrete actions. For example, they can partner with sports initiatives to offer skill-building and training opportunities for both staff and young individuals. Federations can also back mentoring initiatives by connecting national and regional athletes with aspiring youth. Furthermore, they can leverage resources and public visibility to advocate for interventions and take on leadership roles within institutions dedicated to this cause.
- **The Olympic Movement:** National Olympic Committees and the Olympic Movement organizations can serve as a cohesive force for policymaking and offer valuable resources and knowledge necessary for training and capacity-building within the sports community aiming to enhance understanding of crime prevention through sports. Through partnering with civil society organizations, ministries and other relevant sport and non-sport stakeholders, National Olympic Committees can build and develop resources and crime prevention through sport programmes and incorporate skills training in their curricula and training offers, and bring in their expertise in existing projects. They can also provide necessary resources (access to sports facilities, athletes, volunteers and to sports equipment) to facilitate implementation of youth crime prevention programmes on the ground.
- **The sport industry:** The sport sector includes a range of sport business partners, commercial institutions, national and local media outlets. Such stakeholders can support capacity building and advocacy efforts as well as promote the role of the sport sector to encourage partnerships.

Other key partners

- **Government leadership.** All levels of government should play a leadership role in developing effective and humane crime prevention strategies and in creating and maintaining institutional frameworks for their implementation and review. This goes beyond direct connections provided by the Ministry of Sport and Ministry of Justice but should also include youth services, health, social welfare and education departments. Specifically, government leadership actors should set up policy frameworks and resources to help integrate sport in crime prevention frameworks, as well as include crime prevention objectives and outcomes in youth and sport policies. The various actors and service providers engaged can encourage participation, offer referrals and support services, and act as collaborators for the sport intervention.
- **Youth:** Youth should always be included in crime prevention strategies as they know their community and social realities as well as their individual needs. Recognizing youth as important agents of change enhances youth empowerment and their opportunities to meaningfully engage in the prevention process. Youth should be respected, and their agency should be considered as an asset to policymakers and interventions. Youth should be consulted and involved at all stages of sport intervention design and delivery as well as influencing policy agendas.
- **Peer leaders from civic society agencies and community members and leaders as positive role models:** Locally-based interventions can benefit from civil society

organizations and community leaders to enhance local engagement. Those in the community are best placed to offer contextualized knowledge of the needs and strengths of the local area. They will also have a greater influence in encouraging youth to participate in a programme. Local actors like community leaders and civil society organizations may also include faith leaders or those who are culturally positioned to positively inform policymakers and intervention settings.

- **Local, community-based structures and institutions:** Schools, universities, trade schools, colleges, community centres and local businesses can play a role in secondary and tertiary crime prevention by being partners with the sport intervention and offering upskilling, volunteering, apprenticeship, and employment opportunities to youth. Local academic institutions can also play an important role in monitoring, evaluation, learning and creating an evidence base for sport in the context of crime and violence prevention.

5

Theory of change

Based on the drivers of youth crime and violence, key crime prevention approaches and the role sport can play in this regard, a theory of change can be designed to underpin programming.⁵⁵ The theory of change presented in this section is centred around the three levels of crime prevention and offers an innovative three-level, sport-based perspective to strengthen protective factors and mitigate risk factors to violence and crime, and achieve disengagement from criminal elements, social reintegration and desistance from crime. Each level of prevention is presented with a kaleidoscope diagram that shows how that level of crime prevention – alongside sport – is built upon the foundation of safe spaces, social inclusion, education, resiliency and empowerment. The secondary prevention kaleidoscope builds from that of primary prevention, and the tertiary prevention kaleidoscope develops those of primary and secondary prevention. Below is a visual of the combined prevention levels which demonstrates how sport can help drive positive change and disruption throughout the levels of prevention.

When thinking about the way that sport can contribute to the outcomes listed in the theory of change, it is useful to consider the two distinctive approaches to sport programming: (1) “sport plus” and (2) “plus sport”. As mentioned previously, throughout this guide a “plus sport” approach is encouraged based on research that shows greater impact on violence and crime prevention among at-risk youth and the prevention of recidivism and social reintegration of offenders.

Which sport?

Different sports are known to lend themselves to different developmental outcomes that are relevant for youth violence and crime prevention. For example:

Team sports could support developing social skills such as communication, conflict management and working effectively with others toward a common goal.

Individual sports could help developing self-reliance, self-discipline, and personal goal setting.

Extreme sports can build self-reliance, fill the need for adventure and excitement and offer a measure of risk that may serve as an alternative to violence crime and drug use for some young people.

Other parameters to consider include age, gender, and local context. Often a multi-sport programme may suit best to the specific target group and programme objectives.

55. The theory of change is tailored to the three prevention levels in the context of crime and violence prevention and builds on the theory of change for primary prevention of violent extremism developed in UNODC Technical Guide on Preventing Violent Extremism through Sport.

The figure below shows how the concepts from the theory of change, starting with the five broad tenets (safe spaces, social inclusion, education, resiliency, empowerment) evolve from the primary prevention level (colour-coded in green) to secondary prevention (pink) and finally to the tertiary level of prevention (blue). These colours are used to identify the three levels of prevention throughout the rest of this guide.

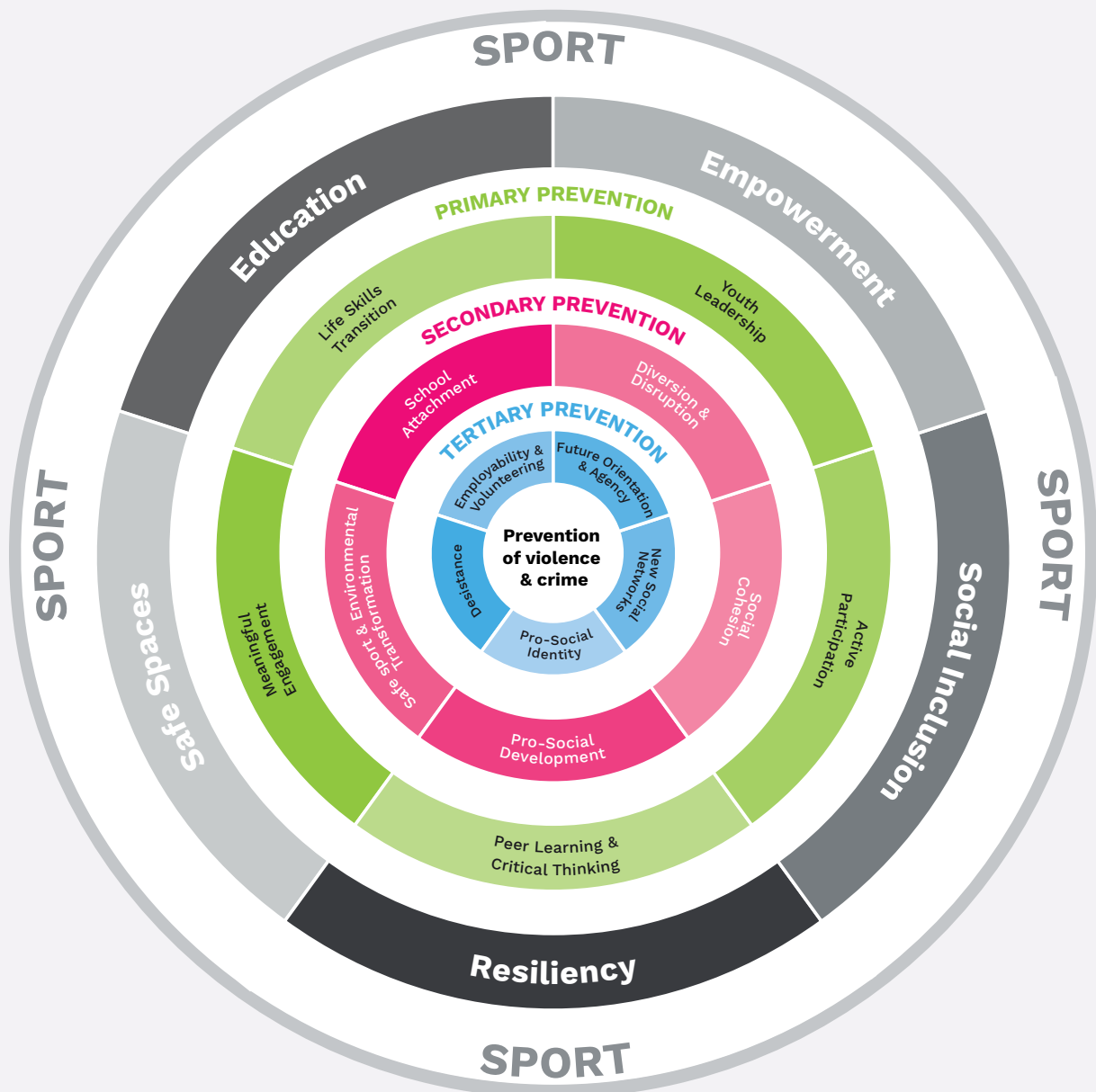


Fig. 7

Use of sport to achieve prevention outcomes for youth violence and crime at the three levels of intervention

Additionally, below, on the left side are a list of 'enablers' for each level, which are programme elements that facilitate achievement of each level's short-term outcomes (the circles). On the right side of the visual are the long-term outcomes corresponding with each level; these can also be found in the centre of each level's kaleidoscope. For more precise indicators and outputs for each level of prevention, refer to Part 7: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

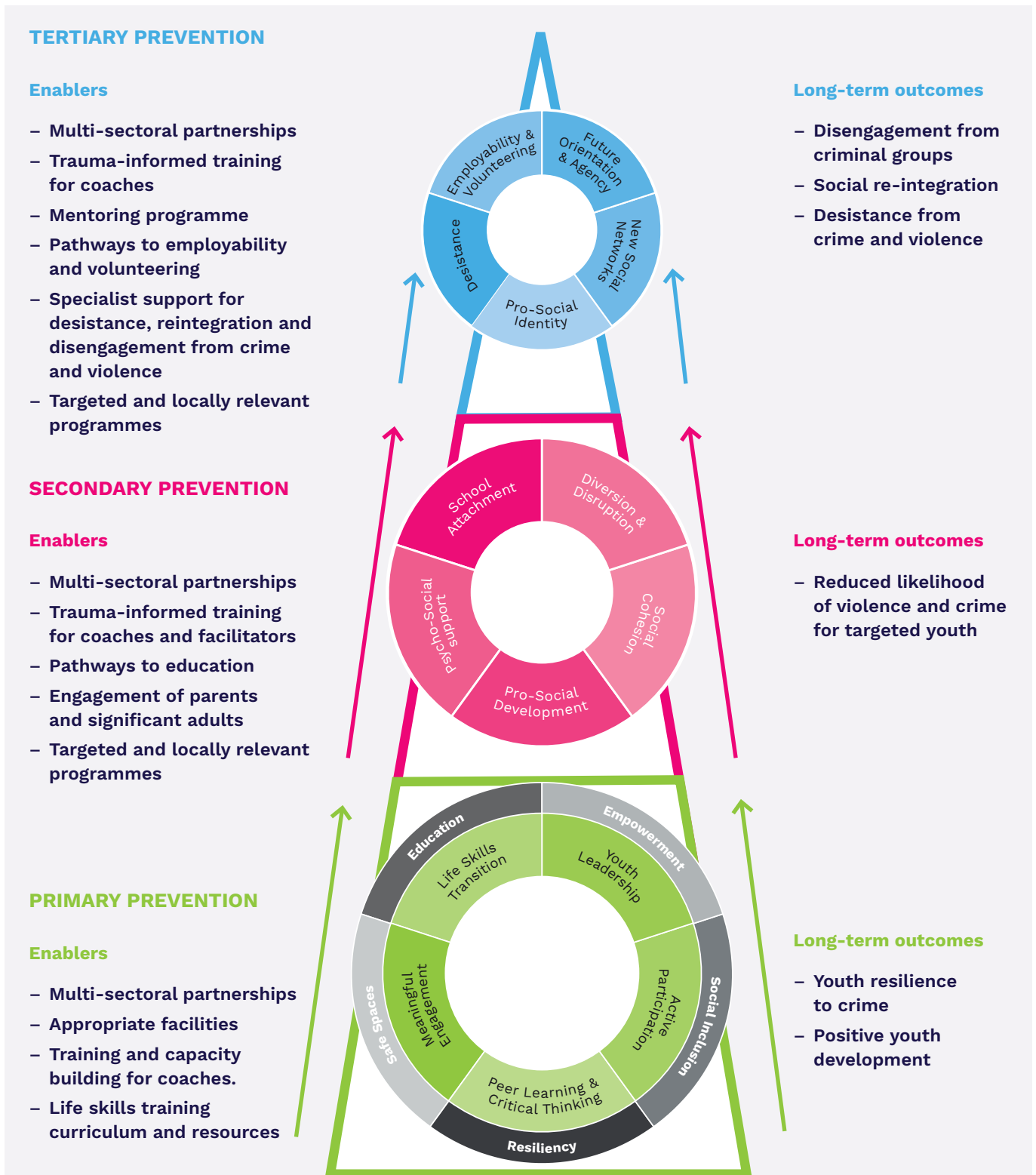


Fig. 8
The theory of change against the backdrop of the crime and violence prevention pyramid, with associated enablers and long-term outcomes

3

Primary level of intervention

Although primary prevention is not the principal focus of this guide, it is important to acknowledge its components and role as the basis for secondary and tertiary prevention. At that level, one is not concerned with sport-based programmes, but with sport’s general social and community development impact and how that impact contributes.

At the primary level of intervention, sport’s main contribution to achieving youth crime prevention outcomes is indirect and usually revolves around the objectives outlined in the table below.

Primary prevention	Objectives achieved through sport
Safe Spaces: Meaningful engagement	Providing safe spaces means youth may feel more comfortable engaging in meaningful and authentic ways.
Social Inclusion: Active participation	Supporting social inclusion means youth feel they belong and want to take part in all programme activities.
Education: Life skills transition	Encouraging education means youth can build their repertoire of life skills to apply outside of the sport programme.
Resiliency: Peer learning and critical thinking	Building resilience means youth learning from other programme participants and thinking critically about how to overcome challenges and peer pressure related to crime and violence.
Empowerment: Youth leadership	Empowering youth means they welcome and seek out leadership opportunities within and beyond a sport programme.

It is important to understand how and under what circumstances organized sport activities can contribute to achieving these desired outcomes and enhance the protective environment around children and youth, especially those who are vulnerable and marginalized.

Based on available research evidence, it is not always clear whether sport participation acts as a preventive measure or a risk factor for violent or criminal behaviour.⁵⁶ Some studies have concluded that young people’s participation in sport programmes were associated with more violence.⁵⁷ A large study reported that minimal to moderate sport participation was linked to the highest rates of violence, while multiple hours and no hours spent in sport were linked to lower engagement in violent crime.⁵⁸

Therefore, because participation in sport activities does not automatically enhance pro-social behaviour,⁵⁹ there is a critical need for more research to identify the processes through which sport participation specifically contributes to the prevention of violence and crime. Attention must be turned to the question of how to improve the crime prevention benefits of sport participation, in particular with respect to the five key elements identified above. In addition, it is important to ensure that sporting activities do not ritualize or even legitimize violence and confrontation in connection to harmful stereotypes and normative beliefs linked to violence and crime, including with certain ideals of masculinity. It is therefore important that sport programmes do not encourage toxic masculinity and provide an inclusive and safe environment".⁶⁰

“Sport plus” or “plus sport”?
 At the primary level of intervention, one finds mainly sport for development programmes utilizing “sport plus”. These typically promote sport participation in school, after school or in the community to promote individual, community or social development and increase resilience to crime and violence. Some interventions, however, are specifically meant to address exclusion, discrimination, or unequal access to sport, especially by disadvantaged or marginalized youth.

56. Davis, B.S. and Menard, S., “Long term impact of youth sports participation on illegal behavior”, *The Social Science Journal*, vol. 50, No. 1 (2013): pp. 34–44; and Spruit, A., Vugt, E., Put, C., Stouwe, T. and Stams, G. J., “Sports participation and juvenile delinquency: a meta-analytic review”, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 45, No. 4 (2016), pp. 655–671.

57. Collison, H., Farello, A., and Smith, A. C.T., “Tackling Knife Crime and Violence through Sport Programmes. Evaluation Report prepared for the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, London, UK” (2021).

58. Stansfield, R., “Teen involvement in sports and risky behaviour: A cross-national and gendered analysis”, *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 57, No. 1 (107), (2017), pp. 172–193.

59. Scheithauer, H., Leppin, N., Hess, M., “Preventive interventions for children in organized team sport tackling aggression: results from the pilot evaluation of ‘Fairplayer.Sport’”, *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, vol. 2 (2020), pp. 49–63.

60. Outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, para. 33.



Fig. 9
Theory of Change for sport programming at primary level of prevention

The figure below represents the primary prevention elements of sport-based crime prevention programmes for the general population and highlights the different contributors that help strive towards the programmes' crime prevention outcomes. The elements in the middle of the square present the sport methodology, or what occurs during a sport programme for the primary prevention that can help lead to the intended outcomes at this level. These outcomes are understood as almost entirely contingent on the effectiveness of other interventions or programming approaches – supported by sport (the four sides of the square). These additional elements are included to reinforce and strengthen those outcomes.

developmental benefits appear to be dependent on environmental, social and contextual factors and may vary depending on, among other things, the sport subculture, social relationships, shifting meaning of sports across the life course, and the social characteristics of participants.⁶¹ Those observations emphasize the need to structure and implement sport activities in an intentional manner that supports youth development or the acquisition of key values and life skills to other life domains.

Research has emphasized the crucial role of “intentionality” in maximizing the developmental outcomes of sport participation.⁶² Tailored sport interventions and structured programmes that have social development and prevention objectives (for example those that are deliberately structured to teach life skills) score higher on positive youth development outcomes, compared to other sport programmes and activities that are not tailored to the specific objectives.⁶³ When coaches and programme facilitators are skilled and trained and use tailored approaches, methods and curricula for youth development, they can play an important part in helping young people face the social challenges ahead of them.⁶⁴ Training and capacity building for coaches

1
Programming approaches at the primary level of prevention

Although sport and physical activity has demonstrated its contribution in promoting positive development and well-being, supporting social inclusion, instilling values, teaching skills, building community and individual resilience to crime, its positive outcomes are not a given. Sport's

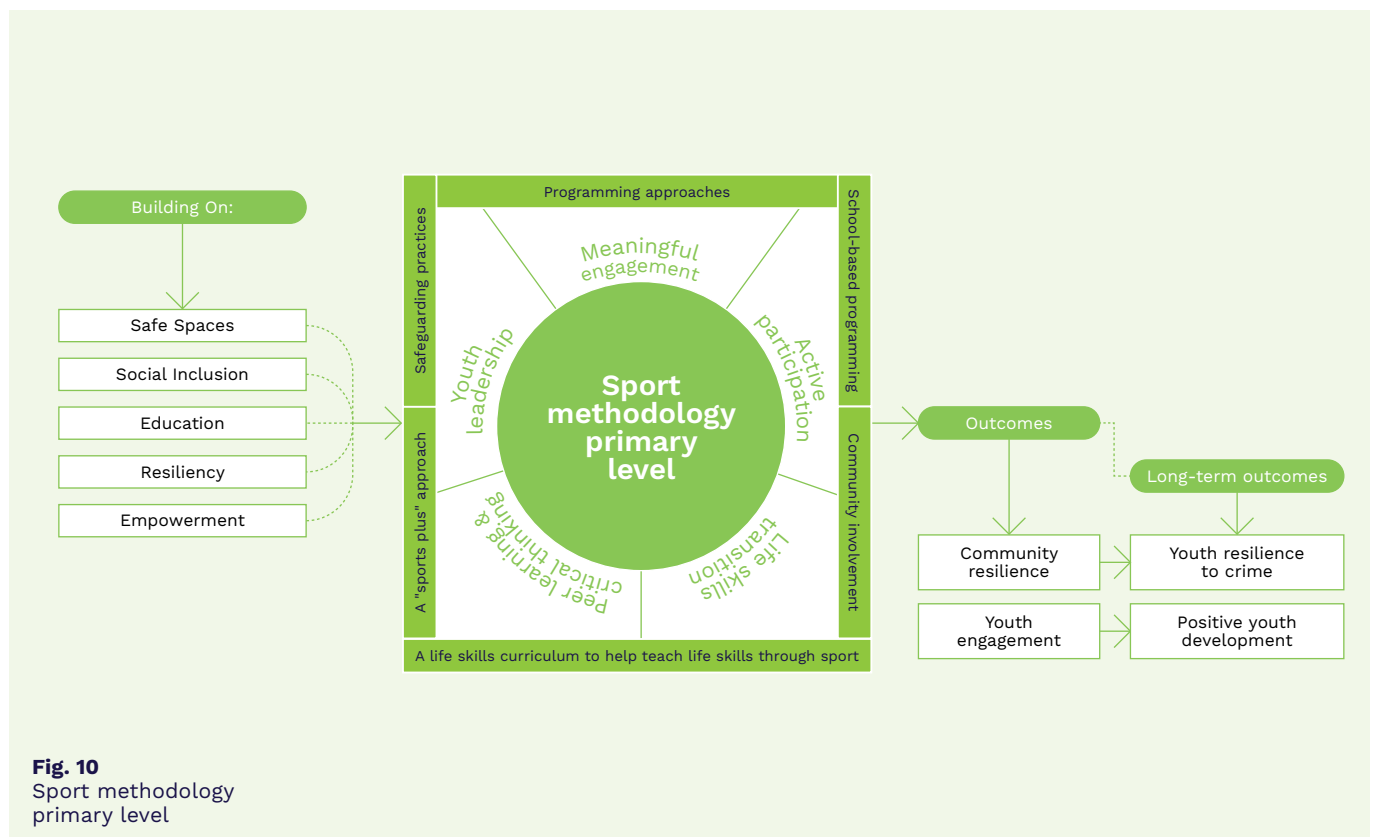


Fig. 10
 Sport methodology primary level

61. Coakley, J., “Youth sports: what counts as ‘positive development?’”, *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 35, No. 3 (2011), pp. 306–324.
 62. Bean, C. and Forneris, T., “Examining the importance of intentionally structuring the youth sport context to facilitate positive youth development”, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol. 28, No. 4 (2016), pp. 410–425.
 63. Bean, C. and Forneris, T. (2016). op. cit.
 64. De Sousa Ferreira dos Santos, F., Camiré, M. and Henrique da Fonte Campos, P., “Youth sport coaches’ role in facilitating positive youth development in Portuguese field hockey”, *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, vol. 16, No.3 (2018), pp. 221–234.

is essential and should be designed to help facilitators create environments conducive to the intentional teaching of life skills through sport-based activities.⁶⁵

2

Providing safe spaces and strengthening the protective environment around children and youth

It is critical that children and youth have access to safe spaces to participate in sports activities. Where a safe space does not exist, it must be created, cultivated and maintained. A safe space is not only the physical place where young people can be engaged and interact, but it should offer an environment that is free from bias, conflict and criticism, one which promotes inclusion and meaningful participation. Collaborating with the sport sector and delivering appropriate training to staff and volunteers is essential to creating and maintain safe spaces. Attention to gender and cultural differences is required in creating safe spaces for all.⁶⁶

Providing safe sport spaces for young people goes beyond ensuring that there is no threat for physical danger. Several aspects of personal safety – including physical, psychological, social and moral safety – need to be considered:

- **Physical safety:** This is how safe the space is from causing physical harm to participants. This is particularly important in combat and urban sport, and within settings that utilize community open spaces.
- **Psychological Safety:** This is how safe participants feel with themselves, relying on their ability to protect against destructive impulses that originate internally or externally.
- **Social Safety:** This is how safe youth feel with others. A safe space allows youth to trust others, make mistakes without judgement, share thoughts and ideas, take safe risks and be cared for.

