

Programme Sustainability

Being able to identify what sustainability means in the context of your programme and then prioritise and plan around your unique goals is an important step towards designing and implementing sustainable programmes. This section will guide you through defining sustainability in the context of your programme and offer tools designed to help you create a dialogue and action plan around programme sustainability within your organisation.

Where are you?

This section of the International Guidelines will explore how to approach the development of a successful sport programme for girls.

In this section, you will explore the following topics:

- 01 What is Programme Sustainability?
- 02 Aspects of Programme Sustainability
- 03 Tools for Assessing and Planning for Programme Sustainability



01 What is Programme Sustainability?

Programme sustainability is a **dynamic concept** that relates to multiple aspects of a programme, including **long-term impact, family and community buy-in**, and the **financial viability of the programme in the future**. In this context, programme sustainability refers to the programme continuing beyond the end of the initial funding period, and the impacts of the programme being sustained beyond the end of the programme - this includes the impact on the participants, coaches, leaders and the community.

Oftentimes, what is needed to create sustainable programmes is resources, including funding, but also resources related to the institution and its context, such as human resources, social resources (trust, validation, support, etc.), environmental and political resources, among others.

Many of our partner organisations have different perspectives and priorities when it comes to programme sustainability depending on the context within which they operate. Let's consider the following real-life examples:

For [Plan International Nicaragua](#), programme sustainability means 'strengthening the capacities of the target groups in such a way that they can sustain themselves over time independently. In other words, the target groups implement their own action plans, taking up their own capacities and resources.'

For [Naz Foundation](#), programme sustainability means 'an organisation can continue working towards the project objectives without being constrained by resources, or the internal and external environment.'

At [Girl Move, Mozambique](#): 'Financial sustainability: the ability to raise additional funds. Technical sustainability: the ability to maintain relevant human resources with solid training. Political sustainability: the ability to understand and monitor political and social stability. Environmental sustainability: the ability to adapt to the context and to make decisions to reduce the negative impact of the programme on the environment.'

For [Moving the Goalposts \(MTG\)](#), Kenya programme sustainability is, 'the ability of a given project or programme to continue beyond initial funding by having its own resource acquisition strategies after funding.'

At [ChildFund and Lao Rugby Federation, Laos](#): 'The sustainability of a programme should be considered at two key levels: participants and institutions. Within the Pass It Back programme in Laos, sustainability means that programme graduates make more informed decisions in the future by utilising the skills, knowledge and capacity they have been equipped with through the programme. At the institutional level, sustainability is considered to be the structural and systemic elements that organisations adopt, which go beyond the project itself and, therefore, have a broader impact on current and future work.'

How to Design Sustainable Programmes



It is vital to consider programme sustainability at the outset of your girls' sport programme design, and to continually address it during all stages of your programme - planning, implementation, and evaluation. Considering programme sustainability from the initial planning phase will allow you to design strategies so that the activities and actions carried out during the implementation aim to create a sustainable impact.

Monitoring implementation, getting feedback from participants, coaches, and community members, and promoting adaptations and adjustments while thinking about long-term impact will allow you to adapt the programme based on changing context or environment. The more integrated and adapted the project is to the community context and reality, the more likely it is to be sustainable.

Finally, evaluating the project will allow you to understand its impact on the target audiences and community. This will help **inform future experiences and identify beneficial elements to incorporate** into the organisational structure. In order to evaluate the programme, it is important to apply both **quantitative measurement** tools that allow visualising indicators of change, as well as **qualitative tools** that make it possible to incorporate the voices of the different actors involved. More information on monitoring and evaluation tools can be found in the [Measuring Impact](#) section.



Image source: Amazing
Masaai Girls Project, Kenya

02 Aspects of Programme Sustainability

When discussing or planning for the sustainability of sports programmes to **empower adolescent girls**, there is an **additional gender and sport lens** that must be applied. Because of the sociocultural norms that limit girls to the roles of household care, preventing them from engaging in social/sport activities and the traditional stereotype of sports as a 'male' domain, sustaining a sport programme for girls has unique challenges.

Not only can it be more challenging to financially sustain girls' sports programmes, but it can also be difficult to develop other aspects of sustainability, such as obtaining support and encouragement from community leaders. Below are five key aspects to consider when thinking about the sustainability of programmes focused on promoting the empowerment of girls.

Involvement of Families



Girls' families have a great influence in their lives and on their decisions. Connecting with the families from the beginning of the programme and listening to their perspectives is critical to ensuring the engagement of your participants and the impact of your programme is sustainable.

