

Promoting Youth Empowerment, Social Cohesion and Gender Equality through Sports

Project title	Global Programme Sport for Development, Pakistan
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany
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Technical partner	Elementary and Secondary Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
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Context

As the world's fifth most populous country, with a population of over 240 million, Pakistan has a significantly young population - 64% under the age of 30, and around 31% between the ages of 15 and 29. The country faces complex challenges affecting its youth, including limited access to education, healthcare and employment, as well as persistent issues of gender inequality and social cohesion. Furthermore, for more than 40 years, Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province has been home to a large population of Afghan refugees, counting 800,000 registered Afghan refugees today. This presents both opportunities and challenges, as young Pakistanis, especially girls and women, often face limited opportunities for growth and limited access to public spaces, including sports. Addressing these barriers cannot only promote gender equality which is critical given Pakistan's very low ranking on the Global Gender Gap Index (145 out of 146 countries). It can also strengthen social cohesion, as youth engagement promotes positive community participation.

Sport offers young people a dynamic, collaborative environment to learn and grow. It presents a unique and effective approach to empowering young people, developing skills such as leadership, teamwork and resilience. In addition to promoting inclusivity, sport can bridge divides, foster a sense of belonging and act as a powerful tool for empowerment and social change. Structured interventions through sport enable young Pakistanis to realise their potential and play an essential role in shaping a more resilient and cohesive society. Sport is not only innovative and versatile, but also

cost-effective. At the same time, the positive impact of 'Sport for Development' is scientifically proven.

The 'Sport for Development' approach

Recognised by the United Nations 'as a means to promote education, health, development, and peace', Sport for Development (S4D) uses sport, physical activity, and play intentionally as tools to achieve development objectives. German development cooperation, in partnership with governments, civil society, business, and academia, has developed a rich S4D portfolio that promotes intersectoral collaboration.

The 'Global Programme Sport for Development' promotes the networking of stakeholders across various countries worldwide, with two regional hubs in Latin America and the Western Balkans, as well as hubs in Pakistan and Tunisia. The [Global S4D Community](#) serves as a virtual platform where learners and experts can further develop their skills and exchange experiences at both regional and global levels. Through the training of stakeholders in the field, the programme supports the individual, collective and operational capacities of organisations and local groups in implementing the 'Sport for Development' approach.

Activities of 'Sport for Development' in Pakistan

Since 2022, German development cooperation has been using the 'Sport for Development' (S4D) approach in Pakistan as a tool to foster learning and transformation processes in a playful and engaging way, benefiting both individual children and young people as well as society at large.



From left to right:
Impact Study on
Gender Equality
S4D training in
the initiative
'Game on for
Equality!'
S4D training of
the 'Young
Leaders'

In collaboration with the Elementary and Secondary Education Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, GIZ has since adapted this approach for Pakistan by introducing a tailored Sport for Development Capacity Building programme and Sport for Gender Equality resources. This approach aligns with KP's cultural and contextual needs, focusing on building skills and values that resonate deeply with the province's traditions. S4D activities are implemented in schools, community programmes, and government sectors, promoting gender equality, inclusion, peaceful conflict resolution, and strengthening social cohesion and resilience of teenage girls and boys, women, and transgender persons. It aims at supporting marginalised and disadvantaged groups and opening new perspectives for them. In particular, the programme's work encompasses the following areas:

- Anchoring of the Sport for Development approach in the communities and (selected) government department structures.
- Capacity building of youth, women and transgender persons on the Sport for Development approach to enable them to play their role as the change agents for the promotion of gender equality.
- Capacity building of the Physical Education Teachers (PETs), Sports officers, and the District Education Officers (DEOs), from the Elementary and Secondary Education Department (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).
- Empowering 24 'Sport for Development Youth Ambassadors' from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region and strengthen them as local agents of change.

Selected partner organisations

In Pakistan, the 'Global Programme Sport for Development' is collaborating with the following partners:

- Education Ministry (Elementary and Secondary Education Department), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- Programme for Wellbeing and Sustainability (PWS), Pakistan

- Right To Play International, Pakistan.

In collaboration with the [adidas Foundation](#) the activities are scaled up through the 'Game on for Equality!' initiative, targeting boys and girls aged 10-14 in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. Children and youth strengthen their psychosocial well-being and resilience, resolve conflicts peacefully and gain a deeper understanding of equal rights in their communities.

Achievements since 2022

- Development of two Sport for Development capacity building resources (manuals) in collaboration with the Elementary and Secondary Education Department.
- 240 youth and women have been trained on the Sport for Development approach and have successfully engaged 5000+ persons in S4D activities focused on the promotion of gender equality, peaceful conflict resolution, inclusion, and social cohesion.
- Training of 115 Physical Education Teachers (PETs) and Subject Teachers (STs) in Sport for Development, with the aim of integrating the S4D approach into government schools. The trained teachers have engaged more than 10,000 students in S4D activities in schools, focusing on promoting gender equality, peaceful conflict resolution, inclusion and social cohesion.
- Empowering 24 youth with on demand skills and as the Youth Ambassadors of Sport for Development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. These 24 Youth Ambassadors have engaged more than 1000 children, boys and girls, and youth in different S4D activities.
- Empowering 30 youth as the Young Leaders in the 'Game on for Equality' initiative in their respective community and as S4D coaches in 30 selected schools. These 30 Young Leaders will engage 9000+ youth in a series of S4D activities that will take place in different communities and schools.

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