- **Moral Safety:** A morally safe environment is one that allows youth to search for meaning and purpose beyond the confinements of the intervention.

It is crucial to adopt and implement policies and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, exploitation and violence against children and young people in sport and ensure that the necessary safeguards for participants are included in the design and implementation of sport-based crime prevention initiatives.

Psychological safety makes it possible for the youth to develop social capital, as well as a sense of belonging and community.⁶⁷ Similarly, as suggested by the results of the UNODC Line Up Live Up pilot programme, “a pro-social moral climate is related to more pro-social behaviour, while an antisocial moral climate is associated with more antisocial behaviour.”⁶⁸

It is often suggested that sport contributes to diverting children and youth away from anti-social behaviour and influences, and that it may help youth to avoid situations and activities that would otherwise attract them.⁶⁹ Research sometimes links leisure and crime.⁷⁰ In short, offering opportunities for youth to engage in healthy leisure activities as well as a positive, safe environment in which to structure their leisure time may reduce the risk that they will engage in more problematic activities. The assumptions supporting that view can be summarized as follows:

- Leisure time filled with social activities cannot be filled with deviant activities;
- Sport is less likely than many other non-structured leisure activities to instigate violent or criminal behaviour;
- Time spent participating in sports contributes to positive development in a way that other use of leisure time does not;
- Commitment to sport participation and attachment to sport and its conventional norms protect youth against engagement in criminal behaviour.

65. Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., and Bernard, D., “Strategies for helping coaches facilitate positive youth development through sport”, *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, vol. 2 (2011), pp. 92–99; and Camiré, M., Kendellen, K., Rathwell, S., and Turgeon, S., “Evaluating the coaching for life skills online training program: a randomised controlled trial”, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, vol. 48 (2020).

66. Saavedra, M., & Martha, B., “Women, sport and development”, *International Platform on Sport and Development*, vol. 4, No. 2 (2005), pp. 225–253.

67. Skinner, J., Zakus, D. H., & Cowell, J., “Development through sport: Building social capital in disadvantaged communities”, *Sport management review*, vol. 11, No. 3 (2008), pp. 253–275.

68. UNODC, *Youth crime prevention through sport: Insights from the UNODC “Line Up Live Up” pilot programme* (Vienna, 2020).

69. Crabbe, T., Bailey, G., Blackshaw, T. Adam, B., Choak, C., Gidley, B., Mellor, G., O’Connor, K., Slater, I., and Woodhouse, D., *Knowing the Score: Positive Futures Case Study Final Report*, Swindon: Positive Future Team and Crime Concern (2006).

70. Caldwell, L. L. and Smith, E. A., “Leisure as a context for youth development and delinquency prevention”, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 39, No. 3 (2006), pp. 398–418.

Ideally, safe sport spaces should be relatively free from the risk factors that influence youth to engage with crime and violence. The safe space allows youth to learn and practice some technical as well as key life skills, connect with trusted adults and peers, and take calculated risks in sport. For some youth, this is often the only safe, stable space they have access to.

Ensuring safe spaces for young people means creating the conditions for personal development and empowerment. Sport can enable the construction of safety and safe spaces through strategic planning of sport-based activities and the development of sport infrastructure, including in marginalized areas to create safe public spaces at community level and facilitate access to sport and sport-based programming for young people.

3

Supporting social inclusion, empowerment and positive social experiences

Crime prevention promotes social inclusion and cohesion, and the idea that sport can play a unique role in this respect by generating social capital, helping to mobilize communities and promoting social cohesion, acceptance of diversity and solidarity. Sport participation can serve as a means of social inclusion and integration, as a site for meetings and bonding relationships between youth and formative role models.⁷¹ For children and youth, feelings of social belonging and inclusion can enhance feelings of empowerment in a positive form.

A need for a sense of community and belonging is often deeply felt by disaffected or marginalized children and youth. By addressing that need and offering youth an opportunity to expand their social networks, sport can promote youth engagement, empowerment, and social inclusion.⁷² This includes ensuring non-discriminatory access for all to sporting activities and access to safe sports spaces and ensuring that sport activities do not contribute

Another important way in which sport may contribute to social inclusion is by reinforcing school engagement. Engaging or re-engaging youth with education. Partnerships between schools, community and sport organizations can help fully realize the potential of organized sporting activities and address student engagement issues and even arresting school dropout through community-based sport activities.

Source: Morgan, H., Parker, A., and Roberts, W., "Community sport programmes and social inclusion: what role for positive psychological capital?" *Sport in Society*, vol. 22, No. 6 (2019), pp. 1,100–1,114.

to the stigmatization or social exclusion of certain groups. It also includes providing a wide range of safe and accessible sports programmes to women and girls that are also respectful of cultural differences. The sports available in a community must resonate with the young people in that community.

Social exclusion affects citizenship and the chance to play sport.⁷³ Sport organizations need to confront the problem of the low sport participation rate among various disadvantaged youth groups⁷⁴. For instance, some sport recruitment practices can themselves exclude many youth, often the youth that would benefit the most from participating in a structured sport activity.⁷⁵ If the programme is located in a safe, middle-class neighborhood, those experiencing socio-demographic, gender-based, or even racial inequalities may not access the programme. The processes of social exclusion that sometimes exist in sport need to be understood and challenged.⁷⁶ Sport should not be allowed to become a site where marginalized youth and youth living with lower incomes face exclusion. The sport experiences of socially vulnerable youth are not always positive or supportive.⁷⁷ For some vulnerable youth sport participation can have an

71. Eckholm, D., "Sport as a means of governing social integration: discourses on bridging and bonding social relations", *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 36 (2019), pp. 152–161; and Dagkas, S., and Armour, K., *Inclusion and exclusion through youth sport* (New York, Routledge, 2019).

72. Sandford, R. A., Armour, K. M., and Warmington, P., "Re-engaging disaffected youth through physical activity programmes", *British Educational Research Journal*, vol. 32, No. 2 (2006), pp. 251–71; and Roth, J. L. and Brooks-Gunn, J., "Evaluating youth development programs: progress and promise", *Applied Developmental Science*, vol. 20, No. 3 (2016), pp. 188–202; and Bailey, R., "Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion", *Educational Review*, vol. 57, No. 1 (2005), pp. 71–90; and Bailey, R., "Sport, physical education and educational worth", *Educational Review*, vol. 70, No. 1 (2018), pp. 51–66; and Eisman, A., Lee, D. B., Hsieh, H. F., Stoddard, S. A. and Zimmerman, M. A., "More than just keeping busy: the protective effects of organized activity participation on violence and substance use among urban youth", *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 47 (2018), pp. 2,231–2,242.

73. Collins, M. F., & Kay, T., *Sport and social exclusion*, 2nd ed. (New York, Routledge, 2014).

74. Spaaij, R., Magee, J., and Jeanes, R., *Sport and social exclusion in global society* (New York, Routledge, 2014).

75. Morgan, H. and Costas Batlle, I., "It's borderline hypocrisy: recruitment practices in youth sport-based interventions", *Journal of Sport for Development*, vol. 7, No. 13 (2019), pp. 1–14.

76. Kingsley, B. C. and Spencer-Cavaliere, N., "The exclusionary practices of youth sport", *Social Inclusion*, vol. 3, No. 3 (2015), pp. 24–38.

77. Super, S., Wentink, C. Q., Verkooijen, K. T., and Koelen, M. A., "Exploring the sports experiences of socially vulnerable youth", *Social Inclusion*, vol. 5, No. 2 (2017), pp. 1–12.

integrative impact (new positive relationships, bounding, trust and social acceptance), but for others it can also entail the opposite (racism, feelings of rejection, disappointment or personal failure).⁷⁸

4

Building the resilience of children and youth through, education, life skills development and positive role models

Sport is a mechanism that can transmit knowledge, skills, experience, social identity and create an environment conducive to positive development. Sport is a value rich experience with multiple innate and developmental opportunities.⁷⁹ Additionally, sport can provide important rites of passage for youth who are undertaking fractured transitions and who perhaps have less access to social and psychological capital that might support their maturation and development.⁸⁰ Sport can support a number of intentional educational outcomes through life skills development while also encouraging sustained engagement in formal educational settings.

Development of personal skills and assets

Life skills are skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live, such as school, work, home and community. The World Health Organization defines them as “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands of everyday life.”⁸¹ Life skills are sometimes classified as

behavioural (e.g. effective communication), psychological (e.g. emotional regulation), cognitive (e.g. decision-making, critical thinking), interpersonal (e.g. friendship, respect, teamwork), or intrapersonal (e.g. focus, perseverance, goal setting). Sport participation contributes to wider social outcomes through an emotionally interactive engagement to the development of personal skills or assets, including cognitive social, emotional and intellectual qualities necessary to function constructively in society.

Education and life skills transfer

To be considered life skills, the skills learned in sport must be transferable.⁸² The ability to transfer skills learned in sports to other domains is a crucial aspect in achieving optimum personal development outcomes.⁸³ It should not be assumed that the learning that occurs as a result of sport participation, including the values adopted and the life skills acquired, will necessarily be transferred to other non-sport contexts in a youth’s life and automatically become resiliency factors. Skills transfer is not an immediate outcome of sport participation, but the result of an ongoing process that occurs over time at the intersection of skill learning in one context and skill application in another context.⁸⁴

There are mechanisms known to support life skills transfer. Research has identified two approaches to life skills transfer: the explicit approach and the implicit approach.⁸⁵ The explicit approach, which is more widely supported⁸⁶, holds that sport participants need assistance in identifying the skills they should develop and how to apply them in other settings. The implicit approach holds that youth can be the active

78. Collins, M.F. and Kay, T., *Sport and Social Exclusion*, 2nd ed., (New York, Routledge, 2014); and Kingsley, B.C. and Spencer-Cavaliere, N. (2015), op cit.

79. Li, J., & Shao, W., “Influence of sports activities on prosocial behavior of children and adolescents: A systematic literature review”, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 19, No. 11 (2022), p. 6,484.

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81. WHO, *Partners in Life Skills Education Conclusions from a United Nations Inter-Agency meeting*, (Geneva, 1999).

82. Chinkov, A. E. and Holt, N. L., “Implicit transfer of life skills through participation in Brazilian jiu-jitsu”, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol. 28 (2016), pp. 139–153; and Pierce, S., Kendellen, K., Camiré, M., and Gould, D., “Strategies for coaching for life skills transfer”, *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, vol. 9, No. 1 (2018), pp. 11–20.

83. Bean, C., Kendellen, K. and Forneris, T., “Examining needs support and positive developmental experiences through participation in a residential summer camp”, *Leisure/Loisir*, vol. 40, No. 3 (2016), pp. 271–295.

84. Pierce, S., Gould, D. R. and Camiré, M., “Definition and model of life skills transfer”, *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, vol. 10, No. 1 (2017), pp. 186–211.

85. Turnidge, J., Côté, J., and Hancock, D.J., “Positive youth development from sport to life: explicit or implicit transfer?”, *Quest*, vol. 66, No. 2 (2014), pp. 203–217.

86. Camiré, M., Trudel, P., and Bernard, D., “A case study of a high school sport program: designed to teach athletes life skills and values”, *The Sport Psychologist*, vol. 27, No. 2 (2013), pp. 188–200; and Camiré, M., Trudel, P., and Forneris, T., “Coaching and transferring life skills: philosophies and strategies used by model high school coaches”, *Sport Psychologist*, vol. 26, No. 2 (2013), pp. 243–260; and Camiré, M., Trudel, P. and Forneris, T., “Examining how model youth sport coaches learn to facilitate positive youth development”, *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, vol. 19, No. 1 (2014), pp. 1–17; and Bean, C., Kendellen, K., and Forneris, T., “Moving beyond the gym: exploring life skill transfer within a female physical activity-based life skills program”, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol. 28, No. 3 (2016), pp. 274–290; and Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T., and Camiré, M., “The implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer”, *Quest*, vol. 70, No. 4 (2018), pp. 456–479; and Weiss, M. R., Bolter, N. D., and Kipp, L. E., “Evaluation of the first tee in promoting positive youth development: group comparisons and longitudinal trends”, *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, vol. 87, No. 3 (2016), pp. 271–283.

Case study: Olympic Values Education Programme

<p>Description</p> <p>Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP) is a series of free and accessible teaching resources created by the IOC to complement academic curricula using the context of Olympic sports as the core principles of Olympism. It is based on the Olympic philosophy that learning takes place through a balanced development of body, will and mind. Participants are encouraged to experience values-based learning through sport and to assume the responsibilities of good citizenship. Recognizing the unique potential of sport as an educational and communication tool, OVEP encourages participants to learn and internalize values such as excellence, respect and friendship through their engagement with Olympic sports. By emphasizing these values, the programme promotes positive character development and a sense of responsibility among youth. The programme has been adapted and delivered in different national contexts through school-based programming at primary and secondary levelsof education.</p>	<p>Target group</p>	Male and female, ages 8–18
	<p>Continuum of intervention</p>	Primary crime prevention (general population)
	<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy lifestyle; • Social inclusion; • Gender balance; • Physical and academic literacy; • Rebuilding of local communities.
	<p>Crime prevention impact</p>	Although, crime prevention is not one of its specific objectives, it is a tool for positive social development outcomes that promote youth empowerment and well-being, and to this end address specific push and pull factors to violence and crime, and build resilience.
	<p>Key lessons learned and recommendations on programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators should demonstrate knowledge and sensitivity in different political, social and cultural contexts to discuss different moral norms and values in different societal contexts and cultures. • Engagement of physical education teachers, sport coaches, parent, and athletes as multipliers of social values in sport is essential for the sustainability of the programme.
<p>More information</p> <p>https://olympics.com/ioc/education/olympic-values-education-programme</p>		

producers of their own development and do not require the assistance of adults in order to learn and apply transferable skills. However, both explicit and implicit means can be present within the same context and may combine to facilitate (or hinder) youth development within youth sport settings.⁸⁷

Different strategies can be used to help youth identify and learn about life skills, such as: including a specific life skills curriculum in the programme;⁸⁸ helping youth develop a common language around these skills and foster a desire to apply them to their lives;⁸⁹ or involving youth in other non-sport activities that may give them an opportunity to further learn about life skills and practice them (e.g. mentoring, peer to peer learning, volunteering)⁹⁰. These curricula and other strategies are designed to help youth

Importance of positive role models

Positive development outcomes are more likely to be achieved by sports when participants are exposed to positive role models. Youth can look up to role models for pro-social behaviours, career advice, and turn to them in times of need. Coaches, trainers, parents and in competitive games, referees, are all in a position to influence the players' behaviour, learning, attitude, values and socialization. In particular, there is no doubt that sport coaches greatly influence how youth experience sport. Effective coaches are able to positively impact the lives of their athletes and teach them skills through sport that can then be transferred to their daily reality.

The use of role models, whether in formal or informal positions, in sport for development programmes has generally

yielded excellent results^{92,93}. Well-documented outcomes include improved participant recruitment and retention, better personal attitudes and motivation, a greater sense of empowerment and inclusion, higher programme awareness, more sensitivity to cultural differences, increases in community engagement, new networks and social connections, enhanced friendships and peer support, rising self-esteem and reduced social isolation. The following practices are known to enhance the positive influence of role models and improve elements that drive positive outcomes in sport interventions:

- A targeted recruitment process for identifying role models from diverse backgrounds, especially from backgrounds represented by programme participants;
- The involvement of role models with a strong local knowledge and understanding of the participants' unique contexts (perhaps even personal experience with crime and/or violence), as well as the sport intervention;
- A well-supported training programme for role models as part of their induction, as well as a clear way to share information among all sport intervention stakeholders;
- The creation of a pathway system to allow participants to become youth leaders and role models to others over time.
- Caution should be exercised to ensure that youth are not exploited by or exposed to negative role models.

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87. Holt, N. L., Sehn, Z. L., Spence, J. C., Newton, A., and Ball, G. D. C., "Possibilities for positive youth development through physical education and sport programs at an inner-city school", *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, vol. 17 (2012), pp. 97–113; and Pierce, S., Erickson, K., and Dinu, R., "Teacher-coaches' perceptions of life skills transfer from high school sport to the classroom", *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol. 31, No. 4 (2019), pp. 451–473; and Bean, C., Kramers, S., Forneris, T. and Camiré, M., "The implicit/explicit continuum of life skills development and transfer", *Quest*, vol. 70, No. 4 (2018), pp. 456–479.
88. Hodge, C. J., Kanters, M. A., Forneris, T., Bocarro, J. N., and McCord-Sayre, R. A., "A family thing: positive youth development outcomes of a sport-based life skills program", *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, vol. 35, No. 1 (2017), pp. 34–50.
89. Hemphill, M. A., Gordon, B., and Wright, P. M., "Sports as a passport to success: life skill integration in a positive youth development program", *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, vol. 24, No. 4 (2019), pp. 390–401; and Wright, P. M., Jacobs, J. M., Howell, S. M., and McLoughlin, G. M., "Implementation and perceived benefits of an after-school soccer program designed to promote social and emotional learning: a multiple case study", *Journal of Amateur Sport*, vol. 6, No. 1 (2020), pp. 125–145.
90. Armour, K. Sandford, R., and Duncombe, R., "Positive youth development and physical activity/sport interventions: mechanisms leading to sustained impact", *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, vol. 18, No. 3 (2013), pp. 256–281.
91. Allen, G. and Rhind, D., "Taught not caught exploring male adolescent experiences of explicitly transferring life skills from the sports hall into the classroom", *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, vol. 11, No. 2 (2019), pp. 188–200; and Super, S., Verkooijen, K., and Koelen, M., "The role of community sports coaches in creating optimal social conditions for life skill development and transferability: a salutogenic perspective", *Sport, Education and Society*, vol. 23, No. 2 (2018), pp. 173–185.
92. Akindes, G., and Kirwin, M., "Sport as international aid: assisting development or promoting under-development in Sub-Saharan Africa?", In *Sport and International Development* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009), pp. 219–245.
93. Bardocz-Bencsik, M., Begović, M., and Dóczy, T., "Star athlete ambassadors of sport for development and peace", *Celebrity Studies*, vol. 12, No. 3 (2021), pp. 407–422.

Coaches and trainers as positive role models

In a sport-based programme, coaches, trainers and other facilitators should be expected to act as positive role models for participants. These individuals should therefore be recruited in line with the type of adult that participants should look up to and aspire to be like.

The coach-participant relationship, already at the heart of coaching, is central to determining the effect of sport participation on programme participants. Being a positive role model is also seen as an important part of their role.⁹⁴ There is some evidence that coaches and facilitators who maintain good relationships with the youth and expose them to “relatively high levels of sociomoral reasoning within the immediate context of sporting activities can promote pro-social behaviour”.⁹⁵

Being a role model and the teaching of life skills in sport involves coaches and other facilitators deliberately teaching skills such as goal setting, communication, managing emotions and developing positive relationships.⁹⁶ The coaches and facilitators involved in a sport-based crime prevention programmes must be sensitive and responsive towards the youth’s developmental needs and be reflexive

of their own behaviour as a role model to maximize the potential for the sport activity to produce positive development outcomes.⁹⁷ They must look for opportunities for youth to practice life skills. They can also, together with other programme facilitators, intentionally create opportunities for youth to practice life skills and transfer them to another context.⁹⁸

Coaches and other sport-based programme facilitators do not always have the knowledge and competences to explicitly integrate life skills into their coaching practices.⁹⁹ Those who take that role seriously do not usually treat their teaching of life skills and being a role model as separate activities from their general coaching and training duties.¹⁰⁰

Sport coaches and other facilitators involved in sport-based programmes will all have different lived experience, but they need help integrating psychological skills in their coaching practice.¹⁰¹ They need to learn how to use interpersonal behaviours that respond to the youth’s basic psychological needs. They require specific training on how to integrate life skills and positive youth development in their regular coaching and training.¹⁰²

94. Curran, T. and Wexler, L., “School-based positive youth development: a systematic review of the literature”, *Journal of School Health*, vol. 87, No. 1 (2017), pp. 71–80.

