OLYMPIC REFUGE
Safe spaces for sport
BACKGROUND

Young lives and the global refugee crisis

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), conflicts and persecution have driven unprecedented numbers of people from their homes, with 65.3 million people recorded as being displaced at the end of 2015. That’s one in every 113 people worldwide. Distressingly, children make up over half of those numbers, with young refugees facing a unique set of challenges in terms of their emotional, physical and educational development.
OLYMPIC REFUGEE FOUNDATION

Born from a long-term partnership

The ongoing collaboration between the IOC and the UNHCR has seen the birth of sport-based projects in refugee camps in more than 45 countries since the 1990s, which have provided for basic sports equipment needs, the rehabilitation of sports playing fields and the organisation of regular recreational activities.

In 2014, IOC Honorary President Jacques Rogge was appointed as Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Youth Refugees and Sport, to help raise the profile of youth refugees and the impact of sport as a tool for peace and an inclusive society.

Another example of the partnership was the creation of the first-ever Refugee Olympic Team for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. In October 2015, the IOC President, Thomas Bach, announced in a speech to the UN General Assembly that refugees would, for the first time ever, be invited to compete on the world’s biggest sporting stage under the Olympic flag. With the help of the National Olympic Committees and the UNHCR, the IOC identified a number of athletes living in forced displacement, and helped them through its Olympic Solidarity programmes to take part in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

Beyond the Olympic Games, the IOC continues to support these athletes day-by-day, to help them to build their future, while the UNHCR also supports them to continue to convey this positive message of solidarity and hope through sport and advocate the cause of refugees. Indeed, in December 2016, the IOC decided to create the Olympic Refuge Foundation. The Foundation will help improve the quality of life of displaced and disadvantaged children and young people worldwide by developing safe places for them to play sport.
WHAT IS THE OLYMPIC REFUGE PROGRAMME?

A safe place to play

Working in cooperation with the United Nations, the Olympic Refuge Foundation will support projects across the world on two levels:

- Firstly, to create safe, basic and accessible sports facilities in areas where there is a displaced migrant population, internally displaced people and refugees, where all children and young people can play sport and take advantage of sport’s multiple benefits;

- Secondly, to develop sporting activities that can be successfully implemented within these safe environments.

Projects will take a community-based approach, with parameters agreed together with the appropriate local partners (UN, NGOs, National Olympic Committees, etc.) and the relevant local authorities to ensure the set-up, operation and sustainability of projects. These multiple entities will help position “playing sport” at the heart of social development and public policy, thus contributing towards delivering on a number of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Sport as a pathway to social, physical and emotional well-being

- **Physical aptitude and development**
  A safe environment to play and enjoy sport can contribute towards acquiring the fundamental movement and sports skills that are the basic building blocks of physical literacy.

- **Education and psychosocial skills**
  Playing sport in a safe environment will help teach social skills and values, while introducing the participants to local support services and, potentially, employment opportunities.

- **Child safeguarding**
  A place to play where children are free from harm, danger or risk, and are protected from discrimination of any kind – be it based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language or religion.

- **Health**
  Sport can protect against illness in later life such as heart disease, obesity, diabetes, stroke, depression and cancer. It can also provide the local support services with the opportunity to monitor the health and well-being of children and young people and teach them about healthy lifestyles.

- **Inclusion**
  The Olympic Refuge programme aims to bind communities together; break down cultural and gender barriers; and promote social cohesion, integration, peace and equality.

- **Life skills**
  Sport fosters invaluable life skills such as: cognitive functioning; emotional regulation; empathy; self-confidence; self-worth; interpersonal skills; life satisfaction; positive peer relationships; cooperation; leadership; decision-making; goal setting and achievement; tolerance; and conflict resolution.
THE ROLE OF THE IOC

A catalyst for strategic partnerships

The IOC will focus on the crucial task of engaging with strategic partners and ensuring sustainability.

As project leader, the IOC will:
- Source donors
- Facilitate strategic partnerships
- Identify appropriate implementing partners
- Work with governments and local authorities, among others, to ensure projects’ sustainability

The IOC will also provide resources to administer, coordinate and oversee implementation of the projects approved by the Foundation.
FUNDING THE PROJECTS

Earmarked donations

The IOC, its partners and its stakeholders will play an important role in convincing as many other donors as possible to invest in the Olympic Refuge Foundation.

The Olympic Refuge Foundation will identify organisations that have the capacity to implement the Olympic Refuge projects. These organisations will submit their proposals to the Foundation, which will be responsible for allocating grants.

When requests by donors come through, funds will be earmarked for specific projects. Monitoring and evaluation will be a core part of the programme implementation.

Independent evaluation will deliver additional evidence regarding projects’ efficiency and relevance.

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