

CFCI Summit

Session documentation

This document summarizes the key topics, insights and next steps arising from the CFCI Summit held from 17 October 2019.

Track:	The right to be a child: Friends, play, and leisure
Title of session:	Realising Children’s Rights Related to Sport in Child Friendly Cities
Date and time:	10:30am – 12:00pm
Facilitator and resource persons:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amy Karageorgos, Centre for Sport and Human Rights • Danielle Goldberg, Director of Advocacy and Engagement, UNICEF USA • Mary Harvey, Chief Executive, Centre for Sport and Human Rights • Anucha Browne, Chief Engagement, Advocacy and Global Programs Officer, UNICEF USA • Dorothy Rozga, Head of Child Rights, Centre for Sport and Human Rights
Name of rapporteur:	Danielle Goldberg

Main topics and ideas discussed:

All children have the right to participate in and be a spectator of sport, recreation and play in a safe and enjoyable environment, as recognized in the CRC. There is no question sport can have a powerful positive influence on the lives of children. It is an enabler of physical and mental well-being, fosters friendships, teaches life skills and strengthens communities. At the same time, there are barriers to participation of some children. Moreover, without proper protections and safeguarding in place, sport has the potential to adversely affect children.

How sport relates to each of the four core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the goals of CFCI:

Principle 1: Non-discrimination

All children should enjoy their right to sport – and access to sport – without discrimination. In this regard, cities and municipalities should take steps to ensure equitable access to sports programmes, facilities and resources. Key questions to ask include: Are facilities accessible for every child? Are they safe? Are they reaching everyone or just the most privileged?

Principle 2: Best Interests of the Child

We know that children, especially when they are very young, are vulnerable and need special support to be able to enjoy their rights fully. This is also true in sport, where the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration at all times. We must never forget that child athletes are children first, and athletes second.

Principle 3: The Right to Survival and Development

We all know that sport, recreation and play make vital contributions to all areas of development. Sport can also be a vehicle to ensure that every child and young person has access to quality essential social services such as healthcare, education, nutrition support, early childhood development and education, justice and family support.

Principle 4: Respect for the views of the Child

Sport is a key element that deserves adequate attention as it relates to the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative goal, “Every child and young person has their voice, needs and priorities heard and taken into account in public laws, policies, budgets, programmes and decisions that affect them.” In sport, it is important for children to have a say in where and how programmes are delivered; who are the referees and coaches;

and what remedy is available when things go wrong. Too often children have limited opportunities to influence the policies that impact their lives.

The benefits and opportunities offered by sport, recreation and play for children at the municipal level:

Numerous speakers including Anucha Browne, Mary Harvey and Janis McDavid spoke about the transformational role sport, recreation and play had in their lives.

Anucha in particular talked about the opportunities sport provided to her as a young girl and later in life and how without sport her life would have taken a very different path. She referenced UNICEF's leadership to provide access to sport for children affected by emergencies, trauma and violence, and the power of sport to alleviate trauma, and build confidence and courage among children.

Practical ways to apply a child rights-based approach to sport at the local level: protecting a child's right to healthy and safe sport, preventing potential harmful effects in the lives of children, and enabling children to have a voice related to sport in their respective communities

The issues of safeguarding in sport was addressed. Policies/procedures need to be in place to protect children as participants, spectators and athletes in sport, including the most elite athletes. The more elite the athlete, the more vulnerable and fragile they are; the more likely they will suffer physical or emotional abuse.

Concrete examples of what can be done at the municipal level were provided by:

Janis McDavid, motivational speaker, Germany: Sport is a key way children make friends. Special steps should be taken in communities to accommodate children with disabilities to make the social and physical benefits of sport accessible to them.

Cecilia Ljung, Child-Friendly focal point Karlskoga and Degerfors, Sweden: Research conducted by the University of Sweden shows the benefits of dance to mental health. In Sweden, it has been used as a tool for both mental and physical well-being among girls.

Janet Reategui Rivadeneyra, Counselor of the Regional Government of Loreto, Peru: Integrated recreation and sport into a wide range of social and health services at the municipal level.

Tatsuru Mikami, UNICEF Japan: UNICEF Japan launched last year 10 child rights in sport principles which can apply a road map for any municipality to translate the rights enshrined in CRC into how sport is played Child Friendly Cities.

Rashed Mustafa Sarawa, UNICEF Representative, Belarus: Belarus has used sport as a mainstream program tool for development and for the protection of children. Volunteers were engaged during the European games in line with the CRC principles. Every year, they hold a family tournament with the Belarusian Football Federation. The Belarussian hockey team provides talks on inclusion and good parenting at games. Children were included in their half marathon.

Key insights, good practices and lessons shared:

While sport is not explicitly listed in the CRC, it is a component of the realization of child rights, and to all CFCI goals. It is also referenced in other relevant UN Treaties like the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sport recreation and play are critical to healthy development, though it is not a guarantee that sport is always safe. Municipal leaders have a key role to play to ensure the safety of every child as a participant, spectator and athlete.

Sports is not just a medal. Sports is a development tool. It is a protection tool for children and children need to be protected while participating in sport as well.

Two important resources shared:

- Children's Rights in Sport Principles (<https://childinsport.jp/en/>)
- International Safeguards for Children in Sport (<https://www.unicef.org.uk/sport-for-development/safeguarding-in-sport/>)

During the session the participants discussed what actions cities can take to ensure more children have access to sports, what they can do to ensure children are protected in the sport environment and what they can do to enable children to share their views about sports in their communities that affect them. For example:

To ensure that more children have access to support, municipalities can:

- Invest in access to safe transportation to participate in sports, safe and accessible spaces for sport for children of every age; spaces where children can borrow sports equipment
- Offer free or discounted tickets for families/children to sporting events
- Engage children to understand their interests around sport, to provide diverse sport offerings according to interests, and to make sure they're aware of the available opportunities.

To ensure children are protected and heard in the sports environment, municipalities can:

- Establish a children's ombudsman in sports
- Practice effective safeguarding all sports activities: train leaders and youth on child rights, inform children and how to make sure their voices and how to report incidents; undergo background checks for all who work with children
- Properly train teachers/staff/coaches engaged with children in sports on child rights

Mary's remarks are available online at:

<https://twitter.com/SportandRights/status/1184892203035852800?s=20>

Next steps and actions points (when applicable):

Recommendations/ Actions	Person responsible	Target Date
1. Add specific examples of sport and child rights in the play/leisure examples page on the CFCI website.	CFCI team	
2. Find other ways to highlight the Child Rights and Sport manual from UNICEF USA as a CFCI resources on the CFCI website.	CFCI team	