95. Rutten, E. A., Stams, G. J. J. M., Biesta, G. J. J., Schuengel, C., Dirks, E., and Hoeksma, J. B., “The contribution of organized youth sport to antisocial and prosocial behavior in adolescent athletes”, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 36, No. 3 (2007), pp. 255–264.

96. Camiré, M. and Trudel, P., “High school athletes’ perspectives on character development through sport participation”, *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, vol. 15, No. 2 (2010), pp. 193–207.

97. Spruit, A., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., and Stams, G. J., “Predictors of intervention success in a sport-based program for adolescents at risk of juvenile delinquency”, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 62, No. 6 (2018), pp. 1535–1555.

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99. Bean, C. and Forneris, T., “Is life skill development a by-product of sport participation? Perceptions of youth sport coaches”, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol. 29 (2017), pp. 234–250.

100. Gould, D. and Carson, S., “Life skills development through sport: current status and future directions”, *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, vol. 1, No. 1 (2008), pp. 58–78.

101. Camiré, M. and Trudel, P., “Helping youth sport coaches integrate psychological skills in their coaching practice”, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, vol. 6, No. 4 (2014), pp. 617–634.

102. Santos, F., Strachan, L., and Pereira, P., “How to promote positive youth development in physical education? The experiences of a physical educator and students through the delivery of Project SCORE”, *The Physical Educator*, vol. 76 (2019), pp. 1,002–1,025.

5

Building community resilience

Community resilience is a measure of the sustained ability of a community to utilize available resources to prevent, respond to, withstand, or recover from adverse situations, including local crime and disorder, organized crime and violence. It is related to the community's collective efficacy, ultimately based on the capacity and willingness of community members and their leaders to act for the common good.

Communities have a varying ability to reaffirm social norms, protect and support their youth, maintain effective social controls, and mobilize local resources to prevent crime and violence.

Sport and sport organizations are entrenched in the fabric of communities. Sport can bring members of a community

and even whole communities together across various cultural, linguistic and other divides, and foster a climate of tolerance and cooperation. Given their popularity, sport and tailored sport activities can offer communities a practical first step towards developing other positive and perhaps more comprehensive initiatives approaches to prevent youth crime and violence, including social and economic risk factors associated with youth crime, violence and substance use. Youth are important members and assets in their communities and sport interventions can strengthen the role of youth as active and valuable members in their communities. They can engage youth and support youth-led initiatives, facilitate inter-generational interaction and dialogues, and enhance youth participation.

With the foundation of the theory of change explained, the next section discusses secondary prevention, which builds upon the information and outcomes associated with primary crime and violence prevention.



4

Secondary level of intervention

As organizations and the sport sector search for more effective ways to engage at-risk youth, crime prevention practitioners naturally seek to build on the popularity of sports to engage with these youth to support their positive development and mitigate risk of engagement to violence and crime. Similarly, people involved in promoting community-based youth sport often observed the difficult circumstances many youth are facing and are conscious of the risk there that some of them may engage in crime and violence, and they are looking for ways to support those youth and guide them towards a better future. As a result, sport-based programmes are increasingly relied upon to reach out to and support youth deemed at-risk.

These programmes typically use sport as a platform to deliver various other forms of interventions, such as mentoring, education, awareness raising, life skills development, school integration, employability, resettlement, or mental health and physical health interventions.

At the secondary level the key elements of the theory of change on primary prevention are developed further. The use of sport to enhance safe spaces, social inclusion, education, resiliency and empowerment remain the foundational principles to prevention crime and violence but are progressed to meet specific outcomes and objectives.



Sport’s contribution to programmes for at-risk youth

The following are some of the specific outputs that the sport component of a sport-based crime prevention programme can contribute in relation to the programme’s expected outcomes.

Building on primary prevention	Objectives achieved through sport
Building on safe spaces	Safe sport and environmental transformation may be achieved by making public community areas functional for sport.
Building on social inclusion	Social cohesion (or mitigation of the impact of discrimination and exclusion). Positive role models can support social cohesion outcomes by sharing experiences of how sport creates social networks and support structures.
Building on education	Reinforcement of school attachment and participation or employability skills. Positive youth development (acquisition and transfer of core life skills, acquisition of specific competences).
Building on resiliency	Opportunities for pro-social development through positive social relationships, changes in social networks and relational dynamics (trust building, feelings of belonging and being accepted in a different social network). Cognitive development (affirmation of values, acquisition of pro-social values, supporting changes in attitude, awareness of risk, goal orientation, etc.).
Building on empowerment	Diversion and disruption (avoidance of negative relationships and problematic situations). Opportunities for leadership and positively supporting others.

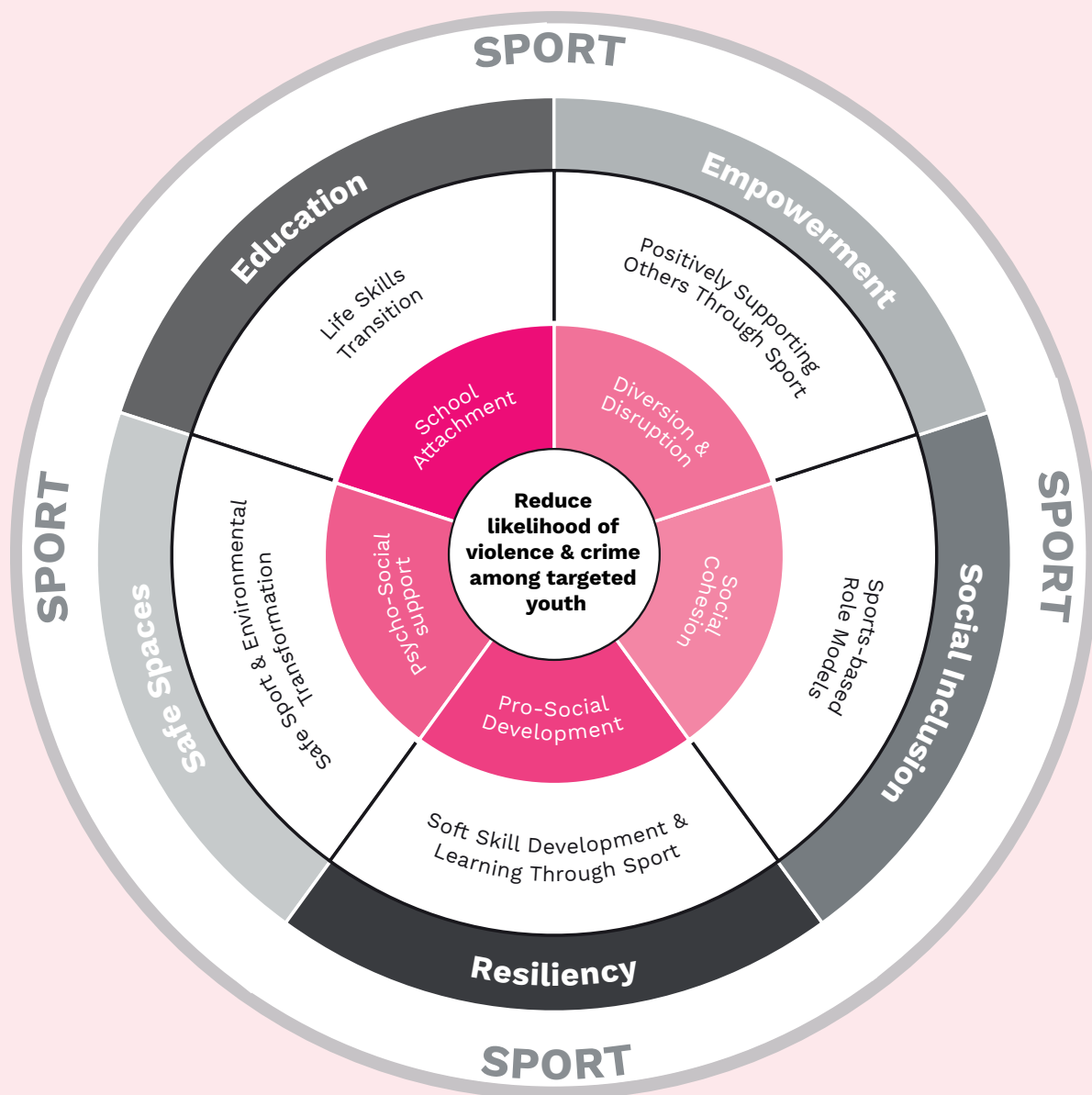


Fig. 11
Theory of Change for sport programming at secondary level of prevention

Defining and understanding youth at risk

The concept of 'youth at-risk' should not be taken too literally. The characteristics which are statistically associated with youth crime, at group or population levels, have been termed risk factors and are relevant to crime prevention planning. However, the concept has unfortunately led to mistaken assumptions about the factors that shape individual behaviour. Individuals who belong to a group that is statistically at risk may themselves be at very little risk. For example, children with a parent in prison belong to a group that is statistically at greater risk of criminal involvement than the rest of the child population, but it is also true that most children with an incarcerated parent are not themselves likely to engage in criminal activity.

Risk factors should not be confused with causal factors, but it is difficult to determine which risk factors are causal and which ones are simply correlated with criminal.¹⁰³ To do so, one would need to better understand the underlying processes, mechanisms and developmental pathways in order to explain why the criminal behaviour occurs.¹⁰⁴ In fact, properly defining and measuring risk factors has not been as straightforward a process as might have been expected.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, many children and youth are exposed to multiple risk and resiliency factors and participating in a programme ostensibly designed for at-risk youth may lead to their social stigmatization and possible exclusion. Indeed, the fear of stigma is known as one reason for non-participation in out-of-school programmes targeted at vulnerable children.¹⁰⁶

Developing targeted and tailored interventions to meet the needs of targeted youth and communities

At both the secondary and tertiary levels of prevention, to be impactful it is essential to develop targeted interventions that meet the needs of targeted youth and communities while avoiding their stigmatization. Sport-based interventions that produced crime prevention outcomes in a certain context cannot be assumed to be immediately transferrable to a different context. Intervention models, when applied in a new context, must be locally adapted. Decentralized approaches to programme implementation are less effective than participatory approaches to programme design that involve the intended beneficiaries and their community

“Sport plus” or “plus sport”?

At the secondary level of intervention, sport-based programmes specifically directed at at-risk youth are more likely to be – but not exclusively – “plus sport” programmes. That is, the sport activity may not be of primary importance as much as serve to attract and retain youth so that they may participate in additional interventions provided by the programme. In some cases, a blend of plus sport and “sport plus” may be used for the population of at-risk youth, but this will largely depend on the specific, local community context and population of young people, and what they are most likely to respond to / benefit from.

in the planning process, and take local needs and assets into consideration.

Local and place-based approaches to programme development are more likely to address the local context and the unique nature of the community involved. Local approaches are aligned to participants' needs, strengths and vulnerabilities, allowing sport interventions to positively disrupt crime and violent cultures. Adopting a local lens allows a programme to better address the community-specific trends and cultures surrounding youth crime and violence but also sport cultures, practices, capacities and institutions. The decision on the types of sports to utilize in reaching out to at-risk youth, boys and girls should take into consideration also popularity of certain sports at certain countries and communities and among young people of different genders that the intervention aim to target. Once local interventions are established, a multisectoral approach can form through shared knowledge, evidence and measurement. This form of localized multisector partnerships can lead to increased institutional capacity and policy development.

The objectives of crime prevention interventions targeting vulnerable and at-risk youth, beside diverting them away from less healthy environments or influences, are typically presented in terms of helping at-risk youth to overcome adversities and build resilience:

103. Farrington, D. P., “Explaining and preventing crime: the globalization of knowledge”, *Criminology*, vol. 38, No. 1 (2000), pp. 1–24.

104. Basto-Pereira, M. and Farrington, D. P., “Lifelong conviction pathways and self-reported offending: towards a deeper comprehension of criminal career development”, *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 60, No. 2 (2020), pp. 285–302.

105. Haines, K. and Case, S., “The rhetoric and reality of the ‘risk factor prevention paradigm’ approach to preventing and reducing youth offending”, *Youth Justice*, vol. 8, No. 1 (2008), pp. 5–20.

106. Appelqvist-Schmidlechner, K., Haavalammi, N., and Kekonen, M., “Benefits and underlying mechanisms of organized sport participation on mental health among socially vulnerable boys”, *Sports and Society*, vol. 26, No. 2 (2023), pp. 240–262.



A systematic process for the development and management of crime prevention interventions is needed, whether planning at the national or local level:

Planning interventions

22. Those planning interventions should promote a process that includes:

- (a) A systematic analysis of crime problems, their causes, risk factors and consequences, in particular at the local level;
- (b) A plan that draws on the most appropriate approach and adapts interventions to the specific local problem and context;
- (c) An implementation plan to deliver appropriate interventions that are efficient, effective and sustainable;
- (d) Mobilizing entities that are able to tackle causes;
- (e) Monitoring and evaluation.

Source: United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime, para. 22, Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/13, Annex.

- Acquire and transfer specific life skills and competences;
- Develop cognitively (attitudes, beliefs, values);
- Acquire social capital and connect with positive role models and supportive individuals;
- Feel included and experience positive social experiences;
- Engage or re-engage with schools and local support networks or access employment opportunities.

These objectives are in many ways similar to those pursued more generally at the primary prevention level, with the important difference that they are defined in relation to the specific needs, risks and circumstances of at-risk youth. When working with youth at risk – especially vulnerable youth – a specific methodology is required.¹⁰⁷ Explicit and clearly articulated models of crime prevention are required to deliver sport-based interventions across multiple risk outcomes and support positive youth development that can help them to overcome adversities.¹⁰⁸

107. Haudenhuyse, R. P., Theeboom, M., and Nols, Z., "Sports-based interventions for socially vulnerable youth: towards well-defined interventions with easy-to-follow outcomes?" *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 48, No. 4 (2012), pp. 471–484; and Haudenhuyse, R. P., Theeboom, M., and Skille, E. A., "Towards understanding the potential of sports-based practices for socially vulnerable youth," *Sport in Society*, vol. 17, No. 2 (2014), pp. 139–156.

108. Allison, K. W., Edmonds, T., Wilson, K., Pope, M., and Farrell, A.D. "Connecting youth violence prevention, positive youth development, and community mobilization", *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 18, No. 8 (2011), pp. 8–20.

Case study: Velocity Adventure Program

<p>Description</p> <p>The Velocity Adventure Program (otherwise known as Velocity) is an adventure-based programme for youth aimed at reducing antisocial behaviour, increasing attachment to school and reducing substance abuse and contact with the criminal justice system. Velocity and its camps focus on four main areas of programming: life skills and personal development; experiential learning through outdoor adventure; therapy and holism; health and wellness.</p> <p>The 12-month programme is centred on community mobilization; conflict resolution; counselling and social work; leadership and youth development; peer counselling and mediation; skills training; social emotional learning; substance prevention/treatment; truancy prevention. The sport components of the programme include participation in several day outings such as kayaking, trapezing and rock climbing in order to get the youth to know the programme and build a team environment; plus a seven-day adventure camp including physical, emotional and mental challenges.</p>	<p>Target group</p> <p>Male and female, ages 12-17</p>
	<p>Continuum of intervention</p> <p>Secondary crime prevention (youth in contact with law enforcement, and/or at-risk youth)</p>
	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help youth reduce their substance use; • Help youth reduce their antisocial behaviours; • Help youth reduce contact with criminal justice system; • Increase youths' school attachment; • Encourage youth to learn and practice pro-social skills; • Help youth increase their connections to the community.
	<p>Crime prevention impact</p> <p>Pre and post-test follow-up data at 12 months indicate that the following aspects changed for participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More positive attitude towards education; • Better ability to handle and reduce substance-use problems; • Aggressive and anti-social behaviours did not appear to have significant changes.
	<p>Key lessons learned and recommendations on programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lead organization must mobilize community members, parents and other community-based organizations to enhance the recruitment of at-risk youth and acquire the resources needed to administer the programme; • The success of the programme depends on its many partnerships with health services, addiction services and various community-based organizations.

More information

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/crm-prvntn/nvntr/dtls-en.aspx?i=10056>

Sport-based interventions can support other programmes by attracting and retaining youth through sport, sustaining youth motivation to participate (in the programme as well as in other positive activities, such as school, volunteering, etc.) and providing a safe space (physically, mentally, socially and morally) within which youth can participate in other interventions. These are key elements and make an important contribution to effective sport programming.

Nevertheless, each sport-based programme must define its own unique combination of pro-social attributes to focus on helping youth develop.¹⁰⁹ This requires some familiarity with crime prevention goals and methods, and an understanding the specific role the sport component of a sport-based programme can contribute to achieving these goals.

The following figure represents the secondary prevention elements of sport-based crime prevention programmes for at-risk youth and highlights the different contributors that help strive towards the programmes' crime prevention outcomes. One should note that the outermost square layer reflects the primary level of prevention, upon which secondary crime prevention builds. The elements in the middle of the square present the sport methodology, or what occurs during a sport programme for the secondary prevention that can help lead to the intended outcomes at this level. These outcomes are understood as almost entirely contingent on the effectiveness of other interventions – or programming approaches – supported by sport (the four sides of the square). These additional elements are included to reinforce, strengthen, and build upon those outcomes.

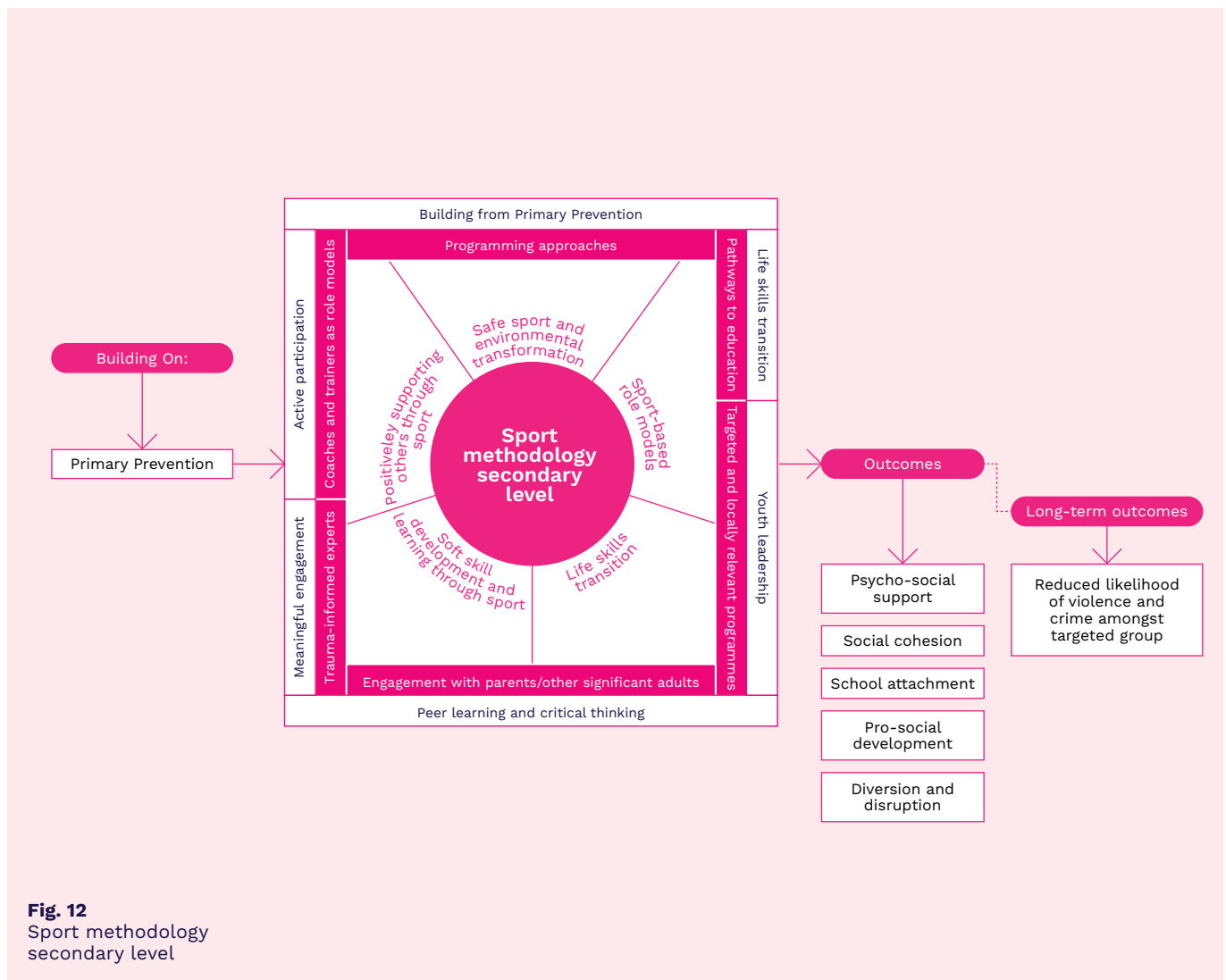


Fig. 12
Sport methodology
secondary level

109. Hartmann, D., & Depro, B., "Rethinking sports-based community crime prevention: A preliminary analysis of the relationship between midnight basketball and urban crime rates", *Journal of sport and social issues*, vol. 30, No. 2 (2006), pp. 180-196.