If the families of the participants are not aware of the programme or not convinced of the benefits, it is often a barrier for the girl to participate. If the families are not supportive of the programme activities, this could also generate a lack of sustained engagement from the girls. Including the families and getting their support can lead to the girls participating in the programme, being understood and, in the long term, being supported in their search for future development opportunities.

Ways to involve families include:

- Workshops to establish a relationship with families and address issues relevant to the lives of girls.
- Meetings with family members to share information about the programme and listen to concerns.
- Media coverage to sensitise families and/or promote their participation.
- Home visits to meet and talk with the girls' families and references.
- Virtual communication (Calls, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.) that allows you to listen, know and respond to families' concerns and questions remotely.
- Family events to promote bonding with girls, and offering families with opportunities to see their daughters/sibling in action.
- Creation of a committee for families or caregivers in which they can meet and make recommendations for the programme.



Consider

Identify which sports are most widely accepted by local families. This could be influenced by the culture of the community, the traditions or the ethnic identity or nationality of the families. **Promoting sports that are accepted by families will make it easier for them to support girls playing.** Otherwise, strategies will have to be generated to sensitise families about the proposed sports discipline.



Case Studies:

Plan International – La League (Nicaragua)

[La League](#) recognised that fathers and other male relatives were as important as mothers in their roles as models of emotional behaviour for their daughters. For this reason, during the implementation, a parent manual was created and connection with girls was promoted through football. Eight awareness workshops were developed for parents and male relatives and community events were promoted as a way to strengthen this bond in a dynamic and fun way. Later on, female relatives were also actively involved, participating in workshops on gender norms, community events and intergenerational meetings and playing a central role in voluntarily supporting the action plans designed by girls.

Girl Move - Mwarusi in Motion - Believe (Mozambique)

During '[Mwarusi in Motion - BELIEVE](#)' a relationship with girls' families was sought in order to talk about and clarify certain topics that were addressed during the programme, such as sports, health, sexual violence, violence and menstruation. For this, different strategies were applied, for example: a letter was sent to the families talking about the programme, community meetings were held in schools and home visits were carried out in order to reflect and share concerns.

Participation of Community Leaders



what is a community leader?

A **community leader** is a person who plays a leading role in the community and has the power to influence the lives of others. They may be a leader because of political, educational, religious or economic reasons.

Raising awareness about the programme and working with community leaders can help increase community support for the initiative, increase the chances for sustainable impact, and create an opportunity to continue the activities in the community in the case that funding for your programme ends.

It is also beneficial to engage leaders related to the sports environment, such as the leader of a club, a sports journalist, or a person with professional experience in the sports field.

In programmes aimed at the empowerment of girls and young women, women leaders should be particularly involved and empowered, as this contributes to **breaking gender stereotypes and barriers**. The programme itself should promote gender equality in terms of balancing the number of women leaders involved, offering them training related to leadership, sports, administration or other topics, and assigning them to leadership roles, such as coaches, referees, and administrative positions. For more tips on developing leadership opportunities for women in sports programmes, see [Coach Development](#).



Consider



Identify female leaders in the community, and offer them emotional support and training tools that'll allow these leaders to empower themselves and be role models for girls.

Ways to engage with community leaders include:

- Generating spaces for dialogue with community leaders to involve them in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the programme.
- Meeting individually with community leaders to discuss the programme before events or new activities.

- Building networks between sports leaders/women leaders and girls through events, mentorship programmes, speaker series, tournaments, and community resource visits.
- Training leaders on gender perspective and/or feminist lens.
- If relevant, offering community leaders advisory positions in your organisation.

Consider

Contemplate whether there are community leaders from any sporting discipline interested in participating in and promoting your project, as this may be useful when deciding on the sport used in the programme. Promoting sports that have the presence of leaders in the community will allow local role models to motivate the participants.



Case Studies:

Naz Foundation Trust - Goal Program (India)

[Naz](#) promotes communication with different leaders in the community, meeting with them individually or in groups in order to share the objective of the programme on gender equality. Naz has even managed to engage political leaders who have similar agendas to work on the development of the population in their electoral region. These political leaders were willing to offer their time to accompany the staff to carry out outreach activities in the community and provide community centres to run the programme, spaces that were useful to play netball and hold sessions. Political leaders have a duty towards overall development in their jurisdiction, therefore, making them accountable for their work by engaging them in programme is one of the strategies for sustainable development.