7

Programming approaches at the secondary prevention level

Many different approaches to programming are possible. Ideally, the selected approach should form part of a strategic and balanced crime prevention plan, and the advantages and disadvantages of each approach in a particular context will have been considered. The specific role of the sport activities included in these approaches should be specified and their contribution to the desired crime prevention outcomes clearly articulated.

Access to sport is representative of wider social inclusion or marginalization. For many young people living in a resource-poor community, trying to access sport opportunities and facilities may become another experience of exclusion and frustration. Especially at the secondary level of crime prevention intervention, young people identified as at-risk must be able to participate in sport and physical activities in settings where they felt physically safe, personally valued, morally and economically supported, personally empowered and hopeful about their own future.

With the right context and careful and intentional programming, it seems that any sport or physical activity can be used as a platform for crime prevention programming.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, sports may also offer youth some opportunities to volunteer, and volunteer training can play a role in developing the youth's competences and life skills.¹¹¹ Experts have suggested that sport activities which de-emphasize rules of specific sports and winning, and instead emphasize choices for participants and the tailoring of interventions to meet individual needs and provide positive feedback, are better at providing a platform for crime prevention interventions.¹¹²

Strength-based interventions

In view of the potentially stigmatizing effect of targeting individuals from various identifiable at-risk groups, flexible, individualized, strength-based approaches to programming must be preferred to deficit-based approaches. That is, recognizing youth primarily as human beings with

Sport-based programmes should be structured and implemented in a manner that supports social inclusion, youth development, or the acquisition and transfer of life skills. They should not overemphasize sport performance and focus instead on providing an optimal for youth's participation in the programme and personal development.

Sources: Danish, S., Forneris, T., Hodge, K., and Heke, I., "Enhancing youth development through sport", *World Leisure Journal*, vol. 46, No. 3 (2004), pp. 38–49.

Côté, J., Coakley, C. and Bruner, M.W., "Children's talent development in sport: effectiveness or efficiency?", *Inclusion and Exclusion through Youth Sport*, Eds. S. Dagkas, and K. Armour, (London, Routledge, 2011) pp. 172–185.

assets and strengths rather than seeing them as broken and needing to be fixed to be valuable or worthy in society.

Identifying the factors that help at-risk youth to have positive futures and productive lives is just as important as identifying the factors that may push them towards crime and violence. Rather than having a problem orientation and a risk focus, a strength-based approach to developing sport-based programmes will help support resiliency and protective factors.

Programming should focus on providing the resources and creating the experience and opportunities that promote healthy development outcomes, especially for youth whose circumstances put them at greater risk of criminal involvement. A positive youth development approach to crime prevention is based on a vision of youth development in which youth are regarded as a resource to be developed rather than a problem to be solved.¹¹³ Such an approach contrasts with the problem-centred or risk mitigating vision of youth crime prevention that has dominated that field.¹¹⁴

Responsiveness to intersectionality

The intersection of youth participants' demographics and identities, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and (dis)ability, should guide how a sport-based prevention programme is designed and implemented. This includes its sport components,

110. Dandurand, Y. and Heidt *Youth Crime Prevention and Sports: An evaluation of sports-based programmes and their effectiveness* (Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2023), p. 56.

111. Buelens, E., Theeboom, M., Vertonghen, J., and Martelaer, K. D. "Conditions for successfully increasing disadvantaged adolescents' engagement in the development through volunteering in community sport", *Social Inclusion*, vol. 5, No. 2 (2017), pp. 179–197.

112. Outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, para. 26.

113. Armour, K. and Sandford, R., "Positive youth development through an outdoor physical activity programme: evidence from a four-year evaluation", *Educational Review*, vol. 65, No.1 (2013), pp. 85–108.

114. Allison, K. W., Edmonds, T., Wilson, K., Pope, M., and Farrell, A. D. "Connecting youth violence prevention, positive youth development, and community mobilization", *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 18, No. 8 (2011), pp. 8–20.

Case study: Line Up Live Up Programme

<p>Description</p> <p>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) worked with international experts to develop an evidence-informed, sport-based life skills training programme called Line Up Live Up (LULU). The programme aims to address risk factors associated with crime, violence and substance use by building a set of important life skills to increase knowledge of risk associated with violence and crime, and challenge normative beliefs linked to violence. The programme includes ten interactive and participatory sessions following a sport-based life skills training curriculum designed to improve youths' knowledge and awareness, perceptions, attitudes, life skills and behaviours to build resilience to violence, crime and drug use. Each session includes interactive sports-based activities, interspersed with reflective debriefing spaces in which life skills are imparted. Working in close partnership with multiple actors at the national and local level, UNODC implements Line Up Live Up in a variety of settings, including schools, community centres, sport clubs and juvenile facilities.</p>	<p>Target group</p> <p>Ages 13–18</p>
	<p>Continuum of intervention</p> <p>Primary and/or secondary levels of crime prevention</p>
	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce risky activities and antisocial behaviours and ultimately engagement in violence and crime • Enhance resilience to violence crime and drug use • Strengthen pro-social attitudes and ultimately pro-social behaviour • Decrease acceptance to harmful beliefs and violence, and crime-related attitudes
	<p>Crime prevention impact</p> <p>The main domains of improved perceived change (self-reported data) in knowledge or skills are self-awareness (+29%), empathy and tolerance (+35%), effective communication (+35%), interpersonal relationships (+37%), creative thinking (+33%), critical thinking (+28%), decision-making (+34%), problem solving (+30%) and coping skills (+29%).</p> <p>An impact assessment study showcase the results showcase improvements in social skills and in knowledge and perceptions around antisocial behaviour and enhanced interactions with coaches and peers, and showed a statistically significant improvement among participants in awareness of the consequences of antisocial behaviour, perceptions of violence in the home not having to be kept secret, and on gender equality.</p>
<p>Key lessons learned and recommendations on programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider ways in which knowledge and skills gained can be transferred beyond the intervention, with space for reflection, peer discussions, critical engagement and follow-up support. • Capacity building activities should be tailored to the need of individual coaches and facilitators. • Sport-based approaches should be integrated within the educational system for primary crime prevention. • Risk levels may vary across participants. In such settings, consider the risks and opportunities that emerge from peer interaction across levels. 	

More information

<https://www.unodc.org/dohadeclaration/en/sports/lineupliveup.html>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Youth Crime Prevention through Sport: insights from the UNODC "Line up Live up" pilot programme (2020).

Wadih Maalouf, Hanna Heikkila, Milos Stojanovic, Elizabeth Mattfeld, and Giovanna Campello, "International Standards on Drug Use Prevention, and Sustainable Development", International Approaches to Promoting Social and Emotional Learning in Schools, A Framework for Developing Teaching Strategy, ed. Markus Talvio, Kirsti Lonka (London, Routledge, 2021).

the choice of sport activity, and the coaching approaches and techniques. Sport participation may have different, maybe even opposite effects on male and female participants, for example.^{115,116} It is therefore important to ensure that the programme and its specific sport components address the risk and protective factors that are most salient for the intersection of participants' demographics and identities. In terms of gender, it is also important to recruit female coaches and facilitators and to develop capacity among programme staff to act as positive role models and challenge gender stereotypes, norms and attitudes that condone and justify gender discrimination and violence.¹¹⁷

Youth engagement and empowerment

As youth are the primary beneficiaries of a sport-based intervention focused on crime and violence prevention, it is necessary to include them at every stage of the programme, including in the design (or co-design), delivery and evaluation processes. Giving youth agency to use their voices in how the intervention is created and implemented also provides opportunities for youth to develop crucial leadership skills.

Because their personal circumstances may be exposing them to various risk factors, young people don't need to be told what's wrong with them. They do not need to be told what is important and unimportant to them. Instead, they should be encouraged to form their own opinion about these risk factors and come up with their own ideas about how to address them. They do not need to be told that they are deficient because they lack certain life skills, but they may appreciate learning how they can use the skills they already have to improve things in their own life and around them. Coaches, facilitators, parents and mentors can help to empower young people by supporting and encouraging them, letting them find and follow their passions, make their own decisions and take action, and learn from their mistakes.

Targeting, outreach and recruitment practices

For sport-based programmes to have a crime prevention impact, an important first step is to identify, engage and retain the target population with a sport activity,¹¹⁸ while minimizing the risk that they may be labelled as "problem youth". For programmes that plan to do outreach, remember that how partnerships are promoted and framed is important (i.e. openly partnering with law enforcement may discourage youth's participation).

Recruitment assumes greater importance with sport-based programmes that promote social inclusion and are aimed at development. Marginalized and disaffected youth may be difficult to reach, let alone engage.¹¹⁹ Experts have noted that current recruitment strategies, often relying on sports clubs and volunteers, sometimes overlook young people whose social exclusion is more complex or acute, and who, most likely, are in greater need of support intervention.¹²⁰

Sport-based programmes need to address the obstacles to sport participation that confront various vulnerable groups and seek to engage youth and community members in defining the goals of the programmes, its target group, the choice of sport activities and the programme design. Carefully planned and well targeted gender responsive and culturally relevant outreach activities are necessary. The experience of groups and organizations already involved in promoting the participation of women and girls or disadvantaged groups in sport can be drawn upon to design such outreach activities.

Some approaches to targeting certain at-risk groups may further stigmatize them and isolate them from the community.¹²¹ In some instances, a programme's social inclusion goals can be defeated by its own youth recruitment strategies or by predetermined participation targets which tend to exclude youth with more complex issues.¹²²

115. Lipowski, M., Lipowska, M., Jochimek, M., and Krokosz, D. "Resiliency as a factor protecting youths from risky behaviour: moderating effects of gender and sport", *European Journal of Sport Science*, vol. 16, No. 2 (2016), pp. 246–255.

116. Fagan, A. and Lindsey, A. M. L. "Gender differences in the effectiveness of delinquency prevention programs: what can be learned from experimental research?", *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, vol. 41, No.9 (2014), pp. 1,057–1,078.

117. Dandurand, Y. and Heidt, J. *Youth Crime Prevention and Sport* (Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2023).

118. Vandermeersch, H., Vos, S., and Scheerder, J., "Who's joining the club? Participation of socially vulnerable children and adolescents in club organised sports", *Sport, Education and Society*, vol. 8 (2013), pp. 941–958.

119. Hartmann, D. and Kwauk, C., "Sport and development: an overview, critique, and reconstruction", *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, vol. 35, No.3 (2011), pp. 284–305.

120. Outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, para. 34.

121. Armstrong, D., "Becoming criminal: the cultural politics of risk", *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 10, No.2–3 (2006), pp. 265–278; and Coakley, J., "Youth sports: what counts as 'positive development'?", *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 35, No. 3 (2011), pp. 306–324; and Chamberlain, J. M., "Sports-based intervention and the problem of youth offending: a diverse enough tool for a diverse society?", *Sport in Society*, vol. 16, No. 10 (2013), pp. 1,279–1,292.

122. Morgan, H. and Costas Batlle, I., "It's borderline hypocrisy: recruitment practices in youth sport-based interventions", *Journal of Sport for Development*, vol. 7, No. 13 (2019), pp. 1–14.

Case study: Only You Decide Who You Are [Alleen Jij Bepaalt Wie Je Bent] (AJB)

<p>Description Alleen jij bepaalt wie je bent” [Only you decide who you are] (AJB) is an intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency in at-risk youth in the Netherlands. Through sports clinics at schools, led by professional athletes, youth are stimulated to take part in structured leisure activities at selected sport clubs, near the school where youth participate at various team sport such as (indoor) soccer, baseball or basketball training in special AJB teams. Lived experienced coaches are selected based on their ability to act as a role model and address participants’ anti-social behaviour, 24/7. It is aimed to create a safe (educational) environment and positive relationships between the coach and participants. The children meet the coaches on weekly basis for around six to eight hours. Youth participants are approached in a positive, respectful way and are motivated to join pro-social activities at the sports club. Youth get free membership at the sport club until they turn 18. AJB coordinators ensure good partnerships between schools and sport clubs. AJB is now being implemented in more than 30 municipalities in the Netherlands as well as in Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Saba, St. Eustatius and Sint Maarten.</p>	<p>Target group</p>	Male and female adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds
	<p>Continuum of intervention</p>	Secondary level of crime prevention
	<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent juvenile delinquency • Reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for delinquency • Lower delinquency rates
	<p>Crime prevention impact</p>	<p>An impact study showed that participation in Only You Decide Who You Are prevented or reduced delinquent behaviour among participants. More specifically, the study shows that 16 months after the start of the programme, participants had – compared to the control group – fewer registrations with police as suspects of crimes (up to two times fewer) and fewer crime convictions (up to three times fewer).</p> <p>Another study on cost effectiveness concluded that for every euro invested in the programme, a social value of between 19 and 32 euro is realized.</p>
	<p>Key lessons learned and recommendations on programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In designing and implementing culturally appropriate sport-based interventions, policy-makers should avoid copying sports activities for leisure purposes into a frame of sport-based interventions for crime prevention; • Fostering positive relationships and creating a pro-social and socio-moral environment demands interpersonal skills, pedagogical knowledge and competence from the life coach. Policymakers should question whether sports coaches are capable of meeting these high standards, and what they need in terms of personal guidance and training.

More information

Andersson Elffers Felix (AEF) and Baker Tilly Berk (BTB) en Andersson Elffers Felix (AEF) (Utrecht, 24 juni 2015 GV318/definitief rapport). De maatschappelijke kosten en baten van Alleen jij bepaalt wie je bent (report prepared for the Ministry of Security and Justice).

Spruit, A., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., and Stams, G. J., “Predictors of intervention success in a sport-based program for adolescents at risk of juvenile delinquency”, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 62, No. 6 (2018), pp. 1,535–1,555.

Spruit, A., Hoffenaar, P., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., & Stams, G. J., “The effect of a sport-based intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency in at-risk adolescents”, *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 94, No. 4 (2018), pp. 689–698

Therefore, sport-based programmes should be specifically designed to address known obstacles to participation encountered by different vulnerable groups (such as migrants, children of incarcerated parents, street children and young people involved in gangs) and seek to involve young people and community members in the recruitment process, the choice of the sporting activities and the design of the programme.¹²³

8

Strengthening the impact of sport-based interventions for at risk youth

Research shows that the impact of crime prevention sport programmes for at-risk youth (secondary prevention), including those that are already in conflict with the law (tertiary prevention), is strongly associated on the non-sport elements of such programmes (“plus sport”) and the effectiveness of the other interventions supported by sport that typically include mentoring support, life skills training and other educational interventions or parental engagement and family support.

The role and importance of non-sport aspects of the programmes

While caution may be necessary in the choice of sport activity, success of a sport-based intervention to prevent violence and promote pro-social behaviour has been attributed to the non-sport components – or additional interventions – that are incorporated into a programme.^{124, 125} In a “plus sport” approach, which is preferred for secondary and tertiary prevention, these additional interventions occur parallel to, rather than with, sport activities. For this reason, all interventions of sport-based programmes should be evidenced-based and carefully planned and implemented. Furthermore, care should be taken to intentionally structure the context, environment and sport component of the programme in a way that will facilitate positive youth development.¹²⁶ The sport climate itself is known to affect the psychosocial development of participants.¹²⁷

Role models: Including sport ambassadors in addition to coaches and trainers

At the primary level of prevention, coaches and trainers were stated as the primary examples of positive role models for youth. This is no different at the secondary level. However, building from coaches and trainers, programmes at the secondary level of prevention should also include sport ambassadors as positive role models. At-risk children and youth should be consistently exposed to information about famous and successful athletes – perhaps those who have a similar background or story to those within the programme. Coaches and trainers could also share information of athletes who might be negative role models, which exposes youth to real-world examples of how good and poor role models behave.

Building on this, both SFD and crime prevention programmes have recruited locally or globally famous athletes as ambassadors, and enrolled them in promoting the programme while acting as positive role models for participants. There is limited research on how to recruit and use these ambassadors.¹²⁸

At the secondary level, it would be beneficial for those in charge of the programme to build formal connections with sport ambassadors, sport icons and elite athletes who can officially engage with the programme. They can visit the programme and share their story, life journey and words of wisdom with youth. The following practices are known to enhance the positive influence of role models and improve elements that drive positive outcomes in sport interventions:

- Connections between ambassadors and community partners and other stakeholders;
- Promotional support systems to assist ambassadors in outreach, including social media;
- Snowball recruitment, where current role models recruit potential new ones;
- A measurement and evaluation process to capture the impact of role models.

123. Outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, para. 34.

124. Coakley, J., “Using sports to control deviance and violence among youths: Let’s be critical and cautious”, in M. Gatz, M. A. Messner, & S. J. Ball-Rokeach (Eds.), *Paradoxes of Youth and Sport* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 13–30.

125. Spruit, A., Hoffenaar, P., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., & Stams, G. J., “The effect of a sport-based intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency in at-risk adolescents”, *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 94 (2018), pp. 689–698.

126. Bean, C. and Forneris, T., “Examining the importance of intentionally structuring the youth sport context to facilitate positive youth development”, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol. 28, No. 4 (2016), pp. 410–425.

127. Gould, D., Flett, R., and Lauer, L., “The relationship between psychosocial developmental and the sports climate experienced by underserved youth”, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, vol. 13, No. 1 (2012), pp. 80–87.

128. Bardocz-Bencsik, M., Begović, M., & Dóczy, T., “Star athlete ambassadors of sport for development and peace”, *Celebrity Studies*, vol. 12, No. 3 (2021), pp. 407–422.

Finally, in sport programming for at-risk youth, it is essential that coaches, trainers and others acting as role models are equipped with knowledge and skills to inform young people about and properly refer them, when necessary, to support services for additional guidance and help (see also on positive role models under primary level page 48).

Education and school attachment

Interventions focused on educational pathways should be part of sport-based programmes with at-risk youth. Improving school attachment through a sport-based intervention might include networking with local institutions, having people with lived experience speak with youth, and youth gaining experience outside of the intervention with the support of coaches and positive role models. The sport intervention can act as a pathway that feeds into specific opportunities to learn about and experience the value of school attachment. Beyond that, learning and development can occur in the sport intervention itself, that is, youth can practice leadership skills within the programme who are later employed by, or return to, the sport intervention to influence the lives of others in the programme.

Moreover, sport-based activities and intervention staff can help focus youth towards thinking about the future and the process of (re)integration into schools, and other formal education institutions and settings. Sport can inspire

youth to achieve new goals through their interactions with coaches and role models. (Re)integration into formal education spaces may cause anxiety but sport-based learning can help youth emotionally prepare for taking positive steps.

Engagement of parents and other significant adults

Quality interactions between youth and key social agents (peers, parents, teacher, mentors and coaches), plus the integration of family, school and community efforts are all important for the success of sport-based prevention programmes, especially programmes that address youth at-risk. Parents and family context play a huge role in a youth's acquisition and application of life skills.¹²⁹ Parents who are aware of their child's leisure interests, activities and friends are a protective factor.¹³⁰ Sport-based programmes need to find practical ways to promote meaningful interactions between youth and interested and caring adults, fostering a sense of acceptance and belonging, placing value on individual achievement, encouraging a positive attitude toward the future, and helping youth develop an ability to work together with others and work out conflicts.¹³¹ With the secondary level of crime and violence prevention explained, the next section discusses tertiary prevention, which builds upon the information and outcomes associated with primary and secondary prevention.

129.Hodge, C. J., Kanters, M. A., Forneris, T., Bocarro, J. N., and McCord-Sayre, R. A., "A family thing: positive youth development outcomes of a sport-based life skills program", *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, vol. 35, No. 1 (2017), pp. 34–50.

130.Caldwell, L. L. and Smith, E. A., "Leisure as a context for youth development and delinquency prevention", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 39, No. 3 (2006), pp. 398–418.

131.Dandurand, Y. and Heidt, J., *Youth Crime Prevention and Sports* (2023).

5

Tertiary level of intervention

At the tertiary level, the main goal of crime prevention interventions is to prevent recidivism by encouraging youth desistance from crime and social reintegration. In that context, properly designed sport-based crime prevention programmes, in the community but more commonly in a correctional setting, can contribute to these goals. There are still many unanswered questions about the effectiveness of these programmes or how they should be designed for optimal effectiveness in supporting desistance from crime and the social reintegration of youth in conflict with the law.¹³² However, a growing number of programme evaluations are making it possible to identify some of the key factors that may be responsible for their success.¹³³ Moreover, experts have noted the potential of sport-based initiatives to enhance gang and gang violence prevention programmes designed to prevent the recruitment of young people into gangs, offer them a way out (exit programmes) and facilitate their social reintegration.¹³⁴

At the tertiary level, the key elements of the theory of change on primary and secondary prevention are developed further to meet the specific outcomes and objective of desistance, social reintegration and prevention of recidivism, while the non-sport components of the programmes and how they are designed and delivered are central and critical for the success of such interventions.

“Sport plus” or “plus sport”? At the tertiary level of intervention, similar to the secondary level, a “plus sport” programme is the most typical and recommended approach for a sport programme specifically directed at youth who have been in contact with the law. The sport activity is not the central component but attracts and retains youth so they may participate in additional interventions provided by the programme. The role of sport cannot be overlooked or understated, however. Sport is a critical component that can facilitate wider outcomes and social development, but the majority of learning is through the non-sport components.

Trauma-informed approach

Youth in contact with the law and those who are more vulnerable to violence and crime, as victims or perpetrators, are likely to have been exposed to adverse childhood events (ACEs) and trauma. Such negative experiences can contribute to overall ill-being (e.g. mental health disorders, non-communicable diseases). It is critical that sport-based intervention actors and organizations understand how trauma affects at-risk youth and how being trained in trauma sensitive responses can help sport be a place of healing for youth. Sport intervention policies and projects should be developed with the goal of avoiding revictimization, increasing the safety of all, and promoting overall well-being (e.g. mental, physical, spiritual).

Experiencing trauma as a child can impact psychological, physiological and behavioural development during adolescence, which can result in an increased likelihood of involvement in crime and violence. A trauma-informed sport intervention can reduce psychological harm and increase feelings of safety. Trauma-informed practices are thus woven into each gear in the theory of change.

In the context of secondary and tertiary prevention, it is difficult to prevent the risk factors youth have been exposed to from influencing their behaviour. However, a trauma-informed approach helps trainees appreciate how certain experiences shape a young person’s development.

132. Meek, R., *Sport in Prison: Exploring the Role of Physical Activity in Correctional Settings* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2014); and Meek, R. *A Sporting Chance: An Independent Review of Sport in Youth and Adult Prisons* (London, Ministry of Justice, 2018); and Meek, R., and Lewis, G.E., “Promoting well-being and desistance through sport and physical activity: the opportunities and barriers experienced by women in English prisons”, *Women & Criminal Justice*, vol. 24, No. 2 (2014), pp. 151–172.

133. Gallant, D., Sherry, E., and Nicholson, M., “Recreation or rehabilitation? Managing sport for development programs with prison populations”, *Sport Management Review*, vol. 18, No. 1 (2014), pp. 45–56; and Sempé, G., *Sport and Prisons in Europe*, (Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing, 2018); Parker, A., Meek, G., and Lewis, G., “Sport in a youth prison: male young offenders’ experiences of a sporting intervention”, *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 17, No. 3 (2014), pp. 381–396.

134. Outcome of the Expert Working Group (2020), para. 19.

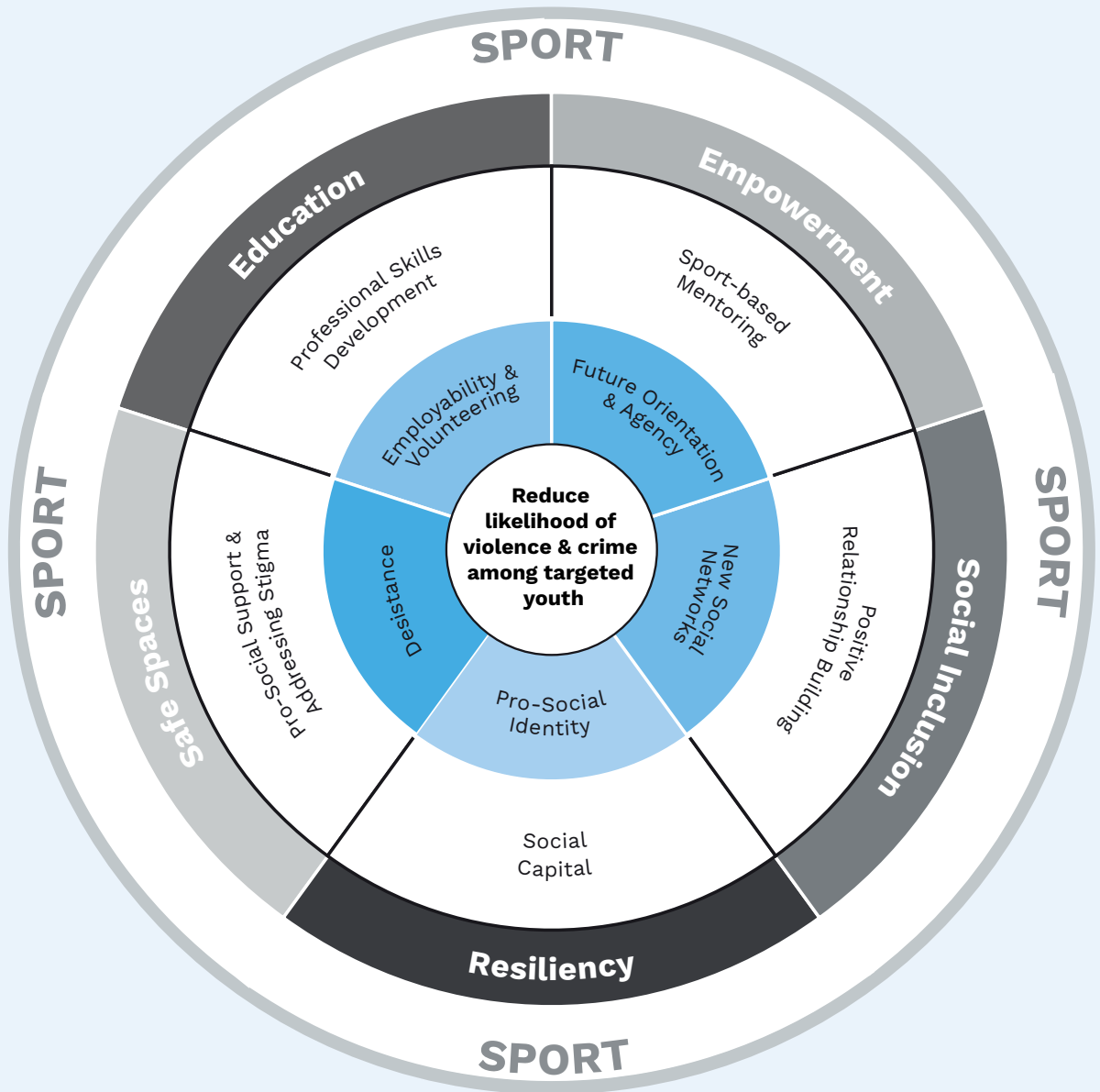


Fig. 13
Theory of Change for sport programming at tertiary level of prevention

1

Sport's contribution to desistance and social reintegration

Sports activities, incorporated as key components in intentionally designed programmes, play a significant role in preventing youth's further involvement in criminal or violent activity, supporting the process of crime desistance and facilitating their re-entrance into mainstream society, or social reintegration. These sport-based programmes strive to achieve the following objectives.

Building on primary and secondary prevention	Objectives achieved through sport
<p>Building on safe spaces and safe sport and environmental transformation</p>	<p>Having safe spaces for sport, especially in one's community, can work towards individual and group-level desistance. They may engage in other programme activities rather than crime and/or violence.</p> <p>Connecting participants with supportive individuals and services (social relations that support identity shift and desistance).</p>
<p>Building on social inclusion and social cohesion</p>	<p>Participants can gain new social networks by being exposed to positive role models and help them connect with a mentor.</p> <p>Helping participants build new relationships and a sense of belonging and bringing about changes in their social networks and relational dynamics.</p> <p>Supporting other interventions to promote cognitive transformation and formation of new social identity.</p>
<p>Building on education and school attachment</p>	<p>Support participants to gain employability and volunteering opportunities. This includes professional development training and upskilling workshops in partnership with the sport sector.</p>
<p>Building on resiliency and pro-social development</p>	<p>Building social capital that may facilitate the youth's reintegration, reconstruction of a pro-social identity, and access to opportunities.</p> <p>Help youth counter and become more resilient to the stigmatization associated with their contacts with the criminal justice system.</p>
<p>Building on empowerment and diversion & disruption</p>	<p>Building and supporting the participants' motivation to change can help young people have a future orientated mindset and agency.</p>

The following figure represents the tertiary prevention elements of sport-based crime prevention programmes for at-risk youth and highlights the different contributors that help strive towards the programmes' crime prevention outcomes. The outermost square layer reflects the primary level of prevention, and then within that, secondary crime prevention, upon which the tertiary level builds. The elements in the middle of the square present the sport methodology, or what occurs during a sport programme for the tertiary prevention that can help lead to the intended outcomes at

this level. These outcomes are understood as almost entirely contingent on the effectiveness of other interventions – or programming approaches – supported by sport (the four sides of the square). These additional elements are included to reinforce, strengthen and build upon those outcomes. For this reason, it is often challenging for programme evaluations to determine the extent to which observable crime prevention outcomes can logically and empirically be attributed to the sport aspect of a sport-based programme or to the the non-sport components.

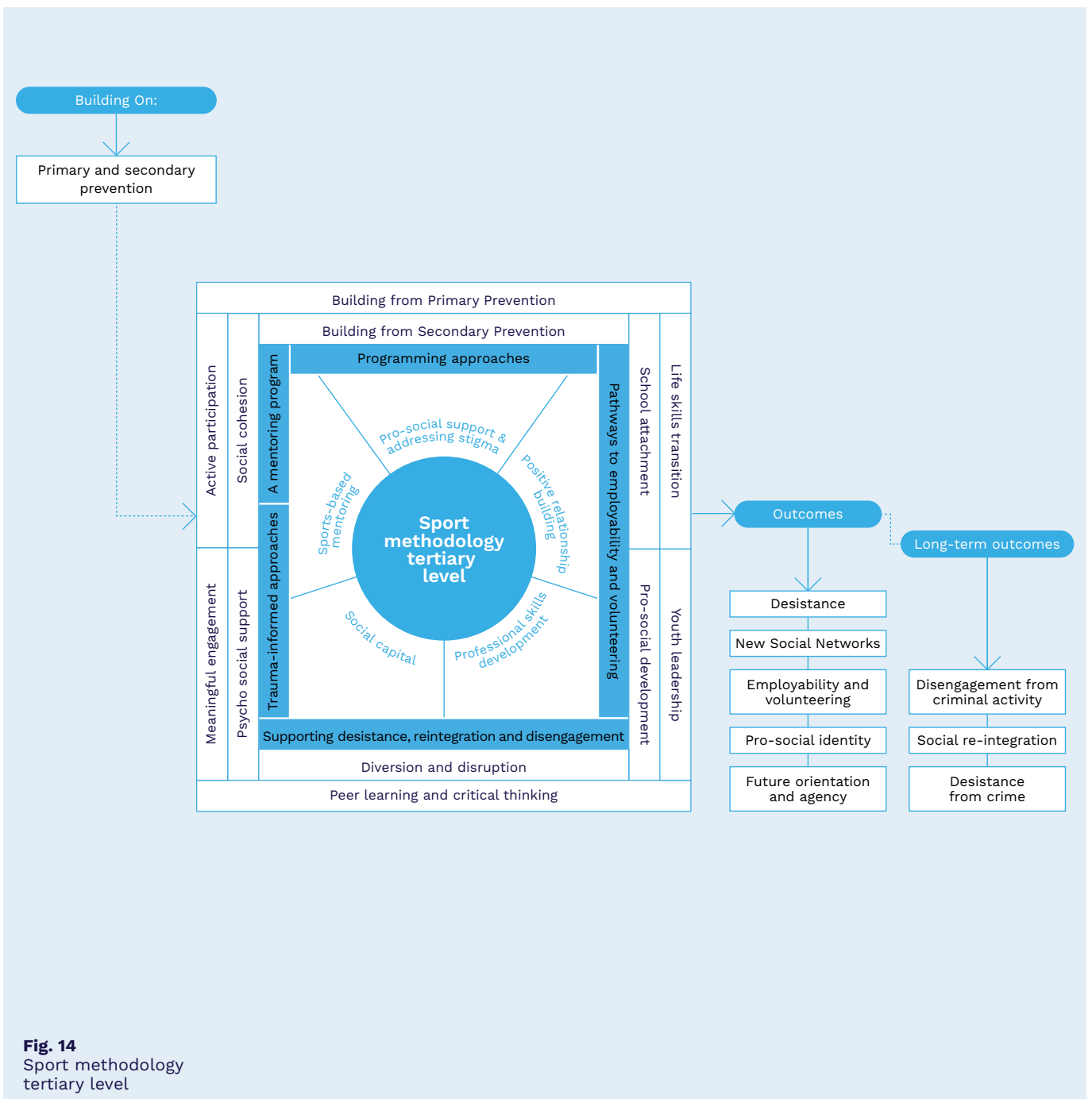


Fig. 14
Sport methodology tertiary level

2

Programming approaches at the tertiary level

At the tertiary level, sport-based programmes targeting children and youth who are already engaged in criminal or violent activities need to be approached in much the same way as programmes at the secondary level.

As discussed in Part 4, sport-based crime and violence prevention programmes for at-risk youth are more likely to have the desired impact when they are inclusive, strength-based, responsive to intersectionality as well as culture and mainly characterized by effective teaching, mentoring, training and other support interventions. However, at the tertiary level the interventions – targeting youth in contact with the law to prevent of reoffending – are not simply meant to address a potential risk but rather to respond to existing criminal and dysfunctional behaviour and behaviour patterns. Their goal is to prevent recidivism by disrupting those patterns and supporting the participants' desistance from crime and social reintegration. The task at hand is very different and, in that context, the targeting and recruitment of participants is different from what was described in the previous part of this guide. For instance, outreach activities for youth involved in delinquent gangs, and their siblings, may require the help of experienced and well-trained community-based youth workers partnering with the police, community groups and local sport groups.

Targeting, outreach and recruitment practices

At the tertiary level, many of the participants are already involved in one way or another with the criminal or juvenile justice systems. They may have been suspected, accused, or convicted of committing an offence or sentenced to a term of imprisonment. They may be referred to a prevention programme by the police, a court, else a probation or child welfare authority. Their participation in the programme may be voluntary, but their motivation is likely to be ambivalent or oscillate. Some sport-based programmes are delivered in prison,¹³⁵ sometimes in collaboration with community groups, but the focus on this guide is on community-based programmes. However, for those in prison who attempt to reintegrate into mainstream society, research shows that there is rarely follow-up from the prison sport programmes to check on youth or facilitate their social reintegration.¹³⁶

There are very few community-based programmes developed especially for children and youth in conflict with the law, including programmes for gang-involved youth. Very commonly, children and youth who have previously been arrested or convicted are referred to and included in programmes for at-risk youth.

It is often observed that sport-based crime prevention programmes often fail to specifically target a type of crime.¹³⁷ It should be obvious that programmes for girls involved in shoplifting or young women involved in a street gang or soliciting, should be designed differently than programmes for sport hooligans, boys spreading graffiti on public buildings or engaged in vandalism, young immigrants forced into drug peddling, young men involved in knife crimes, gang-involved youth in extortion, violence and gang wars, or boys and girls who are part of a car-theft ring, to name a few different examples.

Specific programming is likely to have a far greater crime prevention impact if they are specifically targeting specific criminogenic factors and specific behaviour patterns. Think for example of pairing a parkour activity with a graffiti cleaning and a volunteer service for graffiti artists defacing public building and monuments. Or an outdoor adventure programme with an education initiative to build the confidence of young women and boys and re-engage them with the education system or vocational training.

A literature review on sport-based activities in prisons in Europe concluded the following:

In both the academic and non-academic literature, we found that important information about the interventions is missing (e.g. the role of sport, intensity level and frequency of practice, number and type of sports provided, the role of coach/mentor). This means that we still do not have a good view on sport activities that prepare prisoners for life after prison or activities that (might) have a link with the outside world.

Schailleé, H., Derom, I., & Theeboom, M. State of play in prisons across Europe: Identification of sports-based activities (2021), p. 13.

135. See for example, Meek, R., *Sport in prison: exploring the role of physical activity in correctional settings* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2014); and Meek, R., *A sporting chance: an independent review of sport in youth and adult prisons*. (London, Ministry of Justice, 2018); and Norman, M., "Sport in the under-life of a total institution: Social control and resistance in Canadian prisons", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 52, No. 5 (2017), pp. 598–614; and Norman, M., and Andrews, G.J., "The folding of sport space into carceral space: on the making of prisoners' experiences and lives", *The Canadian Geographer*, vol. 63, No. 3 (2019), pp. 453–465.

136. Schailleé, H., Derom, I., & Theeboom, M., *State of play in prisons across Europe: Identification of sports-based activities* (Brussels, Vrije Universiteit Brussel – Research group Sport & Society, 2021).

137. Groombridge, N., *Sports criminology: a critical criminology of sport and games* (Bristol, Policy Press, 2017).

Case study: Fencing and Restorative Justice

<p>Description</p> <p>The Fencing and Restorative Justice (FRJ) method, created by the Association Pour le Sourire d'un Enfant, in Thiès, Senegal, is placing sports innovation and fencing in particular at the heart of criminal justice systems, with the aim to promote social development approaches to youth crime prevention and support social reintegration of young offenders. The FRJ method is based on five psychotherapeutic concepts (identity, socialization, responsibility, self-control, cognition) and eight educational preceded, broken down into 60 lessons. Participation in the programme is voluntary. The final selection is done jointly by an educator and the prison governor following an individual assessment. In addition to fencing practice that has a central role in the intervention, participants receive other support services including legal aid, counselling and vocational training. An important element of the intervention is that fencing practice is delivered at a community facility outside detentions twice a week. The support to the participants continues, through the same programme, after release.</p>	<p>Target group</p>	<p>Ages 10–21, in conflict with the law in Thiès prison and at community level with at-risk youth</p>
	<p>Continuum of intervention</p>	<p>Tertiary crime prevention Note: The most common offences for boys include criminal conspiracy, acts of physical violence and offences related to sexual violence. Girls are primarily accused of illegal abortion and infanticide.</p>
	<p>Objectives</p>	<p>The ultimate objective of the FRJ programme is to prevent juvenile delinquency and recidivism of young offenders. To achieve this, it aims, through sport practice and other interventions, to teach life skills, support self-esteem and positive personal development, promote gender equality, promote social inclusion and enhance empowerment of youth participants.</p>
	<p>Crime prevention impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A scientific protocol, combining biographical interviews and an observation grid is used to assess the evolution of each participant and how they have been supported by the programme. The results, cross-referenced with judicial records over a five-year period, demonstrate significant impact on the reduction of recidivism rates. • The programme had positive outcomes on the development of self-concepts relating to the perception of others, especially in the gender relationships and, to this end, can contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence.
	<p>Key lessons learned and recommendations on programming</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key element of success of the programme is its successful integration within the criminal justice system and the close cooperation and partnership with prison administration and staff; • Investing in capacity building and human resources including within the criminal justice system is essential to scale up activities and sustaining the programme; • Sport programmes that offer a bridge between detention and the community can be more impactful in preventing recidivism; • The role of other important support services is essential.

More information

<https://www.enfantsourire.com/escrime-justice-reparatrice>

Rosnet, Elisabeth & Robin, Nelly & Bourdageau, M., Benefit of fencing practice on self-concept development in imprisoned adolescents in Senegal (2016).

Escrime et Justice réparatrice Mesure d'impact, une application atypique de l'IA ,2024, available in French at <https://www.ird.fr/escrime-et-justice-reparatrice-sport-et-science-au-service-de-la-justice-juvenile-au-senegal>

Mentoring opportunities around sport activities

Sport can create opportunities for positive social interaction (socialization), exposure to positive role models and informal as well as formal mentoring. Building on positive sport-based role models from secondary prevention, youth mentoring generally refers to a relationship between a more experienced or adult individual (the mentor) and an unrelated younger individual (the mentee) where the mentor provides ongoing guidance, instruction and encouragement to help the latter develop competence and life skills. The mentoring relationship focuses on helping youth develop important assets and an ability to apply core life skills to everyday life and to cope with the various challenges they encounter.

- The sport sector can connect role models, who can act as mentors or support mentors, into sport interventions.
- Sport role models may have valuable social capital they can use to reinforce socialization.

In addition to the informal, naturally occurring mentoring that often occurs between coaches, trainers or other adults and the youth during and around sport activities, sport-based programmes often rely on a formal mentoring intervention. Mentoring interventions can vary in terms of duration, intensity, approaches, integration with other services, and target population (including the age and gender of the target population). At the core of a formal mentoring programme is a sustained long-term, high-quality relationship between the mentor as an experienced older person, and the young person. The mentoring is only effective when the mentor becomes a significant adult in the life of the young person.¹³⁸

Characteristics of successful sport-based mentoring programmes

The Danish Crime Prevention Council's systematic review of mentoring programme evaluations concluded that mentoring interventions were promising, noting positive effects

related to crime, behaviour, attitude, psyche, alcohol and drugs, school and relationships with family and friends.¹³⁹ With respect more specifically to sport-based formal mentoring programmes, another systematic review of the relevant research found that, although there is mixed evidence about formal mentoring, it still emerges as one of the most promising forms of mentoring for working with young people on a one-to-one basis in a sporting context to prevent or reduce offending.¹⁴⁰ The same review also identified some of the key characteristics of successful sport-based mentoring programmes. In successful programmes, the role of the mentor is well understood by all those involved and there are realistic expectations about that role and what can be achieved. The mentees are open and ready to engage in new relationships such as mentoring. Successful formal mentorship programmes are those that:

- Involve individualized interventions based on a young person's own strengths and goals rather than predetermined programme activities and outcomes;
- Are based on a set of standards with formal processes and procedures to support the mentoring relationship;
- Provide the opportunity for a young person to select a non-judgmental mentor whom they already know and who has demonstrated belief in them;
- Aim to create close, enduring and effective mentor-youth ties and to adopt a pro-social approach;
- Rely on sustained engagement from both the mentor and the mentee, and on developing an empathic bond between the mentor and the mentee;
- Provide opportunities for positive learning and social modelling.¹⁴¹

138. DuBois, D. L., Holloway, B. E., Valentine, J. C., and Cooper, H., "Effectiveness of mentoring programs: A meta-analytical review", *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 30, No. 2, (2002), pp. 157–197.

139. DKR, Danish Crime Prevention Council, *The Effectiveness of Mentoring and Leisure-Time Activities for Youth at Risk – A Systematic Review*, (Glostrup, DKR, 2012).

140. Walpole, C. and Mason, C., *The use of sport-based mentoring programmes as an intervention for preventing and reducing youth offending: Literature review summary*, (Loughborough University, 2021).