Girl Move - Mwarusi in Motion - Believe (Malawi)

[BELIEVE](#) meanwhile, engaged university students to be leaders for the Girl Move LEAD programme, mentoring and inspiring the girls. They received a stipend or economic incentive and transportation expenses, to be able to take on this commitment and achieve their economic independence. The sisterhood circle is a unique aspect of the Girl Move model and its three main programmes, which are based on a path of learning and leadership for girls, youth, and adult women. Sisterhood circles connect girls with new positive female role models through sport.

Collaborating with Existing Community Infrastructure

Identifying institutions that might be interested in supporting girls' development and have the desire to get involved with or support your programme is a central aspect of designing a sustainable programme. When your programme can connect to or integrate into existing structures, such as schools, sports clubs, neighborhood organisations, local government, etc., it can increase the sustainability of the programme. This also provides a chance to expand the network of opportunities for participants after their engagement in your programme, as well as an opportunity to influence other organisations, clubs, and public bodies in your community to make space for girls and women and support processes that stimulate their long-term empowerment.

Examples of ways to collaborate with existing community infrastructure are:

- Sharing methodologies and approaches with other actors (schools, organisations, governments) who can incorporate aspects of the programme in their ongoing work.
- Creating a bridge between the programme and existing sports clubs and supporting girls to access them.
- Integrating the project into the local school curriculum or extracurricular activities, or into existing neighbourhood structures, such as community organisations.



Consider

Find other community institutions that already have resources (like physical spaces for the sports practices, materials for projects, etc.) that are willing to collaborate with your programme, which could lower the barriers for girls to participate.





Case Studies:



Moving The Goalposts - Youth Peer Providers (Kenya)

The sustainability of the Youth Peer Provider programme relied heavily on the collaboration between the local government and [MTG](#). Local government provided training, health facilities, and contraceptives, helping MTG meet the programme objective of preventing teen pregnancies.

ChildFund Rugby and the Lao Rugby Federation - Pass It Back (Laos)

The [Pass It Back](#) programme was integrated into the Lao Rugby Federation's programming, which is a national governing body for sport registered under the Ministry of Education and Sport. This allowed the programme to have a greater, more sustainable impact on other organisations, particularly rugby clubs.

Schools were also engaged during the implementation of the programme, since the Pass It Back curriculum was delivered as an extracurricular activity. School authorities and teachers were invited to meetings and community engagement activities to learn more about what coaches and players were doing in their community teams. Additionally, rugby clubs played a key role in leading on sustainable impact and served as development pathways and community support organisations, since they offered opportunities for players over the age of 17 to participate in their training sessions and to join a network that promotes gender equality and safe and supportive spaces for ongoing and professional development.



Image source: Pass it Back, ChildFund, Laos

Leadership Pathways for Participants

Generating leadership pathways for participants is essential to sustaining the impact of your sports programme and continuing to resource the programme with staff and coaches. This aspect is particularly important for adolescent girls and young women, as there are many cultural norms and patterns that lead to less development opportunities for them. For this reason, throughout your programme, **girls should have the opportunity to develop skills that can be applied in different contexts of their lives.**

Leadership development skills for girls include **communication, self-confidence and decision-making.** The opportunity to develop these skills is important to incorporate into your programme so that the girls can realise the benefits of your activities in their personal and professional lives.



When girls have opportunities to practise taking on additional responsibilities and leadership roles in your sports programme, they develop these skills and can create opportunities for themselves in other aspects of their lives.

Additionally, creating development opportunities and leadership pathways within your programme can lead to the creation of peer leaders, coaches, and even staff members to support the future of the programme. **The presence of positive female role models and coaches is important to attract more girls to your programme and demonstrate the programme's success.** Programmes can also be sustained by generating leaders from among the programme participants: this can be done by establishing leadership pathways, which start with being a player, continue to becoming a peer leader and end with the possibility of being a coach or staff member.

Examples of developing leadership pathways for participants are:

- Designing trainings, workshops, and leadership pathways for the participants to gradually take on greater leadership roles within the project.
- Giving leadership opportunities to all girls during practices, games, and other activities (not just the best athletes or the most natural leaders).
- Generating spaces or networks for girls that can be autonomous and self-sustaining.
- Connecting girls with existing networks of girls and women for future professional opportunities.
- Linking participants with new opportunities that may contribute to their economic empowerment in the future (e.g., scholarships, volunteering, internships).