141. Walpole, C. and Mason, C., *Literature review summary* (2021).

Characteristics of effective mentors

Research has identified some of the main characteristics of effective mentors.¹⁴² According to various studies, successful mentors:

- Are non-judgmental and prepared to accept the mentees' emotions, imperfections and wishes
- Respond flexibly to verbal and non-verbal cues considering the needs of the mentee;
- Listen and allow space for the mentee to make their own sense of things, to unburden;
- Are able to identify and reflect on their own feelings as a mentor as well as those of their mentee, and they are able to develop emotional connections as legitimate mentoring tools;
- Set manageable goals with their mentees and know how to motivate them;
- Have knowledge about services and other agencies that can provide additional support including education, training and welfare;
- Are not motivated by personal gain or social recognition.

Education & employability

Interventions focused on educational pathways (formal and informal), employability skill development and volunteering can all be part of sport-based programmes at the tertiary level of prevention. Employability skills through a sport-based intervention might include networking with local institutions, professional skills training workshops and gaining experience outside of the intervention with the support of mentors.

The sport intervention can act as a pathway that feeds into specific employment and education opportunities. Beyond that, learning and skill development can be developed in the sport intervention itself; that is, youth can develop into young leaders who are later employed by the sport intervention to influence the lives of others who will attend the intervention in the future. Youth may also practice their professional skills to assist in monitoring and evaluation projects and activities.

3

Strengthening the impact of sport-based interventions for at-risk youth

Positive disruption

Tertiary prevention approaches seek to intervene and actively untangle existing webs of social, economic, contextual and cultural drivers of youth crime and violence. A positive disruption is an intervention that disrupts a youth's crime or violence prone trajectory and provides a positive personal development opportunity. The disruption may be temporary or have a longer lasting effect, but it provides an opportunity to interrupt a behaviour pattern and attitudes or disrupt negative relationships and make room for the youth to consider building a different, more positive future for themselves.

A change of context, unless it is permanent, may not be sufficient to motivate young people to make significant changes in their life but it may be enough to create a motivation to do so. Disruption of established social, cognitive, and behavioural patterns can sometimes lead youth to reconsider their criminal involvement, or involvement with a delinquent group. For many youths, crime is a social activity. A shift in schools¹⁴³ or joining a group around a sport activity may lead youth to form different relationships and different friendship patterns, including different relationships with adults and authority figures. The change in context that accompanies young people's engagement in a structured sport activity may, with the right support, lead to alterations in social ties, changes in cognition and identity, and individual progress with respect to agency, self-control and emotional regulation.

Sport can play a critical role in this process by creating positive and exciting new context. It can engage and motivate youth to participate in other aspects of a prevention programme, but much depends on what the participants are exposed to in that new context and how they are supported in that important life transition. Sport is therefore utilized for promoting youth capacity, surrounding the programme with expertise and positive future pathways, and focusing not on what is missing but what is possible.¹⁴⁴

142. Buck, G., "The core conditions of peer mentoring", *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, vol. 18, No. 2 (2018), pp. 190–206; and Pryce, J.M., Gilkerson, L., and Barry, J.E., "The mentoring FAN: A promising approach to enhancing attainment within the mentoring system", *Journal of Social Service Research*, vol. 44, No. 3 (2018), pp. 350–364; and Sulimani-Aidan, Y., "Challenges in mentoring at-risk young adults: caseworkers' perspectives", *Journal of Social Work Practice*, vol. 33, No. 3 (2019), pp. 297–309; and Spencer, R., Gowdy, G., Drew, A.L., and Rhodes, J. E., "Who knows me the best and can encourage me the most?: Matching and early Relationship Development in Youth-Initiated Mentoring Relationships with System-involved Youth", *Journal of early Adolescent Research*, vol. 34 No. 1 (2019), pp. 3–29.

143. Freelin, B. N., McMillan, C., Felmlee, D., and Osgood, D. M., "Changing context: a quasi-experiment examining adolescent delinquency and the transition to high school", *Criminology*, vol. 61, No. 1 (2023), pp. 40–73.

144. Collison, H., Fareello, A., Smith, A. C. T., "Tackling Knife Crime and Violence through Sport Programmes", Evaluation Report prepared for the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (June 2021).

Sport-based interventions with a goal of positive disruption should help young people find a new community through sport. It is critical that such interventions aiming to disrupt risky or negative associations and behaviour patterns should be framed within a non-judgmental, positive and co-created manner.

Supporting disengagement from criminal groups

Sports activities, incorporated as key components in tailored programmes, play a significant role in preventing youths' further involvement in criminal or violent activity, supporting them through a process of desistance from crime and facilitating their social reintegration.

There is limited research on how to disrupt youth's engagement and association with delinquent or violent groups, including youth gangs, and how to support an individual's disengagement from such a group. Clearly, some types of intervention are more effective than others in reducing gang recruitment and gang involvement.¹⁴⁵ Some research suggests that sport-based programmes that are well-structured, appropriately targeted, supported by mentoring and other individual interventions and well supervised, can support gang disengagement by exposing youth to positive role models, nurturing pro-social relationships, teaching them life skills, offering diversion and safety, and leading to meaningful reappraisals among youth.¹⁴⁶ There is also some support for the practice of recruiting and training people with a personal experience (lived experience coaches) of desistance from crime or gang exiting and engaging them in various aspects of a prevention programme because of their experience and their knowledge of nuances and complexities of these difficult transitions. Coaches and facilitators who have a personal knowledge of that transition may be able to build rapport with youth to build strong connections and trust.

As relational analysis studies and studies on co-offending have indicated, sport activities, as much as any other social activity, can also present opportunities for young people to develop or diversify their social capital and form or join delinquent networks.¹⁴⁷ This raises the question of whether successful interventions are possible when working with co-offending individuals. However, recent research

Engaging lived-experience coaches

Adults and youth with lived experience, including those that have been in conflict with the law or been the victim of a crime, have unique insight into the criminal justice system, the pathways to personal development and positive behavioural, and social change. To this end, they can become critically important to the success and impact of a sport-based interventions, including as coaches, mentors or peer learners. Youth and coaches with lived experience from the same local space 'speak the same language' as those at risk and have a deep understanding of their personal challenges and reasons for engaging in violence and criminal activities and the process of social reintegration and desistance. Nevertheless, special consideration should be given, including on the recruitment strategy and capacity building of such persons, before engaging them in the programme activities, to ensure a positive contribution and the safety of participants.

indicates that despite negative assumptions about co-offenders' interactions, co-desistance scenarios are possible. For example, the participants' experience of group loyalty, adherence to a code and mutual support among co-offending or gang-involved individuals may carry over from their former situation to the new one.¹⁴⁸

The role of group dynamics and peer pressure must therefore be considered carefully in delivering sport-based programmes that can help youth involved with criminal peers and groups sever their links with that environment and develop a positive social identity. The careful management of the group processes involved is an aspect of the role of programme facilitators, including sport coaches and trainers. It is therefore critical to choose the right activities and have the right personnel, including people with a relevant lived experience, delivering the sport-based interventions.

145. Taylor, M. J., Nanney, J.T., Welch, D. Z., and Wamser-Nanney, R. A., "The impact of sports participation on female gang involvement and delinquency", *Journal of Sport Behavior*, vol. 39, No. 3 (2016), pp. 317-343.

146. Berdychevsky, L., Stodolska, M., and Shinew, K. J., "The roles of recreation in the prevention, intervention and rehabilitation programs addressing youth gang involvement and violence", *Leisure Sciences*, vol. 44, No. 3 (2022), pp. 343-365.

147. E.g., Boivin, R. and Morselli, C., *Les Réseaux Criminels*. (Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2016).

148. Halsey, M. and Mizzi, J., "Co-desistance from crime: engaging the pro-social dimensions of co-offending", *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 63, No. 1, (2023), pp. 134-150.

Supporting desistance from crime

There is solid research evidence on the process of desistance from crime. Most studies draw a connection between individuals' identities and their motivations for behaviour. A shift towards a new identity is considered a step in the journey towards social inclusion or social reintegration. It is usually the result of a successful but not necessarily linear process during which various experiences lead to cognitive transformations, identity changes and lifestyle adjustments. The shift can be facilitated or hindered by individual agency, social support or structural opportunities for change. The more entrenched an offending career has become, the more significant are the changes required to the individual's core identity.¹⁴⁹

Increasingly, there has been a shift towards reconceptualization of desistance from crime from a static event to a developmental process, re-directing attention to the cognitive transformation associated with desistance.¹⁵⁰ From that perspective, desistance is a process of cognitive transformation or change in identity whereby individuals stop identifying as offenders and craft non-offender identities. Desistance research emphasizes that offenders identify a future self that aids desistance efforts. For instance, a conception of oneself as a non-offender assists efforts to refrain from offending.¹⁵¹ Sport allows programme

Sport-based interventions can be used as a way of promoting the participants' engagement with through-the-gate wrap-around services and helping them access and take advantage of education and employment opportunities. Sport-based prevention programmes can also contribute by functioning as a means for youth to access or be referred to other important programmes and services (mental health services, addiction treatment, etc.) or to professional help.

Source: Report of the Secretariat on the outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies (A/CONF.234/14).

participants to experiment with different versions of self and social identity and to test how those are received by others.

Cognitive processes are important to desistance but are not necessarily sufficient to provide a path to sustained behavioural change. Access to opportunities to change and develop is crucial, as desistance research consistently shows that social relations play a role in either constraining, enabling or sustaining desistance. Because desistance is complicated by ambivalence about change, social-relational support is critical and, to this end, the role of wider relational factors in supporting the desistance process is essential.¹⁵² Sport activities can be structured to provide the kind of social relational support that may encourage desistance.

Changes in social networks and relational dynamics, including changes in relationships with and support from parents and affiliation with offending peers, play a significant role in the change processes.¹⁵³ A sense of belonging or being accepted within a different social network can consolidate the behavioural changes and the shift to a non-offending identity. The potential of properly structured sport-based activities to provide relational and social opportunities that may support the desistance process should be obvious.

Formal mentoring relationships, provided through sport programming, can also play a role in supporting the process of desistance. At the tertiary level, formal mentoring programmes based on volunteers or ex-offenders as mentors have been shown to be effective.¹⁵⁴ These types of mentors are more likely to meet the core conditions to support desistance from crime which include empathy, genuine care, listening and encouraging small steps.¹⁵⁵ Systematic reviews of the research on mentoring programmes have revealed a moderately positive effect of such programmes in combating delinquency and aggression.¹⁵⁶ They suggested that mentoring may be particularly valuable for those already involved in delinquency or related issues. Positive effects were also stronger for those programmes in which emotional support was a key part of the mentoring process.

149. Dandurand, Y. and Heidt, Youth Crime Prevention and Sports (Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2023).

150. Farrall, S., The architecture of desistance. (Abingdon, Routledge, 2019).

151. Hunter, B. and Farrall, S., "Emotions, future selves, and the process of desistance", *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 58, No. 2 (2018), pp. 291–308.

152. McNeil, F., "A desistance paradigm for offender management", *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, vol. 6, No. 1 (2006), pp. 39–62.

153. Copp, J. E., Giordano, P. C., Longmore, M. A., & Manning W. D., "Desistance from crime during the transition to adulthood: The influence of parents, peers, and shifts in identity", *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 57, No. 3 (2020), pp. 294–332.

154. Buck, G., "The core conditions of peer mentoring". *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, vol. 18, No. 2 (2018), pp. 190–206.

155. McNeill, F., "A desistance paradigm for offender management", *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, vol. 6, No. 1 (2006), pp. 39–62.

156. Tolan, P., Henry, D., Schoeny, M., Bass, A. Lovegrove, P., and Nichols, E., "Mentoring interventions to affect juvenile delinquency and associated problems", *Campbell Collaboration* (2013).

Supporting the social reintegration of young offenders

Sport-based programmes can facilitate the social reintegration of children and youth by encouraging them to exercise agency in a pro-social direction. The transition can be supported by a combination of personal support to guide their identity shift and structural support to enable it.¹⁵⁷ In particular, the first few months after young people are released from institutional care can be critical. At that point in time, they find themselves without the structure, supervision or support that the institution provided. Too many children return to their community with serious risks and needs that have remained unaddressed, thus compromising their chances of successful reintegration. Some youths are returning to families and communities that cannot accommodate them even under the best of

circumstances.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, supportive interventions during that period are particularly important.

As part of an aftercare strategy, different interventions can be delivered to assist children in reintegrating into their families and the community. These interventions must fit the individual needs and circumstances of youth, and the choice of intervention should be based on a realistic assessment of such personal needs, challenges as well as personal strengths. Sport-based programmes may be uniquely apt to support that transition process.

Similarly, community-based sentences and diversion programmes can be supported and strengthened by well-structured sport-based intervention.

157. Hazel N, Goodfellow P, Liddle M, Bateman T and Pitts J, "Now all I care about is my future", Supporting the shift – Framework for the effective resettlement of young people leaving custody (London, Nacro, 2017). Hazel, N., and Bateman, T., "Supporting children's resettlement (re-entry) after custody: beyond the risk paradigm", Youth Justice, vol. 21, No. 1 (2020), pp. 71–89.

158. UNODC, Introductory Handbook on the Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders, (Vienna, 2018).

6

Designing effective interventions

Designing effective interventions

Although there is a need for more robust programme evaluations, the main characteristics of successful sport based crime prevention programmes are generally known. These characteristics have implications for programme design and implementation. These implications are presented here as a general guide to sport-based crime prevention design, with the caveat that our knowledge of successful practices is constantly evolving.

1

Synergies between sport and non-sport components of programmes

Successful sport-based crime prevention programmes are those that clearly targeted, have clear and realistic objectives, are intentionally designed to support youth positive development or, depending on the target population, the participants' desistance from crime and social reintegration. Ideally, they are locally relevant, culturally appropriate, sensitive to intersectionality (e.g. gender, socioeconomic status, religion), and developmentally and age appropriate.

They also have a well-articulated and evidence-informed programme logic and a theory of change that will guide all programme interventions and serve as a basis for programme evaluation.

Both "plus sport" and "sport plus" programmes are accompanied by other interventions which are supported by or even integrated within sport activities. These may include formal or informal mentoring; psychosocial support; formal and informal education; employability; life skills development and social, emotional and cognitive training; and several other forms of intervention. Indeed, the success of a sport-based programme is usually contingent on the impact of the non-sport components and objectives that are incorporated into or supported by a sport activity.^{159, 160}

Programmes must align their objectives and activities with the participants' needs.¹⁶¹ Addressing the participants' needs can facilitate psychosocial outcomes for them. Structuring the programme to satisfy the participants' basic needs may also have a positive influence on their mental health and encourage their participation in other interventions.¹⁶²

159. Coakley, J., "Using sports to control deviance and violence among youths: Let's be critical and cautious" in M. Gatz, M. A. Messner, and S. J. Ball-Rokeach (eds.) *Paradoxes of Youth and Sport*. (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 13–30.

160. Spruit, A., Hoffenaar, P., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., & Stams, G. J., "The effect of a sport-based intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency in at-risk adolescents", *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 94 (2018), pp. 689–698.

161. Mason, C., Cleland, J. and Aldridge, J., *Youth Crime Reduction and Sport: Pilot Project Evaluation Report*. (Loughborough, Loughborough University, 2017).

162. Bean, C., Harlow, M., and Forneris, T., "Examining the importance of supporting youth's basic needs in one youth leadership program: a case study exploring program quality" *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, vol. 22, No2 (2017), pp. 195–209; and Bean, C., Kendellen, K., and Forneris, T., "Examining needs support and positive developmental experiences through participation in a residential summer camp", *Leisure/Loisir*, vol. 40, No. 3 (2016), pp. 271–295.

2

Safeguarding and preventing harm

The identification and co-creation of a safe space is essential to laying the right foundation for the roll-out of a sport-based programme for crime and violence prevention. Collaborating with participants and the community in identifying what makes a location safe is vital to ensuring overall support and the continuity of the programme. In locations at risk of or affected by crime and violence, a safe space represents a place where participants and coaches feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment or any other emotional or physical harm. In turn, this will allow youth to openly express their individuality, protect their dignity and pursue opportunities to participate in sport while engaging in meaningful dialogues that deconstruct barriers of judgment, hate speech and violence.

Adopting a trauma-informed approach

Ensuring the protection of young people is essential. A safe, do no harm, approach should always be adopted. In the context of youth violence and crime prevention, this is especially important considering that many participants may be especially vulnerable or have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). All programming aspects should be trauma-informed and programme staff should receive training on trauma-informed practices in working with children and youth. A successful programme is one that creates a safe and supportive environment in which participants feel physically and emotionally comfortable and safe.¹⁶³ It should offer an environment that is receptive to, and supportive of, the needs of trauma affected individuals.

Safeguarding policies and practices

The issue of child safeguarding cannot be understated. Youth in conflict with the law are especially vulnerable and are likely exposed to various forms of stigmatization and exclusion. Sport-based programmes must therefore have explicit and robust child safeguarding policies and practices. In practice, a commitment to the do-no-harm principle includes in minimum, the following practices:

- Making sure staff and administrators are trained in a do-no-harm approach and that they are aware of best practices for working with at-risk youth.

The sexual exploitation of children occurs in all parts of society all around the world, and sports are no exception. There are nonetheless certain power dynamics inherent to the sporting world that render children particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, in its thematic study on the sale and sexual exploitation and abuse of children in the context of sports, points out existing challenges in addressing sexual violence in sport and underlines the importance of effective and holistic prevention and safeguarding strategies, providing recommendations for both states and sports organization.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material (A/HRC/40/51).

- Staff, managers and administrators must know how to identify, respond to, prevent and report harmful situations, including in cases of violence, abuse and harassment.
- Have in place reporting mechanisms that are age and gender sensitive that participants and responsible adults can report concerns and actual incidents of violence, abuse or harassment and receive proper guidance and support.
- Set up vetting and screening procedures for all personnel, staff and volunteers, engaged in the programme.
- Create clear consequences for staff and admin who do not abide by a do-no-harm approach.
- Regularly check in with, and get feedback from, staff, managers, administrators and youth to identify any instances that do not align with the sport intervention's child safeguarding policy.

Programmes can ensure sport intervention is sensitive to youth who have experienced trauma, ensuring the physical and emotional safety of youth and staff from threat, harm and further traumatization.

163. Eccles, J., Gootman, J.A., and Appleton, J., *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* (Washington DC, National Academy Press, 2002); and Morris, L., Sallybanks, J., Willis, K., and Makkai, T., "Sport, physical activity and antisocial behaviour in youth", *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 23, No. 1 (2004), pp. 47-52.

3

Context specific programming

Sport-based crime prevention programmes must be sensitive to the diverse needs and circumstances of vulnerable youth if they wish to address the underlying structural inequalities that are partly responsible for youth crime. To that end, an inclusive approach is essential for long-term success.¹⁶⁴

Sport-based prevention programmes must be tailored to the local context and the young people's interests and cultural backgrounds. At the same time, they should aim to address the local youth crime situation, local risk factors and challenging circumstances, and respond to local crime prevention goals and priorities, including those identified through community participation and various consultations. As previously mentioned, local and place-based approaches to programme development are more likely to address the local context and the unique nature of the community involved.

Cultural responsiveness

Socialization experiences that foster positive development vary across cultural contexts, therefore prevention programmes based on skills development and competencies must be culturally relevant. In addition, specifically on sport-based programming, there is a need to be developed based on an understanding of the varying cultural perspectives on sport and physical activities. Collaborating with local institutions, community leaders and community partners will help provide a cultural perspective on what types of activities and approaches may be needed to have the greatest impact on local crime and violence prevention. It must be noted that even adjacent communities may have slightly different cultural norms and customs. Do not assume that cultural knowledge, norms and customs that apply to one area will necessarily apply to other communities nearby.

A review of 12 positive youth development programmes addressing substance use and violence showed that informal and formal community engagement was “a key factor in ensuring programmes were culturally sensitive, accessible, an appealing to young people and their parents as well as the wider community”.

Source: Dickson, K., Melendez-Torres, G. J., Fletcher, A., Hinds, K., Thomas, J., Stansfield, C., Murphy, S., Campbell, R., and Bonell, C. (2018). How do contextual factors influence implementation and receipt of positive youth development programmes addressing substance use and violence? A qualitative meta-synthesis of process evaluations. *American Journal of Health*, 32 (4), pp. 1,110-1,121.

4

Gender responsiveness and gender mainstreaming

With global data showing that boys and young men are the vast majority of homicide victims and perpetrators, crime and violence have been often identified as resources for performing masculinity.¹⁶⁵ However, it is important to recognize and consider gender influences that guide the trajectory towards crime and violence, also for girls and women. Failure to recognize the unique relationship of girls with crime and violence is a major drawback to prevention and engagement efforts.

One way of explaining girls' involvement in crime and violence is as a means of strengthening their female power, as at-risk girls seek to gain authority within their marginal status and vulnerable positions with their communities.¹⁶⁶ Victimization in childhood and adolescence, specifically sexual abuse, are prevalent among girls who go on to commit crime and violence. There is an indication that the prevalence of sexual assault and rape trauma is higher among girls who participate in antisocial behaviours.¹⁶⁷ Girls can be exploited and may use violence as a response to their victimization whether out of anger, or as a defence mechanism against future abuse.¹⁶⁸ In addition, girls may be more sensitive to dysfunction and stress in the family.

164. Chamberlain, J. M., “Sports-based intervention and the problem of youth offending: a diverse enough tool for a diverse society?” *Sport in Society*, vol. 16, No. 10 (2013), pp. 1,279-1,292.

165. Messerschmidt, J. W., *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and reconceptualization of theory* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1993).

166. Ness, Cindy D., “Why Girls Fight: Female Youth Violence in the Inner City”, *Being Here and Being There: Fieldwork Encounters and Ethnographic Discoveries: Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2004), pp. 32-48

167. Messerschmidt, J. W., & Tomsen, S., “Masculinities and crime”, *Routledge handbook of critical criminology* (Routledge, 2018), pp. 83-95).

168. Chesney-Lind, M., Morash, M., & Stevens, T., “Girls Troubles, Girls' Delinquency, and Gender Responsive Programming: A Review”, *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 41, No. 1 (2008), pp. 162-189.

Available data shows that, boys and young men aged between 15 and 29 are the group at highest risk of homicide globally. In 2021, men and boys accounted for 81 per cent of all homicide victims globally, with a rate four times higher than that of women and girls. Homicide perpetrators are also mainly young men.

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 Special edition.
Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet

When family dynamics are disrupted by violence, abuse or neglect, girls are more likely to participate in risk-taking behaviour, including crime and violence.¹⁶⁹ Feelings of a lack of protection and safety at home make girls more vulnerable to recruitment in gangs who may be seen as extensions or replacements to their family.¹⁷⁰ Relatedly, girls from dysfunctional family environments are seen to seek the protection of older boyfriends who may pressure them into illegal activity such as substance misuse.¹⁷¹

Some sport-based interventions may have different, and sometimes opposite, effects on male and female participants.¹⁷² It is therefore important to ensure that the interventions address the risk and protective factors that are most salient for each gender, as well as age group.

For girls and boys, societal norms and expectations often shape their relationship with sport. However, girls' involvement in sport is often discussed in terms of negotiating femininity¹⁷³ while some sports are perceived to promote masculinity.¹⁷⁴ Further, evidence suggests different motivations for girls to engage in sport, such that leisure is more appealing than competition,¹⁷⁵ as are individual rather than team sports.¹⁷⁶ A multi-sport programme, therefore, may be more appealing to female participants.

When designed appropriately, sport can promote gender equality. For programme design, stakeholders should adapt programme offerings and design principles according to the context in which they are implemented. One specific area of consideration is whether mixed-gender programmes are allowed or encouraged. Relatedly, the question of where programmes are held is critical to ensure safe spaces are provided for girls who may feel more vulnerable in public and outdoor facilities.

It is important to recruit female coaches and facilitators, and to develop a capacity among facilitators, coaches, trainers and sport leaders to act as positive role models and challenge gender stereotypes, norms and attitudes that condone or justify gender-based discrimination and violence.¹⁷⁷

169. Parkes, J. (ed.), *Gender Violence in Poverty Contexts: The educational challenge* (1st ed.) (Routledge, 2015).

170. Hagadorn, J., & Devitt, M., "Fighting female", in M. Chesney-Lind & J.M. Hagedorn (eds.), *Female gangs in America: Essays on gender, and gangs* (Chicago, Lakeview Press, 1999), pp. 256–276.

171. Schaffner, L., *Girls in trouble with the law* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2006).

172. Fagan, A. and Lindsey, A. M. L., "Gender differences in the effectiveness of delinquency prevention programs: what can be learned from experimental research?", *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, vol. 41, No. 9 (2014), pp. 1,057–1,078.

173. Krane, V., Choi, P. Y. L., Baird, S. M. et al., "Living the paradox: female athletes negotiate femininity and muscularity", *Sex Roles*, vol. 50 (2004), pp. 315–329.

174. Yi-Hsiu, L. & Chen-Yueh, C., "Masculine versus feminine sports: The effects of peer attitudes and fear of negative evaluation on sports participation among Taiwanese college students", *Revue internationale de psychologie sociale*, vol. 26 (2013), pp. 5–23.

175. Emma Guillet and others, "Understanding female sport attrition in a stereotypical male sport within the framework of Eccles' expectancy-value model", *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 30, No. 4 (2006), pp 358–368.

176. Deidre Scully and Jackie Clarke, "Gender issues in sport participation", in J. Kremer, K. Trew. and S. Ogle, *Young People's Involvement Sport* (London, Routledge, 2005).

177. Outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, para. 31

Based on the information above, and given the scarcity of research on the impact of sport interventions on the criminality of girls, the following guidance can be offered to practitioners:

- Given the differing motivations and circumstances that lead girls into crime and violence, girl-only programmes may help produce more targeted results.
- Practitioners who share the same gender and background as participants may find it easier to identify needs and assess outcomes.
- It is important to recognize and consider how gender influences a girl's journey towards crime and violence. Equally important is to consider how a girl's relationship with sport is influenced by these considerations.
- For girls, depending on the context, certain sports are more accepted for than others. Girls' participation in sport may also differ in terms of motivations with evidence suggesting that girls are more likely to engage in sport for leisure rather than competition,¹⁷⁸ and in individual sports as opposed to team sports.¹⁷⁹ For design, this means that stakeholders should adapt programme offerings in terms of sport choice programme and design. One specific area of consideration is whether mixed-gender programmes are allowed or encouraged. Relatedly, the question of where programmes are held is critical to ensure safe spaces are provided for girls who may feel more vulnerable in public and outdoor facilities.

5

Youth engagement and empowerment

Youth are agents of change and must be treated as such, meaning they must be involved in all stages of programme design, delivery, and evaluation. As already mentioned, youth engagement allows youth to feel they have agency over their lives and circumstances, when their lives outside of sport may be uncertain and out of their control. Youth

are much more likely to engage in a sport intervention if they can voice their opinions and see their ideas come to fruition.

Ensure the programme is inclusive and accepting of youth's different perspectives and ideas. The identity formation process that may occur in the sport domain can also then transfer to further engagement and participation in their daily lives.

6

Selection and training of coaches, trainers and facilitators

An essential element of sport-based crime prevention programmes is the positive relationships participants develop with caring adults, coaches and mentors. Positive youth development is more likely to occur when the youth experience of the sport activity is enjoyable and immediately positive.¹⁸⁰ The coach-participant relationship and the coaches' pedagogical role are central to producing the programme's desired outcomes.¹⁸¹ The selection and continuous training and capacity building of the coaches, trainers and other facilitators, including volunteers, who play a role in a sport-based crime prevention programme is crucial to the success of the programme. They must understand what is expected of them and the role they are expected to play in support of the programme objectives.

The relationship that is been developed between the sport coaches, and often the power imbalance in this relationship and the influence that coaches and other programme staff and volunteers can have over young people, makes them more vulnerable and increases the risk of all forms of exploitation. In order to ensure the physical, but also emotional and psychological safety of participants, special consideration should be given to the recruitment strategy, vetting and screening procedures of coaches and other facilitators.

178. Emma Guillet and others, "Understanding female sport attrition in a stereotypical male sport within the framework of Eccles' expectancy-value model", *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 30, No. 4 (2006), pp. 358–368.

179. Deidre Scully and Jackie Clarke, "Gender issues in sport participation", *Young People's Involvement in Sport* (London, Routledge, 2005).

180. Vierimaa, M., Erickson, K., Côté, J., and Gilbert, W., "Positive youth development: a measurement framework for sport", *International Journal of Sport Science and Coaching*, vol. 7, No. 3 (2012), pp. 601–614.

181. Cowan, T., Taylor, I. M., McEwan, H. E., and Baker, J. S., "Bridging the gap between self-determination theory and coaching soccer to disadvantaged youth", *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol. 24, No. 4 (2012), pp. 361–374.

7

Sustained interventions

Programmes must be able to offer intensive and lasting interventions through sustained and consistent delivery of programme activities, including the sport activities.¹⁸² They should encourage a gradual take-up of responsibilities thereby increasing the youth's engagement at their own pace.¹⁸³ This is made possible by engaging youth in the long term and enabling lasting positive relationships. At that level, programmes must build a structure that ensure sustainability.

The life transition that tertiary level programmes are purporting to facilitate, takes time. Duration and continuity of participation in the programme are associated with the participants developmental assets and lower engagement

in problematic behaviour and delinquency.¹⁸⁴ Programme retention is therefore crucial to achieving positive development and crime prevention outcomes. Programme design must therefore be attentive to the factors associated with youth decisions to opt out of the programme. The decisions can be influenced by factors that are both internal and external to the sport activity.¹⁸⁵ It may be that the same factors that put a youth at risk of criminal engagement or recidivism, including social, psychological and developmental factors, are those that also responsible for some youth dropping out.¹⁸⁶ Programme monitoring and evaluation should collect and analyze data on participants who decide to opt out of a programme to inform the programme design and activities. An important question at the programme development stage is what kind of sport activity is most likely to bolster programme retention and how should that activity be structured.

182. Mason, C., Cleland, J., and Aldridge, J., *Youth Crime Reduction and Sport: Pilot Project Evaluation Report* (Loughborough, Loughborough University, 2017).

183. Buelens, E., Theeboom, M., Vertonghen, J., and Martelaer, K. D., "Conditions for successfully increasing disadvantaged adolescents' engagement in the development through volunteering in community sport", *Social Inclusion*, vol. 5, No. 2 (2017), pp. 179–197.

184. Inoue, Y., Wegner, C. E., Jordan, J. S., and Funk, D. C., "Relationships between self-determined motivation and developmental outcomes in sport-based positive youth development", *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, vol. 27, No.4 (2015), pp. 371–383.

185. Persson, M., Espedalen, L.E., Stefansen, K., and Strandbu, A. "Opting out of youth sports: how can we understand the social processes involved?" *Sport, Education and Society* (2019), pp. 1–13.

186. Dandurand, Y. and Heidt, J., *Youth Crime Prevention and Sports* (Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2023).

8

Partnerships and collaborations

Cooperation and partnerships have long been recognized as an integral part of effective crime prevention and, like other types of crime prevention activity, sport-based crime prevention programmes require coordination and partnerships among various sectors, levels of government and community organizations. Partnerships is a way to address limited resources and joining expertise when scaling up crime prevention activities, for example in the context of service provision, viability of infrastructure and facilities.

Some specific partnerships may be very significant, such as partnerships between schools and community organizations in addressing student engagement issues. Schools, in cooperation with community agencies, have a crucial role to play in fully realizing the potential of structured sporting activities, together with or independently from other educational activities, and contributing to the engagement of young people.

Similarly, partnerships with sports clubs and sport organizations can provide trained coaches, physical and emotional safety, strong administration and context in sport-based crime prevention programmes. Sport organizations at



Fig. 15
Process of partnership building and cooperation



all levels have valuable expertise in the development and promotion of sport that could be applied to crime prevention objectives. Some national sports federations and their local member clubs have in fact developed their own sport-based initiatives or worked in partnership with non-governmental organizations to do so.¹⁸⁷ (See also Part 2 regarding engaging the sport sector in multisectoral approaches to crime prevention).

Developing effective partnerships takes a combination of expertise, aligned motivations and goals, opportunities to influence and contribute, effective leadership and strategic structures and processes. In the previous sections the ecosystem of actors, organizations and institutions were provided but the essential component of recognizing the diverse opportunities to contribute is creating spaces and building and collaborations for enhanced sustainability, capacity building and impact. At the institutional level, ministries and associated departments should lead policy coherence activities and create spaces for a range of local, sport sector, youth and intervention voices to be heard. They should also collaborate to identify opportunities to support sport-based crime prevention interventions.

9

Monitoring, evaluation and continuous learning

Sport-based crime prevention programmes, like all crime prevention interventions, require solid process assessments to ensure fidelity to programme implementation methods, as well as impact assessments using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Monitoring and evaluation should be a constitutive part of every project or programme design, a must have. It is not an imposed control instrument by the donor or an optional accessory of a programme, or a nice to have. It should be understood as crucial learning aspect of each sport-based programme. The next section provides additional information and guidance on the development of monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks.

187. Outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, para. 40.

7

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

An evaluation is the ongoing process of undertaking a systematic and objective examination of monitoring information to answer agreed questions and make judgments based on agreed criteria. Evaluation may be used to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of an organization or programme. The intention is not simply to assess what impacts have arisen, but why they have arisen and what lessons can be drawn on how to improve the programme.¹⁸⁸ It is a learning process.



The need for monitoring, evaluation and learning

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial to learning, identifying effective practices and failed approaches, as well as ensuring sustainability in terms of policy support and programme funding.¹⁸⁹

The lack of rigorous evaluations of sport-based programmes specifically designed to achieve crime prevention outcomes has hampered progress towards more effective interventions. A commitment to evidence-based crime prevention programming therefore requires more robust monitoring and evaluation of sport-based programmes. This is

particularly important to generate data on the impact and the added value of sport as a tool in crime prevention, especially when sport-based interventions are delivered jointly with other types of interventions, as they usually are.

There is evidence of the beneficial effects of sport participation, but the question of whether sport participation promotes or inhibits problem behaviours and hence reduces violence and crime, remains unresolved.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, recent evaluations have highlighted the effectiveness of certain types of sport-based programmes in promoting positive youth development, but they usually failed to establish a clear link between positive development and specific crime prevention objectives. Indeed, measuring the impact and effectiveness of any crime prevention programme remains challenging, even if some progress has been achieved in addressing various theoretical and methodological issues.¹⁹¹

Linking research and evidence to policies and programmes is important for ensuring they are working in the ways they were intended. Thus, robust monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms are needed to advance sport-based interventions. Programmes should be consistently evaluated using objective measures with a focus on identifying the specific factors that prompt behavioural change and contribute to crime reduction.¹⁹²

188. Coalter, F., *Sport-in-Development: A Monitoring and Evaluation Manual* (Stirling, University of Stirling, Scotland, 2008).

189. Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit (2023). (<https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk>)

190. Spruit, A., Vugt, E., Put, C., Stouwe, T., and Stams, G. J., "Sports participation and juvenile delinquency: a meta-analytic review", *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 45, No. 4 (2016), pp. 655–671; and Sheppard-Marks, L., Shipway, R., and Brown, L., "Life at the edge: exploring male athlete criminality", *Sport in Society*, vol. 23, No.6 (2020), pp. 1,042–1,062.

191. Elliott, D. and Fagan, A., *The Prevention of Crime* (Malden, Wiley Blackwell, 2017).

192. Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., and Hawkins, J. D., "Positive youth development in the United States: research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 591, No. 1 (2002), pp. 98–124; and Coakley, J., "Using sports to control deviance and violence among youths: let's be critical and cautious", in M. Gatz, M. A. Messner, and S. J. Ball-Rokeach (eds), *Paradoxes of Youth and Sport* (New York: University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 13–30; and Hartman, D., "Theorizing sport as social intervention: a view from the grassroots", *Quest*, vol. 55 (2003), pp. 118–140. Chamberlain, J. M., "Sports-based intervention and the problem of youth offending: a diverse enough tool for a diverse society?", *Sport in Society*, vol. 16, No.10 (2013), pp.1,279–1,292; and Roth, J. L. and Brooks-Gunn, J., "Evaluating youth development programs: progress and promise", *Applied Developmental Science*, vol. 20, No.3 (2016), pp. 188–202; and Spruit, A., Hoffenaar, P., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., and Stams, G.J., "The effect of a sport-based intervention to prevent juvenile delinquency in at-risk adolescents", *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 94, No. 4 (2018), pp. 689–698; and Spruit, A., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., and Stams, G. J., "Predictors of intervention success in a sport-based program for adolescents at risk of juvenile delinquency", *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 62, No. 6 (2018), pp. 1,535–1,555.

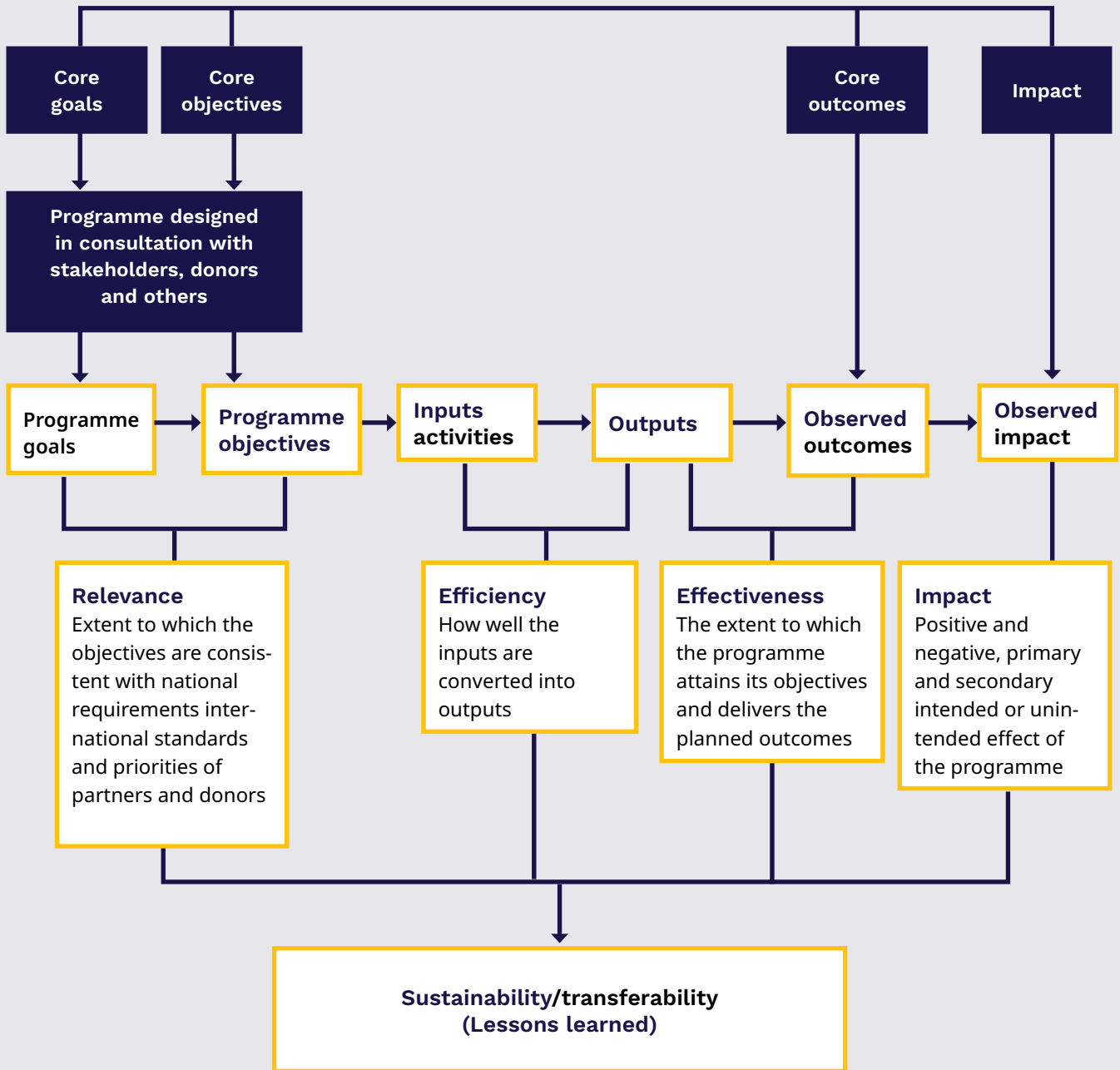


Fig. 16
 Criteria for the design and evaluation of youth crime prevention programmes in UNODC (2010). Criteria for the Design and Evaluation of Juvenile Justice Reform Programmes.

Monitoring

Monitoring is done at various points throughout an intervention's life cycle and is "real-time learning that feeds into evaluation".¹⁹³ Programme monitoring is the systematic and routine collection of information from projects and programmes to learn from experiences to improve practices and activities in the future, have internal and external accountability of the resources used and the results obtained, take informed decisions on the future of the initiative, and promote empowerment of beneficiaries of the initiative.¹⁹⁴

Evaluation

An evaluation is a process for assessing the implementation, delivery and outcomes of a programme as systematically and objectively as possible. Evaluations appraise data and information that inform strategic decisions, with the aim of improving the project or programme in the future. Evaluations can help to draw conclusions about five main aspects of a programme: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact; and sustainability. Information gathered in relation to these aspects during the monitoring process provides the basis for the evaluative analysis.¹⁹⁵

Process evaluations assesses the extent to which programmes are successfully implemented and is often linked also to monitoring. It is different from an outcome/impact evaluation. However, assessing the implementation of a programme, including programme fidelity, is usually a necessary prerequisite to evaluating the extent to which a programme has achieved its intended outcomes. In practice, it is common to see programme evaluations where a focus on programme process is combined with concerns about results, or whether the programme is achieving its intended objectives.

A rigorous impact (or outcome) evaluation is one which does not simply confirm the presence of intended outcomes following the implementation of the programme, but also systematically tests whether and to what extent these outcomes are attributable to the programme's activities or interventions.

Different evaluation designs are possible, including experimental and quasi-experimental designs, but the goal is to arrive at a valid evaluation design that can ascertain whether the programme in question caused the observed outcomes (establish a causal relationship).

Learning for sustainability and scale

An important contribution of programme evaluations is that they may help address the question of programme transferability and scalability. Assessing the transferability of a programme from one context to another is complex. It is an attempt to identify the necessary conditions required for a similar programme to produce similar results in a different context. It can also be explained as the lessons learned about those specific aspects of the design and implementation of a programme, the context and circumstances in which the programme was implemented or even the characteristics of the justice system in which it took place that made the programme successful. The question of transferability is closely linked to the goal of identifying good practices, because a good practice is rarely independent of the conditions in which it is applied.

193. United Nations Development Group, *Monitoring and Evaluation: UNDAF Companion Guidance* (2018).

194. Sportanddev.org. (n.d.) What is monitoring and evaluation (M&E)? (<https://www.sportanddev.org>).

195. UNODC "Toolkit for Evaluating Interventions on Preventing and Countering Crime and Terrorism" (Vienna, 2021); and UNODC and the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice, "Criteria for the Design and Evaluation of Juvenile Justice Reform Programmes" (New York, 2010).

2

Measuring crime prevention outcomes of sport programming

A programme evaluation aims to determine the extent to which the programme has achieved its intended results. In addition to supporting accountability mechanisms, an evaluation is an important source of evidence concerning the results achieved. As such, it is a learning tool that contributes to building knowledge about how best to achieve the desired goals and objectives. In the context of youth crime prevention, evaluations provide a critical tool for learning how to achieve various child protection and public safety objectives in an efficient and effective manner.