Case Studies:

Naz Foundation - Goal Programme (India)

Through leadership pathways in the Goal Programme, young women who participated became instructors of other girls. In order to implement the programme, these young women went through an internship period, where they received training in both netball techniques and life skills and worked as community sports coaches. At the end of 2021, 80% of Naz staff were alumni of the programme. Among them, there were different levels of leadership from internship positions who received a travel stipend, to junior coaches, coaches and senior coaches, who had salaried positions.

Moving The Goalposts - Youth Peer Providers (Kenya)

The YPP programme had a leadership structure in which the Peer Providers trained girl leaders in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues. After taking part in training, these girls could lead SRHR sessions with other girls from their own sports classes throughout the year. Through this process, the girls were empowered and trusted to replicate the knowledge learnt in their circles of trust and take on a leadership role in their local sports activities.

The YPP project has contributed to very successful pathways for girls out of MTG, thanks to the experience and investment in training and support of girls as they deliver the project. The majority of graduates have become community health workers, employed and engaged by NGOs, after they graduate from the programme as social workers and community volunteers.

Additional Funding or Resources

Identifying the resources and funds that are necessary to sustain your programme will allow you to make realistic decisions about the possible activities to maintain. These resources can be obtained through grants, donations, loans, material or in-kind donations (e.g., tools, machinery, equipment) or purchases and payments from the organisation's own funding or reserves. Diversifying the programme's sources of resources and funds increases the possibility of sustaining the project. Thus, it is preferable to have inputs and contributions from multiple organisations and individuals, rather than getting all resources from a single source.



Examples of ways to identify additional funding or resources are:

- Generating a budget for the programme components you want to continue
Identifying the actors (companies, government agencies, international organisations, etc.) interested in promoting sport and / or gender equality.
- Having a person or team in charge of fundraising.
- Generating documentation that evidences the impact of the project (including quantitative and qualitative information).
- Generating unrestricted funds. This could include contributions from individual donations, income from events, collaborative financing (crowdfunding), and sales of products or services, among others.

Consider

Identify the actors in your region that promote gender equality and/or sport, making it possible to find potential allies for your programme. A database could be generated with companies, government areas, and institutions that work for the empowerment of girls and women and/or the promotion of sports in your region (or internationally).



Image source: Karolina Sznycer, Barcelona Tennis Academy. UNICEF



Case Studies:

Naz Foundation India Trust - Goal Program (India)

Due to the success and proven impact of the programme, the Goal Program continued to be financed by Standard Chartered Bank after 2006, who supported its replication in other schools and communities. Over time, other economic contributions to Naz's programs were acquired. To obtain new funds, Naz has consolidated an effective team in fundraising that is responsible for communicating with donors to demonstrate transparency in their reporting and share the impacts of the programme. Standard Chartered Bank is no longer their primary donor, since Naz has the support of seven other sources, diversifying of the programme.

ChildFund Rugby and the Lao Rugby Federation - Pass It Back (Laos)

As the tag rugby and life skills curriculum has taken shape, [Pass It Back](#) has emerged as a product that can be proposed to potential donors. Importantly, Pass It Back protocols ensure ongoing collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data each season to enable ongoing programmatic development. This analysis has proven concrete, measurable, and sustainable impact through the evidence against indicators that demonstrate the programme is a worthwhile investment. This makes the product attractive to potential donors. As such, the LRF can and has sought new financing opportunities to grow and replicate the programme in new districts and provinces.



03 Tools for Assessing and Planning for Programme Sustainability

Based on the experiences of our partner organisations, we have created a set of tools to assist organisations in thinking about programme sustainability and how to create sustainable girls' sports programmes. The tools are a Programme Sustainability Self-assessment and a Sustainability Action Plan tool that guides organisations through the decision-making and planning process around programme sustainability. The Programme Self-assessment and the Sustainability Action Plan should be internal tools for your organisation: they are not intended to be a comparison with other organisations, but a snapshot of your organisation at a moment in time. These tools should be treated as living documents and be updated over time as your organisation grows and contexts change.

- [The Programme Sustainability Self-Assessment](#) is a useful tool to address the five aspects of program sustainability. It allows you to assess the sustainability of the programme at any stage of its development, and can be used as a tool to promote dialogue on sustainability with the team and the participants or stakeholders of your programmes. Additionally, it illustrates where your programme's strengths and areas of growth are related to sustainability.
- [The Sustainability Action Plan](#) is a tool that offers practical exercises to complete the different elements that make up a Sustainability Plan. This includes a reflection on the programme purpose, the definition of sustainability objectives, a mapping of key actors and community support, the identification of key actions and the creation of a budget.



Image source: Safe Spaces, Kenya



Game

over!