Evaluating the effectiveness of a programme's intervention involves, at a minimum, three main steps:¹⁹⁶

- Measuring change in the observed situation;
- Attributing the change in the observed situation to the programme or one of its interventions (i.e. was the change a result of the programme or some other intervention or change in the circumstances?);
- Judging the value of the change by reference or comparison to standards, targets, benchmarks or other programmes.

Limitations and challenges

One of the main challenges in measuring the impact of sport programmes to crime prevention is the fact that there is no causal relationship between sport participation and crime reduction. Sport contribution is often indirect, and much of the effectiveness of such crime prevention programmes can be attributed to their non-sport activities and components.

Considering also the "sport plus" and "plus sport" approaches to programming, it may be useful to focus the evaluation on developing a useful typology of programmes based also on the size and nature of their sport component. However, quantifying the unique sport-related crime prevention outcomes within multi-component sports-based programmes will continue to present challenges.

Keeping in mind that most programmes involve a small number of participants (youth or at-risk youth), that behavioural changes need to be measured over time and that access to control groups for the purpose of comparison

or the possibility of conducting a randomized control trial are limited, the crime reduction effect of sports-based intervention is inherently difficult to measure. Furthermore, rigorous evaluations require far more resources than those usually available to programmes.

There are also practical problems in measuring the incidence of crime among programme participants and comparing it to non-participants. Given the relatively small size of sport-based community programmes, their crime prevention effect cannot be expected to be revealed in local youth crime rates, assuming that youth crime rates can be reliably measured at the level of a community. Similarly, measuring the criminal involvement of programme participants (as compared to other youth) – whether through criminal justice data or self-reported delinquency tools – can also pose some practical challenges. In other words, the crime reduction outcomes of sport-based interventions remain inherently difficult to measure. In practice, programme evaluations would be significantly improved if sport-based crime prevention programmes were more precise about the risk and protective factors that aim to address and the kind of crime or violent behaviour they are specifically trying to prevent.

There are also practical and methodological difficulties in attempting to measure the impact of a particular sport-based crime prevention programme as distinct from the collective impact of simultaneous crime prevention and social development initiatives targeting the same youth crime problem. Since sport-based programmes are meant to be part of a broader crime prevention strategies, it can be difficult to disentangle their impact from that of other components of the strategy.¹⁹⁷

The question of how certain observed outcomes can logically and legitimately be attributed to a specific programme is a complex one. The task of determining causal attribution is often made difficult by poor internal validity of the programme. When a programme's internal validity is not well established, attribution usually becomes a significant challenge.

Assessing the effectiveness of a programme obviously becomes complicated when there is only a tenuous logical basis upon which to determine the extent to which observed changes in outcomes can be attributed validly to the programme itself.¹⁹⁸ Thus there are frequent calls for greater specification of the theory of change and the internal logic of sport-based crime prevention programmes.

196. UNODC, Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice, *Criteria for the Design and Evaluation of Juvenile Justice Reform Programmes* (New York, 2011).

197. Dandurand, Y. & Heidt, J., *Youth Crime Prevention and Sports* (Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2023).

198. UNODC, *Criteria for the Design and Evaluation of Juvenile Justice Reform Programmes* (New York, 2011).

To this end, sport-based crime prevention programmes should be clear about the type of crime to be prevented and have clearly stated and realistic objectives. They must also rest on a well-articulated and evidence-informed programme logic that will guide all programme interventions and serve as a basis for designing a robust programme evaluation.

3

Developing indicators

An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the effectiveness of a programme. Indicators make it possible to assess whether a programme is being implemented as planned if it is leading to the achievement of its objectives and whether it is necessary to adjust project activities to maximize benefit and overcome unanticipated obstacles.

When choosing indicators for an MEL practice, they should align with, and be bespoke to, the sport programme's theory of change. Specifically, consider the problem that is being addressed (i.e. violence/crime), the target population (i.e. youth), the sport(s) being used, and desired outcomes.

The process for developing indicators should begin at the project conceptualization and design phase. It is programme specific and a tributary of the programme logic model.

Programme evaluations must rely on valid and reliable indicators of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact. Some of these indicators may exist already and may have already been validated, while others may need to be developed or adapted to the relevant context. In every instance, these indicators must logically and validly be related to the logic of the specific programme and the related theory of change.

Specifying the theory of change and internal logic of each programme

A theory of change is a statement that explains why certain actions are theoretically expected to produce the desired change. A logical framework articulates how, based on such a theory, a particular programme and its activities are specially designed in each context to achieve such a change. Key to articulating a programme logic model is specifying the programme's objectives and defining its expected outcomes, preferably in measurable terms (i.e. outcome measures or indicators). A programme logic model is always programme specific, in terms of its goals and intended results, as well as its approach, methods, targets, resources and activities, or the context in which it is implemented.

Moreover, since the presence of linkages between the intermediate outcomes and the desired crime prevention outcomes are theoretically presumed, their presence needs to be empirically established. For example, it is not sufficient to show that a presumed risk factor has been mitigated by a programme intervention; one must also establish that the risk mitigation in question has also resulted to the ultimate crime prevention objective such as reducing the incidence of violence and crime or supporting desistance from crime.

While the choice and design of outcome measures and indicators should be based on common principles, there are additional considerations which are specific to each programme and dictated by the programme specific goals, methodology and implementation context. Based on the theories of change presented in this guide, one would expect various process and outcome indicators to be frequently used in evaluating sport-based crime prevention programme. The following pages 103 and 104 show some examples.

Examples of process indicators

Example indicators	Example sources of information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of recruitment strategy, including frequency and nature of referrals to the programme, comparison of actual participants to intended participants, gender variance, age variance, demographics of participants as compared to that of targeted population; • Retention of programme participants, including length of participation, programme completion, characteristics of participants who drop out of the programme, dropout rates and reasons; • Frequency of sport programme activities and programme attendance; • Duration of programme (or interventions), including deviation from intended duration; • Elements of sport activities (type of activity, level of participation, attendance, etc.); • Elements of other programme interventions (type and frequency of interventions, participation, attendance, etc.); • Participants' satisfaction with programme activities (gender and other observed variance;) • Participation and contribution of programme partners and other stakeholders (e.g. volunteers, local organizations, sport, youth, justice sector, etc.); • Changes and adjustments in programme activities and interventions; • Efficient utilization of programme resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme documents; • Surveys & Interviews with youth, coaches, tutors and parents; • Interviews with programme partners and staff; • Debrief and reflection records; • Attendance sheets; • Observations; • Youth sessions.

Examples of intermediate programme outcomes (mid-term impact indicators)

Example indicators	Example sources of information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of life skills, and social, emotional and cognitive learning; • Transfer of life skills acquired through sport activities to other areas of life; • Changes in associations (contacts with crime involved individuals); • Changes in social isolation (sense of belonging, participation in social activities, improved peer relationships); • Pro-social involvement with peers (e.g. teamwork, conflict resolution); • Peer support to others; • Changes in social identity (various validated measures already exist, orientation toward pro-social behaviour); • Changes in attitude towards authority; • Changes in values (e.g. as expressed by participants); • Development of meaningful relations with significant adults (e.g. mentors, parents, peers, coaches and programme staff); • Measures of change in the presence of various risk factors, either at the individual or group levels (or effect of mitigation of specific risk factors); • Measures of change in protective (resiliency) factors (e.g. school attachment, reduction of school absenteeism, motivation and future orientation, engagement to vocational training and other educational programmes, etc.); • Acquisition of social capital and community engagement • Knowledge of and access to opportunities (e.g. education, employment, apprenticeship). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys and interviews with youth, coaches, parents; • Interviews with programme partners and staff; • Observations; • Self-reported data; • Indexes.

Programme outcomes (long-term impact indicators)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes and behavioural change; • Changes in perceptions, stated personal opinions about violence and crime; • Reduction of violence and crime. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reported crime; • Police reports and records; • Criminal charges or convictions; • Interviews and surveys. |
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4

Strengthening monitoring evaluation and learning frameworks

Sport-based programmes, like any other evidence-based crime prevention programme, should be consistently evaluated using objective measures with a focus on identifying the specific factors that prompt behavioural change and contribute to crime reduction, while also accounting for structural, social and community factors and circumstances rather than just individual factors. In this context, programme evaluations must continue to elucidate the links between positive youth development outputs and behavioural outcomes, including crime and violence, and identify the impact that the acquisition of specific life skills or the mitigation of specific risk factors may have on criminal or violent behaviour.

It is incumbent on programme evaluators to distinguish between the effect of sport participation and that of other accompanying interventions. To this end, it is important that impact assessment studies and evaluations are designed with the aim to help identify the added value of sport as a crime prevention tool. Programme evaluations should also aim to assess programme transferability from one context to another. Very importantly, programme evaluation findings should be shared across both the sport and the crime prevention fields to inform future initiatives and programming in this area.

In developing and applying an effective monitoring evaluation and learning framework to support evidence-based sport programming, it is important that the following aspects are considered:

- **Resources:** Adequate time, planning and financial resources should be allocated to monitoring evaluation and learning, and impact assessments. Key resources to budget for may include supplies and equipment, staff time and fieldwork costs.
- **Context:** Organizations, government and civil society partners should have a shared understanding of contextual knowledge, or the complex circumstances around crime, secondary and tertiary prevention near a programme's location. Additionally, ensure the community and programme implementers have shared definitions of sport and secondary and tertiary prevention when developing activities, outputs and goals.
- **Co-designed monitoring evaluation and learning:** Carrying out monitoring evaluation and learning that has been co-designed with youth and is trauma-informed means that youth are in control of if, when and how their stories are told. Youth are never to feel like they are being assessed during monitoring evaluation and learning processes. Monitoring evaluation and learning is about exchange, reflection and learning, rather than assessing.
- **Mitigating risks:** Ethical considerations are paramount in monitoring evaluation and learning. A do-no-harm approach ensures evaluation frameworks are context-sensitive and do not cause distress or offense to participants, partners, and stakeholders (especially those from marginalised groups).²⁰⁰ Make sure all voices are included in data collection. Furthermore, considering that many young people may have been exposed to violence and trauma, monitoring evaluation and learning have to be carefully designed to avoid revictimization, and put appropriate referral pathways in place.
- **Data protection:** Personal details must be filed in accordance with data protection laws; guidelines, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity options produce more ethical MEL processes.

8

**Key
considerations
for effective
policy and
programme
development**

Key considerations for effective policy and programme development

When considering the role of sport and sports-based programmes within a policy or programme aimed at preventing and reducing crime among at-risk youth or youth in conflict with the law, the following should be considered by policymakers:

<p>Support the institutionalization of sport and sport-based strategies and programmes to increase efficiency and sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport's contribution to crime prevention is most effective when institutionalized as part of a comprehensive crime prevention strategy linked to a national crime prevention framework or specific crime prevention objectives. • Keep in mind that the power of sport to produce individual and social change should not be overestimated and sport should not be seen as an alternative to public investment in education, access to employment, social services, access to justice and rehabilitation programmes, but rather to complement them. • Integrate positive youth development, and violence and crime prevention objectives in sport policies and programmes.
<p>Ensure access to sport for all, including for at-risk youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address obstacles to sport participation, prioritizing groups and communities where the need is greatest. • Promote youth social inclusion through participation in community-based sport programmes and avoiding exclusionary practices in sport. • Tackle known obstacles to participation encountered by different vulnerable or at-risk groups and seek to involve young people and community members in the recruitment process, the choice of the sporting activities and the design of the programme.
<p>Adopt a view of sport beyond competitive and elite levels and strengthen community sport.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply an inclusive definition of sport in sport programming, and refer to "sport for all, physical play, recreation, dance and organized, casual, competitive, traditional and indigenous sports and games in their diverse forms" covering not only competitive and elite levels but also grassroots and community-level sport. • Promote and invest in community and sport-based activities and programmes for crime prevention that provide youth with safe and conducive learning environment and support positive youth development and well-being. • Promote and facilitate the use of sport for local or community-based crime prevention initiatives, as per United Nations standards and norms, including through funding, supportive regulation, the planning of publicly accessible and safe spaces and the development of sports infrastructure at community level.

<p>Invest in multisectoral partnerships for crime prevention including with the sport sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to delivering sustained long-term interventions through committed and trusting partnerships. • Collaborate with the sport sector and the broader sport ecosystem to increase capacity, safety, advocacy and resources. However, avoid a narrow focus on sport performance and competitiveness, instead focus on the positive value systems embedded in sport. • Promote partnerships among various sectors and levels of government and community organizations, and ensure coordination and cooperation, including sharing of good practice. • Explore the development of public-private partnerships to support the development and sustainability of sports programmes, and open some creative and sustainable funding opportunities.
<p>Enhance sport infrastructure and create safe public spaces at community level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rethink public space planning and its use to meet the needs of young people and local communities by utilizing sport and sport infrastructure to create safe open public spaces for all, at community level.
<p>Develop evidence-based interventions based on a theory of change and clear logical frameworks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and support sport-based crime prevention programmes with a clear theory of change and a logical framework that is explicit about what in the chosen sport-based activities can logically and realistically lead to the desired crime prevention outcome(s). This is in terms of reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors, distinguishing between three complementary levels of crime prevention programming (primary, secondary and tertiary). • Choose a “sport-plus” or a “plus sport” based on the targeted group and the specific goals of a programme, taking into account that in the context of secondary and tertiary prevention “plus sport” programmes are the most commonly used programmes and are proven to be more impactful. • Adopt a strength-based approach to sport programming, in order to not only mitigate risk factors but to also enhance protective factors and provide youth with opportunities for positive relationships, success, and recognition. • Integrate monitoring evaluation and learning frameworks in policy and programme development and ensure availability of resources. • Enhance the transferability of sport-based values and learning to daily life by integrating certain features and delivery strategies in sport programming, including mentoring, organizing peer discussions, providing opportunities for reflection after programme activities and follow-up experiences to enhance and reinforce learning.

<p>Prioritize local and community-based intervention that are tailored, targeted, age and gender appropriate and contextually relevant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support well-targeted interventions, supported by effective outreach and recruitment practices. • Develop local or contextualize and adopt interventions that have been developed and implemented in a different context, taking the local needs and assets into consideration. • The targeted beneficiaries must be clearly identified. The method of intervention should be specified, including the role played in it by sport activities and the expected crime prevention outcomes should be precisely defined. • Apply participatory approach in policy and programme development and engage targeted beneficiaries and youth from diverse groups, including girls and women, and local communities and organizations in the development, implementation monitoring and evaluation. • Recognize that different sport types are associated with different outcomes and cultures, and this may impact recruitment and participation levels. Therefore it is important to choose the right activities and have the right personnel deliver the sport-based interventions. • Apply safeguards and trauma-informed strategies and practices for women and girls in sport-based interventions; ensuring that interventions addressed the risk and protective factors that were most salient for each gender group. • Enhance participation of women and girls, including by providing a wide range of safe and accessible sports programmes that are also respectful of cultural differences, engaging female sports coaches and facilitators and by addressing the risk and protective factors that were most salient for each gender group in the specific local context.
<p>Develop strategies that promote inclusion and avoid stigmatization of certain individuals or groups of participants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote safe sport and personal development opportunities that are accessible to all, inclusive and free of discrimination. • Build on the youth's lived experience, involve youth in programme development, implementation and evaluation, and empower youth. • Develop flexible, individualized, strength-based approaches to programming instead of deficit-based approaches, to avoid potential stigmatization of targeting individuals from various at-risk groups for intervention.
<p>Ensure safety in all sport settings for all participants and promote inclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement adequate policies and measures to safeguard all participants. • Ensuring that sport, at all levels, and sport interventions for crime prevention, do not encourage toxic masculinity, confrontations, violence or gender-based violence and expose participants to positive role models. • Develop capacity among sports coaches, facilitators, trainers and sports leaders to act as positive role models and challenge gender stereotypes, norms and attitudes that condoned or justified gender-based violence and discrimination. • Apply the do-no-harm principle and prioritize the safeguard of participants throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of all sport-based crime prevention strategies and interventions, including by ensuring that interventions targeting at-risk groups or young offenders were trauma-informed and did not contribute to their stigmatization or social exclusion.

<p>Sport should be used as a hook for at-risk youth and entry point for connecting services aiming to create a support network, provide opportunities and pathways to positive development and support desistance and social reintegration of young offenders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep in mind that the impact of sport-based interventions in preventing (re) offending, is determined to a large extent, by the strength of parallel interventions or the non-sport aspects of the programme. • Use the sporting activities as a hook for attracting young people to a stimulating field and engaging them in sport programmes with wraparound services and interventions such as mentoring and other forms of individual support and helping young offenders in particular, find a new community and build support networks. • Integrate formal mentoring in sport programming, support development of mentoring relationships among youth participants, coaches and other programme staff, and solidify these for long-term engagement and participation. • Engage parents and other meaningful adults in the intervention and include parents and meaningful adults when mobilizing stakeholders to strengthen policymaking and partnership building. • Recognize the complexity of the desistance process and support the cognitive transformation processes that may lead to desistance, including a change in identity. • Structure and deliver interventions to support gang disengagement by exposing participants to positive role models, nurturing pro-social relationships, teaching life skills, offering diversion and safety, and leading them to meaningful self-reappraisals. • Support the social reintegration of young offenders leaving custody by using sport as a way of promoting engagement with through-the-gate wraparound services and of supporting former offenders into education and employment opportunities.
<p>Invest in human resources acknowledging the crucial role of sports coaches, facilitators and volunteers in ensuring the successful implementation and impact of sport-based crime prevention interventions and programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on selection, screening, skills development and ongoing training, and vetting of coaches and other sport project staff and volunteers, acknowledging their crucial role in prevention interventions and programmes. These include their role in recruiting and motivating young people, providing role models, keeping participants engaged in the programme and providing a safe and caring environment.

ANNEX I:

Key resources

United Nations policy instruments, standards and norms

Security Council resolutions

- Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security.
- Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture.
- Security Council resolution 2419 (2018) on youth, peace and security.

General Assembly resolutions

On sport for development and peace

- General Assembly resolution 70/1 on transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- General Assembly resolution 71/160 on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace.
- General Assembly resolution 72/146 on policies and programmes involving youth.
- General Assembly resolution 73/24 on sport as an enabler of sustainable development.
- General Assembly resolution 73/325 on strengthening the global framework for leveraging sport for development and peace.
- General Assembly resolution 74/16 on building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal.

On crime prevention

- General Assembly resolution 74/170 on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies.
- General Assembly resolution 76/183 on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies.
- United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) (General Assembly resolution 45/112, annex).

- United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (General Assembly resolution 69/194, annex).
- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) (General Assembly resolution 40/33, annex).

Economic and Social Council resolutions

- Economic and Social Council resolution 2019/16 on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies.
- Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System (Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/30, annex).
- Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/13, annex).
- Economic and Social Council resolution 2016/18 on mainstreaming holistic approaches in youth crime prevention.
- Guidelines for the Prevention of Urban Crime (Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/9, annex).

Reports of the Secretary-General

- Report of the Secretary-General entitled "Sport for development and peace: towards sport's enabling of sustainable development and peace". 21 July 2016. A/71/179.
- Report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening the global framework for leveraging sport for development and peace". 14 August 2018. A/73/325.
- Report of the Secretary-General entitled "Policies and programmes involving youth". 16 July 2019. A/74/175.
- Report of the Secretary-General entitled "Youth and peace and security". 2 March 2020. S/2020/167.

Other relevant United Nations frameworks and reports

- Kyoto Declaration on Advancing Crime Prevention, Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law: Towards the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted at the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and endorsed by the General Assembly at its 76th session in December 2021. A/RES/76/181.
- United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace. A/61/373 and A/73/325.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Kazan Action Plan, adopted at the sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport of UNESCO. SHS/2017/PI/H/14 REV.
- Revised International Charter on Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport of UNESCO.
- United Nations Youth Strategy entitled "Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People".
- United Nations, Human Rights Council. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material (thematic study on the sale and sexual exploitation of children in the context of sports). 27 December 2018. A/HRC/40/51.
- World Programme of Action for Youth (General Assembly resolutions 50/81, annex, and 62/126, annex).
- Report of the Secretariat entitled "Outcome of the expert group meeting on integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies". February 2020. A/CONF.234/14.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 Special edition. Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet.
- United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Africa. Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment. New York, 2017.
- Sport values in every classroom: teaching respect, equity and inclusion to 8–12-year-old Students – A Quick Guide. Paris, 2019.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Olympic Committee and Terre des hommes. Sport for Protection Toolkit: Programming with Young People in Forced Displacement Settings. Geneva, 2018.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Handbook on the crime prevention guidelines: Making them work. New York, 2010.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Line Up Live Up: Life Skills Training through Sport to Prevent Crime, Violence and Drug Use – Trainer Manual. Vienna, 2017.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Preventing Violent Extremism through Sport: Technical Guide, Criminal Justice Handbook Series. Vienna, 2020.
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- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Youth Crime Prevention through Sport: insights from the UNODC "Line up Live up" pilot programme. Vienna, 2020.
- World Health Organization. Preventing Youth Violence: An Overview of the Evidence. Geneva, 2015.
- International Olympic Committee. Olympism365: Strengthening the role of sport as an important enabler for the UN Sustainable Development Goals. October 2021.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. UN toolkit on Sport for Development and Peace (online). New York, 2023.
- United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Sport for Development and Peace (IAGSDP). Thematic paper: The contribution of sport to the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. 2021.
- United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals funds. The contribution of sports to the achievement of sustainable development goals, A toolkit for action. 2018.
- United Nations Children's Fund. Protecting Children from Violence in Sport: A Review with a Focus on Industrialized Countries. Paris, 2010.





UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



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